



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)

Spring, 2010

How I Learned to Live One Day at a Time

*Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift.
And that is why it is called THE PRESENT.*

by Nancy Miles



Nancy Miles

“One day at a time” is a phrase I’d heard most of my life. My grandmother would say, “Nancy, you must live one day at a time.” Someone else once told me, “If you dwell in the past, you are bringing yesterday’s problems into your present time.” I also heard that if we have one foot in the past and one in the future, we will miss the joy of living in the present.

There was even a popular song entitled *One Day at a Time*, sung by Christy Lane. It has a lot of truth in it, seeming much like a prayer. Jesus gave the same advice to His disciples: “Take therefore no

thought for tomorrow: for tomorrow shall take thought of the things for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:34).

Over 30 years ago, I decided to check myself and see if I was really living in the present. I suspected I had failed to stay out of the past, but I was totally shocked to discover that I had never really left the past behind at all. I was wallowing in self-pity and childish jealousies, and I was holding grudges and plagued by feelings of guilt and hopelessness. I had brought these unsolved problems into my present because I had never dealt with them. At the same time, I noticed that I was worrying about the future and the fearful things to come upon the earth. Of course I knew about God’s plan to save this world from total destruction and bring salvation to mankind.

So I decided to make a concentrated effort to stay in the present time. It wasn’t easy, and many times I fell back into my old ways. However, each time I returned to the present, I gained new strength and understanding. God kept working with me, giving me wisdom and insight, until I was finally able to face and deal with my problems. Staying in the present is a lifetime endeavor. It also frees one from fears and worries about the future. As we embrace each day, we will find our Father and Christ waiting for us there. “Am I a God at hand, says the LORD, and not a God afar off” (Jeremiah 23:23)? The truth is, mankind can only deal with one day at a time. God knew this when He created the human race.

I remember vividly the day my grandson, Danny, came for a special visit. I noticed his furrowed brow and slumped shoulders right away. He had dreamed of being a medic in the Navy, hoping after boot camp to work in a military hospital. However, circumstances took a different turn. One day the Marines came to his base, looking for a few good men for their Medical Corps, and chose Danny, sending him to their boot camp in California, where he later learned he would be stationed in Japan. He told me, “Grandma Nancy, what am I going to do? I signed up for five years in the Navy, but circumstances have turned all my plans completely upside down, and I don’t know if I can handle the next five years.”

Danny’s problem wasn’t that he was dwelling in the past, but that he was trying to live in the future before it even arrived. I gave him the advice my grandmother had given me about living one day at a time. I told him to do his best each day, don’t worry about anything, and then go to sleep each night and rest. Then the next day, to do his best again, taking advantage of any opportunities that came his way.

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Impaired Judgment

by Lonnie C. Hendrix



Lonnie C. Hendrix

What is important to you? What are the qualities or things you value in others? In fact, just how do you evaluate the people you come into contact with? As a fellow human, I presume your brain processes what you can see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. Also, it is probably safe to say that what you see and hear constitute the senses you rely on most. Moreover, most of us rely on our first impressions—the things we see and hear *first*.

When you process and evaluate those impressions, what constitutes a favorable, positive, good, or successful appraisal? Do you equate things like physical beauty, wealth, power, intellect, and athletic prowess with positive qualities? Do you notice how a person is dressed when you meet someone? Do you ask that person what he/she does for a living? Do you notice how someone speaks—what kind of vocabulary he/she uses? When you take inventory of your own life, what are you looking for in yourself? Did you know that every time we process and evaluate the information our senses are sending to our brains we are operating under impaired judgment? For our purposes, we will define “impaired judgment” as a weakened, damaged, or faulty ability to evaluate the good from the bad. “Wait just a minute,” someone will interrupt, “are you saying that we operate with impaired judgment all of the time?” *Yes*, that is precisely what I am saying. Jesus Christ told people during His ministry on this earth, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

My grandfather is a case in point. He had little formal education, but he was a genius when it came to all things electrical. I have witnessed him pour over the plans and schematics of electrical engineers, men with college degrees, and tell them that this or that would not work. He proceeded to draw on and modify those plans, and I have seen those same men acknowledge that he was right. He was a coarse man. He had been a sailor in World War II, and he cussed like one. Even so, he was one of the most generous and tender-hearted individuals I have ever known. On the basis of the kind of superficial observation we are discussing, how would he stack up against one of those little blue-haired elderly ladies who are in church every week and would

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Soon the days would turn to weeks, then months, then years. Danny took my advice, and made it just fine. He traveled all over the Orient with the Marines, setting up Mash Units, and even had a part in treating the sick and injured after the big tsunami. Today he is studying to be a doctor. Recently he called me and told me he had never forgotten the good advice I gave him, and was considering going back into the military as a Navy doctor. They had offered to pay all his educational expenses, and he would be able to retire in 15 years. How I rejoiced to see Danny's new attitude about the future!

The present is where we grow, gaining understanding and knowledge. Each morning is a type of the resurrection, and the work we do during the day is a type of our work in the Kingdom. Each night we can think about our day, repenting of our sins. Then before we go to sleep, we can ask God to help, strengthen, and watch over us and our family through the night. This is when we let the past go. As time goes on, we will discover we are resting and sleeping more peaceably than before.

As we let go of our past one day at a time, we also embrace our future one day at a time. Actually, we can't have a correct view of the past *or* the future unless we live in the present. From this vantage point, we have a better understanding of both the past and future. As children of God, we have a blessed hope and a bright future to look forward to. We should never be discouraged about the future. Aren't we glad that all things are in the most capable hands in the universe?

Don't worry that you might forget your good memories. I once thought I had to struggle to keep my memories. There were some things I didn't want to forget, such as the love and companionship of my grandparents, and the memories of growing up with my childhood friends. I finally came to realize that God only blots out the sin and darkness in our lives, not our memories or the lessons we have learned. We will still remember bad things from the past, but we will find that, because of God's great love, forgiveness, and acceptance, our painful memories will no longer trouble us. As time goes on, we will discover that the pain from the past no longer exists.

Remember to love and forgive others, just as God does for us. Jesus said, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be you therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned: forgive, and you shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your lap. For with the same measure that you measure it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:35-38).

Today, as children of God, we keep the Sabbath. Your Sabbath day will be even more blessed by living in the present, because just as God's presence is in the present time of each day, He has placed an even greater portion of His presence into the Sabbath. We are reminded that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Matthew 28:18-20). There will eventually come a day that we let the past go and embrace the future, as it becomes the present—and BEHOLD! WE WILL JOYFULLY DISCOVER THAT THE PRESENT IS THE RESURRECTION!

W



**"So teach us to number our days,
that we may apply our hearts unto
wisdom" (Psalms 90:12).**

*The next deadline for submitting articles, church
news and pictures for the International News is
May 15th, 2010.*

God's Holydays for 2010

Feast/Holyday Information

Feast/Holyday Calendar

- New Testament Passover: March 28 §
- Feast of Unleavened Bread: March 30–April 5
- Pentecost: May 23
- Feast of Trumpets: September 9
- Day of Atonement: September 18
- Feast of Tabernacles: September 23–29
- Last Great Day: September 30

§ Observed at sundown.

2010 FEAST SITES

We will begin publishing information on our 2010 Feast sites as soon as contract details have been finalized.

"Let us keep the Feast!"

(1 Corinthians 5:8)

During the upcoming year, congregations of the *Church of God International* will be celebrating the Feasts all around the world. We invite you to join us. Want to know more about the celebration of the Feasts? Be sure to request your *free* copy of *GOD'S SEASONAL PLAN*. Simply write to one of the convenient addresses below or visit our web site at www.cgi.org for details.



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A World In Transition

—PART 2—

Currently, the world appears to be gravitating toward global socialism under the guise of a new politically correct term: “State Capitalism.” What does this mean for the geopolitical future of the world, and in particular the United States? Is it really the path to world peace and prosperity? And what does our Bible say about this global trend?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

Previously, in our last issue, we were left asking a variety of questions in the opening article on this topic—questions that a few years ago would have been irrelevant for our time. However, in today’s “progressive socialistic environment,” it’s just the opposite; *presently*, these questions have become *very* relevant!

Admittedly, however, it’s important we recognize the operative word here is “presently.” We should always keep in mind geopolitical events and conditions are dynamic and subject to change. Therefore, it’s important when observing the principles and trends of our changing world, we understand *caution is key* when considering what we may think are the *final lynchpins* to the prophetic fulfillment of our Bible. *Speculation* about current events, news headlines, or politics should be minimized; otherwise, we run the risk of looking foolish. This is precisely why we will stick close to what Scripture says about the future of our changing world throughout the remaining discourse of this subject.

With that being said, let’s consider what the *Bible* has to say about these centralizing initiatives that appear to be nationalizing the world into some kind of socialistic “World Order.”

Some Biblical Imperatives to Consider

Revelation 18 explains an internationally *centralized* worldwide economic system has been implemented around what is described as an *end-time Babylon*. Notice what it says in Revelation 18:3: “For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings [plural] of the earth have committed fornication with her [politics], and the merchants [plural] of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies [policy/commerce].”

Now keep in mind: this chapter primarily describes the destruction of this Babylonian system. However, as it becomes quite clear in the course of the context, this *world order* was benefited, and for a time became quite prosperous by virtue of this nationalization. Again notice: “Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise anymore” (Revelation 18:10–11). Imagine that! The world is saddened—weeping and mourning because they cannot do business with this Babylonian system, due to the swift destruction that comes upon it.

So, what are some of the imperatives we should consider about this Babylonian system?

Point No. 1: It is a *global* system that emerges onto the world scene, becoming dominant in its geopolitical influence and worldwide economic benefit to the nation-states of the world (Daniel 7:23; 8:25, Revelation 18:7, 9–16).

Point No. 2: It appears to be a socialistic coalition made up of a) an autocrat (Beast), b) a religious leader (false prophet), and c) ten independent nation-state leaders (kings) who combine their hegemony in confederation with this prominent charismatic autocrat. Notice, “And in the *latter time* [This is important to recognize: it’s at the end time] of their kingdom, ...a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand

up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully [not using force], and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace [prosperity] shall destroy many...” (Daniel 8:23–25). Also, “Thus he said, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon the earth...and shall *devour the whole earth*, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom *are ten kings* that shall arise...” (Daniel 7:23–24). In addition, Revelation 17:12–13 says: “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings [independent of the autocrat—*Beast*], which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour [a short time] with the beast [the autocrat]. These have one mind [implying unity, confederation, or coalition], and shall give [concede] their power and strength unto the beast [the autocrat].”

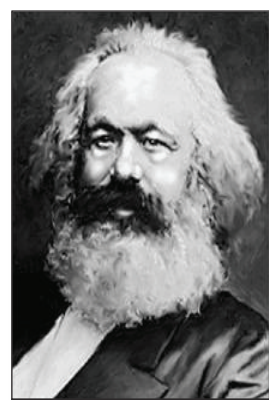
Point No. 3: This Babylonian system historically is responsible for killing the prophets and saints, and will proceed to repeat *Christian persecutions* and cause martyrdom again in the future. Notice, “And I saw the woman [Mystery Babylon the Great] drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6).

In addition, notice what this futuristic Babylonian system will do to *modern-day Christians* at this time. “Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others...And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up... I beheld, and the same horn made *war with the saints*, and *prevailed against them* [they will be harmed]... And he [the Beast] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall *wear out* [beat down and destroy] *the saints* of the most High...” (Daniel 7:19–25). Also notice: “And it was given unto him [the end-time Beast/autocrat] to make war with the saints [violent harm], and to *overcome them* [subdue them]: and power was given him [the autocrat of the fourth kingdom] over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (Revelation 13:7).

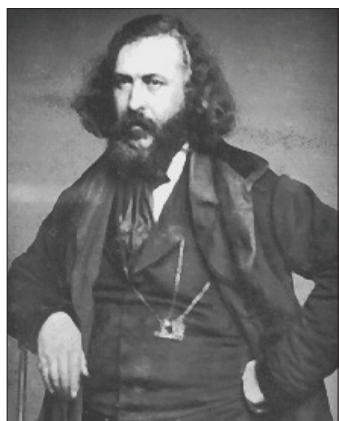
Even our Lord warns us that in the latter days, *at the time of the end*, many will be offended, betrayed, and delivered to be afflicted and killed (Matthew 24:8–13; Mark 13:8–9; Luke 21:10–19). This substantiates Daniel’s warnings.

Point No. 4: We must remember: *this happens at the end*. We know this because it’s this Babylonian system that fights our returning Lord, Jesus

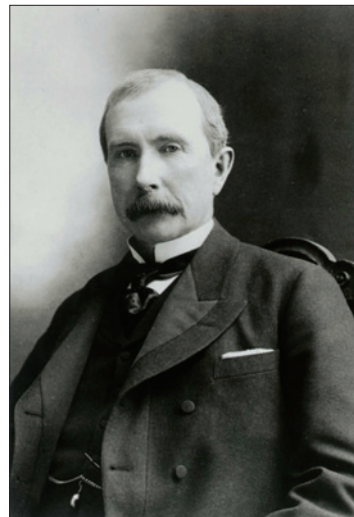
Christ, and the armies from heaven. Notice, “And in the days of these kings [the Beast, false prophet, and ten kings] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed [it’s at this time]: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44). And further, “...He [the autocrat/Beast] shall also stand up against the Prince of princes [Jesus Christ]; but he [the Beast/autocrat] shall be broken without hand” (Daniel 8:25). Also, “These [the Beast and the ten kings] shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb [Jesus Christ] shall overcome them” (Revelation 17:14).



Karl Marx



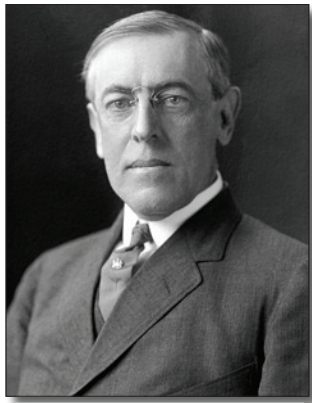
Albert Pike was a grand master of the Scottish Rite of the Masons, well known in the late 19th century as an alleged modern-day founder of the conspiratorial Illuminati movement.



J. D. Rockefeller, alleged international banker/Illuminati.

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Woodrow Wilson was an alleged Progressive conspirator, accused by many of being part of the Illuminati.

Clearly, there are many unanswered questions concerning these Biblical imperatives. But here's the point: Presently, world trends indicate the global community of nations appear to be moving toward a socialistic model, which the Bible claims will result in a "world order" that ultimately is going to attempt to control the entire world; and indeed, this is prophetically substantiated by many scriptures in our Bible, and is further accentuated more plainly by what is actually happening today in the world!

Simultaneously, while all this is going on, the United Kingdom has virtually conceded all of its positions with its former Commonwealth nations. Today, Great Britain shares its relationships and authority mostly in *name only* with the majority of these former nations, and is nowhere near the power and influence it once was. In

addition, the United States, the *last remaining* "super-power" and *obstacle* preventing the socialization of the world, is sadly close behind Britain in its decline. This once world prominent and unprecedented global power, like the United Kingdom, has also unfortunately plummeted to a position of secularism, moral decay, economic bankruptcy, and political disarray! Undeniably, the United States of America has lost its way because it has no national vision of *who* it is and *what* it should be doing. Clearly, it has forgotten its identity and has fulfilled, in a surreal kind of way, the meaning of its prophetic name, Manasseh, which simply means "*forgetfulness*"!

The Conspiracy

Many over the years have claimed the real conspiracy behind this "New World Order Initiative" lies with many international elites. They reach back to the secret societies and/or brotherhoods like the Illuminati, Jacobinism, Freemasonry, or the Round Table Groups, and claim these ruthless and progressive organizations are behind much of the gravitation toward this global socialistic tyranny. They claim men like Dr. Adam Weishaupt, Giuseppe Mazzini, Moses Mordecai (alias: Karl Marx), Albert Pike, and Clinton Roosevelt, to mention a few, were some of the intellectuals behind the genesis of this conspiracy. They allege these conspirators/socialists made inroads into the industrial, banking, education, media, and political sectors of the nations. Those who believe this further assert that these incremental encroachments of influence from men like John Ruskin, Sir Abe Bailey, John D. Rockefeller, John Dewey, Dr. Harold Ruggs, the Bilderberger's, Rothschild's, and yes, even some of the presidents of the United States, along with many more international politicians—and additionally, organizations like the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Federal Reserve, Royal Institute of International Affairs, and of course, the United Nations—are all responsible for coordinating this conspiracy! But really, is this a fair assessment of who is actually behind the scenes manipulating the horrific multi-millennia legacy of mankind's miserable and pathetic story?

If we're honest with history, it's hardly realistic to conclude the Rothschilds' or other international elitists who are considered part of the "Bilderbergers'," or for that matter, any other financial sage, was behind the scenes financing World Wars I or II and conspiring to take over the world, with such prodigious amounts of destruction and loss occurring to so many of these individual European bankers, industrialists, and educators during those times. Arguably, this would have to be considered the ultimate masochistic, self-inflicted wound of all times! And furthermore, after one recognizes the magnitude of personal loss these families experienced in art, real estate, and in some cases, even the death of their own loved ones as a result of these many historical conflicts, it hardly makes any sense that this would be the case.

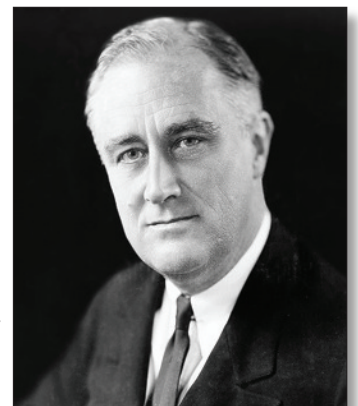
Clearly, the present worldwide financial meltdown also goes to substantiate we can hardly blame the bankers to be behind some global conspiracy to take over the world, when they themselves also suffered so many losses and bankruptcies, while others required such enormous government bailouts. Again, it would hardly make much sense, when considering the magnitude of such personal loss and financial setbacks. Remember, many of these financial leaders lost their companies, jobs, fortunes, and sometimes their families and freedom. Some even ended up in jail! That's hardly good conspiratorial planning for taking over the world, when you, too, suffer loss of this magnitude in pursuit of swindling others out of their fortunes. Somehow, it just doesn't seem to make much sense.

But, on the other hand, that's not to say there isn't a conspiracy, or at least a degree of manipulation occurring within these areas occasionally, because there is an agenda at work; and clearly, it could be considered a conspiracy. However, the size and scope of those behind it are far more powerful and deceitful in their operation than most of mankind realizes; and it is indeed obvious—*most people don't realize it!*

I'm always amazed when talking about this alleged "conspiracy," because eventually in the course of conversation, comments will finally lead to statements like, "Well, *THEY* have arranged it", or "*THEY* have done this", or "*THEY* presently are working on it." Eventually, I'll get around to asking, "Who are *THEY*?" And as a rule, generally the answer at best is ambiguous, or the question is simply ignored, which just goes to prove that most people do not comprehend the size, scope, depth, and complexity of this very real conspiracy. Why is this? It's really simple: most people *ignore the spiritual factor and dimension* of the agenda!

Unquestionably, this is what underpins the answer to this mystery. We can't ignore the *spiritual facts* because this conspiracy does, indeed, go beyond the human realm. Your Bible points this out when it states the world is deceived—but not by the international bankers, Council on Foreign Relations, the United Nations, or the Illuminati. It's much larger in scale and scope, and far more deliberately insidious than that! Notice, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). That's right! This fallen covering cherub, presently known as Satan the devil, is in fact, *the one who is really behind this conspiracy!* He and his minions who left their first estate and are currently postured in rebellion against God—these are the ones who are behind this sad and lamentable legacy of human anguish, pain, and suffering. Admittedly, these demonic forces work within the hearts and minds of mankind, exploiting our lustful natures as well as deliberately manipulating outside circumstances directly to serve their power mongering and destructive objectives. And yes, they work many angles, using multiple methods, including people, organizations, and yes, even nations of the world to advance their specific agenda—but always, of course, within the allowances of God's overall plan (Ephesians 2:1–3 and 6:12).

Now notice, who is it that gives power to this up-and-coming resurrected "king of the north," which is this Greco-Romanish, Babylonian system. "...and the dragon gave him [the Beast and ten kings] his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Revelation 13:2). Notice, it was that dragon, Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9), who was behind this coalition and movement to nationalize the world order and confederate it into what the apostle John called "...MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS [fornications] AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Revelation 17:5). John claims this system is the habitation of demons, and the place of every foul spirit, unclean and hateful bird. It is a system that has influenced all nations to "fornicate" with it [political intercourse], in order to prosper (Revelation 18:1–3), living off the production of those who receive the "mark" it requires in order for one to work and make a living (Revelation 13:16–17).



Franklin Roosevelt, alleged conspirator connected with the Progressive Illuminati movement.

With this perspective in mind, who can truthfully say to what extent the specific role of certain individuals, or of U.S. politicians like Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ted Kennedy, George Bush, and Barack Obama, or of organizations, governments and/or business sectors played in this conspiracy? It's simply up for speculation! Who specifically financed what revolution and who particularly was behind Napoleon, Garibaldi, the Bolsheviks, Hitler, or the Federal Reserve is frankly up for debate! Who really knows the truth, or the extent of involvement specific individuals or world conditions played, concerning these events? And frankly, in the grand scheme of things, does it really matter?

Yet, some will insist, don't we have a right to our personal opinions about this? Yes, of course, *all of us* are free to *speculate* in this area, because undoubtedly, it makes for lively and interesting conversation. But understand—it's *speculation* at best, as to how specific men, politicians, organizations, round table groups, or international revolutions fit into this "web" of grotesque deception and worldwide charades. What's simply being suggested is to guard against allowing this kind of *speculation* to come between us as Christians. Let's not make these topics, or theories, or our politics, become *divisive* "doctrinal tenets." It's just not worth it.

Instead, stay focused on what's *really* important—the *bigger* picture—and how Satan is really behind all this manipulation—how he, Satan, is steering the global trends which are now developing by means of the *type* of principles being initiated by the nations of the world and driven by the demonic lust for destroying God's plan! Remember, that's what is really behind all this deception, corruption, violence, death, and destruction. The agenda being implemented by the contradistinctive forces of God are designed—or "conspired" if you prefer—with the objective of undermining everything God loves and is working toward accomplishing.

Presently, it appears "State Capitalism," which is underscored by government involvement and/or ownership of private assets (Socialism), as

opposed to private ownership (Free-Market Capitalism) unhampered by government involvement, is becoming the New World Order's model of global commerce. So, when overlaid onto the "system" described in Revelation 18, what is presently happening now in our world becomes very cogent to Bible prophecy. The *real world confirmation* of our present geopolitical trends and events of how emerging markets are developing and positioning themselves *now*, is STUNNING!

Obviously, this is because it's exactly what the Bible plainly illustrates will be the economic system dominating the world at the time of Christ's return. It is described as a socialistic confederation of ten nationalized nation-states, led by an autocrat (the Beast) and religious leader (false prophet), who are both demon possessed (Revelation 16:13–14) and who also mark the people for serving the State. This system, in combination with the ten kings who confederate with this autocrat (the Beast), ultimately face off with Christ and the armies of heaven in the final battle known as Armageddon (Revelation 16:16–18). The result is the destruction of this evil Babylonian system (Revelation 16:19–21).

Are We There Yet?

As we look out over the landscape of countries throughout the world and consider the geopolitical *trends* we've been discussing, it's painfully apparent the global community of nations is indeed steering its way in the direction of this "Babylonian World Order." However, there remains a very stubborn obstacle standing in the path, presently obstructing and preventing all of this from being accomplished—the *United States of America!*

We don't need to belabor the current political and economic trauma the United States is in. Clearly, there are forces in and outside of the United States that are dedicated to its destruction and currently becoming more transparent in their evil deeds. With the advent of the present economic crisis the United States has recently experienced and is still recovering from, in combination with so much corruption, moral, and political confusion, double standards, secret meetings, and shameless behavior from so many public servants, it's become disappointingly obvious that particular aspects of the American culture have accelerated in decline, thereby contributing to putting the United States at risk. This has resulted in an *international inferior condition*. The United States is a paralyzed "paper tiger."



Barack Hussein Obama

This is not surprising in light of the abandonment of God's thundering words, principles, and expectations for a people who adopted the Judeo-Christian heritage and originally claimed the God of Israel to be the standard of her moral and social behavior.

Believe it or not, the nations of the United States and United Kingdom had the opportunity to stand as *beacons* to a world community of nations who do not have a clue about who the God of Israel is and His firstborn Son, the Savior of mankind, Jesus the Christ, of Nazareth. These nations of multiple ethnicities and races, segmented into a great nation and company (commonwealth) of nations, have been historically, and undeniably still are, the greatest cultural force on earth promoting the name of Jesus Christ. Without their participation, prodigious amounts of money, resources, and missionary efforts, regardless of their imperfections and sinful manners, the record is clear: God has used them to advance the name and knowledge of Christ as humanity's Savior as no other culture of people on earth! For reasons of promises made thousands of years ago to a man called Abraham, this was an important prophetic objective for God our Father.

However, this chapter in the life of these nations appears to be approaching the end. The promises of great wealth, affluence, and power have been fulfilled! Sadly, it's becoming obviously dismal and lamentably disheartening that as a "birth-righted" culture, we have failed God! We have been weighed in the balances, and to our shame, as a people who claim the Judeo-Christian Bible as God's Word and her model of social and religious identity, we have been found "wanting."

Unquestionably, we are the cultures held responsible and who are accountable for failing to live up to the standard set by Jesus Christ. Why? Because it was the intention of the living God to use these particular cultures to set the example for the rest of the world, *as a city upon a hill*, to live for the God they *claimed* to be the true God (reference the side bar, *City upon a Hill*).

Unfortunately today, the United States and the British Commonwealth nations are socially compromised and have lost their way. They no longer consider the God of Israel, or the name of Jesus Christ, to be of much influence for social or religious value anymore. Nor do the words of His law have any long-term efficacious effect on the lives of the people He has blessed with so much. Yes, the God of Israel, in the name of Jesus Christ, has blessed America and the Commonwealth of Britain with many great successes throughout their history and much affluence over the last four to five centuries. But, as the world turns, "change" has come. And unfortunately, the "fundamental changes" these cultures have and are presently experiencing, are not the kinds of changes that will ingratiate us into a closer relationship with the God of Israel. W

TO BE CONTINUED...

John Winthrop's City upon a Hill, 1630

Now the onely way to avoyde this shipwrecke and to provide for our posterity is to followe the Counsell of Micah, to doe Justly, to love mercy, to walke humbly with our God, for this end, wee must be knitt together in this worke as one man, wee must entertaine each other in brotherly Affeccion, wee must be willing to abridge our selves of our superfluities, for the supply of others necessities, wee must uphold a familiar Commerce together in all meekenes, gentlenes, patience and liberallity, wee must delight in eache other, make others Conditions our owne rejoyce together, mourne together, labour, and suffer together, allwayes haveing before our eyes our Commission and Community in the worke, our Community as members of the same body, soe shall wee keepe the unities of the spirit in the bond of peace, the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us, as his owne people and will commaund a blessing upon us in all our wayes, soe that wee shall see much more of his wisdom power goodnes and truthe then formerly wee have beene acquainted with, wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us, when tenn of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when hee shall make us a prayse and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantacions: the lord make it like that of New England: for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us; soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our god in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a byword through the world, wee shall open the mouthes of enemies to speake evill of the wayes of god and all professors for Gods sake; wee shall shame the faces of many of gods worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into Cursses upon us till wee be consumed out of the good land whether wee are going: And to shutt upp this discourse with that exhortacion of Moses that faithfull servant of the Lord in his last farewell to Israell Deut. 30. Beloved there is now sett before us life, and good, deathe and evill in that wee are Commaunded this day to love the Lord our God, and to love one another to walke in his wayes and to keepe his Commaundements and his Ordinance, and his lawes, and the Articles of our Covenant with him that wee may live and be multiplyed, and that the Lord our God may blesse us in the land whether wee goe to possesse it: But if our heartes shall turne away soe that wee will not obey, but shall be seduced and worshipp other Gods our pleasures, and proffitts, and serve them, it is propounded unto us this day, wee shall surely perishe out of the good Land whether wee passe over this vast Sea to possesse it;

Therefore lett us choose life,
that wee, and our Seede,
may live; by obeyeing his
voyce, and cleaveing to him,
for hee is our life, and
our prosperity.

Where Is My Party?

The Lesson of the Non-Prodigal Son

by Nancy White



Nancy White

I'm the second child in a family of seven. My older sister is only 18 months older, and I spent my life trying to be as smart, popular, pretty, and thin as her. Okay, I admit I was trying to be smarter, prettier, more popular—better. There was no trauma. My parents loved us equally. I didn't feel unloved or lesser. I just felt very competitive, the way younger sisters sometimes do.

When my husband, Wes, proposed to me, he asked my mother, as my remaining living parent, to give her blessing to the marriage. She did, but she also wrote Wes a letter that he cherishes, explaining a little about me—that I am sensitive, that I am a pleaser, and that I spent my young life working hard to be my father's favorite child. I didn't just want him to love me—I wanted him to love me *best*.

I was loved and knew it, but I still wanted to be number one in my father's heart—the favored child. Sadly (and a bit sheepishly), I must confess that I sometimes feel the same kind of drive to be the favorite child of God—or at least the best at something.

I'll give you an example. At the UCM-sponsored Women's Conference in Sevierville, Tennessee this past July, I was blown away by the talented speakers at the conference—so much great information and excellent presenters. We heard some amazing stories of survival, spiritual transformation, and divine intervention.

Before it was my turn to speak, that old feeling came back. I started thinking that, compared to these experiences, my conversion is ordinary and my story is—well, a little boring. Maybe my life wouldn't make it into the Bible—just not a lot to tell. I grew up in the church and never left. I sinned, to be sure, but I never gave up trying to obey.

Want to know what led me to get baptized? After a minor husband-wife spat, it just popped into my head that I'd probably have a better marriage and life if I'd go ahead and make the commitment to God I'd always known I'd make some day and then have the help of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Not exactly being struck blind on the road to Damascus, is it? I've never shaken off a poisonous snake. I've not healed the sick or even attempted to walk on water. As far as I know, no one has been converted to Christ because of my dynamic speaking. Not even my own children.

I am a second-generation Christian. And if you are too, you may have an idea of what I'm talking about. If you are not a second-or-third-generation believer, maybe I can help you understand by turning to the story of the prodigal son. We find it in Luke 15:11–32.

I've always enjoyed the story of the dramatic repentance of the son who'd gone astray. I am thrilled at the way the father ran to his son and accepted him back—how the father and all the servants rejoiced, slew the fatted calf, and threw a big party.

It reminds me that the angels in heaven rejoice more over the one sinner who repents than over the 99 who don't need to. There are two parables in Luke 15, just before the parable of the prodigal son, that illustrate this principle.

Me? I'm in the position of the other brother—the one who stayed home, tended the family business, and helped his father while old Mr. Prodigal was out sowing his wild oats—the one still out in the field working when the party started for the prodigal son. And I must carefully guard against the attitude that tripped up the non-prodigal son. In his shoes, I might have also cried, "What about me? Where is my party?"

To add insult to injury, the Bible also tells us that the last shall be first and the first shall be last. So, not only do prodigals get the party, but now I

might be tempted to worry about some "Johnny-come-lately" being invited to the front of the line when God is handing out eternal rewards. It is only human for some resentment to well up over being sent to the back of the line. But then, the Christian experience isn't about being "only human," is it?

Being a Christian is about becoming fully spirit and completely un-human in all we do.

As always, the best example of how to handle anything properly—of how we should look at our brothers and how we should feel about those moved to the front of the line and how we should react when someone else gets a spiritual party—is Jesus.

Jesus has been with the Father since time began. We are *all* "Johnny-come-latelies" compared to Him. He had it all. Then He gave it up to walk in our fleshly shoes. He gave up even more than that—taking on our sins and the penalty of death we deserve. Why did He do it? He did it so He could share some of Himself and all the abundance of heaven with us. He gave up being the only Son, to welcome us as His siblings.

Whose example of steadfast obedience can compare to His perfect example? Talk about walking a straight path and never straying—that is Jesus.

You know what I used to do to try to become my dad's favorite? I imitated him—ate what he ate—tried to do what he did. I developed a love of exotic cheeses because my dad liked them. I wanted to work with his power tools. I watched the shows he watched. I tried in all things to be most like him.

I focused on my father, not my siblings, with whom I felt I had competition. That works with our Heavenly Father. When we focus on Jesus, our elder brother, we are focusing on the Father. When we imitate Jesus, we are imitating the Father, because He is the express image of the Father (Colossians 1:15) and because when we see Him, we see the Father (John 14:9).

I have no business focusing on the experiences, talents, conversion, benefits, character, blessings, or parties in honor of my siblings in Christ (past or present).

I would do better to focus on the message of the father to the non-prodigal son, when he said, "Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours" (Luke 15:32). Good point. The truth is that I don't really want to go through any of the trauma and drama associated with a life lived outside of obedience, just so I can have a party when I finally "come to my senses" (verse 17).

I've already got it all in Christ, and I am already enjoying the blessings associated with obedience, including being "ever with" the Father. I am already the Father's "favorite," and so are you!

Human parents will sometimes treat children unequally—favor one over the other. It is possible that a good child (or a bad one) might receive preferential treatment. You only have to read about Isaac and Rebecca's treatment of Esau and Jacob to understand that. Thankfully, God is not like our human parents.

Yes, each one of us will have a unique Christian experience. God has carefully crafted a path for each of us, designed specifically to develop our unique, God-given talents, develop our character, and give us opportunity for maximum rewards.

So, let's not focus on who has what among our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's focus instead on our obedient Elder Brother, Jesus, and on the Father.

Remember: the Father loves me best—and He loves you best, too! We'll have all eternity to party together.

W



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Step by Step

“That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy” (Colossians 1:10–11).

by Jean Jantzen



Jean Jantzen

When first learning how to walk, our mother stretches her arms out and we blissfully accept the challenge. Those first steps are a mixed hodgepodge of wonder, exhilaration, fear, and delight. Mother is always nearby, giving us the encouragement we need. This walking is a spine-tingling adventure with a few stumbles along the way. With growing confidence, we bounce through the years of childhood and teen years not always watching where we are going, taking a few missteps, but always rebounding. In those growing-up years, we don't always look before we leap, so abrasions, contusions, and sprains happen from time to time. But we get up, brush ourselves off, and keep going. Slowly, as adults, we take a little more care in how we walk, but it's not until we are elderly (mature) that we are very careful, thinking about where we place our feet, planning our every step, trying not to lose our balance or slip off the path before us. But even then the unforeseen may surprise us, and we take a stumble. As you can see, there is no time throughout our life that we take those steps without the occasional incident.

It's the same in our walk with Jesus Christ. When we start out with joy, enthusiasm, and unbounded exuberance, Jesus with open arms helps His child get started on his way. Throughout our learning years, there are falls, but Jesus helps us up and continues to guide and protect us through the turbulent and trying times. He knows our frame is dust. David tells us about his faith in God: “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me” (Psalms 138:7). Do you think Jesus thinks we are not walking worthy when taking those baby steps, or when we bound into troubling waters as a spiritual teen, or when we stumble as an elderly man or woman? He sees our sincere effort to walk circumspectly. He knows our heart. He knows conversion is a lifelong transformation, starting at that first baby step and continuing till we mature spirituality and ultimately enter His Kingdom.

The Greek word translated *walk* in Ephesians 4:1 means “daily conduct.” The theme of the last three chapters of Ephesians is the believer's conduct: we are to walk in unity (4:1–16), in distinctness (4:17–32), in love (5:1–7), in light (5:8–14), in wisdom (5:15–17), in the Spirit (5:18), and in preparation for warfare (6:10–24). The Christian walk speaks of our lifestyle. We all know we need to walk worthy of Jesus Christ. My question is, *Does God make it worth our while to walk this difficult path?* Let's face it; it's not easy to be different than everyone else, to go against the grain of society, to love our enemy, to learn love when everyone hates. Therefore, I want to show the blessings we receive when walking this path so we can know it is more than worth our while.

Even though Job was in the midst of tribulation, he longed for “When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness” (Job 29:3). Life is not always a bowl of cherries, but we have that blessed light and the knowledge that we never need walk alone. If we lose our way on occasion, we need to listen to the comforting words in Proverbs 4:11–13, NIV: “I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.”

King Hezekiah is a good example of a man who zealously walked the walk. He followed the good example of his father before him. He relied on God to protect his people. Then the unbelievable happened. He was told he was going to die, and to get his affairs in order. But Hezekiah did not take this announcement lying down. Once again, he turned in prayer and wept to the only One who could save him. He came boldly before his Maker saying, “I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore” (2 Kings 20:3). Not only did God answer his prayer, adding fifteen years to his life, but God protected his city from invasion. God does answer our prayers!

Another wonderful example of walking worthy is the familiar story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who served God while being held captive in a foreign land. King Nebuchadnezzar had set up a golden idol expecting everyone to bow down, but these three men were reported as refusing to comply. The king was livid, accusing them of disobedience, but they said, “...O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:16–18). What an example they set for future generations, and what hope we have in a heavenly Father who will be there for us and perform such miracles in our lives.

Read some of these promises:

- “Whoso *walketh* uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once” (Proverbs 28:18).
- “He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one *walking* in his uprightness” (Isaiah 57:2).
- “He that *walketh* with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20).
- “But if we *walk* in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

- “And if thou wilt *walk* in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days” (1 Kings 3:14).
- “Yea, though I *walk* through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psalms 23:4).

The whole world walks through this life with much tribulation and suffering, but we have the truth, the blessing, the boldness, and access to the throne of Almighty God.

Jesus later told him (Peter) and the other disciples they would be seated on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28) *and have eternal life!* That's what I call a pay-off. Jesus said to them, “...Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matthew 19:28–29). W



Un-Christian!

Do others perceive you as “Christian”... or “Un-Christian”?

by Mike James



Mike James

I recently read a book titled *Un-Christian* by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons. The authors address a new research project describing the increasingly negative reputation of Christians, especially among young Americans, ages 18–29. This group of young Americans was referred to as the “Outsiders.” The research shows that Christians are better known for what they are against than what they are for. Christians should be cognizant of this, because talking more about what you are for than what you are against will bring less criticism. The six things

the research showed Christians most often being criticized for are hypocrisy, insincerity, contempt for homosexuals, being sheltered, being too political, and being too judgmental. By looking at why many “Outsiders” think this way, we may better be able to overcome these criticisms and be a light to unbelievers.

The book addresses hypocrisy in a couple ways, but it focuses on how young people perceive the term. A lot of the young people in the research perceived hypocrites as being two-faced or having double standards. If you say one thing and do another, you can be considered a hypocrite. The book states that part of the reason the young look at Christians as hypocritical is that many Christians lifestyles and perspectives are not that much different than the general population. For example, one study found Christians were just as likely to do one of the following over a 30-day period as non-Christians: view pornography, get drunk, consult a medium or psychic, fight someone, lie, or gossip. The reason the “Outsiders” see hypocrisy is because when asked what the most important thing Christians do in terms of their faith, the “Outsiders” say it is a Christian’s *lifestyle*—in other words, being good and not sinning. Notice what Jesus has to say about hypocrites in Matthew 23:13–29. Jesus was not happy with people who knew how to live life yet were not living the way they should. Keep in mind the people Jesus is speaking to here were the true believers in His society. In order to overcome this perception, we need to practice what we preach.

Another problem that young “Outsiders” have with Christians is that Christians seem too concerned with getting people “saved” or gaining converts. Unbelievers are made to feel like targets rather than people, and they wonder if Christians really care about them. One story in the book mentioned a young man who was invited to a Bible study by a Christian. The Christian remained friendly with the young man as long as he attended the Bible study. When he stopped attending, the Christian was no longer friendly with the man. These types of acts will lead others to look at us as only being concerned with making people convert to our way of thinking. Notice what it says in 2 Timothy 2:24–25. It tells Christians to be kind to everyone. Even with those who oppose us, we must gently instruct in the hopes God will bring them to repentance.

A third common perception that “Outsiders” had of Christians was that we are anti-homosexual. Of course the Bible is very clear that homosexuality is a sin, but do we place more emphasis on this sin than other sins? Does it seem to you like Christians speak out more against homosexuality than fornication or adultery? This is the perception of those in the “Outsiders” group. One gay man tells the story in the book about how when he was 14, he realized he was gay and felt the rejection from his church family at the time. The kids at his church called him “fag” or “queer.” The only place he did not feel rejection was from other homosexuals. This lifestyle went on for 20 years before he got back to Jesus again. It took 20 years of depression, drug addiction, and suicide attempts before he found his way back. He stated that even when he was a teenager, he didn’t want to leave church, but he felt he had to due to the rejection he encountered from Christians. During my years in the church, I have perceived that I have heard more anti-homosexual jokes and comments from church members than comments or jokes about other sexual sins. We need to be reminded what James says in James 1:26. We need to keep a tight rein on our tongues. We need to support people rather than tear them down, because we are all sinners in need of repentance.

The younger generation also has the perception that Christians are sheltered, old fashioned, or out of touch with reality. These perceptions

include the idea that we do not think for ourselves or that we are aloof and insulated. The “Outsiders” today think that life is too complicated to completely understand. Many Christians who attend church also attend a weekly Bible study or a church men’s or women’s group. A number of Christians today devote most of their free time to socializing with only like-minded people. This is not a bad thing, but it does cut them off from connecting with others. The Bible teaches that we need to be a holy people (1 Peter 1:15), but we are also told in Scripture to let our light shine in the world. God wants us to do good deeds in the world so that others will take notice (Matthew 5:13–16). Jesus is our example to follow, and He did not commune exclusively with like-minded believers. Jesus involved Himself with outcasts and sinners (Matthew 9:10–13). God wants us to be in the world, but not of the world (John 17:14–18), just like Jesus came to this world to be a part of it, but He did not allow the world to overcome Him and His purpose.

The fifth point the book addresses in how Christians are perceived by the younger generation, is that Christians are too political. In a survey conducted of young churchgoers, the question was asked to identify their best-known Christians. Anyone who came to mind could be included in their choices. Interestingly enough, George Bush received more votes (17 percent) than Jesus (7 percent). This might have something to do with why young adults who are not Christian think Christians are too political, when a political leader gets more votes for being Christian than Jesus. During my time in the *Church of God International*, I have perceived that some of us seem to be a little too political in our comments and jokes, too. I have heard some very negative things said about politicians church members don’t support. We need to be reminded of the words of James (James 2:12–13), that God will not be merciful to those who are not merciful. I don’t believe there is anything wrong with voting or supporting certain political views, but we need to understand that no man will be able to solve our problems or fix our society. Only the return of Jesus will do that. Finally, whatever your political point of view, remember that God’s Word tells us to pray for our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1–3) no matter who they are. Remember God has allowed them to be leaders.

The final point the book raises in regard to issues young adults have with Christians, is that we are too judgmental. They lament that we just don’t listen to them. Being judgmental in this sense is when you point out something that is wrong in someone else’s life, making that person feel put down or marginalized. Sometimes being judgmental is fueled by self-righteousness. Once again, as Christians, we need to make those around us aware of what sin is and what the Bible says about it, but how we do that can make a big difference in whether people see us as judgmental or just providing our opinion.

The Bible has much to say about judgment, and we should heed those words. For example, 1 Corinthians 5:12 says we need to judge those within the church rather than those outside. Jesus was more about compassion than retribution (John 8:7–11). It is true that God wants us to do what is right (Romans 1:18), but we all do wrong, and as God is kind and patient with us, we should be kind and patient with others (Romans 2:1–4). The book brings up some good ideas for being less judgmental. These ideas include listening, not labeling (pagan, Sunday-keeper, independent churchgoer, etc.), don’t act all knowing, put yourself in other peoples’ shoes, be real (don’t try and make every conversation about God), be a friend with no other motives. One way to lose your judgment is to be friends with the poor, the homosexuals, atheists, and criminals.

So how can we be a better light to our younger generation, which seems to be drifting further away from Christianity than previous generations? We need to be like Jesus. We need to provide service, sacrifice, humility, and grace to all we meet and come in contact with. We need to understand that all of these perceptions addressed in this article may not be true of all of us, but we need to be open to investigating criticism and trying to learn from it. The Russian writer Dostoyevsky wrote that grace heals our vision, that it lets us love people by seeing them as God intended them to be. That is how we need to deal with people with love, as if they were our very children or family members.

Judgment, continued from page 1

not dream of using coarse language, but would not lift a finger to help a neighbor in need?

When I was in grade school, there was a girl the other kids would laugh at, holding their noses and making crude references to her smell. She had a horrible body odor. We thought she was “poor white trash” and did not take a bath. We thought that until our teachers told us she had a condition called *bromhidrosis*. She would take multiple showers every day, even during school hours in the girls’ locker room. She had no control over her body odor. That child may have been a wonderful person, but her smell prompted all of us to push her aside.

We are told by those in a position to know that Howard Hughes was filthy, had long, unkempt hair, and had claw-like fingernails during the last several years of his life. If you had seen him on the street, would you have guessed that he was a multi-billionaire—one of the richest men on the planet?

It has not been that long ago that a frumpy, overweight, hair-tossed, 40-something lady walked out onto the stage of a British talent show and told the judges and the audience that she was going to sing *I Dreamed a Dream* from *Les Miserables*. Everyone laughed, the judges rolled their eyes, and then she began to sing. To the astonishment of all, it turned out that Susan Boyle had the voice of an angel. She has gone on to produce an album, which will probably sell millions of copies.

Abraham Lincoln is widely regarded as our greatest president. Even so, how would he fare as a candidate for that office in *our* time? He had virtually no formal education, and was ugly as dirt. Would he even have a *chance* in the United States of today?

After it became plain that Saul had failed as king of Israel, God sent Samuel to anoint a new king from among Jesse’s sons. When Samuel saw Eliab, he thought he would be the one. To him, Eliab *looked* like a king (1 Samuel 16:1–6). “But the LORD said unto Samuel, *Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart*” (1 Samuel 16:7). In fact, all of Jesse’s elder sons passed before Samuel, but the Lord did not choose any of them. God had chosen the youngest son, David, who was out tending the sheep (1 Samuel 16:8–13). Think about that; Samuel chose someone using his human senses—but God chose someone by looking at the heart.

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If you had been living in 31 A.D., would you have recognized the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God? He was not wealthy. He was a carpenter. He was an average Jew, living in what was then an insignificant province of the Roman Empire. Scripture says, “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2, NIV [and for remainder of article]). Would you have recognized your Lord and Savior? What does that scripture mean, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...” (John 6:44)? Brethren, our natural human judgment is impaired. Our five senses are not sufficient to the task of evaluating what is good and what is bad. The answer to my question should be plain to all of us by now: *you would not have recognized Jesus as the Christ*—not unless God had miraculously revealed Him to you!

Christ once asked His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” They replied with various names of different prophets (Matthew 16:13–14). “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, *for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my father in heaven*” (Matthew 16:15–17). It took a divine miracle to reveal the Christ to Simon Peter, and it takes a divine miracle to reveal Him to *your* mind as well. The natural human mind is operating with impaired judgment. Without the aid of God’s Holy Spirit, you and I would be in the crowd shouting, “Away with him, crucify him!”

Remember what Isaiah prophesied about Christ Himself? He said, “He will not judge by what he *sees* with his eyes, or decide by what he *hears* with his ears; but with *righteousness* he will judge the needy, with *justice* he will give decisions for the poor of the earth” (Isaiah 11:3–4). I ask you again to compare how *we* evaluate things and people with how *God* evaluates them.

Do we not rely on those five senses I mentioned at the beginning? Does

that not come natural to us? We are impressed with a nice house or car, a large bank account, a good job, a private jet, fine crystal, etc. We admire people with pretty faces, good speaking voices, power and authority. Nevertheless, God’s way is the *opposite* of that way of looking at things. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8).

Before they had received God’s Spirit, while Christ was still walking the earth as a human, some of His disciples wanted to occupy the top positions in His government (Mark 10:35–37). Notice, however, what He said to them: “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42–45). What was Christ’s example? He took a towel and washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:1–17).

God does not look at wealth, power, and beauty in the same way we humans do. God is love, and to Him those things (wealth, power, and beauty) are tools to serve, to give, and to help others. God is the wealthiest and most powerful being in the universe, and He wants to share, give, and serve His children. In our world, we say someone who puts him/herself forward, who takes command and is decisive—such an individual is a leader. That is how we look at leadership. Even so, God will never allow

anyone to give orders who cannot take them. Paul told the saints at Philippi: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: “Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:3–8)!

God has chosen and called us to be kings and priests in His Kingdom. He looked at you and me, and He saw the heart of a servant. “I can work with this one—I can make this one into the kind of leader I want,” He must have said. Even so, the world sees something very different when it looks at us Christians. “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise *by human standards*; not many were influential [in this world]; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things *of the world* [the way the natural human mind looks at it] to shame the wise; God chose the weak things *of the world* to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things *of this world* and the despised things [by this world]—and the things that are not [the way the world looks at it]—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him” (1 Corinthians 1:26–29). We value beauty, wealth, power, intellect, pedigree, and athletic prowess when we evaluate ourselves and each other; but God values other things.

Christ once said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34). What do you place a premium on? What do you value? What is important to you? What do you consider worthwhile and valuable? Houses, cars, and jobs are no more gods than those little stone and wooden statues of three thousand years ago were. It is in the laboratory of our minds where things are turned into idols.

Even in our natural state, we understand on some level that our reasoning is flawed. We have those old sayings, “All that glitters is not gold” and “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” Yet, the natural mind is unable to get past this type of judgment. It takes God’s Holy Spirit to correct the impressions we derive from our senses. Christ said, “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment” (John 7:24).

Brethren, we have work to do. When you look at yourself, when you take inventory, when you look at other people, appeal to God’s leadership. Look to the voice of the Holy Spirit within you. Do not just rely on what you can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel. Dig deeper, put on the mind of Christ, and attempt to overcome your impaired judgment.

W



Dust to Dust: the Essence of Love

"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" (Romans 12:1).

by Jean Jantzen



Jean Jantzen

What does Paul mean by presenting your body as a "living sacrifice"?

Back to back, these words are a contradiction. We understand one to mean life, the other death. But "sacrifice," from a Middle English verb, means "to make sacred," from Old French, from Latin *sacrificium*: *sacr*, "sacred" + *facere*, "to make" (Wikipedia).

The Hebrew word for sacrifice (*korban* or *lehakriv*) is from the same root as "to come near, to approach...to become closely involved in a relationship with

someone." There is no word in the English language that can adequately render the idea behind the Hebrew word *korban* (*A House of Prayer of All Nations*, Chaim Richmond).

The first we read about this kind of biblical event is in Genesis, when Abraham was commanded by God to give his son Isaac as an offering. Both had something to lose. Both had something to give: one his son, the other his life. But it was Isaac who presented himself as a living sacrifice. Isaac was obedient and submissive to his father. When Abraham took the knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord called unto him,

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad..." (Genesis 22:12).

The apostle Paul had this to say about this event: "By faith, Abraham, at the time of testing, offered Isaac back to God. Acting in faith, he was as ready to return the promised son, his only son, as he had been to receive him—and this after he had already been told, 'Your descendants shall come from Isaac.' Abraham figured that if God wanted to, he could raise the dead. In a sense, that's what happened when he received Isaac back, alive from off the altar. By an act of faith, Isaac reached into the future as he blessed Jacob and Esau" (Hebrews 11:17–20, *The Message Bible*). Abraham had built such a close relationship with God, he trusted Him with the life of his son.

James adds his thoughts concerning how faith and works justify a person as righteous before God: "You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did" (James 2:20–22, NIV).

We also read of Jephthah's rash vow of offering a sacrifice to God (even if well meaning): "Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:31).

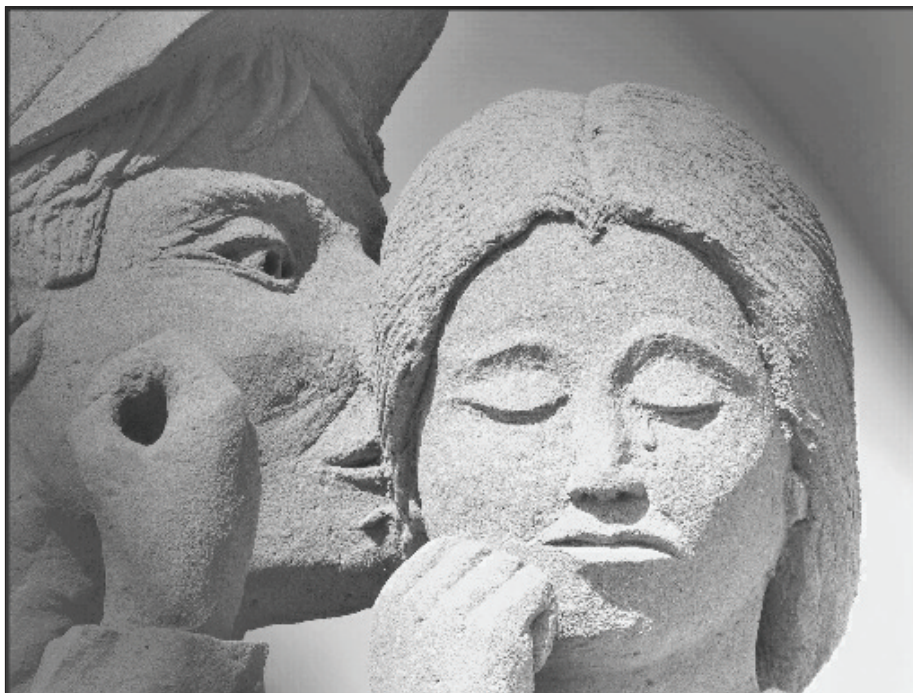
Eastern custom teaches us that an unmarried maiden is a disgrace not only to the girl herself but also to the family; An unwed daughter indicates that a curse of God is on the family. Often such parents give these maidens as servants to serve at the temples for the rest of their lives. But before the young lady is committed, the maiden vacations in the mountains with relatives and a few close friends and together they have consecration ceremonies for two months, bewailing her virginity—that is, lamenting the fact she did not marry and produce offspring. Then the maiden bids farewell to all her relatives and friends. Once the girl enters into the service of the temple, she cannot be released to go back to her

friends, relatives nor parents... The total commitment of his only daughter to God's service was Jephthah's burnt offering (The Word's Way Studies in Abundant Living by Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille, American Christian Press, 1973). The daughter humbled herself under the father's hand, and in obedience to his vow became a living sacrifice.

We, too, can sacrifice by meditating, praying, fasting, loving our enemies, making peace, giving thanks, and offering praise. God tells us quite frankly that humility is a significant part of our sacrifice, for without it we cannot please God, for we are told: "...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2).

Etymology of the word "humble": from *humilis*, "on the ground, low," from *humus*, "the earth, ground." If you take a walk through the forest, the ground is covered in humus, that layer of decomposing leaves. So the lowly meaning of *humble* is "seen as being as low as the ground" (*Podictionary*).

"When people manage the recycling of organic matter, the process is called composting. Often this activity involves putting organic refuse (such as leaves, lawn clippings, and garbage) into a compost pile, where the materials decompose. The resulting compost (humus) can be used as a soil conditioner, and as a source of plant nutrients" (Spurgeon, R., *Ecology, Usborne Science and Experiments*, EDC Publishing, Tulsa, OK, 1988, *Building a Compost Heap*, pg. 38).



So what can we learn from this analogy? What does compost have to do with being humble? Everything! Humus or organic matter is living matter, and in its humble attitude or state, it is something that sacrifices itself—in other words, it dies—decomposes—changes composition, if you will—and in the process gives itself up in order to serve others (John 12:24–25; Matthew 10:39). To give life to other plants, animals, and humans, it gives its own life through its humble service.

This allows a deeper understanding of Romans 12, where Paul encourages us to become a living sacrifice like that of humus. Sometimes we forget our humble beginnings—how God made us out of the lowest part of the earth, "dust" or "humus" (Genesis 3:19). But our "dust" needs to be improved—to become like compost, or that organic part of the soil that is the most necessary part, which imparts life to others by its continual sacrifice. This is the type of sacrifice God wants from us.

Ruth is another example of a living sacrifice. Ruth lived in the land of Moab and had married one of Naomi's sons, who later died. Ruth did not bear any of his children. She had no further obligations to serve her mother-in-law. Naomi, after losing her husband and sons, was going back home to another country, another way of life. Naomi was not of the same religion as Ruth. But Ruth displayed an unusual attitude.

"Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge: Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried" (Ruth 1:16–17).

Ruth, in her humility, went back to the soil, so to speak, to work in the fields—giving herself in service to another human being. Like the humus or compost, her living sacrifice provided sustenance or life to another. Without Ruth, Naomi would have had a difficult time obtaining food. We can learn from these examples that sacrifice is the essence of love, like our heavenly Father. We are also made sacred (by God) through our action of becoming a living sacrifice. Ruth was blessed by her actions, and in the future, we will be blessed also.

Winning the Game of Life

*"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).
"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain" (1 Corinthians 9:24).*

by Ronald Bachner



Ronald Bachner

Do you feel like you are losing ground in this world? Do you feel at times you are losing at the game of life? Have you asked yourself what is going on in this world around you? Do you know the rules of life? Are there rules? Are you living by them, or living by any rules?

These are questions we ask ourselves. They are very important questions we must consider during our lives. The most important question we must ask is, *How do I know I am winning the game of life?*

I write this article because I have found and observed in my life over the past many years that in this world we find ourselves battling or participating in the games of life on an everyday basis. The games of life, or *in* life for that matter, are many and numerous. They seep into our lives over time and at many levels, both knowingly and unknowingly. We are aware of some, but many just take root without us even knowing it until they begin to affect us. By now you might be wondering what I mean when I say the "games of life."

We are talking about the rules of the many games we play to survive in the many environments we find ourselves in on a daily or regular basis. It is the constant adjustments or changes we make to stay on course and to counteract what we observe is taking place in our families, at our place of work, from our government leaders, in the daily business world, from our friends, from many religious leaders in this world, and in many other situations. It is often called "office politics" in the work environment. It is also the adjustments you make to keep relationships. It is the policies of governments that you know are wrong and failing this world, and are failing you, but forcing you to be a part of their world at least to some degree. It is many things, but you do many of these things to please others, to maintain peace, to be a team member, to keep your job, and so on.

I hope the above gives you a little understanding of what I mean by the "games of life" we encounter on a daily basis. I am not suggesting any of these things are wrong—I'm just saying we can become more involved in these things to the point we may lose focus on what is the most *important* game in life. At some point or level, each of us makes rules and observations for ourselves so we can survive or deal with the many different people, views, rules, opinions, laws, and policies that we must comply with or that we perceive are important to us. In the games of life, it seems the rules are always changing, or you can't keep them straight. It's hard to win when rules are always changing. If you are feeling the pressures of life, it is because often, it seems, everyone wants to control you and make you into something they want you to be. The poet E. E. Cummings is quoted as saying, "To be nobody but yourself in a world which is doing its best night and day to make you everyone else, means to fight the hardest battle any human being can fight and never stop fighting."

This is what we as flesh-and-blood Christians are confronted with everyday. If you're playing on an uneven playing field, it is difficult to win when the rules are ever changing and dictated by others whose intentions are unclear. It is a game you and those around you have to play to survive. While this is the world we live in, there is a game in which the rules are clear and the rewards lifesaving. This is a game or *gift* of life, which you win. Are you willing to accept this gift and play in this game where you win? It is the only game with a playing field that is worth playing on and participating in. It is the only one I have found in my life that I knew when playing, I was winning. When you play by the rules of this game, you will find yourself winning the games played in your everyday life. The Rule Book is in writing, and never changes. It comes with a guarantee.

If you are in doubt what this game is, let me explain it now. It is God's plan for your life. This plan is laid out in your Bible, which is the "Rule Book" for your life. The change for you begins when you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and His blood sacrifice on the cross for your sins. In this game, the playing field is even. God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ teach you how to deal with daily life and its many aspects. For me and many others, the more I make choices for God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, the less I am concerned with the games of life described above and which surround us. I have learned over a long period of time to see the net result of when I am focused on God and when I am just trying to survive in this human world with the many different games being played. Under close scrutiny and focus, I can go where the hand of God has carried me and made my life easier, and has opened my heart and drawn me closer to Him. I urge the reader to learn and conform to God's plan for his or her life by praying for guidance and following God's direction. The more you learn and live by the lessons of the Bible, the more you will find you do not have to develop different ways of reacting to the different games being played around you. After a while, you will look back and see how God and Jesus Christ have changed your life, because you have learned to follow God's Word and direction. You will see His hand in your life. It is the only game where I can

know what the score is, and I have no competition except with myself, as God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). The promises or gifts of the Bible can be yours just as easily as they can be anyone else's. While change will not happen overnight, and there will still be difficult times when you will have to rely on your faith, it is the only playing field where the outcome is assured if you choose to play. You will soon be making the right choices without even thinking about it. As many of your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ can attest, your life will become more peaceful and rewarding.

During this coming *Passover* festival, commit yourself to focusing on the promises of God and Jesus Christ, and play in a game that has more rewards than the games of everyday life. You do not want to look back and realize you spent more time engaged in life's distractions than the plan for your life. If you choose to follow God and Jesus Christ more in your daily decisions, and continue growing in faith and putting on the armor of God (Ephesians 10:13), you are assured victory in the only game of life that counts. W



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Big, Fat Religious Lies— Who Can You Believe?

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

If you are a sincere seeker of truth, you've undoubtedly been told a host of big, fat, religious lies! For example:

- If you've ever walked into a "Christian" bookstore.
- If you've ever read any one of the many popular religious magazines.
- If you've ever bought the latest best-selling religious "health and wealth, name it and claim it" book.

- If you've ever watched Sunday morning TV and listened to a charismatic preacher—man or woman—preach about an amazing new way to get close to God.
- If you've ever surfed the web for information about God, the Bible, or the Ten Commandments.

Let's face it, if you've ever done ANY of these things, then the odds are extremely high that *you* have been told many big, fat religious lies!

We have all seen it: multitudes of people are encouraged to send the preacher "seed money" to guarantee financial success that, somehow, despite glowing and sometimes dishonest "testimonials," just didn't seem to "work out." Adherents begin to wonder if there is something wrong with them, or worse, is there something wrong with God—is God fair? The sender inevitably becomes poorer and poorer while the recipient becomes fabulously rich.

Well does 2 Peter 2:3 declare, "And *through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you*: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not!" God does not reward us for being gullible!

Honest information about God, the Bible, and true doctrine is harder to come by than a hammer in a glass factory. Nearly everyone has been lied to, misled, or deceived at one time or another. Truly, Satan has the whole world deceived (Revelation 12:9)! The Bible goes on to say of false ministers and religious hucksters, "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* [Yes, Satan has many false ministers, masquerading as righteous ministers!] also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). Whether such "men of the cloth" are purposely deceiving their flocks, or if they, themselves, are genuinely deceived, God is the judge. We are commanded, "Beloved, believe NOT every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

To successfully navigate through today's jungle of misleading and conflicting information, we must reason like a savvy and discriminating consumer. The aim of this short article is to be a basic guide to help you find your way out of this religious morass of confusion.

There are several reasons why it's so difficult to find truthful information today:

Who, what is your Ultimate Authority?

1) Religion is Big Business

"Religion" is currently a multi-billion dollar industry in the United States and Europe today. Although most might be "sincere" in their beliefs, sincerity is no criteria for truth. Satan himself is no doubt "sincere" in his efforts, but he is sincerely wrong! With so much at stake, unscrupulous religious marketers will tell you just about anything—even outright *lies*—to get you to follow them, donate to them, and procure their products via a "love offering," as they make merchandise of God's people.

- Unrealistic expectations of health and wealth are made.

- Near-miraculous results without effort or hard work are promised.
- Expensive masses are offered to shorten duration of departed loved ones in purgatory.
- Tithing and the giving of offerings are presented as magic bullets to get you out of debt.

And that's just the beginning.

*A text without a
context is a pretext*

2) Total Information Overload

Since the electronic age has arrived, lack of information is not a problem any more. In fact, the problem these days is *TMI*—too *much* information. Your time is your life. It has been rightly said, "If the devil can't get at you any other way, he'll use up all your time."

When visiting the average Christian bookstore, you will find that comparatively few Bibles and Bible helps fill bookstore shelves; but you will find hundreds, perhaps thousands of inspirational "touchy-feely" books, and Christian fiction. Authors claim unbelievable results if you will only buy *their* book. Additionally, dozens of magazines clutter the mail every month.

To top it all off, the explosion of the Internet is adding to this "info-jungle" at an exponential rate. As of this writing, there are 469,000,000 web pages indexed on Google under "God," 119,000,000 under "Bible," and 61,400,000 sites under "doctrine." Surely all these differing views can't be right! No wonder people are confused!

Where does one even begin? Unfortunately, more often than not, most people do not even begin to prove things for themselves because information overload leads to "paralysis by analysis." Instead, people tend to settle for a version of "truth" that agrees with their preconceived or traditional upbringing—what they *want* to believe anyway.

3) Conflicting Authorities

Not surprisingly, not even the experts can agree with one another! One evangelist declares, "I *know* I am going to heaven!" while another says, "No man is going to heaven." One authority claims sinners will burn forever in an ever-burning hellfire, while another says the dead know nothing. One church organization claims, "We are the one-and-only true church," while another retorts, "No, *we* are the one-and-only true church!" One says God is a three-in-one trinity, while others claim God is a Family and the trinity doctrine is borrowed from paganism. Who is right? Can anyone really know? Christ asked, "And why *call* ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)?

Let's face it—most Americans today are abysmally ignorant of the Bible. The Bible is maligned and ridiculed by skeptics, the media, and the classroom. Many "man on the street" interviews reveal that most cannot even name the first four gospels of the New Testament! Few can name even three of the Ten Commandments. Almost none can name all ten in order. Is it any wonder so many blindly trust in whoever seems to be a religious leader?

4) Humanism

The word "humanism" has a number of meanings, and because authors and speakers often don't clarify which meaning they intend, those trying to explain humanism can easily become a source of confusion.

Generally speaking, the philosophy of humanism, so popular in today's culture, is a strain of ethical theory and practice that elevates reason, scientific inquiry, and human fulfillment in the natural world apart from belief and obedience to God. Humanism is the belief that given enough time and resources, man can solve all his own problems, apart from God. Humanism becomes the "eye-glasses" through which people view the world.

In short, humanism is idolatry. It is replacing God with *man* and human reasoning. The Word of God says, however, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean *not* unto your *own* understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). Jeremiah added, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not *in* himself: it is not *in* man who walks to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Few seem to realize the devil is at least a thousand times more powerful and clever than any modern scholar gives him credit for being. One of the devil’s cleverest disguises is to convince men that he does not even exist. He has, in fact, deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9)! Our worldly system of things has convinced men that what alleged authorities have said about the Bible is considered to be of more importance than the Bible itself.

5) Cognitive Dissonance

People become confused over what psychologists call *cognitive dissonance*—trying to believe two opposite, conflicting authorities. The result is disorientation and confusion, with people often doubting themselves and their ability to discover truth. Many become agnostic, reasoning, *how can anyone really know the truth?* The unconscious result, then, is to establish a *third* authority, *the opinion of the hearer*. The seeker of truth then raises himself up as judge and jury to determine for *himself* which of the previous two authorities he will give credence to. The powers and influences of this world are geared to lead the unsuspecting to maximum uncertainty relative to absolute authority. People, torn by conflicting alternate authorities, thus wind up with *no* authority but tradition and their own opinion! Is it any wonder the world, apart from God’s Word, is uncertain, confused, and deceived?

The first question ever raised in the Bible was asked by Satan the devil as he began putting doubts into the minds of our first parents. He uses the same tactic today. He raises doubts about what God said. “Yea, *hath* God said?” (Genesis 3:1) he asked, followed by a lie, “You shall not surely die” (verse 4), and then the added half-truth, “For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (verse 5).

All apostasy begins with questioning God’s Word—what God *said*—by raising up a *second* authority equal to or superior to it. Who was mother Eve to believe, God or the serpent? Then began the world’s first “scientific experiment” to find new truth apart from what God plainly said. This experiment, which failed abysmally, has led to the downfall of mankind ever since! Faith—believing what God says is so—is scoffed at today as being “unscientific” and “superstitious.”

The real issue is, *who, what* is your ultimate authority? This question has always been and always will be, whether in the home, the government, the military, the media, or the church.

With this in mind, we must again ask ourselves, who—what—is *my* ultimate authority? Is it tradition, my own opinion, some man, some organization of men—or is it the divinely inspired Word of God, the Bible?

Well did Elijah say, “How long do you halt between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

So how do we bypass the marketing lies of the competing religious organizations? How do we cut through the information jungle? How do we sort through the conflicting opinions and big, fat religious lies?

How Can You Be Sure?

The answer lies solely in your own Bible. The *Amplified Bible* reads, “If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine (is disloyal to what Jesus Christ taught), do not receive him—do not accept him, do not welcome *or* admit him—into [your] house or bid him Godspeed *or* give him any encouragement” (2 John 10). Yes, God’s Word, the Bible—the Book nearly everyone has access to, but few read, and still fewer choose to obey—will expose the cover-ups, dispel the myths, uncover the scams, and reveal the truth about false preachers.

Truth has never been popular (Romans 1:22–22). When all is said and done, most people choose to believe what they *want* to believe, even if it means wresting the Scriptures to mean what they *want* them to mean (2 Peter 3:15). As one wit once put it, “Most folks have minds like concrete: all mixed up and permanently set.” Because of the vast amount of misinformation in the religious business today, reaching people’s minds with the true gospel is becoming increasingly difficult to the degree Christ Himself asked, “Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith [belief in what God says] on the earth” (Luke 18:8)?

Before we can effectively begin to learn the truth about the true Gospel, we must first un-learn all the rumors, myths, and, yes, outright lies. It only makes sense that, if all these competing religions claim to be the “one-and-

only” true church, or at least a “valid” church, we should turn to the alleged source of their beliefs: the Holy Bible itself!

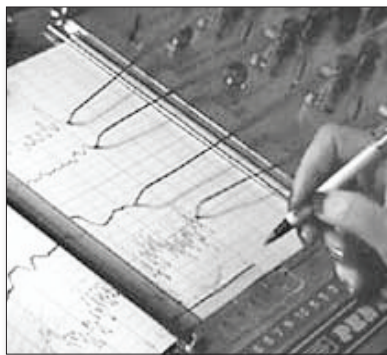
Are you, dear reader, one of the millions who take their beliefs for granted—non-thinkingly going along with whatever you were taught by others?—or are you seriously motivated to faithfully follow Jesus Christ wherever He leads you? Nothing can be more important! Your very eternity may be at stake!

Hopefully, the question will naturally come to mind: “How can I be sure? How do I know you—the *Church of God International*—are not just another religious ‘huckster’ organization competing for my allegiance or my money?” We’re glad you asked!

Answer: You don’t—*UNLESS* you blow the dust off your Bible and prove all things for yourself. Don’t believe us—*believe your own Bible!* 1 Thessalonians 5:21 says, “Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good.” Sound advice! This implies, if something is *not* good and true, let it go—get rid of it—and cling to the truth.

It is a common humanistic saying that, “You can prove *anything* by the Bible!” This would appear to be true *if* one hunts for isolated scriptures to supposedly back up what one already wants to believe. This is called “proof-texting,” to try to validate what you already want the Bible to say. But it is blatantly *false* if you gather *all* the scriptures addressing a particular subject, putting them all together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle! How true that a *text* without a *context* is a *pretext*! We invite you to send for our booklet—especially prepared for you—*How To Study Your Bible*, which contains common sense guides on *How and Why to Study Your Bible*, and

Can We Study the Scriptures for Ourselves? along with ten points on *How to Study Your Bible for All It’s Worth*. There’s a chapter on *How to Avoid Common Mistakes* many make in reading or studying their Bibles. There is even a chapter telling you *How to Mark Your Bible*, and a unique *Daily Bible Reading Schedule* to read your Bible through in a year starting at *any* date of the year. It’s FREE for the asking.



Man’s lie detector



God’s lie detector

Counterfeit or Genuine?

It is interesting to note that people working in the Treasury Department learn to spot counterfeit money, not by studying all the variations of counterfeit money, but by intently studying *the real thing*. Then, once educated, the counterfeit currency stands out like a cat at a dog convention!

The same is true of spotting false doctrine and big, fat, religious lies: once you understand the truth from your own Bible, the lies, hypocrisy, and false doctrine dissolve away and become glaringly evident.

“For all those things has my hand made, and all those things have been, says the LORD: but to *this* man will I look [take note!], even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word” (Isaiah 66:2).

To further your investigation into the truth, we also invite you to enroll in our free *Home Bible Study Course*. We are currently up to 15 lessons. Each lesson delves deeply into the major doctrines of the Bible. In essence, it addresses various doctrinal issues, and then tells you where to find the answers *in your own Bible*. Once you have proven these truths *from your own Bible*, you will instantly be able to spot a scam, a false doctrine, or a vain tradition, and you’ll know without hesitation if you are being fed a “big, fat religious lie” on such topics as the Ten Commandments, heaven, hell, the trinity, immortality of the soul, law versus grace, Saturday versus Sunday, and much, much more.

We also encourage you to tune in regularly to the *Armor of God* television program. If it is not available in your area, you can easily view it by visiting our web site at www.cgi.org. We invite you to view our videos and download our sermons and literature. *CHECK UP ON US! Prove* whether or not what we say is right out of your own Bible (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

May God be with you as you search His Word and follow and obey Him.

W

**“Prove all things; hold fast
that which is good.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:21)**

Church News

Buckaroo Bob and His Buckeroos



The first Sabbath of February 2010 in the Tyler CGI congregation started with a special puppet show featuring Buckaroo Bob's Neighborhood.

Buckaroo Bob, played by Wes White, and his gang—Suzy Q (Karen Weese), Dr. Nelson (Kim Skelton), Yankee Dan (Wes White), and Miss Nancy (Nancy White)—taught the kids, big and small, that it is not nice to say one thing and do another, as Yankee Dan deceptively tried to trick Buckaroo Bob into toilet papering Dr. Nelson's house. "Stop lying, and tell the truth instead!" was the saying for the day.

After the puppet show, Brent Kern delivered a great sermon on how the things we say, which can get us in trouble, reflect what's in our hearts.

Following the Sabbath service, twelve pots of chili were lined up on the buffet. Angie Geddes supervised three judges (Jack McPherson, Ronnie Sharp, and Mae Billingslea), and the competition began. The winners of the annual chili cook-off were as follows: 1st Place, Faye Brown; 2nd Place, Lisa McComb; and 3rd Place, Nancy White. We are all looking forward to our next chili cook-off. What a *great* Sabbath!

W

Submitted by Lisa McComb

Church of God International Chili Cook-off

And the Winner Is...



The Tyler, TX congregation (CGI) had a Chili Cook-off on February 6. First place went to Faye Brown (center). Lisa McComb (right) was second place winner, and Nancy White (left) took third place.

W

Wedding Bells!



And the LORD God said,
"It is not good that
the man should
be alone!"



On October 1, 2009, Caleb Collins married his beautiful fiancée, Lele Hong, in Lakeland, Florida. They were blessed to spend their honeymoon at the Feast of Tabernacles in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The newlyweds make their home in Auburndale, Florida.



Church News

Baptism in Sainte-Justine-de-Newton, Quebec



Above and Below: André Régner is congratulated by members of the Ottawa church family.



Landon Palmatier, Elizabeth Udell, Katelyn Palmatier



Pictured are members of the Ottawa congregation:

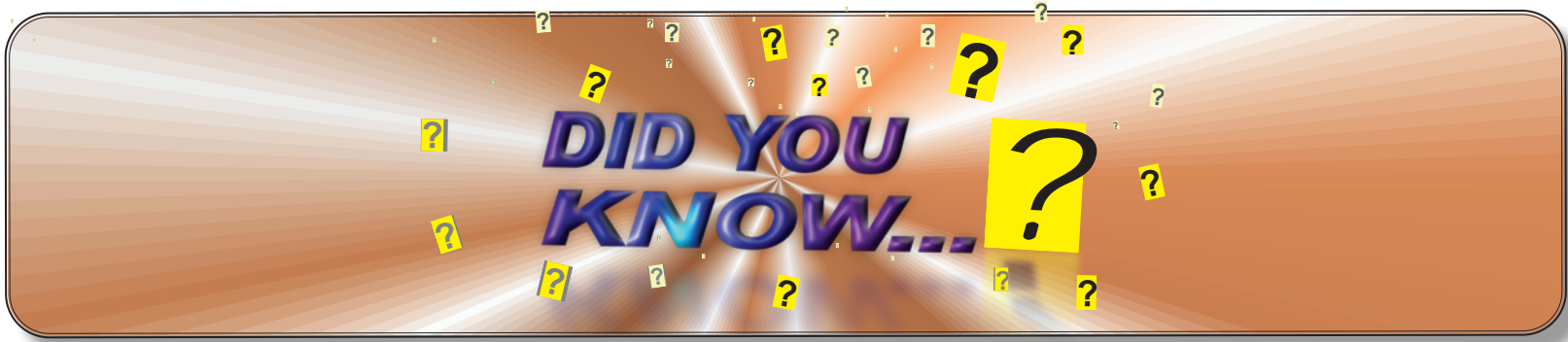
Front Row: Claire McCallum, Monique Dagenais, Landon Palmatier, Andre Regnier, Katelyn Palmatier
Second Row – David Townson, Margaret Tourond-Townson, Bob Dagenais, Doris Schafer, Lissa Palmatier, Elizabeth Udell, Dan Udell
Back Row – Lloyd Myers, Jim French

Sabbath, November 21 was a very special day for the CGI congregation in Ottawa! A baptism is always a time for rejoicing, and this was no exception! André Régner came ready to covenant with God publicly what he had already chosen—total surrender to God in the waters of baptism. Murray Palmatier, assisted by Jim French, performed the baptism in the Palmatier's home in Sainte-Justine-de-Newton, Quebec, near the Ontario border. Everyone wished André God's blessings at such an inspiring occasion. After the baptism, the 15 members of the Ottawa congregation enjoyed a Sabbath service followed by a lovely potluck meal and much fellowship. What a beautiful way to spend the Sabbath and welcome winter to our region together!

It was a relaxing and happy time spent in the company of brothers and sisters in Christ. W

Submitted by Margarat Touron-Townson

Repent,
 and be baptized every one
 of you in the name of Jesus
 Christ for the remission of
 sins, and ye shall receive
 the gift of the Holy Ghost!
 (Acts 2:38)



- “I am” is the shortest complete sentence in the English language.
- “Amen” is the same in more languages than any other word. “Taxi” is second.
- Without excuse? Sixty percent of atheists and agnostics say they own at least one Bible.
- The world has been at peace only eight percent of the time over the last 3,300 years.
- Percentage of American men who say they would marry the same woman if they had it to do all over again: 80 percent.
- Half of all crimes are committed by people under the age of 18.
- A typical child sees 80,000 TV commercials by the age of 16.
- First novel ever written on a typewriter: *Tom Sawyer*.
- “Battle Hymn of the Republic” was written by Julia Ward Howe. She sold the rights for \$5.00.
- The average adult eats over 2,000 pounds of food each year.
- The name “Jeep” came from the abbreviation used in the Army for the “General Purpose” vehicle, G.P.
- Your kidneys, weighing about 5 ounces each, process about 425 gallons of blood a day.
- At last count, there are 34 bathrooms in the White House.
- The word “millionaire” was first used by Benjamin Disraeli in his 1826 novel, *Vivian Grey*.
- Eleven percent of the planet—5.8 million square miles—is covered by glaciers.
- Ice covers about 15 percent of the earth’s land mass.
- Israel is one-fourth the size of Maine.
- No “only child” has ever been elected U.S. President.
- The earth weighs an estimated 100,000 tons more than it did one year ago today.
- George Washington’s second inaugural address was the shortest, at just 135 words,
- The most common first name in the world: Mohammad. Most common last name: Chan.
- Remember when: 30 million years ago, there were palm trees in Alaska.



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