



Armor of God

Meditation

Vital Key to Spiritual Growth

Immortality - God's Gift to the Saints • The Pleasures of Sin
Enduring to the End • Just Between You and Me

Who Are We?

Jesus Christ founded His church (Matthew 16:18), gave it His teachings (Matthew 28:20), proclaimed Himself its leader (Ephesians 1:22), and promised never to forsake it (Matthew 28:20).

The Church of God, International is a human organization comprised of members of Jesus Christ's own spiritual church, and is faithful, so far as human frailty permits, to Christ's example, teachings, and directives as recorded in the Bible and further clarified by the influence of the Holy Spirit in the context of the modern world.

These statements may sound similar to those made by many other Christian churches, but we of the CGI make one further claim which we challenge any other church to perform: to prove whether its statements are the truth.

Let us see how the CGI came to be organized, what we do, and what we believe.

A Very Brief Look at 2,000 Years of History

In the pages of the New Testament, you read of Jesus Christ founding his church, and of the early exploits of that church. Jesus Christ set the example of serving, teaching and living according to the principles of the Old Testament, not merely on a physical letter-of-the-law basis, but on a higher level—that of a spiritual, mental intent.

He then opened the way for everyone to live at that level. First, through his crucifixion, death and burial, each of us may obtain forgiveness of our own sins, our own disobedience to God and His commandments. Then, through his resurrection and ascension to the Father, each of us may attain to the glory of eternal life with the Father.

However, there is much, much more to Christ's personal teaching, and its further expansion throughout the pages of the Bible than that essential kernel. To spread this entire message, Christ selected His apostles, established His church, and sent out His people as witnesses and teachers of His way.

The latter books of the New Testament tell of many of their travels, and of the mighty works they performed through the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, it wasn't long before false apostles, false ministers, and pagan or perverse doctrines began to subvert the church. The true apostles had to instruct their flocks to "strive for the message once delivered to the saints." But it was a losing battle, so far as the bulk of Christianity was concerned. Down through the centuries more and more of Christ's original teaching has been lost and a great variety of pagan doctrines, customs, and ideas introduced. The result is that today there are hundreds of disagreeing "Christian" sects and denominations, some of which even go so far as to proclaim that one can entirely disregard Christ, His teachings, and all the Bible, and still be on the road to salvation.

On the brighter side, history records that there have always been small, often scattered, groups of Christians who have rejected pagan ideas and human hierarchies. They have clung loyally and tenaciously to the crystal-clear teachings of Christ and the Bible, and have resisted, often to death, the many attempts to expunge them. As sparkling lights across the dark centuries, one can see such names as the Nazarenes, the Bogomils, the Waldensians, the Church of God 7th Day), and many others.

Unfortunately, such groups do not last forever. They may simply die out; they may finally yield to the great pressures they are under; or they may forget that we are commanded to continue to "grow in grace and knowledge" and so lose their sense of direction and purpose. Nevertheless, Jesus stated that His church would always exist; the "gates of hell" would never prevail against it. Thus, even in this secular, materialistic, dangerous world, there are still true followers of Jesus trying their utmost to follow His leadership. It is of such that the Church of God, International, is composed.

continued on page 21

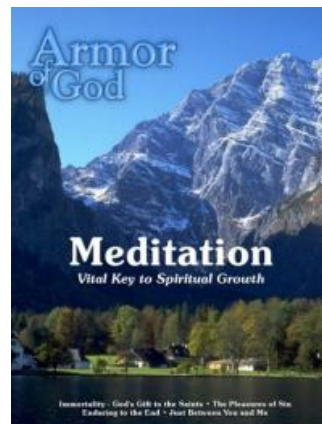


Table of Contents

- 3 Meditation—
Vital Key to Spiritual Growth
- 7 Just Between You and Me
- 8 Enduring to the End
- 10 Immortality—
God's Gift to the Saints
- 14 Literary Corner
- 15 The Pleasures of Sin
- 17 Line Upon Line—
Understanding Repentance
- 23 Reflections

The **Armor of God** magazine is published by the Church of God, International (Philippines). It is made possible through the freely given tithes and offerings of members and fellow laborers of the **Church of God, International**.

Winston S. Co
Rene D. Corpuz
Alvin M. De Leon
Ely S. Mellomida
Raymond F. Necio
Editorial Staff

Meditation

Vital Key to Spiritual Growth

HENRY FORD is reputed to have said: "Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is the probable reason why so few engage in it." Whether Ford actually said it or not, that statement has never been more accurate than today. For most of us turning on the TV is much easier than turning on our minds. Ours is the age not only of the paid entertainer and the hired specialist who can provide the services we're unable to perform for ourselves, but it is also an age in which we can even become accustomed to letting others do our thinking for us

A Human Weakness

Our educational processes have a part in this mind-numbing movement. Too often, as students, instead of analyzing the subject matter to see if it was accurate, we simply repeated on the exam sheet what we had been spoon-fed. After all, didn't many of us just go to school for grades?

And now even our jobs tend to become increasingly specialized and automated, leaving us as workers with little need or incentive to think. Our environment encourages a natural tendency to avoid "unnecessary" thinking.

Humanly, we tend to be superficial. As God says in I Samuel 16:7, *man normally-looks only at the outward appearance*. This often means that we accept an answer, solutions, or supposed fact on face value.

Early in this century, for example, people *assumed* the new and mighty Titanic was unsinkable, though in reality its watertight integrity had been sacrificed for the comfort of the passengers. Superficially, it was undoubtedly a majestic, awe-inspiring ship. Probably nobody *thought* much about her internal strength and stability until a massive iceberg ripped a 300-foot gash in her hull.

But perhaps the most unfortunate part of our "no-think" environment is its effect on our mental outlook. As its consequences, we don't spend the time or effort we should in active thought and meditation about God, His laws, His Word, and how they all relate to our lives.

Meditation Leads to Prosperity and Success

We find in Joshua 1:8 that God commanded the children of Israel: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt *meditate* therein day and night"--why?-- "That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way *prosperous*, and then *thou shalt have good success*."

We all want to be successful and prosperous. Yet often God cannot bless us, as He would like to do because we are inadvertently breaking His law. For unless we are meditating on our own lives in relation to that law, we can easily overlook areas where our performance is not up to God's standards.

Don't just assume you are on solid spiritual ground! Examine yourself (II Cor. 13:5) and at the same time ask God to help you search out your own life (Ps. 139:23-24). Use the law as a spiritual yardstick with which to measure your own personal performance. Look for the hidden, subtle sins that often escape notice.

David, in Psalm 119:105, called God's Word, which includes the law, "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." For God's law to illuminate our lives, as it should, we must be actively *thinking* and meditating on it.

**Constructive
meditation can
and should play
a vital role in our
Christian lives.
This article will
show you how to
begin meditating
effectively.**

Meditation on God's Law

The first Psalm, verse 2, very aptly describes the righteous person (a true Christian): "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

Fine. But how do you meditate on God's law? Let's take one of the Ten Commandments, the seventh for example "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Now, think about this for a while. The people of the world, for the most part, don't keep that one too well, do they?

Suppose they *did* keep this commandment, then what?

All forms of venereal disease would eventually be wiped out! No more gonorrhea and syphilis. No more blind babies born to unwed mothers. The incidence of babies born with serious mental defects would drop as well.

Another result: fewer potential juvenile delinquents. The phenomenon of fatherless children would virtually disappear. Children would develop with more balanced personalities, keener minds, better health, etc., etc.

Now think about what happens to the people involved in an adulterous relationship. Are they helped? Far from it! The first time they probably feel pretty guilty about it. But if they continue to indulge, they will probably sear their consciences to the point where anything goes.

Then there is the other mate. Think about what it must feel like to be cheated, defrauded and lied to by the very one who supposedly took you for better or worse (if, indeed, that was even done in the first place). And let's not forget the children. Certainly they will sense that mommy and daddy aren't getting along (even if the wronged mate doesn't realize what has been happening). A feeling of insecurity will develop. And permanent scars will form in their personalities and character that may never be completely erased in this physical life.

What about the plight of the expectant unwed mother? In considering the alternatives, she may undergo the tragedy of an abortion. If it's too late for that, the newly born child may be abandoned or discarded in someone's garbage can. It actually happens! Or if the unwanted child is more fortunate, he might be farmed out to an orphanage or adoption agency. But even if the expectant mother loves and really wants to keep the

baby, what chance do you think the child has for a normal existence?

Now consider what mankind is doing about all of these problems. You guessed it treating the *effects* with penicillin, the pill, prophylactics, and misguided sex education. To even suggest that adultery or fornication is harmful to all parties concerned, and that it violates a living law given by an all wise God for man's benefit, well-being and happiness, would be considered a bit "old fashioned" in today's "enlightened" modern society.

Does thinking meditating on these evils get you stirred up a little? Can you see how badly this world needs God's Kingdom and His laws? Does this give you a better understanding of why obeying God's laws is so vital to our own salvation as well as that of the world?

Use this principle of meditation on all of God's commandments, statutes (Ps. 119:48) and judgments. You'll then be able to pray more fervently, "Thy Kingdom come!"

But what's that you say? You "can't meditate"? "It takes too much effort"?

Reconditioning Our Minds

We might compare our minds to a well-made precision watch. Kept running, cleaned and oiled periodically, a fine watch normally will function smoothly and efficiently for a lifetime. Neglected, the parts will eventually become rusty, dirty, and out of synchronization. If our minds are not kept active and fed a proper mental and spiritual diet, they will also become inefficient and run down.

Unfortunately, if you have allowed your minds to stagnate to the point that deep and continuous thinking or constructive cogitation of any type is a chore be it spiritually oriented or otherwise it is going to take some effort to get it back into condition. But it can be done!

Environment, surroundings and life-style can be great hindrances to effective meditation. It's difficult, you know, to do any constructive meditation if your life is one big round of activities, social events and entertaining junkets. Or if you continually "burn the midnight oil" because you're snowed under, behind in your assignments, or simply engrossed in your work, you may experience the same lack of deep, reflective thought.

Jesus Christ successfully

confronted that kind of problem during His earthly ministry. He and His disciples were so busy in the Work of God that at one point they didn't even have time to eat! (Mark 6:31). The obvious solution was to break up the routine and get away from the pressures for a while. Whenever He did succeed in getting away by Himself, Christ must have spent a significant amount of time in meditating and planning. On other occasions, He took the time for this type of spiritual rejuvenation even in the midst of a busy day's activities (John 6:15, 8:1).

We need, just as Christ did, to step back from time to time from our routines and take a long, reflective look at what we're doing. Almost anything that will get you out of your normal environment will help. One of the most relaxing and enjoyable ways is to get out into God's creation by going hiking, camping, backpacking or canoeing. You'll find that meditation will come much easier in this type of environment.

You won't have to contend with television, radio, ringing telephones, sirens, barking dogs, etc. And once you get out and away from "the four walls," you'll find that many of your day-to-day problems, inconveniences and difficulties won't seem quite so all encompassing and "earth-shaking" as you originally imagined. David got the "big picture" and saw things in their true perspective when he was able to meditate in the midst of God's creation (Ps. 8:3-9).

Meditate on God's Creation

David said in Psalm 143:5: "I meditate on *all* thy works; I *muse* on the work of thy hands."

Being out in the wide, open spaces is not always necessary to be able to reflect on the creative power of God and His creation and on what they reveal about His nature and character. You can easily do this right in your own backyard.

For instance, if you happen to be raking leaves, think for a few minutes about those little objects being pushed along by your rake. Each one possessed symmetry, balance and a purposeful design. Thinking about these aspects of your subject should give you a better insight into some of God's personality and other traits.

Then look a little further. Notice the difficult varieties, shapes and designs of leaves hanging from the surrounding trees. Someone had quite a bit of

imagination to design everything from pine needle to giant fern leaves.

And each variety is not only fabricated to be pleasing to the eye in terms of beauty and color, but is also designed with a specific functional purpose in mind. Man has yet to fully explain the mysterious action of the chlorophyll that makes leaves green. Obviously it took the master Designer, Chemist and Artist of the universe to “put it all together” and create leaves!

Take any object, small or great, simple or complex, in God’s creation and think about it from the standpoint of the genius of design, breadth of imagination, depth of planning and understanding that went into it, and you’ll soon begin to marvel and stand in awe of the mind and power of Almighty God!

Meditate on Lessons from the Past.

Don’t ever underestimate the value of hindsight! God certainly doesn’t. Forty-nine books in the Old Testament contain 929 chapters that are chock-full of historical examples written expressly for you and me! (I Cor. 10:4). But the lessons you need to learn won’t just pop out of the page and into your brain unless you’re meditating about the meaning of the black and white print passing before your eyes.

Whenever you are reading such examples, slow down and ask yourself a few questions. Read between the lines. Analyze the character and motivation of the people involved. View the passage in question as it fits into the overall panorama of historical and social events of the time. And most important of all, relate the events you are reading about to your own personal life.

For example, take the case of Saul, king of Israel. We know he disobeyed God. We understand fully that he was rebellious and self-righteous. But did you ever *analyze* or think deeply about what were some of the causative factors involved in his downfall?

First, you might remember I Samuel 15:17 which says, in the Authorized Version, that when Saul was little in his own sight, God chose him to be made king. Obviously, you would say the throne must have gone to his head. But think a little further about the time he first went wrong by offering sacrifices at Gilgal contrary to Samuel’s instruction (I Sam. 13:8-10).

Saul knew that Samuel spoke for

God, and he obviously felt guilty about what he did, but he tried to excuse his actions to Samuel. Notice what his reasoning was: “Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, the Philistines will come down upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.” (verses 11-12).

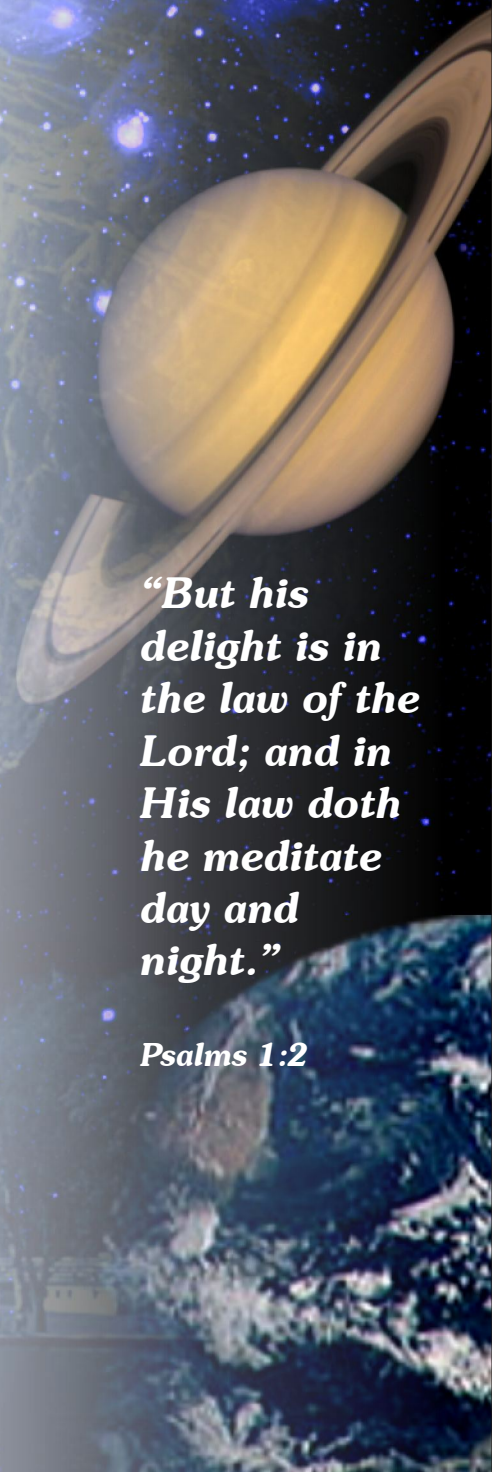
“Well, it appears he just lacked faith,” you might say. True, but look further.

Primarily he was worried because “the people were scattered from *me*.” Immediately we can surmise that he was overly concerned about his own prestige and importance in the eyes of the people. He was afraid that if he just sat there he would appear to the people like a dunce. Instead, he wanted to show them he was a dynamic man of *action* that HE, Saul, would save them from the villainous Philistines. After all, wasn’t he the biggest man in Israel? He couldn’t allow his knight-in-shining-armor image to get tarnished, could he?

Also, he *had* to get that sacrifice in before the Philistines came down on who? The people? Of course not! SAUL! (Verse 12). Saul was looking out for “old number one.” That is not the kind of character God wants in a leader!

Then there was the matter of Samuel not showing up. Maybe Saul figured he wouldn’t make it. “After all, you can’t always be sure about his word,” he probably reasoned. (Perhaps Samuel’s delay was for the purpose of testing Saul’s obedience). Then, too, Saul more than likely had his doubts about God’s government. He probably reasoned it was fine to follow it for *routine* situations, but this was a wartime emergency! The time had come to take matters into his *own* hands. Saul had his eyes on the Philistines and not on God’s power. He totally forgot whose nation he was ruling and who had put him at its head.

Actually, as the Revised Standard Version shows, Saul was “*little* in his own sight” (I Samuel 15:17) in the sense that he did not comprehend, as king over God’s nation, that he was in a very *big* position, and therefore even the smallest example of disobedience on his part would have a very serious effect on the entire nation.



***“But his
delight is in
the law of the
Lord; and in
His law doth
he meditate
day and
night.”***

Psalms 1:2

**"I meditate
on all thy
works; I
muse on the
work of thy
Hands."**

Psalms 145:3

The whole situation should ring a few mental bells, as far as our own actions are concerned, because Saul's problems were some of the same ones that many of us today face from time to time. He lacked faith in God and in His government to work things out, became impatient, and tried to work out a human solution. He was more concerned about himself than he was the people or the nation, and he used deceit in trying to make his actions look good in the sight of *men*.

The account is all very realistic, up-to-date and applicable for us today. The lessons are there in God's Word. The question is: will we take the time to *meditate* on what we read in order to learn and apply the lessons?

Meditate on Your Life and Work

When you come home after a hard day's work, do you flop down in front of the TV and promptly fail to capitalize on the lessons and experiences of that day? Or do you, at some time during the evening, reflect on the main events that transpired and what you can do to improve your performance?

For instance, if you have offended someone, or something didn't go exactly right, don't just chalk it up to a bad day, but analyze what happened and why. See what biblical principle you or others violated. Learn from your mistakes and from circumstances that surround your life. If you do this, you'll find correction not only easier to take, but you will probably soon be getting much less of it (1 Cor. 11:31).

Remember, David said he *thought* on his ways and as a result turned his feet to God's testimonies (Ps. 119:59).

And as you meditate on your own life, it will be helpful to learn about the lives of famous men such as Franklin, MacArthur, Churchill, Patton and others. Reflect on some of their strong personal traits and characteristics.

You'll find many useful lessons you overlooked the first time through. Try to throw yourself into the company of as many successful men as possible. Study them. Try to learn **WHY** they are successful. This will help you to learn how to build a success for yourself.

Meditation Helps Prayer

David admitted his prayers were more effective when coupled with meditation. "My soul shall be satisfied as

with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: *when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches*" (Ps. 63:5-6).

Your prayers will be more joyful your praise more sincere if you take time to meditate on God! David did it. Why don't you?

After going to bed, are you ever unable to go right to sleep? What do you do? Count sheep?

Why not MEDITATE?

As you lie there feeling the blood pulse in your temple, think about the great master Designer who made your heart. By what processes does your heart keep beating? You almost never give it a thought. Yet this powerful pump ticks day and night. It responds to the demands of physical exertion and emotional involvement.

With this meditation will come a warm feeling. A feeling that you'd like to kneel down and praise the Ever-living Creator. Then why not? You can't sleep, why not get up and pray while you're inspired?

No other being of God's physical creation has a mind that can meditate. God gave man this capacity!

God's Word is replete with exhortations to meditate. Meditation is vitally linked with His plan for our lives. He intended that we take time from our restless everyday hurry to ponder the most important questions: what are we? Where are we going? What are the laws that will guarantee success in life? What is the way that will lead to eternal life?

Do you understand the answers to these questions thoroughly? Are you meditating on them? And is that meditation leading you to a deeper, richer understanding of God's Work into a greater, more intimate contact with God Almighty, your heavenly Father?

Paul wrote to Timothy these words which also apply to us: "*Meditate* upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting [progress] may appear to all" (1 Tim. 4:15).

Start today. Make meditation a vital part of your spiritual life! **AG**

Just Between You and Me

Prayer is our personal communication with God. When one prays, he utters verbally or mentally his praise for God, his thanks for God's blessings, and also his petition to God for himself and for others. Prayers are an offering to God; they are described as incense stored in golden bowls before God's throne (Revelation 5:8). Prayers are not mere repetitions imposed or stylized, but rather heartfelt, personal communication with the Creator, equivalent to communication with an intimate personal friend. In prayer, we share our hopes, dreams, frustrations, needs, and desires with God, as we would with our physical father.

In fact, this is a glimpse of how much God loves us. He tells us He is our *Father!* That is truly an amazing thing! We belong to Him. The Creator God is the Supreme Father, and as a father He loves His children. Whether spiritually young or physically young, He watches how His children are treated.

He gives us a way to talk to Him, and get to know Him. We are to talk to Him through prayer, and get to know Him through reading the Bible. He wants our fellowship.

When we pray it should be a combination of reverence, thankfulness, willing confession and surrender, appeal, confidence, and trust. Prayer is the communication between "You and me, Parent and child, Friend and friend, Master and servant, King and subject, Creator and creature" (*The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, subject "Prayer"). We put ourselves in His hands.

Jesus' instructions in Matthew 6:5-15 are the clearest in the Bible regarding prayer. We are told to pray to our Father privately, not to be seen of men; not to heap up empty phrases and ritualistic repetitions; to address God as our Father; to *reverence* His name; to yearn and pray for the Kingdom to come; to ask that His Way be followed and His will be done; to thank Him for our



sustenance and other blessings; to forgive us for our sins; to help us forgive those who sin against us; to keep us from temptation; to deliver us from Satan; and to help us understand, appreciate, and look forward to the majesty, power, and glory of God. It was Christ's own approach and example of effective prayer.

If it sounds complicated it is not. Our *attitude* is pivotal in determining how God reacts to our prayers.

God states that it is our iniquities and sins which separate us from Him, so that He will neither hear nor answer our prayers (Isaiah 59:21). A heart hardened by sin doesn't feel sorry or want to change.

On the other hand, when we go to God in faith, with a humble and contrite spirit, He will both

hear and spiritually revive us (Isaiah 57:15). God is happiest when we turn from sin and want to do what is right.

God would rather restore us than destroy us. He would rather lift us up than knock us down. He would rather we choose life than death! But He will always give us the choice. Prayer gives us the chance to make better choices by looking to Him for guidance.

In teaching our children the importance of prayer we give them foundational information that is the best and wisest we could ever offer. It will last them their lifetime.

In this ever-changing world there is the solid foundation of God. There is refuge, wisdom, and hope in the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God. *Excerpt from the Teachers Bible Study in "Sshh, Who's That Talking?", SKY StoryTime. AG*





When God opened our minds to His precious truths, we were filled with excitement with what we had discovered.

If you were like me, you couldn't wait to share them with family, friends, and coworkers. We couldn't understand why they couldn't "see" what we had. Often this got us into trouble. But, nonetheless, we charged out of the starter's block with the blinding speed of a sprinter. Sprinters run as fast and hard as they can for a short distance. But the Christian "race" cannot be run as a sprinter would; our "race" is a marathon. It takes a different kind of runner to compete in a marathon. Speed is secondary. Endurance is the key.

Many have come into God's church scorching the trail as a Kentucky Derby champion. They couldn't maintain that breakneck pace, and they broke down and fell by the wayside, while the steady, plodding Clydesdale stayed the course, enduring to the end of the race.

When we commit our lives to Jesus Christ and go into that watery grave of baptism, we have to be willing to endure unto the end. Jesus was very concerned that anyone contemplating this life-saving covenant count the cost before entering into this awesome obligation (see Luke 14:27-33). Earlier Jesus warned, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God"

Enduring to the End

(Luke 9:62).

We have to endure to the end. While we tend to think this means until His feet stand on the Mount of Olives, we cannot afford to do that. Thousands of our fellow firstfruits have already met their end—many of them had no idea of the very day of their "end." In our local congregation in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, alone, that has been just the case.

One of our worship leaders, shortly after services, died watching TV with his wife; our fellowship hostess passed away preparing for bed after coming home from her daughter's; another of our brethren died waiting in his car

while his wife shopped (only a few days after his retirement); and my mother had roast beef thawing on the stove on her last morning. That's why enduring to the end must be a daily, ongoing process—our top priority. We cannot know when that end is.

The Bible is rife with heroes who have endured to the end. Abraham patiently endured; Moses endured, fearing not Pharaoh; and Jesus Himself willingly endured the agonizing death of the cross. (See Hebrews 6:13-15; 11:24-27; 12:1-3.)

We must never forget that our eternal reward is contingent upon our enduring to the end. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12). The rewards mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 are dependent on overcoming, or enduring.

Our endurance is the proof of our discipleship. Jesus said, "If you continue [endure] in my word, then you are my disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

In Mark 4, we have the parable of the sower of the seed, which teaches a powerful lesson on enduring to the end. In verses 3-8, Jesus tells of seed falling by the wayside and being devoured by birds; seed falling on stony ground where they couldn't take root; seed that fell among thorns and was choked out as they grew; and seed that fell on good ground and bore much fruit.

Jesus then gets a little testy with His disciples for not understanding the parable, but goes on to explain in verses 14-20.

The seed is the gospel. The seed by the wayside is heard and understood, but Satan swoops in like the birds of prey and devours it. The word *devour* is quite apt, as it is the same word Peter uses in describing Satan as a roaring lion seeking whom he may *devour* (1 Peter 5:8). The evil one will use any person, any device, whether subtle or obvious, to devour, distort, and twist the precious Word of God and His church. Satan uses people to sow discord and discourage little ones in the faith, and he is often successful in devouring seed, causing the newly called not to endure to the end.

The seed on stony ground are like those we talked about earlier. They begin with the speed of a sleek stallion, but lack the endurance of a plodder. As a minister

in God's church, I have encountered many who wanted to be baptized "yesterday," but only stayed a short while. Many were merely impressed by a talented speaker who said some things they agreed with; some recognized doctrines that were in sync with theirs; others were simply interested only in being "someone" within the organization. Their foundation was on something other than the Rock which is Christ, and His Word, the Holy Bible. So when a doctrine came under review, when a human leader stumbled or erred, when their "talents" weren't adequately recognized and rewarded, they stopped enduring.

The seed which grew up did well for a while and then was choked out by thorns. Jesus said they are deceived by the world's riches and they become unfruitful. The world offers a dizzying array of toys and goodies. And it seems as if the evil and the untoward get all the breaks, get away with all their indiscretions, never are held accountable. Satan works very deftly to spotlight all this. "If I wasn't tithing, I could have that big Lincoln, Caddy, or SUV." "If I worked a little overtime on Saturday, that pleasure boat would be within reach." Whatever it is that appeals to us. And what about our time? Surfing the Net, computer games, movies, and TV are a lot more enticing than prayer and Bible study. "Can't miss the big game. They're only having a videotape this week, and watching baseball is resting and relaxing on the Sabbath." Satan will throw down obstacle after obstacle in our paths until Sabbath services, prayer, and study slip to fourth, fifth, tenth on our priority schedule. If we recognize anything here, it's time to go out and weed the garden, pull out the thorns and thistles that are choking the plant before it's too late.

Then there's the seed that fell on good ground. Seed firmly rooted in the truth of God, nurtured by the living water of the Word, growing and bearing much good fruit. That's where we all want to be, rooted solidly, safe from the birds of prey, free of thorns, building righteous character, growing in grace and knowledge, constant and enduring in prayer and study.

Let us always remember the admonishing words of Jesus in Matthew 20:16: "for many are called but few chosen." And those that are chosen are they that endure unto the end. **AG**



There is no single doctrine which commands such universal acceptance among religious adherents over so vast a span of time. Indeed, this doctrine has been almost synonymous with religion itself. Not one major religion disputes it and every religious tradition affirms it in one form or another.

In the ancient Near East, it dominated religious thought. In African and Asian tribal religions it is prominent and religions of all civilizations have endorsed it. It is an important relic of Platonic thought. In the world of professing Christianity, only a few sects question it. Seventy-one percent of Americans believe it.

Amazingly, the Bible as a religious document is almost unique in its utter refutation of the view that the real person is the soul inside, which goes into another world upon the death of the body. This is no minor issue to be mistaken about. Granted there are some doctrines which are inconsequential, and no church has all truth and no error. We all know in part and prophesy (preach) in part. But the true church, the church divinely commissioned to take the gospel to the world, must know the fundamental doctrine of what man really is.

Could God have started a church and continue to actively lead that church when it does not even know what man is

rescue them from that error, if He were, in fact, the Founder of those churches which believe in the immortality of the soul?

We need to dispassionately and without bias examine this critical subject.

One respected theologian came to what was a startling conclusion for him: that his church had misled him on this critical issue. Church of Christ elder Edward Fudge explains in the book which he finally wrote to show the results of his study, *The Fire That Consumes: The Biblical Case for Conditional Immortality*: "I was reared on traditionalist teaching. I accepted it because it was said to rest on Scripture.

IMMORTALITY

God's Gift to the Saints

No question about it, the Bible clearly reveals that immortality is God's gracious gift to His saints. But if immortality is a gift that is given only to the saints, why do millions believe that it is an inherent quality of the human soul? What does the Bible say about this subject?

It is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, the view that the human soul has a conscious existence immediately after death.

Yet the Bible, reputedly the authoritative document of the Christian faith, nowhere teaches this doctrine. It is nothing less than astounding that the Old Testament, a document of the ancient Near East, roundly rejects the teaching that the soul consciously survives death when that teaching was commonplace then, and that the New Testament equally rejects this doctrine, believed by the vast majority in the first century.

and what happens to him after death? Is this a minor doctrine?

The implications for any church which is wrong on this issue are profound. Immortality of the soul defender John W. Cooper, in his book *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting*, says that if the doctrine is not true then "a doctrine affirmed by most of the church since its beginning is false. A second consequence is more personal and existential--what millions of Christians believe will happen when they die is an illusion." Would God have led so many believers into error, or would He not

Closer investigation has shown this claim to be mistaken. Careful study has shown that both Old and New Testaments teach instead a resurrection of the wicked for the purpose of divine judgment... so my beliefs have changed--as a result of careful study."

So have the views of an even more well-known and renowned theologian and evangelical apologist, Clark Pinnock. In his chapter on "The Conditional View" in the well-researched book, *Four Views on Hell*, Pinnock, after showing a number of scriptures disproving the immortality of

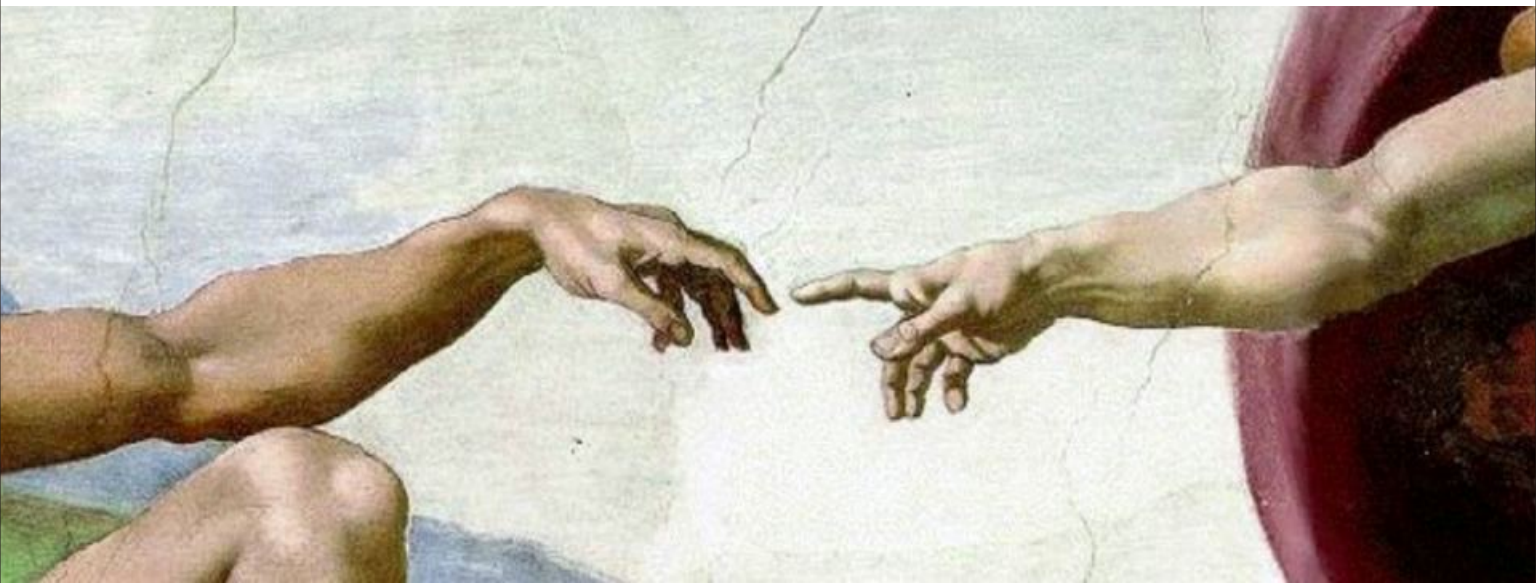
the soul, wonders aloud why so many churches should have adopted what would appear an obviously unbiblical view. An explanation for this, he offers, “exists in a Hellenistic belief about human nature that has dominated Christian thinking about eschatology from the beginning. There has been a virtual consensus that the soul survives death because it is by nature an incorporeal substance. This assumption goes back to Plato’s view of the soul as metaphysically indestructible, a view shared by Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. The Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul has affected theology unduly on this point—a good example of the occasional Hellenization

them.

Revelation 14:10 refers to people who “will be tormented with fire and brimstone.” Verse 11 says that the “smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image.” Now if they don’t have immortal souls, how will that be possible? Will God give them immortal souls to facilitate their everlasting punishment? In any event, those who believe in conditional immortality, like the Church of God International, reject the notion of everlasting conscious punishment. So what do we do with a text like Revelation 14:10,11, which was not smuggled into the Scriptures by

Understanding *Aionios*, or How Long Is ‘Everlasting’?

Surprising as it might seem, “eternal” and “everlasting” do not always mean never-ending, but can actually mean “age-lasting,” that is, lasting for a limited period. It is important to bear in mind that what we have are English translations of the Bible and that the Scriptures were originally inspired in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. To study to show ourselves approved, we have to acquire some rudimentary understanding of the biblical languages. If we are going to pronounce authoritatively on certain complex doctrinal matters, we must be equipped.



of Christian doctrine.”

It is time we recapture and rescue Christianity from Hellenism!

It is time we get back to the Bible, especially in light of the fact that the Protestant Reformation was ostensibly based on sola Scriptura--Scripture alone! If this claim is true, then why should non-biblical sources be more influential than Scripture in the formation of Christian doctrine? Yet defenders of the immortal soul doctrine will protest that Scripture itself is clear that the soul is immortal. There are some scriptures which do, indeed, seem to clearly teach an eternal conscious existence in hell. We can't ignore these scriptures, if we accept all biblical texts as the Word of God--but we must seek to understand them without reading foreign ideas into

Plato? These verses seem devastating to our view.

In Matthew 25:41, Jesus refers to those who will depart into “eternal fire.” Verse 46 has been especially appealed to by defenders of the immortal soul view. It says the wicked will go away into “eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” If “eternal life” means unending life and conscious existence, then why in the same passage doesn't “eternal punishment” mean unending conscious existence as well?

Matthew 18:8 says that “it is better for you to enter maimed or lame than...to be thrown into the eternal fire.” Why would the fire be eternal if it has nothing to burn and if the wicked are annihilated, as we teach?

We need to answer all these texts.

There is an easy way to prove that *aionios* does not always mean never-ending and that it can mean eternal in its results and consequences.

In Jude 1:7 we read that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the “punishment of eternal fire.” Yet no one believes that Sodom and Gomorrah are burning now. The inhabitants suffered the punishment of eternal fire in the sense that they were completely destroyed; the fire was eternal in its results and effects; it left nothing to be consumed.

There can be no dispute about this for there are no cities named Sodom and Gomorrah burning today! Scripture does not say they suffered the punishment of *Gehenna* (hell) fire, so one cannot reason that perhaps they are suffering (unknown to us) in hell. They suffered the

punishment of a literal fire which swept through the area. (One scholar points out that at least seventy times in the Bible the Greek word *aionios* qualifies objects of a temporary and limited nature.)

The Hebrew equivalent of *aionios* in the Old Testament is *olam*, which can also mean eternal or everlasting, but is also used in reference to a limited span of time. To prove decisively that “forever” or “eternal” do not always mean never-ending, notice the following passages in which *olam* obviously means age-lasting or a limited time.

In Exodus 12:24 we read that the sprinkling of the blood at the Passover was to be “an ordinance for ever.” The Aaronic priesthood was also said to have

would not know immediately is that the word translated “long ages” is *aionios*—the same word translated “forever” in the passages quoted about eternal fire and everlasting punishment. It is indisputable, therefore, that the word carries more than one meaning and cannot, under all circumstances, be interpreted as eternal in the sense of never-ending.

But then there is Matthew 3:12, pulled out by immortal soul advocates to prove their point. It refers to the “unquenchable fire” which will be unleashed on the lost.

Again, just as in the case of the “eternal” fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, the fire threatened by

fire, refers to the results and consequences of its action, not the duration of its time.

Isaiah 34:9,10 is a clincher. Notice the imagery of the punishment proposed for Edom: “And the streams of Edom shall be turned into a pitch, and her soil into brimstone; her land shall become burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up for ever [notice this similarity with the Revelation texts quoted earlier], from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.”

Yes, there it is! The fire would completely destroy Edom; its smoke would proverbially go up forever, “from



Jude 1:7 tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the “punishment of eternal fire”



Sinners writhe eternally in burning potholes

been a “perpetual statute” (Exodus 29:9; 40:15; Leviticus 3:17). Solomon’s temple was supposed to have been everlasting (1 Kings 8:13). The ritual of tending to the light in the tabernacle was to be “a statute for ever” (Exodus 27:21). All the sacrifices and circumcision were said to last “forever.” Now how many Christians, even among law-keepers, are still practicing these rituals which the Bible clearly says should be observed forever, as part of an “everlasting covenant”? Clearly, the Hebrew word *olam*, the equivalent of *aionios* in the passages quoted, means age-lasting, to be in force for the life of the Old Covenant.

Romans 16:25 talks about the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret “for long ages.” What the reader of the English translations of the Bible

Jesus here is one which will accomplish its purpose of utter destruction, one whose purpose and mission cannot be thwarted by anyone or anything. This is the sense of the phrase.

To prove that this is not speculation, turn to Jeremiah 17:27 where a similar threat was made to a rebellious Israel. Hear the words of Yahweh: “But if you do not listen to me, to keep the sabbath day holy...then I will kindle a fire in its [Jerusalem’s] gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.”

Yahweh threatened an unquenchable fire that could not be put out by all the firemen in the world. It would achieve its purpose: the utter destruction of Jerusalem and its sinning inhabitants. The unquenchable fire, like the eternal

generation to generation.” The land would be desolate no more; it would be completely destroyed. That the fire would be “eternal” and “unquenchable” means a fire which no one would be able to quench until it achieved its purpose. See also Isaiah 1:30,31: “For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. And the strong shall become tow, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.”

There it is—“none to quench them”—clearly meaning both will burn until they become extinct, annihilated!

As Clark Pinnock has suggested in his essay in the book *Four Views on Hell*, “I believe that the real basis of the traditional view of the nature of hell is not in the Bible’s talk of the wicked

perishing, but an unbiblical anthropology that is read into the text. If a biblical reader approached the text with the assumption that souls are immortal, would they not be compelled to interpret texts that speak of the wicked being destroyed to mean that they are tortured forever since according to that supposition they cannot go out of existence? ...[T]he belief in the immortality of the soul will necessarily skew the exegesis."

This is why we have dealt extensively with the discussion of hell, for at the root of the traditional view of an ever-burning hell is the false doctrine of the immortality of the human soul.

'everlasting salvation,' both scriptural phrases. No one supposes that we are being redeemed or being saved forever.

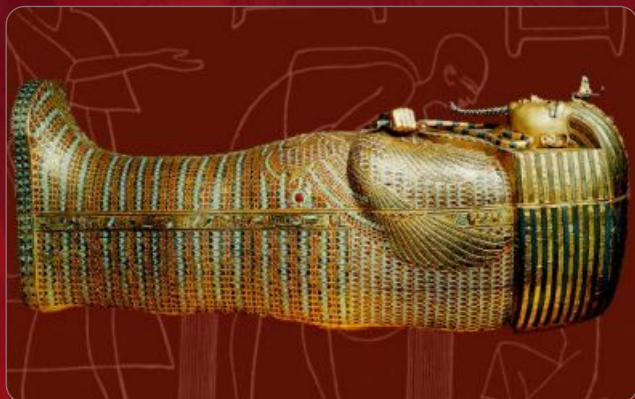
"In the same way the lost will not be passing through a process of punishment for ever but will be punished once and for all, with eternal results. On the other hand, the noun 'life' is not a noun of action, but a noun expressing a state; that is, the life itself is eternal."

Finally, Samuele Bacchiocchi in his insightful book *Immortality or Resurrection?* says of *aionios*, translated "everlasting" or "forever": "Ancient Greek papyri contain numerous examples of Roman emperors being described as *aionios*. What is meant is

destruction, and utter annihilation. How could we get any other concept from that text? When we are not imposing preconceived ideas on the biblical text, it is obvious that the fate of the unsaved is destruction.

Psalm 37:38 says that "transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off."

In Matthew 13:30, Jesus also uses the imagery of total destruction to describe the fate of the wicked. The proverbial weeds are gathered to be burned. The metaphor is of total destruction. In Psalm 37:2, we read that the wicked will "fade like the grass"; they "shall be cut off" and "will be no



Egyptians mummify their dead to ensure a safe passage to the afterlife.



Believers of reincarnation hold that after death a man may return as an animal.

The attempt to use Matthew 25:41,46 to prove this false doctrine fails miserably. The fact is, both the righteous and the damned will have their fates sealed eternally. The righteous will enjoy unending life as a reward and the unrighteous will suffer everlasting punishment—their punishment will be final, inexorable, irredeemable. The unrighteous will suffer everlasting punishment, not everlasting punishing!

In his book, *Life and Immortality*, Basil Atkinson notes that "when the adjective *aionios* meaning 'everlasting' is used in Greek with nouns of action it has reference to the result of the action, not the process."

"Thus, the phrase 'everlasting punishment' is comparable to 'everlasting redemption' and

that they held their office for life. Unfortunately, the English words 'eternal' or 'everlasting' do not accurately render the meaning of *aionios* which literally means 'age-lasting.'"

Explicit Texts on Destruction

While some have tried to impose their own preconceived ideas on the biblical texts, a clear reading of the texts which refer to the fate of the wicked and the lost indicates that their end is destruction. Let's look at some plain texts.

Malachi 4:1 says that on the Day of the Lord "all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." That text speaks most forcefully of

more" (verses 9,10).

Hebrews 10:27 refers the "fury of fire which will consume the adversaries." Defenders of the immortal soul doctrine have often replied to the avalanche of texts showing that the wicked will be destroyed by saying that the word destruction is sometimes used to mean "put out of action." The example is used of Christ who, as it were, destroyed Satan the devil through His action on the stake, yet the devil continues to exist.

It is amazing the ingenious attempts which are made to preserve a cherished, inherited belief. While it is true that words do have several meanings, it takes no linguist with a doctorate to see that the contexts of words determine meaning. That destruction could

possibly mean to put out of action and that it does take that meaning in one or a few texts does not mean that we should ignore the clear, ordinary meaning of the word as it is used in the many other texts of Scripture.

It is hard to ignore texts like Isaiah 1:28, which says that “rebels and sinners shall be destroyed together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.”

There is one text that cannot rationally or exegetically be opened to any other meaning than the one favored by those who deny ever-burning hell and the immortality of the soul. This text is crystal clear once one really focuses on it.

We return to the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed by eternal fire and are clearly not burning today. This fire was complete in its work of utter destruction. Peter says that God turned “the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes” (2 Peter 2:6). We don’t have to wonder whether Sodom and Gomorrah are burning today. Those cities have been already turned to ashes as a result of the eternal fire.

So, clearly, their fire resulted in complete destruction in the ordinary sense of the word. Let’s go on, for it gets more interesting. What God did was condemn them to extinction—to annihilation!—not an unending burning. But it gets even more interesting, and now we’ll see why there can be no other explanation of this bombshell of a text against the ever-burning hell and immortal soul concepts. In the latter part of verse 6, we are told that God “condemned them [Sodom and Gomorrah] to extinction and made them an example of those who were to be ungodly,” meaning that the ungodly will suffer the same fate. What fate? Utter extinction! They will be turned to ashes (which is exactly what Malachi 4:1 says).

It could not be clearer! What Sodom and Gomorrah suffered served as an example of the kind of destruction that awaits the wicked at the end.

(Other important texts applying the word destruction to the fate of the wicked are Philippians 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:2,3; and 2 Thessalonians 1:9.)

To be continued next issue.



LIFE

Don't you ever think of what life really is?
Are we really meant to be just like this?
Clothes, jewelry, money and fame?
If so, then life is nothing but a losing game.
You want to be famous, and let the world know you
You want to be rich, and make your fantasies come true
You want to be a person who's always on top,
You want to keep climbing and never stop
You want to be popular, more popular than others
You want more and more money and nothing else matters
You have all these, but why are you still sad?
You're popular and rich, what else don't you have?

You see, my friend, that life isn't about money, popularity and beauty
All these can't guarantee to make your life happy.
You should know that you really don't need fame,
All you need is a new heart to end this foolish game.
Life is actually who you love and who loves you
It's about a close relationship with God who created you
Aren't all these, true my friend?
Don't you think your selfishness must come to an end?
Forget all about the material things that you love,
Start thinking and praying to God who is up above
Be a good Christian and love one another as you ought to do
With the short, precious life God has given you!

Teach me, Rabbi
About the things I cannot see
Of thrones, dominations
Powers and principalities

Give me wisdom, Good Rabbi
And knowledge, if you please
Plenty and immeasurable
As waters cover the seas

Make known to me your secrets
And mysteries, please reveal
Things sought out by the prophets
Unknown even to angels.

Untitled II, RFN

The Pleasures of Sin

Ahhhh, the pleasures of sin. Settle down, relax and let's talk about them.

We read in Hebrews 11:24-25: "by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." We see in God's Word that there are often temporary "pleasures" in sin; otherwise, few would do it. But if it "hurt" to sin—if it was immediately painful; if we could feel the effects of sin instantaneously; if it bruised or lacerated or burned every time we sinned, we would be very careful not to sin.

Your Bible defines sin as the breaking or transgressing of God's law (1 John 3:4). Further, the wages of sin is death for all eternity (Romans 6:23).

Being finite, man's problem is spiritual and infinite. We often do not recognize that there are vacillations in the time between various acts and their penalties. Let's talk about the three stages of penalty.

Immediate penalty: as in touching a hot stove. When I was a child, I accidentally backed into a red-hot coal-burning stove and burned my elbow severely. I knew immediately that that was not the thing to do! If all sins were punished with immediate severity, we would quickly learn that sin does not pay.

Intermediate penalty: as in leaping off a tall building. Conceivably, we could leap off a tall building or high cliff and fantasize about how much "fun" it would be on the way down. However, we usually have foresight enough to see

that a severe penalty is waiting to "spank" us at the bottom of our journey.

Far-reaching penalty: as in injurious attitudes, bad health habits, or in breaking God's laws. How many of us can see far enough ahead to see the penalties that lie in store for us when the time between action and reaction—between the sin and its penalty—is protracted?

Ecclesiastes 8:11 tells us, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." The "lag time" between sin and its penalty is often very seductive, allowing us to deceive ourselves that we are getting away with something. Although we can see the cause and effect when we touch a hot stove, or the folly of jumping off a high edifice, how many of us can see far enough ahead to realize the penalties we will incur if, for example, we maintain injurious attitudes in our relationship with God or our fellow man? Proverbs 23:7 tells us that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. Evil thoughts engender evil deeds. Continuing, how many foresee the disastrous effects of smoking, overeating, or overdrinking? And how many comprehend the wages of directly violating any of God's other commandments, such as committing adultery, stealing, or Sabbath-breaking? Do we really see sin as God sees sin, or do we try to rationalize our way around it?

Seen from a "God's eye" view, the pleasures of sin are but momentary and

end in misery and death.

God said in Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Let us choose life over the pleasures of sin.

Self-Examination

Let us examine ourselves, not just once a year at Passover time, but every day, through the eyeglasses of God's Word. Let us see sin as God sees sin. Let us turn to God with all our heart, mind and strength (Luke 10:27).

Now let us skip back to the time Israel was captive in Egypt. Egypt was a type of sin. Israel was a type of the church—and ultimately of us as individuals. Pharaoh was a type of Satan and his demons.

When God brought Jacob and his house into Egypt long before the time of Moses, did He know they would multiply and become slaves in Egypt for 400 years? Positively yes! We read in Genesis 15:13, "And He said unto Abram, 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.'" Then why did God do it? I think that is a fair question. When we see what God had in mind and how He delivered Israel from Egypt, we see a pattern of how God delivers His people from sin.

God freed Israel by invoking ten great plagues upon Egypt—one upon

each of their major “gods”.

Why did God deliver Israel this way? First Corinthians 10:11 tells us, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” God was showing Israel, their captors, and His people today who and what God is—who and what is the ultimate authority!

Do you think God could have just “tweaked” Pharaoh’s mind? Absolutely. Just as He stirred up, roused, and inspired many throughout history. Instead, He chose to reveal Himself and His mighty power through mighty miracles.

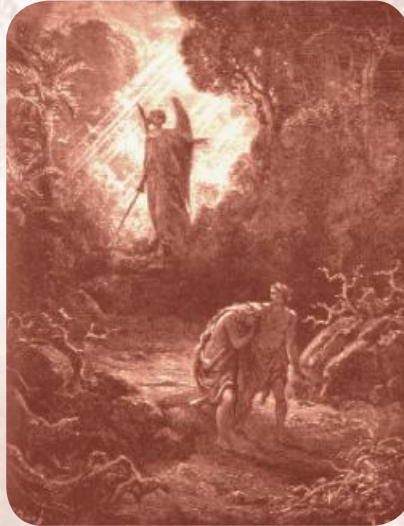
When we are called into God’s truth we must come to the same crossroad: we must decide who and what is our ultimate authority. Is it our past notions or ideas? Our old friends, family, or the opinions of others? Is it our politics or philosophy? Or is it our own emotions, feelings, wants, or desires? Whatever comes between you and the true God is nothing less than a form of idolatry and it must go!

All apostasy begins with questioning what God said, and raising up a second authority equal to or superior to it. When two authorities conflict, the deciding authority then becomes a third authority—a judge—between the other two. We must constantly beware that we are not put into the compromising position of putting our own views, wants, and habits ahead of the Bible thus “judging” God’s Word.

If you find yourself becoming confused or uncertain about a doctrine or issue, perhaps there is some conflicting, alternate “authority” plaguing your mind. Have you been viewing the Word of God through the eyes of men or are you viewing the ideas of men through the eyes of God and His Word? Let no man deceive you: compromise leads to sin.

Consider the example of Adam and Eve. The very first thing Satan did was to question what God said: “Yea, hath God said...?” (Genesis 3:1). He next raised up a second alternative with

promises and logical-sounding arguments. Eve, listening to the tempter, weighed the arguments and decided to “experiment.” She became, in effect, the third or final authority. She “judged”



Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden because of their disobedience.



God, through his mighty deeds, has shown us how he delivered Israel from Egypt — the land of sin.

God’s Word and found it wanting. Regrettably, Eve made the wrong choice.

If God has called you, He has opened your mind and shown you the false gods—the idols, and the wrong behavioral patterns in your life, just as surely as He has shown and called Israel out of the idolatry and paganism of Egypt.

God is showing us our faults, our sins, our idols today—not by horrendous plagues—but by and through His Spirit and His holy days. Consider the Days of Unleavened Bread. God chose leaven as an agent to remind us of our sins because...

1. Like sin, leaven is usually invisible (we often have trouble seeing

our own sins unless we really look for them).

2. Like sin, leaven is all around us, everywhere (often where you least expect it).

3. Like sin, leaven puffs up (makes us proud, complacent, and indifferent). We need to diligently search out the leaven of sin in our lives and cast it out as though our lives depended upon it because it does.

“If Baal be god, serve him...but if God is God, serve Him” (1 Kings 18:21)! When God calls us out, it is a miraculous intervention in our lives (John 6:44). When we are called, we,



1 John 3:4 tells us that sin is the transgression of God’s law.

like Israel, have three choices:

1. We can return to Egypt and the pleasures of sin. (We can give up, return to our old ways of life.)

2. We can “camp out” in the wilderness of sin. (We can wander through life murmuring, compromising, and deceiving ourselves that we are “in tight” with God, not realizing that we are spiritually wretched, poor, blind, and naked Revelation 3:17).

3. We can move with haste to the Promised Land. (We can change, grow, and overcome, putting away our sins and drawing close to God through meditation, Bible study, and prayer.)

Let us examine ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5), put sin out of our lives, get behind the work that Jesus Christ has called us to do (Matthew 28:19,20), and move ahead to the Promised Land!) **AG**

Line Upon Line

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little..." *Isaiah 28:10*



Understanding Repentance

Repentance signals the start of a changed and godly life. It involves a fully conscious recognition of one's sinful, lawless way of life that is antagonistic toward God and His law. It is accompanied by a firm conviction to make a total change and to begin to live in full accord with God's way of life as described in the Bible.

Doctrinal Statement

God, by His very nature and in His supreme wisdom, has determined that every debt must be reconciled. How could we possibly believe His word and trust Him to fulfill His manifold promises to us if He was of a changing character and lacked dependability, integrity, honesty, and fairness? Obviously, we couldn't.

Sin in God's eyes is too serious to just be shrugged off. God's perfection and holiness are so great, He will not tolerate sin in His presence. The debt of sin must be settled, and the books balanced. Once we understand the immensity of His righteousness and holiness, we can then understand the great necessity for our repentance from deadworks.

Jesus Christ has settled this debt of sin for us. God was willing to allow the life of His own son to be sacrificed to pay the debt that no human being could ever afford to pay. Christ died because God's character is so consistent that there could be no other way for Him to extend mercy to us.

The Bible you will be using in this course was written for all men of all times. It is the most up-to-date book you can read today. Within its pages are revealed the causes of all of mankind's ills, the social problems, the economic problems, and the constant threat of warfare among the nations.

The Bible shows where all the sins of mankind are leading us and what the final outcome will be. Strange as it may seem, it is the most purchased book in the world and at the same time the least understood book in all the world.

Why? One major reason for failure to understand is their unwillingness to allow God's word to change them. No one will understand God's word

unless they are ready and willing to allow God's word to bring them to the point of repentance.

As in all endeavors, there are certain basic rules which when followed will help you in gaining the truth from God's word. Some of those basic rules are: praying for guidance, accepting correction, and being grateful.

Pray for Guidance

Before opening your Bible, it is very beneficial to ask God in prayer to open your mind to His word in the study you are undertaking. It has been written that David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He studied the word of God that was available to him, meditating upon God's laws and His ways. Throughout the Psalms we find David asking God to guide him in his study, and to open his mind to receive the truth of God.

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness. Establish Your word to Your servant, Behold, I long for Your precepts; revive me in Your righteousness." (Psalm 119:33-40).

Accept Correction

Think of God's word as being written directly to you, because it is! We must have an attitude of accepting correction and be willing to take action by putting it to use in our lives. To gain academic knowledge is a wise thing to do, but we must know in our heart and mind that the real purpose for Bible study is to bring us closer to the stature of the fullness of the character of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished by allowing God's Word to correct us. Through the study of the Bible, God speaks to us personally and directly.

Therefore, our attitude should be similar to the prophet Jeremiah's: "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his

own steps”(Jeremiah 10:23).

Several other verses that will help us in learning a proper bible study attitude are the following: “Thus says the Lord, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist, says the Lord. But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:1,2).

Another great truth is this: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible also commands each one to “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Be Thankful

Down through the centuries, the Bible was preserved by the blood of courageous, God-led men and women. It was a slow, painful, agonizing process to put together, preserve, and place in our hands the English text of Old and New Testaments we call “the Bible.” These Scriptures are the record of the lives of men and women of faith: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Deborah, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and many others. Without these people of faith, there would be no Old Testament Scripture “written for our learning” (Romans 15:4)

Where To Begin

There are a number of places to begin this course of Bible study. At the very beginning with creation, or with prophecy, or with the ministry of Jesus Christ. We could even study about how the Bible was written and preserved, and why so few understand it.

However, because this course of Bible study has been requested by you, the student, we are going to begin with you! Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). Therefore we are going to assume that God the Father has drawn you to His Son, Jesus Christ, and that you are willing to do those things which Christ will ask you to do.

Understanding Repentance

Jesus Christ preached repentance. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 4:17). Matthew says His message was the gospel of the kingdom and His appeal to the people was to repent.

“And Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23).

Jesus started His ministry with the very word people had heard John the Baptist say: “Repent!” The message is the same today as when Jesus and John gave it.

To become a follower of Christ is to turn away from our self-centeredness—the self—and turn our lives over to Christ for correction and control.

Review

1. Jesus preached repentance and it was the gospel of the Kingdom of God.
2. Jesus went about all Galilee teaching and healing all manner of disease.
3. Jesus preached repentance as did John the Baptist.
4. To prepare for the kingdom, we must repent as those of Jesus’ time if we want to enter the Kingdom of God.
5. To be a follower of Christ we must turn control of our lives over to Him.

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite: *Matthew 4:17; Matthew 4:23*

Repent! What Does It Mean?

What did Jesus mean when He used the word repent? Just what does it mean to repent?

Webster’s New International Dictionary says *repent* means “To turn from sin out of penitence for past wrongdoings; abandon sinful or unworthy purposes and values, and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one’s life; to cause oneself to feel regret or contrition for a past action, course of conduct or decision.”

Real repentance means to turn from a lifestyle of breaking God’s commandments. It is to go the way of God, the way of the Bible. We are to live according to every word in the Bible,

instead of the desires and appetites of the flesh.

God’s first children, because of their carnal nature, partook of the fruit of the forbidden tree. They did that which was natural for them to do. They gave in to the pulls of their flesh as they were deceived by the devil. They did not believe or trust God (Genesis 2:17; 3:6). They lusted for that which was not theirs. It was desirable. It would make them wise. They experienced the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life spoken of in 1 John 2:16. We have the same nature.

Repentance means that we have come to a full realization that we have rebelled against our Creator, just as Adam and Eve did, and we are willing to turn from our rebelliousness and begin obeying and trusting our Creator in all things.

Many believe that Jesus came to do away with His Father’s commandments. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). If Jesus did away with the commandments, there would be nothing to repent of and His message of repentance would be meaningless. Jesus came to magnify the law and bring out its true meaning.

Review

1. We are to live according to the teachings of the Bible and not the way of society.
2. Our nature today is the same as our first parents Adam and Eve after the fall.
3. We are free moral agents, and we can choose to obey our Creator or rebel against Him.
4. Jesus did not come to cancel His Father’s commandments or the teachings of the prophets.
5. Jesus came to magnify the law and bring out its true meaning. You are not even to hate, your brother in your heart, let alone physically harm or murder him.

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite: *Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:16; Matthew 5:17*

Sorrow of the World

The apostle Paul revealed much about the doctrine of repentance to the Corinthian assembly. He stressed that

mere sorrow is not repentance. In fact, only godly sorrow works toward repentance. It is from God, produced by the Holy Spirit. "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

King David experienced godly sorrow after his sin with Bathsheba. You will find his prayer of repentance in Psalms 51:4. "Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight." With that attitude he found pardon from God. God forgave him, even though the consequences of the sin plagued David to the end of His life.

By contrast, the sorrow of this world regrets only sin's discovery and leads merely to dreading the consequences of sin. Since it does not work repentance, it ends in eternal death in the lake of fire. Also, the sorrow of this world can affect a person's health and well-being in this life, and lead to an untimely death. Many have suffered depression emanating from worldly sorrow which can result in suicide.

King Saul experienced worldly sorrow at his rejection by the Lord God. It was loss of respect in the eyes of the army he commanded that worried him most, not his unfaithful service to God. When the prophet Samuel refused to help him keep up appearances, Saul sought to physically restrain the man of God (1 Samuel 31:4).

Many people exhibit worldly sorrow. They are very upset about the natural consequences of their sins, and for being caught. Compare Peter's remorse and repentance with Judas's bitterness and suicide. Both denied Christ. One repented and was restored to faith and service; the other took his own life.

Review

1. We learned that godly sorrow works repentance to salvation.
2. The sorrow of the world works death.
3. Sorrow of this world regrets only sin's discovery and leads to dreading the consequences of sin.
4. Since it does not last, "worldly sorrow" ends in the lake of fire.
5. Sorrow of the world can lead to poor health and depression, even leading to suicide.
6. Saul expressed worldly sorrow and committed suicide.
7. King David experienced godly sorrow and wrote Psalm 51.

8. On your own, search the Scriptures and find Peter's repentance and compare it with Judas's.

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite: *1 Corinthians 7:10; Psalm 51; 1 Samuel 15:2230; 1 Samuel 31:4*

Repent of What?

Can people actually worship the Lord, acknowledging that He is Lord, and yet not enter His kingdom? "Not everyone that says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

How else, in addition to not doing the will of the Father, can people worship God and yet never be transformed at Christ's coming? "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8,9).

Difficult as it may be to believe, many people feel they have received salvation, but in reality have failed to take even the first step.

How is this possible? It is because they have the opinion that all they have to do is "believe" in Jesus Christ (acknowledge His existence), but they do not have to do what He tells them to do. "These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition" (Mark 7:79).

Jesus is plainly telling us to turn from man's way of worship and turn to God's way, and keep His commandments. Just as Jesus told His disciples, "You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14). If we are not a friend of Jesus, then we must be a stranger, and worshiping Him in vain.

Mankind has a carnal mind. What is wrong with the carnal mind? "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). The carnal mind is literally the mind of the flesh—the pattern of thought and its motives, interests, and aims. The carnal mind is the mind dominated by the flesh. "To be spiritually minded" is to have "the mind of Christ" "For 'who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians. 2:16). Our minds must be

dominated by Jesus Christ.

What should one repent of or feel sorrow for? It is sin we are commanded to repent of (Luke 24:47). And what is sin? "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). Sin is breaking God's law—not human customs!

Anytime we break or disobey any one of the holy, righteous commands of God, we have sinned. We must repent. No one is excluded.

No man or woman has ever lived without having disobeyed and broken God's law (Romans 3:10,23). Everyone must repent with their whole heart. For "He who says, 'I know Him' [who says, 'I am a Christian'] and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

Review

1. Jesus is more concerned with our "walk" than our "talk."
2. Jesus would rather have us obey the will of His Father in heaven than say, "Lord, Lord."
3. Satan is satisfied with a piece of our heart. Jesus will be satisfied with nothing less than our whole heart.
4. It is not enough to act religious; our actions and attitudes must be wholehearted.
5. We become hypocrites when we (a) pay more attention to reputation than to character, (b) carefully follow certain religious practices while allowing our hearts to remain distant from God, and (c) emphasize our virtues but point to others' sins.
6. We are God's friends if we obey Him.
7. To be spiritually minded is to have the mind of Christ.
8. We should have a godly sorrow for sinning against God, not just a sorrow for getting caught in our sin or sorry we messed up our life.
9. We are commanded to repent of sin in our lives.
10. Sin is breaking God's law, not human customs.
11. If we say we know the Lord and continue to break His commandments, we are lying, and the truth is not in us.

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite:

Matthew 7:21; Matthew 15:8,9; Mark

7:79; John 15:14; Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Luke 24:47; 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:10, 23; 1 John 2:4

Who is Your Authority?

People from the time of Adam and Eve have been self-righteous. God placed a desire in them to worship something, but with their carnal minds being at enmity (enemy) to God, they substitute commandments of their own for God's commandments. God is not their choice of authority, so they do that which seems right in their own eyes, and attempt to worship God in their own way. By doing so they end up worshiping God in vain, establishing their own "righteousness."

Read what the prophet Isaiah recorded: "But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousness are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And all our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6).

What did Jesus say about those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9-14)? Please read these verses carefully!

Observation: Notice that it was the man that smote his breast and called upon God to be merciful to him, a sinner, who received the commendation of God (verses 13,14). When we attempt to put our own ways ahead of the ways of God as recorded in the Bible, we are attempting to establish our own righteousness. There should be only one great Authority in our life, and that is Jesus Christ and His Word. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

Review

1. No matter what the issue, Jesus Christ and God's law is the standard by which all things should be measured.
2. We must choose God as our authority.
3. God's word is the only true authority.
4. When we are our own Authority, we establish our own righteousness.
5. Our own righteousness is like filthy rags.
6. There is only one great authority, and that is Jesus Christ and His word.

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite:

Isaiah 64:6; Luke 18:9-14; Proverbs 14:12

A New Creation

A true Christian is a new creation created to perform good works. This is a spiritual matter which involves God's Holy Spirit. This great change takes place in the mind—we might call it the heart. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The very first step is repentance, and repentance means "a change of mind." The second step, acceptance and faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, also takes place in the heart and mind. The third step is something God does by placing within us the gift of His Holy Spirit. When we receive the gift of the Spirit, a renewing of the mind takes place. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). The Spirit of God creates a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). Conversion miraculously puts within us the mind of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5). Conversion is putting on the "new man who is renewed in knowledge" (Colossians 3:10). Knowledge is knowing and living God's Word—the Bible.

Jesus said, "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations" (Revelation 2:26). Overcoming is directed by this renewed mind! We must continue for the rest of our lives to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

True Christians follow Jesus and put loving obedience to God far above all worldly ways. As the apostle Paul told the Ephesians, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

We cannot perform good works and break God's commandments with impunity. God ordained that we should walk in the footsteps of Christ, for we are His workmanship. We must repent, receive God's Spirit, and do the good works God commands us in His Bible to do. There is "doing" to be done. If we believe God's word, we will be living within His law. This is a demonstration of our faith in Christ Jesus. If we fail to obey our Savior, we will be outlaws, saying by

our lack of action that we are faithless.

When Jesus returns, He is going to return as a warrior King (Revelation 17:13,14; 19:11-16). Christ would rather return in this manner than let the people of this God-rejecting world continue in non-repentant, destructive, sinful ways until "no flesh would be saved" alive (Matthew 24:22).

Remember, there were those that came to Jesus saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? cast out demons in your name? and done many wonders in your name" (Matthew 7:22). Surprisingly, Jesus told them to get away from Him, because they had been working iniquity.

Repenting, is an ongoing, lifelong effort. It is time for all men to repent. Are you repenting?

Review

1. We are God's workmanship.
2. We are created in Jesus Christ unto good works.
3. We should also walk in good works.
4. A true Christian is a new creation.
5. This change takes place in the mind, or the heart, by the power of God's Holy Spirit.
6. If we are in Christ, we are a new creature.
7. When we receive the Spirit, a renewing of the mind takes place.
8. We are not to conform to the world.
9. The Spirit of God creates a sound mind.
10. Conversion is putting on the new man.
11. Jesus will give power over the nations to the overcomers.
12. If we are not obedient, we show we are faithless.
13. Jesus will return as a warrior King, otherwise, no flesh would be saved alive.
14. Doing wonderful works is not a guarantee of salvation, but loving obedience is.

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite: Ephesians 2:4-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 12:1,2; 2 Timothy 1:7; Philippians 2:5; Colossians 3:10; Revelation 2:26; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 17:13,14; 19:11-16; Matthew 24:22; Matthew 7:22; 2 Peter 3:9 **AG**

Who Are We?

continued from page 2

The CGI: Are We Only a TV Ministry?

The most conspicuous members of the CGI are the ministers like Vance Stinson, Bronson James, Charles Groce and Bill Watson, who are hosting the "Armor of God" television program. This leaves an impression that they are all there is to the Church. Far from it. All over the United States and in many other parts of the world, (such as the Philippines, Australia, Canada...) there are local church groups meeting on a weekly basis. It is these local church groups, which provide a considerable portion of the resources, which enable our TV Hosts to speak out via the various media and proclaim Christ's good news.

As is nearly stated throughout the Bible, and reinforced by the example of Christ and the apostles, the day of which Jesus is Lord, the day on which we are to rest from our labors and draw closer to God is the Sabbath (Saturday). So, each Sabbath, numerous CGI church groups meet to fellowship together and hear God's ministers expound the Bible to them. Others, smaller groups watch videotapes or hear audiotapes of sermons sent from the CGI Home Office in Tyler, Texas.

Local groups may have other activities and programs as the Spirit leads them. However, all celebrate God's own annual commanded holy days: Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, the Day of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23). In particular, during the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, as many as are able to, the entire membership of the CGI meet at various locations to worship God, hear his Word proclaimed, and reinforce our commitment to the Work of the Church everywhere.

Some Questions We Are Frequently Asked

Can I visit with a local church near me?

Certainly. Everyone is always welcome at our weekly Sabbath (Saturday) services. *(Here in the Philippines, write to The Church of God International, Makati Central P.O. Box 2450, Makati City, Philippines 1264 or call Tel. No. 8243277. See accompanying map).* There is never any pressure to join, or to contribute money. Offerings are not taken up during church services except on

the annual holy days, the time periods when they are commanded of God (Deuteronomy 16:16).

How Can I become a Member?

The bible is very clear on this, and its instructions are straightforward: "Repent and be baptized" Acts 2:38). To repent means to profoundly regret the way of life you have been living in disobedience to God's laws, and resolve deep down to live from now on according to both the physical and spiritual intent of those laws. To be baptized means to be immersed completely in water, as picture of the death of your old way of life, your old self, then to be raised, in newness of life, accepting Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour who made this "resurrection from a watery grave" possible by His sacrifice for your sins.

The minister will then lay his hands on your head, and pray, and God will give you the gift [which is] the Holy Spirit, thus making you His child spiritually, and a member of His church.

What relationship do you have to other denominations?

We are in accord, or try to be, with everyone who is seriously, sincerely, and open-mindedly trying to follow the teachings of Jesus and the words of the entire Bible. We welcome such into our midst and recognize them as our brothers.

We are, however, no part of any "ecumenical movement" in which different denominations and sects are hoping to unite together by everyone compromising a little on what each person believes.

There are several church organizations which have similar doctrines to us in many respects. We have been closely associated with some of them.

Since the time of its "founding" in 1978, dedicated men and women, have continued to perform the work they are called to do. The CGI holds no animosity towards its brothers and sisters in the Worldwide Church of God, and in other "churches of God" and maintains an open door policy.

What are your main doctrines?

That's a tall order! How can we summarize what the Bible says, and all that the Holy Spirit has further revealed through historical research, scholarship, and the lives of people who are living according to God's Word? Nevertheless,

here are some key themes you may want to look into further.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, was the God of the Old Testament. He was conceived, born, lived, and died as human being. His suffering and death paid the penalty for our sins and obtained for us forgiveness. His resurrection to spiritual life and ascension to the Father has opened us salvation and eternal life. Jesus and the Father are one in attitude and intension, and form a family of which a human family is a representation.

The Holy Spirit, a power sent from God, enters each true Christian, after repentance, baptism, and the laying-on of hands. It begets that person as a child of God, and is an earnest of the resurrection to eternal life, which will occur at the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

Repentance and the Christian way of life are defined in terms of God's law, which is holy, just and good, and is summarized in the Ten Commandments and their spiritual intent, as explained in the Sermon on the Mount.

Man is to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, which in our day means the entirety of the Bible. Living according to the Bible means renouncing many pagan ideas and practices, such as Christmas, Halloween, Easter, and Sunday worship. It also means obeying God's instructions such as observing the Sabbath and the annual holy days, following God's dietary laws, tithing, and living according to the spirit of the loving God with all of one's heart and mind, and loving one's neighbor as oneself.

The return of Jesus Christ to the earth will occur just at that instant in time when human life is about to obliterate itself from this planet. It will be preceded by many events prophesied in the Bible, in particular the "Great Tribulation," and it will be part of the "Day of the Lord." The Great Tribulation will be God's punishment for the sins of the modern-day descendants of the ancient house of Israel (long separated from the ancient house of Judah, the Jews). These modern descendants are the United States of America, Great Britain and many former British colonies, and many countries of Northwestern Europe. They are prophesied to be taken into captivity by a combined ten-nation superpower to arise in Europe, the final "resurrection" of the Holy Roman Empire.

With Christ's return, the righteous will be resurrected from their graves to eternal

life; the devil will be thrown into a symbolic pit; and the Kingdom of God will be established on earth for 1,000 years. After this, Satan will be released for a little season, lead another rebellion, and eventually end with him being cast into a "lake of fire." Then all who did not have a chance for salvation in this life will be resurrected to a mortal life. They will at last be given their chance to repent and have an opportunity to become God's spiritual children.

Finally, all the incorrigibly wicked will be killed, obliterated forever, when the earth is burned up with heat and all things are made new.

How can I find out more?

There is so much more that we could write, much of which we have already made available in other literature or on tape. Please request for it.

Also, the "Armor of God" TV and Radio programs may be seen or heard in many parts of the United States each week in addition to limited radio and TV coverage in foreign countries. The messages are always eye-opening, and often shocking.

A final word. We cannot make you a member of God's church. God must call you, and you must accept His calling. However, we will do all we can to help you along the path to the glory of eternal life as a member of the family of God, with Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother and the Captain of our salvation, and God, our Father and giver of all blessings. **AG**

If you'd like to know more:

write

The Church of God International
P.O. Box 2450 MCPO Makati City
Metro Manila 1264 Philippines

tel/fax

(632) 824-3277

pager

EasyCall 141-284265

e-mail

cgiphils@mydestiny.net

web sites

US <http://www.cgi.org>
Phils <http://members.xoom.com/cgiphils>



The Church of God Meeting Schedule

The Church of God, International welcomes everyone who wishes to attend its weekly meetings. We encourage you to bring along your family and friends. Admittance is absolutely FREE. You can also avail of our literature which are FREE for the asking.

Our weekly meeting schedule are as follows:

1st Saturday of the month

2:00 to 4:00 pm

Lubang Function Room

Edsa Plaza Hotel

2nd to 4th Saturday of the month

10:00 am to 12:00 nn

6th Floor, Peaksun Building

1505 Princeton St., cor. Shaw Blvd.

Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila



Reflections



The True Church of God Member

It is essential that we understand that the Church of God, the 'real' church which is the body of Jesus Christ, is not the physical organization that we are affiliated with such as the Church of God, International or any other church organization. Neither is it a building, a chapel, a meeting place, or any other physical structure. The true Church of God is composed of people, individuals, those who have the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit regardless of their church organization. Can their be 'true' church members in just about 'every' church organization? Absolutely not. There are basic 'identification marks' whereby we could single out a son or a daughter of God. Belief in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice and teachings, adherence and obedience to the Ten Commandments, the Food Laws, acceptance of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures are among the most basic of those identification marks as far as the Church of God, International is concerned regardless of the ideas of other "church of God" groups or of other so-called "God-believing" individuals or organizations. A 'true' son or daughter of God, or one who claims to be, must exhibit the same character traits as his/her Father, or at least should be struggling hard to be "like" his/her Father. After all, we do believe we are created 'in the image and in the likeness of God.' For a more detailed explanation on this subject, please request for the brochures "Where is the True Church?", "Must You Be a Member of a Church to Be Saved?" and "Why You Were Born."

The Shepherd and the Sheep

In John 11, Jesus described Himself as a Shepherd and his followers as the sheep. Some church members have ideas that when they turn away, go back into the world, stop attending church services and reject Jesus Christ, that somehow they are "lost sheep." This isn't quite the case if we carefully study what is written in Scriptures. First, a "sheep that is lost" does not stay where it is but wanders

along trying "to find where the others are"! Unlike those who stop attending, this is not the case with a "lost sheep." Jesus said that when he makes a call, his sheep will hear his voice. Whose voice do you hear and listen to? Jesus Christ's or your church leader or some other person who discredits Jesus Christ? Think about it very carefully, if you are a lost sheep and Jesus has found you, and talks to you through the Bible, will you listen to His voice? But if you don't even recognize let alone obey your True Shepherd, how can you claim to be a sheep of His? To say you are a sheep of Jesus Christ means that you recognize Him as your Shepherd, therefore you should be obedient to His voice and His commandments, the question is: do you really believe and obey Jesus?

The Sabbaths of God

The Church of God International firmly believes that the Sabbath, the Fourth Commandment, is as binding today as it was in the days of the Israelites. This is not negotiable and we believe it is part of the covenant that identifies who is a true son or a daughter of God. Regardless of the many excuses that we always come up with not to keep it or the many reasons why we find it difficult to observe, Sabbath-breaking is in the same category as murder, adultery, covetousness, theft or any of the other commandments, the penalty of which is eternal death. Any person who disregards or rejects the Sabbath and teaches men (or women) to do so are disrespectful of the Father God and will not be a part of the Kingdom of God. The same is true of the annual holy days that God instituted and commanded to be observed. To find out more about the Sabbath, request for your free copy of "Saturday-Sunday, Which?", "Keeping the Sabbath Holy" "God's Holy Days" and "Why Would Anyone Keep Saturday for Sunday?"

The Church is NOT Trouble-Free

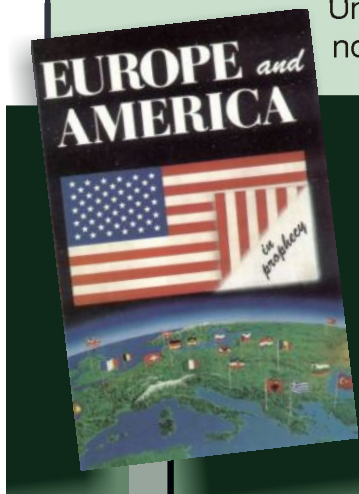
The history of the church of God is not exactly "smooth-sailing" since the day it

was founded in the first century until now. From the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Acts, the Epistles of Paul, Peter, John, James, Jude and Revelation, we can clearly read that the churches are beset with all kinds of problems. There are numerous cases of people going back to their old ways of life, succumbing to personal weaknesses, even accepting totally different doctrines from the ones they were originally taught and myriad of other problems, both personal and organizational. Our idea that a church is a place of safety, of refuge, of peace, is not entirely accurate. Ideally, a church assembly, should be a good place to be, to fellowship with people of like minds, to be encouraged and be strengthened. But we know that people in the church are people who are struggling with personal weaknesses, and occasionally, with personal ambitions, and sometimes, there are those who are just "spying out" on the liberty of the church. John speaks of church brethren turned anti-Christ's (I John 2:18-19), Jude warns of godless men among the congregation (Jude 3-4), Paul was abandoned by fellow laborers and warns that there are those who are preaching a different doctrine (Galatians 1:6-7, 2 Timothy 2:17-18, 2 Timothy 4:10). We read of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 with its own set of particular weaknesses and strengths and warned by no less than Jesus Christ himself of being removed if they do not change their ways. If you are looking for some "religious" good time, the church is not really the place to be, especially the Church of God. But should you decide to stick with one of God's churches, you will have to share its "ups and downs," the good times and the bad times, the thick and thin, and clearly understand that it is "he who endures to the end" who will have authority over the nations (Revelation 2:10, 26). **AG**

Europe and America:

Are they ignored in Bible prophecy?

Is the world's greatest nation ignored in Bible prophecy? If it is, how could prophecy be considered valid? How could prophecy be inspired, if the United States of America is nowhere mentioned?



Surely, if Bible prophecy is relevant to our times, NOW, then it MUST mention the United States! Many small, less significant nations are mentioned: Ethiopia, Libya, Syria, and Egypt. Students of prophecy know that many Middle Eastern nations are identified, some of them by their modern names. What about Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and the Commonwealth? For that matter, what of the nations in Europe? Write or call us for your free copy today!

