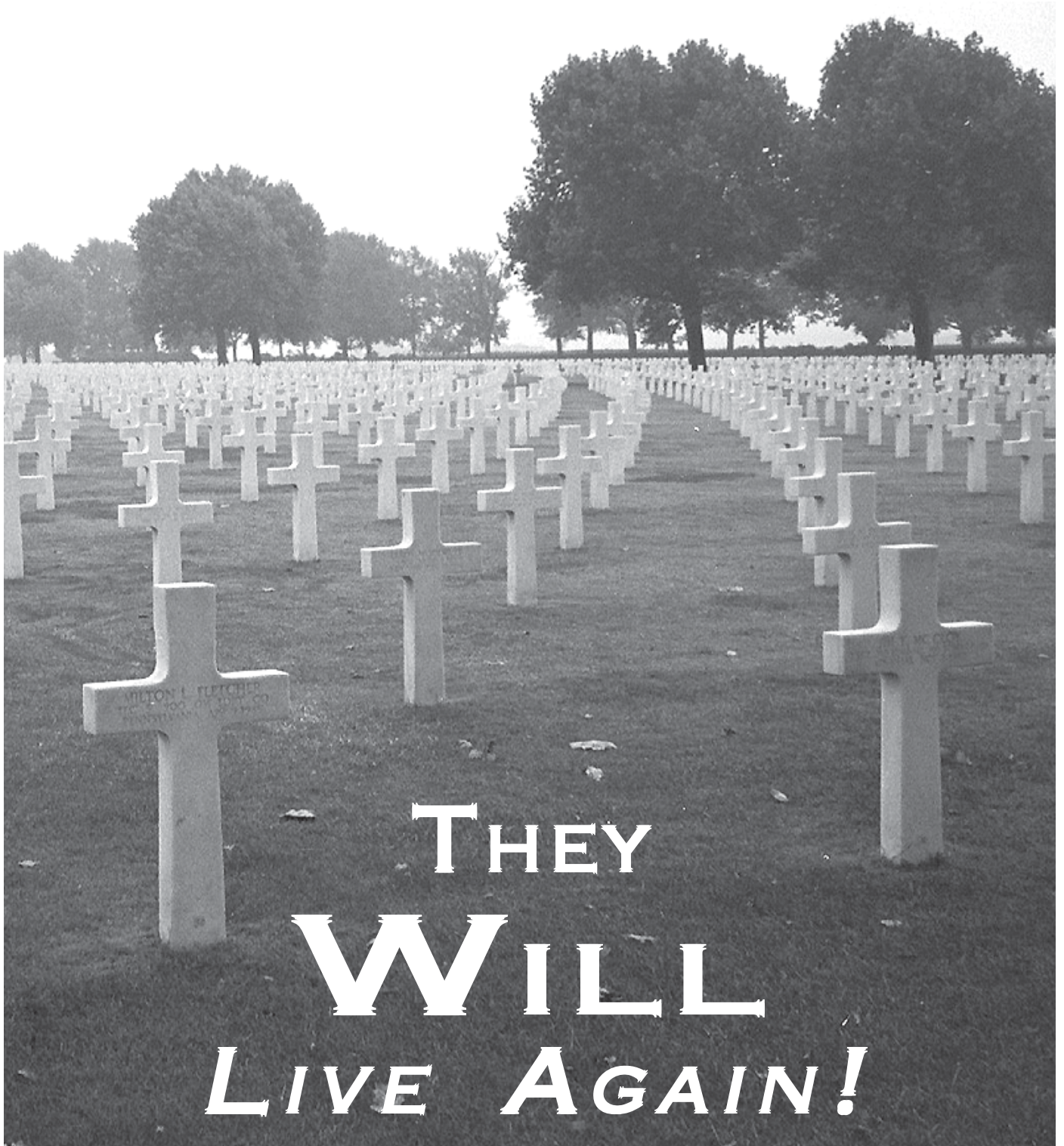


# *Forerunner*

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God



**THEY  
WILL  
LIVE AGAIN!**

# Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

September 1996

Volume 5, Number 9

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## About Our Cover:

How many billions of people have lived and died since Adam and Eve? Some estimates run as high as fifty billion! All but one of them, our Savior Jesus Christ, still await the resurrection from the dead. The final festival of the year, the Last Great Day, foreshadows that wonderful time when the graves will be opened, and the dead will live again! (Forerunner photo)

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# THE FINAL HARVEST

For some reason, cemeteries fascinated my father. Quite frequently when I was a young boy, after church on warm summer Sundays, he would take the family on a tour through Allegheny Cemetery about two miles from the Methodist church we attended. It was an old-style cemetery with many large, sometimes ostentatious granite and marble mausoleums, statues and pillars. The cemetery was well maintained, with shady hardwood trees, great stone and steel gates arching over the entrances, hilly terrain, winding paved drives, ponds for fish, and displays of flowers to give joyous color to what otherwise might be a depressing place.

Many people important to the Pittsburgh area and even some of national prominence are buried there. It is the final resting place for quite a few more nobody knew except their families. Now, my father is buried there, along with his parents and most of his brothers and sisters.

I do not recall ever questioning why we went there. Rather, I remember enjoying it because it was a place of mystery with a touch of reverence and beauty. I think I know now, though, why my Dad liked to go there.

For the most part, my Dad was gentle, soft-spoken, thoughtful and kind. I think he was also a romantic who liked to go to the cemetery and wonder about, dream or imagine the kind of lives those tombstones represented. He must have wondered where they were and what they were doing. Were they alive—in heaven, in hell? Were they aware of him?

He never received any answers to those questions. By the time he died, his attitude toward God was ambivalent at best and bitter at worst. He told me once that if there was a God, he would never bow down and pray to One who would let such suffering take place on earth.

Even though he had seen a lot of hypocrisy from the religious among his brothers and sisters, and though he was generally turned off by religion, he never seemed to hold it against me that I became a minister. In fact, he paid me a very high compliment after he heard me give a sermon about a year before he died. He told me that while I was speaking, he was so wrapped up in listening to the message that he entirely forgot I was speaking.

I think my Dad was similar to most who have ever lived,

especially those who have lived in a Western nation where Christianity is the dominant religion. He was confused by what he thought were conflicting realities. To him, what God is doing was an unfathomable mystery.

The “Christian” world little understands the nature of God’s purpose. Even though my father’s family was more than nominally involved in evangelical Protestant religious pursuits, they provided no satisfying answers to his searching questions about the intensity of suffering and why it even existed. They only answered that the cause was sin. Most assuredly, they could not provide even one iota of truth about those who died without accepting Jesus Christ as Savior.

## **Rivers of Living Water**

But the Bible does not leave us without a clear insight into both their present and future state. John 7:37-39 provides a scriptural platform on which we can expound a very exciting and beautiful doctrine of a merciful God.

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, which those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Giving meat in due season (II Timothy 4:2), Jesus preached about the meaning of the Last Great Day, and His subject was the Holy Spirit. Why? There is no doubt that some understood the meaning of the day because His audience had just witnessed the conclusion of a ceremony that involved water. God never commanded them to keep this ceremony, but nonetheless it contained a measure of true symbolism.

Each day during the Feast of Tabernacles, a priest drew an urn of water from the pool of Siloam and carried it through the Water Gate while the people recited Isaiah 12:3: “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” Once inside the city, they paraded the

urn of water to the altar accompanied by a choir singing Psalms 113–118. To conclude the ritual, the priest poured the water on the altar as an offering to God.

However, on the last day, the great day of the Feast, they marched seven times around the altar before pouring the water. What does pouring water upon an altar have to do with salvation? How many understood the symbolism that day when Jesus spoke concerning the Holy Spirit? Had the symbolism become obscured in people's minds by the passage of time? Jesus' comment should have revitalized their understanding of this wonderful truth.

Psalm 118:19-29 is a part of what the choir was singing as the procession approached and circled the altar:

Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD, through which the righteous shall enter. I will praise You, for You have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. . . . God is the LORD, and He has given us light; bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise You. . . . Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

This psalm exalts the theme of the Last Great Day. It depicts the time when the whole world will go through the gates of righteousness, recognizing Christ as Savior, rejoicing in those God sends to teach them and praising God for His mercy in giving them salvation. Though not directly stated in these verses, the only reason mankind will respond like this is because God will pour out His Holy Spirit on all of humanity!

### Are the Unsaved Dead "Lost"?

The Last Great Day has a very special meaning to those who understand. It answers perplexing questions about the great masses of humanity who are living or have died without knowledge of God's way or a true understanding of Jesus Christ, the only "name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). In my thirty years as a minister, I have yet to talk with anyone from another church who knows the fate of these "lost" people.

Are millions lost because they never heard the name of Christ? What about infants who died? What about the billions enslaved under the dreadful yoke of atheistic communism? They did not choose to be born in a godless society. Are the doors forever shut on those born in a nation dominated by Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism or

Islam? Most calling themselves Christian think so.

It almost seems as though Paul agrees with them when he writes:

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:11-12)

What a depressing status! If these verses stood alone, these "aliens" and "strangers" would indeed live their lives in vain. Without a future opportunity for salvation, they would truly be lost forever.

Could we call God merciful if He consigned people to hopelessness merely because of an accident of birth? Would He be fair to condemn those who never heard? God can do anything He wants. It is, after all, His creation. In verse 13, though, there is a slight crack

in the door of hope: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Everyone has stood in the Gentile's position of being far off from salvation. We have all had to be brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ. Could the only difference between us and them be a matter of timing?

Imagine the multiple billions who have lived through childhood unloved, uneducated and unhealthy in body and spirit. They may have endured miserable marriages, reared and lost children to disease, war and natural disaster. Others may have spent seemingly pointless lives growing old, neglected and disrespected as fodder for the next disaster.

The heaven and hell doctrines of this world's Christianity may make for interesting reading, but they render the judgments and resurrections of God as superfluous. They diminish the creative power of the great, merciful God in these areas as finished and past, not as ongoing and future.

### God's Attitude

Paul gives us an insight into God's attitude toward all of mankind in I Timothy 2:1, 3-4, 6.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for *all men*. . . . For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires *all men* to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth . . . who gave Himself a ransom for *all*, to be testified in due time.

Three times in four brief verses God states He has planned for the salvation of all. Since He desires to save all men,

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# THE MIXED MULTITUDE

*At the time of the Exodus, did God offer certain Gentiles the chance to be part of national Israel? Did some take Him up on the offer and become woven into the “chosen people”? The surprising answers should sound a loud warning to all in the Israel of God today.*

Pay heed, Paul warns us, to the events surrounding the Exodus and the subsequent wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel. “All these things,” he assures us, serve “as examples, . . . written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come” (I Corinthians 10:11). In verses 6-10, Paul catalogs their sins: “lust after evil things,” idolatry, “sexual immorality,” “tempt[ing] Christ,” murmuring.

God records one such example of their sins in Numbers 11, where the “mixed multitude who were among [the children of Israel] yielded to intense craving” (verse 4). God sent quail aplenty—and “struck the people with a very great plague” (verse 33).

The mixed multitude is mysterious by reason of its obscurity. God’s Word does not say much directly about these folk, except for a passing reference here and there. One is in Exodus 12:37-38: “Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed multitude went up with them also.”

Who these people were, where they came from, why they joined the Israelites, what happened to them—God’s Word specifically answers none of these questions. As we will see, however, what God does say about them speaks volumes about the extent—and limits—of His grace. Their story provides an excellent Old Testament lesson of His mercy as well as His judgment.

## Partakers of Grace

Exodus 12:38 tells us the “mixed multitude went up with” the children

of Israel. These folk fell in step with God’s army as it marched out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. For how long? Their presence during the quail incident, cited above, indicates that these peoples were still with the Israelites *at least* one year after the first Passover. That means that the mixed multitude was present at Mount Sinai, some fifty days after the Red Sea crossing. This means *they were present at the giving of the Law!*

Whoever they were, the peoples of the mixed multitude were much more than just witnesses of God’s strength. Even the unbelieving Egyptians witnessed that! The mixed multitude *partook* of God’s grace, experienced it *with* the children of Israel. Whoever they were, these people were fellow-travelers with Israel for a time, experiencing with them the power of God as He pulled them “out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 4:20; see also I Kings 8:51; Jeremiah 11:4).

Both Israel and the mixed multitude experienced His might as He destroyed the most powerful nation on earth at that time. They both experienced deliverance from the Egyptians at the Red Sea. They both experienced the shaking of Sinai as God thundered the Ten Commandments. They both ate the manna and drank water from the Rock! They both were baptized in the Red Sea (see I Corinthians 10:1-4).

The folk God calls the “mixed multitude” were partakers with Israel! But who were they?

## What’s in a Name?

The general term God uses to describe these folk tells us they were

*mixed*, and they were *many*. Apparently not part of a single “family grown great,” as the Moabites or Canaanites were, they bear no family or national appellation. Yet, as vague as the term *mixed multitude* appears, a careful analysis yields an abundance of information.

**Multitude.** The Hebrew word for *multitude* is *rab* meaning “great,” “many,” or “large.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* claims that *rab*, whether referring to people or things, “represents plurality in numbers or amount.” In Exodus 5:5: Pharaoh, speaking to Moses and Aaron, alludes to the population of Israel by calling them *rab*, “many.” So, the mixed multitude was large, perhaps consisting of thousands or millions of individuals.

**Mixed.** The Hebrew word translated *mixed*, *gehrev*, appears only 11 times in God’s Word. Twice the translators rendered *gehrev* as *mixed* (Exodus 12:38; Nehemiah 13:3). In its other nine appearances, however, we get the strongest indication of its meaning. All nine of these instances are in Leviticus 13:48-59, where God gives Moses and Aaron His law concerning leprosy.

Notice Leviticus 13:47-48: “Also, if a garment has a leprous plague in it, whether it is a woolen garment or a linen garment, whether it is in the warp or woof of linen or wool, whether in leather or in anything made of leather.” Both *mixed* of Exodus 12:38 and *woof* of Leviticus 13:48 are translations of *gehrev*.

But how different are the subjects of Exodus 12 and Leviticus 13! The former text concerns the Exodus, the

seminal historic event of national Israel. The latter deals with a law concerning leprosy. What could *mixed* and *woof* have in common?

Answering that question requires that we look first at *woof* in the context of its sister word, *warp*. *Warp* and *woof* are weaving terms:

**Warp** refers to the lengthwise threads in a woven article; they are the threads that hang *down* in a loom, running parallel to the bolt of cloth being created.

**Woof** (also called the *filling*) refers to the threads that criss-cross the warp, running at right angles—perpendicular—to them; they interlace among the warp, over and under, over and under.

By extension, *woof* has come to mean “a basic or essential element or material,” according to the dictionary. Clearly, both warp *and* woof are important to the integrity and strength of a garment. A bolt of cloth lacking either warp *or* woof simply will not “hang together.” The warp and the woof complement each other. Properly united, they form a strong fabric, for example, a carpet, which can take the rough-and-tumble wear of years.

## Weaving a Coat of Many Colors

The connection between *woof* of Leviticus 13 and *mixed* of Exodus 12 now becomes clear. In Leviticus 13, *gehrev* refers to the woof or filler of a woven *cloth*: in Exodus 12, *gehrev* refers to people. **God is speaking by way of analogy.** He develops that comparison in Exodus 12:48-49:

And when a stranger sojourns with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who sojourns among you.

In Exodus 12:37-38, God hints at a dualism which verses 47-48 develop. In doing so, He answers at least two important questions for us:

**If the mixed multitude is the folk of the woof, what people make up the warp?** Exodus 12:37-39 mention two groups of people—Israelite and the mixed multitude marching out of Egypt. Verses 47-48 establish that dualism as a dichotomy, a clear, distinct division. There is “a great gulf fixed” between Gentile and Israelite that only circumcision can bridge.

Thus, metaphorically, God expresses the Israelite-Gentile dualism as the warp and the woof. The Gentile is the woof, the *gehrev* that marched out of Egypt with the children of Israel. The Israelite is the warp.

**What is the relationship of the peoples of the woof to those of the warp?** We saw earlier that the defining characteristic of the warp-woof relationship is *unity*: A woven cloth is useless without *both* warp and woof. It is a relationship of interdependence. The warp-woof metaphor of Exodus 12 stresses the *union* of peoples. In fact, the relationship appears almost symbiotic, an “intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship.”

The very same chapter records the first Passover, introduces us to the mixed multitude *and* outlines the condition under which God would accept Israelite and Gentile. God required physical circumcision for both. Through circumcision, the Gentile can take the Passover and become completely united under “one law” with the Israelite (Exodus 12:49). Warp and woof together make one fabric. Israelite and Gentile together make one nation under God. **THEY BECOME ONE PHYSICAL NATION UNDER ONE CONSTITUTION—GOD’S LAW.**

God uses the warp-woof metaphor behind the word *mixed* to illustrate an important principle: *He can turn a dichotomy into a union.* Figuratively, He can weave diverse threads, running crosswise to each other, into a single, strong fabric. This metaphor from weaving describes how He works with His people.

At the time of the Exodus, God was offering the woof—the mixed multitude—the chance of a lifetime.

In His grace, God was *at that time* offering these Gentile folk the opportunity to take their place *with* the children of Israel, interlaced with them, as an integral part of the fabric of the nation He was building. An essential part! What an opportunity these people had for national greatness! The mixed multitude was on the ground floor of God’s nation-building.

We cannot identify with certainty these peoples’ ethnic and national backgrounds. Some of them may have been native Egyptians who, witnessing the power of God in their land, forsook their own weak gods and cast their lots with the “winning team.” The word *mixed* certainly indicates that they were not of a single ethnic origin. Rather, it appears that they were a veritable kaleidoscope of peoples, probably black and yellow and red slaves the Egyptians had gathered in their conquests. To God, they were a folk of rich potential, having qualities He wanted as part of His own “rainbow coalition.” God was, indeed, weaving a “coat of many colors.”

## Not for Everyone

God offered only to certain Gentile peoples the opportunity to be a part of Israel. He was selective then, just as He is today when He calls individuals—“one from a city and two from a family” (Jeremiah 3:14)—to spiritual salvation. Notice some examples of God’s rejection of Gentiles through Israel’s history:

**During the period of Joshua:** God warned Joshua to stay away from the indigenous population of Palestine (Joshua 23:6-7; Judges 2:2).

**During the Kingdom Period:** I Kings 11 records the pathetic state of affairs in Israel near the end of Solomon’s life. Solomon had married the

women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. For surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” (I Kings 11:1-2)

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**O**ur desires strongly influence our lives. At times we wish to have something so badly that we will go to almost any length to obtain it. Some people in business and industry have a ruthless, cut-throat desire to succeed, and they will ruin other people's lives and careers to reach their goals. A few even devote their lives to acquiring priceless art, rare automobiles, thoroughbred horses, antiques and other fine things to satisfy their cravings.

In today's society, our desires are reflected in astronomically high credit card balances, with many people carrying tens of thousands of dollars in debt. On top of this, they are paying usurious interest rates! Walking hand in hand with this credit card debt is bankruptcy. This legal admission that one cannot pay what he promised is at a modern all-time high.

If we are not careful, we can transfer this mentality over to our relationship with God. We can promise—vow—to change our way of living or do some specific deed in return for a request we ask from God. Should we do this? Is this wise? Should we really count the cost before we allow this thinking to be placed into action?

There are two examples of people making vows that we should examine. The first shows a right example of desire, thought, planning, and carrying out the promised deed, while the second example describes the results of an impetuous vow that produced terrible results.

## Hanna

I Samuel 1 narrates the story of Hanna, the wife of Elkanah. She was barren, but with every fiber of her being, she desired a child. Though Elkanah treated her with love and kindness, his other wife, Peninnah, who had children, became Hanna's adversary, provoking her until she was miserable. Wisely, Hanna took her situation and desire to God. She vowed that if He gave her a son, she would give him to God for His service.

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me, and not forget your maidservant, but

# Should We Make Vows Today?

will give your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head." (I Samuel 1:10-11)

In verses 19-20, God hears Hanna and gives her desire to her: "And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. So it came to pass in the process of time that Hanna conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, 'Because I have asked for him from the LORD.'"

God had fulfilled His part of the agreement, and now it was Hanna's responsibility to keep her promise. Notice how completely she holds up her end of the bargain:

Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli.

And she said, "O my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him: Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD." So they worshipped the LORD there. (verses 24-28)

Hanna's example shows how a proper vow works. She intelligently thought it through, made it solemnly and humbly, and kept it completely. God not only respected her vow and fulfilled it, but He also greatly used the product, Samuel the prophet! Notice, too, how the process caused Hanna to thank and glorify God and built humble and righteous character in her (II Samuel 2:1-10).

## Jephthah

Jephthah, son of Gilead by a harlot, also made a vow, but he vowed rashly, without counting the cost to himself or to others. Because of his birth and the hatred of his half brothers, Jephthah had fled from his home and soon gathered a ragtag group of soldiers around him. When Ammon threatened Israel, the elders of Gilead asked him to lead his army against the enemy, offering him leadership over Gilead. Accepting their offer, Jephthah tried to negotiate a settlement with Ammon, but to no avail. War was inevitable.

On the eve of battle, whether out of weakness or ignorance,

Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If you will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out

of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering." (Judges 11:30-31)

He seems not to have considered what the payment might be. He desired victory so greatly that he gave little thought to his part of the bargain. It was, as if he were saying, "Just give me what I am asking for, and I'll worry about my end later."

Jephthah's rashness and inconsideration cost him dearly:

When Jephthah came to his house in Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it." So she said to him, "My father, if you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon." (verses 34-36)

Because of his impetuous behavior, Jephthah had to face performing what he had promised. His heart was filled with grief over what he had done to his daughter, his only child. Even so, as a man of his word, Jephthah resolved to keep his part of the deal.

Jephthah's daughter asked to be given two months to lament her virginity. Because of this, commentators feel that she was *not* offered as a burnt offering, but instead dedicated herself to God's service, to live without husband and children, as a virgin



the rest of her life. (Request our July 1994 article "Did He or Didn't He?" for further information.)

## The Rules of Vowing

What are the rules concerning the making of vows? This is so important to God that He devotes a whole chapter, Numbers 30, to this subject. Immediately, we need to note that this instruction comes from the LORD, the One who became Jesus Christ (verse 1). These rules are not just judgments of Moses but direct commands of God.

Verse 2 emphasizes that a person must always keep his word. Whether he swears an oath or vows a vow, he is bound to fulfill all its terms. If he does not, he has broken the ninth commandment.

Verses 3-5 focus on unmarried women still living at home. To God, she is still under her father's authority, so if he hears her vow and makes no comment, then her vow stands. On the other hand, if her father disallows her vow on the day he hears it, then her vow does not stand. God will forgive her of her foolishness because of her father's authority. This, however, does not negate other consequences that may result from her actions.

Though made somewhat unclear in the New King James, verses 6-8 deal with a betrothed woman and her fiancé. If she makes a vow before she marries and brings it into the marriage, her new husband, like her father before him, now has the authority to allow it or disallow it.

Verse 9 clarifies that widows and divorced women are held accountable for any vows they make.

Verses 10-14 discuss vows made by a married woman. As in the previous sections, if the husband hears it



but does nothing, her vow stands, but if he disallows it, it does not stand, and God will forgive her.

Verse 15 stresses the importance of the husband being careful in these matters. God says that if the husband hears his wife's vows, accepts them, and later makes them void, he bears the guilt for renegeing on them. As the leader of his family, he is ultimately responsible for what he allows to happen.

The chapter concludes with a reminder that these statutes concerning vows are commands of the LORD. We can see that God holds the promises we make to Him to be serious undertakings. He certainly does not take them lightly; He considers it to be sin when we fail to perform what we have promised.

## The New Testament and Vows

The New Testament mentions vows only twice, both times regarding vows made by Christians who had made vows consecrating themselves to God for some length of time, much like the Nazirite vow (Acts 18:18; 21:23; see Numbers 6:18). More often, the New Testament speaks of swearing oaths, a related concept.

Jesus advises us not to swear at all (Matthew 5:34), but to say simply, "Yes" or "No" (verse 37). If we are honest, we have no need to take an oath. He goes so far as to say that anything more than "Yes" or "No" has its source in the father of lies (John 8:44)!

There are several aspects to these verses. The overall statement Jesus makes is that we do not need to swear by anything to confirm that our statements are true. A Christian's word should be his bond, as the old saying goes. We should be so bound by the ninth commandment that nothing else is necessary.

The not-so-obvious meaning of these verses is that we should not lightly give an oath or make a vow to God to acquire something. We have many desires, and some might take it upon themselves to ask God for them, promising to perform a certain deed

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# Will Europe Ever Unite?

Before spending a week in Belgium, Holland, France and Germany recently, I was only academically aware of the problems involved in the creation of a United Europe. Membership in God's church has given me a natural interest in the formation of this future colossus, but I have been disappointed with how slowly events seem to be moving. The proverbial molasses running uphill in January appears speedy in comparison. Seeing firsthand some of the factors involved in European unity, I have enhanced my understanding of the problems.

It is easy to see how we can become frustrated by this ponderous process. Before World War II, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong preached about Europe uniting under a coming world dictator, and when the Axis Powers fell to the Allies in 1945, he proclaimed that a United

States of Europe would rise from the ashes of the devastated continent. Now, 51 years later, we continue to preach the same message, and its fulfillment still seems years away.

How long, O Lord?

Granted, much has been accomplished over the past five decades. The nations of Europe have formed an economic union that has opened borders from Scandinavia to Spain and from Britain to Austria. A European Parliament, composed of representatives from all member states, meets in Brussels, Belgium. Measures have been taken to inte-

grate the armed forces into a common army. In 1999 the nations of the European Union (EU) are scheduled to drop their national currencies in favor of the euro. These are *major* strides in bringing sovereign nations under one banner.

Luigi Barzini, in his 1983 book, *The Europeans*, concludes that European unity has come a long way, but that it has a long way to go:

We must admit that in a modest way the dream of European unity has been a success. It was really conceived to prevent a recurrence of the wars of 1870, 1914, and 1939 between France and Germany. This it has done.

It has also established a shopkeepers' ideal continental market of sorts, which has encouraged exchanges and production. It cannot go any further. There cannot be a really united Europe without a common currency and a common foreign policy, but above all, a common defense policy. This, in the twentieth century, means nuclear weapons and space defenses. It entails a tangle of insoluble political problems among the member nations and the superpowers. (pp. 265-266)

His pessimism should be tempered by Herbert Armstrong's assessment. In his last sermon, *Trumpets*, 1985, he warned us—as he so often did—that Europe could suddenly unite. We could awake one morning, he said, to find that the nations had for the sake of expedience put aside all their differences and chosen a man, the Beast, to lead them. It could occur that quickly!

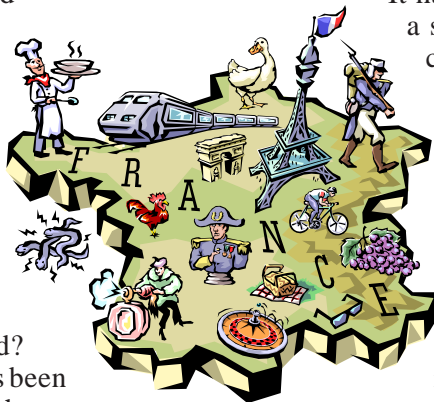
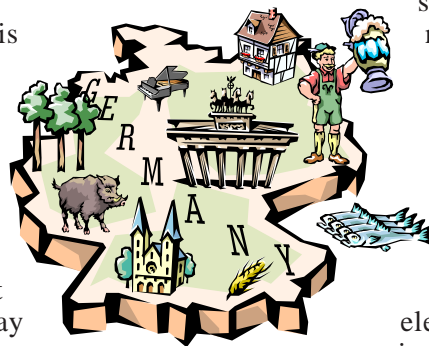
As we have plodded through the last eleven years, that scenario has seemed less and less likely. As Barzini intimated, the nations of Europe cannot agree on much. They constantly regurgitate petty quarrels among themselves and savagely protect their own interests, industries and cultural distinctions. They can enumerate a million reasons why union is not feasible within the next 25 years.

However, we KNOW it will happen! The Bible guarantees it!

## Babel at Work

What are the problems facing European unity? A primary one is language. How many languages and dialects people speak within the borders of the EU is hard to gauge, but "dozens" is a conservative estimate. Many Europeans are bi- or tri-lingual, knowing English, French or German as their second and third tongues. But even this is not enough.

Road signs, menus, television programs and operating instructions often come in two or three languages. Even cities are called by different



names depending on what language is being spoken! Aachen in German is Aken in Dutch and Aix-la-Chapelle in French. A word in one language probably does not mean the same thing as a word spelled exactly the same in another. Idioms, slang and loan-words from other languages help to muddy the waters further.

The origin of this confusion is Babel, of course. For the past 4,000 years, the language barrier has successfully kept man from uniting for any length of time to accomplish his goals. God acknowledges that if men could communicate freely with each other, no frontier would be unreachable:

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. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (Genesis 11:6-7)

The result of dividing man's languages was separation (verse 8). People of the same language found each other and migrated away from Babel to avoid the conflicts and confusion that many tongues produce. The same conflict and confusion exist today in Europe. Because this obstacle is so difficult to surmount, God's original reason for confusing the languages is still in effect!

English-speaking peoples are much more likely to ally with each other than with French or German speakers because communication is so much easier. Alliances between peoples of different languages are usually short-lived because of the difficulties involved. It is truly a wonder that the EU has agreed upon as much as they

have!

The Scriptures show that this division of mankind into language groups would reach into the end time as well:

"And authority was given him [the Beast] over every tribe, tongue, and nation" (Revelation 13:7b). The un-

spoken reason that the Beast is given authority is that he would be UNABLE to unite these groups unless he were allowed to do so. The prejudices that arise between differing

language groups are just too strong to overcome humanly.

This fact screams its veracity throughout Europe. The Europeans muddle through with translators and halting attempts at the other's language, or they resort to using a common third language, often English, to come to an understanding. But without outside—spiritual—help, a complete understanding leading to unity is impossible.

### Genes and Beliefs

Two other factors play vital roles in keeping Europe disunited: race and religion. One may say, "Aren't most Europeans white?" Yes, they are, but the races are made up of many "nations, tribes, peoples" (Revelation 7:9). The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 shows very clearly that nations are merely families grown large, each with its own culture, idiosyncrasies, strengths, weaknesses and ideas.

This is evident every day in Europe. The Dutch are markedly different from the French, Germans, Belgians, Swiss, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, Greeks, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Finns, Poles, Austrians,

English, Scots, Irish, Welsh, etc. Each of these is distinct from any of the others, and everyone knows it.

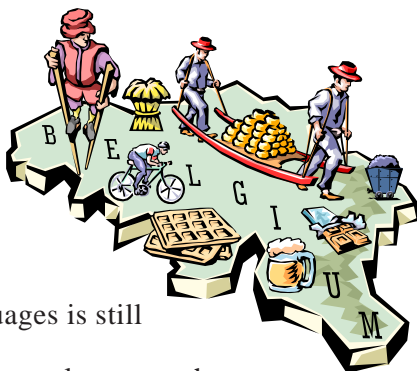
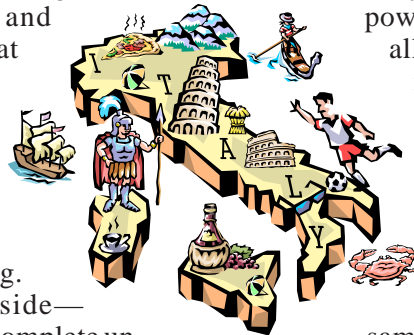
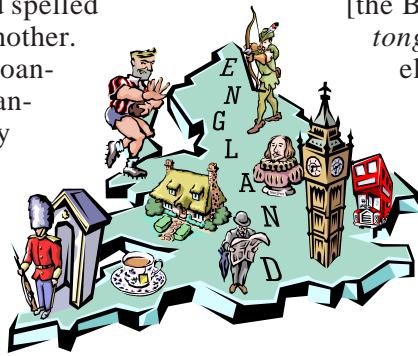
It is common knowledge that Italians are good designers, the Germans are good engineers, the Dutch are good sailors, the Swiss are good bankers, the French are good chefs, the Belgians are good artisans, and so on. True, these are generalities, but they are based on generations of observation. Often, other peoples caricature and warp these qualities, and this leads to misunderstanding, friction and further separation. Over time, hatreds and resentments become traditional and sacred and virtually impossible to eradicate.

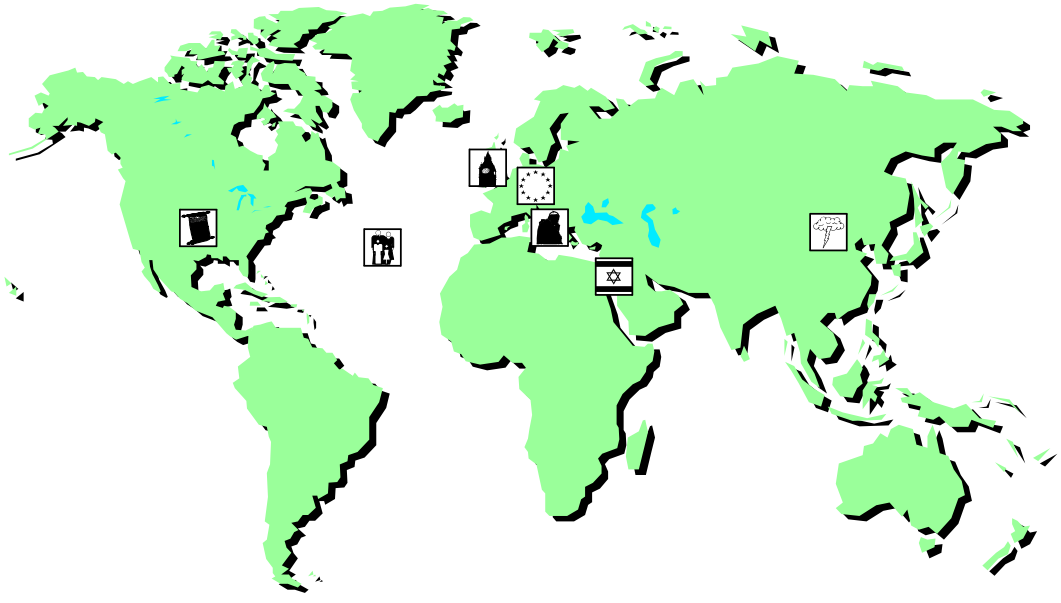
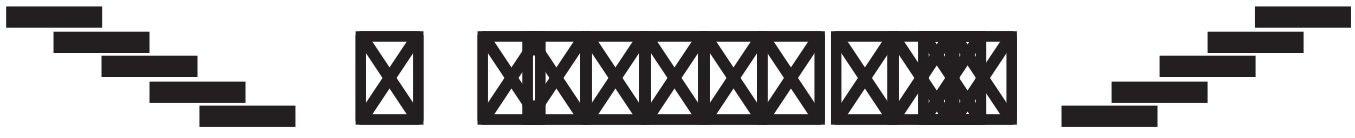
The Germans and the French are so suspicious of each other that the other nations of Europe use their animosity to check each other's power. The Belgians are really two peoples, the Flemish and the Walloons, and they are so divided that the two groups rarely, if ever, intermingle geographically, socially or politically. Never put a Scot and an Irishman in the same room together and ask who makes the best whiskey! Similar racial animosity can be found in each country of the EU.

Then, of course, there is religion. Religion has divided more people on this earth than any other cause, and more blood has been spilled in its name than any other. Spiritual beliefs, because they involve personalities greater and stronger than mere humans, drive men to acts they would never imagine doing for any other reason. Unspeakable atrocities become honorable deeds when "God" is involved.

In Europe, Protestants and Catholics coexist peacefully now, except in Ireland. This does not mean that the enmity between them has passed; it is simply simmering under the surface until the right moment. The nations of the EU are still either Protestant or Catholic in all but name. When we add Judaism, a growing Islamic minority and atheism, Europe is not far from a religious explosion.

Please see page 17





### Jerusalem



In a fiery speech asserting Palestinian rights to Jerusalem, Yassir Arafat branded as “dangerous” Israel’s permitting of the Temple Mount Faithful onto the Temple Mount. In a separate communiqué, his cabinet called it “a barefaced challenge to Moslem feelings and an Israeli attempt to intensify the atmosphere in Jerusalem.”

### Floods



Summer floods and landslides in China have killed at least 121 people, and 200,000 others had to be rescued. Nearly 450,000 people were forced from their homes. Damage is estimated at \$1.2 billion. With accumulations as high as 22 inches, four provinces have set rainfall records in 1996.

### Family



Except for Japan, out-of-wedlock births account for 25–67% of babies born in industrial countries. Increased technology is also partly to blame for the growth in abortions, single-parent families, fathers abandoning their families and divorces.

### European Union (EU)



German ambassador D. R. Oesterholt revealed his country’s goal for the EU: a superstate that will be a political match for the U.S., Russia and China. To achieve this, Germany plans:

- an independent security and defense capacity.
- a common foreign and security policy.
- an end to the veto power of member states.
- a pan-European penal and civil legal code/system.
- a strengthened European Court of Justice.
- a single, high-profile figure to head the EU.

### Britain



Anglo-French financier Sir James Goldsmith leads a campaign against taking Britain into a European superstate. Britain, he believes, would have to sacrifice its independence and sovereignty to join Europe’s economic and monetary union. The EU, he and other European politicians claim, “could only have been created in the absence of democracy.”

### Roman Catholic Church



Vatican expert Malachi Martin warns of “an unspoken alliance today between powers inside the Vatican and leaders of major international humanist organizations who would change the Roman Catholic Church from a sacred institution to one whose primary function is to act as a stabilizing social force in the world. They see the church as the only global structure able to do this.” The non-church part of the alliance consists of “academia, foundations, non-governmental organizations and even some governmental ones with vast resources devoted to population control, education and economic and social stabilization. . . . It is *not* a conspiracy, but it is *deliberate*.”

### Rights



A New York appellate court found that the state’s ban on euthanasia violates the U.S. Constitution’s 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which guarantees that “No State shall . . . deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” The state of Washington also had a similar law struck down for the same reason. Experts say that the Supreme Court will inevitably be asked to decide whether Americans have a constitutional right to “physician-assisted suicide.”

—Andy Benedetto

# THE THIRD RESURRECTION: What Is Its Value?

**W**e generally think of the third resurrection as totally negative—if we pause to think of it at all! Does it benefit anyone? What is its purpose? Why must such a horrible event have to occur?

I Corinthians 15:23 describes an order of resurrections: “But each one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.” Revelation 20:5-6 picks up the thread:

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

As Christians, we focus on this *first* resurrection; it is our hope and prayer to be raised from the dead or changed at the return of Christ (I Corinthians 15:50-52; I Thessalonians 4:17). If we are converted now and our judgment is now, other resurrections have no personal impact on us.

The next resurrection in God’s order is the second resurrection. Though not specifically named as such in the Bible, it is described in numerous places. John alludes to it in Revelation 20:5: “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand

years were finished.” Thus, it occurs at the end of the Millennium. Ezekiel describes it as a physical resurrection for all those who have lived through the ages and not had a full opportunity at salvation (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

***“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”***

Revelation 20:11 calls it the Great White Throne Judgment, when the dead are raised to be “judged according to their works” (verse 12).

Verses 13-15 describe the final or third resurrection in this order of resurrections:

The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Jude shows that some in his day had rejected God and, after dying, would be awaiting the Lake of Fire at the final judgment (verses 7-13). This

final judgment, also called “the second death,” is on those of all time periods who have rejected God and will not repent.

The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man in Luke 16 portrays “a great gulf fixed” between those made immortal after their period of judgment and those awaiting their fate in the third resurrection (verse 26). That great gulf is eternal life. When those incorrigibles from all ages are resurrected at the third resurrection, they will have no hope for salvation. They are doomed to the Lake of Fire, *the second death*, and cannot cross the great gulf into immortality.

## How Many Times to Die?

Hebrews 9:27 says that all men are appointed to die *once*. Considering this, some have asked: How can one die a second death? How many times *can* one die?

First, baptism is symbolic of death (Romans 6:2-11) and so is “dying daily,” as Paul describes the sacrifices of the Christian life (I Corinthians 15:31). Paul mentions this latter death in the context of the resurrection chapter to emphasize our need to crucify the old self daily and renew or resurrect the inner man as symbols of actual death and resurrection (see II Corinthians 4:16-17). In this sense we die every day of our lives.

When speaking of great embarrassments, many have used the phrase,

## A Ready Answer

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

“I died a thousand deaths.” That is just what God expects of us if we are to reach maturity of thought and conduct! Each of these deaths is just as difficult and excruciating as the one before, and thus Paul describes them as *crucifixions* (Galatians 5:24). These play a major role in overcoming, and it is never easy.

Apart from symbolism, the general rule is that we each die physically *at least* once and then await the resurrection to eternal life. But some few humans have already died twice! Lazarus, Dorcas, Eutychus, those who came out of their graves when Christ died and others were physically resurrected and physically died again.

It is conceivable that some few might even die *three* times! If those who were resurrected physically were converted and accepted for the Kingdom, they will be resurrected when Christ returns—changed “in the twinkling of an eye” into immortal spirit beings (I Corinthians 15:52). If they were not called and converted—not yet having had an opportunity for salvation—they will come up in the second resurrection to be alive a *third* time. At the end of that life they will then be either changed to spirit or die in the Lake of Fire, a *third* death.

Why, then, does Revelation 20:14 call the Lake of Fire “the second death”? The emphasis is on the fact that it is a **PERMANENT** death. Once a person experiences the second death, no hope remains for another resurrection. However, for a few it could represent a third physical death.

The point is that all of us are appointed to die *at least* once! Even those “blessed and holy” individuals who are alive and changed at Christ’s return will go through a kind of death. As Paul writes, “For this corruptible [body] must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Corinthians 15:53).

### Why Raise an Incurrible?

What purpose does the third resurrection serve? Why would God raise those who have rejected Him from all time periods—who have *already* died—and make them die again? Is it because He is vengeful, harsh and cruel?

God has every right to avenge him-

self on those who despise His offer of salvation, His way of life and His Kingdom. “‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). Jude 7 compares Sodom and Gomorrah with the Lake of Fire as an example of *His* vengeance. Make no mistake, God is not pleased with those who reject His wonderful gifts!

Unlike man, God is not vengeful in a hateful sense; He does not punish men just for the sake of it. Torture is not His way. Under the Old Testament administration of death sentences, a person either lived or died, but he was not tortured. Punishment may have been brutal, but it was swift and just. The same holds true of those who merit the Lake of Fire. He will

**FIRST RESURRECTION  
of Firstfruits to Eternal Life**

**SECOND RESURRECTION  
of the Uncalled to  
Physical Life**

**THIRD RESURRECTION  
of the Incurrible to the  
Second Death**

not punish them unmercifully and forever. They will be burned and forgotten. (See our April 1996 article, “Eternal Torment?” for more information.) He *does* “torture” us in *fiery* trials, tribulations and chastenings, but He does this to purify us in mercy, not in terms of eternal judgment.

Fairness is the issue: As Christians we must face dying daily, crucifying the self. God holds us accountable for everything we say and do (Ecclesiastes 11:9; Matthew 12:36). **WE** are now facing Christ in our judgment (II Corinthians 6:1-2; I Peter 4:17). God will judge others in their order. What of those who may have rejected God and are in an unpardonable condition for which they cannot seem to repent, as was Esau? Can they commit suicide or die a natural death, never to be judged? Would that be fair to the rest of us?

Undoubtedly, some would opt for a quick suicide and eternal blackness

if they thought that could avoid having to reap the consequences of their evil lives. Satan and the world would love to have us believe there is no responsibility and accountability—that we are all “victims” in one way or another. This is simply not true! The Scripture says clearly that *all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ to answer for their lives* (Romans 14:10, II Corinthians 5:10). To be fair, God’s justice must be applied to all in equal measure. To allow the wicked to go without punishment would not be fair to those who struggled and fought to avoid such a fate. *Everyone* will be held accountable, good or bad.

The third resurrection has real value! *Abject terror of that judgment should help to keep us on the track!* Life is difficult, trials are hard, discouragement and self-pity are often overwhelming. But we know that the second death awaits those who will not repent. The Lake of Fire is a powerful deterrent for **us** *while we still have opportunity to overcome!*

Even in the horror of having to destroy those few who will not repent and submit under any circumstances, God uses their future deaths as a powerful motivation for us to remain close to Him. It is **not** the *main* reason, as God is not the author of “fear religion” in an over-all sense. He draws us with love (Hosea 11:1-4), but, on the other hand, fear of Him—both awe **and** terror—is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

God works with people in the way that will produce the best results. Jude writes: “And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others *save with fear*, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh” (verses 22-23). Some respond to kindness, but others must be scared witless before they begin to move in the right direction.

Still others—hopefully just a few—will never respond, and these are the ones who will experience the third resurrection, a necessary event to fulfill God’s perfect justice. Their evil, incurrible lives, in one sense, will serve a “good” purpose by being examples for others to avoid emulating.

—Darryl Henson

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# THE FINAL HARVEST

continued from page 4

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they must all be given an opportunity for it. It is very obvious from human experience that very few among all mankind have ever heard the gospel or come to the knowledge of the truth.

Verse 6 also says that Christ is a ransom for all, and this will be testified or witnessed of in due time. The way Paul wrote this shows that the testifying is still future. In other words, many had not heard of Christ's ransom for sin, and Paul indicates that he expected many then living and many yet unborn would also die without hearing of it. But it would be witnessed to all in due time because Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven by which men can be saved.

II Peter 3:8-9 reinforces this:

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God's plan, humanly speaking, covers a long time. Like Paul, Peter clearly says that God does not desire anyone to perish. Other scriptures indicate that some will, but it is not God's will that they do so.

The critical factor in these verses is repentance. How can a person repent if he does not have knowledge of the truth, if he does not know the purpose God is working out, of what he should repent, why he should repent or by what means his sins are forgiven? The overwhelming majority of people who have ever lived on earth fit into this category! These things remain untestified to them.

I Corinthians 15:21-23 adds another important revelation to this mystery. "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

Simply put, God is proceeding according to a plan. All die, but that same *all* will also be made alive, resurrected in a certain order according to God's plan. Verse 26 reads, "The last enemy that will be destroyed is death"—it has not yet been destroyed! This means that God's plan is still continuing, and in due time the opportunity for salvation will come to all, even though God must resurrect many to that opportunity. Most churches exclude most of this world from salvation because they are not part of their group. Why do people scoff when we point out that God will give all mankind the chance to conform to His image?

## **Krisis**

Jesus explains in John 5:25-29 that there is more than one resurrection:

Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

To understand the resurrections, it is important to discern the meaning of the word *krisis*, variously translated "judgment" or "condemnation" (verses 22, 27, 29-30). According to *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* by Spiros Zodhiates, *krisis* generally means "separation," "decision," "division," "turn of affairs" and "judgment." The *Companion Bible* defines it as "a separating, a judgment, especially of judicial proceedings." Notice that it does **not necessarily** indicate the END of an affair.

A very clear similarity exists between the Greek *krisis* and the English "crisis." Crisis means "a turning point for better or worse" in the progress of an affair or a series of events. It is not necessarily the end, but a critical juncture, and the affair continues on. In this sense, *krisis* indicates a turn of affairs, a turning point, in a person's life. It may be the end, but, then again, it may be a time when his life takes a considerable turn for the better! Maybe God has, for the first time, revealed Himself and His purpose to him so he may be judged.

In the biblical sense, judgment can imply a period during which a process is ongoing. The decision, or sentence, comes at the end of the judgment. I Peter 4:17 shows this pattern in relation to the church. "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

Here the word translated "judgment" is from the Greek *krima*. According to Zodhiates, this word derives from the same root as *krisis*, but in this case, it indicates the act of judging, that is, a process including the final decision or sentence. The Bible uses this word only in reference to future reward and punishment.

Again we have indications of an active process, not merely a final decision. The active process includes both what the Judge is doing (observing, evaluating; Psalm 11:4) as well what the judged are doing. A judgment cannot be made without both aspects. In I Peter 4:17, God is judging "the house of God" and "those who do not obey the gospel" within the framework of how they live their lives.

Peter says, "The time has come for judgment to begin," implying that judgment did not officially start until Christ founded the church. Now that it has begun, all mankind will eventually be included within God's judgment. The pattern for judgment is therefore being established in the church.

When we see the overall picture of God's purpose, we can better understand what occurs in a Christian's life. God calls and grants repentance. We are baptized, receive the Holy Spirit and are put into the church, where we begin

to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ until we come to the measure of the stature of the His fullness. During this period of sanctification, God puts us through trials, and we overcome, producing the fruits of His Spirit. Sanctification prepares us for God's Kingdom and determines our reward.

Paul helps us understand this in Romans 5:1-5:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us.

All of this requires time. It is not God's purpose merely to save us, but to bring us to His image so that we will be prepared for His Kingdom. Our God is a Creator. He is reproducing Himself in us. Like a wise parent, He is judging, evaluating what is best for our development, then putting us through the next step in that ongoing process until we inherit His Kingdom. This is a true understanding of a major portion of the doctrine of eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:2).

### God's Spirit and the Last Great Day

Romans 5:5 says, "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Thus, we did not have the love of God until we had His Spirit. Without God's Spirit, we could not possibly keep His commandments, for love is "keep[ing] His commandments" (I John 5:3). If we cannot keep His commandments, God cannot create His character in us, and He will not allow us to enter His Kingdom. Therefore, anyone not having His Spirit will not be there.

At this point, we can return to the symbolism of the water-pouring ceremony in Jesus' time. Paul writes in II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." If one does not have the Holy Spirit because God has never offered him the opportunity, he can only receive the death penalty. Why? Because he has no way of even coming close to keeping the commandments, especially in terms of truly loving God (compare Romans 8:7).

I Corinthians 2:11-12 adds:

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but

the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

Christians have been separated, made distinct, from the world. As a result, we have also been brought under judgment, because receiving the Holy Spirit enables us to know the things of God that have been withheld from the world.

Ephesians 3:3-5 confirms this:

... how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. . . .

At the foundation of this world, mankind was cut off from access to God and His Spirit. The water ceremony pictures a future time when mankind's contact with God is restored, and he will receive the Holy Spirit. Then, God will also judge him on the same basis as those privileged to have His Spirit now.

### Humanity's Blindness

#### Removed

Romans 11:25, 32 provide a major basis for God's judgments concerning salvation for those who have not yet received His Spirit.

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardening [*blindness*, KJV] in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. . . . For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

This applies not only to Israel but to all of mankind. Thus, when man was cut off from God through Adam and Eve's sins, he did not possess the most important tool needed to equip him for his part in God's purpose. So God made a merciful judgment on him based on his ignorance of or blindness toward God.

And mankind is still blinded. "But their minds were hardened [*blinded*, KJV]. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart" (II Corinthians 3:14-15). Mankind is still held in bondage to human nature, Satan and sin. Until God chooses to reveal Himself, the veil—the ignorance and blindness toward and enmity against God—remains.

It will not remain forever, though. God says in Romans

11:26, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’” Many other scriptures state that God desires to save all of mankind, not just Israelites. Given the circumstances that have already occurred, and the criteria that must be met under the process of judgment, the only way God can save humanity is through a future resurrection.

## The Second Resurrection

This will indeed occur!

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. . . . And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4-6)

A first resurrection suggests at least a second. The verse clearly says the second occurs one thousand years after the first. That verse 6 states that death has no power over those in the first resurrection strongly indicates that death *will* have power over those in the second. The second resurrection, therefore, must be a resurrection to physical life. Verse 6 also repeats from verse 4 that those in the first resurrection will reign with Christ. This means that His government is established, functioning and executing judgment, among other things.

The events foretold in verses Revelation 20:7-10 occur at the end of the thousand years. Verses 11-12 occur immediately afterward and describe the second resurrection alluded to in verse 5.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great standing before God, and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

The apostle John saw people rising from the dead and experiencing the same kind of judgment we do now. For the first time, they are called of God, granted repentance, given His Holy Spirit and gain access to Him. They, too, must then overcome and grow into the image of God that they might be prepared to live and reign in God’s Kingdom. Like us, God judges them against the things written in His Word. He also opens the Book of Life so new names can

be entered. All these things do not happen instantly but over a period of time deemed sufficient by God to prepare them for His Kingdom.

Ezekiel 37:12-14 reveals what lies ahead for Israel, God’s Old Covenant people:

Therefore prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,’ says the LORD.”

The ancient Israelites, except for a few, never really knew the true God, nor did they ever have His Spirit. Ezekiel 37 describes in greater detail those things shown generally in Revelation 20:12.

God has not overlooked the Gentiles. In Matthew 12:41-42, Jesus confirms that they will rise in the same judgment, and therefore at the same time, as the Israelites:

The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.

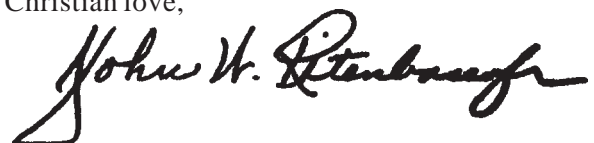
Notice that Jesus calls *it the* judgment.

The Scriptures, without doubt, show a universal resurrection of all who have lived and died without ever having what God considers an opportunity for salvation. This resurrection will occur one thousand years after the first, and those resurrected will be given the time not merely to repent, but to come to know God.

They must come to know Him because Jesus says in John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Eternal life is more than just endless life. It is endless life, *living as God lives*. It takes time and overcoming for us—and them—to learn to live like God lives. When we live as He does is when we know Him.

I cannot be sure what my father’s thoughts were when he visited the Allegheny Cemetery. But I am sure he knew neither the true God nor His Son Jesus Christ. His time is yet ahead, and I for one want to be there to greet him.

In Christian love,



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# Will Europe Ever Unite?

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We should also not forget that all of these religions are further divided among themselves. Lutherans, Pentecostals, Calvinists, Anglicans and others make up the Protestant camp. Catholics come in Traditionalist and Liberal stripes. Jews are Orthodox or Reformed or secular. Muslims can be Sunni or Shiite. Even atheists are divided between humanism and nihilism! And scattered thinly among these countries are a handful of God's chosen people.

As in the United States, people in Europe are becoming more distrustful, skeptical and independent. Fewer and fewer attend worship services of any kind. The denominations, churches and leadership have less control and influence than at any time in history. Among the nations of Europe, religion is dividing more than uniting; in fact, it seems to be splintering religious groups in much the same way as the church of God is being shattered.

## Coming—a United Europe!

Given these factors, the prospect of European unity seems pretty bleak. How can 300 million people, speaking dozens of different tongues, with radically different cultures, beliefs and aims, ever agree on anything? They cannot! Human nature dictates that such a unity would be impossible to achieve.

Jesus says, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). This is the answer to the question, "How can Europe unite?" If it were a purely human endeavor, European unity would never occur. It would most likely be cut short by war over some point of national, cultural or religious self-interest. With God's intervention, however, A UNITED EUROPE IS A CERTAINTY!

We have already seen that the Beast is given authority "over every tribe, tongue, nation" (Revelation 13:7). This does not reveal who gives him this authority, nor does it say why

this occurs. God reveals the answer to both these questions in Revelation 17:17: "For **God** has put it into their [the ten horns, ten kings (verse 12)] hearts TO FULFILL HIS PURPOSE, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, UNTIL THE WORDS OF GOD ARE FULFILLED."

This is a very vital part of God's plan, and it **will** come to pass! God says,

Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; . . . declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure," calling a bird of prey [like the Beast] from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it. (Isaiah 46:9-11)

God Almighty Himself moves to unite Europe under the Beast! Why? He does it to fulfill His purpose and fulfill the prophecies of His Word! His plan is moving inexorably toward its culmination, and nothing can make God deviate from it. To bring all conditions into a proper alignment for His Son's return to establish His Kingdom, God must force the ten kings to surrender their sovereignty to the Beast.

Yet even with God's intervention, the unity of Europe will be brief and fragile. Revelation 17:10-12 show that the Beast reigns only "a short time," and the kings rule with him "one hour." The parallel prophecy in Daniel 2:41-43 emphasizes the union's brittle nature:

Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will

mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

We know these things will happen. We know united Europe will exist for about 3½ years (Revelation 11:2), and it will be strong but unstable. But when? How long, O Lord?

We cannot answer this with any certainty. Jesus tells us, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36). He does tell us what to expect, however:

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. . . . Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. . . . Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him. (verses 37, 42, 44)

Paul echoes this in I Thessalonians 5:1-2, 4, 6:

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. . . . But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. . . . Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

What we can be certain about is that the time is near. We are living in the time of the end. Conditions are like those describing Noah's day. The "perilous times" of II Timothy 3:1 are upon us. Now we must watch soberly, preparing ourselves for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ by putting on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) and cleansing ourselves unto holiness (II Corinthians 7:1).

Is Europe ever going to unite? As bleak as it looks on the surface, it will unite. Yes, indeed, and very soon!

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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# The Mixed Multitude

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**During the post-exilic period:** Nehemiah 13 records God's rejection of whole Gentile nations *after* the remnant of Judah and Benjamin returned from Babylon. The people of the remnant came to understand that "no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the congregation of God" (Nehemiah 13:1).

In Joshua's, Solomon's, and Nehemiah's time, God did *not* choose to weave whole nations of Gentiles into His fabric, Israel. But during the Exodus, God extended His mercy to Egypt's mixed multitude, offering these folk a chance to join Israel.

God did not offer that opportunity again on any wide scale until the days of the apostles (Acts 10). At that time, He offered spiritual, not national, salvation to the Gentiles He called. In one sense, Exodus 12 foreshadows Acts 10, with the physical type preceding the spiritual. In both cases, whether under the Old Covenant or the New, God's calling is His prerogative. What is first recorded in the Old Testament (Exodus 33:19) is repeated in the New (Romans 9:15): "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

## Clean Garments and Called Multitudes

Earlier, we saw there were historically *two* mixed multitudes, one in Moses' time, the other in Nehemiah's. Some might protest, "God is unfair! Why didn't He accept the woof of Nehemiah's day just as He accepted the woof of Moses' day?" Paul asks the same question in somewhat different terms in Romans 9:19: "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" Since God's calling is totally unilateral, and since no one can resist His will, why does He find fault in people?

His answer is that God can do whatever He pleases with *His* creation (verses 20-26). He is the Potter, and the clay cannot legitimately question the Potter's methods or purposes

(see Isaiah 29:16; Jeremiah 18:1-11). He, as sovereign ruler over His creation, is under no obligation to tell us *why* he chooses as he does.

The warp-woof metaphor of Leviticus 13:47-59, the law dealing with leprosy in cloth, reinforces Paul's conclusion. A priest is to examine a cloth thought to be leprous, but make no decision about the disposition of the garment for seven days, during which time it is to remain isolated, separated from the people of Israel (verse 50). After the seven days, He reexamines the suspect garment (verse 51). If the leprosy has spread, "whether warp or woof, . . . it shall be burned in the fire" (verse 52). If the leprosy has not spread yet is still present, the garment is to be washed and isolated for yet *another* seven days (verses 53-54). If the leprosy has not changed its color after this second week, the garment is to be burned, even though the plague has not spread (verse 55). If the plague has disappeared, then the garment is clean and fit for use after it has been washed a second time (verse 58).

What an example of God's mercy, patience and long-suffering! He extends mercy on mercy—to a piece of cloth! How much more grace does God show us, the warp and woof of His garment! How much more has He given the Gentiles in offering them spiritual salvation now! How much more will he exhibit when He calls whole *nations* of Gentiles—when the time is right!

Was there a difference between the woof of Nehemiah's day and that of Moses' day? Indeed there was! The woof of Exodus 13 was a slave nation *called* by God, but the woof of Nehemiah 13, made up of Moabites and Ammonites, remained *uncalled* to that point in history. In other words, this latter woof was *unclean*, suffering from the "leprosy" of sin. However, God judged the woof of Exodus *clean*.

Did you notice that Leviticus 13 leaves an important question unanswered? It does not tell us *why* God chooses to cleanse one garment and not another. Likewise, God never tells us why He accepted the mixed multitude of Exodus, but rejected the mixed multitude of Nehemiah. The *why* is

known only to Him; as clay, we cannot question the Potter's decisions.

## New Testament Warp and Woof

The clear implication of Leviticus 13:47-59 is that some, though not all, leprous garments became clean. Peter's vision of "all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air" (Acts 10:12) speaks to this point. *God made it clear that He was capable of cleansing the Gentiles, but never said He had cleansed all of them at this time.* Notice His admonition to Peter: "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (verse 15). Peter got the picture when he met Cornelius shortly after, telling the Roman centurion: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (verses 34, 35). While God calls from "every nation," only some, those who fear and obey, are acceptable to Him.

In verse 36, Peter interjects a vital idea: Christ "is Lord of all." Verse 45 records that the "Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also." The "apostles and brethren who were in Judea" (Acts 11:1) came to understand that "God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life" (verse 18).

God cleansed *some* Gentiles, those He appointed to salvation. Paul addresses this fact in Romans 3:29-30: "[I]s He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith."

In Galatians 3:28, the apostle to the Gentiles continues in this vein: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus." In Colossians 3:11, he reiterates Peter's comment in Acts 10:36 that Christ "is Lord of all": "[W]here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."

God is bringing many diverse peoples into *one* body, His church

(Romans 9:6-33) with Christ as its Head (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16). He is truly weaving “a coat of many colors.”

## Separating from the World —and Rejoining It

There is a warning to God’s people today in all this: leprosy.

Leprosy is a type of sin. Sin can strike “either in the warp or in the woof” (Leviticus 13:51); no one in God’s church is immune to it. If sin does not abate, God will tear it “out of the garment” (verse 56). As we saw in Numbers 11, the leprosy of sin struck the mixed multitude. In rebellion and lust, these peoples sinned. Some of them died, and others later departed from the “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38, margin). The same can happen to us.

These Gentiles started out on the right path. At least initially, the mixed multitude took the opportunity God offered them. Sometime after the “quail incident” of Numbers 11, though, they chose to separate themselves from God and His people. God’s Word does not tell us the exact circumstances. What is important to understand is this: *Whatever the reason they cited for their defection, when these peoples made the decision to depart from God and His people, they chose to rejoin the world’s nations, the world’s system.*

God intended Israel to be separate from the world’s other nations. It is one of the reasons God separated His people from Egypt—so He could teach them His way of life. Along this line, Balaam’s comments in Numbers 23:9 are instructive: “For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; there! A people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations.”

God even connects Israel’s separateness with His own holiness. “And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine” (Leviticus 20:26). When the mixed multitude rejected the pillar of fire, when it forsook the cloud, it “mixed” with the world! *It lost the separateness it possessed as long as it remained with God’s people.*

## From Fame to Anonymity

What a tragedy of missed opportunity! What potential those people had, physically and nationally—the chance of a lifetime. Literally, somewhere in the Sinai desert, they walked away from it.

The mixed multitude, just like the children of Israel, had been Egyptian slaves—the weak of the world (I Corinthians 1:26-31), nobodies. These peoples, Israelites and Gentiles, were more than witnesses of God’s mercy. *The warp and woof together experienced it.* The Gentiles were there! As long as they stayed with God’s people, they were **part-takers** of God’s grace.

These nobodies had a chance to enjoy the national blessings God was ready to shower on the Israelites, if they obeyed Him. But the folk of the mixed multitude took another path, one that seemed right to them, and passed out of the pages of Scripture and history. They exchanged the opportunity of national fame for historical anonymity.

The mixed multitude does indeed sound a clarion warning to us today. “For indeed the gospel was preached to us *as well as to them*; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith” (Hebrews 4:2). They died in the wilderness like the unbelieving Israelites, missing the blessings of the Promised Land.

Lacking faith, the peoples of the mixed multitude—Gentiles blessed above all others then living—murmured, complained, lusted. Because they suffered from the leprosy of sin, God eventually tore them out of the fabric He was weaving. Some of them died of plague. Others left for parts unknown. *All failed to reach the potential God placed before them.*

We of the spiritual Israel of God, “whether in the warp or in the woof,” dare not follow their path. If we do, ours will be a tragedy of grander scale, of eternal consequence. As Peter says so encouragingly:

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will

be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (II Peter 1:10-11)

—Charles F. Whitaker

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## Should We Make Vows Today?

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if He gives it to them. Jesus warns that once we get what we want, we may forget what we promised to perform. As we have learned from Numbers 30, God does not take reneging on our promises lightly.

Should Christians make vows today? God tells us the best course to take in Matthew 5:34, “But I say to you, do not swear at all.” James writes that it is best not to make them so we do not “fall into judgment” (James 5:12).

Though God advises us not to vow, we can still make vows if we so choose. In making one, however, we should consider the examples of Hanna and Jephthah. We should seriously contemplate what we are requesting and what we are promising, always asking ourselves, “Can I make good on what I’ve promised?”

We are a special people to God. He has called us, and has great love for us. He hears our prayers as we obey and love Him. We should give a great deal of thought to whether we **need** to make a vow when we have such instant and open access to the very throne of God. He does indeed hear our prayers, and He answers them according to what He sees is good for us. Why should we make vows when we know that He will give us or deny us what is best for us?

Our society is plagued by its citizens failing to follow through on their agreements. Private debt and bankruptcy will play an equal or greater role than public debt in ruining the economy of this great nation. The chief cause of this is dishonesty. Let us make sure that we do not emulate the society around us, but instead fulfill all our responsibilities in our relationship with God.

—John Reid

# BIBLE STUDY: THE LAST GREAT DAY

This study concludes the series on God's annual holy days. We have seen that *Passover*, the first festival, memorializes Jesus' sacrifice for man. The *Days of Unleavened Bread* instruct Christ's disciples in holy conduct. *Pentecost* pictures God's Holy Spirit given to His church. The *Feast of Trumpets* warns mankind of impending war and the return of Jesus Christ. *Atonement* depicts Satan being restrained and man finally becoming one with God. The *Feast of Tabernacles* pictures Christ's thousand-year reign of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

The final festival is the *Last Great Day*. It looks forward to a time after the Millennium when an awesomely wonderful period of salvation will take place. During this time the majority of mankind—rich and poor, young and old, men and women—will be resurrected and have an opportunity to inherit eternal life. Billions will qualify to enter the God Family! On the other hand, those who will not repent, who will not submit to God and His way, will be cast into the Lake of Fire and die the second—eternal—death. What a fair and merciful God we have!



1. Why is this festival called “the eighth day” and “the last day, that great day of the feast”? Leviticus 23:34-36, 39; Numbers 29:35; John 7:37.

**COMMENT:** This seventh holy day is observed immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles. Biblically, seven symbolizes perfection. It is also the eighth day of the Feast, and the Hebrew word for “eight” is related to another meaning “fatness,” implying abundance, fertility—even resurrection and regeneration. According to Jewish tradition, on the Last Great Day, they finished reading what they started when Tabernacles began. Though intimately connected to the Feast of Tabernacles, it holds a distinct meaning of its own. It is part of it, yet separate.

The offerings required on this day in the Old Testament were the largest of all, typifying Israel's thankfulness to God for all He provided. Today, God's people keep this day with praise and thankfulness—spiritual sacrifices (Hebrews 13:15)—for His abundant spiritual gifts.

2. What does the Last Great Day foreshadow? Isaiah 65:20-25; Revelation 20:11-15.

**COMMENT:** This holy day represents the Great White Throne Judgment period. The prevalent conditions of the Millennium—God's government, peace, prosperity, etc.—will continue into this time, just as the Last Great Day follows the Feast of Tabernacles. From Isaiah 65:20, some speculate that this judgment will last a hundred years, the life span of a healthy individual.

3. What resurrections will occur during this period? Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15.

**COMMENT:** The first part of verse 5 inserts a parenthetical statement that refers to a *second* resurrection, described in verses 11-15. After the Millennium, God will raise up to **PHYSICAL LIFE** all those who have never had an opportunity for salvation. Christ will judge all those who lived throughout human history yet have not been called. Ezekiel 37:1-14 prophesies of God resurrecting all Israel. At the same time (see Matthew 12:41-42), He will raise all the Gentiles and extend to them the same offer He does to Israel (Romans 2:7-11; I Timothy 2:4). If they satisfy God's judgment, He will at some point grant them eternal life and give them spiritual bodies (I Corinthians 15:44-49).

After all have had their opportunity, God will perform

still a *third* resurrection. Those who will not repent of their rebellion against the Almighty will be raised to physical life and cast into the Lake of Fire, which provides a merciful, permanent death (see Matthew 25:41).

4. Does God judge everyone by the same standard? I Peter 4:17-18; Romans 14:10-12; I Corinthians 3:8, 13; II Corinthians 5:10.

**COMMENT:** God judges true Christians today by how well they live by His Word, and He will judge those who rise in the second resurrection exactly the same way. They will be given enough time to live a life of overcoming and obedience, just as God's firstfruits are doing in this age.

5. Why is this a *great* day? John 7:37.

**COMMENT:** As the God of the Old Testament (John 1:1-3, 14), Jesus personally instituted the Last Great Day to symbolize the Great White Throne Judgment. As Judge of mankind, Christ is great in all His attributes; He is the perfect Judge of all (John 5:22, 24-30). We can also see the greatness of this period in the huge number of people who will be mercifully and lovingly judged and granted eternal life.

6. Why did Christ speak of the Holy Spirit during His proclamation on the Last Great Day? John 7:37-39.

**COMMENT:** His words revealed that a day—the White Throne Judgment—would come when all humanity would have free access to the “living water” of God's Holy Spirit (John 4:13-14; Matthew 5:6; Revelation 22:17). Jesus is not only Judge of all, but also the One who dispenses the Holy Spirit to all of His disciples.

7. What occurs after this period? Revelation 21:1-4.

**COMMENT:** Following this time of judgment, God will create “a new heaven and a new earth”—a clean, pure world fit for God the Father Himself. For all eternity, “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” All those who have accepted God's way will have been glorified as members of the God Family, and they will live forever. Like God, they will create, beautify and spread God's rule over the entire universe! With this wonderful potential ahead of us, we can eagerly echo the apostle John's words in Revelation 22:20: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”