

Understanding what lies ahead

Tomorrow's News

April 2007
FREE!

The New Morality

The Road Not Taken

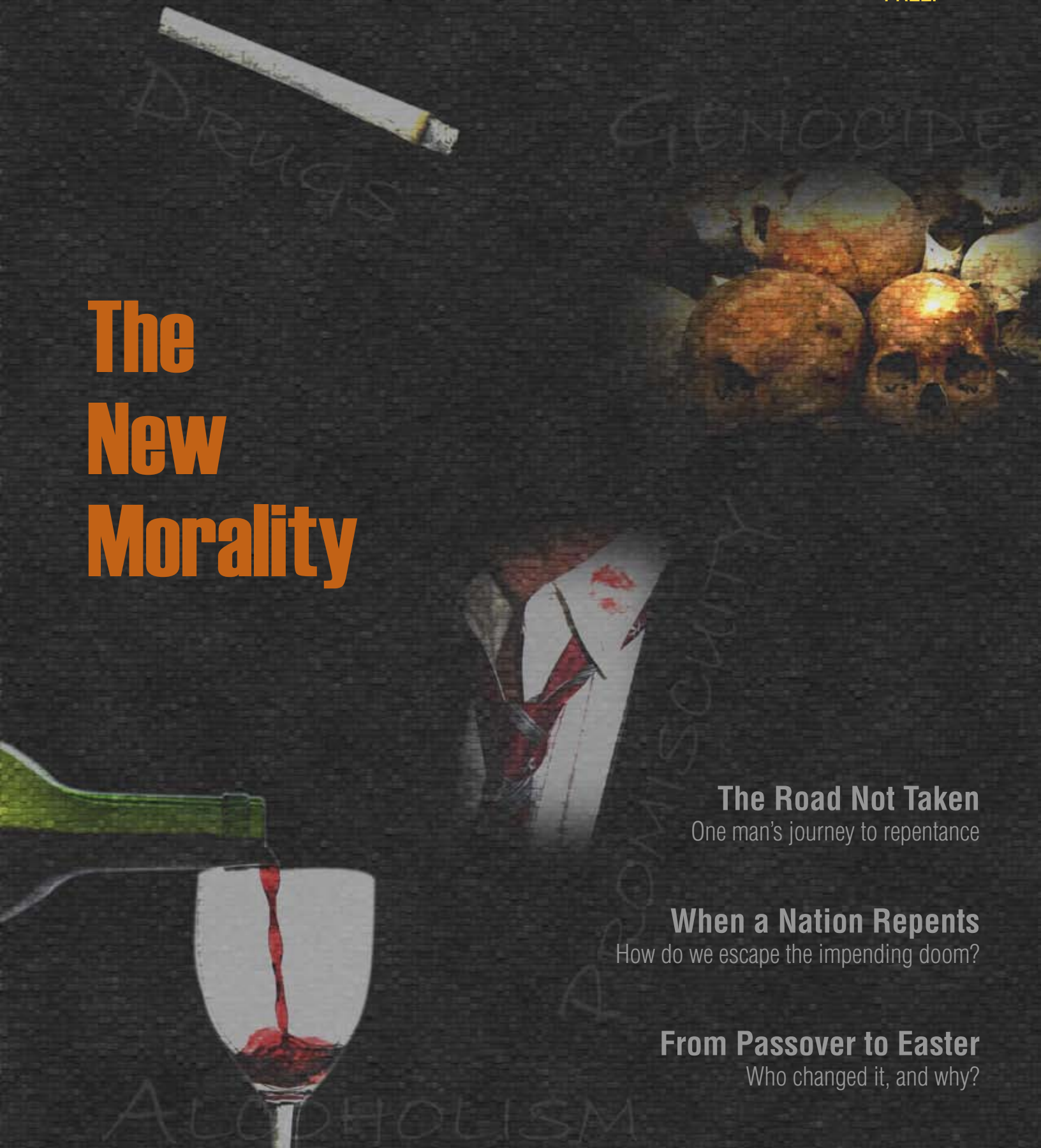
One man's journey to repentance

When a Nation Repents

How do we escape the impending doom?

From Passover to Easter

Who changed it, and why?



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Tomorrow's News



- 03** Repent or Perish
- 04** When a Nation Repents
- 06** The Consequences of Sin
- 07** The Road Not Taken
- 09** Addicted to Death
- 10** REVIEW: Repentance: The Starting Point
- 11** From Passover to Easter
- 13** The New Morality
- 15** Letter from Polycrates
- 16** The Days of Unleavened Bread
- 17** Working for God Inc.
- 20** Grow Anywhere
- 21** How Archaeology Proves the Bible
- 24** Q&A with Lloyd Cary
- 25** News You Can Use
- 26** POEM: A New Conception in Christ



How Will It End?

WATCH

Armor of God

Repent or Perish

by Horane Smith

Life is merely a ritual, albeit a challenging one. We're born, live out our appointed time, and die; and after a while, "...the memory of them is forgotten" (Eccl. 9:5).

Life is like "vapour," says the book of James, "that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away" (4:14).

If life is so short, temporary, and uncertain, why do so many continue to transgress the laws of God? The Bible tells us that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," which means that it's in our nature to go contrary to the Word of God (Rom. 3:23).

Yet, we're warned, "the wages of sin is death," and "the soul that sinneth it shall die" (Rom. 6:23; Eze. 18:20). But that doesn't stop us from breaking God's laws. It's as if sinning has become a 'ritual' for some of us. We struggle not to sin; but no matter how hard we try, sometimes we still end up repeating the same old mistakes.

We live in a society where it's becoming fashionable to substitute wrong for right. We want to set our own standards, our own absolutes to determine "what is right in our own eyes," despite the warning in Ecclesiastes 7:20 that says, "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not."

There's a popular saying that "life is what you make it." The Eternal has set before us a choice between life and death. Our merciful God has given us an admonition to "choose life," so we may live forever (Deut.

30:19). This life to come is not going to be governed like the 'ritualistic' way we're living today. We'll be in an everlasting Kingdom with Jesus Christ, ruling from Jerusalem in a new age, where there will be no sin, no sorrow, and no death.

How is this going to be achieved? First, we have to understand that no sin can enter into the Kingdom of God (Rev. 21:1-7). We are all sinners and need to repent before God for the remission of our sins, which is made possible by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. That's what He died for—all our sins, no matter how terrible they may be. It's God's desire that all human beings come to repent and submit their lives to Him (1 John 2:1-4). In so doing, we will have turned our lives around, pledging to follow God's ways until we meet our appointment with death.

As society continues its immoral downslide, many will be deceived believing that to *follow* is the right way to go. The messages that the mainstream media put out don't glorify God; they even question His existence. Is it any wonder that many people don't make time for God, or why evil flourishes?

The sad reality is: true to the Word of God, sin has become a reproach for many nations and people. Nations need to repent collectively; and likewise, so do individual people.

Read the story of Jonah about how God spared a nation from destruction after they repented. Look around you; consider the social decay that has manifested itself in murder, robbery, child abuse, family violence,

drug abuse, and pornography. Take some time to read your newspaper or watch the nightly news and wake up to the realities facing this planet, as humanity's transgressions against God sink us deeper into a 'bottomless pit,' of mounting troubles.

Presently, while in this season of Passover, learn more about the true Passover Lamb.

(See our article *From Passover to Easter* on page 11), and how He stands ready, waiting, and listening for that knock on the door of repentance. He's ready to receive you when you answer His call. What could be more rewarding than to submit your life to Jesus Christ and live eternally!

The Creator of the Universe and of everything that is good is calling you to become a part of His soon coming Kingdom. He wants you to repent of your sins and follow His prescription on how to make this 'ritual' of life more meaningful, with a hope unmatched by any earthly promise. Yes, Jesus will return to give you eternal life. You've got to believe this if you're a true Christian. Remember Jesus' warning "...except ye *REPENT*, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13.3).

Horane Smith

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WHEN A NATION REPENTS

by Dwight Chin

“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them” Jonah 3:4-5.

The immediate future does not look hopeful for all nations, especially for Canada, America, and Britain. It is quite apparent that these nations in particular, are at an all-time high in moral decline. An increase in violent crimes, divorce, adultery, pornography, homosexuality, abortions, inequality, the occult, and idolatry are just some of the results caused by our lack of godly virtues as a nation.

Disobedience to the true God seems to have dramatically eroded our moral sense of right and wrong. Individuals have become desensitized by the levels of sex and violence we see and hear on television, the internet, video games, explicit music, sports, and of course, glamorized Hollywood movies. These thousands of events and situations have contributed to this downward spiral of moral and spiritual decay (see the article, *The New Morality* on page 13).

While many Canadians and Americans profess to believe in a God or higher power, the majority are disobedient to His will. In a December 9, 2006 article, Cathy Lynn Grossman of USA Today writes,

“The United States calls itself one nation under God, but Americans don’t all have the same image of the Almighty in mind.

A new survey of religion in the USA finds four very different images of God—from a wrathful deity, thundering at sinful humanity, to a distant power uninvolved in mankind’s affairs.”

The truth of the matter is that mankind does not want a God who interferes with their way of life.

The Washington Times in May 17, 2005 reported, “77 percent of Americans think the country’s moral values are on the decline—a figure that has risen 10 points in three years.”

In a Canadian Gallup poll, taken September 2004, 54% of respondents said they personally thought abortion was “morally acceptable.”

The nations of ancient Israel and Judah were not unlike our nations today. In fact, many would agree that despite our vast ethnic and cultural diversity in Canada and the U.S., we are actually the descendant cultures of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and recipients of the blessings awarded to Ephraim and Manasseh mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 48:8-22, 49:22-26). Much of what is prophesied in our Bibles for and against Israel in the “latter days” are in many ways directed at our nations (Gen.

48:19-20, 49:1; Jer. 30, 31).

Notice, the prophet Ezekiel writes, “Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?” (Eze. 16:20-21).

Also, in Isaiah 1:5-6, God describes symbolically the sins of the nation as a diseased body:

“Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”

The scripture states “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Whose law? God’s law! It has been in existence long before it was presented to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, in written form.

Sin is unacceptable to God! It is like the most rotten, smelly pile of garbage you can

ever imagine in the sight of the Almighty, and as our nation's and individual sins continue to accumulate, God is displeased!

However, God has the power to purge out of His sight sinful individuals as He did to the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their grievous transgressions. The sins of those people reached such enormity, that while God is a patient God, finally, He could no longer endure their sins.

"Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire [fire purifies] from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." (Gen. 19:24-25)

While many believe God is afar off—somewhere out of the way, uninvolved in human affairs; our nations are in for a rude awakening. Jesus states,

"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt. 24:20-22)

World War I, known as 'The Great War' and 'The War to End All Wars,' resulted in the death of an estimated eight million people. In World War II, over 60 million people died—by far the deadliest conflict in human history with 2.5% of mankind killed.

However, the coming prophesied calamity upon our nations will be far worse than World War I and World War II put together. Millions more will die, and if God does not intervene, we will all perish. We know this is very possible when we see so many rogue nations, such as Iran and North Korea, seeking to attain nuclear arsenals.

What if God's true church lifts up its voice like a trumpet, warning the nations and

individuals of their sins and the calamity to come? What if our nation were to repent? Would God divert the destruction that is to come upon our nations because of our sins?

History has shown that when a nation or individual repents, God will turn away His wrath and prevent calamity from happening. This occurred (temporarily at least) in the ancient city of Nineveh, as outlined in the book of Jonah. Nineveh was originally founded by Nimrod a descendant of



"Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven..."

Ham, one of Noah's sons (Gen. 10:9-12). It was located in the northeastern region of Mesopotamia in modern day Iraq. It became one of the greatest capitals of the ancient Assyrian people.

The Assyrians were a ruthless people. Their sins were enormous before God. Halley's Bible Handbook states,

"[The] Assyrians seem to have been about the worst of them all. They built their state on the loot of other peoples. They practiced cruelty. They skinned their prisoners alive, or cut off their hands, feet, noses, ears, or put out their eyes, or pulled out their tongues, and made mounds of human skulls, all to inspire terror" (Halley's, 24th Ed., p. 209).

It was also the Assyrian policy "to deport conquered peoples to other lands, to destroy their sense of nationalism and make them more easily subject" (Ibid.). Needless to say, God intended on destroying the Assyrians for their sins. However, God is a God of

mercy and love. He will always give people an opportunity to change their evil ways and turn to Him for forgiveness.

"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil [calamity] in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:6-7)

God has revealed and commissioned His servants, His true church, of what's just ahead in the future, so that they will warn sinners of what is coming, giving them a chance to repent.

In Nineveh, before the invasion of Israel, God sent the prophet Jonah to warn the sinning Assyrians of their impending destruction. Would they repent? Notice Jonah 3:4-5,

"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, [outward sign of repentance] from the greatest of them even to the least of them."

"And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented [changed His mind] of the evil [calamity], that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." (Jonah 3:10)

If our nations were to call for a national day of genuine repentance, prayer, and fasting, and if individuals were to call on God, appealing through Jesus Christ with sincerity for the forgiveness of their sins, the true God of Heaven, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would forgive our sins and not allow our enemies nor the soon coming Great Tribulation to overtake us. So, let's pray that our nation will repent and be turned back to our spiritual fathers, and through Jesus Christ, God our Father will forgive our collective and individual sins (Mal. 4:5-6).

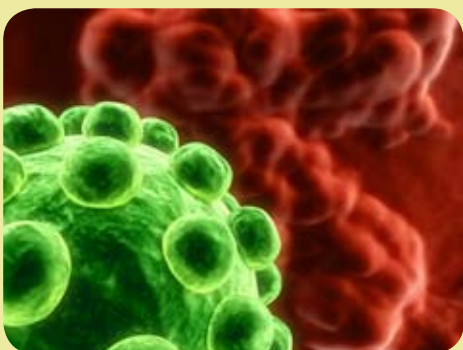
Repent I say! Repent!

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Many people suffer because of the actions of others. Be it genocide, mass starvation, disease, greed, or pollution, there are *real* consequences to sinful actions. The various evils affecting our planet today such as, murder, robbery, theft, kidnapping, rape, deceit, or any other sin, all have devastating effects not only on

by Noel
Scoburgh

The Consequences of Sin



the 'sinner' but on society at large.

Greed and Dishonesty

Greed, as with other sins, is at the root of many of today's ills. As an example, many people have become addicted to gambling and often lie to hide their habit from loved ones. Even farmers and those involved in

agriculture who supply the foods we eat everyday, have been known to abandon safe agricultural practices for quick money. Many commercial farms feed their animals a high calorie grain instead of natural feed so animals can gain weight in the shortest time possible. On top of that, sometimes parts of dead animals are added to animal feed to increase their growth while other commercial farms use growth hormones to fatten the animals quickly. No wonder maladies like Mad Cow Disease (BSE) have been linked to such practices.

There is another example of greed and dishonesty that hits a little closer to home. Each year, thousands of people cheat on their income tax returns as dishonesty becomes the acceptable norm in society. Also, many western companies, in pursuit of cheap labour, exploit foreign employees abroad to increase their profit margins. Greed reigns in the marketplace. For instance, nations in need are denied food and medicine, which are readily available elsewhere in the world because profit driven companies only want to provide for those who can pay for them. Charity is often ignored for the sake of profit! Simply stated, by being so covetous, much of this world's business violates God's Commandments about stealing, and loving our neighbour as ourselves.

Sexual Immorality

Consider the consequences of sexual immorality. Persons engaging in such activities put themselves at risk of contracting an STD. AIDS, for example, is taking a staggering toll on human life and is among the deadliest epidemics in modern history. Sexual activity outside of marriage may also result in unwanted pregnancies. This in turn often leads to abortions. Many marriages are being destroyed because of adultery, which is unequivocally condemned by the Word

of God. Sexual immorality has led to many single parent homes, causing many negative effects on children.

There are other costs, too. Many suffer emotional pain and live with tremendous regret because of illicit sex. Ultimately, these behaviours place an extra financial burden on health care systems. Meanwhile, millions of dollars are spent on research, hoping to find a cure for STDs such as HIV/AIDS. Although HIV can be transmitted through non-sexual means, if there were no sexual sins, there would be no HIV/AIDS pandemic; transmission rates would be extremely low.

Thou Shalt Not Murder

No one can dispute the emotional pain that results from losing a loved one. In spite of this, our society is plagued with murder and violence. Wars throughout the world, for example, are taking lives at a staggering rate. World War II alone claimed an estimated 62 million lives globally. The destruction of economies, disruption of food and medical supplies, and untold human suffering are all terrible consequences of war. War generates countless hardships: women are beaten and raped, property is destroyed or lost, environmental damage occurs, and millions of refugees fleeing their homeland are all testaments to the tragedy of war and its toll throughout history.

Monetary Costs

Sin has a very high monetary cost. This is evident when considering the cost of crime within a city or nation. While it is impossible to calculate an exact financial figure for the pain and suffering resulting from sin, there are studies that attempt to estimate the monetary cost of crime. A study released in 2004 by the Canadian Department of Justice entitled, *The Cost of Pain and Suffering from Crime in Canada* estimated that the cost of all crime occurring in 1999 in Canada was \$35.8 billion CAD. This number includes the offences of homicide, assault, sexual assault, robbery, property, and vandalism. In the United States, a National Institute of Justice report, *Victim Costs and Consequences: A New Look* released in 1996 reported that the cost of personal crime for Americans including pain and suffering totaled \$450 billion USD per year. Undeniably, sin levies a high price on society that we all must bear.

continued on page 23



The Road Not Taken

by Dan Alexander

Scared...big...beautiful...best describe my memory of church when I was about 5 years old. I have some good memories of the years we attended, although they come in bits and pieces.

One day, I can recall being scared standing in front of this huge structure. As we were about to enter through the large, blonde, wooden doors, everyone's mood changed from happy to straight faced. It was if they had to make this change to enter the House of God. For me, there was this fear when we walked into the church, so much so that I had to hold onto someone's hand.

We were bussed to Sunday school from the projects, a geared-to-income housing development, where we lived for 21 years. Mr. Steward, the bus driver, was very kind to us. Sometimes, he would take us to Steve's Restaurant for a meal, or send a strawberry custard pie for our parents, which we would enjoy after dinner. My parents never attended church; but ensured that we went every week primarily to participate in Sunday school and the other activities the church had for the kids from the neighbourhood.

My last vivid memory was my final day at church. There was a man who supervised the children at the park across the street. I cannot remember the exact circumstances, but he was angry and tried to grab and whip me with a branch—I was hit once or twice. Some people from the church were rough on the children from the projects. You couldn't run from punishment at home, but there was no way I would allow this man to spank me. So, I decided to run away from the whipping and the church. How I made that ten-mile hike home that morning still baffles me. Nobody came after me; yet, I couldn't help looking back for those first few miles.

When I reached home, my mother was shocked to see me arrive earlier than expected. I told her what had transpired; she was both angry and concerned. I never returned to that church and to the best of my knowledge, no one from the church ever showed up or called our house again.

Don't get me wrong; I believe there were some people who really cared for us at the church. And though faded as they are, I still have some fond memories that I occa-

sionally think about.

Nevertheless, life went on without church—except when we had rare visits from Dad's father and stepmother. They were Sunday keeping Christians. When they showed up, it was like being at church. Everybody was on their best behaviour. My Dad would tell one of us to ensure that any beer on the staircase be taken down to the basement and out of sight. His God-fearing father still had a great deal of influence on a grown man with a wife and five children.

My father didn't live a Christian life like his father did, even though he grew up in the church. He once told us he had taught Sunday school—something we would have never known because there was simply no evidence of this side of him. Yet, my father had deep respect for grandfather and his way of life.

I see the Word of God differently than the way my grandfather and father understood it. I've come to understand subjects such as the Sabbath: worshipping on Saturday instead of Sunday; God's Kingdom on

Earth, not heaven; and the Holy Days, not the 'holly' days of Easter and Christmas.

Back then, we didn't see Grandpa very often; just as we don't see or hear much of my parents nowadays. However, I'm learning to let my light shine through my walk with God. I have always had a distant relationship, but deep respect for my grandfather. He was different from all our relatives, not because he attended church all his life (even during World War II); it was the way people acted around him: they revered him because of his commitment to God. He seemed to 'walk the walk and talk the talk.'

I had just finished my apprenticeship at C.P. Rail when Grandpa passed away. I flew to Ottawa for the funeral service. My parents, step-grandmother, older brother, and myself, shared a car as we drove to the gravesite. I have never been so overwhelmed with grief in my life. I cried like a baby in the backseat of the car that day for a man I wished I had known better. While I waited for my grandfather, my family who were with me never uttered a sound. My grandfather's beliefs may not have been the same as mine, but his light did shine and people noticed it.

Since his passing in 1986, my life of repentance has been like an hourglass—upside down, with all the sand on top, falling very slowly through a narrow passageway to the bottom.

During my late 20s and into my late 30s, I enjoyed going up to Northern Ontario in Canada, hanging out with my friends, fishing, boating, swimming, and partying. I felt good being in 'God's Country' as people refer to it, away from the concrete jungle. Up there, I found 'peace' and a sense of knowledge of something greater that wants to enter my life. That knowledge gave me a sense of God's calling, His love, and grace for sinners like me. However, I kept blocking Him out because of my partying lifestyle. The calling was there, but I didn't make the commitment at that time.

Although the birth of our first child had a profound effect on my life; it didn't change my partying lifestyle—instead, it just

changed the *way* I partied. Another child came and I slowed down for a while, but as they got older, I began to speed up my revelry. I knew the two couldn't last. Family life and the party life are like oil and water: you can shake them up, but in the end they just won't mix!

I was feeling trapped in marriage and fatherhood at that point in my life, although admittedly, being a father was the greatest joy and love I had ever known. At this point, our children were now approximately 6 and 8 years old. The world was still pulling at me to continue my festivities and do the things I no longer had any



"You need to change your lifestyle and be a better example to your family."

desire to do. Unfortunately, I couldn't stop. I felt helpless. In later years, I would reflect on what Paul wrote in Romans 7:14-15:

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

Twenty-five years of doing things my grandfather would definitely *not* approve of, had taken its toll on me. Romans 6:21 says, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." It took about 8 months to plan my escape from a life that was no longer any fun. I would attempt an escape on my own, or so I had thought. I was desperate to succeed in order to raise

our two young daughters in a manner pleasing to God. In my mind, it was as if I kept hearing whispers from heaven saying, "You need to change your lifestyle and be a better example to your family."

The months had passed by in a blur, and my family was going away for two weeks—now it was time to make my move. On the first day, I failed; the second day—I failed again. The sand was running out, guilt overtook me and I failed once more. Satan had four fingers around my neck, one more to close the deal and I would totally fail at my attempt to repent and change. In a drunken stupor on the fourth day, I lay there and questioned my whole existence. Sadly, I thought: Is this *all* there is to my life? I got up, went to the window beside the fireplace, got down on my knees, and stopped trying to do it my way. I pleaded to Jesus to come into my life and make me whole.

Satan's thumb was that close to getting a full grip on me. Thank God, Christ was there for me at that moment when the sand ran out. Jesus rescued me from what would have been a life of continued torment. I repented and asked for forgiveness, and if He would help me, I would change my ways. From that day on, I've been liberated of all the things I asked Christ to free me from. He ushered me away from a road of destruction, towards the pathway of righteousness.

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Rom. 6:22-23)

My repentance has set me free, allowing almost 7 years of sobriety and over 5 years of attending church with my daughters on the Sabbath praising God, trying to walk with Christ, like my grandfather before me. We may not have agreed on all the Biblical teachings; however, if we had been given the chance to discuss them, the love of God and Christ would have definitely been our common ground.

We'll see each other again grandpa, in a future resurrection, by the grace of God.

"I tell you the truth,
everyone who sins is a slave to sin."
John 8:34, NIV

ADDICTED TO DEATH

by Mark Agnew

Here and Now

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines addiction as: a devotion or surrender of oneself to something habitual or obsessive. The addict ignores all common sense and rational thinking and becomes a slave to their addiction. Many people today, both young and old, have a variety of addictions. For instance, drugs, alcohol, pornography, smoking, food, television, video games, etc., are all in effect, illustrations of how people become slaves to their 'appetites.'

Statistics from the Toronto-based Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) do not paint a rosy picture, in particular of substance abuse in the province of Ontario. According to a 2005 CAMH survey, 62% of all students in grades 7-12 (aged 12-17), report drinking at least once in the past year. Additionally, 1 in 4 male students and 1 in 5 female students reported they binge drank (defined as 5+ drinks at once) in the past month.

In 2001, a CAMH study found that 24 percent of students in grades 7-13 smoked. These students, range in age from 12-18; yet, under Canadian Law, it is illegal for them to purchase cigarettes until they are 19 years old.

After alcohol and tobacco, marijuana is the next most commonly abused substance. Another 2001 CAMH survey revealed that 30% of students in grades 7-13 had smoked marijuana at least once in the past year, while 3% had used it daily in the past 4 weeks. Marijuana users claim they smoke it to feel good about themselves; the drug relaxes and calms them. However, they fail to mention the health costs. A CAMH study said marijuana use frequently causes increased rates of brain, lung and liver damage, memory loss, cancer, and many

other problems.

Besides the health costs, there are other effects that compound from the use of marijuana like the misuse of finances. In essence, money used to support any addiction is money taken away from sustaining responsible financial obligations. If the addict is married, the quality of his or her family life is often the first casualty in a long war of attrition—a war the addict never wins.

More Than Just Physical

The often-ignored reality of substance abuse is the spiritual cost. The book of Ephesians says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery" (Eph. 5:18, NIV). The Bible warns us not to be deceived for drunkards won't inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Although the Bible is directly



"In reality, Eric had spent a year partying and had nothing to show for it except a mountain of bills."

silent

on drug abuse,
some theologians believe

Revelation 9:21, translated from the original Greek condemns the use of drugs, not sorceries, as the English translation commonly reads. Nevertheless, we should respect our bodies because

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ." (1 Cor. 12:12, NIV)

Instead of becoming intoxicated with wine,

the Bible says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, NIV). The second part of Ephesians 5:18 also tells us, "Instead, be filled with the Spirit." When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we are reminded that our bodies are here to worship God. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, [which] is in you, [which] you have received from God? You are not your own" (1 Cor. 6:19, NIV).

To put this article in perspective, let me share a story about someone I met while at university. I'll call him 'Eric.' Soon after school started, it became apparent that Eric was a party machine, as he constantly attended one party after another. His partying included alcohol and occasionally, marijuana use. Sometimes he walked around with alcohol even before the weekend. Eventually, Eric gained a new name: 'The Party Man.'

Finally, Eric's habits caught up with him. He couldn't focus on school and began to skip classes; ultimately Eric dropped his classes altogether. As Eric squandered his money—mainly on alcohol, and smokes, he became a client to the local pawnshop. Eric had to sell many of his possessions to support the habits he had developed in order to pay his bills.

When Eric returned to school in September, he avoided suspension and/or expulsion only because he had previously dropped his first year classes. On paper, Eric had technically postponed his date of university entry by one year. In reality, Eric had spent a year partying and had nothing to show for it except a mountain of bills.

continued on page 23

A Brief Summary of our Booklet,
Why Should You Repent?



Jesus said, "Repent ye, and believe in the gospel!" John the Baptist shouted, "Repent!" Peter, on the Day of Pentecost announced, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Later he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

To repent means to be deeply sorry for having sinned. It means coming to a sincere, honest, deeply felt remorse over having broken God's laws—all of them. It means being totally bereft of any feelings of self-pity or broken-hearted remorse over what we have done and what we have been; what we *are*!

Assuredly, along with being deeply sorry to the point of real emotion expressed toward God for our past sins, repentance means fervent resolve that, with God's help, we will quit sinning!

Real repentance takes knowledge and deep understanding mixed with sincere emotions.

It is not an embarrassing, selfish feeling

of self-pity and sorrow that one has been caught or suffers loss that so often is characterized by the 'sorrow of the world.' Instead, it is a full, genuine, completely honest understanding of how wrong, sinful, and worthless our life has been and how far we have strayed from God's perfect will for our personal lives.

The only way a person can really repent is to understand these major points:

1. Understand what sin is; that it is the breaking of God's Ten Commandments in any of the broadest possible applications as Jesus Christ defined by His life's example and by His teachings, notably the Sermon on the Mount.

2. Understand that *we have been sinners*; that we were living arrogantly, pridefully, willfully contrary to those laws and the teachings of Christ.

3. Understand that our own personal rejection of God and His Son Jesus Christ, *the way of life* They have willed for us, was what took Christ's life. We need to know He died for us personally.

4. To see ourselves for the first time as God sees us: selfish, prideful, innately rebellious toward God, and resisting the suggestion that we may have been wrong. We must come to be disgusted with the self, to say with Job, "I abhor myself," and with Paul, "O wretched man that I am" and mean it!

5. We must sincerely cry out for God's *forgiveness* that He will *remove* the burden of guilt we have been carrying.

6. We must *be baptized* (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6) as a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and as a symbol of the death and burial of the "old man," the person we *were* in the past.

7. We must receive the "laying on of hands" by the direct representatives of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38, 8:17, Acts 19:6) for the receiving of the Holy Spirit; and then know and have the faith to believe we have been forgiven

and that God will now empower us to live a life of daily overcoming. We must understand we are no longer our own person, but belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 7:23).

Millions of sincerely contrite people have come forward to the emotional cries of an evangelist who did not understand these seven vital points.

They were sincere. They may have changed their lives in some important ways. Those changes could have been for the good. But, if their sorrow was only the "sorrow of the world;" if their *understanding* failed to include the entire biblical truth about repentance; and, if they were not willing to be baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit exactly as your Bible requires, then they did not really repent!

Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

To be converted is *to be changed*. Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be *not conformed to this world*: but be ye transformed (completely changed, converted) by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2).

When one repents, is baptized, and receives the Holy Spirit of God, a *profound change* comes over their whole character and personality.

A truly repentant person is *through* arguing with God. A repentant person realizes the great price Jesus paid to purchase them with His own suffering and blood. They are so overwhelmed by God's great mercy, that they approach the Bible with trembling and awe. To such a person, it is unthinkable that one would attempt to compromise God's laws; unimaginable to rationalize away the requirement to obey God, and to humbly follow Christ's *example*, as a *believer* of His Word. May God show you your deep personal need for repentance.

Write in or call us today for your copy of, *Why Should You Repent?* **TN**

FINISH

Unquestionably, Jesus Christ was a Jewish Passover observing individual. He never kept an Easter in His life! How then, did the day He both observed and instituted for the sacrificial emblems of His body and blood change from Passover to Easter? Who did it and how was it done?

by Bill Watson

result and overlook the real tragedy of this *unauthorized* change.

How Passover Was Abandoned and Replaced

When reviewing the historical record of the "Passover/Easter" controversy, it is undeniable that the early New Testament Church *did not* observe Easter. They continued observing Passover, but with a *new significance and understanding*. Notice,

"There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers... The first Christians continued the observance of the Jewish [God's] festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed," (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition, p.828).

In addition, we are informed,

betrayed [not Easter Sunday] took bread" (1 Cor. 11:23). Keep in mind Jesus Christ was betrayed during the night of Nisan 14 (Luke 22:15-22), which was the day of Passover (Exod.12:6-13).

With this *established fact* and connection in mind, how was it changed from the 14th of Nisan (*Passover*) to the *Sunday* following the first full moon, after the vernal equinox, and assigned the name Easter? Unquestionably, this is no small change from the original observance that Jesus Christ exemplified. Furthermore, to supersede the authority of Jesus' own example is obviously presumptuous at best; and at worst, it's outright heretical! How could such a blatant act of contradiction and disregard be allowed to take place?

Assuredly, we must first understand the contention between the Western congregations lead by Rome and the Eastern Asiatic congregations. This debate intensified during the second century and is

FROM PASSOVER

How Did

Church history is a fascinating story. There are many angles and approaches one can take when exploring the nuances of the ecclesiastical record. However, the means by which Passover was abandoned and replaced with Easter is fairly straightforward and clearly documented as to who, and how, it was done. The *real* question underscoring this issue is: did they have the *right to do it* and more importantly, is that what *Jesus* wanted?

Before we answer those questions, let's review the historical facts of how and who made this change so we can put this event into its proper context. Otherwise, we might marginalize the significance of the

"Neither the apostles, therefore nor the Gospels, have anywhere imposed... Easter...The Savior and His apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast [Easter]...And that the observance originated not by legislation [of the apostles], but as a custom the facts themselves indicate" (fourth century scholar, Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, chapter 22).

The Apostle Paul confirms he maintained the customary observance of Passover, as was given to him by Christ Himself, when he said, "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was

historically known as the *Quartodeciman Controversy*. Quartodeciman is simply a Latin term indicating fourteenth. What the historicity of the second century reveals is that there was a controversy over the fourteenth. Specifically, it concerned the change of the 14th of Nisan (*Passover*) to Easter with all of its pagan connections, associations, and typologies of fertility and fecundity. This was unequivocally contested and rejected by the congregations of the Asiatic East. It came to a head when Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, faced off with Anticetus, the pre-eminent bishop of Rome in about 150 A.D.

Notice what history tells us from the

Catholic Church itself concerning this second century controversy:

"The dioceses of all Asia, as from the *older tradition* [Passover], held that the *fourteenth day of the moon*, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should *always be observed* as the feast of the life-giving Pasch [Passover]...However, it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world [primarily the West, represented by Rome] to end it at this point [allegedly a non-biblical based fast ending on Easter Sunday], as they observed the practice, which from apostolic tradition has prevailed to the present time... Synods and assemblies of bishops [not Jesus Christ's example] were held on this account and all with one consent through mutual correspondence drew up an ecclesiastical decree [superseding Christ's personal example as recorded in the gospels] that the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other day but, the Sunday [Easter]

the connection of Passover. Undoubtedly, there was a long-term agenda to shift and undermine any and all associations connecting Jewish-Israeli underpinnings that were foundational to the early Christian Church. Remember, Paul said, the household of God (the Church) is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [not Synods, Councils, and bishops], Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," (Eph. 2:20). There was absolutely *no authorization* to change the framework of worship outside of Jesus Christ's own reflection of worship exemplified by His life, habits, and customs (1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 2:6). It's important we remember: Jesus Christ never kept an Easter in his life! It is undeniable that Easter has no biblical connection, foundation, or authority on the name of Jesus Christ to be observed by any who claim Christ as their Saviour.

Yet, this

trend finally became law in the year 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicaea. Again, notice from the Catholic Encyclopedia:

"The emperor himself [Constantine] writing to the churches after the council of Nicaea, exhorts, 'At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present [regardless of the example of Jesus Christ, Matt. 26:17-30] that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day [Easter Sunday]...And first of all it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin... For we have received from our Savior a different way [Where then is

the Biblical proof or Christological authorization?] ...and I myself [Constantine] have undertaken that this decision should meet with the approval of your sagacity in the hope that your wisdoms will gladly admit that practice which is observed [Easter Sunday] at once in the city of Rome and in Africa, throughout Italy and Egypt... with entire unity of judgment."

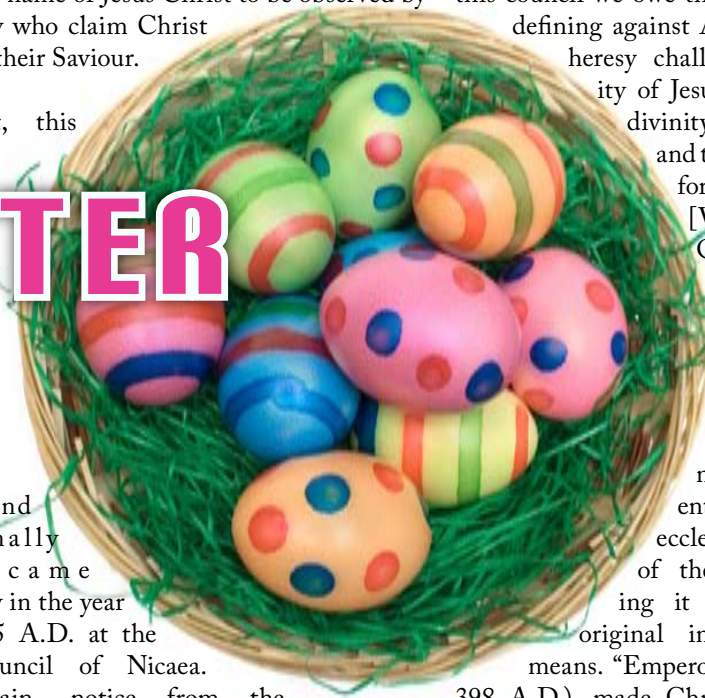
And finally, under the article *Councils* in the Catholic Encyclopedia, again we read about the purpose of the Council of Nicaea. "The first ecumenical, or council, of Nicaea (325 A.D.) lasted two months and twelve days. Three hundred and eighteen bishops were present. Hosius, bishop of Cordova, assisted as legate of Pope Sylvester. The Emperor Constantine was also present. To this council we owe the Creed of Nicaea, defining against Arius [which was a heresy challenging the divinity of Jesus Christ] the true divinity of the Son of God, and the fixing of the date for keeping Easter" [Which opposed the Quartodecimans who observed Passover].

After the Council of Nicaea, the Roman government became more entangled with the ecclesiastical matters of the Church, derailing it further from the original intent by multiple means. "Emperor Theodosius (378-398 A.D.), made Christianity the State Religion of the Roman Empire, and made church membership compulsory. This was the worst calamity that has ever befallen the church. The forced conversion filled the churches with unregenerate people... The church had changed its nature, had entered its great Apostasy (2 Thes. 2:1-12), had become a political organization in the Spirit and pattern of Imperial Rome, and took its nose-dive into the millennium of Papal abominations. The Imperial church of the 4th and 5th centuries had become an entirely different institution from the persecuted church of the first three centuries. In its ambition to rule it lost and forgot the Spirit of Christ" (Halley's Bible Handbook, Paganization of the Church, p. 760).

continued on page 23

TO EASTER

It Happen?



and that we should observe the close of the paschal fast on that day only. A letter of Saint Irenaeus is among the extracts just referred to, and this shows that the diversity of practice regarding Easter had existed at least from the time of Pope Sixtus. Further, Irenaeus states that St. Polycarp [bishop of Smyrna], who like the other Asiatic, kept Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon [which is really Passover], whatever day of the week that might be, following therein the tradition which he [Polycarp] claimed to have derived from *St. John the apostle*, but could not be persuaded by Pope Anicetus to relinquish his Quartodecimen observance. The question thus debated was therefore primarily whether Easter was to be kept on a Sunday, or whether Christians should observe the holyday of the Jews... Those who kept Easter [Passover] with the Jews were called Quartodecimans" (The Catholic Encyclopedia, emphasis mine.)

Clearly, the historical record from the Catholic Church proves that they themselves chose to exercise authority to change and sever

The New Morality

by Jasmin Smith

Today, our society is at war. The battlefield is not in Iraq—it is right here in North America. Under attack is our ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

Under the cloak of freedom and tolerance we have abandoned a morality grounded in Judeo-Christian ethics replacing it with the concept of *moral relativism*. Moral relativism has many definitions, but each claims there is no objective basis for determining right or wrong. Rather, everyone can decide for themselves what is right or wrong based on their personal feelings, or cultural norms.

In essence, moral relativism gives each of us the right to say, “I’ll decide what’s right for me, and you decide what’s right for you.” Since there is no objective standard of morality, neither of us is wrong—we just have different beliefs: a neutral morality where *nothing* is universally right or wrong.

Is it Really Neutral?

Moral relativism is not a new concept; however, it has gained increasing popularity in recent years, especially in the post-secondary educational system. Clearly, this ‘new morality’ has major repercussions on the state of society in the West. At its extreme, moral relativism abandons even cultural norms as a basis for right or wrong and declares that morality is entirely a matter of personal choice.

Is it possible there are *no* universally right or

wrong actions? What about rape, murder, or incest—does any society have the right to label these actions morally acceptable? Stop and think for a moment—imagine a society where morality is *self-defined*—what would it look like; what would be the consequences?

Unfortunately, we need not look far. Moral relativism is evident in every aspect of social culture. Its seductive pull allows any behaviour to be permissible, finding its way into our homes, entertainment, education systems, and even our laws.

Does Normal = Moral?

A recent report from the Alan Guttmacher Institute claims that 95% of Americans admit to engaging in sex prior to marriage. According to Lawrence Finer, the author of the report, the likelihood of Americans having premarital sex has remained stable since the 1950s. Finer concludes that premarital sex is, “normal behaviour for the vast majority of Americans, and has been for decades” and thus, is morally acceptable.

However, statistics are *not* the same as ethics—just because the majority of people engage in a particular behaviour, or hold a belief, does not make it morally correct. Beyond exposing the alleged normalization of premarital sexual behaviour, the objective of Finer’s report was to discredit the usefulness of government-sponsored abstinence programs. By citing that most Americans engage in premarital sex, Finer argues money should be spent on teaching

teenagers about ‘safer sex,’ not *wasted* on abstinence programs.

If morality is truly relative, since statistically, most Americans are clearly okay with premarital sex, Finer would be correct and abstinence programs are indeed a waste of time. But what about the Judeo-Christian ethic? What does your Bible say? Is morality to be dictated by societal norms, or is there a higher standard that applies to *every* society, regardless of social trends? The truth is, there’s only one authority that can determine morality—the One who creates life, Almighty God!

In 1 Corinthians 6:18, we are told to “Flee fornication.” The New International Version Bible says “Flee from sexual immorality.” What are the sexual behaviours the Bible admonishes us to abstain from? The short list includes: incest, premarital and extramarital sex, rape, prostitution, orgies, lust, and homosexuality. The entire chapter of Leviticus 18 outlines many sexual sins we are to avoid. Unfortunately, the carnal nature of man leads to the perpetuation of these sins.

Nothing New Under the Sun

Moral relativism is obviously not the right place to turn for moral guidance; but today, many argue against Biblical morality saying it is ‘out dated’ and therefore not in touch with the realities of today’s world. Is this true, has the Bible lost its usefulness? Our society mistakenly believes that morality changes with time; unquestionably, this is far from the truth. As Solomon declares in

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10:

*"That which has been is what will be,
That which is done is what will be done,
And there is nothing new under the sun.
Is there anything of which it may be said,
'See, this is new?'
It has already been in ancient
times before us." (NIV)*

The immorality that underpinned societies of old continues to plague us today. There are no new sins to diminish the relevance of the Bible—it is as relevant today as it was when it was written. We are living in a time when *right* is wrong and wrong is *right*! As Paul beautifully illustrates in Romans 7, we need the Law of God to distinguish right from wrong. Without the Law, there can be no sin and moral relativism reigns.

*"What shall we say, then?
Is the law sin? Certainly
not! Indeed I would not
have known what sin
was except through the
law. For I would not
have known what covet-
ing really was if the law
had not said, 'Do not
covet.'" (Rom. 7:7, NIV)*

Questions about morality never ask: *Is there* such a thing as right or wrong? Instead, the 'relative' question becomes: *What* is right and *what* is wrong?

*The acts of the sinful
nature are obvious: sexual
immorality, impurity and
debauchery; idolatry and
witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits
of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, fac-
tions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and
the like. I warn you, as I did before, that
those who live like this will not inherit
the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21)*

Hitler used Moral Relativism to Justify the Holocaust

History has taught us the consequences of a flexible morality. When Adolf Hitler commissioned the atrocious genocide of over 6 million Jews, he did so by redefining morality. Hitler drew many of his beliefs about Arian supremacy and the justifica-

tion for the Holocaust by applying the principles of moral relativism adopted from the writings of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche is credited as one of the foremost philosophers in the field of morality and ethics. His concept of *Nihilism* (from the Latin *nihil*, meaning nothing, found in the word *annihilate*) is recognized in philosophy as a form of moral relativism. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *moral nihilism* is the belief that *nothing* is morally wrong—anything goes, even torturing a baby for one's own sadistic pleasure is permissible. It is not difficult to see how this form of moral relativism has led and will continue leading us to great evils.

If moral relativism were indeed valid, it would mean the Holocaust was justifiable

Sin and Destruction

Throughout the Bible, we are repeatedly warned about the consequences of our immoral behaviour. Deciding for ourselves that sin is not sin, but some relative concept, does not free us from the reality that sin *is* sin. Accordingly, when Paul advised the church in Corinth about their behaviour, he went so far as to cast out the sexually immoral man from the congregation (1 Cor. 5).

In Noah's day, God destroyed the Earth by a flood because of widespread violence and immorality resulting from abandoning God's laws (Gen. 6-7). The ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were rampant with sexual immorality and as a result, God destroyed them with fire and brimstone (Gen. 19). How much more does today's society warrant destruction for abandoning God's ways in exchange for a self-determined morality? History *is* repeating itself.

Immorality comes with repercussions. Some of the consequences of sin are self-evident—adultery leads to divorce and broken families; sex outside of marriage often leads to terrible STDs that can cause infertility, cancer and death (see the article, *The Consequences of Sin* on page 6). So what is the solution?

Repent!

Apart from the physical consequences of immoral behaviour, the Bible warns that breaking God's laws will lead to our ultimate destruction—if we don't repent. The Book of Revelation gives a detailed account of the looming destruction of mankind. Satan's wrath will unleash mind-boggling devastation upon the earth, but Jesus Christ is going to intervene for the elect's sake.

95% OF AMERICANS ADMIT TO HAVING SEX BEFORE THEY ARE MARRIED

because Hitler and his army made their crimes against humanity a social norm. It's a morality that finds a way to justify the Holocaust! Is this really what we want taught in our schools, applied to our laws, or brought into our homes? God forbid! Every human society, no matter how primitive, can survive *only* by the establishment and enforcement of laws or codes of conduct. But, Proverbs 14:12 warns, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (NIV). For this reason, humanity is incapable of defining right and wrong. We need the Word of God to be our *absolute* moral guide.

continued on page 19

Letter from Polycrates

Controversy was brewing again, not a bit unusual in the Second Century, since the departure of the highly respected and last living apostle 'Saint' John.

It was near the close of the Second Century in Ephesus, Asia Minor, an area where great men of God such as the apostles Paul and John, had trod the dusty and sometimes muddy roads to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and His coming Kingdom.

In the First Century, Paul had written a letter to the church at Ephesus, admonishing the brethren there: "Stand therefore having your loins girth about with truth..." (Eph. 6:14). But now, those stalwarts of the faith were sleeping in their graves, and that very truth was about to be tested.

As these Pillars of the Church passed on, more followed suit, striving to adhere to the "faith once delivered to the saints." One such faithful adherent in the Second Century was Polycrates, who presided over the Church of God at Ephesus. He came from a family of eight Christian Bishops, all firm believers in the truths taught by the apostles. They were passed down from the apostle John to another great student and Christian martyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who had died a martyr in Ephesus, for resisting the change from Passover to Easter.

In Rome, the controversy was far from settled. Bishop Victor wanted a consensus on a proper date to celebrate Easter, rather than the Paschal Feast known as Passover. All the parishes of Asia remained faithful to the older tradition, heralding that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should be observed as the feast of the Saviour's Passover (Eusebius, Church History, Book V, Chapter 23). Victor of Rome was pressuring them to abandon this observance.

However, to their credit, the bishops of Asia led by Polycrates, stood their ground and were not about to compromise on this truth. Polycrates was adamant that "we ought to obey God rather than man." It was time to write a letter to Pope Victor.

"We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away," was the first line of the letter, a reminder to the Pope that he had no doubts about the time of Passover. Polycrates went on:

"For in Asia also, the great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven and shall seek out all the saints," the letter continued.

Without a doubt, these great men were not in heaven, but sleeping in their graves, Polycrates went on to name some of them. "... Philip, one of the twelve apostles who fell asleep at Hierapolis... John, who was both a witness and a teacher and who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord... fell asleep at Ephesus. Polycarp, in Smyrna, who was a bishop and a martyr, and Thraseas, a bishop and martyr from Eumenia. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris, who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papius, or Melito, the Eunuch, who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and whom lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven when he shall rise from the dead?"

Polycrates bolstered his position about retaining the Passover by naming these martyrs, knowing personally at least one of them, Polycarp, who had "endeavoured to keep the unity of the Spirit."

"All these observed the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the gospel, deviating in no way respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops: I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when people put away the leaven. I therefore, brethren, who have lived 65 years in the Lord, and have met with brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said 'we ought to obey God rather than man. I could mention the bishops whom I summoned at your desire, whose names, should I write them, could constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus' (Early Christian Writings).

Despite his arguments, Polycrates and the bishops who supported him were ex-communicated from the church by Roman Bishop Victor. However, Victor reversed his decision later on, after several bishops, including Irenaeus, intervened.

It's uncertain what happened after Polycrates' reinstatement. Sadly, despite his bold attempts to remain faithful to God, the date for Passover was changed and replaced with a man-made holy day, known as Easter, instituted shortly thereafter.

Today, the majority of the traditional Christian world observes Easter, but there are still small groups of people who celebrate the Passover or Lord's Supper, on the same date that the apostles of God, as well as Polycrates and Polycarp fought so bravely to keep. They all held on to their beliefs and for each of them, when facing death, martyrdom was the worthy option. To God's glory, Polycrates' letter to Bishop Victor was not written in vain.

The Days of Unleavened Bread



by Patrick Bastien

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, His intent was to make them a model nation. He wanted them to be a light to the world, so He gave them specific statutes and judgments, and warned Israel to follow His instructions.

God's instructions to Israel included a series of divinely appointed festivals that were to be observed every year. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was one of the seven annual Festivals (or Holy Days) which came right after the Passover. God told Moses,

"Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread ... Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance." (Exod. 12:15-17)

Exodus 12:39 further explains,

"And they baked unleavened cakes of dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared previously for themselves." (Exod. 12:39)

Who Should Keep the Feast?

Today, most people erroneously assume that these biblical Holy Days were only given to the Jews and not required of Christians. However, these people are mistaken!

The Bible clearly reveals that Jesus and His disciples kept the Days of Unleavened Bread (Luke 22:1). Jesus' parents, Joseph and Mary, went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of Passover (Luke 2:41). Furthermore, Jesus Christ often spoke about the significance of

leaven, which makes the Feast more meaningful in His plan for humanity.

During His ministry, Jesus used the parable of the loaves and the fishes to explain the significance of leaven and sin to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Notice, Jesus said He didn't speak to them concerning bread. They then understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven *in* the bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Be aware of the leaven; bad doctrines affect the soul as leaven does in a meal: they assimilate the whole spirit to their own nature. A man's particular creed has a greater influence on his temper and conduct than most are aware. Pride and hypocrisy constituted the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The apostles understood Jesus had warned them against the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, which produced hypocrisy, pride, envy, lust, and the false doctrines of the Sadducees, which denied many essential truths revealed in the Old Testament (Matt. 16:5-12).

Notice how the early church, imitating Christ in His actions, observed the Days of Unleavened Bread.

"Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" (Matt. 26:17)

The apostle Paul kept God's Feasts, referring to the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread while visiting Troas (Acts 20:4-6). During the Feast, Paul taught the same spiritual lessons as Jesus by creating a vivid

mental picture, associating sin with leaven. Notice how Paul rebukes the Corinthian congregation for its division, jealousies, and tolerance of sexual misconduct, using leaven to illustrate sin:

"Your glory is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" he asked. "Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5:7-8)

Clearly, we see that leaven represents sin. Obviously, this is a New Testament command for keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread, given to a mostly Gentile church at Corinth.

How are Christians to Keep This Feast?

As we approach Passover and remember Jesus Christ as the supreme sacrifice of the true "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," His followers will diligently remove all leaven from their homes because of its representation. The principle is clear, baked products containing leaven (sin) should be discarded. For seven days, they will eat only unleavened products (Lev. 23:6-8). They will perform this 'spring cleaning' while remembering that just as crumbs of leavened bread may have fallen into the hidden corners and secluded areas around their homes, so too sin may be lurking in the hidden quarters of their lives. Indeed, some may be surprised by the places they find leavening agents.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a time for personal reflection and examination. We should meditate on our attitudes and ask God to help us recognize and overcome our shortcomings. Observing the Festival helps us to realize our need for Christ's help to overcome our weaknesses. Yet, this Feast is certainly a time for rejoicing because Christ freely gives us the help we need. True Christians must get leaven out of their homes and off their property while focusing on the reflected spiritual meaning of completely ridding sin from their lives. They are to remind themselves they have a continuing responsibility before God to overcome sin, thereby, becoming a new lump (person) for Jesus Christ our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7-8).



WORKING FOR GOD INC.

by Steve Agnew

"The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few"
(Matt. 9:37, RSV).

"They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:18-19, RSV).

How would you like to work for God? He's the greatest entrepreneur and He owns a company you could call *God Inc.* His purpose is to reproduce and produce. What are the requirements of the job you might ask? Well, consider the example of the apostle Paul.

Chief Sinner Recruited as Chosen Instrument

Early on in God's church, Stephen, a man filled with the Holy Spirit was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court in Jerusalem. He was accused of blasphemy against Moses and God. After several false witnesses were presented to testify against him, he was convicted and sentenced to death by stoning. His testimony described the many sins the Jewish people committed against God. This did not help his cause. In the crowd was Saul of Tarsus, later known as Paul (Acts 6-8). It is thought that Saul had a hand in Stephen's death, but regardless, Jesus would soon refer to Saul as His chosen instrument (Acts 9:15). Paul would later refer to himself as the chief sinner (1 Tim. 1:15). Yet, many who have examined Paul's life consider him a hero, exemplify-

ing the perfect pattern of a good corporate employee who once again will work for *God Inc.* in the Kingdom of God.

However, questions often asked about Paul include: How does the "chief sinner" get recruited as God's chosen instrument? Why does Jesus openly choose Saul as His instrument on the road to Damascus when Saul has not yet repented? Why does Saul first receive the Holy Spirit with a measure of God's power and healing from Ananias (Acts 9:17-18); become a new creature by means of water baptism (Acts 9:18); and then, openly repent of his unbelief (Acts 9:20)? The usual pattern is: repentance, water baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit by laying-on-of-hands (Acts 2:38).

The simple answer: Jesus is a teaching sovereign pragmatist. He selected Saul because He chooses whom He will (John 15:16). He chose Saul to demonstrate His perfect patience for an example to unbelievers (1 Tim. 1:16). Jesus also illustrates His pragmatism by choosing the most qualified. Saul had spent many years studying the law with a revered teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and had been trained as a Pharisee (Phil. 3:4-7). He knew the Torah and was

well qualified; and now with direct instruction from Jesus to advance and describe the spirit of the law (Acts 9:3-9), he is commissioned by the sovereign act of Christ to go and take this gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

In short, Jesus saw potential in Saul, as He does with all of us (Isa. 55:8; Isa. 46:10; Jer. 1:5; John 10:10; 1 Tim. 1:15-16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 7:23) and moved quickly, recruiting the most suited candidate for the job. Paul was subjected to a long and hard interview (three days of blindness) to ensure that the fit was good for both. After this, Paul was introduced to the rest of the staff in Damascus. Ananias was one of Paul's first contacts. Now, with this done, the real work could begin.

The Company Man

Usually, the term 'company man' refers to someone exhibiting a high degree of loyalty to his employer, and exceptional faith in the company product. He is extremely dedicated and perseveres to advance the aims of the company. In 1980s, North American business schools taught students to admire the 'dogged' determination and loyalty of the Japanese company man who

sacrificed everything, sometimes even family, for the company's goals. Jesus said it differently,

"He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me... he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me... and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:37-39, RSV).

Paul was a good company man. His mission was to spread the gospel successfully throughout the Roman Empire. The book of Acts details Paul's work for *God Inc.* Paul made three missionary journeys to Asia Minor. Two of them were to Greece and his last to Rome, where he was allegedly beheaded during the reign of Nero. During these missions, he led others to the truth of Jesus Christ (Acts 13:13-52). In addition, he healed the sick (Acts 14:8-10); drove out demons from the possessed (Acts 16:16-18); converted his jailer (Acts 16:25-34); raised the dead to life (Acts 20:7-12); and preached salvation through Jesus Christ to both the Sanhedrin and the Roman authorities (Acts 21-26). At the end of his journeys, but before he was sent to Rome, both the Jewish and Roman civil authorities had *privately* found him innocent of all accusations (despite the lies). But, because he appealed to Caesar, he was sent to Rome (Acts 26:30-32, 27-28).

Paul also had many hardships. He endured bitter disputes with other believers over the need for circumcision (Acts 15:1-29) and choice of missionary companions (Acts 15:36-41). Paul was also flogged and jailed (Acts 16:22-24). On the journey to Rome, Paul was shipwrecked (Acts 27:21-44) and bitten by a poisonous snake although he did not suffer harm (Acts 28:1-6). However, throughout all of his work and hardships, Paul remained true to his mission. Amazingly, he maintained loyalty to Jesus and his witness to the truth. How many people in *any* activity today can say that? Underlying all of this was a deep and unshakeable faith in the gospel message and a willingness to exercise all of the

tools of the trade: faith, prayer, fasting, and thankfulness as a *workman* not ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15), putting on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:11). As Jesus' chosen instru-

long haul.

The Corner Office

What is the reward for a lifetime of work at *God Inc.*? What was Paul's reward for successfully running this race?

If God's Holy Spirit is leading you, the first reward is the fruit of the Spirit and internal peace and joy—God's peace and joy (Gal. 5:22-24). The opposite of this fruit are the works of the flesh: adultery, fornication, lasciviousness (Gal. 5:19-21). In addition, there may be other temporary rewards in this life (Mal. 3:10-12) some of which are spiritual in nature (1 Cor. 12:27-31).

During his life, Paul certainly seemed to have peace despite the circumstances (Acts 16:22-25). Paul also received many spiritual gifts from God (Acts 20:7-12, 28:1-6).

However, the rewards of this life are not the main objective of an employee at *God Inc.* Paul was working for more than a paycheck in the present. In the parlance of corporate speak, Paul was vying for the 'corner office' of a future position, in the true life, eternal life, which is *to come* (1 Tim. 6:18-19). Jesus said it this way: He was going to prepare a place (or reward) for His disciples in His father's house where there would be many rooms (John 14:1-3). Some have taken the word *room* to mean an office or position of power in the Kingdom, which is in sync with the reward of rulership promised specifically to faithful followers of God (Rev. 3:21-22). Of course, underlying these two rewards is the more important promise of eternal life.



ment, God's Spirit worked even greater within Paul. The gifts of the Holy Spirit such as healing, miracle working, teaching etc. became more apparent in his life (Heb. 2:4; Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:27-31). The benefits also included the fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-24), and the peace of God (Phil. 4:6-7). For Paul, eternal life would be the eventual result of sowing to the spirit and not the flesh (Gal. 6:8-9).



Is Jesus calling you through His Word, to work at God Inc.?

Paul said it this way, "... forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13-14, RSV). Paul was running a race to win a valuable prize (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 12:1-2). I suppose you could say Paul was working with *God Inc.* for the

However, Jesus also warned against a less than first-rate effort. Like any good employer, God expects our best effort all day, every day, as He illustrates in two parables. The first compares the works of the five wise and five foolish maidens as they labour on behalf of God (Matt. 25: 1-13).

This parable demonstrates the need to keep a diligent hand at the till so the reward of rulership (and eternal life) can be obtained.

Secondly, the parable of the talents, told almost the same thing (Matt. 25:14-30). All workers, no matter what their assignment, skill set or opportunities—great or small, are expected to produce. Those who do not produce are cast out. Are these not the lessons that Paul tried to demonstrate by his hard work and the life he lived?

One day soon, when Jesus returns, we will understand the extent of Paul's prize. He, like the other saints, will rule in the millennial Kingdom with Jesus.

Now Hiring

The path Paul took was extraordinary. However, as Jesus said, there are many rooms in His Father's Kingdom. He also said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few." (Matt. 9:37, RSV). There is still a tremendous need for *more* employees at *God Inc.*, so how about you?

To summarize, all of God's workers are called according to His purposes. We are asked to respond quickly and favourably to the prize of this higher calling "of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14). The first act is usually repentance. We work for God

according to the measure of faith and talents given to us as a gift from God (Rom. 12:3-8). In addition, we are told that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). When we do this, the rewards of eternal life and a high office in God's Kingdom are ours.

When you work for any company today, the pattern is the same. No one attends a job interview or applies for a job without faith—knowing and believing that this is what they want. No one is given a job interview, and a job, unless they are first called and then chosen. In God's company, this sometimes means a person who has or who through growth and training (repentance and gifting), can develop the skills (talents), and work habits (prayer, fasting and Bible study) to do the job. No one remains on the job unless they diligently produce results which are of the quantity and quality expected by their employer (recall Paul's example vs. the example the five foolish maidens). Generally speaking, no one obtains an important position, measure of power or access to resources within a company unless they work long, hard and faithfully. Beauty, they say, is in the eye of the beholder and so is an employer's judgment of a worker's value.

What About You?

Just a final thought. Presently, there are

many vacant positions at *God Inc.* We are witnessing the start of a great falling away from Christianity. God is calling many people in this world and some of them are your loved ones. God is looking for a few good men and women to rekindle the fire in His church, especially where many pews are empty. God's sheep have strayed and are now lead away by many other things.

Perhaps you were created for just a time as this. God once said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose..." (Isa. 46:10, RSV). He also said,

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55:11)

So what about you? Is Jesus calling you through His Word, to work at *God Inc.*? And if He is; will you answer the call?

God Bless you as you consider working for *God Inc.*

TN

The New Morality

continued from page 14

Jesus warns, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matt. 24:22).

When we fail to repent and turn to God's way, we are bringing destruction upon ourselves. How can we escape from this impending doom? Our Heavenly Father, in His great mercy, answered this question many times throughout the Scriptures:

*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to **repent**, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given*

assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31, emphasis mine)

Jesus is coming soon and you too can escape God's wrath by repenting.

Very few turn to the Holy Bible as their moral guide. Even many sects of Christianity disregard the moral teachings of the Bible in exchange for 'feel-good' Christianity. Preachers believe it's better to draw the big crowds for Sunday service; to have parishioners feel good about themselves and to just 'believe' in Jesus, rather than follow His moral codes. However, the morality taught in the Bible is *absolute*. As Jesus declared during His Sermon on the Mount, not one bit of the Law of God has been abolished. God's moral standards remain intact (Matt. 5:17-19).

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness." (Rom. 6:12-13)

The Word of God is the *only* moral compass that remains valid and true throughout the centuries. So, as you uncover the true morality, revealed only in the Bible, remember Jesus' warning for the end of this age: "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Matt. 24:4). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

TN

The study of nature is truly fascinating, especially the study of plants. It's particularly intriguing to see plants growing under some of the harshest conditions of cold or heat and in some of the most unusual places. Some survive in the cracks of concrete pavement, on bare rock, or way above the ground on high-tension power lines.

The sight of lichens growing on *high tension power lines*, some 40 feet above the ground, caught my attention on a recent trip to Jamaica. Amazing, isn't it? How do they survive on those wires without soil, water or other nutrients? In child-like simplicity, I quipped to a bystander that they grow by feeding on the electricity. The truth is, the Creator who made them, equipped them with the ability to take nutrients from the substance in which they are rooted, as well as from the atmosphere. So, although we can't see it, these little plants, hanging 'hopelessly' in the air are drawing moisture, gases, light, and other nutrients from their surrounding environment.

What we *don't* see is far more powerful and profound than what we *do* see. The flowers in our garden don't make a fuss, yet with the passage of time and the right conditions, will cause them to blossom into resplendent beauty (Matt. 6:28).

There is something to be learned from plants growing in normal as well as in unusual places. When we see plants growing like that, it should remind us to make the most of what's available to us, personally. In other words, if we fall on stony ground we can still grow!

No plant can grow unless it remains *rooted* in the source of its strength. We too, can only truly grow when we stay rooted in Christ: the Solid Rock, the source of our strength (Psa. 89:17). It's said that a tree's greatest growth is in the midst of a storm when it sends its roots deeper to stand firm and braces itself to weather the storm. The deeper we send our roots in Christ, the firmer we will stand in the face of trials and adversities.

Have you noticed that plants *never* get distracted? That's because they are totally consumed with growing. When we allow the cares of life or persecution or anything else distract us from growing towards the Kingdom of God, we become like those

by Ken Allen

Grow Anywhere

plants that fell by the wayside or on rocky ground. They had the potential to grow, perhaps even flourish, but they fell victims to their environment (see Mark 4:15-17). Don't allow legitimate or illegitimate needs or wants distract or derail you.

Consider a grapevine. No part of it can grow unless it stays connected to the rest of the vine. We must stay connected to the *True Vine*. We read in John 15:1, 4, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser... Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,

wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:24-25). In this we see a picture of the act and process of repentance and renewal. As we put to death the deeds of the flesh and our own selfish desires (Gal. 5:19-21), we allow the seed of God's Holy Spirit to germinate in us and produce these fruits: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).



A lemon tree is distinct from an orange tree by its fruit; how does our behaviour distinguish us?

unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

Most plants grow from seeds or spores. Before a seed bursts through the ground as a tender seedling, it must first die. Jesus used this analogy to illustrate the need for us to die figuratively, from vanity and carnality, in order to live for God. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of

We can only survive and flourish when we have our lifeline connected to Christ. As a lemon tree is distinguishable from an orange by the fruit it bears, so the world will know we are Christ's disciples when we bear godly fruit in abundance (John 15:8).

The psalmist tells us that the children of Israel "limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psa. 78:41). They did this by griping and complaining about their environment and the situation in which they found themselves. We can make the most of our circumstances by *thriving* and not just surviving—or we can focus on what we lack, fold our arms and wither up and die. The choice is ours.

God is not limited by geography or circumstances. He can nourish us in a desert just as in a fertile land. By abiding in Him, not only will we be able to grow and be nurtured like the lichens, we will produce a bumper crop for ourselves, for others and for His glory, bringing forth thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold! (Matt. 13:18-23)

TN

How Archaeology Proves the Bible

by Waine-Ann McLaughlin

The Old and New Testament writings of the Bible have long been considered fables and myths—thereby, deemed untrustworthy. For some critics, if you cannot prove something with empirical evidence, it is not to be taken seriously.

As we'll see in this article, the authenticity of the Bible *is* supported by empirical, archaeological evidence.

Men of the Bible such as Jesus Christ, King David, King Solomon, and King Beltezzar of the Book of Daniel are often considered mythical characters by scholars, atheists, critics, and even some Christians! Thankfully, the discipline of archaeology (developed only 125 years ago) provides an excellent source for information on people and communities of antiquity. All of these great men become real when their lives and existence can be proven with factual evidence.

Noah's Ark

Let's begin with the intriguing account of Noah's ark. In 1959, a Turkish airline pilot took stereo photos of a boat-shaped object on the top of Mount Ararat (*shown in background*) for the Geodetic Institute of Turkey. After careful study, the length of the remains of the boat shaped object was determined to be exactly 300 cubits: the stated length of Noah's ark in the Book of Genesis (6:15). The width was greater than the size recorded in the Bible; however, due to the age of the boat, expansion over time is naturally expected. Careful scientific examination found an organic fossilized antler, extinct rodent hair, organic fossilized animal droppings, and human hair inside the boat. It lies approximately 6300 ft. above sea level and is located over 200 miles from the nearest sea. The age of the boat is over 4400 years. The Turkish Government has officially dedicated the site as a national park declaring it to be the

remains of Noah's ark!¹

Ebla Tablets

The Ebla tablets found by archaeologists in 1975 provide solid evidence about life in the ancient world. Ebla was a kingdom that included Syria/Damascus and South-East Turkey. The people of Ebla experienced cultural and commercial prominence in their time. They established state archives, built libraries, and recorded commercial contracts in written form. The kingdom of Ebla existed around 2500 BCE. Many scholars have doubted the accounts in the Torah because it was believed that writing did not exist in Moses' time; and therefore, he could not have written those books. On that notion, they date the Torah to a much later time and do not credit Moses as the author. The discovery of the Ebla tablets has proven all those unbelieving scholars wrong. Also, the Creation account in Genesis 1 is considered by many to be a later writing, because the word '*tehon*' (the deep) was used in the text. However, the discovery of tablets in the Eblaite Kingdom in the 1970's shows the word was in use 800 years before the time of Moses.²

Additionally, the discovery of 20,000 cuneiform tablets and fragments mentioned the names of David (Da-u-dum), Abraham (Ab-ra-mu) and Ishmael (Ish-ma-il). The unearthing of the Ebla tablets in northern Syria in the 1970s, uncovered names of biblical patriarchs, and the discovery of ancient regions such as 'Canaan,' all legitimize the patriarchal accounts, proving them to be viable and genuine.³

The Hittites

The Hittite people, considered a biblical legend, have also moved from fiction to historical fact after records from the Ebla Kingdom and Cuneiform tablets discovered in Bogazkoy, Turkey mentioned their name.

Sargon, the Assyrian King, was discounted because his name did not appear outside the biblical account in Isaiah 20:1. It reads, "In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and fought against Ashdod and took it." However, this all changed when archaeologists found Sargon's palace in Khorsabad, Iraq. Recorded on the Palace walls was the event mentioned in Isaiah 20—Sargon's capture of Ashdod. Also, steel fragmented tablets memorializing the victory were found at Ashdod itself.

According to recorded history, Nabonidus was the last Babylonian king. As a result Belshazzar of Daniel 5 was in doubt because there was no extra-biblical source to validate his existence. This position changed when Cuneiform tablets were recently found showing that Belshazzar was Nabonidus's son, who served as coregent in Babylon.

Archaeologists also uncovered ossuaries from the first century that confirm the existence of additional biblical figures, further supporting the reliability of the Bible.⁴

Simon of Cyrene

In 1941, Archaeologists Eliezer L. Sukenic and Nahman Avidag of Jerusalem's Hebrew University found the ossuary of Simon of Cyrene. There is no question about its authenticity. It was found with 10 others as an intact assemblage in a tomb chamber that survived for centuries untouched by tomb robbers. The blocking stone was still in place. This find was published in 1962. Many scholars who have nothing to gain conclude: the ossuary is that of Simone of Cyrene and one of the 10 others was his son, Alexander.

Jesus Christ

Presently, many biblical scholars reduce Jesus Christ to a mythical figure because they require evidence from external secular

sources that He existed. Archaeology is providing this evidence as scientists continue to uncover evidence of the communities and people mentioned during the biblical times of Christ. Amazingly, much of the evidence uncovered supporting the Bible is from secular sources; some of which are hostile to Christianity.

Flavius Josephus provides us information about 'James the Just,' the half brother of Jesus. In addition, he gives us details about James' life as the first bishop of the Christian church and his death by stoning, executed by the Sanhedrin in 62 AD.

Josephus refers to Jesus twice in his writings. His second reference refers to James as "the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ." He has a longer passage on Jesus in his reports on Pontius Pilate's administration. For centuries, it was dismissed until the original wording was restored, as noted here:

"At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified, and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning who the prophets had reported wonders. And the tribe of the Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day" (Antiquities 20:200).

Critics had doubted the existence of Nazareth in Jesus' day, until its name showed up in a first-century synagogue inscription at Caesarea. Augustus' census edicts (this is linked with the Nativity account) are borne out by an inscription at Ankara, Turkey. In his famous accomplishment, the Roman emperor proudly

claims to have taken a census three times and mandated that husbands had to register their families for the Roman census.

Herod, the Great

Herod, the Great ruled at the time Jesus was born. This is demonstrated by the numerous excavations of his massive public works in the Holy Land, including the Great Temple in Jerusalem. His son, Herod Antipas, ruled Galilee, which has been shown in similar digs at Sepphoris and Tiberias. Many of the sites during Jesus' ministry such as Bethsaida, Chorazin,

a fishing boat dating back to the time of Jesus' disciples, and the tomb of Joseph of Aramathea.

Archaeology continues to confirm the Old and the New Testaments and will persist to do so until Jesus Christ returns. Undoubtedly, it is through archaeology that the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament disciples/apostles, and Jesus Christ Himself, have been taken from the realm of fiction and legend (in the eyes of sceptics) to their rightful place as validated historical figures.

Described below is a list of biblical figures that have been made known to us by secular ancient historical records:

- **Roman Emperors:** Caesar Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius
- **Roman Governors:** Pontius Pilate, Sergius Paulus, Gallio, Felix, Festus
- **Regional Rulers:** Herod the Great, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Philip, Herod Agrippa I, Herod Agrippa II, Lysanias, Aretas IV
- **High Priests:** Annas, Joseph Caiphas, Ananias
- **Prominent Biblical Figures:** John the Baptist, and James the Just

Has archaeology proven the Bible? The evidence is there for all to see, and the answer is a resounding yes! From Noah's ark, the Ebla tablets, the ossuaries, and the discoveries of hidden cities and towns by present day archaeologists, the evidence that supports and validates the reliability of the Bible and its

Capernaum, Caesarea Philippi, Shechem, Bethany, and Jerusalem are currently in the process of excavation.

It is noteworthy that the correlation between biblical and non-biblical evidence regarding the historicity of Jesus is supported through recent archaeological discoveries. The remains of the synagogue at Capernaum, where Jesus taught, exist today below ruins of a 4th century synagogue. Peter's house in Capernaum has been uncovered from underneath a 4th century Christian sanctuary.

The Apostle Paul

The apostle Paul was one of the greatest followers of Jesus and the present archaeological support of him is most impressive. Ruins in Cyprus, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome and surrounding areas, have many references about Paul of the New Testament.

Other Findings

Other discoveries in recent years include a goblet belonging to King David's dynasty,

narratives is overwhelming. Such empirical evidence leaves little room for doubt.

TN

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- <http://www.allaboutarchaeology.org>
- University of Southern California: Archaeology Department

Passover to Easter

continued from page 12

Identifying Specifically Who Made The Change

Sadly, the combination of Rome's secular power and the integration of fertility observances (adopted from many of the existing pagan religions that saturated Rome) took its toll. By means of forced compliance and/or persecution, the Roman Church marginalized the *true* Church, reducing its influence. Throughout history, Christians who have remained faithful to the commandments and testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17), have been comparably small when measured against the traditional Christian community that has emerged and been so heavily influenced by the Hellenistic teachings of Greco-Roman culture. The liberties taken by the Catholic Church and many of the Popes, bishops, councils, synods, and Emperor's to rearrange the theology of Christ's original teachings is unconscionable. Unfortunately, much of *traditional Christianity*, Protestant or Catholic, is not theologically correct.

Notice what Jesus says,

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye who work iniquity [lawlessness]." (Matt. 7:22-23, ASV)

It would do us well to consider this possibility very seriously. It is plausible to think you are pleasing God when in fact you're not. It's important to our Lord that we worship Him in Spirit and in *truth*. Love of the truth means *living the truth*. We must love in doing; the hearers are not justified (1 John 3:17-18). Acting on what we know, living our faith is key to justification and knowing the true God (Jas. 2:15-26). Notice, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like." Read the remaining versus located in Luke 6:46-49. They are revealing in light of the historical record you just read.

It is the height of arrogance, vanity, and ego to circumvent God in areas He reserves

exclusive prerogative to define. The historical record of the Passover/Easter controversy is a prime illustration of how man endeavours to evade God—avoiding His authority. History reveals that the combination of the Greco-Roman government, implemented by the ecclesiastic authority of the Popes and Catholic Councils over the centuries, replaced Passover with Easter. There is *no Biblical directive or Christ-like example* throughout the *whole Bible* authorizing the institution of Easter as a Christian Holy Day!

Without a doubt, this being the case, why not consider following the example Jesus Christ left us and begin keeping the Passover instead of Easter, as was originally intended by Christ Himself?

Want to learn more about the day Christ Himself instituted and observed? Request your *FREE* copy of *The Passover - Is It for Christians?* today!

Also available online at:

<http://www.cgi.org/booklets/passover.cfm>

TN

The Consequences of Sin

continued from page 6

The Real Costs

However, the real costs of sin cannot be reduced to a dollar amount because of the incalculable spiritual consequences. Mankind has pursued a way of life that is contrary to that which is revealed in the pages of the Bible. Society's way of life, anchored in a 'get rather than give' mentality is paved with sin, focusing on concern

for oneself rather than others. Sin produces a myriad of costly and detrimental effects on us and our environment.

Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death." The end result of sin, if left unchecked, leads to suffering, pain, death, and eventually complete destruction. There is a way to live that leads to long lasting peace and happiness. However, to achieve such results, like the city of Nineveh, we must collectively turn to the God of the

Bible and repent of breaking His laws (see the article, *When a Nation Repents* on page 4). In today's world, it seems unlikely an entire city or nation will turn to God and repent; but individually we can. You can reject a life that leads to the tragic consequences of sin, and begin a new life in Christ, that leads to good health, peace, happiness, and prosperity (3 John 1:2). The choice is yours!

TN

Addicted to Death

continued from page 9

I recently bumped into Eric and we talked about how things were going. He told me the university administration was pressuring him to either get his grades up or he'd be removed from his program. The tragedy of Eric's story is, while he enjoyed himself for those fleeting moments, he must now make up for lost time. Hopefully, his recovery won't be 'too little, too late,' and he will realize that his success depends on

turning away from his addictions.

A Friend Who Stays Closer than a Brother

The medical and social effects of addictions are pretty clear: addictions lead to physical and spiritual death. However, the way out is a repentant attitude, born of faith, so Jesus Christ can free those who have become slaves to their addictions. The Bible says, He "...has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5, NIV). When we are freed from the bonds of sin we can serve

Him, being ready for His return. Paul said it this way,

"...those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet" (1 Thes. 5:7-8, NIV).

Let us, here and now, obtain our freedom in Christ, by allowing Him to come into our lives and liberate us from our slavery to the addictions of sin.

TN



WITH LLOYD CARY



Is 'paradise' where we go when we die? Does our Spirit go to 'paradise'?

The word 'paradise,' translated from the Greek word *paradeisos*, is mentioned *only 3 times* in the Bible: Luke 23:43; 1 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7. 'Paradise' is of Persian origin, and means a garden, particularly a garden of pleasure, filled with trees, shrubs, fountains, and flowers. In hot climates, such gardens were quite pleasant and were attached to the mansions of the rich and to the palaces of princes. The word came to signify any place of happiness and was used particularly to denote the abodes of the blessed in the Kingdom of God. Jesus used this word to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43), as a *type* of the Kingdom of God, where the Earth will be plush and green and at peace.

God formed man from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the Breath of Life, and man became a living being (Gen. 2:7). But man was also given a spirit that made him far superior to the animal world, which operates solely on instinct and conditioned response.

The human mind, coupled with the human spirit, gives man intelligence far above the animal kingdom. When a human is converted and is given the Holy Spirit from God, that Spirit combines with the human spirit to form a new spiritual creature. When a person dies, his spirit returns to God until the resurrection. By analogy, the human spirit may be compared to a master recording device that records all of a man's characteristics, intelligence, and experiences.

If God so chooses, He can rebuild that man either from new physical material or from spirit (depending on which resurrection he may be in), using the information preserved in the human spirit. Scripture clearly speaks of two types of spirit a man can have: the spirit of man, which is in him, and the Spirit of God, which is given to him during conversion. Some references in this regard can be found in the following scriptures: Gen. 2:7; Job 32:8; Eccl.

3:21, 12:7; Dan. 45:28-37; Zech. 12:1; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11-15.

Contrary to what many religious organizations teach about heaven, *your Bible* says,

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He [Christ] that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (John 3:13, emphasis mine)

Revelation 5:10 says, *"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (emphasis mine)."*

Yes, Jesus is coming a Second time *to this Earth* and will set up His Kingdom *on Earth!* The Kingdom of God is the Family of God ruling as the Government of God. It is a future world-ruling government to be set up *on the Earth* by Christ at His return—with Jesus as King and the resurrected spirit-composed saints in positions of co-rulership with Him. The Kingdom of God—sometimes referred to as a "mystery" in the New Testament because so few really understood it, was first preached and explained by Christ, then by His church. It shall be established *on Earth* for a thousand years following Christ's return and shall be completely fulfilled when New Jerusalem and God the Father come down out of heaven to dwell on the New Earth. (Please read all of Mark 4:11; Rev. 5:10, 20:4, 21:1-3, Rev. 7, 10.)

We encourage you to continue growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. We recommend that you request our **FREE Home Bible Study Correspondence Course**, which goes into much greater depth on issues such as these.

The **Home Bible Study Correspondence Course** is also available for download at: <http://www.cgi.org/hbsc/index.cfm>

TN



News You Can Use

Does God Exist?



A new centre for spirituality and the mind has been opened at the University of Pennsylvania, to examine whether God exists.

The centre is using brain imaging technology to determine whether God is the creator of our brains. It's also trying to find out

how spiritual and secular beliefs affect our health.

The spirituality centre is a multidisciplinary team of researchers who are approaching the subject from a biological, psychological, social, and ideological point of view.

Don't Mention God!

All mentions of God were bleeped out of a version of the award-winning film, *Queen*. The bleeped version was distributed to several airlines in the United States.



A spokesman for the distribution company explained that the bleep was done in error by an inexperienced employee, who had been told to edit the profanities and blasphemies.

Airline passengers heard "(bleep) bless you madam," as a character in the film was speaking to the Queen.

ZEUS IS BACK!



Modern pagans honoured the ancient Greek God Zeus at a ceremony in Athens recently.

The ceremony, which took place at an 1800 year old temple, was the first ceremony of its kind after the religion was outlawed by the Roman Empire in the 4th century.

About 20 worshippers participated in the ceremony watched by curious onlookers. They recited prayers, and sang hymns caling on Zeus: king of the gods, to bring peace to the world.

Rabbis Want to Bring Back Animal Sacrifices



A group of rabbis in Jerusalem want to resume the Old Testament practice of animal sacrifices.

The group, named the *Re-established Sanhedrin*, will be buying sheep with the hope of finding one perfect for sacrifice in order to resume the practice in Jerusalem at the disputed sacred site, the Temple Mount. Muslims believe their prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven from the Temple Mount.

Animal sacrifices were an important practice in the Jewish temples in Jerusalem. They were banned after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD after which rabbinical teachings took their place as the focus of Judaism.

A New Conception in Christ

For years I had dined at the table of deceit
Fulfilling my own desires and lusts.
Habitual sin once a daily routine
As I fellowshiped with the unjust.

Readily I followed the multitude of despair,
The blind leading the blind into the ditch.
Laying my treasures on things of this world;
Plotting schemes of how I could become rich

Afflicting vulnerable souls, causing many to stray,
As I foolishly lived by the sword.
Rejoicing in sin. For much less than thirty shekels,
I was eager to betray the Lord.

Then one day I heard a loud knock on my door,
And I anxiously answered the call
It was the Lord of hosts, The God of Jacob,
So I let Him in, in my heart, my soul, my all.

He aptly chastened me with His rod of reproof
As I cried out in stern throbbing pain.
Anguish and sorrow overflowed my soul,
But I knew this was not occurring in vain.

"Please forgive me," I cried.
"For against You and You alone Lord have I sinned.
I submit to Your will, incline my ear to Your call
"Please my past sins will you rescind?"

He presented me the gift of repentance,
And baptized me in His name by water and Spirit.
He said if I followed His laws and accepted His terms,
Eternal life I would surely inherit.

So I picked up my cross and asked Him to guide me,
So I could obtain life without end.
He restored my soul, through the pathway of righteousness,
As my life I allowed Him to bend.

Lord, You are the potter and I am the clay,
I declare, "Do with me Lord as You will!"
Shaped into worthy formation, He molded me,
So His righteousness could be fulfilled.

Teach me to walk in the light as You are in the light,
So to darkness I will never return.
Fill me with wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and truth,
As salvation I am eager to learn.

Help me to bear fruit in every good work,
For the sake of Your Kingdom come;
That I will resist temptations and purge out vanities,
That I once performed under the sun.

In Christ I am now a new creation,
As I rightly turned my back from sin.
Baptized into His death, justified by His blood,
A new life chapter I earnestly begin.

If there be any soul out there needing to repent
And begin a new path today:
Jesus Christ is the only solution, the Bread of Life,
And He is gracefully passing your way.

Zion Hezekiah

Tomorrow's News

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