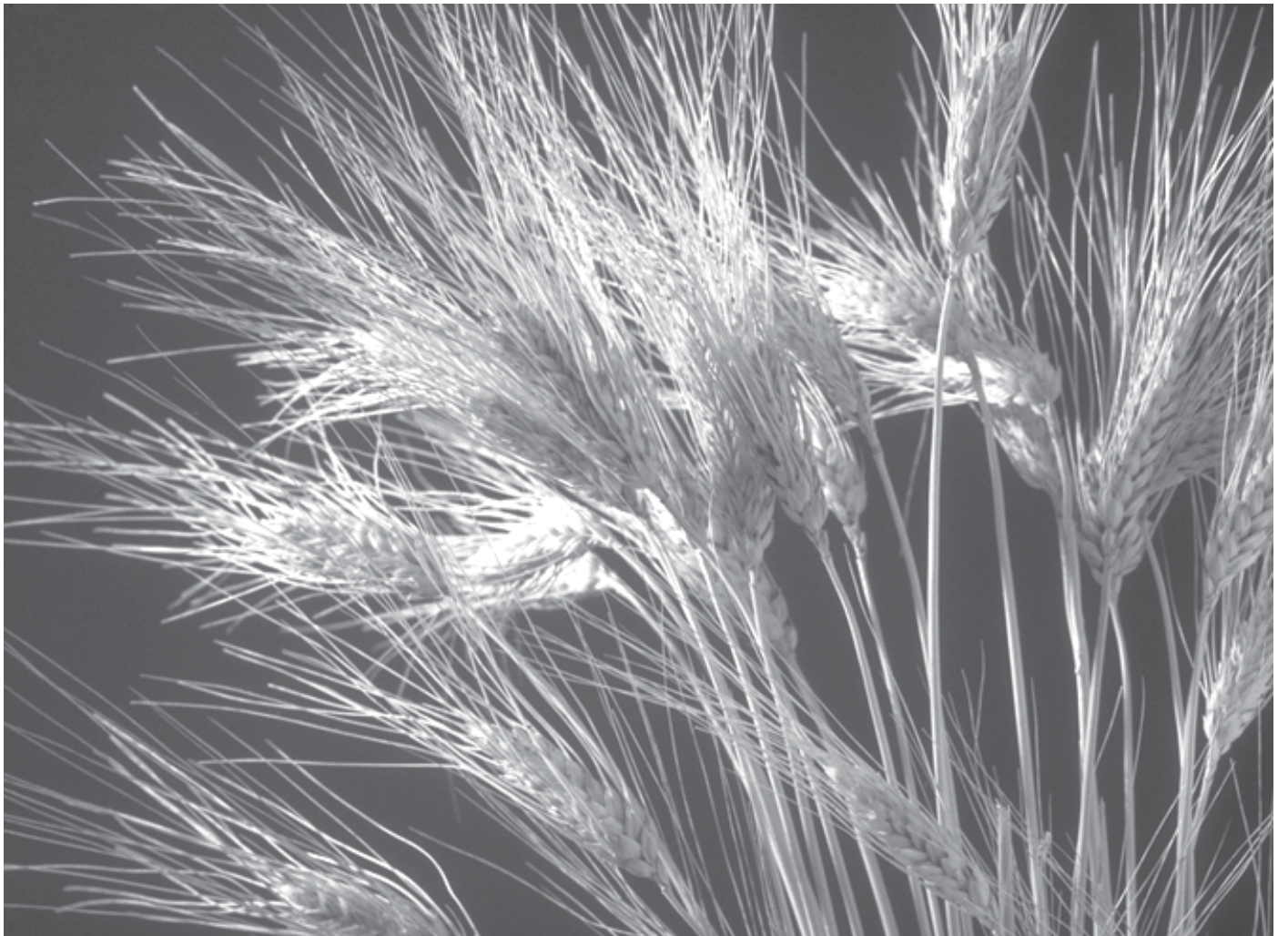


Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

THE HARVEST OF FIRSTFRUITS



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Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

May 1996

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About Our Cover:

The late spring holy day of Pentecost falls at the end of the early harvest of grains like wheat. This festival depicts the spiritual harvest of the firstfruits of the children of God! It also commemorates the founding of the church in AD 31 when God sent His Holy Spirit to Christ's disciples in Jerusalem. (Proclaim Communications)

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All in All

Branded upon our minds is the idea that I Corinthians 15 is the “resurrection” chapter, and indeed resurrection is its major theme. However, the apostle Paul inserts other important ideas into this inspiring chapter. As important as it is to us and to God’s purpose, the resurrection is just another step contained within a concept suggested in the phrase, “that God may be all in all” (verse 28).

“All in all” has much to do with Pentecost and with oneness. It alludes to a time when all human beings will not only be reconciled to God, but everything in His awesome creation will be in total agreement and harmony with Him—as well as with each other!

This time is the complete restitution of all things, the conclusion of the work of Jesus Christ. It is the culmination of the new creation, the spiritual one begun in Christ. In the center, as the focus and the cause of the oneness, is God the Father. Verse 28, picturing Jesus turning over all things to His Father, is the exclamation point that draws our attention to the Father.

Christ’s reign will and must continue until every enemy has been conquered, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For the rule and authority over all things has been given to Christ by His Father. But in that quotation, “All things are put under Him,” it is self-evident that God, who reduced everything to subjection, is not included. When Christ has finally won the battle against all His enemies, then shall the Son acknowledge Himself subject to God the Father, who gave the Son power over all things, that God may be utterly supreme, that He may be everything to everyone. (I Corinthians 15:25-28)

If this quotation does not square with your Bible, do not be alarmed. It is an amplification of these verses pieced together from the *Phillips*, *King James*, *Taylor*, *Moffatt* and *Norlie* translations. The Father is drawing the entire creation into a state where everybody and everything acknowledge Him as God. When this occurs, division, confusion and warfare will not exist because all, every-

thing, is at one with our Creator.

Our acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, repentance from dead works and receiving of God’s Holy Spirit are the first major steps for each of us in seeking to become one with the Father. The next major step is the return of Jesus Christ, when we will inherit the Kingdom of God after the resurrection from the dead. The “all in all” of verse 28 is the very end point of the gospel.

Though I Corinthians 15:28 may appear to be something that happens in the distant future, the process has already begun in us. Understanding this as a reality is vital to our spiritual well-being. If we do not consider it to be real, we may be lured into neglecting our summons to this glorious destiny by letting ourselves follow distractions or grow irresponsible.

Heavenly Citizenship

Philippians 3:20-21 remains in the present tense, but the teaching is essentially the same as I Corinthians 15:25-28:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Verse 20 begins by asserting that we are now a colony of people whose real citizenship is in heaven. “Citizenship” indicates a fellowship or society all living under the same administration, but in this case, not living in the land of their citizenship. When we see this in context with His purpose, God is already drawing the church as a body into oneness with Him. Paul then goes on to assure us that by His power Christ will complete the process—even to transforming our bodies to be like His! What an awesome oneness to anticipate!

Paul began the section in verses 17-19 by contrasting two groups, and the difference between the two lies in the way each lives. He implies that those who are citizens of heaven are one, and they have a fellowship whose charac-

teristics are opposite to “the enemies of the cross of Christ” (verse 18). They will end in destruction because they have “set their mind on earthly things” (verse 19). As a people living by sight, they are not in control of their flesh, their carnal nature.

Paul must have used “heaven” in verse 20 to emphasize how vast the difference between the two groups is. Heaven represents the unreachable to those whose minds are fixed upon goals limited to the earthly, carnal gratification of their senses. Though satisfying the self may be much easier at the moment, God says living that way will end in destruction.

Because we are reaching for something we cannot see, hear, smell, touch or taste, the carnal mind perceives living by faith as wasting life on the unreachable or as living a daydream or fantasy. Why pursue something that never gives any immediate gratification? God, however, hastens to reassure us that He has the will and the power to bring us into this oneness with Him (verse 21).

Unsearchable Riches

Paul repeats this assurance in Ephesians 3:20-21: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” His capacity to meet our spiritual needs far exceeds anything we can either request in prayer or even dream! These verses climax Paul’s insistent teaching, beginning in the epistle’s first chapter, that the culmination of our redemption is the very glory of God!

These verses look beyond the grave to our being resurrected and changed, when we will have a life of unending and limitless success and fulfillment! Within the relationship of a wonderful, loving family, we will surmount challenges, pursue adventures and make astounding progress throughout eternity! We could ask for no more rewarding life!

Notice how Paul has, from the beginning of Ephesians, repeatedly touched upon the abundance of God’s gifts and power supplied to us:

- . . . having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. . . . (1:5-7)
- . . . in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. (1:11-12)

- . . . [which] is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (1:14)
- . . . that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (2:7)
- To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. . . . (3:8)
- . . . that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. . . . (3:16)

Now notice Ephesians 1:17-19:

. . . that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know

what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. . . .

And Ephesians 3:17-19:

. . . that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

And finally Ephesians 1:22-23:

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The phrase “all in all” that ends verse 23 summarizes Christ’s relationship with the church. Between Christ and the church exists an indissoluble link through which the riches and glory of God flow because Christ and His church are complementary parts of one organism. Brethren, the process to bring us to the oneness to which I Corinthians 15:28 looks forward has already begun! As Head and body together, we form the organism in which God’s glory is manifested.

Glorifying the Father

In Jesus’ prayer in John 17:4, He says He had glorified

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THE CROSS: Christian Banner or Pagan Relic?

Onward, Christian soldiers!
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.” So reads the chorus to a very popular Christian hymn that churches have sung for many years. The song portrays the cross as the identifying sign of everything for which Christianity stands and around which Christians should rally in their fight against the forces of evil.

Throughout the world, people universally regard the cross as THE symbol of Christianity. Churches have crosses atop their steeples, on their walls, windows and doors. Catholics and Protestants wear crosses on necklaces, bracelets, rings, pendants, keychains and items of clothing. People in some churches “cross” themselves by touching the forehead, breast, and then each shoulder to form a symbolic cross in carrying out certain religious rituals or in blessing themselves or others. Some think the sign of the cross to be effective in warding off evil spirits and for generally protecting believers from harm.

All this seems perfectly natural to most people. After all, Jesus was crucified on a cross, was He not? Have not Christians used the sign of the cross throughout all ages to show to the world their belief in the Savior of mankind? The Bible mentions the cross many times, in both literal and figurative terms, as symbolizing the meaning of true Christianity as well as the sacrifices and trials that a true Christian must endure in this life to be true to the faith. What then could anyone possibly find wrong with the sign of the cross?

What most people do not fully realize is that Satan has deceived this whole world (Revelation 12:9). Many of the comfortable, familiar customs and traditions of this world have, indeed, been borrowed from rank paganism and have nothing at all to do with true Christianity. God tells us to prove all things (I Thessalonians 5:21). Before we accept any practice, we should always inquire into its origins. We must assure ourselves that it does not transgress any of God’s laws and that it follows the traditions and practices of the early New Testament church. So, is the sign of the cross really an emblem of true Christianity or is it something far different?

Pre-Christian Crosses

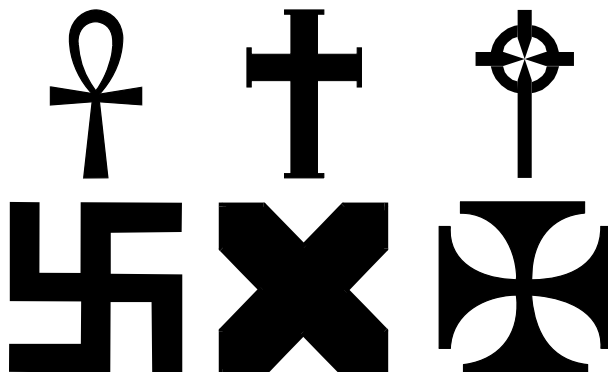
Did the use of the cross as a religious symbol begin with Christianity? Notice this paragraph from *The Encyclopedia Britannica*:

From its simplicity of form, the cross has been used both as a

religious symbol and as an ornament, from the dawn of man’s civilization. Various objects, dating from periods long anterior to the Christian era, have been found, marked with crosses of different designs, in almost every part of the old world. India, Syria, Persia and Egypt have all yielded numberless examples, while numerous instances, dating from the later Stone Age to Christian times, have been found in nearly every part of Europe. The use of the cross as a religious symbol in pre-Christian times, and among non-Christian peoples, may probably be regarded as almost universal, and in very many cases it was connected with some form of nature worship. (*The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 1910, Vol. 7, pg. 506. Emphasis ours.)

Clearly, long before the coming of Christ, pagans used the cross as a religious symbol. The ancient world used many variations of the form of the cross. Did the ancients use the type of cross that is generally used as a symbol of Christianity?

Two of the forms of the pre-Christian cross which are perhaps most frequently met with are the tau cross, so named from its resemblance to the Greek capital letter T, and the *svastika* or *fylfot*, also called “*Gammadion*” owing to its form being that of four Greek capital letters *gamma* G



Common crosses used today and in antiquity. Top row, from left to right: ankh, Latin, Celtic; bottom row: swastika, St. Andrews, Maltese. These and many other types of crosses have their roots in ancient paganism.

placed together. The tau cross is a common Egyptian device, and is indeed often called the Egyptian cross.” (ibid.)

Variations of the tau cross were used extensively by nominal Christians in Egypt. “The ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic symbol of life—the ankh, a tau cross surmounted by a loop and known as *crux ansata*—was adopted and extensively used on Coptic Christian monuments.” (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., 1995, Vol. 3, p. 753). The tau form of the cross had been used as a pagan Egyptian symbol and then adopted by “Christians,” called Copts, in Egypt. (A Copt is a member of the traditional Monophysite Christian Church originating and centering in Egypt. A Monophysite is one who adheres to a variation of Gnosticism that teaches that Christ is altogether divine and not human, even though He took on an earthly body.)

Tammuz and the Cross

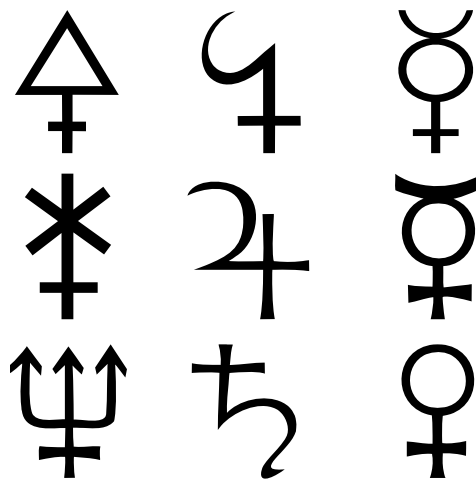
Where did the tau cross come from? In the book of Ezekiel, God supernaturally revealed to the prophet some of the secret sins of the nation of Israel. One of these sins was lamenting for a pagan god named Tammuz. “So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the LORD’s house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz” (Ezekiel 8:14). Who was Tammuz and why would women be weeping for him? *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* writes in the article “Tammuz”: “. . . in Mesopotamian religion, god of fertility embodying the powers for new life in nature in the spring” (Vol. 11, p. 532).

This “nature god” was associated with two yearly festivals, one held in late winter and the other in early spring.

The cult of Tammuz centred around two yearly festivals, one celebrating his marriage to the goddess Inanna, the other *lamenting his death* at the hands of demons from the netherworld. During the 3rd dynasty of Ur (c. 2112–c. 2004 BC) in the city of Umma (modern Tell Jokha), the

marriage of the god was dramatically celebrated in February–March, Umma’s Month of the Festival of Tammuz. . . . *The celebrations in March–April that marked the death of the god also seem to have been dramatically performed.* Many of the laments for the occasion have as a setting a procession out into the desert to the fold of the slain god.” (ibid. Emphasis ours.)

What does the worship of Tammuz have to do with the sign of the cross?



Symbols of ancient pagan gods and goddesses employing crosses. Top row, from left to right: Athena, Ceres, Hermes; middle row: Juno, Jupiter, Mercury; bottom row: Neptune, Saturn, Venus.

According to historian Alexander Hislop, Tammuz was intimately associated with the Babylonian mystery religions begun by the worship of Nimrod, Semiramis and her illegitimate son, Horus. The original form of the Babylonian letter T was 𐤔, identical to the crosses used today in this world’s Christianity. This was the initial of Tammuz. Referring to this sign of Tammuz, Hislop writes:

That mystic Tau was marked in baptism on the foreheads of those initiated into the Mysteries. . . . The Vestal virgins of Pagan Rome wore it suspended from their necklaces, as the nuns do now. . . . There is hardly a Pagan tribe where the cross has not been found. . . . [T]he X which in itself was not an unnatural symbol of Christ, the

true Messiah, and which had once been regarded as such, was allowed to go entirely into disuse, and the Tau, “𐤔”, the sign of the cross, the indisputable sign of Tammuz, the false Messiah, was everywhere *substituted* in its stead.” (*The Two Babylons*, 1959, p. 198-199, 204-205)

Adopted by “Christians”

One can easily corroborate from history that nominal Christians adopted this pagan symbol as a sign of their religion, even though it had nothing to do with true Christianity.

The death of Christ on a cross necessarily conferred a new significance on the figure [of the cross], which had hitherto been associated with a conception of religion *not merely non-Christian*, but in its essence often *directly opposed to it*. The Christians of early times were wont to trace, in things around them, hidden prophetic allusions to the truth of their faith, and such a testimony they seem to have readily recognized in the use of the cross as a religious emblem by those whose employment of it betokened *a belief most repugnant to their own*. The adoption by them of such forms, for example, as the tau cross and the *svastika* or *fylfot* was no doubt influenced by the idea of the occult Christian significance which they thought they recognized in those forms and which they could use with a special meaning among themselves, without at the same time arousing the ill-feeling or shocking the sentiment of those among whom they lived.” (*The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 1910, Vol. 7, p. 506. Emphasis ours.)

When did “Christians” first begin using the cross as a sign of their religion? Did the apostles use it?

It was not till *the time of Constantine* that the cross was publicly used as the symbol of

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SHOULD WE OBEY THE LAWS OF OUR GOVERNMENT?

God hates rebellion (I Samuel 15:23; Isaiah 30:1; 63:10)! He hates the attitude of lawlessness it produces, as well as the crop of wicked fruit that results from it.

The prince of all rebellion is Satan the Devil, also known as “the sum of all moral impurities.” Though we do not see this demon physically, the influence of this arch-rebel permeates our society. We need not look far to see children rebelling against their parents, artists rebelling against the status quo and fringe groups rebelling against the government.

Satan personifies rebellion. It was Lucifer’s rebellious action that saw him tossed out of heaven and renamed Satan, Adversary:

How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart:
“I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God [angels];
I will also sit [rule] on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north [God’s government];
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.”
Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
to the lowest depths of the Pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)

Lucifer, “Light Bringer,” rebelled against the laws of God, thus he rebelled against God Himself. Desiring independence from God’s legislation,

he tried to depose God and become the sovereign ruler of the universe. Great chaos and destruction resulted among the heavenly bodies and on earth (Genesis 1:2) when God “cast [him] as a profane thing out of the mountain of God” (Ezekiel 28:16).

Because of his rebellion, we are today experiencing its evil fruit. Notice how Isaiah describes the reaction of people who will look back upon Satan’s career after God finally binds him forever in the Lake of Fire:

Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying, “Is this the man [Hebrew *ish*, male, individual, person] who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?” (Isaiah 14:16-17)

These people are describing the effects of Satan’s rule on this earth now!

We say, “It’s a jungle out there!” And it is! The earth seems to be teetering on the edge of destruction. Our world is a wilderness, our cities rise only to fall in war, our nations tremble at life’s uncertainties and the god of this world, Satan (II Corinthians 4:4, KJV), holds the people captive spiritually. All this evil fruit can be traced back to his rebellious attitude.

Worldwide Rebellion

Satan’s influence extends over the

whole world. In some places, we see it in war after war, and in others, unrest and instability. In America, we have political, racial and religious factions at each other’s throats. Gangs of young men and women roam the streets of our cities, robbing, destroying and killing without regard for the laws of the land and absolutely no consideration for human life.

Our populace chafes under the restraint of law. Many are willing to cheat on their taxes, take money under the table, steal from their employers, exceed speed limits and stab their competitors in the back. Everyone seems to be working *to get around* the national, state and local laws—and God’s laws too!

The television and movie industries contribute massively to the nation’s problems through the fare they offer for our viewing consumption. Many—if not most—of the shows we watch depict the breaking of God’s commandments. They produce story lines glorifying rebellion, sexual promiscuity, adultery, murder, war, stealing, lying and aggressive competition. Movies like *Thelma and Louise*; *Dirty, Rotten Scoundrels*; *Natural Born Killers*; *Pulp Fiction*; *The Terminator* and the James Bond movies make heroes out of the ones who are breaking all the laws!

Governments also show the effects of Satan’s rebellious influence. Our leaders, who should be setting an ethical, honest, moral example for the rest of us, must frequently defend themselves against charges of fraud, sexual misconduct, obstruction of

justice and illegal covert operations. This list does not include wasteful spending on pork projects, expensive travel junkets, unbalanced budgets and questionable lawmaking.

From the Supreme Court to local juvenile courts, the judicial system makes a mockery of our laws. Appeals courts overturn good and just laws because of minor technicalities that may discriminate against one in a million people. Proper convictions and sentences are derailed by wealthy or powerful parties who can afford high-priced, famous attorneys who work the system's loopholes or confuse the jury by manufacturing "reasonable doubt."

Whether we realize it or not, all of this corruption and rebellion has an affect upon us. We may not understand how it could influence us one way or another, but nevertheless, we cannot help noticing it and being influenced by it.

Sovereign Citizenship

In the United States, we can see the effect of this mistrust in the form of militias, paramilitary groups mustered from citizens dissatisfied with big government and expanding federal control. These militias are born of mistrust in the country's leadership and direction. Instead of regaining citizens' rights, their actions present Americans with more rights being removed through anti-terrorist legislation aimed against them and the ghastly specter of civil war.

Some groups are pursuing the idea of "sovereign citizenship." Under this general term, several variations of this status exist, one of which is the Freemen holed up by the FBI in Jordan, Montana. Affiliation with sovereign citizenship ideas causes a person to scrutinize tax, federal, state and local laws carefully to find flaws and loopholes.

A sovereign citizen—because he is sovereign, that is, he possesses

supreme authority—feels justified in not obeying any law with which he personally disagrees. He will often not pay taxes, get a driver's license, pay traffic fines, incorporate his business, get a marriage

license, build a home to code or in any way submit to government. He feels that doing such things will enfranchise him to the state.

Some have carried this concept over into religious areas. The resulting religion, though sincere,

is one that requires much effort, as it goes against the grain of more organized churches, and its fruit and attitude are bad. Since, as sovereign, they are above all human authority, they will not submit to the spiritual guidance of the church. They lean on the understanding that they are accountable to God alone, but even in this they have deceived themselves! In their pride they have only made themselves accountable to God *on their own terms and according to their own views of God's law.*

This attitude of sovereign citizenship is one that is sweeping this country in one form or another. If we are not careful, it can influence us in God's church. In fact, it has already caused several of our brethren to leave us to join the growing ranks of "independent Christians."

Sovereignty and Rebellion

A sovereign is a ruler, a monarch. Such a person has the authority to reign, to make laws and to mete out punishments. When one claims sovereignty, he puts himself on an extremely lofty pedestal. *Webster's Dictionary* defines *sovereignty* as "supreme excellence or an example of it; supreme power especially over a body politic; freedom from external control: autonomy; controlling influence; one that is sovereign."

When "citizen" is added to the mix, a strange oxymoron results. A

citizen is one who lives in a certain place and is subject to its laws. Granted, citizenship implies being entitled to the rights and privileges of a freeman, but these rights and privileges are bestowed *by law and common consent*, not by individual sovereignty. A sovereign citizen feels he is totally in charge, free from all external authority and influence.

The last verse of Judges perfectly describes what is happening today in America: "In those days there was no king in Israel; *everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" It is this attitude that the sovereign citizenship movement holds; it is in reality rebellion against the laws of man in this society. Seeing the flaws of man's government and the weakness of its leaders, they perceive a "better way," reject the laws of the land and do what they feel is right.

But is this what God wants?

Rebellion is "the act of rebelling; revolt; open resistance to, or defiance of any authority or control." Does this idea have a familiar ring to it, especially considering Satan's rebellion described in Isaiah 14? God hates rebellion, comparing it to witchcraft: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you [Saul] have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king" (I Samuel 15:23).

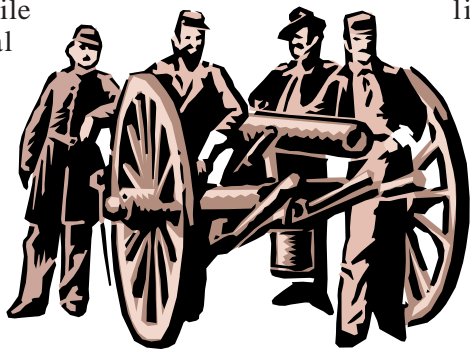
From Satan's insurrection, God knows the price of rebellion. A rebellious, stubborn, unsubmitive heart will destroy one whom He has called, denying him entrance into the Kingdom of God. As Herbert Armstrong said many times, "God will not allow anyone into His Kingdom whom He cannot rule!"

Obeying Government

Though all of us should understand obedience to the laws of man, it is good from time to time to ask, "Should we obey the governments of man over us?" Should we obey it if we consider it an "illegal" government?

The apostle Paul had to address this subject two thousand years ago in Romans 13. Albert Barnes in his *Barnes' Notes* suggests what

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The "Sovereign Citizenship" movement raises the specter of civil war. No wars are bloodier or more destructive than civil wars, as the American Civil war proves.

The Woman Atop the Beast

Part 1

On the isle of Patmos, the apostle John stood gaping in astonishment. One of the seven angels who had previously shown him the seven last plagues of God's wrath had turned the man's attention to another amazing vision. The angel had carried him into the wilderness and shown him a woman sitting astride a great scarlet beast.

What so astonished John about this woman was that she was so vile! She herself was a harlot and a mother of harlots, who had committed endless fornication with the kings of the earth. Though she was clothed as a queen with scarlet and purple clothes and adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls, wickedness exuded from her like perfume. In her hand she held a golden cup filled with filthiness and abominations, and she was drunk on the blood of countless true Christians she had killed over the centuries. On her forehead was tattooed:

MYSTERY,
BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS
OF THE EARTH.

No wonder John stared at her in horror!

The Great Harlot

This vision of Revelation 17 encapsulates the history of the great false church, just as Revelation 12 prophesies about the true church of God. The description of this horrible woman named "Mystery, Babylon the Great" provides clues to her identity.

Much of what is written of her is contained in common biblical symbols or types that the Bible itself interprets.

The only similarity between the two women in Revelation 12 and 17 is that the main character in both



St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

chapters is a woman, a biblical type of a church or religious system. Since Israel, under the Old Covenant, was intended to be a theocracy, the prophets often depict the nation as a woman and frequently as an unfaithful wife (Jeremiah 3:1-14; 6:2; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1:2; 2:2). In the New Testament, the apostles continued and expanded this symbolism, applying it to the church (Galatians 4:22-27; Revelation 19:7; 21:9). Notice how Paul uses this imagery in Ephesians 5:23-24, 32:

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. . . . This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

From this point on, however, all similarities end. The woman who rides the beast is a "great harlot" (Revelation 17:1); she is famous for her "sexual" prowess! Her fornication is her dominant characteristic. But how does a church or religious system commit fornication? God answers this question in the Old Testament: through idolatry and foreign alliances!

At God's insistence, Hosea took a harlot as a wife to illustrate the similarity between idolatry and fornication or adultery. As part of his prophecy, the prophet writes:

Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God. They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, and your brides commit adultery. (Hosea 4:11-13)

Ezekiel uses Israel's example to show that trusting in other nations is also spiritual harlotry:

"You also committed harlotry with the Egyptians, . . . with the Assyrians, . . . [and] as far as the land of the trader, Chaldea; and even then you were not satisfied. How degenerate is your heart!" says the Lord God, "seeing you do all these things, the

deeds of a brazen harlot. . . . Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and hired them to come to you from all around for your harlotry.” (Ezekiel 16:26, 28-30, 33; see 23:1-35)

For these reasons, God calls this wicked woman riding the beast “a great harlot.” Her false religion is based on a syncretistic mixture of Christianity with rank paganism; she has blended the holy with the profane to produce an intoxicating, destructive vintage that has made the world’s people drunk. Just this one description enables us to fix her identity as the Roman Catholic Church.

The Paganism of Rome

No other “Christian” organization has so blatantly used syncretism to attract and hold its adherents. The Catholic church, and to a large extent, her daughter Protestant churches, have incorporated countless pagan elements into their worship. From crosses (see *The Cross: Christian Banner or Pagan Relic*, page 5) to steeples, from adoration of saints to images of a false Christ, from Easter sunrise services to Christmas Eve masses, heathen, idolatrous elements fill their worship, liturgy and tradition.

When the Emperor Constantine “converted” to Christianity in AD 313, he granted the church official status alongside paganism. This devious political stroke suddenly made him the religious authority over thousands of Christians in the Roman Empire, for since he had legitimized the church, he had to be proclaimed its head. The bishops of the day began calling him “Bishop of bishops,” while he himself took the title *Vicarius Christi*, Vicar of Christ. Later, these titles—along with *Pontifex Maximus*, Constantine’s title as high priest of the **pagan** Roman religion—passed to the Popes.

As an unbaptized neophyte, he convened the Council of Nicea (AD 325), set its agenda, opened it with a speech and greatly influenced its discussions. During this Council, the Catholic Church determined the date and observance of Easter, officially

received the unbiblical doctrine of the Trinity, and eased the admission of pagans and their practices into the church (“Nicea, Council of,” *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 1910, Vol. 19, pp. 640-642).

Maybe the most blatant idolatry in Roman Catholicism is their adoration of Mary, the mother of Christ. On the basis of one scripture, Luke 1:28, Catholic theologians have built a major tenet of their faith: “And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’” With this, they elevate her nearly to a goddess (if not in fact), pray to her incessantly, claim to see her in visions and hear her in dreams and trances, and worship statues of her in their churches and cathedrals!

Two quotations from supposed saints of Catholicism will suffice to illustrate how far Mary worship goes:

- There is no one, O most holy Mary . . . who can be saved or redeemed but through thee. . . . (St. Germanus, quoted in St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, 1931, p. 171.)
- As we have access to the Eternal Father only through Jesus Christ, so have we access to Jesus Christ only through Mary. By thee we have access to the Son, O blessed finder of grace, bearer of life, and mother of salvation. . . . (St. Bernard, *ibid.*)

The Catholic Church has elevated Mary to divine status and given her titles and responsibilities reserved to God the Father and His Son! In fact, she becomes the third member of a trinity modeled after the pagan trinities of ancient times. These heathen trinities, found in most polytheistic religions, follow the Father-Mother-Son pattern: Osiris, Isis and Horus; Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz; Zeus, Diana, Dionysus; Jupiter, Venus and Cupid; etc.

In like manner, some Catholics attribute to Mary the position and characteristics of the third person of their unscriptural trinity, the Holy Spirit. The official publication of “The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima,”

boasting 22 million members, claims:

Mary is so perfectly united with the Holy Spirit that He acts only through His spouse. . . . All our life, every thought, word, and deed is in Her hands . . . at every moment, She Herself must instruct, guide, and transform each one of us into Herself, so that not we but She lives in us, as Jesus lives in Her, and the Father in the Son. (*Soul Magazine*, November–December 1984, p.4.)

If she has these powers and characteristics, then Mary must be God! There can be no doubt that this adoration of Mary is simply a modern manifestation of goddess worship that began over 4,000 years ago in Mesopotamia! In fact, one of her titles, as used by the present Pope, a devoted Marian, is “Queen of Heaven” (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19, 25)!

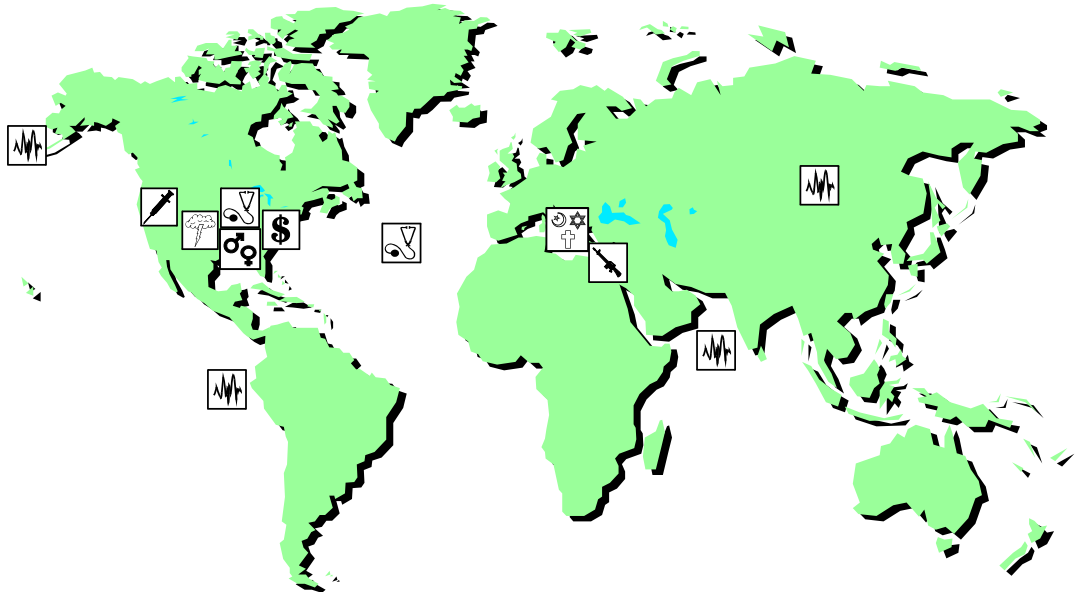
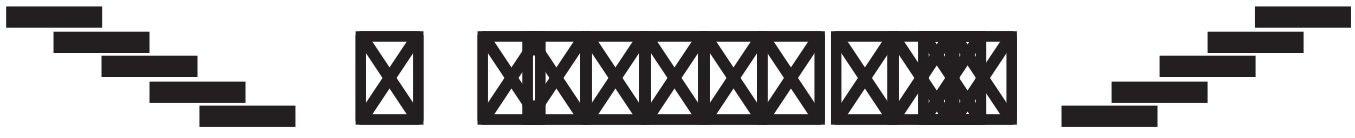
“Purple and Scarlet”

The woman on the beast is “arrayed in purple and scarlet” (Revelation 17:4), both of which are colors of pagan and “Christian” Rome. When the soldiers mocked Jesus, hailing him as “King of the Jews,” they put a scarlet robe on him (Matthew 27:27-29). John’s gospel says it was purple (John 19:2, 5). Whatever color it was (one authority says the ancients did not discriminate between colors as closely as we do), it connoted power and authority, and both these colors became known as “royal” colors.

Both of these colors are prominent within the Roman Catholic Church. On special days, Church officials wear a *cappa magna*, a cloak with a long train and a hooded shoulder cape. For bishops, it is made of purple wool, and for cardinals, scarlet silk. For the pope, this item of clothing is red velvet or red serge. The official garb of the Catholic clergy is the *cassock* or *soutane*, a close-fitting, ankle-length robe. “The color for bishops and other prelates is purple, for cardinals scarlet. . . .” (*Our Sunday Visitor’s Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1991, p. 175, 178).

[TO BE CONTINUED]

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh



EARTHQUAKES



An earthquake of 6.3 magnitude occurred in northwest China on March 19, killing at least 28 and leaving nearly 15,000 homeless. Quakes of 6.8 and 6.3 struck the Aleutian Islands on March 22 and 30, respectively. Two quakes of 6.0 occurred in the Arabian Sea (March 28) and on Santa Cruz Island, Ecuador (March 31).

Large earthquake totals for 1996 as of April 7:
+6.0s: 46 +7.0s: 5

TERRORISM



• Germany gave unconditional support to the peace process in the Middle East, securing a promise from Palestinian President Yassir Arafat to take a more active role in fighting terrorism. Chancellor Helmut Kohl declared his country's willingness to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with other nations against terrorism, saying that the peace process is "the only real chance for a just and lasting peace in the region."

• An advisor to Arafat said that if Israel will not discuss Jerusalem, return refugees and retreat to pre-1967 borders, then they will resume their terrorism with the help of 30,000 Palestinian soldiers.

JERUSALEM



Pope John Paul II warned that peace in the Middle East could disappear if the status of Jerusalem is not resolved in a way that "preserves its uniqueness as a Holy City to all."

DUST BOWL



Winter precipitation was only 30-40 percent of normal over the region from northeast New Mexico to western Kansas. This dryness,

combined with normal freezing and thawing and high winds, has created "dust bowl" like conditions. Farmers have already turned under thousands of acres of wheat to prevent further soil erosion.

HEALTH



• More people died in the U.S. in 1993 than in any other year in the nation's history. The death toll of 2,268,553 is an increase of more than 92,000, a 3.2 percent increase over 1992, interrupting a general improvement in the rate since 1930.

• The World Health Organization reported 3 million worldwide died from tuberculosis in 1995. Increased air travel and immigration have spread TB in recent years.

DRUGS



America has less than 5 percent of the world's population but consumes more than 50 percent of the world's illegal drugs. The value of the U.S. drug market is close to that of the U.S. budget deficit.

ECONOMICS



The consumer-debt load could drag the U.S. economy into recession by as early as 1997. Consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of the economy. Credit-card debt rose to \$330 billion in 1995, and consumer loans topped one trillion dollars.

ILLEGITIMACY



In 1995 nearly a third of America's babies were born out-of-wedlock. The illegitimate birthrate among blacks is 69 percent, while among whites, almost 25 percent. Sociologists have traced many social problems—poverty, crime, drug abuse, educational problems, etc.—to the family's breakdown.

—Andy Benedetto

Common Tithing Questions

For years, members of God's church have had questions about the tithing system. Are there really *three* tithes—or only *one* tithe split into three parts for different uses? Should ministers support themselves or be supported by tithes? Since the instruction is to tithe the produce of agricultural work, is tithing to be done only by farmers and ranchers? These questions have been raised frequently enough to require answers.

The early Worldwide Church of God taught that members should give three tithes or thirty percent of their increase. The first tithe, to be given to the church every year, financed the work of preaching the gospel and feeding the flock. The second tithe, kept every year by the individual, funded one's observance of God's holy days, especially the Feast of Tabernacles. The third tithe, commanded only in the third and sixth years of a seven-year tithing cycle, supported the needy, widows, orphans, and to some degree, the ministry as needed. The Church of the Great God follows this basic teaching.

Of course, the Bible is the only source for such instruction. This article will answer *from God's Word* the three questions posed above and augment our doctrinal position on the subject of tithing.

Three or One?

The first question involves whether God commands three separate tithes or if one tithe was merely split into three different uses. God says in Num-

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

bers 18:21, "Behold, I have given the children of Levi *all* the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacles of meeting." The Hebrew term for "all," *kol*, means "the entire amount," "the totality," "the whole" of the tithe, not a percentage or part.

Moses uses the same word in Deuteronomy 14:22-23, regarding the festival tithe:

You shall truly tithe *all* the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your

new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

Just a few verses later, he shows *another* use for ALL the tithe!

At the end of every third year you shall bring out [*kol*; see KJV—"all"] the tithe of your produce of that year and *store it up* within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do. (verses 28-29)

Here, a third tithe is given for a separate use. It was not to be given to maintain the tabernacle (church) or spent on oneself at a festival. It was to be stored, implying a use over a period of time for the poor, widows, orphans, etc. Since this third tithe occurred only on the third and sixth years of the seven-year cycle, it had to be stored for the special purpose intended.

For each of the three tithes, God specifies *all*, or the entire tenth, should be used for the stated purposes. If on the third and sixth years we kept *all* the tithe for the poor, we would have

A Ready Answer

"Be Ready Always To Give An Answer" – I Peter 3:15 (KJV)

no money for festival use! Yet the feasts were kept **every** year as a memorial (Exodus 13:10). This clarifies that *all* of the three tithes are referred to rather than a splitting of one tithe.

Support Ministry?

What about financial support for a full-time ministry? Some cite II Chronicles 34:8-13 to show that the Levites had professional and building skills. From this, they reason that the Levites had second jobs and therefore supported themselves. They argue that the New Testament ministry should do the same. Is this what is implied?

The key to understanding the situation in II Chronicles 34 is in verse 21: “. . . for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book.” Israel rarely kept all the words of God. By Josiah’s day, they had departed from God’s way to the point that the Temple was damaged and the priesthood was not functioning.

The priests and Levites had not fulfilled their duty as expressed in Numbers 18:20-23. *The service of the Temple was to be their full-time profession*, for which they were to receive a full tithe as their living. They had neglected this, however, and had gone into private enterprise, developing various skills. When Josiah and Hilkiah began to restore the Temple and its proper administration, they put the Levites to work rebuilding the temple because they were greatly accountable for its destruction. The priests and Levites had departed from God and led the people astray, for which God later sent the nation into captivity. God held these “shepherds” in great contempt for their laxness.

A few generations earlier, Hezekiah had reset the priests and Levites in their courses, or divisions, and put them back to work (II Chronicles 31:2-19)! Zerubbabel and Nehemiah followed a similar pattern in rebuilding the Temple and wall after their return from Babylon (Ezra 3:8-9; 6:18; Nehemiah 3:1, 17-18, 22; 7:1; 12:44-47; 13:4-13, 30-31).

The New Testament leaves no

doubt that Christ intended a full-time ministry. John 21:15-19 makes it clear that Christ expected Peter to be feeding His sheep rather than return to his former occupation as a fisherman. Had He not told the disciples when He called them that He would make them fishers of men (Matthew 4:19)?

In Acts 6:1-4, the twelve apostles realized that business of physically serving the brethren was distracting them from laboring full-time in teaching God’s Word. They were not above physical service—in fact, they were doing it—but they realized it was more important to spend their time laboring directly in the gospel. Through this situation, they learned what their *priorities* ought to be.

They therefore appointed deacons to do the physical service of distributing aid to the members of the church. This allowed the apostles to give themselves *continually* to prayer and the ministry of the Word. The apostles now had the time to fulfill their calling.

Paul clearly shows in I Corinthians 9:1-18 that the ministry “should live from the gospel” (verse 14). At times, he personally waived his authority to collect tithes in new areas because of the newness of the people. However, he makes it plain that “those who labor in the word and doctrine” were worthy of **DOUBLE** wages (I Timothy 5:17).

In Hebrews 7, Paul explains that the change in priesthood to the ministry of Christ—who descended from Judah, not Levi—necessitated a change of the law. What law? The *TITHING* law, *which had to be in effect to be changed in its administration to the New Testament ministry of Christ*. In the final analysis, a paid, full-time ministry has ample support in the Bible.

Just Agricultural Increase?

Within the fabric of many of these scriptures lies the answer to the question of whether we should tithe only agricultural produce. The argument in Hebrews 7:1-10 refers to Abraham’s example of tithing (Genesis 14:18-20) and applies it to the New Testament church! Here, Abraham does not tithe of his flocks and herds but of the work of his hand. His work

at the time involved the slaughter of the kings—war! The spoils of war include gold, silver, apparel and any other items the victors judge valuable. This prime example of tithing shows Abraham giving ten percent of a non-agricultural endeavor to God.

Jacob’s example in Genesis 28:20-22 is similar. He promised to give God a tenth if God would give him protection, food and raiment “in this way that I am going”—that is, as he traveled, not as he farmed. This section also shows that he knew about tithing. He could have picked 9, 37 or 86 percent instead of 10 percent had he not known the tithing principle. It is likely that Abraham passed this knowledge to Isaac, who passed it to Jacob.

Paul is writing to the **CORINTHIAN** church when he says that he could take tithes of them (I Corinthians 9:7-15). In Paul’s day, the city of Corinth was a large trading and industrial center, a major seaport and the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, not a farming community. The people in the church there worked at “city” jobs.

Christ condemned the Pharisees for forgetting the major points of the law while meticulously counting their spice seeds to determine their tithes (Matthew 23:23). These Pharisees were not farmers. The “land and inheritance” rules of Joshua’s administration had long since passed into disuse. They had probably ceased to be functional after the Babylonian captivity 500 years before this account. In Babylon, people forgot who owned what land, and in the meantime, foreigners had moved onto it. Upon returning from the captivity, the Judeans had to assimilate into the population of those who had replaced them. They had to buy land, work for others or go into commerce to survive. Even so, tithing was in effect.

The same principle applies to Malachi 3:8-12. Malachi wrote after the captivity, probably contemporary to or just after Nehemiah, and he mentions only agricultural products. This only emphasizes that God *intended* Israel to be an agricultural economy, and this may be a primary reason He initially tied increase to agriculture. In the World Tomorrow,

the world will return to an agriculturally based economy; everyone will have his own vine and fig tree (Micah 4:4; Zechariah 3:10).

Meanwhile, is it logical to assume that a farmer working with his hands for a living would tithe when a carpenter, who also works with his hands for a living, would not? God obviously highly endorses agriculture throughout the Bible, yet how many would want to pursue agriculture when they would be “penalized” 20 percent—and in some years 30 percent—for farming? If they did not have to tithe, how would city folk attend the Feast? If it had no income from tithes, how would the church take care of its widows, poor and strangers?

God is not a respecter of persons; He requires the same from everyone. We need to remember that the tithing law was a total financial package that ran the nation of Israel. It is this *principle* that we must apply to today’s circumstances.

Another point to consider is that Malachi is an end-time prophecy writ-

ten to the end-time church. It fully endorses tithing as requisite to God’s blessings and protection. He mentions wage earners, widows, the fatherless and strangers as categories of people we should help (verse 5). God wants the people to repent and return to Him in tithing so that His end-time church can remedy these inequities and show *His kind of love!* In this day, very few church members are farmers or ranchers. God knew this would be the case when He inspired Malachi’s prophecy. Yet He still emphasized tithing as a *major teaching*, knowing it would be of the increase of the work of our hand in areas other than agriculture.

Tithing Brings Blessings

We have examined these questions considering Scripture only, since it is the final authority. However, one can obtain further information from biblical encyclopedias and dictionaries, commentaries, Josephus and other secular works. Many of these confirm the seven-year cycle that Herbert Armstrong taught. Even the author’s

little *Cruden’s Concordance*, under “tithe,” explains all three tithes before listing the scriptures on tithing.

As a historical note, the Worldwide Church of God successfully followed the three-tithe system for many decades, and God blessed His work mightily during those years. The gospel message went out in increasing power and coverage. Converts increased around the globe, building an attendance upwards of 150,000. People prospered physically and spiritually as they kept this entire tithing system. Many could not “make the numbers work” on paper, but if they were faithful, God—to His glory—supplied their needs, and somehow the money stretched.

In short, God used this financial system to supply everything required, personally and institutionally, to build a royal priesthood for His Kingdom. God tells us to judge by the fruits. *By its fruits*, the tithing system has worked extremely well!

—Darryl Henson

SHOULD WE OBEY THE LAWS OF OUR GOVERNMENT?

continued from page 8

prompted Paul to write this to the Roman church:

In the seven first verses of this chapter, the apostle discusses the subject of the duty which Christians owe to civil government. . . . There is no doubt that he had express reference to the peculiar situation of the Christians at Rome; but the subject was of so much importance that he gives it a *general* bearing, and states the great principles on which all Christians are to act. The circumstances which made this discussion proper and important were the following: (1.) The Christian religion was designed to extend throughout the world. . . . Christians professed supreme allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ; he was their lawgiver, their sovereign, their

judge. It became, therefore, a question of great importance and difficulty, *what kind* of allegiance they were to render to earthly magistrates. (2.) The kingdoms of the world were then *pagan* kingdoms. The laws were made by pagans, and were adapted to the prevalence of heathenism. Those kingdoms had been generally founded in conquest, blood, and oppression. Many of the monarchs were bloodstained warriors; were unprincipled men; and were polluted in private, and oppressive in their public character. Whether Christians were to acknowledge the laws of such kingdoms and of such men, was a serious question. . . . Soon the hands of these magistrates were to be raised against Christians in the fiery scenes of persecution; and the duty and extent of submission to them became a matter of very serious inquiry. (“Romans,” p. 284.)

How did Paul respond in Romans

13:1-7 to these inquiries?

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom

taxes are due, custom to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

The phrase “let every soul be subject” is a military term implying subordination. It is a willingness to occupy our proper place, to yield to the authority over us. That these governing authorities are “appointed by God” stems from another military term denoting the order or organization found in a military unit. Not only should we be subject, but we should submit in the knowledge that God Himself has had a hand in allowing them to exist!

Paul’s conclusion flows naturally from this. Those who resist, or rebel against, man’s governments also resist the ordinance of God! What God has ordained we should obey! This means we are to regard man’s governments as instituted by God and agreeable to His will. This is a hard pill to swallow for those who consider themselves sovereign!

Being Subject

Paul continues with his instruction with a warning that, if we break the law, we will be punished by the civil government as lawbreakers. Those in authority generally do not punish people for doing good, but they have God-given authority to punish those who do not accept their rule and laws. The apostle says we should be afraid to break man’s laws because his government administrators are really “God’s ministers”! They are servants of God! Thus, we should be subject not just for fear of punishment, but also for conscience’ sake.

He concludes the section with specific instruction concerning taxes, custom, obedience and respect. He says, “Pay your taxes and your fines. Obey the laws and respect government officials.” Sovereign citizens directly disobey this explicit command of God’s Word on each count!

Many who complain about the government over us fail to remember the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. He and His apostles lived under an “illegal” government for years; they were subject to Roman conquerors who levied stiff taxes and brutally oppressed freedoms. But

what was Jesus’ instruction, specifically regarding taxes?

[The Pharisees asked,] “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show me the tax money.” So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:17-21)

Thus, Jesus advises us to pay our taxes, as He also paid them. Matthew 17:24-27 shows that He paid the Temple tax as well.

Some, considering this world to be Babylon, refuse to come under its laws. Though this world is truly Babylon the Great (Revelation 18), these people also forget the examples of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. These men not only lived in literal Babylon, but also served in Nebuchadnezzar’s government, giving great honor and loyalty to the king. When Babylon’s laws conflicted with God’s laws, as in the case of idolatry (Daniel 3), they stood rock solid for God’s way, willing to take whatever punishment the civil government gave them. This is the principle we should always follow (Acts 5:29).

God has appointed authority over men to bring order to our society, and in bringing order, He has given each of us an opportunity to learn the lesson of how to submit to government. This is a lesson we all *must* learn, for even Christ is subject to the Father (I Corinthians 15:23-28)!

Practical Submission

Besides these civil authorities, God has given offices of authority to nearly everyone. In the home, the husband leads the family (Ephesians 5:23). When he is away at work, the children are subject to the authority of their mother (Exodus 20:12; Colossians 3:20). At work, though, the husband is frequently subject to his

employer (Colossians 3:22).

As we mix with the society around us, we fall into many situations where others have authority over us in their particular niche. The bus driver has the authority to ask us to conduct ourselves properly on his bus. The movie usher can grant us entrance to the theater and direct us to a seat. A park official can ask us not to pick flowers or walk on the grass. In whatever position we fill, we have the authority to do that job properly.

What does obedience to authority produce? Harmony, accord, agreement, order, peace and above all *the character of submission to law* that God wants to perfect in each of us. God has seen to it that we all have authority, so that we might learn how to handle it and learn to respect it. Additionally, He has also given us many opportunities to come under authority, so that we might learn to submit and be governed. When we learn these lessons, we can be taught and become of greater use to God.

This lesson is so important that God will place His people under a heavy hand to teach them to be governed. He has done this in the past, as Nehemiah tells the poignant story of Israel’s history (Nehemiah 9). How many times Israel rebelled against God and found themselves cowering under the lash of harsh taskmasters!

Yes, we do see abuses of law in this country. More and more of our rights are being stripped from us as our nation weakens. As the end of the age nears, problems and corruption in government seem to multiply. Our approach to all this, however, should not be rebellion, but we should obey the law in wisdom, trusting in God to guide and protect us from injustice and oppression.

Because, as “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), Satan broadcasts his attitude of rebellion over the whole earth, it can affect any of us. Do not let this proud attitude of personal sovereignty distract us from the goal of seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). As part of this pursuit, let us respect authority and work on developing the submissive character of Jesus Christ!

—John Reid

All in All

continued from page 4

the Father. Since the Son has returned to the Father in heaven, and the church is formed and joined to the Son as one organism, the church now has the responsibility to glorify the Father. How? By becoming one with Him just as the Son was—by the power of God’s Spirit given to us.

Christ glorified the Father by successfully completing the work the Father gave Him to do. He qualified to be our Savior, Redeemer and High Priest, and along the way, He preached the gospel to others. Our responsibility is to yield to Him, allowing Him to form us into His image by growing, overcoming, producing fruit and carrying out the works of the church as He assigns them.

In Philippians 3:21, the phrase “subdue all things to Himself” adds more detail to this picture of oneness. “Subdue” (*hupotasso*) means “to place in order” or “to place under in an orderly fashion.” This word describes someone neatly rearranging scattered, disorganized objects according to a pattern.

In this context, the objects are not merely things, but people whose minds are in disorder, divided, confused and not wholly subject to God as a result of their own actions. Before being subdued, they exercised their own free will, followed the deceptions of Satan, loved the world and showed enmity toward God. Yet when Christ puts us in order, rearranges us, subdues us to bring us into oneness, He goes so far as to change our bodies to conform to the body of the One doing the subduing—God!

Paul says in Philippians 4:1, “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.” “Therefore” indicates a concluding thought or exhortation. In this case, Paul exhorts us to take advantage of what has been given to us as expressed in chapter 3. In his word-picture, Paul shows us standing at a crossroads. We can look both ways—where we have been and where we are going. In one direction is eternity in the Kingdom of God, and in the other is the time we began the journey toward oneness with God.

In Philippians 3:3 he affirms that we are the true circumcision; we are the ones with whom God is really working at this time. Whatever great, earthly position, power or wealth that we may have is merely rubbish compared to what lies ahead (verses 7-8). Our immediate goal is the resurrection from the dead (verse 11). Therefore, we must strain to reach it (verse 14), and strive to have one mind in the church (verse 16). Even as the process to bring us to oneness with God has begun, so also the process to unify the church has begun. Paul urgently exhorts us in chapter 4:1, “Don’t let this slip!”

Working Out Our Salvation

I John 3:2 plainly states that “now we are children of God; and . . . we shall be like Him.” Since God is going to be “all in all,” and since we are already considered by Him to be part of the same organism as Christ, who is God, and will have bodies conformed to His glorious body, there is

only one thing we can be after the resurrection—God! After all His preparation to mold us into His image, do we suddenly turn into something else, something less than what He is in terms of being a member of His Family?

But there is yet one “fly in the ointment.” That is, we are not completely there yet. Our job is not yet done. Then again, this is not too bad because we are not yet ready to inherit eternal life! We would be miserable living forever the way we are now. To have eternal life while encompassed with human nature would be a burden to us.

We see so much overcoming yet to be done, and we wonder, how will we do it? God has figured even this out. Who brought the plagues on Egypt? Who got Israel out of Egypt? Who divided the Red Sea? Who supplied the quail, manna and water? Who divided the Jordan? Who brought down the walls of Jericho? The questions could be virtually endless, but the answer would always be the same.

Philippians 2:12-13 adds an important element to understanding this process:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

It is God who saves! God saved Israel from Egyptian slavery. Israel did not overcome Pharaoh and Egypt by either warfare or by dint of superior intelligence. Jesus Christ is our Savior, and we cannot save ourselves from sin’s power. When we accept Him as Savior, it obligates us as His servants to obey Him.

In like manner, when God broke Egypt’s power, enabling the Israelites to be free, it obligated them to walk out of Egypt if they wanted their liberty. If the Israelites wanted to save their skins and be totally free of Egypt when God parted the Red Sea, it obligated them to walk the path God made for them between the walls of water. When God said, “I am going to bring you into the land and provide for you along the way,” if Israel wanted these things, they were obligated to walk all the way to Canaan. It is very clear that if Israel wanted what God said He would give, then Israel had to also cooperate by *working* in the form of *walking* to where God said He would lead or take them. “Walk” is a code word for living.

With this as a background, when Paul says to “work out your own salvation,” it cannot possibly mean we are going to save ourselves. Rather, like what confronted the Israelites when God opened the way to their physical salvation from slavery in Egypt, we should be ready to make God’s spiritual salvation practical and operational. Paul does not say we must work *for* salvation, but rather carry our salvation out to its conclusion. He uses “work out” in much the same sense as when a student is told to work out an arithmetic problem—to bring it to its conclusion. For us, the conclusion, the goal, to work toward is Christ-likeness. The salvation here is sanctification, victory over sin unto holiness.

To make it very plain, if we want to be one with Him, we must get moving in the direction He is pointing, and He

points toward His standards of conduct and attitude. Each person's walk is not exactly the same because each person's experience and makeup are somewhat different. There is enough similarity among humans, though, to make the Bible always relevant.

What God Supplies Us

One of the beautiful things about this is that each person's walk toward the image of God is exactly right for him. What is more, Philippians 2:13 also says God gives us both the will and power or energy to do it! *The New Testament in Modern Speech* renders it, "For it is God Himself whose power creates within you both the desire and the power to execute His gracious will." This work of God in us is another aspect of His grace, and without it, we could never be one with Him.

God Himself produces in us both the desire to live righteously and the effective energy to do so. He does not demand what we cannot do (I Corinthians 10:13). We see in Philippians 2:12 our responsibility and in verse 13 help to accomplish it.

We can see this working together with God in simple illustrations from physical life. We may launch a sailboat upon the water, but it takes what God supplies, wind, to make it move. We may plant vegetable seeds, but it is the power of God in nature that makes the plant grow and produce food. We may generate gigawatts of electricity in power plants, but God provides the wind, water, sunlight, coal, oil or gas to turn the turbines. In each case, we add something to what God already supplied.

Our salvation is something already given because it is God's will, and He is sovereign. We, though, must do something to make it practical by applying ourselves to salvation's demands. Even in this, God enables us to do it!

We will never know where the dividing line is between what God supplies and what we are responsible to do because it is different for each according to God's purpose. This proportion must be different because each person is different, and He is preparing us for different responsibilities within His Family. This is sure, however: Our walk toward salvation will always be difficult enough to be challenging and edifying.

Even here the analogy of Israel in the wilderness comes to our aid. Where did Israel get the energy to walk across the wilderness to the promised land? Did it not come from the manna and water God supplied, as well as the vision and hope of the inheritance which He also provided? Still, Israel walked! They had to work, to cooperate.

The verb "work" in Philippians 2:12 is in a tense that indicates continuous working. Just as Israel did not leave Egypt and arrive in the promised land in one step, neither are our salvation and oneness with God accomplished at once. It, too, is a process; it is our life's work.

God Is With Us!

That Israel spent *forty years* in the wilderness before reaching their goal may be intimidating, but God's Word

abounds with encouragement. Did the pillar of fire or the cloud ever leave Israel? Did not the manna continue until they were in the promised land? Philippians 4:19 says, "And my God shall supply *all your need* according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Hebrews 13:5 strengthens us by assuring us that God will *never* leave us nor forsake us. Philippians 1:6 greatly encourages us by saying, ". . . being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you *will complete it* until the day of Jesus Christ."

We have no need to be discouraged! God is so closely involved with us! When we recognize just how closely involved He is, we need to glorify Him for what He truly is accomplishing as Creator.

His work in us has already begun, and John 14:23 helps us to see how close the union already is: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If any one

loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'" Here Jesus shows the relationship of the Father and the Son with one who loves Them and is obedient to Them. They are all part of the same home! They have a warm and loving family relationship.

One With God and the Brethren

We can carry this idea even one step further:

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge, according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (Colossians 3:9-11)

Here is another "all in all" phrase used in addressing the church. We need to connect this to Galatians 3:26-29:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

These verses pair groupings or concepts that separate people and keep them divided and sometimes at war with each other. Paul shows racial differences (Greek and Jew); religious differences (circumcised and uncircumcised); cultural differences (barbarian and Scythian); social differences (slave and free); and finally sexual difference (male and female).

These are in no way all the differences that divide humanity, but they give enough of a representation for God to make His point. He makes it clear that we cannot be united to Him and separated from our brother at the same

We have no need to be discouraged! God is so closely involved with us!

time. To do something for or against a brother is to do it to Christ (Matthew 25:31-46). Because we, as brethren, are “in” Christ and He “in” us, we are one organism. John says if a man does not love his brother, he does not love God (I John 4:20)! This is serious business. We must be one with both.

The person who is truly converted is motivated, guided, inspired, led by, yielding to and empowered by the radiant energy flowing from Christ, who lives and works in Him. It is almost as if Christ and His converted brethren are driven together because they share the same nature. Ephesians 2:13-18 provides an explanation of the legal basis and motivation to make unity, oneness, a practical possibility:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

When we understand this is God’s will, then we can consider it a certainty because God does not fail at what He undertakes.

Paul has shown us that Christ, through His crucifixion, has created the condition needed for peace. The crucifixion made possible the forgiveness of our sins, access to the Father and the granting of the Holy Spirit. These empower us to make peace and be unified into one by enabling us to live God’s way. In this way, we are actively creating peace.

We sometimes have division in the church for two reasons, but both of these are actually expressions of the same reason: *Not everyone attending services are of the same spirit*. This does not mean demon possession, but simply that, with God’s permission, Satan has sown some unconverted tares within the congregation (Matthew 13:24-30). Paul makes it very clear in I Corinthians 3:3 that some of us having God’s Spirit are still carnal! That is, we are very weak in the faith. As he points out in that same scripture, the result is “envy, strife, and divisions.” Those three are sufficient to produce anything but oneness.

Oneness will occur when each person chooses to act out of love and loyalty for Christ and within God’s law to eliminate sins that separate them. This will allow us to achieve a true family relationship.

Considering Colossians 3:10-11 in context, Paul is saying that because these people had undergone the radical transformation of receiving the new nature and being renewed, they should work hard at making practical the salvation Christ made possible. They should do this by ceasing to do the things that separate and starting to do the things that bond. From chapter two, he carries over an underlying assumption that some measure of doctrinal difference is probably exacerbating the unity problem.

God’s purpose is drawing us into oneness with Him, and this process has already begun! It is effected by our yielding to Him through the power of His Spirit. When each of us yields to what He says to do, it will draw those who are also doing likewise into unity also.

Christ is our Savior. We love Him for what He has done for us. We are obligated to Him because He has given so much of Himself for us. He lives and works in us, and the combination of our love for and our loyalty to Him—the very love and loyalty that came from God by His Spirit originally—is what motivates or causes the very oneness God is drawing us into.

Christ is our Creator and Redeemer. It is through Him and because of Him that we are justified and sanctified and receive God’s Spirit. He is our High Priest, Mediator and Head of the church. He lives in us, energizing us to desire and practice His good pleasure, all for our God and the completion of His plan. He will do this until He arranges all in order under the Father. He truly is ALL IN ALL TO US. If each of us turns our attention to yielding to God and emphasizing that instead of the differences that separate us, the unity problem in the church of God will be solved in God’s good time.

In Christian love,



THE CROSS: Christian Banner or Pagan Relic? continued from page 6

the Christian religion. Till then its employment had been restricted, and private among the Christians themselves. Under Constantine it became the acknowledged symbol of Chris-

tianity. . . . Constantine’s action was no doubt influenced by the vision which he believed he saw of the cross in the sky with the accompanying words *en toutw nika* [by this conquer], as well as by the story of the discovery of the true cross by his mother St. Helena in the year 326. (ibid. Emphasis ours.)

As we have seen, an enormous

body of evidence proves that the cross is not a Christian symbol but has its roots in rank paganism. Some will argue, however, that we may use the sign of the cross because 1) it represents the manner in which Jesus Christ died, and 2) we are not using it today to worship a pagan deity. However, its use as a Christian symbol is a product of syncretism, that is, the blending of pagan traditions and methods of worship with the true worship

of God, something God strongly condemns.

Before entering the land of Canaan, God told the Israelites,

... take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods." (Deuteronomy 12:30-31)

Crucifixion and the Cross

Does the cross, the sign of Tammuz, truly represent the manner in which Jesus Christ died? The word "cross" appears 28 times in the New Testament, and in all cases, it is translated from the Greek word *stauros*. The original meaning of this word was not "a cross" but "an upright stake."

Originally Gk. *staurós* designated a pointed, vertical wooden stake firmly fixed in the ground. Such stakes were commonly used in two ways. They were positioned side by side in rows to form fencing or defensive palisades around settlements, or singly they were set up as instruments of torture on which serious offenders of law were publicly suspended to die (or, if already killed, to have their corpses thoroughly dishonored). (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 825)

Commonly, crucifixion was carried out in one of two ways:

Two methods were followed in the infliction of the punishment of crucifixion. In both of these the criminal was first of all usually stripped naked, and bound to an upright stake, where he was so cruelly scourged with an

implement, formed of strips of leather having pieces of iron, or some other hard material, at their ends, that not merely was the flesh often stripped from the bones, but even the entrails partly protruded, and the anatomy of the body was disclosed. In this pitiable state he was reclothed, and, if able to do so, was made to drag the stake to the place of execution, where he was either fastened to it, or impaled upon it, and left to die. (*The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 1910, Vol. 7, p. 506)

The second method of crucifixion involved a stake with a crossbar to which the condemned individual's hands were tied or nailed.

In such a case, after the scourging at the stake, the criminal was made to carry a gibbet, formed of two transverse bars of wood, to the place of execution, and he was then fastened to it by iron nails driven through the outstretched arms and through the ankles. Sometimes this was done as the cross lay on the ground, and it was then lifted into position. In other cases the criminal was made to ascend by a ladder, and was then fastened to the cross." (ibid.)

The Bible does not specifically state which method the Romans used in the crucifixion of Christ. Most other sources suppose that they used a crossbar because they nailed an inscription above Jesus' head and that both His hands had been pierced by nails (John 20:25-27). However, this is far from conclusive proof; it cannot be proven how Christ was crucified because the biblical account gives insufficient evidence. Thus, we do not know how to represent properly the stake upon which Jesus died.

Does it matter? We must also consider if it is even appropriate to use the very tool that was used to kill our Savior as an emblem of our faith. If Jesus Christ had been killed by hanging, would we use a gallows or a noose as a symbol of our faith? If He had been beheaded, would we use a

guillotine? Why should we parade the instrument of shame and death before the world and be proud of it? The New Testament shows that the fact that Christ was killed by crucifixion was an offense to some. "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness" (I Corinthians 1:23).

But did Paul not state that he gloried in the cross of Christ? In Galatians 6:14 Paul writes, "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." In this scripture, Paul addresses the same issue that the entire book of Galatians is all about, namely, how we are justified.

The Galatians had been led away from faith in Christ and had begun trusting in various physical works, like circumcision, for justification. Paul underscores his point that we cannot boast about any works of the flesh. We can only boast in Christ paying the penalty for our sins by giving Himself to be crucified. Because of His voluntary sacrifice, God has imputed Jesus' righteousness to those who have faith in that sacrifice. Paul in no way glories in a pagan symbol, but rather in what Christ's death accomplished!

Satan the devil knew long before Jesus was born that He would die by crucifixion (Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14; Psalm 22:16). In an attempt to deceive the world and lead people into worshipping a false Christ, the Devil made the cross a popular symbol of worship.

God instructs His true followers to worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23). When He called us, God told us to forsake all of this world's false religions, rituals and false, pagan symbols of worship including the cross. As we look forward to the soon coming, glorious return of our Savior to this earth, those who are true "Christian soldiers" must divest themselves from anything that is impure or unclean. God desires Christ's Bride, His true church, to be found "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27) at His coming.

—Earl L. Henn

BIBLE STUDY: PENTECOST

As we study the meaning of God's holy days, a logical pattern surfaces that unlocks truths that remain a mystery to the vast majority of the world's people. The day of Pentecost symbolizes a major key to spiritual understanding because upon this day God sent His Holy Spirit to His church, providing Christ's disciples with the power, love and understanding to carry out the work of the church. This regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the key to understanding the spiritual principles of God's Word, opens our understanding of the plan that God is working out among humanity.

God established His holy days around the two major harvests of the year, a small one in the spring and a larger one in the fall. These harvest seasons typify two spiritual harvests. Pentecost, occurring in late spring, symbolizes the first spiritual harvest and reveals that this is *not* the only day of salvation. Those whom God calls now are merely a "pilot group" that He has specifically selected to be His "firstfruits." This day is also the anniversary of God's church—the beginning of the portion of God's master plan in which He calls people out of this evil world to create in them His holy, perfect, spiritual character.



1. During what three periods of the year did God command Israel to appear before Him? Exodus 23:14-16.

COMMENT: The "three times" are three general periods during which God's holy days fall. Passover and Unleavened Bread occur in early spring, the "Feast of Harvest" in late spring and the "Feast of Ingathering" in the fall.

2. How did the spring harvest begin? Leviticus 23:10-11, 14.

COMMENT: Before the Israelites could reap the spring crop, God commanded them to bring a sheaf of grain to the priest, who waved it before God for acceptance. This "wavesheaf offering" occurred on "the day after the Sabbath" that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

3. How do we determine when to observe Pentecost, also called "the Feast of Weeks"? Leviticus 23:15-16, 21.

COMMENT: This late spring holy day must be counted. God instructs us to count 50 days from the day that the wavesheaf was offered. This explains why this day is commonly called Pentecost, which means "count fifty." The Sabbath (verse 15), the day after which we start to count, is not an annual holy day, but the weekly Sabbath that falls during Unleavened Bread. We know this because Pentecost must be counted every year. If this Sabbath were an annual Sabbath, Pentecost would always fall on a fixed date. It always falls on the same day of the week—the first day, Sunday—because one begins to count on a Sunday.

4. What special offering did God command to be offered on Pentecost in the Old Testament? Leviticus 23:17.

COMMENT: God commanded that two loaves of bread be offered as firstfruits to God. These two loaves represent the Old and New Testament churches.

5. Are the members of God's church regarded as firstfruits? James 1:18; Revelation 14:4.

COMMENT: Pentecost, the Feast of Firstfruits, represents the first part of God's spiritual harvest. God is now calling a small number of people, the firstfruits, into His church. These people, who live in the world but are not part of it (John 17:15-16), are training to be the leaders in the World Tomorrow when God will work to save the whole world.

6. Is the end time a spiritual harvest? Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43.

COMMENT: "End of the age" (verse 39) refers to the time of Christ's second coming and the resurrection of the dead when God will reap the firstfruits of His harvest! The fifty days between the wavesheaf offering and Pentecost sym-

bolize the time from the founding of the church to the end of the age when the small harvest of the firstfruits occurs.

7. What did the wavesheaf offering symbolize? I Corinthians 15:20-23.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, the first of the firstfruits, willingly gave His life so others may receive forgiveness of sin. He was a holy, sinless sacrifice, and three days later, He was the first person resurrected to eternal life! In this, He fulfilled the symbolism of the wavesheaf offering.

8. Did Jesus have to be accepted just as the wavesheaf offering was? John 20:17.

COMMENT: Jesus was crucified on the day of the Passover in AD 31, which fell that year on a Wednesday. God resurrected Him at the end of the weekly Sabbath (Saturday). He appeared to Mary Magdalene the next morning, the day after the weekly Sabbath during Unleavened Bread, when the priests presented the wavesheaf offering. He did not permit her to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father. Just as the High Priest had to wave the sheaf of grain before the spring harvest began, so our Savior had to ascend to the Father that day to be accepted before Him. Once this happened, He allowed His disciples to touch Him (cf. Matthew 28:9; John 20:20-28).

9. Did Christ's disciples observe Pentecost? Acts 2:1.

COMMENT: This was the Day of Pentecost exactly fifty days after Christ ascended to heaven to be accepted by the Father on the day the sheaf of grain was waved.

10. What happened then to fulfill a promise that Jesus had made to His disciples? Acts 2:2-4; John 14:16, 26.

11. Was the Holy Spirit to be IN the disciples as contrasted to dwelling WITH them? John 14:17.

COMMENT: During Jesus' life on earth, the Holy Spirit was *with* the disciples. After the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, the Spirit was *within* them as it had been in Christ. At this time, the disciples were born from above by the Holy Spirit, marking the beginning of the church of God.

12. Did the early church continue to keep Pentecost after the Holy Spirit came? Acts 20:16; I Corinthians 16:8.

COMMENT: About 25 years after Christ's ascension into heaven, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, hurried to be in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost! Just as the early church kept Pentecost every year, so the true church of God continues to keep it today as a continual reminder of our part in God's great master plan of salvation!