

# *Forerunner*

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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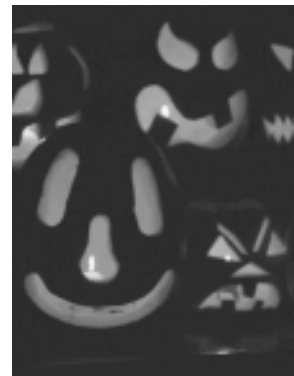
**HALLOWEEN**  
*A Christian Holiday?*

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Halloween is an increasingly popular holiday in America and around the world. Its obvious occultic themes run counter to Christian principles, but even some churches promote it. What does God's Word say about All Hallows' Eve?  
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# The Offerings of Leviticus

## Part Seven: The Sin and Trespass Offerings

**F**or thousands of years, men have recognized to some extent that they are cut off from God. Perhaps some have not understood why, but Isaiah 59:1-2 makes the reason clear: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear.” Sin separates us from God, and sin must somehow be overcome if access to Him is to be made available.

In Ephesians 2:11-13, the apostle Paul makes abundantly clear how overcoming sin’s deadly grip is accomplished:

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

The blood of Jesus Christ secures forgiveness and

redemption for us when we believe and bring forth fruit fitting repentance because His sacrifice is of sufficient value to cover the sins of the whole world. I John 2:2 says, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Throughout this series of articles, we have seen two clear distinctions between the sweet-savor offerings and the sin and trespass offerings. The burnt, meal, and peace offerings were a sweet savor because no sin was represented in them. God enjoyed them because of the devotion of the offerer they represented. The sin and trespass offerings, though requiring unblemished animals to be offered, representing the sinless Christ, were nonetheless laden with unforgiven sin. Jesus was laden with sin once He took our sins upon Himself, and the law claimed His life. God never views sin as pleasurable; they were not a sweet savor.

A second distinction is that the sin and trespass offerings were burnt outside the camp. This act emphasized God’s disgust and aversion to sin and at the same time signaled the separation sin produces. The sinner, separated from God, could have no access to Him until he repented, and he was likewise separated from the community until cleansed of his trespass.

### A Third Distinction

Leviticus 4 provides instructions concerning the sin offering and Leviticus 5, for the trespass offering. Are they not the same? Are not sins and trespasses the same thing? Can we see a difference between them? God does, thus there are two different offerings covering them.

Humanly, we are quite limited in making judgments because we can see clearly only what is happening on the

surface of another’s conduct; we have but a small degree of insight into another person’s heart. Conversely, God says He looks upon the heart in His judgments of men (I Samuel 16:7). The fruit of our shallow perception is that we are forced to judge what a person *does* rather than what he *is*. We are willing to confess that we might do evil things but reluctant to admit that the heart, the fountain of what

we do, might be inherently evil! Jeremiah 17:9 plainly says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

How can sin in the heart be covered unless there is an offering for what is in it? The distinction between the offerings of Leviticus 4 and 5 is this: The sin offering of Leviticus 4 covers our evil nature, the heart’s sin. The trespass offering of Leviticus 5 atones for the fruits of that evil nature, the acts that are actually performed.

Notice how God reveals the sin offerings purpose: “If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering” (Leviticus 4:3). Notice that, though God mentions the priest, he names no specific sin. It is generalized, as if it could be any number of specific sins.

Verse:13 is similar: “Now if the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done something against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which should not be done, and are guilty. . . .” Again, sin is dealt with broadly; no particular sin is named. The same principle holds true in verse 22, where a ruler is named but no specific sin, and in verse 27, where the common people are identified but no particular act of sin.

By contrast, the instructions for the trespass offering reveal the opposite approach: Specific sins appear but the offender is generalized. Leviticus 5:1 provides a clear example: “If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter—if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.” This pattern continues: “Or if a person touches any unclean thing” (verse 2); “Or if he touches human uncleanness” (verse 3); “Or if a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with his lip to do evil or to do good” (verse 4). Verse 5 concludes the opening thought: “And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing.”

These contrasting approaches show that the sin offering

covers the sins of the evil heart, and the trespass offering atones for sins of evil behavior.

In three places in Matthew, Jesus distinguishes sin as coming in two parts for those who have made the New Covenant with Him:

**Matthew 12:34:** “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” The tongue only utters what is already in the heart.

**Matthew 15:17-20:** “Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.” Acts of sin besides what the tongue commits proceed from the same evil heart.

**Matthew 7:16-18:** “You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes 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.” These verses confirm the impossibility of changing an evil heart, as it can never produce good fruit. God must completely replace it with a wholly different nature for it to produce good fruit! Before being changed, it can produce only evil fruit.

This teaching is paramount in helping us appreciate God’s grace. God has covered sin, its penalty, and its expiation from every possible angle to ensure we will be in His Kingdom. He covers not only the sins we commit, but also what causes them to occur—human nature. This has far-reaching and meaningful ramifications that should lead us to ever-increasing gratitude for His vision and mercy.

## Is Sin Everywhere?

No matter how thoroughly we were counseled for baptism or how vividly we were told that Christian life might prove difficult, very few are dissuaded from being baptized. This is, of course, good. However, most of us are also full of misplaced confidence. Though none of us is ever sure of what we will have to experience to be prepared for what God has in store for us in His Kingdom, we are sure God will be there for us in our times of trial. He will indeed, but will we be ready to face our discouragement over what we come to see in ourselves?

As we become educated in God’s way, as we grow and become more discerning, sin becomes more apparent

everywhere we look. The discouraging aspect is that the sin is not necessarily in others but that we see it in ourselves. We may even reach a level of outright despair because, everywhere we turn, every angle we view ourselves from, we see “little” deceits. We become aware of envy rising, jealousy, anger, and sometimes even rage and hatred. We attempt to bottle them up to keep them from breaking out.

Yet, they always seem to be just below the surface, ready to leap out in a foolish act. Sin is like a cancer, most of the time invisible but silently working to destroy us. Sin desires to return us to our former state. We may have even

imagined that, when we began to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, life would become continually easier—we would grow in holiness, and life would become an unending pleasure. Too frequently, it seems to work in the opposite direction.

This course, however, is good. First, the older and more mature we become in the faith, the more of the filthy corruption of sin we can discern. Our discouragement can turn to thankful encouragement because, even though we perceive the filthy corruption in ourselves, our ability to discern it more clearly is evidence of growth. Second, it is encouraging to understand that for us to overcome sin and grow, we must first be aware of the corruption.

Third, it is wonderful to understand that our merciful God has covered even all this accumulated sin that we have been completely unaware of. Christ's blood is sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world! That we can see more of the evil aspects of human nature should help us also discern of the implications of Christ's sacrifice. Fourth, these things should motivate us to cry out to God, "Your Kingdom Come! Your will be done!" and help us yearn for the time we will be free of the pulls of the flesh.

The removal of ignorance is a wonderfully rewarding gift. Even so, despair sometimes comes easily because we have allowed ourselves to be deceived into trusting our

own works to keep us in good standing with God. If we fail to conduct ourselves according to our own standards, it is not difficult to become guilt-ridden and full of despair.

We should strive as Paul describes in I Corinthians 9:24-27:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

We must not merely "shadow box" as he describes but fight with our whole heart to please God and glorify Him with a proper witness before men.

However, our works do not admit us into the Father's presence and keep communication flowing. Jesus Christ's sacrifice does; the sin and trespass offerings precede us. If we could get into His presence by our works, who would need Christ? We would be sufficient to redeem and save ourselves. We need to thank God humbly for His gracious providence that enables us all along the way.

## Human Nature Is Ever With Us

We saw earlier that the human heart cannot be completely changed. Supporting this is what God declares in Ezekiel 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." The meal offering adds support to this as well. The instructions show that, once leaven was put into it, it was not allowed to be burned on the altar (Leviticus 2:11; 6:17).

Leaven is a symbol of sin. Regardless of how much oil, a symbol of God's Holy Spirit, was poured on the offering, no leavened offering was allowed to be burned on the altar. This teaches us that no amount of God's Holy Spirit can repair human nature. God's Spirit will enable us to keep it suppressed, but it will not change it. Thus, we also understand that as long as we are in the flesh, human nature will be with us. We must deal with it; it is a fact of our spiritual life.

The apostle Paul vividly illustrates this for us in Roman 7:14-25:

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to

perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul is not confessing that he continually practiced sin in his daily life, but that the threat of practicing it was always with him. He always had to be on guard against it to keep it from breaking out. And, at times, it did indeed break out, reminding him not only of its presence, but also its strength. There is no doubt Paul was a mature Christian. Therefore, this serves as a reminder to us that, no matter how spiritually mature we become, human nature will still always be with us.

Paul died spiritually and was buried in the waters of baptism. Therefore, baptism and the receipt of a new nature by which we are to conduct life do not take human nature away. We, like him, sincerely desire to do the right

thing. We believe God's Word. We love God and aspire to glorify Him. Nevertheless, because human nature is always present, we do not always follow through. Instead, human nature overpowers us; we are taken captive, as it were, and revert to following its drives instead. This can be very disturbing, piling guilt upon us and making us fearful of separation from God.

Thus, because we are similar to Paul, and despite the wretchedness we may feel, we have assurance, knowing we will be delivered from this peculiar situation, one that is somewhat akin to having a dual personality. Our deliverance is through Jesus Christ; there indeed is an end. However, unlike many Protestant groups that proclaim that we do not have to keep the law because all is done for us, we know that we must strive to walk even as Christ walked—and He never sinned. I John 2:3-6 emphatically states:

## Is Everybody Included?

Is it possible that some might be excused from the sacrifices required or that some may have escaped the infections of human nature? Again, God's teaching in the instructions for the trespass offering tells us, "No." Within Leviticus 4, the high priest, the whole congregation, the ruler, and the common people are all directly mentioned. Human nature is everywhere; it infects every stratum of society. From top to bottom or bottom to top, regardless of one's perspective, sin is everywhere. Nobody escapes from it.

Whether one sins individually or in a group by going along with a crowd, one still incurs guilt. The degree of guilt and the effects may vary, but sin is still present. The sacrifice's directives make an instructive distinction between the offerings made for the sin of the high priest and the sin of the whole congregation in contrast to what was required for the sin of a ruler or commoner. Leviticus 4:5-7 states:

Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and bring it to the tabernacle of meeting. The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of meeting; and he shall pour the remaining blood of the bull at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Verses 16-18 give the same instructions for sin of the entire congregation.

The sacrifice was killed outside the Tabernacle. After its blood was poured into a basin, the high priest took it inside the Tabernacle and smeared a small amount on the

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Though we are under no condemnation, we still must do our utmost to yield to the Spirit of God to our utmost abilities. We are to "go on to perfection" (Hebrews 6:1), endeavoring to grow "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Paul says, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Despite the difficulties involved, any failures that occur, and any feelings of guilt that arise, we are still required to strive to keep God's laws as Jesus did.

horns of the incense altar. This altar stood at the back of the first room, called the Holy Place, against the veil that separated the Holy Place from the second room, the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies represented God's throne room.

Now notice Leviticus 4:25 regarding the sacrifice of the sin offering for a ruler: "The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering." Verse 30 repeats this command in regard to the sin offering of the common people.

Comparing the two offerings reveals a clear distinction between them. Each offering indicates the relative seriousness of the sins that motivated the offering. What the high priest does affects everybody in the nation. When he sins, communication with God is completely shut off. Therefore, the incense altar is part of the ceremony, as it represents communication with God through prayer. Thus, the blood of the offering must ceremonially cleanse the incense altar. The same principle is true when the whole nation sins. Because everybody is sinning, and sin separates one from God, the blood of the sin offering must heal the breach in the same manner as when the high priest sinned.

When a private individual sinned, whether civil leader or commoner, his sin affected only himself and those immediately involved. Thus, they were free to carry out their services to God in other areas. The high priest, though he too was an individual, was more critical to God's means of communicating with His people. When he sinned, the consequences were far more serious.

Under the ceremonial system, the brazen altar represents earth and the incense altar, heaven. The blood represents the means to accomplish the reunion of God and man.

## Ceremony and Grace

Leviticus 5:15-16 adds still another development to understanding the offerings:

If a person commits a trespass, and sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the LORD, then he shall bring to the LORD as his trespass offering a ram without blemish from the flocks, with your valuation in shekels of silver according to the shekel of the sanctuary, as a trespass offering. And he shall make restitution for the harm that he has done in regard to the holy thing, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. So the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

Whenever a sin caused loss to the one sinned against, restitution had to be made to him for his loss according to a valuation made by the priest. An additional one-fifth was added to the evaluation to compensate the plaintiff for any costs involved in recovering his loss. This process contains a valuable spiritual lesson.

Suppose a person stole something from another worth a hundred dollars. He would then appear before the priest with his offering (a ram without blemish), as well as a hundred dollars. However, an additional twenty more dollars would go to the victim to cover any mental anguish or attorney's or private detective's fees. This is what would have happened physically. However, we should consider this spiritually because this principle has application to us today. We are similarly under His government.

When we break His law, we are indebted to Him. The penalty of breaking His law is death. If we pay the penalty, we die, ending our indebtedness, but it also ends our potential, stops our growth, and perhaps—God forbid—keeps us from entering God's Kingdom. That would be the total end of everything! However, upon repentance, God permits us to claim the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sin. He allows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to substitute for us.

However, in doing so, He now has a claim on us He did not have before we made use of Christ's sacrifice (symbolically, the unblemished ram). Before, He had a claim only on our obedience, but now He also has a claim on our life because He has spared us the death penalty. God not only forgives our sin, but He also clears us of guilt and then gives us the wherewithal to keep His law in the future. God adds grace, that is, gifts, as this is generally what "grace" means.

In Romans 5:20, Paul puts it this way: "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." When God forgives our sins at the beginning of our conversion, He does not simply wipe sins away. He also invites us into communion with Him, gives us His Spirit to enable obedience, promises to provide all our needs, and adds everlasting life on top of all this! In other words, God sets the example of

going above and beyond what is merely required of Him.

God expects us to follow His example in our relationships with each other. The twenty percent payment over and above what was literally owed represents the way we are to act toward men in general. In answer to the disciples' request to increase their faith, Jesus clearly instructs them to go above and beyond what was required:

And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." . . . [Jesus answered,] "Does [a master] thank [his] servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" (Luke 17:5, 9-10)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins His ministry espousing this very principle:

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. And if any man wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. (Matthew 5:38-42)

He crowns his teaching on this principle in verses 43-44: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." He says we must be quick to forgive. He did that very thing hanging on the stake in behalf of the very ones who were killing Him! That is going above and beyond even in the midst of great personal pain and stress when one would most likely have his mind focused on himself. At the very least, we should have a mind to extend grace even before our enemies want it.

In concluding instructions on loving our enemies, Jesus makes an arresting statement on the attitude and conduct by which His disciples are to live:

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much aback. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not

*(continued on page 18)*

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# H a l l o w e e n

Each year, as the last day of October nears, members of God's church begin making plans to avoid Halloween. Some plan a trip to the local mall to do some shopping, even though the malls teem with kids and their parents trick-or-treating. Others hope to escape to the movie theater to watch whatever happens to be in distribution at the time. A few seek out various other amusements from miniature golf to autumnal carnivals. Those of us with either less imagination or less motivation simply make ourselves appear to be somewhere else, putting the car in the garage, turning off all the lights at the front of the house, and creeping around on tiptoe so that no sound gives away our presence.

These plans coincide with a feeling of resigned dread that the holiday season—now stretching from mid-October to early-January—is upon us. We used to catch a break between the Feast of Tabernacles and the annoyances of the Christmas season, but no longer. Halloween has just become too big for kids, partygoers, and retailers alike, to pass over so easily.

Each year, roughly 65-70% of adults participate in Halloween, which includes wearing a costume. About 80% of households distribute treats to an average of 37 trick-or-treaters, and sadly, despite their best intentions, 7% of children eat all their candy on the first night.

In terms of retail sales, Halloween is second only to Christmas. Americans spend over \$3 billion on Halloween items and activities, with nearly \$2 billion spent on candy and the rest on costumes, decorations, and party favors. The average household shells out an average of \$81 to celebrate this evening, mostly on candy and decorations.

As a party day, Halloween is third behind Christmas and Super Bowl Sunday. Bottlers sell more beer around Halloween than around Saint Patrick's

Day, when the beer flows like water. In many ways, Halloween is becoming a favorite of adults across America, a time when they can shed their inhibitions behind a mask and costume.

Many professing Christians have considered Halloween to be innocuous, an evening of innocent fun. However, there is a great deal more to this holiday than darling children dressed in cute costumes shouting for candy at the neighbors' doors. Once the facts are known, no sound argument justifies Christians observing this most unchristian holiday—an unholy mixture of rank consumerism with outright paganism, occultism, vandalism, hedonism, and demonism.

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## Foundational Principles

**Jeremiah 10:1-5** reveals a principle that we need to consider in terms of Halloween. The context is the heathen practice of idolatry. In this sense, it is ironic that Halloween comes primarily from the Celts, descendants of the Israelites.

Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the LORD: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are futile [vain, worthless]; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good."

God commands us not to learn the way of the Gentiles, the nations who

do not have the revelation of God. The Israelites were different from all the nations chiefly because God had revealed Himself to them and given them His law (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Amos 3:1-2). The Gentiles invented their own futile, meaningless ways of worship because they did not have the truth.

This is the first reason why we should not keep Halloween. It adds nothing good, that is, nothing of God or godliness, to our character. Being devoid of God's truth, it is simply worthless and a waste of time.

Deuteronomy 12:29-32 provides a second reason to avoid Halloween. God says this to Israel just before they entered the Promised Land:

When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

Halloween is a custom of the nations. God Himself calls such things abominations, practices that He hates. If we strip away its façade of revelry and feasting, it is idolatrous false worship, honoring spirit beings that are not God. In addition, God never tells us to celebrate this day or in any way to honor the spirits of the dead.

Notice that He warns us not to be  
*(continued on page 17)*

“And you shall  
spend that money  
on whatever your heart desires.”

Deuteronomy 14:26

# Whatever Your Heart Desires

Every fall, the average church of God member looks forward to God’s fall holy days, especially the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. In recent times, God’s people have celebrated the Feast by traveling to places near and far, staying in comfortable hotels, eating and drinking sumptuously, and spending a year’s worth of second tithe (ten percent of their annual income) on family and friends over about two weeks’ time. Much of this activity has been based on a general understanding of Deuteronomy 14:23-26:

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 firstborn 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.

Most who read this have been to the Feast and thus look forward to eight days of experiencing many enjoyable things: food, drink, activities, spending time with friends, and of course, the spiritual meals of eating and drinking in of God’s instructions. Many sermons over the years have been preached about prioritizing our time and activities throughout the Feast, keeping God first over the physical abundance and events that can often relegate Him to second place. Some may have justified a physical approach to the Feast from an immature understanding of God’s command in Deuteronomy 14: 26, “You shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires . . . and you shall rejoice”—using the time and money God provides for the Feast as a vacation with friends and family, rather than an eight-day, spiritual-information-packed, learning experience.

God wants us to experience *both* the spiritual and the physical abundance that foreshadows the time when we will live and reign with God during His Millennial rest and on into His eternal Kingdom. However, we need to prioritize and balance our wants and needs with God’s expectations—especially so during this short period of plenty when it *seems* we do not need God as much as we normally do.

God notices how we treat this eight-day period and assesses our actions to see if we really feel

*“And you shall spend that money on whatever your heart desires.”*

we do not need Him as much during this time of plenty versus the rest of the year when our daily struggles require His involvement in our lives. We may see the Feast as a time of fun activities, which is partially true, but it may expose how we would live if God were to bless us financially or how we would govern if He were to give us exalted positions in His Family.

As is often the case, to understand something better we need to examine more than just the obvious. Deuteronomy 14:23-26 does point to a time of plenty and gives us reasons to rejoice and enjoy what God has blessed us with. We will see, though, it is only a part of the total equation, one that is detailed throughout Deuteronomy 14, encompassing our entire lives.

## Deuteronomy 14

We realize that man has divided the biblical books into chapters, but with a little study we can still determine the flow that God intended. At first, the chapter seems to have a disjointed message, but further analysis shows that it contains a clear theme. The chapter breaks down like this:

- Verse 1: Israelites are children of God. Do not cut oneself or shave one's head for the dead.
- Verse 2: Israelites are God's chosen people, a special treasure to Him.
- Verses 3-21: Clean and unclean meats.
- Verse 22: First tithe.
- Verse 23-26: Second tithe. Going to where God places His name and enjoying whatever the heart desires.
- Verse 27-29: Third tithe. Caring for the needy.

In verse 1, we see how God regarded Israel. Moses wrote Deuteronomy at the end of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, forty years after their release from Egypt. After spending many generations under Egyptian rule, the Israelites had absorbed certain aspects of Egyptian culture as their own, and many of these were wrong.

Idol worship, which the Israelites quickly returned to with the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:4), was just one of the wrongs that God needed to fix. He speaks here of not mutilating the body or shaving the head for the dead. The Bible does not clearly explain if the Egyptians practiced cutting themselves or shaving their heads for the dead, but many pagan peoples have done so as a sign of mourning or piety or to attract the attention of their god. God addresses it in a number of places (Leviticus 19:28; 21:5; I Kings 18:28).

Verse 2, though similar, goes in a slightly different direction, revealing Israel's status with God. He called them a special people, set apart as God's chosen. In similar fashion, God regards His people today, the church, as His own special people (I Peter 2:9). These two verses show that God had a special purpose for Israel, one of being an example to all the peoples around them, and thus their appearance and behavior were important. In modern terms, God does not want His people to follow worldly practices such as radical hairdos, cult fashions (Goth, grunge, gang-banger styles, etc.), tattoos, body piercing, and the like. God wants His chosen people, set apart for a special purpose, to know who they are and that what they do to the *outside* of their bodies is important to God.

God then changes gears rather drastically. In verses 3-21, He gives instructions about what should be taken internally, what kinds of meats are suitable for intake from God's perspective. The eating habits of the Egyptians were certainly not up to

God's standards, and He thus illuminated Israel on what was good as food for human consumption and what was not. In essence, God is concerned about what goes *inside* our bodies. Junk foods, of course, are not addressed, but God's intent is the same: Do not misuse the inside of the body.

Verses 1-21 show, then, that God's people are to be cognizant of their status with God as a people. In addition, they need to recognize the effects of their external appearance as well as their internal health and well-being. In sum, this passage reveals God to be interested in man's entire being, especially those who have made a covenant with Him.

## Setting the Stage

The tone seems to change in verse 22. He instructs Israel to tithe of their increase to God as the Provider of all things, and verse 23 gives the reason: “that you may learn to fear [reverence] the LORD your God always.” He also mentions “eat[ing] before the LORD . . . in the place where He chooses to make His name abide.” We know from Leviticus 23:34-43 that He is addressing the period of the Feast of Tabernacles. At first, it seems this has little to do with the previous verses.

Using the tithe for attending and enjoying the Feast is only a part of the entire tithing process, which also involves giving back to God (first tithe) and taking care of the less fortunate (third tithe). Taken as a whole, however, these tithing instructions are an integral part of the total equation of this chapter: taking care of God's chosen people. These verses have expanded the principle outside the personal to include others of God's people and even God Himself.

Verses 23-26 contains the admonitions to go to the place God chooses, turn the increase into money if needed, and to spend it on whatever the heart desires, rejoicing with each

other before God. However, the chapter's theme remains as a vital component of the instruction. God wants us to enjoy the fruit of our labors, as He also does when we obey Him. He also wants our relationship to be many-layered. Our focus, of course, should be off the self, centered on God, and extending outward toward others.

The rest of the chapter addresses this outward orientation with teaching to share with those who are less fortunate. It tells us to make sure that the needy are also able to rejoice and enjoy this time of fellowship and prosperity. The chapter ends by telling us that when we do these things, we give God good reason to bless us in whatever we set out to do.

Throughout these verses, we see God, very active in the lives of His people, admonishing His people to follow His lead. God is quite concerned about His people and His spiritual body. He cares what we do to ourselves both inwardly and outwardly, physically and spiritually (I Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:18-22), and He cares how we treat each other as members of "the body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12:27).

While He allows us to partake of things we desire, Deuteronomy 14 shows that God does impose limits; He wants us to exercise self-control. He expects us to be givers and not just takers. This applies to sharing our money, food, drink, activities, and fellowship with others, and we should make special effort to share ourselves with Him in prayer, study, meditation, and church services during this time of plenty. After all, one of the purposes of going to the Feast is to learn how to fear God, and we do this by spending time with Him.

## Lessons Today

**J**esus admonishes us in Matthew 6:19-21:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth

and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

From the perspective of Deuteronomy 14, having a right or wrong priority at the Feast can reveal where our treasure is. If it is on the self only, then our heart is obviously in the wrong place. If we have the entire body of Christ in mind, then our treasure will be on a more godly plane.

In a unique way, God is laying up treasure on this earth in our very lives with the intention of bringing the entire body together spiritually. Conversely, we live physical lives, but our hearts and minds must strive toward a spiritual realm. Because of this, we have the ability to share experiences on both spiritual and physical levels, with God and each other. If the physical enjoyment of life becomes too important, the body of Christ suffers spiritually. If we never saw the physical side described in Deuteronomy 14, we might not see the awesome potential of God's spiritual promises. They should work hand in hand.

God thinks of us as special and chosen. Do we see Him in the same way? Are God and His people special to us? Do we make them a priority? Do we desire to take care of Christ's body, the church made up of many members, as we are instructed in Deuteronomy 14?

God expected the Israelites to obey Him physically. Even then, however, He indicated that they had a "spiritual" responsibility to God and each other. As we know, Christ came to magnify the physical to reveal the spiritual intent—from physical, bodily applications to spiritual, eternal principles of holy, righteous character. Ezekiel prophesies of a time when man's stony heart

will be replaced with a fleshly one, and he will be given a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:24-28).

How does this apply to us? Each of us is special to God. He cares what we look like in terms of hygiene, dress, and appearance. He is most certainly concerned with what and how much we put into ourselves, food and drink as well as knowledge, experience, and attitude. He wants us to share with Him and each other our blessings and fellowship.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the last place God wants selfish attitudes and a "me only" way of thinking. It is a time of looking ahead to the wonders of God's Kingdom, but also taking others along for the ride. It is a time of giving of ourselves—and not just our money. We should be quick to say, "Hello!" or to bend an open ear to someone who is having a bad day or who left a mountain of problems behind at home. We should include others in our "group" and go outside of our normal "comfort zones" to fellowship.

When we use our time and blessings this way at the Feast, it gives God glory. We should determine that this Feast, we will be a one-person committee to make this the most profitable Feast ever—for someone else!

What exactly does your heart desire this year at this Feast? Is it wrong to enjoy the blessings and good times that we will certainly have this year? Absolutely not!

Yet, we must remember that all the money in the world, spent anyway we desire, cannot replace how God looks at us, the treasure of who we are, and what we have been given the instruction and power to do. God wants us to grow beyond having mere physical desires to desiring spiritual things, not just for ourselves, but also for our brethren. This is exactly how we can fulfill God's decree to obtain "whatever your heart desires."

—Rod Keese

# Southern Christianity's Impact on America

“Then the king of the South shall become strong . . .”  
*Daniel 11:5*

Last month, we looked at the sizable migration of Southern Christians into America. The religious preferences of these immigrants from Latin America, Oceania, Asia, and Africa are more often than not some variant of Southern Christianity. In their multitude, these people have bloated the rolls of Catholic parishes and Pentecostal churches with pious, essentially fundamental and evangelical traditionalists. As a result, the face of American Christianity is gradually mutating from a doctrinally liberal White Anglo-Saxon Protestant institution of formal mainline denominationalism into a dynamic phenomenon of Pentecostal fervor often sponsored by small, unaffiliated sects.

Non-denominationalism has run amok! Conservatism has experienced an upsurge!

All this is a totally unforeseen result of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. For the last three-and-a-half decades, liberals have watched with irritated consternation as their scheme to dilute Christianity to the point of statistical insignificance has yielded precisely the opposite result. If the truth be told, their plan to secularize American culture—and to

diversify it—has sunk under the tide of Christian immigrants.

However, liberals are not willing to tell it the way it is. Although America is less religiously diverse than most Middle and Far Eastern nations, and although non-Christian groupings (for example, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus) in aggregate constitute only about 5 percent of the American population, the liberal-controlled media unceasingly paints America as religiously diverse. It goes out of its way to run stories that suggest an inflated influence of non-Christian groups, while at the same time implying that Christianity is culturally irrelevant. In addition, it has been singularly successful in suppressing the facts, hiding them from the public. Indeed, the public, apparently lacking the ability to think beyond the next football game, seems all too eager to buy the media's outright—and absolutely outlandish—fabrications. Few people question what appears on their television sets or in their newspapers.

Whether the public perceives it or not, the fact remains though: In an amazing exhibition of His sovereignty, God has turned the tables on the Satan-inspired, godless social engineers. They actively sought to use immigration policy to secularize America and force Christianity outside the mainstream of her culture. Exactly the opposite has taken place. God used their scheme to modify immigration regulations to accomplish His own purposes.

Let us look at what those purposes might be.

## OVERTHROWING BEDROCK

*First, Southern Christianity is certain to contribute to the gulf that is developing between America and Europe.*

For years, the church of God has recognized that this separation, whatever its cause, would provide the motivation, the rationale, behind the Beast's attack on America. God's church understood that America and Europe would eventually develop deeply opposing interests. This divergence, together with widening cultural and religious gaps, would generate a gigantic crack in the long-standing “Atlantic Alliance” between North America and Europe. The rift

# R I S T I A N I T Y

## T H R E E

would tear the Alliance apart, ultimately becoming so cavernous as to lead to outright war.

However, as long as Europe *needed* America, as it did in 1914 and in 1939, as it did while the Cold War was raging, Europe's and America's interests were too closely aligned for such a crack to form. The potential for divergence was certainly there, we all recognized, but, as long as America and Europe were facing a common enemy (say, an expansionist Germany in 1914, a vengeful one in 1939, or the Soviet Union later) that potential never materialized.

Then, the Cold War ended. America had weaponry all over Europe and no reason to use it; European countries no longer faced cultural and national annihilation from the East. Attendant to the retraction of the Soviet power in 1991, the interests of Europe and North America began to drift apart. The drift, overall, has been slow.

Wherein lies the resiliency of the alliance? *It lies in the partners' mutual commitment to liberal internationalism and multilateralism.*

Internationalism and multilateralism, treated as synonyms here, are ideas that deny the utility of the sovereign national state and seek to cast it into the dustbin of history. Internationalists believe that power politics are passé, the nation-state is the principal cause of war, and parochial national interests inevitably lead to conflict. To fix the situation, internationalists urge replacing national sovereignty with a number of international institutions and forums, such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and a host of other, lesser-known bodies. Multilateralists believe that global peace and prosperity can be achieved only when all nations commit themselves to collaborate through this network of conflict-resolution institutions. Theirs is the world of diplomacy, treaties, trade agreements, conventions, concords—prosperity and peace on a piece-of paper. This way of thinking is often referred to as “one-worldism.”

The opposite of internationalism and multilateralism appears in two forms, both of which emphasize the continuing value of the sovereign state:

1. Historically, one of these opposite forms

manifests itself as great-power politics. Strong nations develop alliances with weaker ones to balance each other. Then the strong nations draw lines in the sand to demarcate “spheres of influence.” Woe to the power who attempts to step across those lines! Egypt and Babylon played this game in the ancient world, as did Rome and Parthia. In more modern history, Britain, France, Germany, and Spain all became adept at the game. Indeed, some historians believe that European nations invented power politics.

2. At the present time, we are living in a remarkably ahistorical period, an anomalous situation, where a single hegemon, the United States, unilaterally calls the shots. That approach to world order is also the opposite of liberal internationalism. Unilateralism is inherently hostile to one-worldism.

It is extremely important to understand that the elite policy makers of Europe and America subscribe to the tenets of internationalism and multilateralism. To a good extent, this is also true of the rank-and-file in both continents. In this sense, America and Europe share a substratum of agreement, and it runs deep on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Europe.** Europe has been a leading exponent of liberal internationalism for years. This is a turnaround, historically, for Europeans have expertly practiced power politics for centuries. Now, Europeans claim, they have matured to a higher level of sophistication; they have grown to the point where they have learned to live together in peace. Further, they claim, they would like to share their secret with the world by applying the principles of the European Union, which is based on a French bureaucratic model, to the international community. So, one commentator asserts that “Europe is turning away from power; . . . It is moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation.”<sup>1</sup>

Actually, growth in sophistication has nothing to do with Europe's rejection of power politics in favor of international forums. The real reason is growth—

that is for sure—but growth of an entirely different type. *Europe is growing weaker every day.* Europe is suffering badly from the “deadly wound” of weakness in every sphere—military, economic, cultural. Basically powerless, having spent it in the Second World War, European nations have turned to the “game of the weak,” negotiation. “Europeans oppose unilateralism in part because they have no capacity for unilateralism.”<sup>2</sup> In reality, internationalism is the game plan of nations too weak (or too weak-willed) to use force to impose their policies on other nations.

**America.** In spite of some recent unilateralist tendencies, the United States has a gigantic stake in multilateralism and internationalism. After all, from the very start, the impetus behind the International Money Fund (IMF), the WTO, and the UN has been the United States. The American foreign policy establishment views multilateralism pragmatically—as a way to ensure that weaker nations feel they have a part in making the big decisions. If they feel they have had a part in determining the “grand strategy” of major nations, the smaller nations are more likely to “buy into” the policies set forth by powerful states. Smaller nations will more readily fall into line behind the hegemon.<sup>3</sup> So it is that “the idea of a new international community with self-governing institutions and self-enforcing norms . . . is the view of the Democratic Party in the United States and of a large part of the American foreign policy establishment.”<sup>4</sup> It should come as no surprise that the avowed mission of many of the liberals in America is to “Europeanize” American society and government. Of course, Europeans are more than willing to oblige.

What about America’s rank-and-file? Well, not everyone agrees with Jesse Helms. “Polls consistently show that Americans support multilateral action in principle—they even support acting under the rubric of the United Nations.”<sup>5</sup> Another commentator is more blunt: “A large segment of American opinion doubts the legitimacy of unilateral American action but accepts quite readily actions undertaken by the ‘world community’ acting in concert.”<sup>6</sup> It appears that many Americans do not feel at home calling the shots internationally.

Admittedly, there are important dissenters on both sides of the ocean. In Austria, Germany, and even France, nationalism is experiencing a resurgence. In America, there are now significant voices calling for unilateralism in the face of Europe’s inability to make decisions. That having been said, the fact remains that today Europeans and Americans—rank-and-file as well as policy makers—continue to walk down the same road of “goo-goo one-worldism.”<sup>7</sup>

So, the question naturally arises, “If both sides

enjoy this substratum of agreement about the value of internationalism and the way it should be implemented, what will cause the breach in the transatlantic alliance which God’s church understands must come?” What will cause Europe and America to go their separate ways?

Enter Southern Christianity. In time, it will be America’s new fundamentalism that will generate the seismic forces capable of demolishing the substratum of agreement between America and Europe. The vast influx of Southern Christians into America has already made these immigrants’ views politically significant. Well before 2020, they will be in a position to *reshape* American domestic and foreign policy dramatically. Could we expect any less, considering that, by 2050, there will be about 100 million Americans of Latino descent, mostly Catholics and Pentecostals of a conservative bent, along with millions of like-minded African and Asian immigrants?

This new and robust political power structure will reshape foreign and domestic policy in decidedly conservative and traditionalist directions—in the *opposite* direction of the European liberal leadership.

Southern Christianity already abhors the European establishment, which it sees as corrupt and godless. Once it becomes a muscular power block in this country, Southern Christianity will push America away from what it sees as the morally perverse “plain of irreligion” we call Europe. Far more than most commentators realize, Southern Christianity is poised to play a major role in bringing about the cleavage between the two continents.

## JIHAD AND CRUSADE

*Second, Southern Christianity has the potential to amplify the conflict between Christianity and Islam.*

Through Southern Christianity, God may choose to do a lot more than simply reorient America to a more conservative position in international affairs, returning her to a stance where she advocates national sovereignty, to the upset of European policy-makers. God may be doing all that (and more) in a way that is sure to create nothing less than a nuclear explosion—figuratively and literally.

To understand the flash point the two continents will reach, consider this: The majority of the current immigrants to America are overwhelmingly *Christian*; the majority of current immigrants to Europe are just as overwhelmingly *Muslim*. The Gentile folk infiltrating the two halves of the Western world, Europe and North America, are coming out of two different—and opposing—religious traditions. Sparks will surely fly.

In contrast to America’s largely Christian immi-

grants, present European immigration is defined by her historical patterns of colonization.<sup>8</sup> Migrants into Europe are mainly Muslims from the Middle East, North Africa, and Pakistan.

How will Southern Christians react to these people? Probably, in the early stages of their power, they will advocate a policy of isolationism toward Europe. It will be their self-righteous better-than-thouism which will lead them in this direction. This isolationism will be in reaction to the liberals' long love affair with internationalism and secular humanism. Southern Christians will simply want to cut America off from the secularizing influence of Europe.

However, isolationist policy is sure to give way eventually to a more proactive international stance. Given the military capabilities of America, the Southern Christian will not long be able to resist turning America into the church militant! For example, if Islam becomes a real threat to the (Southern) Christian Philippines, America's Southern Christian power block would not be reluctant to intervene. Further, we should appreciate—and never under-estimate—the missionary zeal that makes up such a big part of the Southern Christian's psyche. That zeal will not allow him to forego using America's economic clout to evangelize Europe's "great plain of irreligion" in the hopes of returning it to the fold of Christianity. Europe will, of course, not tolerate what she will surely consider a threatening and patronizing American incursion on her secular way of life.

Overall, the coming cleavage between America and Europe will take place at two fault lines.

- One will be the liberal-conservative dichotomy. It will express itself in the moral and economic terms of traditional values *versus* the postmodern values of relativism and pragmatism.
- The second will be the Christian-Islam one. It will express itself in religious terms: Which Prophet is *the* Prophet—Christ or Mohammad? Fundamentalists on both sides will carry the rhetoric all the way to jihad and crusade.

## SOUTHERN CHRISTIANITY AND GOD'S CHURCH

The advent of Southern Christianity as an influential force in American culture has another implication, one that will seriously affect God's people. *Southern Christianity could well provide the impetus for the eventual expulsion of God's church (and perhaps other minorities) from America.*

Southern Christianity is, as we all recognize, a false religion, a religion of this world. As such, it will

come to persecute the church of God. One way to understand this truism is to realize the nature of Herbert W. Armstrong's frequent run-ins with Pentecostals in the early days of his ministry.

Mr. Armstrong, of course, did not experience the phenomenon of Southern Christianity in the 1930s. But, he surely encountered its precursor movement in this country, Pentecostalism. Moreover, he well understood the incompatibility of that movement with the doctrines of God. In his *Autobiography*, he writes,

In Portland I had gained some little experience with "Pentecostal people." . . . I had noticed that most of these people refused to obey God's commandments; almost none had any real sound understanding of the Bible; they customarily had a wide knowledge of certain scattered texts—verses or partial verses—which they usually misapplied, entirely out of context, putting only a meaning of pseudo-spirituality on them. They spoke in what was supposed to be spiritual-sounding language. They loved to show off—to brag, especially about their own spirituality which usually consisted of sentimentality and emotion.<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Armstrong understood the lack of common ground between God's way of life and Pentecostalism. There was no meeting of the minds at all! He found nothing but frustration in his dealings with Pentecostals. They habitually attended his evangelistic meetings in Oregon, but were highly disruptive, driving away anyone who may have been serious about hearing the true gospel. In those days, his approach was to preach in a rural community, establish a group of interested individuals there, and then move on to another area. Once he left a community, Pentecostal ministers, like hawks sensing an easy kill, would inevitably swoop down on the immature congregation, with the intent of leading God's people astray. Pentecostals are missionaries through and through. In their evangelical efforts, they were all too often successful. As a result of this "invasion" of Pentecostal folk, God's people in these small congregations would either become deceived into accepting Pentecostalism or would simply drift away entirely. When Mr. Armstrong's circuit took him back to the community again, he would find the group he had founded there either completely gone or badly corrupted by Pentecostalism. It was disheartening. In fact, this repeated experience contributed to his decision, later, to found a college. He learned by painful experience about the necessity of a ministry trained in the truth and loyal to God, who would protect the flock from predators.

Pentecostalism is false religion, pure and simple. Once it becomes a strong political power in America, it will become an irritation to God's people by virtue of its missionary emphasis. In the course of time, it will probably become an outright persecutor of God's people as well.

In the growing phenomenon of Southern Christianity, God could well be developing the machinery that will produce the expulsion of God's people from America. In Isaiah 16:3-4, God warns the peoples of Moab to be circumspect, not betraying His "outcasts."

Take counsel, execute judgment; make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes. Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler.

God's Word here reveals that there will be some outcasts—we would call them refugees today—whom God claims specifically as His Own: "My outcasts." His use of the term suggests that at that time there will be other outcasts, other refugees, who are not under His direct protection. These various refugee groups may be peoples cast out of America (and other Israelite nations as well) by Southern Christians in a misguided attempt to cleanse the land of what it considers false religions. It would be difficult to imagine such purging taking place at the hand of today's liberals, who trumpet diversity, the coexistence of different cultures and religions. However, under the hand of conservative Southern Christians turned bigots, such a forced ejection of God's people (along with Jews and others) is quite within the realm of possibility.

## AN ONGOING STRUGGLE

The choice of Daniel 11:5 as a preamble to this article is not meant to suggest that America's liberal left is the biblical King of the North or that Southern Christianity will develop into a power structure led by the King of the South. One should not wrestle with God's Word.

Yet, Daniel 11 is relevant to the comments above in that it emphasizes the ongoing state of *struggle* between two antagonists. Therein lies Daniel's lesson for us today. Let none think that America's effete and pampered liberals, hypocrites at heart, will surrender their leadership role gracefully or willingly. Those silk stockings will viciously resist losing power to Southern Christians. Their struggle, generally exhibiting itself in legislation and jurisprudence (and, of course, in the press), may erupt occasionally into the violence of outright persecution.

Of this we can be sure: The tension between Southern Christians and agnostic secularists will be the defining fault line in American politics in the years to come, often behind the scenes, sometimes not. Their struggle will leave Americans—most of whom do not even know what a Southern Christian is—bewildered, at a loss to explain the disarray in their civil society and the failure of domestic policy. In addition, their struggle will leave America weakened by vacillating and therefore ineffective foreign policies.

As the Southern Christians increasingly press conservatism into the service of their innate self-righteousness, and traditionalism into the service of their indefatigable missionary zeal, Europeans will increasingly perceive America as aggressive, arrogant, and a threat to their way of life. Domestically, social fragmentation will give way to outright flight, as large numbers of people flee America for safety from religious persecution.

Southern Christianity will play a big role in the decline and fall of America.

—Charles F. Whitaker

<sup>1</sup> Kagan, Robert, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review*, June/July, 2002, p. 3. Mr. Kagan is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He is currently based in Brussels.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. For a contrarian viewpoint, see Kupchan, Charles A., *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. Mr. Kupchan, a Georgetown University professor of international relations and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, argues that America will be increasingly isolated in the world community due to her unilateralism. Interestingly, he picks the European Union as the rival power block that will bring about American decline. His reasons are unique, to say the least, in that he sees a similarity between the current European/American struggle and the division of the Roman Empire into Western and Eastern parts, headed respectively by Rome and Constantinople. These two power centers soon came into collision: "Rome's fate does not augur well for a unitary West that is in the midst of separating into distinct North American and European power centers." For an important, though somewhat technical, web site on transatlantic issues, visit [www.europeanaffairs.org](http://www.europeanaffairs.org).

<sup>3</sup> Nye, Joseph S., "Seven Tests: Between Concert and Unilateralism," *The National Interest*, Winter, 2001/2002, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Krauthammer, Charles, "The Unipolar Moment Revisited," *The National Interest*, Winter 2002/2003, p. 13. Mr. Krauthammer is a syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post* and an essayist for *Time*.

<sup>5</sup> Kagan, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Krauthammer, Charles, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs: American and the World*, 1990/91.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Jenkins, Philip, "A New Religious America," *First Things*, August/September, 2002, p. 28. Mr. Jenkins is Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University.

<sup>9</sup> Armstrong, Herbert W., *Autobiography*, p. 431.

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“ensnared to follow” the practices of the nations. A snare is a trap designed to catch an unwary animal. The trap itself is hidden, but what is visible is a kind of lure, an attractive trick designed to fool the prey into entering the trap. Once it takes the bait, the gate comes down, a hook comes out, or a spring slams closed on a limb, and it is trapped.

God is alerting us to the fact that heathen or ungodly practices—customs, ways of worship, traditions, celebrations—usually have characteristics that appeal to our human nature. They are the lures. We can become caught up in them before we are aware of it. God advises us to watch out for the hidden dangers, the appealing entrapments, that are designed into these holidays.

## Halloween’s Origins

Many cultures have a form of Halloween in their tradition. It seems that most of this world’s peoples desire to celebrate the dead. The holidays or feasts may vary from place to place, falling on different days and following different customs. The common denominator is that they all honor or remember the dead or unseen spirits.

Mexico has its “Day of the Dead” in which participants give out candies in the shape of skeletons and visit graveyards to commune with the dead by leaving them food. In Japan, they honor their ancestors with various celebrations. Certain African tribes set aside days to honor the unseen spirits, warding off the evil ones and placating the good. German, Scandinavian, Spanish, Italian, and many other cultures have a Halloween-type holiday.

In English-speaking countries, Halloween derives primarily from the Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced “sow-in”). Samhain, held on the three days around November 1, was a kind of New Year’s celebration and harvest festival all rolled up into one.

The Celts believed that these three days were special because of the transition from the old year to the new. They felt that during this time the boundary between the physical and spiritual worlds relaxed or lifted,

allowing spirits to cross over more easily. This idea, of course, terrifies superstitious people—that departed spirits could walk among us, especially those who died in the past year as it was thought these spirits desired to return to the mortal realm. For this reason, they believed they had to appease the spirits to make them go into the spirit world and stay there.

The Celts did this by putting out food and treats so that, when these spirits came floating by their houses, they would pass on. They thought that, if they did not appease the spirits, they would play tricks or put curses on them. Whole villages would unite to drive away the evil spirits, ensuring that the upcoming year would be good. Others among them would hold séances or conduct other kinds of divination by incantation, potion, or trance to contact dead ancestors in hope of receiving guidance and inspiration.

An interesting aspect of this transition time—the three days of Samhain—is that it was considered to be “no time,” a time unto itself. Thus, it became a tradition that the order and the rules by which people lived were held in abeyance during them.

All laws went unenforced. The social order was turned upside-down—the fool became king, and the king became the fool. Men dressed as women and vice-versa. People took on different personas, dressing in disguise and acting the part. No work was done during this period of total abandon, for it was a time for revelry, drinking, eating, making and taking dares, and breaking the law. In a word, it was chaos.

Then Roman Catholicism arrived on the scene and “converted” the pagans. It also decreed a day to honor departed saints: May 13, All Saints’ Day. The priests instructed the “converted” pagans to keep All Saints’ Day, but they continued to celebrate Samhain because it was so much more fun than attending church to pray for the halloved saints of yesteryear.

To keep them in the fold, in AD 835 Pope Gregory IV officially authorized moving All Saints’ Day to November 1 to coincide with Samhain. He allowed the pagan “Christians” to keep their old customs as long as they put a

gloss of Christianity on them. Thus, they kept Samhain in the name of Christ to honor the departed saints.

Like Samhain, All Saints’ Day began the evening before, which was called All Hallows’ Eve, All Saints’ Eve, or Halloween. Since then, Halloween has evolved into its present form, in which nothing remotely Christian remains. It is known for all its pre-Christian Celtic practices—particularly the recognition of the spirit world in the form of fairies, witches, ogres, goblins, demons, ghouls, vampires, etc.

Today, “trick-or-treating” is the most recognized of Halloween activities, and it is simply a form of extortion. Children, whether they know it or not, are acting as the spirits who will play a trick or put a curse on the one who does not pay up in food or treats. Divination and séances are also commonly held on October 31. Finally, Hooliganism—tricks resulting in vandalism—often reaches its high point on Halloween. For many years, Detroit was the scene of “hell night,” in which rampaging young people trashed large areas of the city, setting fires, smashing cars and windows, looting, and generally creating havoc.

The Celtic feast of Samhain still survives in Halloween. It has simply reverted to our ancestors’ Celtic practice.

## Simple Idolatry

The Bible plainly denounces all of these practices in many places. For instance, God forbids spiritism, witchcraft, and the occult in numerous passages. Notice Deuteronomy 18:10-12:

There shall not be found among you anyone . . . who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead [a necromancer]. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives [the heathen] out from before you.

God considers these things to be idolatrous; they honor demonic spirits,

and thus He calls them abominations or detestable things, things that He hates. Interestingly, He says these practices are a reason why He sent Israel in to dispossess these people. We do not want to practice customs that ultimately bring on God's wrath and destruction.

In Leviticus 20:6, God likens spiritism to prostitution, the physical counterpart to spiritual prostitution, idolatry. To God, witchcraft and occultism are similar to sexual immorality, but one is physical and the other is spiritual. Which is worse—physical or spiritual prostitution? Both defile the purity God desires in our flesh and in our spirit (II Corinthians 7:1). This linking of spiritism with sexual sins and idolatry occurs elsewhere (Exodus 22:16-20; I Samuel 15:22-23). Witchcraft is equated with them because it is both prostitution and idolatry.

When a Christian meddles in spiritism of any kind, whether witchcraft, sorcery, divination, consulting a medium or fortune-teller, or even reading a horoscope, he undermines his relationship with God—just as a man who visits a prostitute damages his relationship with his wife. Someone else is coming between the two covenanted parties, causing division. Occultism puts a wedge between God and the Christian; he might as well bow to an idol. It produces the same result: to drive him away from God.

The New Testament takes the same approach as the Old:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, . . . of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

The apostle Paul speaks of adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and licentiousness—all with at least overtones of sexuality—then he mentions idolatry and immediately thereafter sorcery! It cannot be just a coincidence that they all fall in this order. Those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God because they are not fulfilling their covenant with God.

“Sorcery,” intriguingly, is *pharmakeia* in Greek, from which we derive our words “pharmacy” and “pharmaceutical.” Diviners, enchanters, witches, and sorcerers employed drugs and other potions to put them or their clients “in the spirit” so their “magic” would work. The drugs, then, came to stand for sorcery of all kinds. For the same reason, drug use is part of the celebration among the more serious Halloween devotees today.

The Bible's teaching on this is con-

sistent. Spiritism, the occult, is a form of idolatry, a kind of spiritual prostitution. Its end is separation from God and eventual destruction.

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:8-13:

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), proving what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light.

God's truth shines on ungodly practices and exposes them for the darkness and evil they are. This is why all we need to know which is the one right and good way, because the light that shines from them will expose the unfruitful works of darkness and give us wisdom in how we should behave.

We were once dead in our sins, living in darkness, asleep to the things of God. Now, however, God has revealed His truth to us, and the truth in turn has revealed the evils of Halloween and spiritism of every kind.

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

## PERSONAL ►

## The Offerings of Leviticus: The Sin and Trespass Offerings

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be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. (Luke 6:34-38)

Even as God lives by grace, we too are to learn to implement it into our lives. If we want to super-abound, we must learn to give grace. We are to go above and beyond mere requirement because it will support developing the mind of God.

In Corinth, members were taking each other to law over disputes between them. Paul admonishes them:

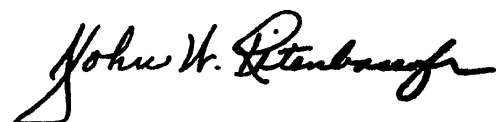
But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! Now therefore, it is already an

utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! (I Corinthians 6:6-8)

They were failing to behave like God. They should have swallowed their pride and suffered loss. Christ gave up His glory and suffered the greatest loss in the history of creation!

God is not only willing to forgive but also go above and beyond and give additional gifts besides to the sinner. God shows this giving of grace in the trespass offering. It is indeed a high standard, but it is eminently worth emulating because it works to make us like the One who sets the standard.

In Christian love,



## SOUTHERN CHRISTIANITY IN MOTION

The last three *Prophecy Watch* columns by Charles F. Whitaker have described a trend known as "Southern Christianity." While Europe has become increasingly secular and North American Christianity has become extremely liberal, a morally conservative, Pentecostal-type Christianity is growing in the Southern Hemisphere and beginning to make its presence known.

The Episcopal Church's recent decision to elect unrepentant homosexual Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire is a prime example of the trend to liberalize. Even before the fateful vote was cast, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams—the leader

of the Anglican Communion, of which the Episcopal Church is a part—issued a thinly veiled warning against the appointment. His major concern, though, was organizational unity rather than morality or biblical truth.

Others, however, were much more bold in their statements. "It's wrong, and it's against the Bible," said the Reverend Joseph Mutie Kanuku, the bishop of the Machakos diocese east of Nairobi. "How can we go against God's words? Two men being joined is contrary to nature and contrary to the Bible." African homosexuals remain closeted in all but South Africa, where there is somewhat more openness toward

them. African leaders regularly condemn homosexuality as a Western lifestyle choice being exported abroad. Anglican bishops across Kenya, where there are more than three million church members, signed a letter of protest following the appointment of Robinson. One signatory said, "You in the West may not consider it a sin, but we in Africa do. We stand with the Bible. When we are wrong, those in the West should tell us. We are telling them this is wrong."

The opposition was just as fierce in Asia, where bishops are considering cutting ties with the 3.2 million members of the Episcopal Church USA. "Practicing homosexuality is culturally and legally not acceptable here," Bishop Lim Cheng Ean, leader of the Anglican Church of West Malaysia, told the Associated Press. In addition, the Right Reverend Dr. Mouneer Anis, Bishop in Egypt, said: "We cannot comprehend a decision to elect as bishop a man who has forsaken his wife and the vows he made to her to live in a sexual relationship with another man outside the bonds of his marriage."

Even though the Anglican Communion as a whole has been struggling with the issue of homosexuality for the last three decades, earlier this year bishops from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, representing more than a third of Anglican Communion members worldwide, severed relations with the Diocese of New Westminster, based in Vancouver, British Columbia, because it authorizes same-sex "blessings."

## Roman Catholicism and Homosexuality

The American branch of the Roman Church is still battling the scandals caused by sexual abuse of children by priests, and almost 60% of Canadian Catholics are in favor of same-sex "marriages." Even so, the Vatican is vehemently opposed to homosexual unions, issuing a strongly worded statement urging Roman Catholic lawmakers and others to fight back on this issue. "There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family," the document says, as-

serting repeatedly that marriage should be reserved for heterosexual couples. "Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law." The conservatism of the Catholics on this issue seems to be right in line with the moral stance of Southern Christianity.

Zenit, the official news agency of the Vatican, recently released a study of laws around the world that favor the homosexual lifestyle. All of the countries in the study were in North America and Europe, and most of them are nations descended from ancient Israel.

## AIDS DEVASTATION

- The Associated Press reports that South Africa is entering the "death" phase of its AIDS epidemic, meaning there are more deaths than new infections each year. While adult HIV/AIDS prevalence in the country is starting to plateau at around 33% of the population, sickness and death are on the increase as the disease kills off workers in Africa's strongest economy. Scientists say South Africa's real AIDS death toll is hard to quantify because government statistics list many probable AIDS fatalities as deaths due to tuberculosis and other common HIV-related opportunistic infections. But activists say AIDS kills about 600 South Africans each day—or over 200,000 per year.
- South Africa certainly is not alone in facing this epidemic. According to the *Washington Post*, the number of Americans developing AIDS appears to be rising again for the

first time in ten years. The number of *new* AIDS cases increased 2.2% in 2002, the first apparent rise since 1993. In that year, 80,010 new cases were diagnosed. The number of new infections has declined since then, but the number of new AIDS diagnoses increased from 41,227 cases in 2001 to 42,136 cases in 2002. In the past few years, there has been evidence that unprotected sex, sex with multiple partners, and other risky sexual behaviors has been increasing among gay men, particularly younger ones, causing the number of new HIV infections to begin to rise again in that group. According to the CDC, an estimated 850,000 to 950,000 Americans are infected with HIV, but only about a quarter of them are aware that they are HIV-positive. The *New York Times* says almost 10%—80,000—of HIV-infected Americans live in New York City.

NEWS AND TRENDS Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man is coming. (Matthew 25:13)

# BIBLE STUDY: THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

In Luke 12:13-21, a listener in the crowd surrounding Jesus asks Him to instruct his brother to divide the inheritance due to him equitably. Jesus declines, saying that life should not be based on having many possessions. He uses this occasion to teach His disciples that a godly life is more important than material things. To explain this, He tells a parable about a rich man who builds larger and larger barns to store all his crops and goods.

Since he had everything he could possibly want or need, the rich man's focus was on living an easy life. God's response is that the man was foolish because, when he died later that night, his goods would do nothing for him. Someone else would inherit and enjoy them. A person whose life is caught up in what he owns is not rich toward God. The Parable of the Rich Fool illustrates Jesus' teaching to guard against every kind of covetousness.



1. Who should judge civil matters? Luke 12:13-14; Deuteronomy 21:16-17; Hebrews 5:5.

**COMMENT:** The man in dispute with his brother thought he was being cheated. Perceiving that Jesus had influence with the people, he tried to get Him to side with him. Jesus' parable indicates that he probably did not have a just claim on the inheritance but was covetous. Had his claim been just, the laws of the land would have resolved it without Jesus' interference. Among Israelites, the firstborn received two shares—twice as much as any other child.

Jesus makes it clear that He had no responsibility to settle controversies of this type. He had not come to mediate secular disputes but to preach the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God, offering salvation to those who are willing to repent and live righteously. The nature and constitution of His Kingdom is spiritual, that is, not of this world. Secular authorities should judge civil affairs. Jesus could undoubtedly have judged this case justly, but He would have been interfering with the proper office of the magistrate.

2. What is wrong with desiring abundance? Luke 12:15; Exodus 20:17; Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:3-7; Hebrews 13:5.

**COMMENT:** One of the brothers, no doubt, was guilty of covetousness. Covetousness is an unlawful desire of the property of another; also a desire of gain or riches beyond what is necessary for our wants. It violates the tenth commandment and is expressly equated with idolatry. Jesus shows that we should not be anxious to accumulate wealth because, however much we may obtain, it will not prolong our lives. The man from the crowd was guilty of a desire for more than God in His providence and wisdom had allotted to him. His was a sinful desire of seeking more than his share.

3. What should be done with the excess of abundance God provides? Luke 12:16-17; Proverbs 11:25-26; 22:9; Isaiah 32:5, 8; Galatians 6:7-10.

**COMMENT:** Human nature tends to value the wrong things in life—to eat, drink, and be merry—things without

eternal worth. Because of this temptation, people's main anxiety concerns accumulating this world's luxuries. The rich man may even have been embarrassed by his inability to store his hoarded wealth, but he never considered using his riches for the benefit of others. Irishman Jonathan Swift observed, "Nothing is so hard for those who abound in riches as to conceive how others can be in want." A generous person, however, sees the needs of others first. We should sow goodness and generosity so we will reap the same.

4. Why is the rich man a fool? Luke 12:18-20; 11:39-41; Jeremiah 17:11; James 4:13-17.

**COMMENT:** This sudden cutting short of the rich man's career expresses, not only the folly of assuming one knows what the future holds, but also of staking one's whole life on what may disappear at any moment. God calls this man a fool because he reasoned that his life of secure and abundant earthly enjoyment was the pinnacle of human success and happiness. A fool is a person without good sense or mental sanity, one who lacks a commonsense perception of the reality of physical and spiritual things. The true reality is that everything depends on what God wills, not what man plans.

5. What does Jesus mean by the phrase "not rich toward God"? Luke 12:21; Psalm 30:5; Proverbs 3:15; James 2:5; I Timothy 6:18; I Corinthians 10:31.

**COMMENT:** This phrase summarizes human folly and the error of thinking one does not need God. A person who "is not rich toward God" lives to accumulate and enjoy wealth only to die with nothing permanent or eternal to show for his efforts. Godly living—and all that God esteems to be true riches—is eternal. To think of life only in terms of physical things is both foolish and fatal because life is not comprised and enhanced even by abundant material possessions but by spiritual and eternal things. If we place God first rather than the accumulation of wealth, then we will use whatever He allows us to have, no matter how little or how much, to glorify Him.