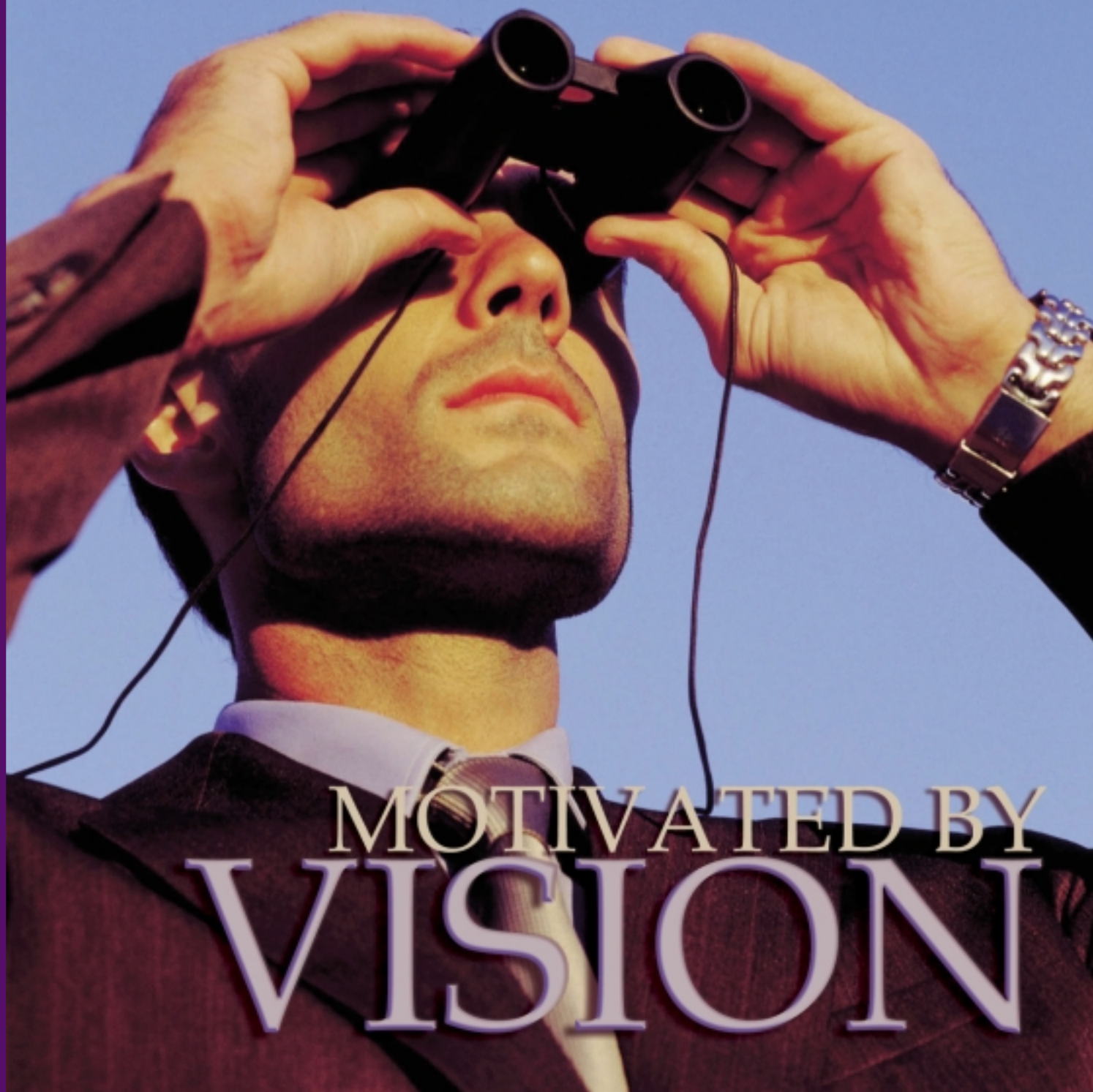


Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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VISION

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It is axiomatic that, if we do not have a goal, we will never attain it. And if our goal is unclear, we will not be motivated enough to do what it takes to reach it. How clear is our goal of the Kingdom of God? (Corbis Images)

Forerunner Magazine

Editor-in-Chief

JOHN W. RITENBAUGH

Managing Editor

RICHARD T. RITENBAUGH

Associate Editor

MARTIN G. COLLINS

Contributing Writers

TED E. BOWLING, JOHN F. BULHAROWSKI, MARK DESOMER, MIKE FORD, RONNY H. GRAHAM, WILLIAM GRAY, BILL KEESSEE, ROD KEESSEE, WARREN LEE, DAVID F. MAAS, HOWARD E. MARCHBANKS, BRYAN NELSON, JOHN PLUNKETT, JOHN REID, MARK SCHINDLER, SHERLY J. TOGANS, JR., CHARLES WHITAKER, BRIAN WULF

News Editor

DAVID C. GRABBE

Graphics and Layout Editor

KRISTEN M. COLLINS

Contact Church of the Great God

PO Box 471846
Charlotte, NC 28247-1846
U.S.A.

Box 30188
Saanich Centre Postal Outlet
Victoria, BC V8X 5E1
CANADA

(800) 878-8220 / (803) 802-7075
(803) 802-7811 fax

<http://www.cgg.org> or <http://www.sabbath.org>
or <http://www.worldwatchdaily.org>

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The Elements of Motivation

Part Two: Vision

Last month, the “Personal” focused on the power of fear to motivate. It can motivate us to cringe in stark terror, paralyzing us into a sluggish lassitude—or, it can conversely stir us into vital and directed action against or in behalf of a cause, project, or enemy. Fear can range from sheer terror to a knowledgeable, deep, abiding, and reverential awe of God. In respect of God, fear produces a strong drive to please Him, which itself ranges from self-preservation to the unbridled willingness to sacrifice all to serve our Beloved.

Proverbs 8:13 defines the fear of the Lord as “to hate evil.” This definition suggests the kind of conduct the proper fear of God produces in practical application. If we hate something, do we not take steps to avoid it? Perhaps one of our major problems is that we do not hate and fear sin and its penalty strongly enough. The fear of God, along with the other elements of motivation, strongly induces us to be non-conformists to this world’s ways. This is vital to our continued growth, as the apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:2, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould” (Phillips’ translation). It will be impossible to grow if we are conforming to this world.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-24:

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. . . .

Most assuredly, neither Jesus’ teaching nor His

manner of living conformed to this world. His warning is that *many* will use His name and authority to do marvelous works, but in their personal lives they will not submit to the very instructions that would develop their relationship with God and work to produce His image in them! The only conclusion we can draw is that, despite receiving the instruction, they nonetheless conformed to the world.

Clearly, if we do not know God because we are not really walking in His shoes, as it were, if He does not recognize us or see in us any family resemblance to Him because we are not at one with Him, He will command us to depart, to leave the Marriage Supper! We will not spend eternity with Him. We will have built our house on sandy ground despite all the privileges and warnings given to us!

Psalm 50:16-23 contains a particularly dramatic warning:

But to the wicked God says: “What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you? When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son. These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.”

Verse 5 makes it clear to whom this psalm is addressed: “My saints . . . those who have made a covenant

with Me by sacrifice.” This warning is aimed at the church in general but specifically at those who fellowship with the church but are “wicked” by God’s own judgment! Their wickedness identifies them as having departed from the way of God, even though they still give the outward appearance that they are “saints” by virtue of attending services. They are living in hypocrisy.

Human nature deceives us into thinking that God’s patience with us—which gives us time to repent and change (Ecclesiastes 8:11; Romans 2:4)—is tacit approval of our conduct. Not so! He is testing us to see how serious our devotion and loyalty to Him and His purpose are. In reality, these wicked “saints” are not like Him, but human nature deceives them into ignoring this fact. They, like those of Matthew 7:23, will receive a devastating surprise in the judgment. They were warned! They may have even initially liked what they heard, but they were not motivated enough to depart from sin and correct their relationship with and witness of Him.

Revelation, Vision, Foresight, and Discernment

The world is an ever-present burden, always exerting its will from every side. It constantly appeals through the senses, not merely to satisfy, but to satiate. At times, it seems to bludgeon us into accepting its ways, and at other times, it makes subtle appeals. Nevertheless, it is always a distraction, blurring our vision and clouding moral and spiritual issues, making them indistinct and imprecise. God’s ways, though true and righteous, are frequently abstract, requiring sharp reasoning and clear understanding. Sometimes reaching a correct answer requires some deep and persistent digging.

Notice Proverbs 2:1-6:

My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

For a person to follow this course of action, he must have strong reasons to drive himself to this extent. This is not a path for the weakly motivated, wandering around wondering where he is going. This is a road for one who has a vision of where he is headed, or he will become discouraged and not follow it to its end.

According to *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, vision is “the mode of seeing or conceiving; unusual discernment or foresight; the act or power of

imagination.” *The Reader’s Digest Encyclopedic Dictionary* defines it as “the ability to anticipate and make provision for future events; foresight; insight; imagination.” The word, as this article will use it, deals primarily with foresight and the ability to discern and anticipate future events and results. Vision enables one to plan ahead. Its definitions derive from the verb “to see.” However, rather than being an object one literally sees with the eyes, vision involves objects, events, or results conceived or perceived in the mind. Thus, it is discerning foresight.

The familiar Proverbs 29:18 is a good place to begin understanding vision’s place in terms of motivation: “Where there is no revelation (*vision*, KJV) the people cast of restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.” Modern versions replace “vision” with “revelation,” but the choice is negligible because God’s revelation is the true and most important vision (foresight, discernment, insight) for our lives. *The Living Bible* paraphrases this verse as, “Where there is ignorance of God, the people run wild, but what a wonderful thing it is for a nation to know and keep His laws!” An old English version based on the Latin *Vulgate* provides a fascinating rendering in light of what happened in the Worldwide Church of God: “When prophecy shall fail, the people shall be scattered.” Adam Clarke comments, “Where divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither revered nor attended, the ruin of that land [or church] is at no great distance.”

All these renderings show a measure of cause and effect. The vision a person has is the cause, and the effect is the way he then conducts his life. Where there is a true vision, or revelation of God, it motivates those who reverence it to conduct their lives in a way that produces good fruit—happiness. If the vision that guides is not from God, the people are motivated to “run wild” or “cast off restraint.” That is, they will not discipline themselves to take proper responsibility, and the result is they perish—quite a contrast to the satisfying result of keeping God’s laws!

There can be no doubt about what vision produces. It enhances our perception of what will occur or be produced if a certain course is followed. Thus, it increases our discernment and sharpens our judgment about which way we should go. If the vision, the foreseen result, seems good to a person, he is motivated to go in that direction. When vision and the fear of God combine, they produce a strong stimulus to obey Him. Vision gives a mental picture of results, and the deep and abiding respect for God produces a compelling inclination to please Him.

Enter Prudence

Proverbs 22:3 poses an intriguing question. “A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; but the simple pass on and are punished.” This maxim gives every

appearance of involving a moral choice. Could it also involve the chicken-or-the-egg conundrum? To produce the good result, which came first, the prudence or the vision? In light of the cause-and-effect principle gleaned from Proverbs 29:18, from the Bible's point of view, God first gives revelation (true vision), and prudence is vision's fruit. Vision motivates carefulness in conducting our affairs.

Prudence means "the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason; sagacity or shrewdness in the management of one's affairs; marked by circumspection, discreet." In other words, it enables us to exercise more control over the direction of our lives. It is a much-desired quality. Vision gives us a sensibility or carefulness that enables us to avoid dangerous pitfalls. The foolish are unwary and uncritical and naively blunder into trouble—even death. As mentioned previously, a major task of life is to learn what to respect highly. The Bible shows that most fear the wrong things. Above all, we should fear God, but most fear the world and other people.

Matthew 14:23-31 presents us with an example containing both vision and fear:

And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. And when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Where is the foresight? In this situation, Peter foresaw an unpleasant death by drowning. This is an example of how foresight, for good or ill, can come instantly to a person in an emergency. It is not always necessary for foresight to be thoroughly considered and dissected to be understood. In this case, Peter's foolhardy presumption, coupled with lack of faith, drove him to great fear, and he then foresaw the imminence of his death. Urgency pressed in on him because both fear and foresight were actively working. In this case, he both voiced his need and reached out to Christ for help, the

overall lesson of the experience. These motivators should drive us to Christ for help, whether in an emergency or in the normal course of life.

Vision and Faith

Even though we are to walk by faith, Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, plays on forms of the verb "to see." Seeing, of course, involves both literal vision as well as mental apprehension. In II Corinthians 5, Paul contrasts two different modes of living. The lives of those in the world are directed by confidence and conviction in things physically seen. In contrast, those whose lives are directed by faith in God have assurance and conviction in things, not literally seen with the eyes, but every bit as real though spiritually discerned. These convictions seen in the mind's eye are even more real than the physical because they are eternal. Faith is extremely important to all of the elements that motivate because it provides the spiritual platform that anchors them.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). In the second phrase, faith is what others see in the conduct of a faithful person's life. Evidence of the unseen things gives a person conviction.

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (verse 3). Faith operates within the mental processes. It enables understanding of events that occurred in times past, providing a perspective that we would otherwise lack.

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (verse 7). Noah was motivated by a deep and abiding respect for the divine warning about the impending crisis. He surely formed a strong mental picture of what was coming. Have we not been warned through biblical prophecy of the holocaust coming upon the whole world? Have we not formed a mental picture that gives us a kind of vision of its horror? Some, because of their experience in warfare, ought to have a clearer picture than others do, but we all have seen movies and read of the horrors of war, famine, and disease epidemics.

"For he waited (*looked*, KJV) for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (verse 10). Abraham envisioned the coming of the Kingdom of God to earth and his place in it. This verse is clearly saying that an element that motivated him to do whatever God required was his vision of what lies ahead. In this case, it was a vivid and wonderful contrast to his unsettled circumstance.

In verse 13, vision again surfaces: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen

them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” A pilgrim is a person on the move, traveling from one place to another. It is usually used in a religious sense of one who may have no settled habitation but knows where he is going. Here, it is especially clear that all of these people were motivated by their vision of what lies at the end of the journey.

Verse 19 offers another example of a significant event in which vision played a major role: “. . . accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” When confronted with God’s command to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham “received him in a figurative sense.” Abraham “added up” the evidence of God’s promises, and in his mind’s eye, he foresaw that God would either have to provide a substitute sacrifice or resurrect Isaac. Otherwise, God would have to renege on His promises, and Abraham knew God would not lie.

Finally, from verse 27, is the example of Moses: “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” Notice that in these illustrations the people were moved to do something, and in each case, they did it in response to God. We can safely say that God’s Word shows that vision motivates.

Acts 26:16, 19 presents us with an example of a person having a literal vision: “‘But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.’ . . . Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” The vision motivated Paul to follow through. This kind of vision is especially vivid and motivating, and God has given very few the blessing and responsibility of having one. However, He has given the ability to have the other kind to many, and it, too, can be very motivating.

How Does It Come To Us?

Paul writes in I Corinthians 2:9-10, “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” The source of the vision most of us receive is through the Spirit by our calling. God gives it just as surely as He gave Paul’s, but it is a gradually accumulating one in which the pieces that complete the picture are added through the normal processes of study, comparing, analyzing, and applying what we learn.

Consider how the revelation of God changes the course of a person’s life. If those who killed Christ had the vision to know who He was, they never would

have killed Him. Why? They would have had an entirely different perspective of the consequences of their actions. That foresight would have generated prudence in them, and they would not have permitted themselves to kill Him. Notice also how verse 9 shows us that what God has done gives us a perspective involving things not literally seen, yet in verse 10 they are nonetheless revealed.

Through the entire section concluding in verse 16, Paul tells us that, because of God’s gracious action in giving us His Holy Spirit, He has predisposed, enabled, or granted us the foresight or vision to make right choices in spiritual matters. God’s Holy Spirit gives us discernment as to where spiritual and moral choices will lead. This is wonderful, but something further must be understood. This quality, ability, or skill must be developed. It must grow. It does not instantly and miraculously appear upon conversion.

I Corinthians 3:1-4 provides an example of a group making little progress in this regard:

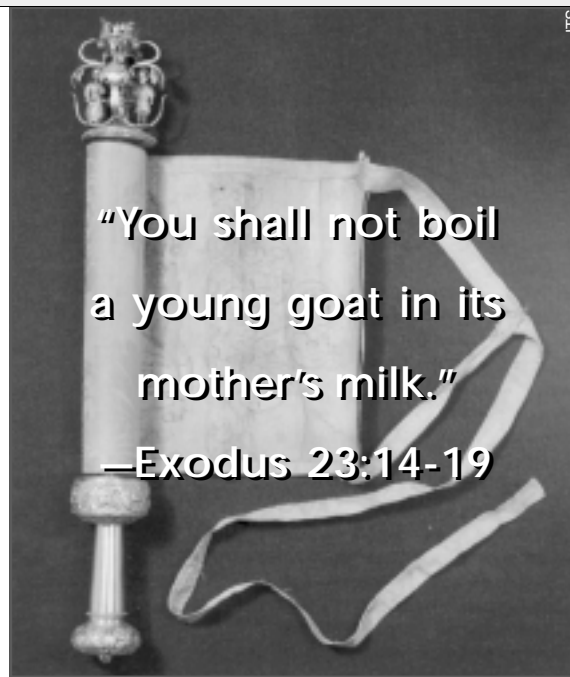
And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

Obviously, Paul expected much better of them. When he calls them “carnal,” he does not mean they are unconverted but acting as if they were unconverted. He is strongly implying they had either regressed from earlier maturity or barely left the starting blocks in growing into mature Christians. Paul uses “carnal” as a synonym of “immature” or “incomplete.” Their conduct and attitude were consistent with spiritual babes. From other parts of the epistle, we know they did not have their emotions under control and went pell-mell from one trouble to another, creating division in the congregation through their lack of knowledge, experience, and character. Giving them the benefit of the doubt, they, in their almost complete self-centeredness, apparently did not know how to do things the right way.

Vision and Wisdom

We might say they had no common sense or wisdom. Their discernment of situations and their evaluation of what to do did not originate in a godly perspective. Consequently, they were motivated to conduct themselves in ways unbecoming of God, Christianity, and the Kingdom of God. *The American Heritage College Dictionary* defines

(continued on page 17)



Milk and Meat

Silence! Repeatedly, God's people have been taught always to be ready to give an answer regarding our beliefs (I Peter 3:15). But when I was put on the spot, all I could come up with was a long, embarrassing silence!

This happened at Strathcona Provincial Park on northern Vancouver Island where I was spending a few days helping to supervise my daughter's Grade 7 class on their school trip. I had just returned to our breakfast table in the lodge cafeteria after a low-key (or so I thought) visit to the kitchen to ask the chef whether the tasty-looking omelets contained any ham. As I sat down, my daughter's teacher—Mrs. Schreiber, a very pleasant, polite, and knowledgeable lady—first asked me if our church kept the "Jewish" dietary laws, a common question that is often asked of God's people.

This was nothing new. I knew what to answer. All was well.

Then came question number two: "But you don't have any problem

eating meat and drinking milk together, as the Jews do?"

I knew that we did not have any doctrine or teaching against consuming meat and milk products together, so out came an automatic, "No." But I felt a need to expand on my answer. Without some brief explanation from me, Mrs. Schreiber and the others at the table would be left with the opinion that "John Plunkett's church" arbitrarily picks and chooses which parts of the Bible it will obey and which parts it will not. I searched my memory:

- Why do we keep the one but not the other? I did not know.
- Was there a real connection between the two? I did not know.
- Was the milk and meat command part of the sacrificial law and therefore done away? I did not know.
- What were the scriptures concerning this subject? I did not know!

The pregnant silence reigned for what seemed like an eternity until, mercifully, one of the other dads at the table changed the subject with another of his hunting or fishing stories.

What about you? Would you have been ready with an answer on this subject? Does God expect His children to be ready with answers on such seemingly minor topics? Is this, in fact, a minor topic? If not, what importance does it hold?

Let us examine how and why the church teaching on this subject—of whether or not to consume meat and milk products together—differs from the Jewish teaching.

Origins

What are the origins of the Jewish teaching? This doctrine of not eating meat and milk together is one of the main Jewish dietary laws determining if a food is kosher. Where did they get it? Is it found in the Old Testament?

I checked in a couple of different textbooks on Judaism, and they all agreed with *The Jewish Encyclope-*

dia, which says this in its article on “Dietary Laws”:

Prohibition of Eating Milk and Meat Together.

The prohibition of eating meat and milk, or foods derived from them, is first mentioned in the Talmud (*Hul. 8:1*), but is traced back by the rabbis to the Biblical commandment: “Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother’s milk” (*Ex. 23:19*). It applies, however, to the flesh of poultry as well as to that of mammals. Foods derived from the meat of mammals or poultry are known as *fleishig*; those derived from milk, such as cheese, rennet and pastry made with milk, are known as *milchig*. All other foods are neutral (*minnig* or *parve*), including fish, eggs, and all vegetables and fruits; accordingly, they may be eaten together with both milk and meat dishes. The latter, however, can be eaten only six hours apart. Scrupulous individuals are careful to have two sets of dishes, cooking vessels and table utensils, in order to remove any possibility of the contact of the tiniest part of one of the two kinds of food with the other.

Note that this doctrine was “first mentioned in the Talmud.” However, what is the Talmud and what authority does it hold? Is it, like the Bible, God’s inspired Word? No. It is a kind of “encyclopedia” of Jewish civil and religious law, and it includes a set of man-made commentaries and interpretations of Old Testament scriptures. These commentaries date from the third to the sixth centuries after Christ, and about two millennia after God had given His laws to Israel at Mount Sinai.

The Jewish Encyclopedia says that it is the rabbis who trace their milk and meat doctrine back to Exodus 23:19. Did the rabbis trace it accurately? Let us examine this scripture:

The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil [*seethe*, KJV] a young goat in its mother’s milk.

The scriptures are clear with regard to clean and unclean meats, but does this verse actually say that meat and milk should not be eaten together? No, it does not. Then what does it say? It says that God’s people should not seethe a kid in its mother’s milk. “Seethe” is an old English word for “boil” or “stew.”

Why Would They Do It?

Why would anyone ever consider cooking a young goat in its mother’s milk? Why did God bring this to the Israelites’ attention? Why would they even think of doing such a thing? Even if they did, what would be wrong with it?

According to various Bible commentaries, the pagans of that era and of that area had a fertility rite, which involved boiling a kid in its mother’s milk and sprinkling the broth as a magic charm on their gardens and fields. They did this in the hope of increasing the yield of their crops. Here is what *The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge* says about Exodus 23:19:

The true sense of this passage seems to be that assigned by Dr. Cudworth, from a MS. comment of a Karaïte Jew. “It was a custom with the ancient heathens, when they had gathered in all their fruits, to take a kid, and boil it in the dam’s milk; and then in a magical way, to go about and sprinkle all their trees, and fields, and gardens, and orchards with it, thinking by these means, that they should make them fruitful, and bring forth more abundantly in the following year. Wherefore, God forbad his people, at the time of their in-gathering, to use any such superstitious or idolatrous rite.

God was warning His people against following this heathen custom. It actually had nothing to do with the dietary laws.

Importance Today

Can any importance be attached to this seemingly outdated command? Does it have any significance today? How many of God’s people today even keep goats?

The late Herbert Armstrong taught that if a command is repeated in the Holy Bible, then that command is doubly important. Believe it or not, this command is repeated *twice*—so we might consider it to be trebly important! For this reason, we should take a look at the appropriate scriptures and their context. Before we leave Exodus 23, notice the context of verse 19:

Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year. You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, in the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out from Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering, which is at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk. (Exodus 23:14-19)

In this passage, including verse 19, God is giving instructions concerning what to do and what not to do on His
(continued on page 16)

Part One

I am not opposed to women as a general rule. I have a wonderful wife, a very sweet mother, and even several sisters. Nevertheless, the Bible warns us about *strange women*, so it is in our best interest to develop a healthy suspicion of these women. They are described for us in Proverbs 7:

My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral [*strange*, KJV] woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words. (verses 1-5)

Verse 5 introduces the main symbol in this chapter, the “strange woman,” as the King James Version calls her. Other translations refer to this immoral woman as a “seductress,” “adulteress,” “wayward wife,” “loose woman,” “adventuress,” or “foreigner.”

The word translated “strange” indicates a deficient quality in a relationship. It represents something that is lacking or incomplete in comparison to an ideal or a standard. This woman was not living up to the standard or ideal of a godly wife, and so the Bible brands her as *strange*.

In our own lives, if we do not recognize somebody, we say that person is a *stranger*. The same principle is at work here—God does not recognize this woman because she does not live by the standards that He has established for women in general, and specifically for a wife.

In this chapter, Solomon shows the danger of being led astray by someone who does not live up to the godly ideal. While this certainly applies in the case of a sexually immoral person, as is illustrated here, another danger, another application of this, encompasses a great deal more than just sexual immorality.

Two Strange Women

The book of Revelation provides two examples of strange women—women whom God does not recognize, and who do not live up to the standards that He has set for us.

Both of these also have the symbolism of a sexually immoral woman:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. (Revelation 17:1-6)

This first example of an immoral woman is, in the words of the King James version, the “great whore.” She represents a powerful false religious system—specifically, false Christianity. We will call her “Miss Heresy.”

A second example of something strange to God follows closely on this woman’s heels, and again, the symbol of sin is sexual immorality:

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” And I heard

(continued on page 18)

Strange Women

GLOBALISM

Part Twelve: It Shall

Everyone knows that “melting pot” America lacks a nationwide religion or a common ethnicity. Substituting for those “common denominators” is a grass-roots respect for the rule of law, a respect visible in no nation so clearly as in America. The respect manifests itself in conviction and confidence: *Conviction* that everyone, including the government, is under the law; *Confidence* that breaches in relationships can be resolved—if not healed—by due legal processes. That respect includes all types of law, including the international variety.

Friends and foes alike recognize that American’s hold this deep respect for law. They also recognize that law—especially international law—can be a powerful tool for controlling the United States.

[I]nternational law constitutes a real and immediate threat to U.S. national interests. The impetus for extending the reach of international law stems from both our allies and our adversaries, who have chosen to use it as a means to check, or at least harness, American power. . . .

[F]rom the perspective of both [our allies and adversaries], the great “problem” of international affairs in the post-Cold War world is the unchallenged military, diplomatic, economic and even cultural predominance of the United States. Our global antagonists, particularly China, would like to see the United States

disengage from world affairs. For our allies, who continue to depend far too much on U.S. military might to wish for a new American isolationism, the great danger has become American “unilateralism”—an all-purpose term for U.S. action not sanctioned by the “international community.” They do not want to prevent U.S. global engagement; they want to influence and control it. . . . Both our allies and our adversaries understand the value of international law in achieving their ends.²

Ironically, America’s own thrust toward globalism, her desire to play a commanding role in leading the “global village,” has given rise to a “renaissance” in international law. It

is now an important and necessary force in the context of globalization, governing the increasingly transnational elements of virtually every area of legal regulation, including such *domestic* issues as family, criminal, commercial, and bankruptcy law.³

The danger lies in Americans’ ignorance of the major *difference* between domestic and international law. Failing to grasp that difference, Americans, regardless of their views toward globalization, might be inclined to empower international courts and organizations to adjudicate domestic

matters through systems of international law. “If law is good,” Americans may reason, “having served us so well for so long, what can be wrong with moving law to an international level? That way, everyone will enjoy its benefits.”

American Domestic Policy

Nevertheless, there is indeed a huge difference between domestic and international law: In the American Republic, domestic law is created by popularly elected legislatures that are ultimately accountable to the electorate. However, there is currently no international governing body, accountable to the governed, which enacts international law.

International law has quite a different genesis from domestic law. Historically, international law, commonly called the “law of nations,” grew up very slowly in the form of treaties, conventions, and compacts between nations. The laws often dealt with commercial matters, use of sea and land passages, treatment of prisoners of war, and the like. This body of law “had little, if anything, to do with the relationship between citizens and their own government.”⁴ That being the case, it did not represent an attack on any nation’s sovereignty.

Actually, the Constitution of the United States recognizes this “law of nations.” Treaties, upon ratification by the Senate, become domestic law



Law is our genius and our Achilles' Heel. If the trends of international law in the 1990s are allowed to mature into binding rules, international law may prove to be one of the most potent weapons ever deployed against the United States.¹

—David B. Rivkin, Jr. and Lee A. Casey,
"The Rocky Shoals of International Law," *The National Interest*

I Never Be

and, by an act of Congress, can be suspended at any time. Becoming signatory to a duly ratified treaty, therefore, does not *ipso facto* constitute an abrogation of American national sovereignty.

More recently, however, the advocates of a global "community of nations" have promulgated two new doctrines that, taken together, assault the constitutional guarantee that American public domestic policy be determined by the consent of the governed.

1. The first doctrine is that of "universal jurisdiction." This doctrine holds that

any state can prosecute international humanitarian violations wherever they occur, whether or not that state's own citizens are involved—any state, or even a low-level foreign magistrate, can begin a prosecution against American military or civilian officials.⁵

Under this doctrine, states—even when not signatory to treaties—are subject to vague legal norms devised by the "international community." Emphatically, this community is not elected by the people it purports to serve, nor is it accountable to them. Even staunch internationalists admit that "accountability deficits in increasingly powerful international institutions do exist."⁶ Robert Bork feels this "deficit" is of pivotal importance:

"There can be no authentic rule of law among nations until nations have a common political morality or are under a common sovereignty."⁷ That day has not yet come.

2. The second doctrine undermining democratic institutions is the development of "customary international law." This body of law is not enshrined in duly ratified treaties or conventions of any type. Rather, "customary laws" seem to be "spawned overnight through nothing more tangible than the convening of scholarly conferences or the publication of papers."⁸ Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as Amnesty International, generally do the convening and publishing and have developed such clout that they are "able to push around even the largest governments."⁹ These secular organizations, which have "begun to act as an independent international force,"¹⁰ vociferously claim to be the legitimate conscience of the world, able to represent its interests fairly. What the NGO gang is not so vocal about admitting is the fact that NGOs are *private* organizations, accountable only to their own boards of directors. *NGOs are special interest groups not accountable to the people.* Licensing these organizations to legislate through the courts is ultimately to abolish the concept of "due process."

"Customary international law," unlike its predecessor, "the law of

nations," touches the daily lives of domestic constituencies. Combined with the doctrine of "universal jurisdiction," it will empower international bodies to decide American domestic policy regarding an unending host of issues: abortion, parent-child relationships, educational and medical standards, environmental depredation, and capital punishment, to name only a few. Moreover, these bodies would make their unilateral decisions based upon current NGO thinking, not the customs and mores (whether right or wrong) of local citizens.

A privately sponsored and extremely prestigious treatise published in 1987 indicates the reach of these two doctrines. *Restatement of Foreign Relations Laws* propounds that international obligations of the federal government require the federal court system to impose its rulings on lower courts "even where there is no direct treaty or statute on which to rely but simply a federal court's *notion* of evolving international law."¹¹ So powerful is this evolving "customary international law" that the federal court's judgments are binding "even where the Senate has not ratified the relevant treaty or has attached particular exceptions by reservation."¹²

Today's internationalists will overturn anything and everything to build their own tower of Babel. To them, even the United States Constitution "will have to adapt to global requirements sooner or later. . . . [E]conomic

prophecy watch

globalization will inevitably bring the United States in line.”¹³ To globalists, the Constitution represents part of “the established order of things,” which globalism’s “great tide” will ultimately wear away.¹⁴

American Foreign Policy

International law threatens more than America’s right to determine her own *domestic* policy. It also can constrain America in the conduct of her *foreign* policy.

Many “globalists” (especially the human rights groups) have a deeply political agenda, and one of its central elements is the gauzy notion that force and power in international affairs can be easily replaced by “the rule of law” enforced through multilateral organizations. Although wildly naïve (and therefore dangerous), one unmistakable objective is the limitation of American power through a network of legal prohibitions applied initially to the likes of Pinochet, but applied later to American presidents and secretaries of state and defense.¹⁵

The anti-Americanists’ strategy is clear. Kofi Annan, the United Nations secretary-general, asserts that “the United Nations Security Council is the ‘sole source of legitimacy on the use of force’ in the world.”¹⁶ Further, the UN claims that “the actions of individual civilian and military officials of states fall under the purview of international criminal jurisdiction.”¹⁷ Under the doctrine of “universal jurisdiction,” the International Criminal Court’s Office of the Prosecutor could investigate and try any American military or civilian official, at any level, for supposed breaches of “customary international law.” This being the case,

[I]nternational judicial bodies and interested states will be able effectively to shape American policy. An American president would be far less likely to use force if there were a genu-

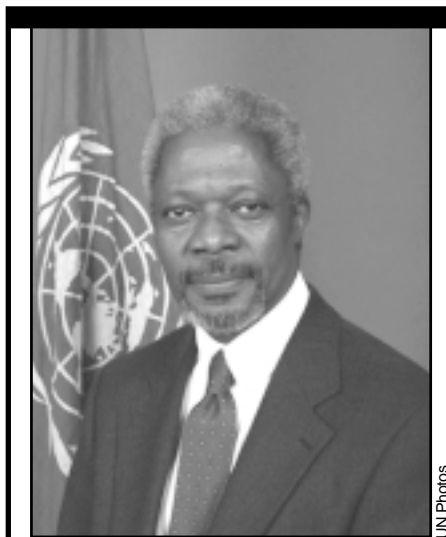
ine possibility that U.S. soldiers or officials, including himself, would face future prosecution in a foreign court. Both our allies and our adversaries fully understand the importance of molding the new international law to fit their needs, and its power as an effective weapon against the United States.¹⁸

In sum,

To the extent that international law allows supranational, or extra-national, institutions to determine whether the actions of the United States are lawful, ultimate authority will no longer be vested in the American people, but in these institutions. Thus, . . . the new international law is profoundly undemocratic at its core. . . . *If the aspirations of today’s international law proponents were ever to prevail, the resulting international systems would not remotely resemble a community of democratic nations.*¹⁹

To Cede or Not to Cede

Whether America actually cedes a substantive part of her sovereignty to a gang of international thugs bent



UN Photos

Kofi Annan

United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, claims that the UN Security Council alone can allow or deny the use of force on the planet.

on her destruction remains to be seen. Severe economic difficulties or a military setback may give rise to a renewed isolationism that would cut the NGO gang off at the pass. In such a scenario, the synergy generated by states-rights advocates and (neo)conservatives may turn America inward.

At any rate, it is important to recognize the scope of the problem. Jesse Helms, as usual, cuts to the chase, seeing clearly the different roads America and the European Union are taking—and the possible end of those roads:

. . . [I]f [the United Nations, through the ICC] seeks to impose its presumed power and authority over nations-states, I guarantee that it will meet stiff resistance from the American people. . . . Today, while America’s friends in Europe cede more and more power to supranational institutions like the European Union, Americans are heading in precisely the opposite direction. The United States is in a process of reducing centralized power by taking more and more authority that has been amassed by the federal government and delegating it to the individual states where it rightly belongs. . . . If the United Nations does not respect American sovereignty, if it seeks to impose its presumed authority over the American people without their consent, *then it begs for confrontation and, more important, eventual U.S. withdrawal.*²⁰

Withdrawal from the United Nations would signal America’s disengagement from world affairs, her return to isolationism, and her reassertion of her right to exist as a sovereign nation. *Historical* evidence points to that reassertion by modern-day Israel before her final destruction. Both the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah ended with a bang, not a whimper. Both went down to defeat strongly stating their sovereign rights as nations.

Sovereignty of Nations



Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State, and Robin Cook, Britain's former Foreign Secretary, both feel that the time has come for sovereign nations to cede their sovereignty to the international community.



terest in preserving its own prerogatives, and so is disposed to protect the prerogatives of the others. To put it differently, the international community may be seen as a cartel, the members of which seek to ration, so as to preserve the value of, their common product: sovereignty.²²

Will America guard her sovereignty? Not if the wrong-headed thinking of leaders like Madeleine Albright prevails. The former Secretary of State believes that "great nations . . . at various times cede various portions of [their sovereignty] in order to achieve some better good for their country."²³ Rivaling Madeleine's madness is that of Robin Cook, Britain's Foreign Secretary: "It is no longer sufficient for states to claim that they have the sovereign right to decide what is going to be legal and what is going to be illegal. *The international community can both determine and enforce that.*"²⁴

The peaceful, uncoerced cession of sovereign power runs so against the grain of human nature—seems so suicidal—that one questions if it is even possible. Yet, history shows human nature to be irrational as often as not. That being the case, ceding national prerogatives is conceivable, even though it is evidently so averse to the biological drive for self-preservation. Israel, Manasseh included, may put on the "Golden Straitjacket," the term one analyst uses to define the restraints a nation places on its action to enrich itself in the global market.²⁵ America may blindly cede much of her sovereignty to international organizations in the interests of reaping the economic benefits of leading a "global village."

Sovereignty at the End

God's Word gives us a picture of the shape of nations in the final days.

- The machinations of Israel's last kings—Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea—indicate their unwillingness to cede Israel's sovereignty to the Assyrians voluntarily (see II Kings 15). None wanted the slavery implicit in the loss of sovereignty.

- Later on, Hezekiah resisted the arrogant threats of the Assyrians, who had the gall to announce to the defenders of Jerusalem Assyria's strategy to "come and take you away to a land like your own land. . . ." (Isaiah 36:17).

- Still later, the conspiracies and rebellions of Zedekiah and his immediate predecessors on the Davidic throne appear to be affirmations of Judah's sovereignty. Judah's kings were unwilling to cede sovereignty to the Babylonish world government of their day.

These historical examples argue that Israel might yet again attempt to reassert her national sovereignty.²¹ However, it may be a while before rich America, ensnared in the materialistic trap of globalization, comes to understand that the loss of sovereignty means the loss of independence. Sovereignty is the "special product" of nations, something they generally guard very carefully:

What is called the international community is, among other things, a trade association of governments. Each has an in-

That picture, emphatically, is not one of a single world government. Israel's dream of leading a unified world will become the nightmare of Jacob's Trouble. With the coming of that nightmare, Israel will be out of the picture as a "mover and shaker" of world affairs until the Millennium.

God's Word shows that even the European power structure, which overturns and then succeeds Israel's world hegemony, is unable to act unilaterally, that is, as a single world government. The Beast has at least one powerful rival. The book of Revelation tells us the last days will see at least *two* major coalitions of sovereign states.

One such coalition is *Occidental*. The angel explains the ten horns of the Beast to John:

And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb. . . . (Revelation 17:12)

These ten kings receive authority for a short time *with* the Beast. Other translations use the terms *along with the Beast* or *in company with* the beast. The Beast appears unable to rule unilaterally. He makes common cause with other kings, collaborating with them to fight a mutual "enemy," Christ. Having one mind, they give their "power and authority" to the Beast. Since human nature seeks to preserve itself, it is clear that these kings plan to retrieve their prerogatives later. Their relinquishment of authority

prophecy watch

is in their minds temporary, only an expedient to achieve a common goal.

The other coalition, the Beast's rival, is apparently made up of *Oriental* nations: "Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared" (Revelation 16:12).

Unknown to many Americans, that coalition has been ongoing since at least 1644, the start of the Qing Dynasty. It was then that a small and obscure—but dedicated and ruthless—group of *outsiders*, the Manchus, successfully infiltrated Han China and, over two centuries, absorbed Manchuria, Xinjiang, Tibet, Mongolia, and Taiwan into their realm. From at least that time, China has not been a single ethnic bloc, but a pluralistic federation of peoples and religions, from the Turkic Muslims in the north to the Buddhists further south. To this day, the additions of the Qing's basically define the borders of China, with the principal exceptions of Mongolia and, of course, Taiwan.²⁶ This pluralism will define the China of our time.

More coalitions are pending. The reunification of the Koreans is foregone, a final—if delayed—conclusion to the Korean Conflict 50 years ago. Far more important, however, are the far-reaching plans for economic consolidation. In progress is the "world-shaking development" of an East Asian free trade area—Japheth's answer to NAFTA. It would ultimately include the Southeast Asian countries, along with Japan, China, and South Korea. "For the first time in history, [East Asia] is creating its own economic bloc, which could include preferential trade arrangements and an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF)." The AMF "would hold monetary reserves of almost \$1 trillion—the largest in the world and far larger than those of the United States or the

countries of the eurozone. . . . The AMF could clearly rival the International Monetary Fund."²⁷

Clearly, China is not acting alone when she confronts the European power nexus.

Notice that the noun *kings* in Revelation 16:12 is plural, indicating that the parts of the coalition maintain a degree of autonomy. The plural form, *kings*, appears elsewhere near the end of Revelation, suggesting a number of states—the sovereignty cartel, ruled by a number of kings. No matter

all the world's nations take part.

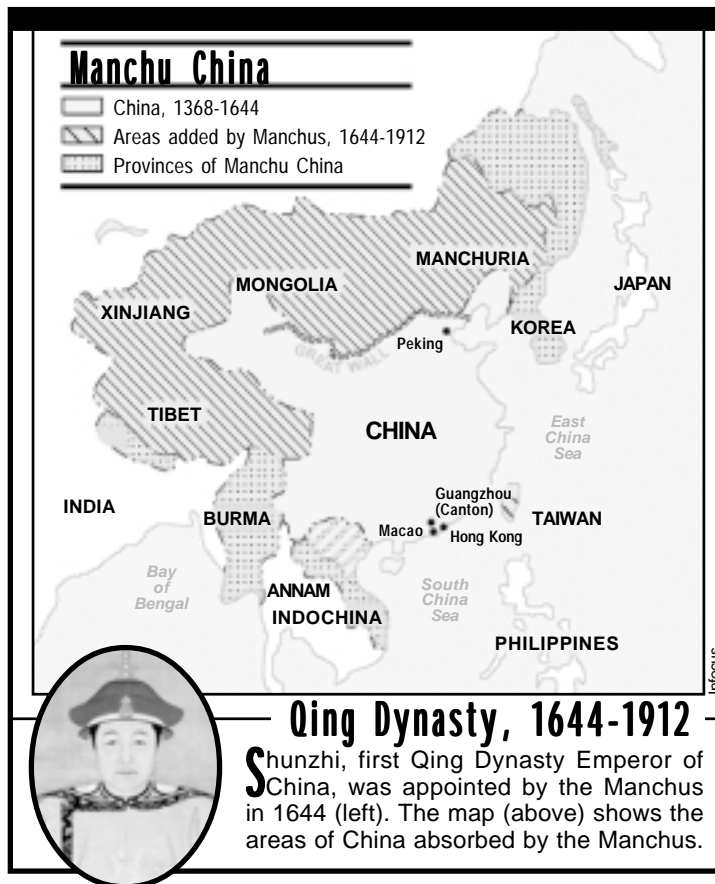
• Revelation 19:19 tells the same story: "And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army."

The Church as Bellwether

Some have observed that God does to national Israel what He has *first* done to His church. That is, that God's church trail-blazes, as it were; the church goes through what national Israel will later go through. This seems to be the case with the twin forces of globalism and tribalism now at work in our world.

• Globalism: Not long ago, we in the church lived through a period of globalism. From the early 1950s into the 1980s, God built a global church. Some nations stood out of it, but we still called this global phenomenon a *worldwide* church. God used His people in Joseph, most notably in Manasseh, to drive and fund this "globalization" effort.

The parallel with national Israel is unmistakable. Analysts view 1987—a year after Herbert Armstrong's death—as the year the current "push" for globalism began. Since about that time, God has used Manasseh, with its almost incalculable wealth and power, to "push" (Deuteronomy 33:17) globalism throughout the developed world. Like the church's experience during the decades before, some nations are standing out of the integration process, resisting it. We once called them "rogue nations"; now the term "axis of evil" is in vogue. In



how hard man tries, he will fail to build a "one world government." Only Christ will do that.

• Revelation 16:14-16 tells of demonic spirits sent out "to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . . And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon." The setting is clear: This is the battle of the last day, in which the kings and armies of

spite of this axis, the march toward globalism continues.

• **Tribalism:** Currently, however, we in the church are experiencing our own type of tribalism, as the once consolidated church breaks up into many small pieces. The church's period of "globalization" seems over, at least for now. Relentless fragmentation seems to be the order of the day. We measure our "tribalism" with what we call "disunity."

Likewise, the globalization pushed by Manasseh today shows every sign of "backfiring" because of the growing opposition to a worldwide governance. The Islamist attack on Manasseh in late summer 2001 is an example of a subnational and disadvantaged group, al-Qaida, displaying its rejection of globalization by striking at the symbols of the international economic and military system, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon respectively. The trend toward a fragmenting tribalism continues unabated, as folk everywhere are increasingly identi-

fying with local ethnic or religious groups. The result is disunity and fragmentation. Globalization seems, at some levels, to be retrenching. National Israel will experience the final, frightful culmination of tribalism soon enough, in national dissolution during Jacob's Trouble.

Globalization is here today, gone tomorrow. Likewise, tribalism.

Plans That Will Never Be

God directs Ezekiel 20, a blend of history and prophecy, to modern Israel, a people who in their collective mind aim to become "like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone" (verse 32). What better description of America today, pushing her ideologies (most notably, democracy and capitalism), culture, entertainment, and wares on the world, all the while falling willy-nilly for its false religions!

Anciently, God allowed the rebel-

lion of Israel to go only so far before He "acted for [His] name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the Gentiles" (verse 22). This is the pattern God has established. He will yet perform His "oath to those in the wilderness," eventually scattering modern-day Israelites "among the Gentiles and dispers[ing] them throughout the countries" (Verse 23). However, we may take comfort that He will intervene on behalf of His people, ultimately gathering a humbled remnant to serve Him as He furthers His plans for humanity's salvation.

Right now though, America is anything but humble. *Hubris* better describes her character, as evidenced by ordinary citizen and elite alike triumphing in her status as "the sole hegemon of the world," "the indispensable nation." The aim behind it all is a desire to lead a global "community of nations," a modern Babel of nations in rebellion against God. In verse 32, however, He utters the final word: "What you have in your mind shall never be."

—Charles Whitaker

Endnotes

¹ David B. Rivkin, Jr. and Lee A. Casey, "The Rocky Shoals of International Law," *The National Interest*, Winter 2000/2001, p. 35.

² *Ibid.*

³ Peter J. Spiro, "The New Sovereignists: American Exceptionalism and Its False Prophets," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2000, p. 9 (emphasis added). Mr. Spiro is Professor of Law at Hofstra University. *Foreign Affairs* is the principal organ of the Council on Foreign Relations.

⁴ Rivkin and Casey, *ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁶ Peter J. Spiro, *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷ Robert Bork, "The Limits of 'International Law'," *The National Interest*, Winter 1989/1990, p. 10.

⁸ Rivkin and Casey, *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁹ Jessica Mathews, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1997, p. 53. Ms. Mathews is the president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

¹⁰ Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, "Toward Global Parliament," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, p. 214. Richard Falk is Albert G. Milbank Professor of International Law and Practice at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Andrew Strauss is Professor of International Law at Widener University School of Law.

¹¹ Jeremy Rabkin, "International Law vs. the American Constitution: Something's Got to Give," *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, p. 30 (emphasis added). Mr. Rabkin teaches international law and United States constitutional law at Cornell University. His most recent book is *Why Sovereignty Matters*.

¹² Rabkin, *ibid.*, p. 39.

¹³ Spiro, *ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴ William Clinton, quoted by Lawrence F. Kaplan, "A Bridge Too Far," *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 135.

¹⁵ John R. Bolton, "Bring Back the Laxalt Doctrine," *Policy Review*, August/September 2000, p. 3. Mr. Bolton, formerly a Senior Vice President of the American Enterprise Institute, is currently Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security.

¹⁶ Jesse Helms, "American Sovereignty and the UN," *The National Interest*, Winter 2000/2001, p. 31 (emphasis added). Jesse Helms (R-NC) is a former chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

¹⁷ Rivkin and Casey, *ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38 (emphasis added).

²⁰ Helms, *ibid.*, p. 33-34 (emphasis added).

²¹ Of course, *sovereignty does not mean success*. Those last kings of Israel and Judah will attest to that in the future. In the long run, a nation gains and main-

tains its sovereignty through righteousness. See Helms, *ibid.*, p. 32. The "principled projection of force is the only thing that will ensure peace and security on the international scene in the future" (emphasis added).

²² Michael Mandelbaum, "The Future of Nationalism," *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 17.

²³ *Washington Post*, February 23, 1999.

²⁴ Quoted by Robin Harris, "Blair's 'Ethical' Policy," *The National Interest*, Spring 2001, p. 25 (emphasis added). Mr. Harris was director of the Conservative Research Department and a member of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Downing Street Policy Unit.

²⁵ Thomas Friedman uses the term in his best seller, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. Once in place, "two things tend to happen: your economy grows and your politics shrinks."

²⁶ Charles Horner, "China and the Historians," *The National Interest*, Spring 2001, p. 86.

²⁷ C. Fred Bergsten, "America's Two-Front Economic Conflict," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2001, p. 16. Mr. Bergsten is Director of the Institute for International Economics and former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (1977-1981) and Assistant for International Economic Affairs to the National Security Council (1969-71).

(continued from page 8)

feast days. The first repetition of this command is in Exodus 34:26, and again, the context is dealing with the proper keeping of God's feasts:

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 ox or sheep. But the firstborn 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.

Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end. Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning. The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. (Exodus 34:18-26)

The third and final occurrence of this command is in Deuteronomy 14:21. As we have seen, the con-

text is second tithe and the proper preparation for, and observance of, God's feasts:

You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a holy people to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you. (Deuteronomy 14:21-27)

Through these commands, God is telling His Old Testament church to keep His holy days in the ways He tells them to, not in the ways that the Canaanites and Egyptians commonly kept their days.

We can apply the principles of these commands to God's New Testament

church today—not misinterpreting them as the Jewish rabbis have done. God's people today should keep His annual holy days as He commands us to, not by trying to duplicate the methods and trappings of the world's ancient heathen observances: Christmas, New Year, Valentine's Day, Lent, Easter, and Halloween.

We can also apply the principle to God's weekly feast day, the Sabbath, by keeping it in the way that God commands us to—not by trying to duplicate Satan's counterfeit day of worship, Sunday.

Still in Force?

If we were so inclined, would it be permissible for us to boil a kid in its mother's milk? It is not likely that we would want to, but if we did, we would be "tempting" God (Deuteronomy 6:16; Malachi 3:15) and breaking one of His laws, one that is just as binding today as those regarding the holy days and tithing.

Finally, is it permissible to eat meat and milk products together? Yes, of course! In fact, God has always allowed it. Our Elder Brother—our example in righteousness—Jesus Christ, mixed the two in a meal prepared for Him by Abraham and Sarah, hundreds of years before Moses:

Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. . . . So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. (Genesis 18:1, 8)

Is it likely that Jesus Christ would have broken one of His own laws in the presence of His human servants?

It is amazing what God will reveal to us if we try to dig a little deeper into His Word. Let us get to know God's Word better and better by studying it every day. Then, if and when we are asked, we will be better able to give effective answers about our beliefs.

—John Plunkett

(continued from page 6)

wisdom as “understanding of what is true, right or lasting; insight.” God’s revelation provides us these very qualities and more if we follow His counsel.

Proverbs 1:2-4, 7 tells us why the book was written: “To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.” Proverbs 4:4-7 adds:

He also taught me, and said to me: “Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom and in all your getting, get understanding.”

Is biblical wisdom different from the above definition? It is, yet only in the fact that God lays heavy emphasis on right application of His Word and His knowledge and understanding. We could label it as uncommon sense because it is what is true, right, and lasting from His perspective, not merely human experience. Therefore, one of wisdom’s primary attributes is foresight, seeing from God’s perspective the best way to produce the best results from a given situation.

Ecclesiastes 7:11-14 clearly states that wisdom’s insights produce a valuable fruit within God’s purpose:

Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and profitable to those who see the sun. For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, but the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it. Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will happen after him.

Solomon is comparing two powers that offer their possessors the ability to defend themselves against many of the vicissitudes of life. On the one hand is money and on the other wisdom. Money can help one avoid and even preserve a person from many of life’s difficulties. Wisdom, however, can give him something no amount of money can—life. Wisdom produces things material possessions cannot because it is insurance against willful self-destruction, whether physical or spiritual.

Consider in verse 13 literally means “to see.” It counsels us to understand that some situations cannot be rectified. No amount of money or wisdom will prevent them from occurring. We can do nothing about them

because circumstances are beyond our powers, and we should not fret overmuch about them. An obvious example is the impossibility of a person being able to stop wars, floods, riots, or a hurricane. Each of these can bring devastation and a great deal of personal pain that may be entirely unavoidable. All one can do in such a case is to deal with the aftereffects as wisely as possible.

Verse 14 carries on the thought, counseling us that good and bad times occur in everybody’s life. There will be situations that are seemingly unjust, such as the righteous seeming not to be prospered, becoming diseased and dying young, while the evil are prospered with wealth, good health, and long, comfortable lives. These things occur in every culture on earth. We are to consider—to see—that God overrules all and is well aware of what is happening. He may even be directly involved in causing the kinds of circumstances that upset our sense of fairness (Isaiah 45:7). We must never allow our thoughts to wander from the reality of the depths of God’s involvement in governing His creation.

The passage concludes by drawing our attention to the future. It is beyond our abilities to know precisely what is going to happen. How long will our present trial last? Will we be drawn into another? Are we pleasing God? Will we be prospered to a greater level? When will Christ come? Solomon is not saying we should not think about the future, but that we will never know precisely what is coming. Thus, we should not be overly concerned about it. We must live our belief that God is on His throne, which allows us to be emotionally stable.

Solomon does not begin to give an answer to the thought he is posing until verses 18-19, and even then, it is a very brief answer: “It is good that you grasp this, and also not remove your hand from the other; for he who fears God will escape them all. Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city.” The combination of the fear of God and wisdom, which is the fruit of vision, appear together as a solution.

Because the circumstances he posed will affect all, Solomon’s advice is to keep on following wisdom. This is a precursor to the climax of the book where he says, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). It is also foreshadows Romans 8:28 where Paul writes, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

In his terse statements, Solomon is saying, “Keep on following the revelation of God, for this is wisdom. The vision of His overall purpose is wisdom. It is an unerring guide through good and bad times. Always consider—see, discern—that an unseen Hand is involved in events, even those of our seemingly insignificant lives.”

Proverbs 22:3 reveals that foresight and discernment produce prudence in conduct to ensure that a person is preserved, and this is wisdom. If the person is preserved, it greatly increases the chances that he will attain his goals. At the very least, those who take advantage of God's revelation will escape dangers into which others unwittingly fall.

Ecclesiastes 8:11-12 warns us not to be deceived into thinking we have gotten away with doing something foolish—something God's revelation gave us insight into yet we ignored. To do such a thing is not at all prudent! It is not taking advantage of the foresight imparted by the truths of God's Word. Adam and Eve ignored God's warning, and they died just as He said they would. Death seemed a long way off at the time, but it did come, preceded by a great deal of pain!

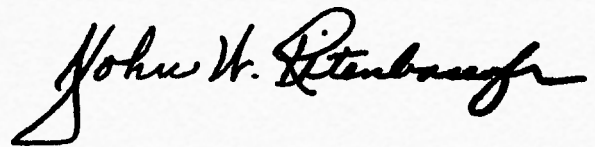
Foresight, discernment, prudence, and wisdom are linked together as vital to accomplishing God's purpose. Although they are not specifically synonymous, where we find one the others are also likely to be present. All of them are connected to the vision provided by the revelation of God. The person who has them is well on his way to living an abundant life and growing in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ because they motivate a person to follow their lead.

Proverbs 2:6-12 provides us with great incentive to take advantage of the revelation of God's wisdom as a sure guide to life:

For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths. . . .

God is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). He delights in giving His children knowledge and understanding that will enable us to make right, wise choices. We could hardly be given a greater gift than the vision of the way we should go.

In Christian love,



Strange Women

(continued from page 9)

another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." (Revelation 18:1-5)

This second example of the strange, immoral woman is *Babylon the great*, a worldwide system of government, trade, and entertainment representing the world's way of life at the end time. The voice from heaven commands Christians to come out from Babylon spiritually. Coming out is an inner transformation, a change or conversion, from what Babylon represents to something that is far better—something that God recognizes. We will call this strange woman "Miss Babylon."

Consider again Solomon's warning as it applies to these "strange women": "My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart" (Proverbs 7:1-3).

This is the basic formula we must use to avoid being led

astray by strange women, whether a real person, or by the symbolic Miss Babylon and Miss Heresy. God's first instruction is to keep His words and to "lay up" His commandments, meaning to *treasure* the instructions He has given to us. He reiterates this in verse 2 with the charge to keep His commandments and make His law the apple of our eye—that is, what we always keep before us and consider valuable.

This applies perfectly to rejecting the two women of Revelation 17 and 18. Miss Heresy has all manner of ways of getting around the laws of God. Catholics try to replace God's law with their own traditions and ordinances. Protestants try to do away with God's law by saying Christ has fulfilled it, and now all we need to do is "believe."

Miss Babylon is also diametrically opposed to God's law, in both the letter and the spirit. By obeying God's instructions in their direct application as well as their intent, we will be rejected by this world and culture for being "strange"—because they do not recognize the way we think or act. It is the way that we live our lives, based on God's clear instruction, that will separate us from the world.

Next month, we will see more ways to avoid these wicked sisters, Miss Heresy and Miss Babylon.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

—David C. Grabbe

BIBLE STUDY: THE PARABLE OF THE TWO BUILDERS

Palestine is naturally a land of hills and mountains, and as a result, it is subject to violent rains and sudden floods. The Jordan River annually swells to dangerous levels and becomes rapid and furious. The streams that run through the hills can suddenly swell with rain and spill tremendous amounts of water onto the plains below, sweeping everything before them. Houses erected within reach of these sudden deluges—especially those founded on sand or other unreliable foundation—cannot stand before them. The rising stream shakes a house to its foundation and erodes away its base until it falls. Rocks are common there, however, so it is not hard to find a solid foundation.

With this in mind, Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount by illustrating the benefit of obeying His words. It is not enough to hear them; they must be obeyed. He compares a person who hears and obeys Him to a man who builds his house on a rock. Introducing the Parable of the Two Builders (Matthew 7:21-28), He says, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man” (verse 24). He then describes this wise man as building his house, that is, his whole life, on the rock of genuine subjection to God. Conversely, the disobedient use unfit material as the foundation of their lives.



1. What does the foundation of rock represent? Luke 6:48; Matthew 7:24; Deuteronomy 32:1-4; Psalm 18:2, 46; I Corinthians 3:10-11.

COMMENT: Luke describes the wise builder as digging deep and laying the foundation on a rock. The Rock on which we build is Christ Himself. In this parable, Christ teaches us the importance of doing as well as hearing. In His description of the two builders, He judges them, not only by their care in building their houses, but also by the foundation on which they build. A rock foundation represents true understanding and right action—true conviction and commitment manifested in righteousness. Only in obedience and dedication to a personal relationship with Christ the Rock can we find emotional and spiritual stability—without which even our most dedicated purposes rest on shifting sand.

2. What does the foundation of sand represent? Matthew 7:26; Luke 6:49; II Samuel 22:4-5.

COMMENT: Christ knew that some coming to build would be attracted to a ready-prepared level surface of sand rather than to sites that must be excavated to reach the hard and rugged rock. Human nature often chooses what looks easy on the surface. But after the seasonal floods, representing trials and tests, such a builder would have nothing left but a heap of ruins. A sandy foundation represents empty preference and mere external religion based on false knowledge. The sand reflects the shifting, uncertain feelings some foolish people possess, the only ground upon which they act. The second house, even though most impressive, stands on a shifting foundation, and is therefore doomed to destruction. People whose resolves do not rest on God’s help sought in prayer—people who have virtues without root—live in a dangerous position. The Pharisees built their hopes on external blessings and privileges, which alienated their minds from

the Rock of their salvation. Christ had to tell them that Satan, not Abraham, was their father.

3. What do the builders represent? Matthew 7:24, 26; Luke 6:47-49; Psalm 111:10; James 3:13-17.

COMMENT: In the wise and foolish builders, Christ describes two categories in illustrating the building of a house. Both houses appear equally attractive and substantial, but their comparative stability differs greatly. In their construction, the materials and labor used were similar, and both houses appeared upright, solid, and sound. Many times, seemingly good people who are uncalled seem to build their lives well and wisely in terms of money, material possessions, and friends. All these things seem good to the human mind, but their end can be disastrous without a Rock foundation. The elect of God build their houses differently, by daily obedience, service, overcoming, Bible study, and prayer.

4. What do the rain, floods, and wind represent? Matthew 7:25, 27; II Samuel 2:5; Ezekiel 13:8-16; James 1:12-18.

COMMENT: Floods and hurricanes can damage seemingly strong houses and destroy those less strongly built. When Christ says, “the rain descended,” He compares the times of testing to the forces of a rainstorm threatening the roof of the house and the fears it creates. “The floods came” pictures turbulent torrents undermining walls. “The winds blew” depicts sweeping, hurricane-like winds threatening a house’s walls. These combined natural forces remind us that spiritual elements try and test our spiritual houses just as God tested and punished Israel. Sometimes these forces come in the way of persecution, suffering, or temptations—all of which will erode a weak foundation, but not a solid one. Christ describes the disaster descending on the house built on the sand as “great [in] its fall.” By doing so, He warns us to avoid a similar end. Foolish builders should heed His warning and build on a solid Rock foundation, that of Jesus Christ.