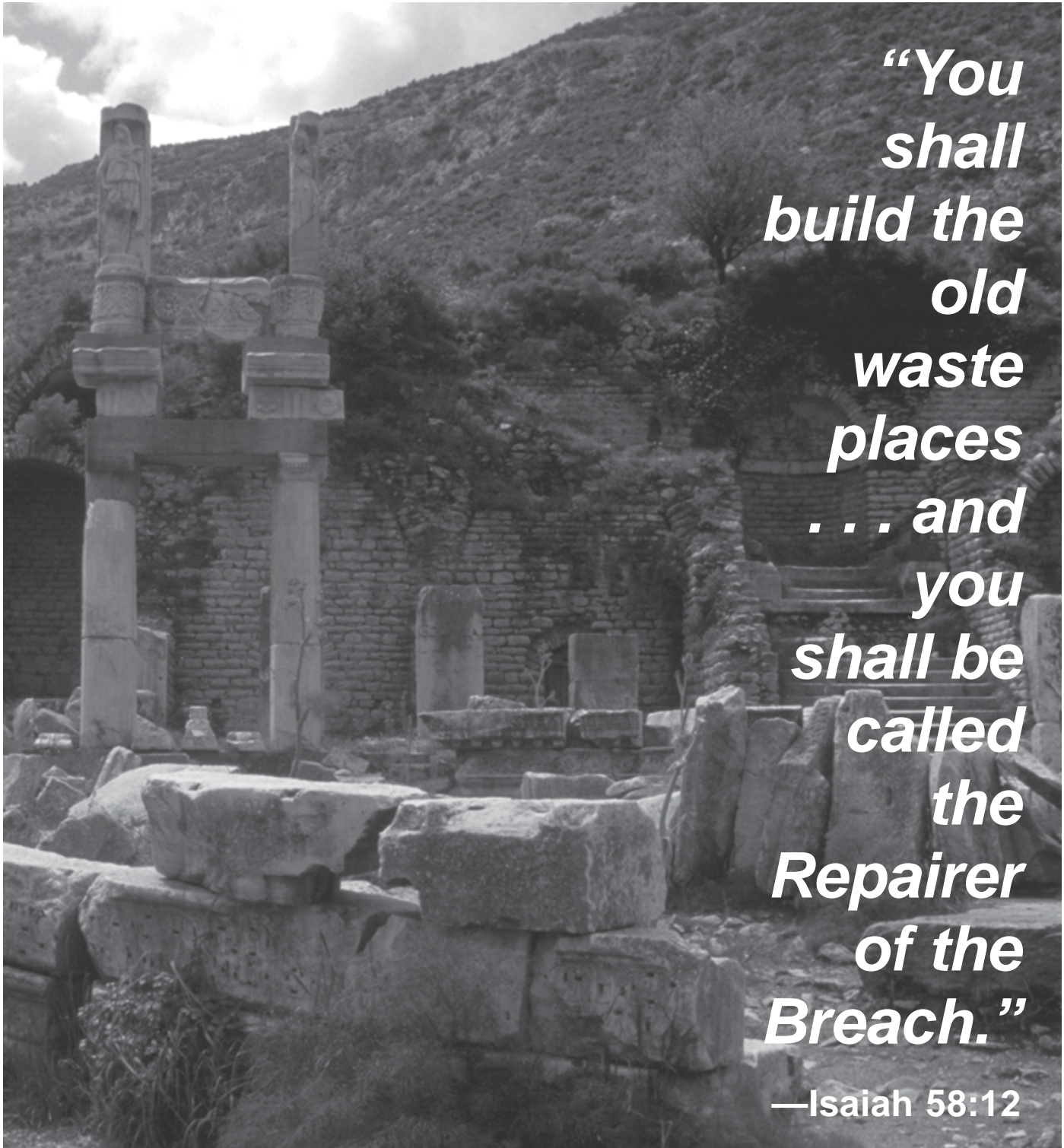


# *Forerunner*

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God



***“You  
shall  
build the  
old  
waste  
places  
... and  
you  
shall be  
called  
the  
Repairer  
of the  
Breach.”***

**—Isaiah 58:12**

# Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

August 1996

Volume 5, Number 8

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## About Our Cover:

After Christ returns to the earth to face the armies of man arrayed against Him, one of the first jobs will be to clear away the wreckage of the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord and rebuild the ruins. God's Word promises that the devastation will be replaced by habitation, peace and prosperity. (Corel)

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**Forerunner ♦ August 1996**

# PREPARING TO RULE!

**I** Corinthians 1:26-29 resounds through our minds as a constant reminder that we are the foolish, weak, base and despised of this world. In these verses God formally states that He has sought no particular advantage in carrying out His purpose by calling us. Paul writes:

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

This is humbling in both a present and future sense. We seem to fall short when we compare ourselves to those who have accomplished great things or seem to have strong and good character in today's world. When we consider the World Tomorrow and the daunting challenges that will face those reconstructing a world out of the chaos of the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, it is enough to make us feel completely inadequate.

Vanity keeps telling us we are intelligent, beautiful, clever, talented, cultured and unappreciated, but these verses should pull us back to reality. God's assessment is accurate because when we compare our accomplishments with people in the world, ours fade into near nothingness!

Consider these verses in relation to the monstrous and seemingly insoluble problems of today's world—and all those talented, accomplished people “out there” cannot solve them! Here we are, a construction worker, nurse, school teacher, computer operator, bus driver, mechanic, bank teller or homemaker. What would we do if we had the responsibilities the talented people have?

## **Millennial Problems**

Cast that thought forward into the World Tomorrow. How will we ever be qualified to govern even a small town, let alone a great city, several cities, a county or even

a nation? Such thoughts daunt us, because we know that, as the Kingdom of God begins, the problems will be exceedingly greater than today.

Will we need to provide a water supply, sewage and refuse disposal, power supply and transportation system? Will we need to devise a city growth plan so that it can grow in an organized way? Will we have to formulate building codes? Will we need to draft a budget to control expenditures? Will we need to collect taxes for roads, schools, police, fire, parks and industrial and housing development? Who will manage the administrators over all the divisions of government? How will we balance permitting personal liberty and creative expression with protecting the environment and the liberties of others?

Better minds in today's world have taken up this challenge and are failing. Many people in government are sincerely trying to make our cities and nations work, and they admit defeat! So what right do the weak of the world have in thinking we can do it better?

We cannot be exactly sure what God has in mind for that time because most of the prophecies of the Millennium picture the perfect world based on the prophet's time. Since then, man has advanced technologically and increased in population. The fulfillment of Revelation 8, 9, and 16 will compound the problem immensely. To the moral, spiritual and ethical problems will be added the utter devastation of transportation systems, communications, infrastructure, housing and a severely reduced and battered population.

If Christ returns on the Day of Trumpets, winter will be just ahead in the northern hemisphere. There will be no harvest to feed those remaining because the waters in the oceans, rivers, lakes and springs will have been poisoned; vegetation blighted; and even the sun, moon and stars somehow “struck”! What monstrous, devastating storms will those conditions generate?

War will have just ceased over much of the earth's surface. A great earthquake, “such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth” (Revelation 16:18), will have rocked the planet, followed by hailstones the weight of a talent falling from the skies (verse 21). Will even one building be left

standing when even islands are moved from their places, mountains leveled and valleys lifted (verse 20)? How many trees will be available for building shelters? A huge salvage operation will probably be among the first orders of business.

Are we ready for this? Will we be equal to this task when the time comes?

## Even Worse Problems

But that is hardly the worst of the problems we will face.

For thus says the LORD: “Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel! Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there.

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.” (Jeremiah 31:7-9)

What about dealing with all these people? As they come out of their captivity, they will have turned to God, a necessary and wonderful first step. They will have a frame of mind—renouncing self-will—where we can begin to work with them. But this will not magically blow away their character and psychological problems. Even in our own lives since conversion, God has had to bring us face-to-face with weaknesses of character and attitude that we must overcome.

Think of the horrors these people will have witnessed: wholesale murder in death camps, perhaps the cold-blooded butchering of their children and other loved ones. They may have lived as slaves in great degradation, having no choices, separated from loved ones, always wondering what happened to them, fearful that they will never eat another meal, and always facing the betrayal of others seeking favor and trying to survive. What will these experiences have done to their minds? Because of the need to survive, such circumstances can cause a person to become wholly self-centered. How will we deal with that?

## Rebuilding the Ruins

At the very worst of the destruction and mayhem, just when it seems mankind will succeed in totally destroying himself, Jesus Christ will return at the last trumpet. At the same time, we will be resurrected or changed to begin the process of rebuilding lives, towns and nations. This much we know:

• **Isaiah 2:2-3:** Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

• **Isaiah 51:3:** For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

• **Isaiah 52:9:** Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.

• **Isaiah 58:12:** Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

Beginning with Jerusalem, the healing and rebuilding will get underway. Gradually, as word of these activities circulates around the globe, representatives of other nations will begin inquiring about why the reconstruction of society works so well in Jerusalem. God’s Kingdom will make it work, and at this point each of us comes back into the picture. Will we be able to help? The answer is emphatically, “Yes, you will!” God makes no mistakes in calling people to prepare for service to Him in His plan.

Nor does God fail in carrying through on what He sets out to do in preparing us (Philippians 1:6). “But,” we have undoubtedly thought, “what do we know of city management? God should have chosen experts, people already experienced in these areas.” Notice, however, how the experts—the strong, mighty, wise and talented of this world—are operating the cities, states and nations today. Are they doing a good job? Something is tragically, horribly missing from their methods!

## The Tower of Babel

What has gone wrong? The account of the building of the Tower of Babel raises some interesting implications:

And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” But the LORD came

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# FELLOWSHIP ACROSS THE MILES

Chess enthusiasts have a unique method of sharpening their playing skills: They play the game by correspondence. All experienced chess players are familiar with chess notation, a method of indicating space by space each location on a chess board. With this simple notation, they can carry on a chess game by mail, scribbling a few characters on a postcard and dropping it in the mailbox.

This kind of chess match is usually conducted between serious players who suffer the misfortune of being removed from better-caliber players who can effectively challenge their skills in this intricate game. Some chess aficionados have been known to carry on single matches like this for months or years. These same chess buffs also play several matches at the same time! Such long-distance matches provide a worthwhile alternative to playing against computerized chess partners that lack the human element of the game.

These chess players and members of God's church have something in common. To some extent we feel a sense of isolation and loneliness because of the separations that have occurred in the past decade. Being alone in the church is difficult; we miss the "iron sharpen[ing] iron" (Proverbs 27:17) that we once took for granted in the larger congregations. By using the same method that chess players use, though, we can avail ourselves of a unique opportunity to have genuine fellowship with other scattered brethren.

All we need is pen, paper, envelopes and stamps!

## Long-Distance Fellowship

The writer of Hebrews understood the need of church members to fellowship: "... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). Though we normally think of this scripture in light of fellowshipping face-to-face, we can apply its principle to the present scattered condition of the church. If we cannot converse in person, we can do it by letter!

Fellowshipping by correspondence affords God's people a chance to encourage and buoy one another up in spirit throughout the entirety of the year. Though we may live hundreds or thousands of miles apart, we do not have to limit our fellowship to the eight days we spend attending the Feast. A good, two-way correspondence can benefit us anytime, anyplace!

We all know how hard it is to get around to everyone at the Feast of Tabernacles! Even with just a few hundred people in attendance, we cannot spend sufficient time with each

person—there are only so many services, meals and activities. The best-laid plans to get in touch with our many friends at the Feast often go awry, and sadly, we sometimes miss each other in the hubbub of our busy and tight schedules.

But, even if that happens, we do not have to put our fellowship on hold until next year! If we take advantage of corresponding by mail, we can move our long-distance

friendship from the back burner to the front. Throughout the year, we can cement our relationships with our brethren and anticipate a happy reunion when we get together again.

Letter writing offers us opportunities to get to know each other the way we really should. It gives us a chance to share our backgrounds,

experiences and individual characteristics in a way that verbal dialogue does not. Correspondence provides a vehicle for achieving positive, uplifting relationships with those whom God has called as our brothers and sisters in His Family.

If we are willing to risk exposing our personality to others, we can—with very little effort on our part—



participate in a relationship that can grow strong and close-knit. In a way, it can make us feel a real kinship with our pen pals. All it takes is a desire to reach out and share the self with others in an attitude of camaraderie.

After all, to be one as God desires us to be with Him and with the brethren of His church has to start somewhere! If we wait around for true brotherly friendships to develop by themselves, we will wait forever. Just a little bit of fellowship can lead to a long—eternal—relationship. Great things can come from the tiniest of beginnings, resulting in an eternity of joyous experiences!

All we need is a pen, paper, envelopes and stamps!

## Help in Growth

A unique aspect of one-on-one correspondence is that it helps people to express themselves—to overcome reticence that they may have in direct conversation. Many of us came out of medium- to large-sized congregations where we could hide in the crowd. At times, some were hesitant to “open up”—others were downright afraid to show their true colors in public.

In a more open environment as we enjoy now, we are almost forced to have closer fellowship with other members. Rather than look upon this fearfully, we should look at it as a chance to develop parts of our character and grow personally. We can overcome shyness and fear, and we will probably find that many of our new friends have the same anxieties that we do. One-on-one correspondence can promote reciprocity in sharing life’s experiences, which help to edify the other both mentally and spiritually. By writing to each other, we can help each other grow!

Beyond offering uplifting fellowship, the togetherness that pen pals soon develop will eventually provide opportunities for good works. Living in these perilous times of trial and difficulty, many of us fall into various distresses now and again. Most, if not all, of us go through periods when we are down or spiritually weak. Pen pals have the opportunity to help each other during these bad times, offering encouragement, advice, prayers and other services depending

on the situation.

Letter writing can give us the satisfaction of knowing we have shared the lives of others. In fact, this “sharing” is part of the definition of the word (*koinonia*) the writers of the New Testament used for fellowship. It means communion, participation, communication, sharing. This sharing of ourselves and participating in others’ lives promotes being



joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, caus[ing] growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:16)

God called each of us to experience spiritual growth, and writing to each other can help us all. Since we are so scattered over the globe, regular letter writing can open to us a whole new world of proper, uplifting fellowship!

All we need is a pen, paper, envelopes and stamps!

## An Apostle’s Fellowship

In I John 1:3-4, 7, the aged apostle uses this method of fellowship with us—*across nearly two millennia!*

That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, *that you also may have fellowship with us*; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write that your joy may be full. . . . But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, *we have fellowship with one*

*another*, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Though he is long dead, we can have fellowship with him through our mutual Spirit of God. By this means, John can fill our minds with a real vision of who and what Christ is. He can describe to us the love that flowed from Him to those who spent so much time in His presence. What a great work God has done to make this fellowship possible!

Now think of the advantage two correspondents have in a similar context if they are contemporaries! We can begin and build long-lasting and mutually exhilarating relationships just by writing to one another. When one writes to another and he responds, we begin a bond of fellowship. And just as John has done, we can encourage and edify each other as we progress toward God’s Kingdom.

Most of us have little involvement with the people in the world around us, those who live their lives according to ways far from our own. As the times get more evil, we will have less and less in common with them. In the God’s church, however, there are people who know and are endeavoring to live the way of God just like us. We have this way of life in common. We are not alone!

Not all of us are powerful speakers. We cannot all sing beautiful solos or give eloquent prayers. Most of us are just ordinary people. Yet we are people to whom God has given gifts. What if one of the gifts He has given us is an ability to correspond effectively with others? We could be missing out on a chance to use one of God’s gifts in a way that would delight Him!

Consider finding pen pals in the church. Think of ways to express trials, tragedies and triumphs so they can learn and grow from your experiences. Remember how God has worked in your life and share it with them. Write to them about your blessings and your set backs. Allow your pen pals know you and encourage them to let you get to know them.

All you need is a pen, paper, envelopes and stamps!

—Sherly J. Togans

Lately, my 12-year-old son Cody has been re-reading Basil Wolverton's *The Bible Story*, published several years ago by the Worldwide Church of God. The narrative of these books, written for children but enjoyable for almost everyone, is naturally devoted to the Israelites. The six books cover the time from the Creation to Judah's return from exile in Babylon.

As Cody read about the children of Israel and their ups and downs—seemingly bursting with blessings one minute and enslaved the next—he asked, “Were they stupid?” We have probably all wondered this very thing ourselves at one time or another. We may not have expressed it quite as bluntly, but most of us have wondered just how intelligent they really were.

No, the Israelites were not stupid, just human. Even we converted people

lost the knowledge of God, and they lost their physical blessings. As slaves, they had little or nothing of their own, and they had no means or freedom to accumulate wealth.

When God delivered them from bondage, however, He allowed the Israelites to spoil their Egyptian mas-

pable of doing.

Finally, they reached Mount Sinai, where they camped for eleven months. Here, they heard God's law taught and they entered into the Old Covenant with Him. God promised to make them “a special treasure . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” if they obeyed Him and kept His covenant (Exodus 19:5-6), and they readily agreed (verse 8).

From this point through the rest of the book, God seems to emphasize three subjects: the Sabbath, the holy days and offerings. For instance, God gives Israel the Ten Commandments in chapter 20, and tradition states that this occurred on Pentecost, a holy day. God instructs the people about the Sabbath in verses 8-11 and about offerings in verse 24. In chapter 23 we find the Sabbath (verse 12), the holy days (verses 14-16) and offerings (verses

# What

ters (Exodus 12:35-36). In effect, they received all their accumulated back pay, with interest, all at once! The Egyptians gave them gold, silver, jewelry, fine clothing or whatever they requested. Suddenly, the Israelites

# Do We Have

make our share of mistakes, as we readily admit. It is just our good fortune that God has not recorded our colossal mistakes for all to read—yet!

It is easy to think of those unconverted Israelites in a negative way. How many times do we read, “The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD” (Judges 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; etc.)? We could get the impression they never did anything right!

We would be wrong, though, if we thought this; on occasion they did things that sometimes put us to shame! Even in their unconverted state, they made astounding sacrifices and performed great deeds that make us seem small in comparison. We will look at one of these.

## Rags to Riches

Before the Exodus, the Israelites lived in slavery for generations. They

were wealthy beyond imagination!

The average Israelite, like a bum winning the lottery, must have had a heady feeling looking at his newfound riches. The Israelites had no experience with wealth. What should one do with it? How does one keep it? How does one accumulate more of it?

Of course, in hurrying out of Egypt,

15, 17-18). These three subjects surface several more times in the remainder of Exodus' 40 chapters.

## The Sabbath, Holy Days and Offerings

Why did God emphasize these three things to the Israelites? For all their lives, they had known nothing but work, seven days a week. One day was just like any other; they would wake, eat, work in the brickyards and start all over the next day. But the Sabbath gave them a break, a rest, a day of peace. It gave structure to their week.

It does the same for us. In our spiritual Egypt, our lives had no real purpose. Like the Israelites, our days repeated endlessly: sleep, eat, work. When God called us, all that had to change; we had to alter our rhythm to keep in time with God's weekly structure.

# to Offer?

they may not have had time to worry about this kind of thing! Besides their wealth, they also had front-row seats to one of the most awesome displays of God's power in man's history. They had watched all the plagues take place and seen the waters part and the Egyptians drown in the Red Sea. They knew what God was ca-



**An Egyptian taskmaster oversees the labor of Israelite slaves.** As property of the Egyptians, the Israelites had virtually nothing of their own. Yet when God blessed them with tremendous wealth, they willingly gave a huge offering to God.

The holy days gave the Israelites a reason for living, a time of festivity just ahead on the calendar. Though they did not understand them as we do, they had enough knowledge of them to give them a vision of the Promised Land. Likewise, the holy days give us a vision of a much greater Promised Land, the Kingdom of God.

Offerings forced the Israelites to bear in mind who God really is. They had already seen Him supply their needs many times. He gave them freedom, food, water, protection, guidance, leadership, law and many other blessings. Offerings made them recognize that He had supplied all of these and that they had to depend on Him to continue to supply them. Offerings taught them—and teach us—humility and faith.

## A Huge Freewill Offering

It is in this area of offerings that the children of Israel left us a wonderful example. In chapter 25, God asks for an offering for the building of the Tabernacle:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who

gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; blue and purple and scarlet yarn, fine linen thread, and goats’ hair; rams’ skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.” (Exodus 25:1-7)

The people responded with an enormous outpouring of these things:

Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they

brought the LORD’s offering. . . . They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart, and brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, . . . fine linen, . . . silver or bronze. . . . All the women who were gifted artisans spun yarn. . . . The rulers brought onyx stones, and the stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate, and spices and oil. . . . The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD, all the men and women whose hearts were willing. . . . (Exodus 35:21-29)

The offering was so huge that Moses had to say, “Stop!” (Exodus 36:6).

For generations these people had been slaves, possessing nothing of substance. Now rich, they were willing to give much of their wealth to God. He had not even commanded it, just asked for it! In fact, God did not want it if they did not give it willingly (Exodus 25:2).

Certainly, their guilt over their sin with the Golden Calf played a part in this overwhelming response, but we can still learn from their abundant

generosity of spirit. They did not have Bibles back in their tents from which they could “prove all things” (I Thessalonians 5:21, KJV). They had seen clear, physical proof that God was present and working in their behalf. When Moses told them, “God has asked for an offering to build the Tabernacle,” they did not doubt that he was conveying God’s Word, His will, to them.

They gave freely of their riches. “Willing” (*nadib*) in Exodus 35:5 means “generous,” “magnanimous,” “liberal” or “willing-hearted.” In verse 21 “willing” (*nadab*) means “to offer freely,” “to volunteer” or “to present spontaneously.” Their offerings were spontaneous and generous, or as Paul says, cheerfully given (II Corinthians 9:7). And they kept on bringing them until Moses ordered them to quit.

## A Rough Estimate

Like any good administrator, Moses took inventory of what the people gave (Exodus 38:21-31):

- 29 talents and 730 shekels of gold (verse 24);
- 100 talents and 1775 shekels of silver (verse 25); and
- 70 talents and 2400 shekels of bronze (verse 29).

No one seems to agree how much this represents in modern currency, but we can get a rough estimate fairly easily. Using the equivalents found in *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* (p. 739) and current market prices from the daily newspaper, it becomes a simple math problem.

- At \$400 per ounce, the gold (approximately 90,000 oz.) converts to \$36 million!
- At \$5.50 per ounce, the silver (approximately 155,000 oz.) converts to \$852,500.
- We will estimate the bronze at \$250,000.
- The people also gave fine cloth,

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# Caught Up IN THE RAPTURE

What would you think if I said that the Rapture is a biblical teaching? In the church of God, we do not like to use this term because of its evangelical overtones and its reputation as a doctrine of wild-eyed, Bible-thumping fanatics. The essence of the idea, though, comes straight from Holy Writ!

Proponents of the Rapture cite I Thessalonians 4:16-17 as their chief source of information:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

So far, so good. But how did this teaching of the apostle Paul ever come to be called the Rapture? The answer lies in the word translated “shall be caught up” (Greek *harpagésometha*). In Latin, this word is *rapere*, from which “rapture” is derived. Free of any arcane or mysterious interpretation, it simply means “to be caught up,” “snatched” or “seized.”

The trouble begins when people confuse this meaning with another definition of *rapture* that has nothing to do with the biblical concept: “a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion; a

mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things.” When people blur these meanings, a picture develops of a strange, otherworldly experience preached by fire-breathing preachers to compel sinners to repent before God’s wrath burns them to cinders.

To avoid this connotation, the church has in the recent past used other words to describe this future event: “Christ’s second coming,” “when we are changed,” and most often, “the first resurrection.” These euphemisms serve a good purpose in distancing the church from groups that hold unscriptural beliefs on this topic.



## The Common Belief

Those who teach the Rapture frequently begin with I Thessalonians 4:16-17, but soon afterward they move into areas unsupported in the Bible. They make assumptions that are suspect. Worst, they fail to consider the clear order of events presented in Revelation, pinpointing when this astounding miracle will occur.

What do they believe? They believe that at some point in the near future, Jesus Christ will return and “snatch away” all Christians on the earth. Those who believe in Jesus will rise to meet Him in the air, and He will whisk them off to heaven for a 3½-to-seven-year Marriage Supper. In the

meantime here on earth, untold destruction occurs when professing “born-again Christians” suddenly vanish while at the controls of cars, trucks, trains, airplanes, heavy equipment and the like. “Unsaved” relatives and friends will frantically and unsuccessfully search for their raptured loved ones. The media will provide 24-hour coverage of the mysterious disappearance of millions of people, speculating wildly on its cause—everything from a mass alien abduction to shifting dimensions and levels of consciousness.

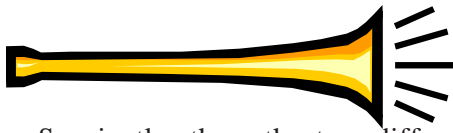
Does this sound like something our God would do?

On the other hand, the church’s understanding of the first resurrection is more straightforward. On the day Christ returns to earth to establish His Kingdom, the dead in Christ will rise first, and those who are alive and converted will follow. They will meet Him in the air and immediately return to earth as a vast army of spirit beings to de-feat the Beast and False Prophet in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Revelation 19:14; Joel 3:1-2; Zechariah 14:1-5).

Notice two vast differences in these scenarios:

- The Protestant Rapture takes place either 3½ or seven years *before* Christ’s return, while the church believes it will occur *at* His second coming. For this reason, the Protestant concept is often called the “Pre-tribulation Rapture” and our view, the “Post-tribulation Rapture.”

- When believers are “caught up” in the air, Protestants believe, they will go immediately *to heaven* for a long, spectacular feast. We believe, though, that the saints will return *to earth* to fight in Christ’s heavenly army and to help establish God’s Kingdom.



Succinctly, then, the two differences are in *timing* and *destination*.

### A Question of When

When this event occurs is the key to understanding the Rapture. If the timing is off, the sequence of events will not make sense, and this is what happens with a Pre-tribulation Rapture. To make the Rapture fit, other events must be juggled to new positions, and verifying scriptures must be wrenched out of context to substantiate it.

The most abused verse on the subject of the end times is Daniel 9:27, and it is a linchpin in the Pre-tribulation Rapture theory: “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” Unlike the Protestants, we believe that “he” in this verse refers to Messiah, not Antichrist, for the main subject of this section is Messiah. (Request our December 1994 article, “Seventy Weeks Are Determined . . .,” for further information.)

Protestants, referring to Isaiah 28:15 and “a covenant with death,” say that the Antichrist makes a peace treaty for one week—seven years—with the Jews. But this makes no sense! Why would the Beast “destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary” (Daniel 9:26b), and “then . . . confirm a covenant . . . for one week” (verse 27) with the vanquished Jews? The timing is wrong! Verses 26-27a speak of events that occurred in the first century.

It makes more sense to attribute this covenant to our Savior. He was “cut off, but not for Himself” (verse 26a) by His redemptive death in AD 31. He had spent 3½ years “con-

firm[ing] a covenant [the New Covenant] with many,” and “in the middle of the week He [brought] an end to sacrifice and offering” (verse 27a) by the sacrifice of His perfect life. This simply restates what is said in verse 26a.

If this is the case, the whole idea of seven years of tribulation vanishes. Many Pre-tribulationists have begun to realize this, now claiming that the Rapture will occur 3½ years before Christ’s return. How can we show



that this is not when it will happen?

### The Last Trumpet

We find the answer right in the context of I Thessalonians 4; in fact, Paul mentions the exact timing twice! In verse 15 Paul says that this occurs at “the coming of the Lord,” and in verse 16 Christ “descend[s] from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.” To combat these clear time markers, Protestants have to say that Christ returns twice and that there are two different blowings of the trumpet!

Paul himself quashes this argument in I Corinthians 15:50-52:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the kingdom of God*; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at *the last trumpet*. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

I Corinthians 15:50-52 is parallel to I Thessalonians 4:15-17. The phrase “the kingdom of God” in I Corinthians parallels “the coming of the Lord” in I Thessalonians. Likewise, “the last trumpet” parallels “the trumpet of God.” The last trumpet announces *both* the resurrection of the saints and Christ’s triumphant return to earth to set up His Kingdom!

We must go to Revelation 11:15-18

to confirm when the last trumpet sounds:

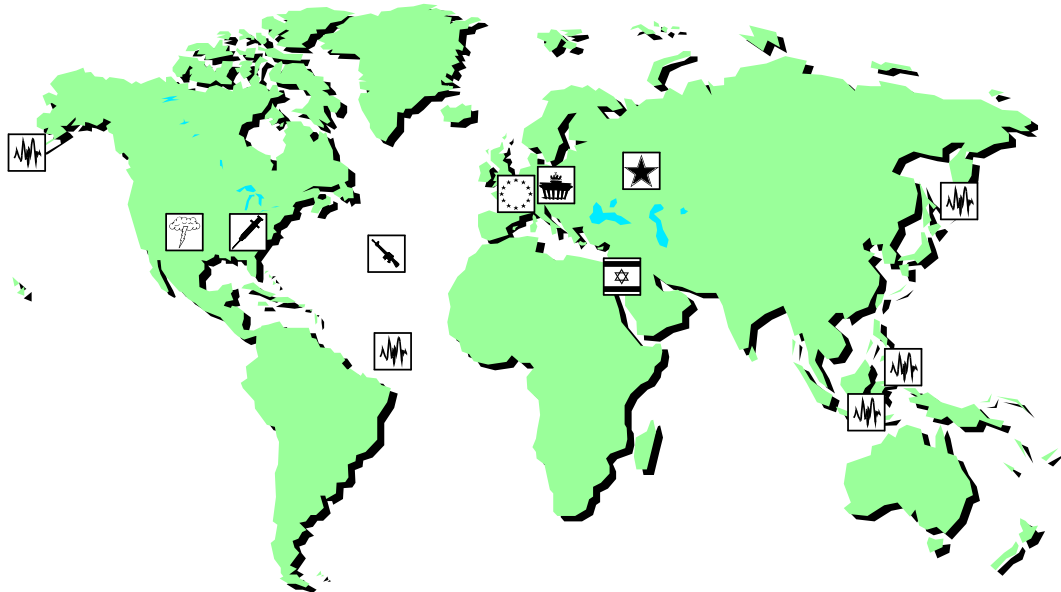
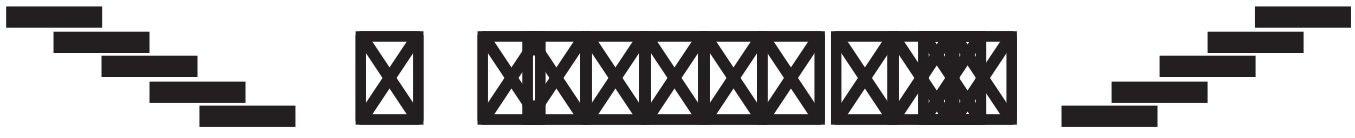
Then the seventh angel sounded [his trumpet]: And there were loud voices [shouts? of archangels?] in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” And the twenty-four elders . . . worshiped God, saying: “We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.”

This prophecy adds even more to the mix. This last—seventh—trumpet announces the coming of Christ, the establishment of God’s Kingdom, the judgment upon the nations, and the rewarding of the saints. They occur simultaneously!

The last trumpet sounds when Christ returns, not 3½ years before! If we compare verses 11-13 (the resurrection of the Two Witnesses) with verse 19, the “great earthquake” ties the resurrection of the saints with the beginning of the Kingdom (see also Revelation 16:18). In addition, an angel tells John in Revelation 10:7 that when “the seventh angel . . . is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished.” There will be no more mystery about man becoming God when the saints are resurrected or changed to eternal spirit beings!

Matthew 24:30-31 also verifies this scenario, showing that the trumpet sounds to send the angels to gather the elect from all over the earth to meet Him upon His return. To clinch the argument, verse 29 very plainly says, “Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days. . .!” Isaiah 27:12-13, Joel 2:1-11 and Zechariah 14:3-5,

Please see page 19



## Earthquakes



Several strong +7.0 earthquakes rocked areas of the planet in June. On June 10, a 7.9 temblor struck the Andreanof Islands of Alaska, the strongest to hit North America in 10 years. Another 7.9 quake hit the Flores/Banda sea region on June 17 at a depth of 350 miles, making it the largest deep earthquake since the Bolivian 8.3 quake on June 6, 1994.

Large earthquake totals for 1996 as of July 4:

+6.0s: 80 (Avg.=105/yr.)    +7.0s: 13 (Avg.=15/yr.).

## Israel



The 21 Arab League members met in Cairo June 21-23 to urge Israel to prove its commitment to peace by resuming negotiations without delay. Yassir Arafat's deputy threatened: "Any digression by Binyamin Netanyahu from the peace process will cause a return to the state of war which existed before the Oslo agreements of September 1993." Though promising to continue the peace talks, Netanyahu insists that he has a mandate to pursue peace in his own way.

## Europe



The European Union (EU) has agreed to negotiate for the adoption of a single currency and set up a system of central banks despite British opposition. Some analysts expect Britain and Sweden to withdraw from the EU and return to the European Free Trade Association, which includes Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

## Drugs



Since 1992, recent use of marijuana has skyrocketed 137% among American 12- and 13-year-olds and 200% among 14- and 15-year-olds.

The percentage of students having used any illicit drugs within the past 12 months also rose over 10% in each of the 8th, 10th and 12th grades.

## Weather



Over 65% of U.S. counties have been declared disaster areas as a result of extreme weather conditions occurring in the last year. Natural disasters have become increasingly intense and of great concern. America has experienced hurricanes, tornadoes, drought, flooding and bitter cold in unprecedented proportions in recent years.

## Russia



Russia's ambassador to Iran assured the Iranians that Moscow considers forging a strategic partnership with Iran to be a foreign policy priority and would oppose U.S. attempts to isolate Tehran. Iran joined Russia in opposing NATO's plan to expand into Eastern Europe, fearing that it would then move into the Middle East.

## War



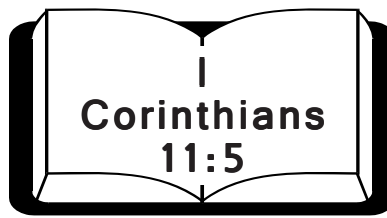
A research group in Stockholm, Sweden, reports that there were 30 armed conflicts fought worldwide in 1995, just one less than 1994. All of these wars pitted a government against another group or groups within the country.

## Germany



According to the same Swedish research group, Germany ranks third behind the U.S. and Russia as the world's foremost arms exporters. In 1995, Germany sold \$2 billion worth of arms, compared to Russia's \$4 billion and America's \$10 billion.

—Andy Benedetto



# MEN AND WOMEN, HATS AND HAIR

Numerous churches have a tradition specifying that women should wear a veil, a hat or some other kind of head covering when attending church services. Claiming that their teaching derives from the custom of the early New Testament church, these churches say that the apostle Paul specifies that women should wear a head covering. As proof, they point to I Corinthians 11:5, where God inspired Paul to write, "But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved."

Paul expands on this point in the next verse, becoming very emphatic: "For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered" (verse 6). On the surface, this seems to be a clear command by a leading, first-century apostle.

What is Paul saying here? Did he teach the early New Testament church of God that women must wear a hat or veil to church services? If this is not what he meant, how should we understand these verses? What kind of tradition was Paul teaching the church?

## Head Coverings and Submission

To obtain a clear picture of what

the apostle meant by these statements, we must understand these verses in the context of his entire discussion of head coverings. This topic begins in verse 3, giving the underlying principle for his decision: "But I want

***"But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved."***

you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

The real subject under discussion is subjection to authority! Paul shows that, under God's government, there is a chain of authority. A woman is subject to her husband, who is subject to Christ, who is subject to God the Father. He repeats this chain in the section on marriage in Ephesians 5:22-24.

In verse 4, Paul relates this matter of authority first to a man's head covering, "Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered, dishonors his head." Paul explains that a man should not have his head covered because a head covering symbolizes subjection. To wear a head covering would dishonor his God-given position as the head of his wife. The apostle explains this prin-

ciple further in verses 7-10:

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

As God has appointed the roles of men and women, a man stands in a similar position toward his wife as Christ does to men. Thus, Paul says, a man who is a godly example of loving authority "is the image and glory of God." Likewise, a woman stands in a similar position as man does to God, in subjection. Therefore, Paul concludes, a woman must appear in her God-designed role as a submissive wife (Genesis 2:18; 3:16). Her submissive appearance renders glory to her head, her husband.

For further proof that this is what God intends, Paul recalls that God created a man first, then He formed a woman out of the man (I Corinthians 11:8). To him, the order of creation is significant, showing who was to be in authority. He then uses the fact that Eve was created as a helper and companion for Adam (verse 9), rather than vice versa, as a final proof for his

## A Ready Answer

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

conclusion that a man should not cover his head.

Paul immediately explains that the head covering a woman should wear symbolizes her submission to the man (verse 10). The covering on a woman's head is a sign of her willingness to be in subjection to a man. It also acknowledges that she has a special need for protection by angels that a man may not need.

In verses 11-12 the apostle cautions us not to go to extremes in these God-given roles:

Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as the woman was from the man, even so the man also is through the woman; but all things are from God.

Men and women need each other and can teach each other many things. In these verses, Paul seems to be recalling Genesis 2:24: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall be one flesh." If a husband and wife work together "in the Lord," they can produce the godly character that God desires in us. God has made us what we are, so we should, as "one flesh," strive to fulfill His purpose for us.

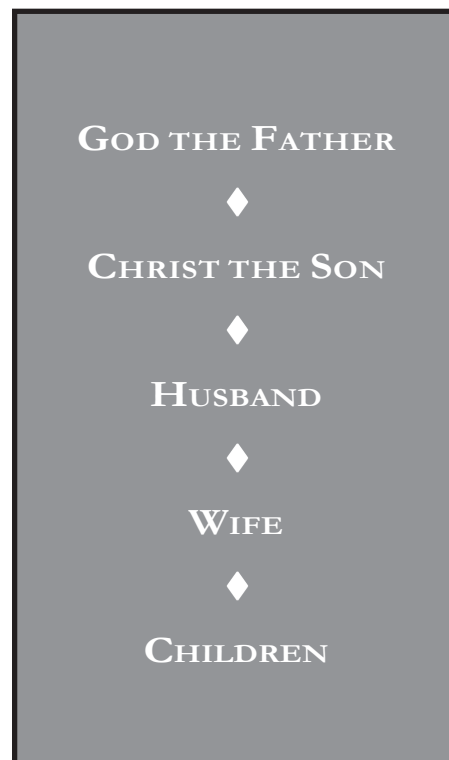
## What Head Covering?

What is this covering that Paul is saying a man should not wear but a woman should? In answering this unspoken question, Paul asks, "Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?" (verse 13). He immediately answers his own question: "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has *long hair*, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has *long hair*, it is a glory to her; for **her hair is given to her for a covering**" (verses 14-15).

All along, Paul has been writing, not about a hat or veil, but the length of one's hair! He is not saying a woman should wear something over her hair, but rather she should wear her hair long enough to be recognized as feminine. This wearing of her hair long shows her submission to the man.

Thus, in verse 5, Paul is saying that if a woman prays or prophesies while wearing her hair short like a man, she is dishonoring the man. She is not showing a willingness to wear the symbol of submission to the man's authority. Further, for a woman to wear her hair short like a man is just as dishonorable as if she had her head shaved like a fallen woman! Verse 6 means that if a woman has the wrong attitude about this matter, she might as well go all the way and have her head shaved!

The issue under discussion, far from being a matter of wearing a hat or veil, involves the length of men's and women's hair. Paul's head cover-



ing is the actual hair that grows on our heads, and his teaching is that a woman should wear long hair and a man should wear short hair.

The only place in the Bible where God instructs men to wear long hair is in Numbers 6:5 where He commands Nazirites to let their hair grow for the duration of their vow. A Nazirite vow was taken by those who were not Levites but wanted to serve in the Temple worship. In this case, the man was required to wear long hair as a sign of his submission to God. Ironically, the apostle Paul is thought to have taken such a vow not

long before he wrote these instructions to the Corinthian church (Acts 18:18). He later paid the expenses of four men who had also taken a vow (Acts 21:18-24).

## Principle and Balance

Because Paul specifies that a woman should wear long hair, some wonder, "How long is long?" Some have gone so far as to believe that a woman should never cut her hair. However, Scripture does not specify uncut hair, but long hair. Others have confused shorn hair with cut hair. Shorn hair is hair that has been closely clipped in a mannish hairdo.

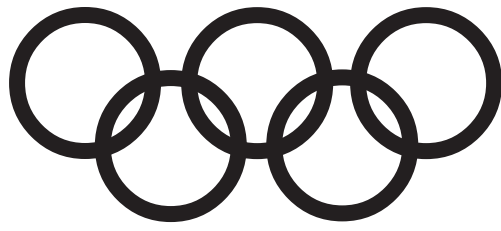
Paul is making the point that a woman should wear her hair long enough so that she looks feminine and honorable. This is why he says in verse 15, "If a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her." A woman should pay particular attention to her hair and make certain that it is long enough and properly groomed and styled to enhance her appearance and femininity.

On the other hand, men must not follow modern fads and styles and wear their hair long like women. Long hair brings dishonor upon a man. God intends that we make a clear distinction between men and women in both grooming and dress (Deuteronomy 22:5). The length of one's hair is a most important line of distinction to God.

As supreme Creator, God has decreed that men should be in a position of leadership and loving authority over women. As such, they should be strong and masculine in both behavior and appearance. At the same time, He has decreed that women should accede to the role of submission. This should be reflected in a feminine appearance and demeanor.

We can learn an important lesson from these scriptures: Our appearance and grooming are important to God. We should not limit these instructions just to church services either. They apply at all times in all situations. In following the traditions that God gave to His church regarding hair length, grooming and dress, we are honoring God and the chain of authority that He has established.

—Earl L. Henn



# Do We Want to Catch “OLYMPIC FEVER”?

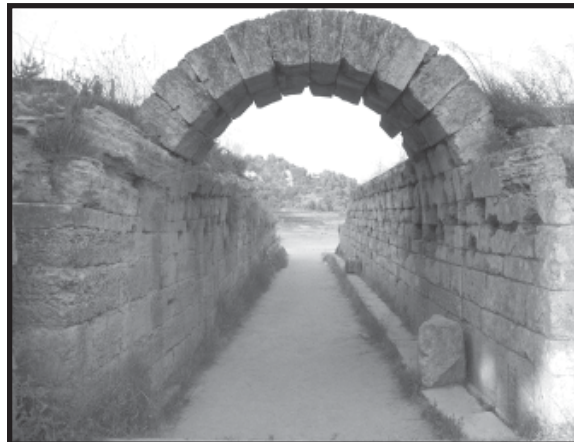
**H**undreds of millions of dollars in advertising and non-stop media hype will ensure that “Olympic Fever” will catch on! Is this a “bug” we want to catch? What is the “Olympic Spirit”? What are its origins?

Everyone knows that the Olympic games began in Greece nearly eight centuries before Christ. Every four years athletes would compete against each other for the honor of being Olympic champion in their sport. This idea formed the basis for the modern games, renewed in Athens in 1896.

What provided the basis for the ancient games? Religion, of course! In Greek mythology, Mount Olympus was the home of the gods, where they ran races and performed other intergalactic feats of strength against each other. In Olympia, the city where the ancient games were held, lies the remains of a great temple to Zeus within a *sacred grove*. This temple complex *faces east*, and its altar stands on a mound of sacrificial animal ashes. A temple to Hera, Zeus’ wife, lies nearby. East of these temples and connected to them by a short covered porch, worshippers constructed an athletic field to re-enact and celebrate the contests of the gods. We know these re-enactments as the Olympic games.

Alexander Hislop, in *The Two Babylons*, pp. 20, 110, 307-308, identifies Hera and Zeus as Greek equivalents of Semiramis and Nimrod. Along with Hermes (Cush), this unholy trinity was worshipped under

different names in various ancient cultures as “mother and child/husband.” They are tied together with sun worship and ultimately to worship of the fallen Lucifer, “son of the



**The arched walkway leading from the temples of Zeus and Hera to the stadium in Olympia (top) and the sacred olive grove nearby (bottom).** The ancient Olympics were tightly bound to Greek religion. Some of those ideals and rituals have been retained in the modern Games.

morning” or “daystar,” Satan the Devil (Isaiah 14:12)!

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the ancient games

always remained a central ex-

pression of the Greek ideas that the body of man has a glory as well as his intellect and spirit, that body and mind should alike be disciplined, and that it is by the harmonious discipline of both *that men best honour Zeus*. (11<sup>th</sup> ed., 1910, vol. 20, p. 93. Emphasis ours.)

The modern games transfer similar ideas to our day, yet in our humanistic thinking, we have transferred the honor from Zeus to man himself.

What are the Olympics? When we boil everything down to the most fundamental issue, the games promote self-exaltation, one of Satan’s worst characteristics. They are tests of skill, speed and strength to see who is the greatest in a particular field.

This hits children hardest of all; the age of the contestants seems to decrease every Olympiad. In some countries, children are trained almost from infancy, and their entire lives are devoted to winning a gold medal. Is this a modern form of passing children through the fire to Molech (Jeremiah 32:35), completely devoting them to a goal, and causing them to lead unbalanced, selfish lives for a temporal reward?

The Greeks adorned the neck of the victor with an olive wreath (“the branch of God,” signifying deity). Vast treasures of money and food were heaped on the deified victors who never had to work again. Second place had worked just as hard

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# PREPARING TO RULE

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continued from page 4

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down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them." (Genesis 11:4-6)

How technologically developed the people were at this time is sketchy. The Great Pyramid of Giza, whether built before or after the Flood, is evidence of a high degree of technology. Whatever the case, God's statement that "nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" implies the builders of Babel were at least on the verge of great technological leaps. How much can a person discover and develop in a seventy-year life span? Yet these people lived hundreds of years! Since knowledge accumulates from generation to generation, imagine how it would build in a person over 500 years!

Consider what man has accomplished in the last 150 years. He has learned how to harness the power of mighty rivers by building dams to produce electricity. He has built soaring bridges across great chasms. He has drilled deeply into the earth to tap its stores of oil and gas to transport ourselves from place to place, heat our homes and fuel our factories. Man has put satellites hundreds of miles into the heavens and placed men on the moon. We can watch the astronauts on television though they are 240,000 miles away!

The list of our technological accomplishments seems endless. Technology, though, is not the answer to mankind's problems. By the time the Millennium begins, the world will have realized that knowledge of physical things cannot solve our problems, especially those of the spirit. Each new technological stride merely titillates us for a while, failing miserably to give a sense of meaning to our lives. Technology cannot rid us of competition and inordinate desire. Instead, it only seems to accelerate the plunge toward oblivion and meaninglessness.

We can be sure God will not permit mankind to rebuild blindly, as Micah 4:1-3 implies:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established

on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Beginning with Israel, God will take a much more direct and visible role in governing the nations. Representatives of nations will flow to Jerusalem to learn God's ways. They must begin at ground zero and prepare their lives to reflect the image of God, just as we have had to do. That these people come to God is an acknowledgment that they and their forefathers had made a mess of things before Christ returned, and now they want to learn from God and His people how to do things properly.

## We Will Be Ready!

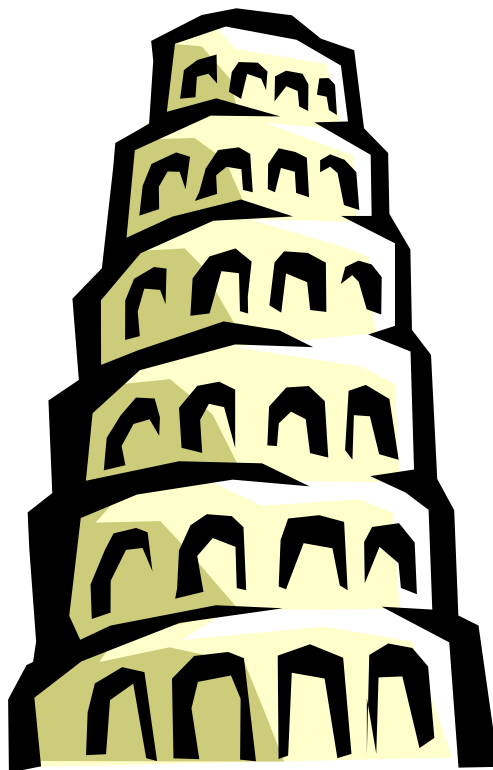
As individuals, we may feel our lives are small and inconspicuous. We may not make much money. We may rent a small apartment and not even own a car. Perhaps we even have physical handicaps, be elderly or think our educational level is too low to be of value to help anyone. We may believe that nothing in our lives is helping us learn to tackle the complex administrative, organizational and personal problems that arise when many people live close together.

Our situation, though, can prepare us to do these things. How? Because this world's problems are much *less* complex than they seem to be! From the top to bottom of society, the overwhelming majority of people do not understand the *nature* of the problems. We are working on and overcoming the nature of these colossal problems *daily*.

**We will be prepared to assist these people!** We are learning now to live godly lives of giving, cooperating, sharing, submitting to each other humbly, loving and serving our neighbors. We are learning not to look for ways to defend or promote ourselves, seek vindication, amass power or protect our image.

Notice, for example, James 4:1-3:

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for plea-



**After the Flood, the people of the world joined together to build the Tower of Babel.** Man was on the verge of a major advance in knowledge, but God stalled his progress by confusing the language. In the past few centuries, man has once again made great leaps in knowledge, but his progress has not solved his problems. The solution is spiritual.

sure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

This world is filled with wars of every size and magnitude, declared and undeclared. The strong attack the weak, and oppressed minorities fight to throw off the yoke of tyranny. Labor and management throw verbal bombs at each other. Husbands and wives do not divorce because they have peaceful, productive marriages! Increasingly, parents and children seem to look upon each other with scorn and sometimes break into open anger and fighting.

James shows ever so clearly that the root of these problems is lust, merely one expression of human nature. Human nature expresses itself in vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, murder, hatred, avarice, competition, lying, stealing, dishonoring parent, fornication, adultery and—the most damaging of all—idolatry. In fact, we could say that all the above flow from idolatry!

Romans 3:10-18 gives a vivid description of the perversity of human nature:

As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.” “Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit”; “the poison of asps is under their lips”; “whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known.”

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Quite an indictment of the nature that drives human society! This helps us to understand that even the struggles between nations are really only small problems grown great. Two major powers locked in a hot war may seem more complex than neighbors arguing over a backyard fence or a family quarrel, but the causes are essentially the same.

Are there problems in our families? If we make an honest search for the cause, we will find that one or both sides are lusting for something and competing for it. Either abuse of authority or an unwillingness to submit—or both—will be present because one or both sides want something and feel this is the only way to get it.

Since we cannot serve two masters, lust drives us to serve ourselves to get what we desire. The spin-offs will be insensitivity, inattention, lack of cooperation, gluttony, alcoholism, quarrels, adultery and lying. Our children will learn to be disobedient, nervous, selfish and rowdy.

## Faithful in Little

In II Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes that men’s minds have been “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” This means that the massive city, state, national and global problems are merely individual problems multiplied by the population. Nothing will change on earth until individuals are convinced that the solution to the problems begins with them. They first have to work to change themselves before they can begin to expect the community’s problems to disappear.

This principle holds true in marriage. If the cause is the same as in individual family quarrels, the solution is also the same. Love, tolerance, kindness, mercy, patience, forgiving, sharing, cooperating and helping, all done with and through contact with the true God and the power of His Spirit activated and used by the individual’s faith, will do the trick.

Luke 16:10-13 adds to the picture:

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon.

Jesus Christ does not need to see us in action administering a great city to know how we will govern in His Kingdom. He can see how we solve our problems in our own little life, whether we humble our-

selves to be faithful by submitting to His way. Or do we “solve” our relationship problems with others by shouting, punching, hating, crawling into a shell, refusing to fellowship, going on strike, spreading gossip, seeking others to take our side or running down another’s reputation?

He can tell by the way we manage our own or our company’s money; how we maintain our property; and how we dress. Christ can even judge our abilities by how we drive our car! Some people turn into aggressive, lead-footed monsters behind the wheel. Are we so vain to think the road belongs to us? Would He entrust a city to such an obnoxious person?

A woman once asked Mr. Armstrong what she had to do to worship God and prepare for the Kingdom. Who knows what she expected, but he advised her to begin in her bedroom! No one knows whether he meant that she should work on her prayers, keep the room neat and clean or improve her relationship with her husband—maybe all three. The principle is that preparation for the Kingdom is achieved by working on the little things of life God’s way.

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**N**othing will change on earth until individuals are convinced that the solution to the problems begins with them.

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Matthew 25:21 illustrates this clearly. "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" In this parable, the servant who misused his position was disqualified because the lord could not trust him to use what was given him in a godly way.

Can we see this, brethren? *The very elements involved in the process of sanctification are the ones that prepare and qualify us to rule!*

What kind of decisions do we make in the everyday things of life? The choices required to live God's way are really very simple. Basically, they are a matter of saying, "Yes" or "No" to God's law. It does not have to be complicated for God to judge where we stand. He did not give Adam and Eve some long, complex mathematical, engineering or political test. It was a simple test of obedience involving one of the most basic areas of life—food. You can eat this but not that.

We do not have to be an Adolf Hitler to prove ourselves unsuitable to rule over others. How we treat our spouse, children or friends will provide ample evidence. Do we carefully think through what we say? Do we keep our word? Are we short-tempered, hard to get along with, stubborn and uncooperative unless things are done our way? Are we quick to judge, impatient, malicious, foul-mouthed or rebellious? Do we seek preferential treatment or position?

Christ needs to know if we will live His way now, before He entrusts us with the power of office in His Kingdom. The leaders of this world are not interested in the Way (see Acts 9:2; 16:17; 18:25-26; 19:9). They consider it foolish, unrealistic, impractical and simplistic. So they make treaties and break them, and the wonderful advances of technology continue to prove useless in things that matter. The Kingdom of God, however, will produce all the good things written in the prophecies because the government itself reflects them. They are in its character, and they have already manifested themselves in each ruler's life.

## The Knowledge of the LORD

Isaiah 11:9 prophesies of a wonderful time that is just over the horizon, and it explains why the World Tomorrow will be so wonderful. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." When the knowledge of God is fully taught, believed and lived

by those dwelling on earth, an ideal world will result!

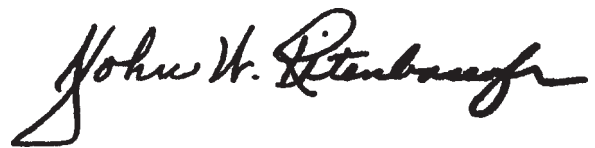
We will be the ones teaching the people the knowledge of God. They will be led to repentance and faith as we "rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:26-27). God's rulership is not abusive, but it is a firm guidance along the *only* way that works, His way. We will be qualified to lead them as priests of God because we will really know our subject. We will have studied it and lived it until it became thoroughly ingrained as our character. Because we will be living it, we will be good examples, which is as good a teaching method as there is. Because we have lived it and proved it and seen its fruits, we will be teachers dedicated to seeing our students improve, prosper and live joyously. Good teachers are not cruel or vindictive. They do not relish having to rebuke. We will be slow to anger, meek and self-controlled with a sincere desire to help.

Some worry that they will be unable to express themselves adequately before others who may have greater education. Never fear! Hebrews 2:18 shows an interesting principle about teaching, "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." We will communicate well with our students, even as Christ does, because we will be speaking from experience. We will be speaking in terms they understand because they will be going through then what we are now.

Physically constructing a town, city or even a nation is the easy part. The talent will be available in the people who survive into the Millennium. The hard part is working to rid mankind of the underlying problems of his nature and character. As long as our students are sincerely trying and overcoming even ever so gradually, we will patiently teach God's way of life over and over again. We will communicate humility and warmth to them even as Christ now does to us. When we are finally put in a position where we can truly help, we will need to express God's perfect, healing and positive love with every ounce of our being.

As we approach this year's Feast of Tabernacles, let us prepare with the purpose of our awesome destiny in mind, imitating Him even now, for this is the way He is preparing us to rule in the wonderful World Tomorrow!

In Christian love,



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## Do We Want to Catch “Olympic Fever”?

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but received no reward!

Modern Olympic champions receive gold medals, international fame, product endorsements and gifts of all kinds. They often move into lucrative professional sports or business. In a sense, they never have to work again either! But who remembers the silver and bronze medalists?

Notice, though, how truly godly men reacted to being proclaimed “gods.” In Acts 14:8-18, the Lystrans declared Paul and Barnabas to be Hermes and Zeus because of a miraculous healing. The people sought to adorn them with wreaths and make sacrifices to them as gods (verse 13)! How did Paul and Barnabas react? They rent their clothes (verse 14) and entreated the Greeks to “turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them” (verse 15). *They would have nothing*

*to do with the Greek gods!*

In 165-164 BC, the Jews took great exception when Antiochus Epiphanes sought to rename the Temple in Jerusalem “the Temple of Zeus Olympias.” They equated the idea of erecting a statue of Zeus as the abomination of desolation (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, “Olympian Zeus, Temple of,” vol. 5, p. 15; see Daniel 11:31; 12:11)! They wanted no part of the Greek gods either!

The church of God has long tied Easter, Christmas and other holidays to paganism and Satan worship. God soundly condemns such practices in Jeremiah 10:1-6; 16:20; 44:17-25 and Ezekiel 8:3-17 as worshipping the Queen of Heaven, Tammuz and other false gods who were merely men or demons. Yet some of these same ancient pagan practices also feature in the traditions of the modern Olympics. Are the Olympics different just because they do not use the names of Zeus, Hera and Hermes, and because they purport to be devoted to excellence in sports and international brotherhood?

Jeremiah 7:16-23 shows how God looks on some of these practices. He has not taught us to follow the practices of the heathen but has given us His way of life. In fact, such pagan practices not only provoke Him to anger, but also bring shame to those who participate in them (verse 19). As Moses writes, “You shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. . . . You shall be blameless before the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 18:9, 13).

Just like those who keep Christmas and Easter, the Olympic participants may not worship the gods of the pagans. However, the customs’ origins lead directly back to pagan forms of worship. We need to consider Paul’s warning, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, *let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 7:1).

Do we really want to catch the Olympic spirit? It is something to consider.

—Darryl Henson

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## What Do We Have to Offer?

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expensive furs, precious stones and their labor.

Conservatively, we can estimate their offering at around \$40 million! Not bad for a nation of recently freed slaves!

### A Modern Perspective

To get a better perspective on this, we need to put ourselves in their sandals for a moment. They had lived their entire lives with *nothing*! For the first time, they were free—and they were rich beyond their dreams. What did they think they would do with their money? Hoard it? Gamble it away? Spend it with the first caravan they encountered? Tuck a bit into the Bank of Sinai for a rainy day?

Of all things, would they give it away—freely, willingly, even gladly?

We have opportunities to give offerings at various times throughout

the year, not just on the holy days. God wants us to see the example of the Israelites in their “first love” and imitate their generosity and willingness in giving (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11). Consider what would happen if we all gave as they did!

Of course, we understand that our circumstances are somewhat different. We have bills to pay and budgets to meet. We must shoulder an ever-increasing tax burden. Inflation takes its toll. We must provide for our own as best we can. God’s instruction about offerings explicitly says, “Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you” (Deuteronomy 16:17).

However, it is not the amount of money we give that counts but the attitude in which we give it. “Let each one give as he purposes in his heart,” Paul writes in II Corinthians 9:7, “not grudgingly or of necessity [*compulsion*, margin]; for God loves a cheerful giver.” He wants us to learn this attitude because it is one of His character traits, for He is the

giver of all good things (James 1:17).

Like the Israelites, we have come out of spiritual Egypt, having been redeemed from slavery to sin. We are now free to follow God’s way, and we have hope, a true vision of life in God’s Kingdom.

Spiritually, we are incredibly wealthy! We can see God. We can see Him working in our lives, in others’ lives, in the church and on the world scene. Instead of a Tabernacle, we are working to build a spiritual Temple, with ourselves as living stones (I Peter 2:4-10).

In this way, we are in the same position spiritually as the children of Israel were physically. What do we have to offer in building God’s spiritual Temple? If nothing else, we must “present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). Each of us must determine for ourselves if we will follow the fine example of the Israelites in their generous spirit and willingness to give to God.

—Michael R. Ford

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# CAUGHT UP IN THE RAPTURE

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9 also confirm these events.



## Destination: Earth!

The second difference between the teaching of the church and the Protestants' view is the matter of the eventual destination of those who rise to meet Christ in the air. Is it up to heaven or back to earth?

Much of the Protestant view is based on an assumption. Because Paul writes, "And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:17), they assume that since Christ lives in heaven, the changed saints will too. But is this assumption valid?

We have shown elsewhere that the reward of the saved is eternal life as kings and priests ruling and teaching here on earth (Revelation 5:10). But where will the saints go at the moment of Christ's return? The clearest verses that show Christians immediately returning with our King to the earth are Zechariah 14:3-5, 9:

Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. . . . Thus the LORD my God will come, **and all the saints with You** [*Him*, margin]. . . . And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. (See I Thessalonians 3:13.)

If our Savior is going to rule "over all the earth," the saints will have to settle for earth too!

Protestants also use John 14:2-3 to "prove" that the saints go to heaven:

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if

I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Here, too, they make assumptions, such as understanding "house" only as a dwelling, rather than as a family or dynasty. Thus, they narrowly define *place* as "an ornate abode, a mansion or palace" instead of a "position," "office," "role" or "spot." If this is the case, it is a good thing that Jesus was a carpenter while He lived on earth! He must be doing a lot of work preparing all those mansions!

Seriously, however, they gloss over the fact that Jesus says directly in this context that He would "COME again." Where? To earth! He then says He will receive the saints to Himself. If He remains on earth to rule the nations, then the saints will rule with Him on the earth! Many scriptures show very plainly that God's Kingdom will be on the earth (Psalm 2:6-8; Jeremiah 23:5; Daniel 2:35, 44-45; 7:27; Zechariah 9:9-10; Revelation 11:15).

After the saints are resurrected, full-fledged members of the God Family, they may be able to go from earth to God's throne in the third heaven. They will live and work, though, on the earth. After the Millennium has passed and the White Throne Judgment is complete, the Father Himself will descend from heaven to make the new earth His dwelling place (Revelation 21:3, 22; 22:1-5)!



Earth is where the action is!

## Not Appointed to Wrath

Pre-tribulationists also point to I Thessalonians 5:9 to show that Christians will not be on earth but in heaven when the Great Tribulation occurs: "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice, however, that they have read into it something it does not say. It mentions neither heaven nor earth, and thus it has no bearing on the physical whereabouts of the saints when Christ returns.

This scripture does, though, make

a good point about God's plans for us! He does not intend for us to feel His wrath in the Day of the Lord (verse 2). With His calling, His Word and His Spirit, we should be soberly watching world events, keeping tabs on the approaching crisis at the close of this age (verses 4-6). More than that, we should be applying the armor of God daily, preparing for our roles in the coming Kingdom of God (verse 8; Ephesians 6:10-18).

Indeed, the faithful have *not* been appointed to wrath! As Paul says encouragingly in Philippians 1:6: "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." God is molding us in His Son's image (II Corinthians 4:18; Romans 12:2; I John 3:2), and Paul shows us what we should be doing as He works in us:

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)

If we are busy following these instructions, with God working in us "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13), we do not need to fear God's wrath! Our Savior promises, "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

Jesus says, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). If we endure to the end and remain faithful servants of God, we *will* be among those who "shall be caught up together . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"!

As Paul says, we can take great comfort in these words (I Thessalonians 4:18)!

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

# BIBLE STUDY:

# THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

In these studies on the holy days, we have seen God's plan unfolding. The process of salvation, revealed in the spring festivals, culminates in the Feast of Trumpets, picturing Christ returning to earth in power to crush Satan's end-time attempt to subjugate the world. Saints from all ages will be resurrected, or if alive, *changed* to immortality. For the first time in history, man will be totally *at one* with his Creator! Satan will then be bound for a thousand years, and his evil, destructive influence will be totally cut off.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the ensuing Millennium when the whole earth will rest. In Hebrews 4, the writer discusses the Sabbath as a day of rest. He uses Israel entering the Promised Land as a type of our entering into rest when Christ returns. If the week typifies the length of God's plan, we are now living on "Friday," the sixth day, as almost 6,000 years—a thousand years as a day—have elapsed since Adam's creation. Christians should be busy preparing for Christ's return and His coming Sabbath rest.



1. What will life be like in the World Tomorrow? Isaiah 11:5-16, 29:18; 35:1-10.

**COMMENT:** Man is proud of his powerful computers, satellites, modern scientific labs and medical discoveries. In spite of this, he fights with nature and other men. Crime, drug abuse, sexual perversions and all sorts of other evils escalate. The deaf and blind go unhealed. Man pollutes his air, water and soil because he does not know how to manage a civilization. With all his technological advances, man cannot get along with his neighbor.

The earth being "full of the knowledge of the LORD" means far more than "everyone will go to the right church"! God's knowledge is vast; He knows how to make a civilization work—even a high-tech one! In the Millennium, man will be at peace. Nations, neighbors and even spouses will not fight. Cancer, diabetes, heart disease, blindness and deafness will be eradicated. Eyeglasses and braces will be found only in museums. The deserts will produce bountiful harvests. The animal kingdom will peacefully co-exist with humanity. All this will be the result of an unprecedented explosion of knowledge *in how to do things right!*

2. What will be the Millennial job of those who are glorified at Christ's return? Revelation 5:10; 20:4, 6; Isaiah 30:20-21.

**COMMENT:** As King of kings, Christ will appoint His faithful followers as kings and priests over the earth. They will have abilities as God has today. If a person considers an action that would hurt himself or someone else, the glorified children of God will teach them to choose a better course. At that time, people "shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" (Isaiah 11:9).

3. Over whom will the saints rule? Isaiah 11:11-16; 66:14-21; Zechariah 14:9-19.

**COMMENT:** After Jesus Christ returns, the survivors of all the nations will be gathered, and He will appoint the resurrected saints to rule over them. If they initially rebel against His rule, He will cut off all rain until they submit and keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

4. How will their keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles show submission to God? Zechariah 14:16-19.

**COMMENT:** During the Millennium, people will be required to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles to worship the King, Jesus Christ. The Feast will be their primary reminder of where they are in God's plan and when they must secure their salvation. If they fail to keep it, they will reveal their refusal to accept Christ as sovereign and to cooperate with Him in His purpose.

5. What occurs at the end of the Millennium? Revelation 20:7-10.

**COMMENT:** God will release Satan for a short time when the thousand years end. The people, familiar with Christ and His kings and priests, will have lived in unprecedented peace, happiness and prosperity. They will have learned and lived God's way from birth. Surely, Satan could have no influence on them!

Almost instantly, however, he will raise an army of people "as the sand of the sea" out of "the four corners of the earth"! His arguments will persuade them that they should and can destroy Christ and his throne in Jerusalem. God, however, will annihilate them all in a blinding flash of fire from heaven and cast the Devil into the Lake of Fire, never to be freed again!

6. What can we learn from this? I Peter 5:8-11; Revelation 12:7-12.

**COMMENT:** This rebellion at the end of the Millennium is often overlooked in the joy of considering Christ's wonderful rule. Satan's influence is *so* powerful he can influence millions of people to follow him seemingly overnight. Having drawn away a third of the angels from God (Revelation 12:4; Isaiah 14:12-14) and overcome Adam and Eve, he has wielded almost total control over man.

His present power will be *greatly magnified* very shortly when he is cast down to earth to begin the Great Tribulation. He would deceive the very elect if it were possible (Matthew 24:24). It is no wonder Peter instructs us to be sober, to be vigilant, to resist Satan in faith that Christ might establish us in the end!