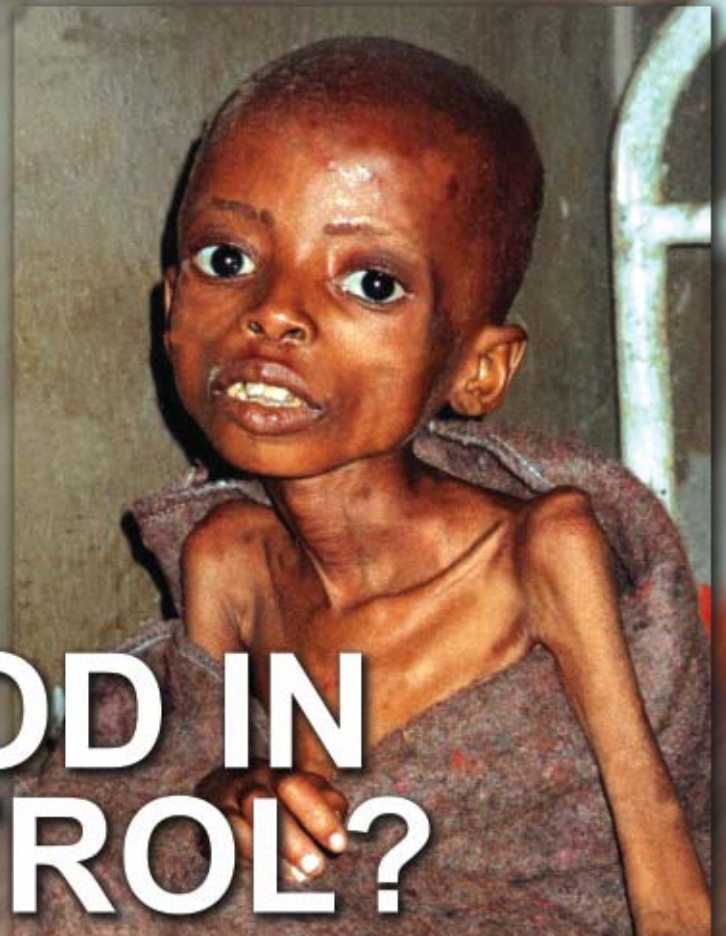


# Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 11, Number 3

March-April 2002



**IS GOD IN  
CONTROL?**

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Everywhere we turn, it seems that all the news is bad—terrorism, natural disasters, human tragedies, and war. Is life on earth out of control, or is God still in charge? Is God merely allowing such evils to occur, or is He actively working to bring His plan to pass?  
**(Reuters)**

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# God's Sovereignty and the Church's Condition

## Part One

Through the years, a number of people scattered among the many churches of God have sent me papers examining whether God or Satan scattered the church. These papers show that a sharp division exists among God's people on this point. From the papers that have crossed my desk, most believe that God permitted it but did not instigate it.

On a related issue, a number of letters ask that, since all the spin-offs of the Worldwide Church of God have the same basic doctrines, why am I not taking steps to merge the Church of the Great God with one or more of the others? In these papers and letters run a common thread—one we all need to explore and about which we perhaps need to adjust our thinking.

The common thread is the role God performs in the world, the church, and our individual lives. If we do not know how God interacts with His creation, we may have the wrong perspective on a great deal of what is happening. We should give it ample attention because, without this consideration, we will lack an absolutely vital understanding of God's overall operations. Without it, we will function in a weakened state of faith. This can devastate us spiritually because it will produce doubt, as well as confusion and lack of perseverance.

This two-part article hopes to add not only understanding, but also appreciation for the magnitude and intimacy of God's dealing with the world, the church, and individuals.

## Reactive or Proactive?

Overall, this article is a study of faith. Increasing our knowledge of God is important to faith's growth. However, the subject focuses on a specific aspect of faith that involves God's sovereignty and the present condition of the church.

Insufficient knowledge of God has the ability to produce a fruit that can be stated in a general accusation: Our common perception of God in His role as Sovereign Ruler is that He is essentially *reactive* rather than *pro-active*. Simply put, God waits until we do something before He does something. "We" can include mankind in general,

the church as an institution, or individual sons of God.

Another way of explaining this is to compare His function with common occupations. For instance, we tend to perceive Him more as a policeman looking for a crime to happen than as an officer directing the traffic onto a certain avenue. We perceive Him more as a test proctor or hall monitor than as a teacher preparing students to take their places as leaders in society. We see Him more as a functionary in a quality-control department than as the chief operating officer of a huge and successful corporation. We are inclined to understand God as One who in ages past designed and created a marvelous instrument but now more or less passively watches it run. In sum, we picture God more as an observer than as the Creator who causes things to happen.

This kind of thinking arises, in part, because we who grew up in Israelitish nations put so much emphasis on free moral agency. Do we have free moral agency? Absolutely, but if we overemphasize its importance to the whole of God's plan, we can be subtly influenced to put God in the background of our salvation and destiny and ourselves in the driver's seat. In addition, it can lead us to give far more credit for the outcome of events to humans who seem to be in control—even in national or international affairs. This is wrong.

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It lays foundations for what follows in the rest of the Bible. How does Genesis introduce God to us? The very first chapter of the very first book shows God actively creating a suitable environment in which mankind can live and flourish. This is no accident. It is done by design so that the initial impression we receive when beginning to study the Word of God is not of Him standing around observing but actively working—creating.

This is supremely important. The Bible shows God as the Mover, Shaker, and Shaper of things pertaining to man's purpose. We do not see Him contemplating; He is actively performing His occupation. He creates. Quickly—in a scant 26 verses—the narrative penetrates to the major purpose behind all God's creative activity: "Let Us make man in **Our** image." First, God prepared the physical environment suitable for the next step: His ongoing creation of forming and shaping man in the image of His holy, spiritual character.

# Does God Plan Ahead for His Spiritual Creation?

In Acts 15:14-18, the apostle James makes an astounding series of statements following Peter's address to the assembled elders:

Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: "After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the LORD who does all these things." Known to God from eternity are all His works.

Notice how clearly God states that *He* initiates His works through men. Acts 10 relates the story of the conversion of Cornelius and his house. Neither Peter, whom God sent, nor Cornelius, who received him, knew of the other's existence. God, working in both men, opened the door and brought them together.

God Himself pledges to rebuild the tabernacle of David. Certainly, He works through men, who, on the surface, appear to observers to be doing the work. Nevertheless, it is the invisible God who initiates and enables the rebuilding by determining when it will begin, who among men will work on it, and how completely they will finish it. He also gives gifts to those concerned to bring it about. Surely, God activates, sustains, and completes.

*The Living Bible* renders verse 18 as, "That is what the Lord says, who reveals His plans made from the beginning." How carefully crafted are His plans? How detailed are they? Has anything been left to chance? One thing is clear: He is a Creator who knows where He is going and has known from the outset of the project. He made His plans, and they proceed as and when He planned. When we begin to think of what James says here in terms of all the nations of the earth as well as the church, we are considering events of tremendous magnitude involving billions of people and millennia of time.

But we need to make this more personal.

Paul writes in Ephesians 1:4-5, ". . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. . . ." *Predestined* means "marked out in advance" or "appointed beforehand." Verse 4 indisputably says this occurred "before the foundation of the world." When we combine this with Acts 15:18, this event must have occurred some time before what happens in Genesis 1:2-26.

Is this a generality that predestines only the existence of a church and not the individuals who would comprise

it? The overall impression of the context in combination with other passages suggests an answer of "No," but it is not certain. Herbert W. Armstrong took it as a generality, which is indeed a safe conclusion. Regardless, Paul's words describe a Creator who is not only actively working toward an ultimate end, but also toward specific intermediate accomplishments, such as the church. He is the One in control, moving things in whatever direction they need to go. It begins to become clear that events relating directly to God's purpose of reproducing Himself do not happen randomly. One should not have the impression that God sits at the controls in heaven constantly making adjustments to accommodate for what He did not foresee we would do down here.

In I Peter 1:2, Peter comments on God's operations in this sphere of His work: ". . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied." *The King James Study Bible* has an interesting note about the intent of this verse: "This is not merely advanced knowledge of, but when connected to 'before the foundation of the world,' it means God determined in *eternity* past to bring certain *ones* of His creation into a special relationship with Him and each other at specific times" (emphasis added).

Before attending Ambassador College and becoming a fulltime minister, I worked for sixteen years in a steel mill. My responsibilities took me to the construction of new buildings and the maintenance of typical large steel mill machinery. As we erected a new building, we followed blueprints made by architects, engineers, designers, and draftsmen. Every detail of what we were building—where it sat on the property, perhaps ten thousand individual dimensions, water pipes, sewer lines, specifications of the foundation, composition of the flooring, steel columns, girders, electrical lines, conduit, brackets to support pipes, roofing materials, the color and composition of paints both inside and out, etc.—was determined, designed, and drafted on the plans before the actual construction began.

In principle, is this not a human form of God knowing the end from the beginning? Does this not compare to God appointing beforehand or predetermining when, where, and who does what? If men can do this on a small scale, why cannot God do this on an immensely more massive and complex scale with His vastly superior mind? Is not God's intellect of such magnitude that He can easily do this (Romans 11:33-36)? Does He not have sufficient time to plan, prepare, and bring these things to pass (Isaiah 57:15)? Dare we even think of Him as getting tired or wandering from the purpose He established for Himself (Psalm 121:3-4)?

Even so, do not get the impression that He does not react to how we use our free moral agency. If He did not react, chapters like Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 would not be necessary, for in these chapters He definitely says, "If you do this, I will do that." They obviously depict Him reacting to our choices. He contemplates and judges what we do. However, this in no way negates the fact that the Bible reveals Him as the Prime Mover in His creation,

always in control even in what we consider bad circumstances that directly affect us.

## How Closely Is God Watching?

In Matthew 10:29-30, Jesus gives us an unquestionable illustration of this: “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” God deemed this promise important enough to repeat in Luke 21:18, where the only difference is the context in which Jesus uses the illustration. There He promises that God will closely watch over us during periods of persecution. The scope of God’s attentive care of His creation is so great that even an insignificant sparrow cannot die without Him being aware and approving that such a thing should happen. How awesome!

Isaiah 49:14-16 provides us with a touching and encouraging insight into God’s watchful care of His children:

But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.” “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands. Your walls are continually before Me.”

The Bible sometimes uses Zion as a type of the church. From that perspective, we can see the church in its present dilemma saying the words of verse 14. God’s reply declares the intimacy of His interest and watchful care. He is constantly looking out for our best interests in every situation. His being the Prime Mover in His creation does not eliminate our free moral agency. Nor does it negate God making judgments and reacting to the quality of our choices.

Does it not say in Matthew 6:8 that He knows what we need before we ask? Knowing these things, could such a massive scattering of His church occur without God being aware of it and, at the very least, allowing it to occur? Understanding His power over His creation, can we possibly believe that anybody could force such a thing on Him?

Because God is moving the world’s nations and the church toward the end He has in mind, we are forced to react while striving to understand where He is headed. He knows exactly where He is headed. As Paul says, we look through a glass darkly (I Corinthians 13:12, KJV).

## The Prime Mover Creates Circumstances

There is more to this than meets the eye because God creates more than planetary bodies, earthly vegetation, and animal life. He also creates events, happenings, circumstances, and occurrences all to achieve His purpose.

Isaiah 45:4-13 provides an example of how God creates

events. The context is God raising up Cyrus, king of Persia, to free the Jews from Babylonian exile that God Himself originally imposed on them. We should also understand that God inspired this prophecy to be written over a hundred years before Cyrus’ birth.

“I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.

“Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together, I, the LORD, have created it.

“Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ Or shall your handiwork say, ‘He has no hands?’ Woe to him who says to his father, ‘What are you begetting?’ Or to the woman, ‘What have you brought forth?’” Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: “Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons; and concerning the work of My hands, you command Me. I have made the earth, and created man on it. It was I—My hands that stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; he shall build My city and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward,” says the LORD of hosts.

I Kings 12:24 sets the stage for explaining this prophecy in more detail: “Thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from Me.’ Therefore they obeyed the word of the LORD, and turned back, according to the word of the LORD.”

This event took place during the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, approximately two hundred years before Isaiah lived. To finance his massive building projects, Solomon had taxed the people heavily during his reign. Following his death, the ten northern tribes appealed for relief from the heavy tax burden, but Rehoboam refused. The Israelites returned home in rebellious anger. Rehoboam sent the head of that day’s Internal Revenue Service to either collect some overdue revenues or negotiate. The Israelites assassinated him. Fearing the northern ten tribes’ secession, the Jews raised an army and prepared to go to war against their northern brethren. At that point, God

directly intervened by sending a prophet to deliver the message contained in verse 24.

God says He was personally maneuvering events to bring about His will. He wanted to divide Israel and Judah into two separate kingdoms with two separate histories—a situation that exists to this day. Israel was later scattered in captivity by Assyria. Judah followed Israel into captivity over one hundred years later but at the hands of Babylon. If God scattered Israel, why can He not scatter the church if somewhat similar conditions to Israel and Judah's appear in the church (Leviticus 26:33)? Should we presumptuously assume that the church is exempt from God's chastening? Moreover, why could He not scatter it for any number of other purposes He might have in mind?

## Large-Scale Calamity

With this background, we must return to Isaiah 45:4-5 to pay closer attention to a number of things God said and did. Notice that He gives examples of things He does from behind the scenes that people are unaware He is doing. By this, He is revealing a principle. He is doing similar things all the time, and people are just as unaware today as the ancients. He is manipulating events to cause people to react. In these verses, God is speaking to Cyrus, who is totally unaware that God has made it possible for him to be in the position to carry out what God wants him to do. He also informs Cyrus that he will do this job for Jacob's benefit, in this case for the Jews living under the Persian Empire.

In addition, we discover in verse 6 that the Jews do not know this either. The time will come, however, when they will know that God worked these things for their benefit and His purpose, and they will give God glory as the One and Only Almighty God. A small-scale fulfillment of this occurred under Ezra and Nehemiah, but the greater fulfillment will not take place until the Great White Throne Judgment. Isaiah 45 gives the impression He is actively working, but that we are aware of only a tiny portion of His activity even in our own lives. Yet, as His children, we should be intently looking for His hand in our affairs.

Until this point, the prophecy foretells a wonderful event; but verse 7 introduces a sobering side of God's work: He creates calamity! He links two contrasting sets of events: light and peace—representing constructive, hopeful, encouraging events—against darkness and calamity—representing destructive, fearful, discouraging circumstances. God creates both “good” and “bad” circumstances for His people and purpose.

The division of Israel and Judah was a calamity to them, and it remains unresolved almost 3,000 years later. It began with the fear of invasion, continued through the devastation and death of the ensuing warfare, followed by deportation into foreign lands as slaves, a centuries-long migration into northwest Europe with their captors, and loss of their true national identity. This massive calamity was instigated and carried out by Almighty God completely from behind the scenes. The “Unseen Hand” was working toward the end He has in mind.

The church's present calamity is nowhere near that

scale in terms of size and length of time to develop, but it is no less important to those of us caught in it. It has involved its own forms of invasion, warfare, fear, discouragement, confusion, scattering—and many, it seems, have emigrated into “foreign lands” with their captors.

Isaiah 45:8 leaps ahead in time to show through symbolism that the result of God's using the means disclosed in verse 7 will be to produce an abundance of righteousness and salvation for those who receive His benefits. The most immediate beneficiaries were the Jews released about a hundred years later by Cyrus, but the longer range fulfillment includes the return of the Messiah and the blessings resulting from it.

Verses 9-11 anticipates that there will always be those who murmur throughout the often calamitous ways God chooses to work out His salvation. Perhaps here God is specifically targeting the anticipated displeasure of some Jews disturbed that He would use a Gentile king, Cyrus, to free them. People who would not dare to grumble against God were they face to face with Him will do this, not realizing that God actually caused some of their discomfort in the calamities they experience. Israel did this in the wilderness. Deuteronomy 8:1-3 plainly says God caused them to hunger. The Israelites grumbled repeatedly, not realizing God was making them go hungry for their good (verses 3, 16). People ask, “Where is God? If He really cared, He wouldn't allow this to occur.”

In reality, God cared about far more important things than the hunger pangs the Israelites endured. People frequently blame God with little understanding and in the wrong attitude. He indeed may be “guilty” of causing the calamity. Sometimes He may be blamed for doing nothing, when in reality He may be “guilty” of doing everything because He has a much greater end in mind! The problem with those who dare to accuse God is that they have a vague and weak understanding of how much He is involved.

Verses 11-13 are simultaneously a rebuke and a challenge to those who take this confused and whining approach. What God does is done in righteousness, and He will follow through with His will regardless of their opinions. He challenges them to ask Him about this prophecy and, if they think He cannot bring it to pass, to notice the power He displayed in His creation. The unstated question is, “Who is going to stop Me?” Further, Cyrus will not have to be bribed to perform what God has decreed—he will rebuild Jerusalem, just as God wills.

Passages like these clearly establish that God initiates calamitous events that on the surface appear to be disasters. But such passages also inspired Paul to formulate the well-known and oft-quoted Romans 8:28: “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” We most need to understand that God creates these events to produce a result in harmony with His purpose. Thus, they are always good whether or not they appear as such on the surface. This in no way means they are fun to go through. By definition, a calamity is not fun, invariably producing the destruction of

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# THE LAW OF THE FIRSTBORN

"REUBEN, YOU ARE MY FIRSTBORN, MY MIGHT AND THE BEGINNING OF MY STRENGTH,  
THE EXCELLENCY OF DIGNITY AND THE EXCELLENCY OF POWER."

So says Jacob to his son Reuben in Genesis 49:3. In ancient Israel, the firstborn child in every family was considered to be extra-special. This apparent favoritism within each family was not just a Hebrew tradition, it was also a set of rules given to them by God through Moses.

Frequently throughout the Bible, instructions regarding firstborn children appear in close proximity to instructions for the spring festivals. Why? It seems strange to think that they could be related topics. Is there a connection between firstborn children and the Passover and Unleavened Bread? If so, what is its significance?

## FIRSTBORN SET APART

Even before the time of the Exodus, the Israelites were accustomed to give special treatment to their firstborn. This is apparent from the book of Genesis in the stories of Esau and Jacob, Rachel and Leah, Reuben and Joseph, and Ephraim and Manasseh. Yet, as He commissions Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, God identifies Israel as His firstborn: "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, "Let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed, I will kill your firstborn"' (Exodus 4:22-23).

God's warning to the Egyptians that He would kill their firstborn was part of the plan from the beginning. It was not, as *The Ten Commandments* movie would have one believe, a last minute decision to which God resorted when all the other plagues failed to achieve His desired effect. In His mercy, God repeats His warning to Pharaoh, giving him plenty of opportunity to repent: "[A]ll the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the maidservant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the beasts" (Exodus 11:5).

Throughout Exodus 12, God gives Moses detailed instructions on how to keep the Passover and the Feast of

Unleavened Bread. Then, at the beginning of chapter 13, seemingly out of the blue, God ever-so-briefly introduces the setting apart of the firstborn: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Sanctify to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and animal; it is Mine'" (Exodus 13:1-2).

In verses 3 to 10, He continues to give detailed instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then, in verse 11, He returns to the subject of the firstborn and furnishes some more thorough rules:

And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstling that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD'S. But every firstling of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. (verses 11-13)

The word *redeem* means "buy back." If a family's firstborn donkey was critical to their livelihood, they could buy it back from God by offering a lamb in its place. Of course, God did not demand that His people offer their firstborn children as literal human sacrifices. They, too, were to be bought back by means of a lamb sacrifice.

So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, "What is this?" that you shall say to him, "By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animal.

Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem." It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt. (verses 14-16)

This relationship between the firstborn and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is repeated later in Exodus:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt. All that open the womb are Mine, and every male firstling among your livestock, whether of ox or sheep. But the firstling of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem him, then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. (Exodus 34:18-20)

God gives additional instructions in Exodus 22:29-30:

You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices [*the outflow of your presses, RSV*]. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. Likewise you shall do with your oxen and your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.

Here, God tells the Israelites that their firstborn cattle and sheep must be offered to Him on the eighth day of life. Likewise, the firstborn of the Israelite children—or rather the redeeming sacrificial lambs with which the parents bought back their newborn babies from God—must be of-

ferred on the babies' eighth day of life. In the case of a boy, this coincides with the day of his circumcision. The baby was "presented" to God at this time, and, although the parents had redeemed the baby, God still claimed the firstborn as being special to Him and still belonging to Him!

Note that the eighth-day presentation and offering were peculiar to the firstborn and was in addition to the sin offering and burnt offering (pigeons, turtledoves, or lambs) that were required for every other newborn baby and for the ritual purification of the mother: "Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. . . . And on the eighth day [he] . . . shall be circumcised'" (Leviticus 12:2-3).

Thus, on the eighth day, a baby boy is to be both circumcised and redeemed. Later, another offering is to be given:

She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hollowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of her purification sixty-six days. When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. (Leviticus 12:4-6)

Notice, she could not make this offering until the time of her purification ended.

Then [the priest] shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female. And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall

make atonement for her, and she will be clean. (verses 7-8)

Originally, it appears that God set apart all firstborn children as His to be used in His service. When He instituted the Levitical priesthood, however, He substituted Levite priests for His service in place of the firstborn of the other tribes.

Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be mine, because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the LORD. (Numbers 3:12-13)

Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel, from a month old and above, and take the number of their names. And you shall take the Levites for Me—I am the LORD—instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel." . . . And all the firstborn males . . . were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three. (verses 40-41, 43)

Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I am the LORD. And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites, you shall take five shekels for each one individually. . . . And you shall give the money . . . to Aaron and his sons. (verses 45-48)

Also notice Numbers 8:16-18:

For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel;

I have taken them for myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel. For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself. I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel.

Additional instruction appears in Numbers 18:15:

Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the LORD, whether man or beast, shall be yours [the Levitical priesthood's]; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.

It appears that, even after the institution of the Levitical priesthood, God still claimed all the firstborn of Israel as His own and as special to Him. Later, after the Jews' return from captivity in Babylon, they reinstated ordinances "to bring the firstborn of our sons and our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstlings of our herds and our flocks, to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God" (Nehemiah 10:36).

### **FULFILLING THE LAW**

Many years passed in the land of Israel. Much history transpired, and a great many things changed. Even though the Levitical priesthood was becoming increasingly corrupt, God's rules regarding the firstborn were still upheld among the remnant of the Jews. Now Jesus Christ, who had just come into the world as a firstborn—both of His heavenly Father and of His physical mother, Mary—was about to begin a life of obedience to His own laws:

And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. . . . And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called

JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. (Luke 2:7, 21)

On Jesus' eighth day of life, He was circumcised, and, as a firstborn, He was dedicated to God's service. It is interesting that Luke makes no mention of Mary and Joseph offering a lamb as a redeeming sacrifice, though he does record the sin and burnt offerings that they presented later on the fortieth day of His human life:

Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:22-24)

This omission appears to be because:

1. Jesus Himself was to become the redeeming sacrifice to which all other redeeming sacrifices had pointed since Moses' time;
2. His physical life was now completely dedicated to God, as had been pictured by all the other firstborn since Moses' time; and
3. He was not to be redeemed from a life of total service to God, neither by the offering of a lamb nor by the service of the now corrupt Levitical priesthood. The imperfect Levitical priesthood, which had pictured His perfect life of service since Moses' day, was soon to be set aside, and His own priesthood (after the order of Melchizedek; see Hebrews 6:20) would be reinstated.

The offering of the two turtledoves or pigeons refers to the fortieth-day purification, not to the fact that Jesus was the firstborn. Again, this purification offering was required for all births, not just for the firstborn. Luke adds in Luke 2:27: "And when the parents brought in[to the Temple] the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the

custom of the law . . ." (Luke 2:27).

This "custom of the law" refers specifically to the fortieth-day purification offering at the Temple. This is proven by both Mary and Joseph being in attendance, a thing she could not do if she were still unclean. Mary was ceremonially unclean on Jesus' eighth day of life, when the firstborn and circumcision ceremonies were performed *at home*, not at the Temple (see Luke 1:57-59 regarding the circumcision of John the Baptist). Ceremonial purity was not necessary for these latter rituals.

## SIGNIFICANCE TO THE CHURCH

All these sacrifices and offerings were for Old Testament Israel. What is their significance to the people of God's church today?

This question actually has two answers, two explanations for the symbolism of the firstborn and its connection to the spring festivals. To find these answers, we need to turn back to the original instructions in Exodus 13. Like the son in verse 14, we ask, "What is this? What do these rules about the firstborn mean?"

God's says, "[Y]ou shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstling that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD's" (verse 12). The firstborn of all clean, male animals (cattle, sheep, goats, etc.) were God's, and they were to be sacrificed to Him. Amazingly, these animals appear to represent the Egyptian firstborn, and thus represent a sin offering for us.

"And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem" (Exodus 13:13). The Israelites were to redeem or "buy back" the firstborn of their children by offering a lamb in its place. These firstborn children represent the people of God's church today. The redeeming lamb represents Jesus Christ.

Notice God's immediate answer to the curious Israelite child's question in verse 14: ". . . you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'" What does this mean to us? The Old Testament answer is only symbolic of its New Testament principle. God has brought the people of His church out of this sinful "world held captive."

Verse 15 now takes on new meaning:

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animal. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.

Remember, the firstborn animals represent the Egyptian firstborn. God released Pharaoh's strong grip on Israel—His Old Testament firstborn—by killing Egypt's firstborn on that first Passover night. Likewise, God released Satan's grip on the people of His church—His New Testament firstborn—by allowing His Firstborn Son, Jesus Christ, to be killed as our Passover (I Corinthians 5:7). We are then free to escape this world and our sins, just as Israel left Egypt on the first day of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:37-42).

Can the Egyptian firstborn symbolize our Savior, the slain Lamb of God? Though it seems an unworthy comparison, God inspired the apostle Paul to write that Jesus allowed Himself to be degraded to the bottom of the barrel—to become the lowest of the low—to personify a curse and sin itself. Notice Galatians 3:13-14: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

The redemption or "buyback" of the Israelite human firstborn is a reminder of the miraculous preservation of their firstborn on the first Passover night. It also looks forward to the church's redemption by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who became sin like the lambs that represented Egypt and the Egyptian firstborn. Paul says in II Corinthians 5:21, "For He [the Father] made Him who knew no sin [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Because Jesus willingly became sin for us, He has become our Firstborn Elder Brother:

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# GLOBALISM

## Part Nine: Running

Why has our sovereign God directed Israel to “push” the world’s nations into a global economic and political system in these last days? To set the stage for an eleventh-hour work, using the infrastructures developed by globalization to facilitate the preaching of the gospel and servicing of God’s people? To establish English as a worldwide language in the Millennium? To develop nations with the power and motivations to lead them into the final confrontations? We looked at all three possibilities last month. Each one of them may be a reason God is using Israel to build a “global village” today.

God’s work is so vast, dealing as it does with so many different people, that He usually has a large number of reasons for taking any action. His purposes may be to bring about certain changes in nations—as well as in individuals in those nations. His actions may have different purposes—at least different *short-term* purposes—for different nations or for the various individuals in those nations. This being the case, it is easy to perceive that God is using globalism to bring about a number of consequences.

In this article, we will look a fourth possible reason.

### Running To and Fro

*Globalism may serve as the tool God uses to bring about widespread dispersions of peoples just before the Millennium.* Remember, market capitalism is one of the two pillars

of globalism. Strictly speaking, capitalism does not just mean free, relatively unrestricted movement of goods, but also the easy movement of the workforce that makes those goods, that is, the unencumbered movement of *people*—migration. The connection of migration and capitalism is an old one. Economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo both believed that “the international movement of goods, services, people, and ideas is welfare enhancing for the world in general. . . .”<sup>1</sup> Hence, the globalists speak about worldwide “open borders.”

As we will see, their aim has not yet been realized. However, globalization may come to provide the social, legal, and political milieu that will make it possible in “the time of the end” for “many [to] run to and fro” (Daniel 12:4).

In an earlier article, we saw that God frequently uses the metaphors of sheep-scattering and grain-sifting to refer to population dispersion [see “Globalism (Part Six): Tide and Countertide” in the December 2001 issue of *Forerunner*]. Importantly, the scope of the end-time prophecies using these metaphors is *global*. For that reason, these prophecies fit well into the context of today’s globalization. It is instructive to see the global nature of a few of these prophecies.

Even before the children of Israel entered Canaan, God warned through His prophet Moses that He would scatter them “among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other”

(Deuteronomy 28:64), if they refused to “obey the voice of the LORD” (verse 62). The scope of Israel’s dislocation is clear: Among *all* people, from one end of the planet to the other.

Much later, the prophet Ezekiel refers to this same warning:

Also I lifted My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries, because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers’ idols. (Ezekiel 20:23-24)

Ezekiel wrote *after* Assyria had taken Israel captive. His warning words about population dispersion were not for ancient Israelites of the past, those already dispersed, but for the peoples of an Israel yet future—the Israel of *today*.

The prophet Amos speaks of this scattering through the use of the sifting-of-grain metaphor:

“Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” says the LORD. “For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.” (Amos 9:8-9)

It is time to recognize the hazards of unreasonable and uncontrolled immigration. Instead of being a source of strength, upwardly spiraling immigration has begun to create imbalances in education, income distribution, employment levels, and welfare demands. It is creating tensions between immigrants and natives, between immigrant and nonimmigrant states, and among state, local and federal governments.

— James Goldsborough

# To and Fro

I remember as a boy watching my mother sift flour over pie dough. She made an effort to sprinkle it *evenly* over the surface of the dough, not missing this section, not piling it up in another section. *Sifting connotes even distribution over an entire surface.* Verse 9 makes it clear that the range of Israel's dispersion is global, "among *all* nations."

## Prophecies Not Yet Fulfilled

Clearly, these prophecies have *not* yet been fulfilled. To date, God has not actually scattered Israel among *all* nations. Historically, He did not use the Assyrians to scatter Israel so much as He used them to *resituate* Israel to locales south of the Caspian Sea, in what is now northern Iran. In process of time, God further *resituated* Israel through a number of migrations into rather *localized* areas of the earth, such as northern Europe, the British Isles (including Ireland), the North American continent, Australia, and New Zealand. Notice that these areas are *isolated* from the capitals of the Gentile world. The British Isles and New Zealand are islands; Australia is a continent-sized island. North America is separated from other northern hemisphere power centers by two large oceans.

These lands to which God led Israel were generally under-populated before Israel invaded them and displaced the aboriginal—Gentile—

populations. These aboriginal peoples did not constitute the bulk of Gentiles. Far from it. The majority of the Gentiles lived, and continue to live, in areas *isolated* from the lands of national Israel. The Gentiles are concentrated in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Asian Subcontinent, and South America, as well as in certain areas of southern and eastern Europe. With the exceptions of the State of Israel and South Africa, Israelite migrations to these Gentile areas have generally not been extensive to date.

So today's world looks like this: The Gentiles are concentrated in certain areas of the world, while Israel is concentrated in *other* areas of the world. Relatively low numbers of Gentiles live among the Israelites, and, again in relative terms, even fewer Israelites live in Gentile areas, such as Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and Africa. Clearly, those Israelites residing in South Africa make up an exception to the pattern. However, when God scatters Israel to all nations, the exception will be the rule. The present plight of Israelites living in South Africa will become Israel's commonplace plight everywhere.

To this day, God has not yet scattered Israel among the Gentiles *en masse*, not yet sifted them "among all nations." Today's demographic reality does not look at all like the population distribution of which God speaks in Deuteronomy 28, Ezekiel 20, or Amos 9.

## Scattering and Sifting—When?

This level of scattering is yet to come. A number of scriptures *appear* to connect this vast displacement of Israelites with Israel's fall and the time of "Jacob's Trouble." For example:

One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. (Ezekiel 5:12)

Does the scattering mentioned here occur *before* Israel's fall or *after*? As an approach to that question, it may be instructive to compare Matthew 24 with Ezekiel 5. Note, however, that the order in which the terrible events cataloged in them is *not* the same. Comparing the number of *thens* in Matthew 24 with the number of *thens* in Ezekiel 5 suggests another difference. Matthew wins out, with his ten to Ezekiel's two. As Herbert Armstrong so often pointed out, Matthew 24 is *sequential*—first this, then that, "immediately after" the other.

However, aside from the last clause of Ezekiel 5:12, where it is quite obvious that the sword will follow the third God has scattered "to all the winds," there is no explicit idea of sequence in the Ezekiel passage. Nothing in verse 12 (or in its compan-

prophecy watch

ion, verse 2) argues for a sequence of events: first pestilence, then famine, then war, then scattering. Even though war is mentioned in this passage *after* pestilence and famine, the war of which God speaks could cause—and hence, *precede*—the pestilence and famine. Historically, this is not at all an unusual sequence. War comes first, causing famine.

So, it is possible, even plausible, that some part of the prophesied scattering could take place *before* the pestilence. It could even take place in a time of relative peace and prosperity.

Of course, none of this denies the fact that the final dissolution of the nations of modern-day Israel will not be accompanied by vast, involuntary migrations. That will certainly be the case. Yet, given the magnitude of the prophesied sifting/scattering, it remains plausible that God may at least *begin to scatter Israel before her national destruction*, using as His vehicle the widespread “open borders” established by a globalized international community. Such borders would facilitate easy migration from nation to nation (just as between Canada and the United States today).

What circumstances might “kick off” a flight of Israelites from their homeland? A prolonged drought-induced famine could become such a catalyst. The panic caused by some incident of grand terrorism, such as the spreading of a toxic contagion by air or water, could also trigger an exodus. The economic and social chaos resulting from a limited nuclear attack would certainly motivate some to flee. As a result of these types of circumstances, an international arrangement of “open borders” could induce a large number of Israelites to migrate into Gentile areas. In addition, a harried federal government, pressed to resolve severe problems, might strike “treaties” with foreign nations needing educated American laborers. The United States government, under these treaties, would probably “incentivize” Americans to leave by paying travel costs, ensuring adequate housing in the host nation, and the like.

There is certainly scriptural precedent for famine- and drought-induced migrations by Israelites, beyond the

classic one of Jacob’s journey to Egypt at the invitation of his son, Joseph. Notice just three:

- Genesis 12:10 makes it clear that God uses famine to induce His people to migrate. This is the account of Abram’s journey to Egypt, “for the famine was severe in the land.”
- Amos 4:8 alludes to circumstances wherein, due to prolonged and severe drought, “Two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water.”
- Ruth 1:1-6 tells how Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, traveled to Moab because “there was a famine in the land” (verse 1). After his death, Naomi, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, returned to Jerusalem after “about ten years” (verse 4).<sup>2</sup>

Remember, the prophet Daniel’s comment that “many shall run to and fro” (Daniel 12:4) is highly general. It can refer to strictly voluntary migrations, as well as to migrations induced by weather patterns and, of course, by governmental edict.

## The Two-Way Street

Nor, of course, does Daniel indicate that *only* Israelites “shall run to and fro.” Like the free trade of goods in today’s globalized trading regime, the free movement of peoples will be a two-way street. Migration in a globalized world will be reciprocal, Gentiles migrating *en masse* into Israelite nations as readily as Israelites relocating into Gentile ones. (Japheth, under this scenario, will literally come to “dwell in the tents of Shem.”)

As the Gentiles move into Israelite territory in their multitudes, the second pillar of globalism, liberal **democracy**, will become an important factor. Democracy entails the rule of the majority through voting. As tens of millions of Gentiles flow into Israelite nations, they will demand, and eventually obtain, the franchise. Politically, they will gain the upper hand in time.

Who of us today, knowing as we do

the power and prevalence of our democratic institution of majority rule, has trouble grasping Deuteronomy 28:43? “The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower.”

Folk in the less egalitarian past might have had trouble understanding this verse. After all, historically, it was not at all unusual for a very small minority of elites to establish and maintain a position of dominant leadership for centuries at a time over a subject people who far outnumbered them. The classic example, of course, is the Spain-based rule of South America beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century of this era—the time of the Conquistadors.

But, now, when democracy is the order of the day, it is easy for us to understand how an alien majority, even an economic underclass, could soon gain political ascendancy over their hosts. How many school boards in America’s Southwest have been actually (and legally) “taken over” by non-Israelites, simply by virtue of their majority! Thus, in a globalized society, with its pledge to democracy (majority rule) and free immigration policies, host populations could find themselves quickly outnumbered by voting immigrants.

Deuteronomy 28:44 tells of the economic and then the social-political *inversion* that will take place as resident aliens come to exercise the franchise: The immigrant “shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.”

Is it fantastic to suggest a soon-coming era of high international mobility of people? Consider the historical precedent. Vast migrations characterized the “first age of globalization,”<sup>3</sup> spear-headed by Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

[T]he greatest era for recorded *voluntary* mass migration was the century after 1815. Around 60 million people left Europe for the Americas, Oceania, and South and East Africa. An estimated 10 million voluntarily migrated from Russia to Central Asia and Siberia. A million went from Southern Europe to North America. About

12 million Chinese and 6 million Japanese left their homelands and emigrated to eastern and southern Asia. One and a half million left India for Southeast Asia and Southwest Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Notice the timing of these migrations, which “peaked during the 1890s.”<sup>5</sup> They started about the time God restored the birthright blessings on modern Israel, generally dated 2,520 years after ancient Israel’s fall in about 721 BC (see Leviticus 26:14-39; II Kings 17:5-23; Daniel 4:16, 25). They ended with the First World War, which closed globalization’s first era. During that 100 years, about 90 million people migrated,<sup>6</sup> usually by walking or sailing. With today’s larger, faster ships, coupled with the prevalence of rail and air transportation alternatives, the timeframe required to move that many people could be significantly compressed.

## Trouble in Denmark

Today, however, in this second age of globalization, worldwide migration rates are low indeed. For example, in

the 1990s, “the United States was the *only* country in the world with a high immigration rate. . . .”<sup>7</sup> This seems ahistorical. Given the extent and scope of current globalism, today’s relatively tight immigration controls—“generally far tighter now than they were a hundred years ago”<sup>8</sup>—do not seem to fit into the pattern. In our globalized world, one would expect to see *higher*-than-ever migration figures, not only for America, but also for *all* the member nations of the “global village.” Yet, the worldwide figures are low.

In fact, some economists actually *blame* the apparent failure of globalism to deliver on its promise to redistribute wealth worldwide on the current lack of migration. In the words of one analyst, globalization is failing because “most rich countries have largely excluded the international flow of *labor* into their markets since the interwar period.”<sup>9</sup>

This economist’s answer to today’s failing globalism is to foster *more* globalism: Couple the capitalistic idea of free movement of *goods* with the capitalistic idea of free movement of *labor*.

Right now, however, publics are not

looking favorably on such proposals. In fact, First-World nations exhibit a great deal of resistance to unrestricted immigration, even in those that claim to be in the van of globalization. Denmark’s recent refusal to relinquish her “national currency, the krone, in favor of full participation in the European Monetary Union”<sup>10</sup> is an excellent example of the strength of xenophobia—fear of strangers—in Israel today. Analysis of the 53 percent “no” vote leads to only one conclusion: Danes, worried about “preserving Danish identity,” voted to disconnect the krone from the euro.<sup>11</sup>

Denmark’s population increased about 7 percent since 1980 through widespread immigration of “guest-workers” from Turkey and Pakistan. The government’s assimilation policy failed miserably, as crime and corruption among immigrants increased. Finally, the Danes had enough: Their “rejection of the euro was indeed bound up with apprehensions about the *consequences* of immigration.”<sup>12</sup>

The suggestion, then, that essentially unrestricted immigration

# And, Trouble in California

**W**e do not have to go all the way to Denmark to witness deeply rooted popular resistance to immigration. In California, which is today less than 50 percent white,

whites are scared. The depth of white fear is underestimated and misunderstood by progressive thinkers and the media. Whites dread the unknown and not-so-distant tomorrow when a statistical turning point will be reached that could have very bad consequences for them. . . . They fear losing not only their jobs but their culture. Some feel that California will become a version of South Africa, in which whites will lose power when minorities are the majority.

California whites are fleeing, to “‘islands’ that are surrounded by vast ethnic or transitional communities, as well as deserts, mountain wilderness, and the ocean, . . . demonstrating what the rest of America might become.”

(See James Goldsborough, “Out-of-Control Immigration,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2000; and Amitai Etzioni, “The Monochrome Society,” *Policy Review*, February/March 2001.)

The result of this paranoia was Proposition 187, an anti-immigrant initiative later overturned by the courts. Hysteria spawned this Proposition, not a year-2000 hysteria, but a year-2050 hysteria, when America will be only 53 percent white.

Even staunch globalists have their doubts about immigration. In the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, certainly one of their leading publications, appears this warning:

It is time to recognize the hazards of unreasonable and uncontrolled immigration. Instead of being a source of strength, upwardly spiraling immigration has begun to create imbalances in education, income distribution, employment levels, and welfare demands. It is creating tensions between immigrants and natives, between immigrant and nonimmigrant states, and among state, local and federal governments.

will become a norm in our future appears unsupportable by present European voting trends. If massive, worldwide immigration does become a reality in the next few years, in spite of the present apprehension of the world's publics, we will have witnessed a powerful example of the sovereignty of God, who *overrides* the will of the masses and *veto*es the plans of the policy makers. God has the final say.

## God In Charge of Change

If God does overrule current public attitudes toward migration,<sup>13</sup> thereby freeing up today's restrictive policies, the world could *change* quickly for Israelite nations. The prophecies of widespread scattering mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:65, of sifting prophesied in Amos 9:8-9, and of political and social-economic inversion predicted in Deuteronomy 28:43-44—all of these—portray the running-to-and-fro-world we could soon come to inhabit.

Globalism might become the vehicle

by which God scatters Israel *and* at the same time destroys her homeland:

- God may employ global capitalism, where people will be able to migrate in significant numbers, to disperse Israelites widely into Gentile areas in response to famine, drought, terrorist attacks, and like disasters. That migration will be reciprocal, permitting the Gentiles to pour into the lands God gave national Israel.
- As a result of this reciprocal movement of people, God may use globalism's other pillar, the majority rule of democracy, to weaken the hold of Israelites on their "home" territories.

What a perfect setup to accomplish His end-time purposes! In process of time, God will regather Israel "from the ends of the earth . . . from its farthest regions" (Isaiah 41:8-9). Then, setting "His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left" (Isaiah 11:11), He "will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together

the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (verse 12).

With the scattering and sifting of millions of Israelites so broadly around the world, little wonder that people someday will come to remember God's second gathering of His people more than His first gathering, when they were pretty much localized in Lower Egypt.

"Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.'" (Jeremiah 16:14-15)

There remains yet a fifth possible reason behind God's development of a globalized world. It is a reason of immense significance. *God may use globalism to destroy the sovereignty of the nations of Israel.* Next month, we will see how globalism has eaten away at the concept of national sovereignty, especially in the United States.

—Charles Whitaker

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Richard Vedder, *The Independent Review*, Summer 2000, p. 143. Mr. Vedder's comments appear in his review of George J. Borjas' book, *Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> The Midrash, as well as Jerome, connect this incident to I Chronicles 4:22. This passage mentions that certain people of the tribe of Judah migrated to Moab and even came to hold positions of rank there. A number of translations decline to render "Jashubilehem" as a place name, but as a clause "returned to Jerusalem." See, for example, *The Amplified Bible*: "Now the records are ancient." It may be that Elimelech was among these migrants searching for food in Moab.

<sup>3</sup> G. J. Ikenberry, "Don't Panic: How Secure Is Globalization's Future?" *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2000, p. 145. Mr. Ikenberry's remarks appear in a review of Robert Gilpin's book, *The Challenge of Global Capitalism: The World Economy in the 21st Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. See also, Martin Wolf, "Will the Nation-State Survive Globalization?" *Foreign Affairs*, January/February, 2001, p. 179. *Foreign Affairs* is the principal organ of the Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, quoted by Martin Wolf, "Will the Nation-State Survive

Globalization," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February, 2001, p. 178 (emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> Martin Wolf, "Will the Nation-State Survive Globalization?" *Foreign Affairs*, January/February, 2001, p. 178. Mr. Wolf is Associate Editor and Chief Economics Commentator at the *Financial Times*.

<sup>6</sup> Above and beyond this figure, of course, is that of the estimated 25 million Africans imported into the New World (and elsewhere) during the period. This was, of course, strictly involuntary migration.

<sup>7</sup> Wolf, *ibid.*, p. 181 (emphasis added).

<sup>8</sup> Wolf, *ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce R. Scott, "The Great Divide in the Global Village," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, p. 160. Scott argues that free migration policies will allow the world's disenfranchised and disadvantaged workers to migrate to other nations in search of better jobs for themselves and better education for their children. The result will be to force corrupt, incompetent, and backward governments worldwide to develop policies and institutions that will promote economic growth. Doing so, he concludes, governments will be able to keep their current workforce and, indeed, attract workers from other, less progressive, nations.

<sup>10</sup> Henric Bering, "Denmark, the Euro, and Fear of the Foreign," *Policy Review*, December 2000/January 2001, p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> Bering, *ibid.* He adds that the Euro "has

lost more than 30 percent of its value against the dollar since it was introduced in January 1999."

<sup>12</sup> Bering, *ibid.*, p. 72 (emphasis added). It is worthwhile to note the larger results of the Danish vote:

Denmark has shown that it really does want to limit its participation in the European venture. Accordingly, it will become relegated to B-team status. . . . As for the rest of Europe, the Danish referendum result will probably delay Sweden's joining the euro; EU skepticism there mirrors that in Denmark. Britain, where anti-EU sentiment runs even stronger, will also postpone its participation. The result will be a European Union in *two* speeds, in which core countries move ahead with common projects and others are left behind. (p. 67)

Note that the A-team/B-team cleavage is basically a split between the Gentile and Israelite nations of Europe. The EU is fragmenting. Who will attempt to heal the breach? A charismatic religious leader? Or a military strongman? Or both?

<sup>13</sup> There are some interesting proposals flying about. Gary Becker and Richard Vedder "have suggested using markets to allocate immigrant visas." Visas sold at \$10,000 each would generate enough money to give each American a two percent tax reduction. See *The Independent Review*, Summer 2000, p. 146.

# Do We Have “Eternal Security”?

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent  
to make your calling and election sure,  
for if you do these things you will never stumble.”  
óll Peter 1:10

**T**he Methodist church near the church office often posts quotations and sayings on their roadside sign. One spring day, the sign read, “We ARE open between Easter and Christmas.” Not only does this reflect a common, modern American attitude about church attendance, it is typical of Protestantism and Protestants’ views on the unimportance of behavior.

This attitude and viewpoint spring from a doctrine that is a foundation of that particular brand of Christianity. This doctrine is itself founded upon the belief that human beings possess immortal souls, a lie that Satan foisted on mankind in the Garden of Eden:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” (Genesis 3:1-3)

Earlier, God had informed Adam and Eve that sin exacts a penalty, death—the cessation of life—and, if a person will not repent of sin, this means total death—no chance for eternal life. This threat God has

held over mankind’s head from the beginning. Notice, however, how the Devil replies:

Then the serpent said to the woman, “*You will not surely die.* For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (verses 4-5)

Here is the lie: “Look, Adam and Eve, you have an immortal soul. God cannot enforce His threat.” In its various forms through the centuries, this doctrine of man having eternal life already has appeared time and again.

In theological terms, this belief is the basis of the “Doctrine of Eternal Security.” What is worse, this heretical doctrine has resurfaced in the church, having been part of the latest apostasy. It cannot stand, however, before the light of God’s Word. God has a far superior way of dealing with humanity—both righteous and incorrigible.

## Salvation Assured?

**B**riefly, most Protestants believe their salvation is assured once they accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Many call this doctrine by the very familiar phrase, “once saved, always saved.” To them, this means that God’s grace eternally covers them, and thus they have eternal security that God will save them. God is bound to accept them and to

give them salvation no matter what occurs after they accept Jesus. In his worldwide crusades, evangelist Billy Graham has popularized the Protestant hymn, “Just as I am, Lord,” which sings the praises of this doctrine.

To us, this idea of “eternal security” is a completely ridiculous concept. God is pure and holy (I Peter 1:15-16). He will not accept people who are not as He is. He forsook His own Son, Jesus Christ, when the sins of the world were placed on Him (Matthew 27:46)! Why would He accept us, who are far more personally sinful, if we failed to repent of our sins and came before Him demanding Him to save us “just as we are”?

An analogy from the real world may be helpful. Just because a criminal is absolved of committing a certain crime does not mean that he will never again be guilty of another crime. For example, if the governor of a state commutes a murderer’s sentence, but he commits another crime later in his life, he is not innocent. The law says he is guilty of the later crime.

In the same way, a Christian who commits sin is guilty even though God’s grace has covered him in the past. If he continues in the sin until it becomes a habitual way of life, he is in danger of losing the salvation promised to him. Notice Paul’s quite concise statement in Hebrews 10:26: “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

This is plain. If we sin in rebellion against God, setting our will to go against God and His way of life, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ no longer applies. In essence, we have spit in His face. Paul continues by telling us what applies at that point:

... a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will

R E A D Y A N S W E R

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

he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (verses 27-31)

Peter says, “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God” (I Peter 4:17), and if we live a life of sin, we will reap the punishment that those sins deserve. Our God is a God of justice. The idea of “eternal security,” then, is foreign to the Bible. It is puzzling how theologians could develop such a doctrine when the Bible repeatedly comments, warns, and advises that we can lose it all through sin.

## Uncomfortable Passages

**T**o many Protestant theologians, the apostle Paul is the champion of grace. Frequently, they quote his epistles to give credence to their doctrinal positions. For instance, Martin Luther built an entire Reformation on one verse—Ephesians 2:8—which he proceeded to mistranslate and misuse! His rallying cry, “By grace you have been saved through faith alone,” adds the word “alone” to Paul’s thought. Luther is famous for disparaging the epistle of James as “an epistle of straw” because he despised James’ assertion that Christians are justified by faith with works (James 2:14-26).

However, such theologians are uncomfortable with certain portions of Paul’s writings because he fails to toe the once-saved-always-saved line. One of these passages is Romans 2:1-16, which expounds upon the judgment of God. Probably the best-known verse from this chapter is verse 13: “For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.”

What a blow! Paul agrees with James! Keeping God’s law is vital to our justification! This has important ramifications for those who refuse to

change their behavior after accepting Jesus as their Savior: Failure to keep God’s law is sin (I John 3:4), and those who sin “will be judged by the law” (Romans 2:12), and “the wages of sin is death” (see Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Jesus Himself says, “I tell you, . . . unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5).

Paul presents this teaching clearly in Romans 2:

But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. . . . [God] “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil . . . but glory, honor, and peace, to everyone who works what is good. . . . (verses 2, 6-10)

This instruction refutes the doctrine of eternal security. He writes this letter to converted Romans, those who had already accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. As God does in Genesis 3, the apostle threatens these Christians with God’s utter abhorrence of sin and His unwavering promise to judge it.

Paul later illustrates this process of judgment to the Hebrews:

For the earth [Christians] which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessings from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned [in the Lake of Fire]. (Hebrews 6:7-8; see verses 4-6; Matthew 13:47-50; 25:31-46)

## A Final Blow

**F**or those who believe in the doctrine of eternal security, II Peter 1:10-11 is a particularly difficult teaching to dispute because it exposes the lie in this infernal teaching. It

does this by stating a simple command that God asks us to carry out:

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.

The inverse is also true; if we fail to do what Peter advises, then our calling and election are *not* sure. Beyond that, if we stumble, an entrance will not be supplied to us into the Kingdom of God.

God has done His part. He called or elected us out of all the billions on this planet. He forgave us, granted us repentance, and gave us His Holy Spirit. He opened up the truth to us and revealed Himself and His way of life to us. He made the New Covenant with us, supplying us with spiritual gifts, love, and faith. There is no end to what He has done for us.

Nevertheless, if we do not reciprocate, the relationship He has begun will fall apart. Our calling and election are not certain without us doing our part. We can fall away and not make it into the Kingdom of God.

Why did Peter write this to the whole church (verse 1)? He wrote this because the church at the time was experiencing various apostasies (II Peter 2:3). False teachers were bringing into the church destructive doctrines to turn the people away.

Why would Satan put false teachers in the church if there was no chance for the people to fall away? If church members have eternal security, why waste his time on them? However, Satan himself knows that Christians do not have eternal security, and he tries his best to turn us into apostates. *We can* fall away!

Peter was writing in this atmosphere. The people in the first century church were living in a time of false teachings, false teachers and apostasy; and he needed to warn them. “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth” (II Peter 1:12).

This, too, begs the question: Why did Peter command them to make their calling and election sure? If they had the truth, and he admitted that they were established in it, why did they have to make it “sure”? In making their calling and election sure, they would be doing the one thing that would keep them on the right path to the Kingdom. Christians keep themselves from falling into deception, error, and sin—keep themselves from apostatizing and losing their salvation—by validating their conversion.

When a thing is validated, it is objectively determined to be genuine, true, real, authentic, or legitimate. How do Christians validate their calling and election? The answer is simple. Jesus describes it in Matthew 7:16-20:

You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

The way we validate our calling and election is by producing fruit. Jesus expounds on this in His Passover message in John 15:

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered. And they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. . . . By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. (verses 1-2, 4-6, 8)

This blows the eternal security doctrine to smithereens. Our Savior, Jesus Christ—our Judge—says that if we do not bear fruit, God will take us away and throw us into the fire! If we bear fruit, however, we will glo-

rify the Father and truly be disciples of Christ, that is, true Christians!

We validate our calling by growing in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). If we are showing love to the brethren, if we are serving as opportunity permits, if we are deepening our relationship with God, we can be certain that our calling and election are still firmly in force.

## Assurance Through Growth

**P**eter closes his epistle with a stirring warning and call to action:

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they

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## THE LAW OF THE FIRSTBORN

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- For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)
- He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. . . . And He is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:15, 18)
- But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “Let all the angels of God worship him.” (Hebrews 1:6)

• . . . and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. . . . (Revelation 1:5)

Finally, let us look at Hebrews 12:22 (RSV): “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering”. This translation refers to these angels being “in festal gathering,” just as we do during the spring holy days.

“... to the assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect” (verse 23). We are part of God’s church of the firstborn, God’s special New Testament firstborn children! We should never let it slip our minds, especially after our pre-Passover self-examinations, that we

occupy a unique and precious position before God!

We are the apple of His eye, just as our children are to us. He looks upon us, not as we are, but as what we can become:

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God. (Revelation 14:4-5)

This is our potential and what we are striving to attain. Our responsibility as regenerated children of God is to remain true and dedicated in lifelong service to God as members of the church of the firstborn!

—John Plunkett

# God's Sovereignty . . .

Continued from page 6

things we may hold dear. It may be quite painful and frightening! But, if we believe God, and if we are coming to know Him, then we will strive to work through it in patient hope, trusting His wisdom, love, and power.

## Small-Scale Calamity

Job 1:6-12 sets the stage for a calamitous event arranged for a single individual:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face." So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

This is a calamity of the first magnitude for just one person! Notice that God Himself takes the initiative in setting this up, choosing the antagonist (Satan) and defining the parameters of what could be done. Can we say in the face of accounts like this that God only permits difficult trials to occur? Can we say He is not actively testing His children to

see what is in them? Can we say He is not actively directing Satan to carry out the calamities He designs?

A series of four verses will give us a brief overview of Job's reaction and performance:

Job 1:22: "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong."

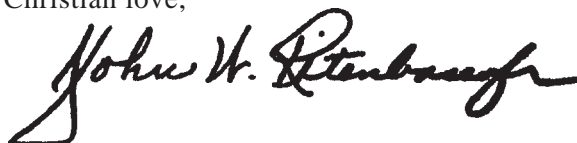
Job 2:10: "But [Job] said to [his wife], 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

Job 42:7, 9: "And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has' . . . So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job."

The narrative shows that Job had his difficulties as this grueling trial took its course, yet overall, he held his faith, and God was pleased. For the purposes of this article, however, his story clearly establishes that God's creative activity includes taking the initiative to burden individuals as well as nations with sometimes difficult trials that He arranges and oversees. It also establishes that trials are always for the same purpose: to produce righteousness and to glorify God. Of course, the one burdened with them always has the ability to overcome them, as Paul conveys in I Corinthians 10:13. These facts contain a great deal of hope and encouragement for us.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

In Christian love,



## Do We Have "Eternal Security"?

Continued from page 17

do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (II Peter 3:14-18)

Peter ends the epistle with the same thought with which he began: We live in spiritually dangerous times,

and the way to stay on the beam is to keep on growing. *If we grow, our salvation is assured.* God is faithful; He has promised us salvation, and He will give it to us if we are faithful.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard. . . . (Colossians 1:21-23)

Jesus Christ earnestly wants to present us holy, blameless, and irreproachable to the Father in His Kingdom, but we have a part to play too. These things will happen *if* we uphold our half of the covenant. We must continue in the faith. We must remain grounded and steadfast. We must keep on growing. We must continue in the hope of our resurrection and eternal life.

We will do well not to take God's salvation for granted, thinking we have some kind of eternal security without obedience to God's way of life. Instead, let us all strive to make our calling and election sure!

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh



# BIBLE STUDY: DOCTRINE

The pagan religion of Rome was a series of rites rather than a body of doctrine. In effect, the emperor declared, “This you must do, but you can think as you please.” Roman worshippers believed they needed only to perform the proper ceremonies of religion, whether they understood them or not. As far as they were concerned, a hypocritical skeptic could be just as “religious” as a true believer as long as he offered sacrifice in the temples of the gods.

Conversely, it is vital that true Christians believe and behave in accordance with God’s doctrine. Jesus states unconditionally, “[T]rue worshippers will worship the

Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). What we believe in our minds and feel in our hearts, we will perform in our actions. When based on truth, Christianity follows this principle. As John writes, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him” (I John 3:18-19). Jesus Christ’s way of life requires genuine obedience to God’s doctrines, the subject of this Bible Study.



1. What are the fundamental doctrines of Christ? Hebrews 6:1-2.

**COMMENT:** The seven doctrines listed in Hebrews 6 are not all the doctrines of the church, but represent a basic understanding of God’s truth early in the process of conversion. These fundamental doctrines are going on to perfection, repentance from dead works, faith toward God, baptisms, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. The first, “go[ing] on to perfection,” means pressing on to or striving for spiritual maturity. It is not enough for a Christian to maintain a basic level of understanding—He must grow toward perfection, completion, or maturity in the doctrines of Christ. Part of this process we call “overcoming sin.”

2. What happens if we do not grow in understanding and application of the elementary principles? Hebrews 5:12-14; I Corinthians 3:1-3; Psalm 111:10; Ephesians 4:14-16.

**COMMENT:** When a Christian does not apply himself to God’s way of life, he continually needs to relearn the basic principles of the knowledge of God—the milk of the Word—rather than the more “solid” spiritual food. One who can digest only the basic doctrines is immature in the Word of righteousness. He can acquire a deeper understanding of godly wisdom only by active use or practice of God’s standard of righteousness. In turn, this enables the maturing Christian to discern both good and evil.

3. Why are the basic doctrines called “the elementary principles of Christ”? Hebrews 5:9; 12:2; Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13.

**COMMENT:** Jesus Christ, as the author and finisher of our faith, begins and ends every Christian’s eternal salvation. It is self-evident, however, that, when working with humans, God must begin with the most fundamental truths. Every Christian, then, starts out as a spiritual infant, a babe in Christ—not as a full grown, mature

Christian. Just as human parents commence their young children’s education with the ABCs, God teaches us the elementary truths of Christ’s gospel. Thus, these seven doctrines are the foundation upon which the deeper, more complicated theology of a mature Christian rests.

4. How important is doctrine to a Christian? I Timothy 4:6-7; 6:3; II Timothy 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1; Jude 3.

**COMMENT:** Paul’s repeated emphasis on sound doctrine implies that the body of teaching in the church is more than just a gospel *about* Christ. It is the gospel *of* Christ—what He taught and lived in His own life, and what He expects us to follow as well. His doctrine is “the pattern of sound words,” the body of truth, once for all delivered to the saints. God inspired the writers of the New Testament to warn us that His church must have a solid foundation in the truth of Christ to defend and contend for the faith because of the constant bombardment of false doctrines.

Just as counterfeit money is recognized by studying the real thing, so we can recognize false doctrine by becoming well acquainted with the true doctrine of Christ. For this reason, God warns us not to learn the ways of the Gentiles (Jeremiah 10:2), which are full of counterfeits of God’s doctrines. Every major religion of the world has claimed that its “founder” had unique insight into the eternal truths of life. Nevertheless, true Christian doctrine claims far more: Jesus Himself tells us that *He is the truth*, not just a teacher of truth (John 14:6).

More important than exposing false teaching, true doctrine is the teaching that will guide us to salvation (Romans 1:16-17). The truth reveals how to live in a way that will please God and instill in us the fundamental traits of His very character. Only by His doctrine can a person hope to find and remain on the path to the Kingdom of God!