

# Watch February 1995

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## ["And There Shall Be Earthquakes In Diverse Places"](#)

Jesus Christ prophesied the time of the end would be near when His servants would see an increase in wars, famines, and earthquakes. Does the recent spate of destructive quakes, from Armenia to Columbia, and from San Francisco to Kobe, Japan, mean we are nearing the time of the Great Tribulation? Is the intervention of God in human affairs near?

## [Answers to Questions About The Sabbath Day](#)

Did God make the Sabbath to be a sign for Israel only? Is the "Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4) the perpetual life of faith that Christians experience in Christ? Is the weekly Sabbath a bygone shadow? Does the New Testament put the Sabbath and animal sacrifices in the same category? Was the Sabbath established at creation? Or was it first instituted in the time of Moses? These questions have proven challenging for many. Let's see if the Bible provides answers.

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Sweethearts trading heart-shaped cards. Chubby, cuddly cupids carrying bows and arrows. There isn't anything wrong with celebrating love. Is there?

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Continuing in this issue, we present a new way of studying your Bible. Using this magazine, your own Bible, a cassette tape recorder and a notebook, you can rapidly increase your knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Read on to see how it works.



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## [What I say to, I say to everyone: Watch! \(Mark 13:37\)](#)

## [The Real Reasons Christ Came To This Earth](#)

In the first part of this series (entitled "Christ Did Not Come To Bring Peace"), we looked at some of the things Christ did not do when He came to this earth. He did not come to usher in an age of peace, do away with the Law, or establish a new religion. This month we will begin to look at the true reasons Christ came.

## [WORLD WATCH](#)

A monthly review of current events from the perspective of biblical prophecy.

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**"And There Shall Be**

**EARTHQUAKES**

**In Diverse Places"**

**Jesus Christ prophesied the time of the end would be near when His servants would see an increase in wars, famines, and earthquakes. Does the recent spate of destructive quakes, from Armenia to Columbia, and from San Francisco to Kobe, Japan, mean we are nearing the time of the Great Tribulation? Is the intervention of God in human affairs near?**

*by Garner Ted Armstrong*

Exactly one year to the day from the costliest disaster in U.S. history, an earthquake of 6.7 on the Richter scale that struck Los Angeles, a massive 7.2 quake shattered Kobe, Japan.

Had the quake in Kobe struck only a few hours later, the death toll could have been nearer 20,000. At this writing, the count of the dead has risen above five thousand, with many hundreds more still missing, and presumed dead.

Here are some excerpts from news releases in the aftermath of the quake, some of which failed to report the final death toll.

TIME Magazine, January 30, said: "The country sits at the intersection of four tectonic plates...Over the past half-year a series of tremors had rocked the northern and northeastern parts of the archipelago: an 8.1 in October, a 7.5 in December and a 6.9 in January.

"Japan's second largest port [bombed 25 times in the final year of World War II], endured aerial attacks that ruined the city, killing 17,014 people and leaving 530,858 homeless. Last week the quake that Japan had not expected accomplished about a third that much carnage in 20 seconds.

"In recent times Japanese have come to believe in the power of science to guard them against the catastrophic thrashing...

"Kobe's short-term losses have been estimated at between \$33 billion and \$80 billion."

The New York Times listed 50,614 structures destroyed or badly damaged, the port of Kobe, which handles 12 percent of Japan's exports was shut down, 40,000 households were without electricity, 849,500 homes without gas, and 840,000 households without water.

About a quarter of a million people were homeless, and U.S. Marines were pitching large pavilion-like tents to provide temporary shelter. Standing public buildings, such as schools, were jammed with thousands. People were forced to cook food in streets filled with rubble over shattered wood from broken buildings, and obtain water from broken water mains.

Fires raged out of control for days, as broken gas lines spewed forth deadly fumes. Firemen watched in helpless futility, since many major water mains were also shattered.

As the Los Angeles Times reported: "This quake was the fifth major temblor in the magnitude 7 range to shake parts of Japan since October 4, 1994...Only nine days [previously] three major tremors struck Japan. They ranged in magnitude from 5.2 just outside Tokyo to 6.9 and 4.2 in Hachinohe, 325 miles north of the capital."

In a column in Earth Week, which specializes in natural phenomena, Steve Newman wrote: "The recent fear among many Japanese that 1995 would be the 'Year of the Earthquake' came true as a magnitude 7.2 temblor killed thousands and wrecked parts of southern Honshu.

"A strong temblor along the Columbia-Venezuela border killed at least one person and damaged homes (6.9 Richter).

"Earth movements also were felt in other points in Japan, the Kurile Islands, the Aleutian Islands, southern Alaska, Indonesia, Cyprus, Oklahoma (4.0 Richter) and the greater Los Angeles area."

Only a day later, a powerful aftershock registering 5.7 on the Richter scale rocked Columbia. As January ended, a 5.0 quake shook Seattle.

Each point on the Richter scale indicates an earthquake magnitude ten times as strong. Thus, the quake that struck Los Angeles about a year ago, which was 6.7 in magnitude, would be only one tenth as strong as a 7.7. An 8.7 would be ten times again stronger. The Dictionary of Scientific Literacy, by Richard P. Brennan, reports: "Magni-tude and energy released by an earthquake are not the same thing. The energy released by an earthquake's motion is about 30 times greater for each increase of one [point] on the Richter scale" (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1992, p. 261).

Should a quake of such magnitude strike Los Angeles, or San Francisco, or New York, the damage would be unimaginable.

## **Jesus Christ Predicted a Time of Earthquakes**

About one-third of your Bible is prophecy. There are about twenty separate prophecies in the Bible concerning earthquakes, but the most outstanding is the famous "Olivet prophecy," delivered by Jesus Christ from the Mount of Olives, shortly before His death, burial, and resurrection.

Jesus and His disciples were in the environs of the temple when Jesus said: "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

"And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matthew 24:2-9).

What would cause such massive destruction of one of the world's most beautiful buildings at that time, with its huge columns, its massive walls, and adjacent buildings?

I have been to Jerusalem many times. I have seen the world-famous "wailing wall," and many other portions of the wall of the Herodian temple, and the huge, rectangular stones that comprise the temple wall are truly enormous. They are extremely heavy, and it is virtually certain that Jesus implied the great, end-time destruction of a temple in Jerusalem would be by means of a massive earthquake.

You and I have been living in a time of "wars and rumors of wars," for a very long time. The world has suffered through two rounds of world war, and approximately sixty-five smaller, regional wars have been fought since the end of World War II, with major outbreaks of warfare in Korea, Greece, Vietnam, Nigeria, Rwanda, Bosnia, and elsewhere.

Now, not only are some of the dread diseases of the past, such as the Bubonic plague, meningitis and increasingly virulent and contagious strains of flu taking a startling toll of human life each year, but the dreaded specter of AIDS, if not checked, could eventually rival the infamous "Black Death" of Europe and Great Britain which took up to fifty percent of the population during the Middle Ages.

One may scoff and say: "But there have always been wars, and there have always been these natural disasters." That is true, as far as it goes. But there have NOT always been many thousands of multi-megaton nuclear warheads posed atop giant, intercontinental ballistic missiles in many different nations!

Read Matthew 24:21. Jesus said "except those days be shortened, no flesh should be saved!" Except God intervenes to save humanity, there would not be a man, woman, or child left alive on this earth!

Jesus strongly indicated that ALL of these great, globe-girdling events would begin to occur at the same time as other great events, including a great falling away from the truth of God, the "scattering of the holy people," and the eventual emergence of a great military dictator called "the beast," and a great spiritual leader called "the false prophet."

For a more complete understanding of all these events, write immediately for our free booklets, *Who, What Is the Beast?* and *What Is the Mark Of the Beast?*

Now, turn to and read many of the places in your Bible that describes earthquakes.

Notice, Isaiah 24:18-20, where the poles of the earth will be shaken, and the earth will reel to and fro. Read Haggai 2:6-11, and Zechariah 14:4 and 5, together with Revelation 16:18. There is to be increasing earthquake activity up to the time of Christ's return, coupled with a truly gigantic quake at the moment of His arrival on earth!

"The earth is completely broken down; the earth is totally rent\_the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Eternal shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Isaiah 24:19-21).

## **Are All Earthquakes Acts of God?**

Are all earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, and hurricanes only chance occurrences of natural forces? A study of geologic history would reveal that the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, for all its massive scope and far-reaching effects, is but a tiny and insignificant event in an ages-long series of calamitous and catastrophic occurrences that have built such massive mountain ranges as the Rockies, Himalayas, Pyrenees, Hindu Kush, Alps, Andes, Atlas, and the Cascades of the Pacific Northwest.

The very continents themselves, their present location, form and shape, represent mute testimony to monstrous cataclysms that defy human imagination wherein whole continents were submerged beneath the seas, perhaps emerging and resubmerging many times until the earth as we know it came to being.

Certainly the Mount St. Helens eruption was a major disaster. Since that time, Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted, forcing evacuation of many villages, the closing of Clark Air Force Base, and causing untold suffering in human life and property loss. Since Pinatubo, the world has been treated to years of bright, rose-hued sunsets, as millions of pounds of volcanic ash was spewed high into the super stratosphere.

These disasters, though severe enough, were but minuscule in comparison to those of some of recorded history's greatest disasters.

## **Krakatoa**

The most stupendous explosion ever recorded by man was the blast that destroyed Krakatoa, a volcanic island that was located in Sunda Strait, between Java and Sumatra. But even this explosion, taking place in 1883, was minuscule in comparison with that which had occurred at some point long prior to any Europeans exploring the region. In that volcanic blast, a mountain so large had been blown into the stratosphere that it left a broken crater ring, visible only by a string of islands which represented the outer portions of the base of an ancient massive mountain which had completely disappeared. As time went on, a new series of cones gradually built inside this ring of islands. The largest of these, Krakatoa, gradually rose to a height of 2,623 feet above sea level. By 1877, the Sunda Strait was being repeatedly rocked by earthquakes. Krakatoa was an uninhabited island whose lower slopes were covered with thick tropical growth. For the next several years, as the seismic activity continued, Krakatoa appeared quiet. Then the mountain began sending columns of smoke and ash into the air. The activity grew in intensity until

gouts of pumice, ash, and smoke were pouring out of the top of the cone, accompanied by explosions and earthquakes. Then, on August 26, 1883, a series of imagination-defying detonations began. They came in quick succession, the four most violent on the following day, August 27. As each titanic blast rocked the area, tens of thousands of cubic feet of the mountain were hurled into the skies, and massive clouds of ash and smoke rose into the upper stratosphere, reaching upward more than fifty miles.

As the solid matter came raining down, it completely buried the thickly covered islands in the vicinity, destroying the lush tropical jungles and greatly increasing the land mass of those closest to Krakatoa. Here and there new islands were formed as massive amounts of rock splashed into the shallow seas and built up above sea level. The amount of material belched up by the mountain as it eviscerated is incalculable.

Large quantities of ash fell over an area of 300,000 square miles as about five cubic miles of rock fragments were roaring into the skies. The hardening foam of volcanic explosions creates the familiar "pumice," or the only rock known to float, because of its light weight and porosity. Ships reported masses of volcanic pumice floating in the seas too thick to penetrate.

With each explosion, the mountain exposed more of the white-hot core of molten lava rising in its throat to the in-rushing seawater. As the waves rushed in, crackling explosions occurred, and massive columns of steam boiled into the skies. But the seas prevailed, eventually, until the rising lava cooled and temporarily stopped the upward surge of magma from beneath the earth's crust. Finally the pressure from beneath overcame the temporary plug in the mountain's throat and another titanic explosion occurred. This happened again and again until a huge cavity, now 1,000 feet below the level of the sea, was all that remained of an island formerly 2,623 feet high.

Lamps were being lit at noonday in Batavia, Java, about 100 miles distant. It became black as midnight in towns and villages for 150 miles as the massive cloud of dust expanded. The tropical upper winds began carrying the dust from east to west at about 73 miles per hour until the entire space between 30 degrees north and 45 degrees south was covered with diffused material. Eventually this upper-level layer of dust was carried completely around the world. It was visible in North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Australia, and from the far north of Scandinavia to the tip of South Africa.

An atmospheric paroxysm, or shock wave, traveled completely around the world no fewer than seven times, and the actual sounds of the explosion were heard at Bangkok, in the Philippines, Ceylon, western and southern Australia and out into the Pacific islands, as much as 3,000 miles distant.

Meanwhile, the blast had created two kinds of titanic sea waves: a long wave which surged outward at about one hour intervals, and a ragged, more erratic short wave. In one combination of both, a wall of water 120 feet high smashed through towns and villages in the islands, killing an estimated 36,000 humans and hurling boats and ships far inland.

The waves spread out through the Indian Ocean, rounded the Cape of Good Hope and finally spent themselves in the Atlantic and English Channel.

World weather was affected for years, even if records are scant, and the whole human race was treated to spectacular, blazing red sunsets for several years after Krakatoa's explosion.

For the next forty-four years the region was quiet as life gradually began to be carried by the winds, waves, and birds, and tropical vegetation began to appear once more in areas that has been completely buried in tons of rock and ash.

Then, on December 29, 1927, the sea floor began to erupt in the same region where previous cones had formed. By one month later, the growing flow of lava had begun to emerge from the sea. It was named Anak Krakatoa (Daughter of Krakatoa) by the natives as soon as it appeared. For years following, the Daughter of Krakatoa continued with sporadic activity until it had reached a height of 360 feet above sea level by 1953. By the early 1960s, the mountain was still continuing sporadic activity.

## **The Ring of Fire**

If one were to view the globe in current geophysical terms, studying the makeup of our planet from the overview now possible through satellite surveys and mapping of the ocean bottom, the traditional approach to geography would be dramatically altered.

One would see the whole of the crust of the earth as a series of "tectonic plates" of greater and lesser thickness "floating," as it were, on the magma beneath. While most of the earth appears to be water from the vantage point of space, the oceans themselves are but plains, valleys, mountain ranges, deep rifts and volcanic peaks covered to one degree or another by the waters of the sea.

There are three "rings of fire" which girdle the globe—the first extending along the entire Pacific coasts of North and South America and extending to Asia, the second extending from the Mediterranean through the East Indies (where Krakatoa blew up) and the third lying beneath the seas, cropping up now and then as islands in the mid-ocean ridges.

Consider our western hemisphere. Beginning with the outermost tip of the Aleutian chain, you will notice some of the most spectacular mountain peaks in the world—and frequently notice volcanically active peaks, or mountains thought to be dormant (like Mount St. Helens was for so many years), but which were obviously active at some time in the past. An almost unbroken mountain chain, containing some of the largest mountains in the world (like McKinley, Wrangell, Torbert, Spurr, and others in Alaska) extends from the Aleutians into Alaska, the Yukon, British Columbia and branching out to become the Rockies, the Cascades, the Sierra Madre range and other associated ranges in North America, becoming the Sierra of Mexico, the very active volcanic peaks of Guatemala (Fuego, Tajmulco, Acatenango, Iraqu, and others), Costa Rica, El Salvador



and Nicaragua in Central America, and blending into the soaring Andes chain in South America.

Chimborazo, in Ecuador, soars upward to over 20,500 feet, higher even than famous Kilimanjaro of Tanzania (19,340 feet). Some of the most famous peaks in the Andes reach above 22,000 feet. The majestic Andes continue along the Pacific coast of South America, extending through Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile to the "Land of Fire" (Tierra del Fuego) at the tip of the continent, and Argentina.

Looking the other direction, this same chain dips under the North Pacific Ocean and then emerges as the volcanic chain of the Japanese Islands. Japan has been one of the most vulnerable areas in the world to massive earthquakes, accompanying tidal waves and potential volcanic activity. Spectacular Mount Fujiyama, long a symbol of Japan, sports rising steam from dozens of hot springs along its sides. Some far-out thinkers even proposed bombing the crater during World War II in the hopes a volcanic eruption could be triggered

. The four main islands, Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku, and Hokkaido, are all volcanic. From Japan, the ring of fire continues in the form of the major mountain chains of China and Tibet, the famous Himalayas featuring the mightiest peaks on the globe. The chain is broken by the Khyber Pass and the Bosphorus-Dardanelles, and then continues into the Carpathians, the Alps, and, finally, the Pyrenees, separating France from Spain.

The three "rings of fire" contain dozens and dozens of active volcanoes. Of the approximately 600 peaks which are active, some of the most famous are Mauna Loa and Mauana Kea, in Hawaii; Etna, Vesuvius and Stromboli in Italy and Sicily; Tristan de Cunha, in the Atlantic Ocean; and Popocatepetl and Paracutin, of Mexico. In addition to the 600 or so active mountains, there are another 10,000 volcanic peaks listed as inactive. Until 1980, Mount St. Helens was listed as among those.

But volcanic eruptions are nowhere nearly so famous for taking human life as are earthquakes, for all their spectacular displays.

All earthquakes are explainable through geophysical forces. Does this mean God does not, from time to time, specially intervene and directly use an earthquake for His purpose, or even bring about an earthquake? A little later we shall see.

For millennia, human beings have been wiped out by the tens of thousands in massive earthquakes. Quakes cause avalanches, huge earth slides that completely change the shape of whole mountains, burying towns and villages beneath millions of tons of rock, never to be seen again. They cause the dreaded tsunamis (the Japanese word for seismic, or "tidal," waves), huge surges of water (not related to the tides at all, but misnamed) that can reach incredible heights, as the 120 foot wall of water that took 36,000 lives as a result of Krakatoa's explosions. Further, they can rain such clouds of pumice and ash as to bury whole cities (like Pompeii) and send torrents of red-hot molten lava flooding across the land, incinerating everything in its path. Huge splits and cracks can open up in

the earth; whole buildings disappear. And, when the epicenter strikes near a modern city, the rupture of gas lines, electrical lines, water and sewer pipes creates havoc, sometimes (as in the disastrous San Francisco fire) resulting in greater destruction of life and property than in the quake itself.

The gas mains bring fires, and the ruptured water mains cannot put them out. In the aftermath, there is always the specter of polluted surface water and even subsurface wells, and disease.

Some of the most famous earthquakes of all time have occurred in the twentieth century. While most Americans remember the San Francisco quake along the San Andreas fault\_largely because of motion pictures, books and pictures\_that quake, in 1906, caused only 700 deaths. By contrast, a quake that shattered Messina, Italy, just two years later took 75,000 lives, but most Americans would know nothing of it.

The largest loss of life comes when quakes hit the populated centers. Massive earthquakes have occurred in sparsely populated areas with little loss of life, and milder shocks, striking centers of population, have taken terrible tolls.

The earthquake that shook Kansu, China, in 1920 killed 200,000 people. Tokyo and Yokohama, Japan, were devastated by a 1923 quake whose combined effects (fires and tsunamis) wiped out 143,000 human beings. Only twelve years after the quake of 1920, Kansu, China, was again the scene of a giant earthquake, killing 70,000 more.

Sixty thousand died in Quetta, India, in 1935, and in 1939 Chillan, Chile, was the scene of a temblor that killed 30,000.

It may seem the most recent earthquakes are milder than those of the more distant past; comparatively fewer people died in the Los Angeles (Sylmar) quake on February 9, 1971 (though property damage was extensive). But, as recently as 1960, Agadir, Morocco, was the site of a loss of 12,000 people from an earthquake. Two years later 10,000 died in Iran, and, again in 1968, an Iranian quake killed 11,000.

The Peruvian quake of 1970 may be fading in many memories, yet it took 47,194 lives, buried whole towns and villages, caused tsunamis to come surging up the Pacific to cause damage to shore installations and shipping even to the California coast, and changed the whole shape of some of the Peruvian coastline.

In 1985, a temblor registering 8.1 on the Richter scale hit Mexico City and three coastal states, killing an estimated 25,000; and in December of 1988, a quake registering only 6.9, significantly lower than the most destructive quakes of the past, turned block after block of office and apartment buildings, housing developments, factories, schools, and hospitals in the heavily populated towns of the northwest portion of Soviet Armenia into mounds of rubble, leaving between 40,000 and 70,000 dead, tens of thousands injured, and at least half a million homeless.

## What Causes Quakes?

Our earth is about 70 percent water, as seen from space, and only about 30 percent land. But the oceans are like massive salt lakes resting on the rocky strata forming their bottoms, which are not unlike the features found on the continents: mountain ranges, deep, trench-like rift valleys, isolated volcanic cones, plateaus, and plains. All are found here and there on the sea floors.

This outer crust of rock (mostly sedimentary, or water formed) is composed of an upper and a lower layer. The upper layer is generally made up of the continents and their "continental shelves," or the shallower portion of the continents projecting into the oceans, prior to dropping into the abyssal depths of the sea floors. The lower layer, making up most of the sea floors, is called the "sima" and is mostly denser, hardened rock formerly lava. While the basic rock of most of the continents is granite, the heavier basalt lies beneath, and beneath the crust lies the "mantle" of the earth, a thick, plastic-like layer of rock about 1,800 miles deep with temperatures ranging from 1,600 degrees Fahrenheit to about 4,000 degrees.

Deeper within the earth are the outer core about 1,400 miles thick and perhaps as much as 9,000 degrees Fahrenheit, composed, it is believed, of melted iron and nickel and finally the inner core, perhaps consisting of pure iron and nickel in molten form, perhaps 9,000 degrees.

The continents are thought to be "floating" as it were, on the molten mantle of the earth.

Around the entire crust are innumerable "cracks" in the rocks forming the continents and sea floors called "faults." With the recent advancements in geophysical knowledge related to satellite mapping and extensive oceanography, it is now known that the continents, sea floors, island chains, and all geologic features of the crust are interrelated.

An analogy might be to soft-boil an egg, then gently crack the shell in dozens and dozens of places, but being careful not to break the skin inside the shell. The many pieces of shell left intact would represent the "tectonic plates" of the earth. The cracks would represent the innumerable fault lines, or cracks, in the crust. The mostly fluid yolk represents the incredibly hot core of molten iron and nickel, and the egg white would represent the "mantle" of superhot magma upon which the continents and ocean beds were "floating."

One could softly squeeze the egg, moving the cracked shell about a little, and yet not break the skin.

But here and there, along the three-part "ring of fire" on our earth, the molten magma of the mantle intrudes close to the surface. Sometimes movement of the magma causes increased melting of upper surface rocks and materials, creating compressed gas, ash, dust and steam.

In a volcanic explosion, such as that of Mount St. Helens, the magma causes rapidly expanding gas to rise in the vent holes (of which there may be many in some volcanoes) and in the core of the volcano. This explosion is not unlike that of a modern bullet. When the gun hammer smashes against the "primer" (a small "cap" of highly explosive material that serves to ignite the more slowly burning gunpowder), the primer vents its burning gases into the powder, causing it to explode. The rapidly expanding gases then dislodge the bullet from the throat of the shell and send it speeding out the barrel of the gun. The gases continue to expand until the bullet has actually left the barrel so that the effect of the burning powder is not contained merely in the shell casing but continues to burn behind the bullet and even to be partly expelled (seen in tiny flashes of streaking fire) as the bullet departs the muzzle.

The "bullet" in the throat of a volcano may be cubic miles of rock, earth, □ trees and even glaciers and lakes!

But, even without magmatic intrusions along fault lines or vent holes (as in the volcano), there is continual stress along the fault lines of the earth as the continual rotation of the earth, the effect of erosion, □ weather, and tides contribute to earth movement.

Many believe the movement of the crust, in bending, building stress and then giving way or "snapping" suddenly as pressure is relieved (causing earthquakes), can be partially brought about by man.

By pumping vast amounts of oil, natural gas, and saltwater from the deep wells, it is believed the subsurface rocks may collapse, causing quakes. It is claimed a whole series of smaller shocks in the Denver region was virtually "man-made," because of the pumping of wastes by the Army deep within the rocks in the earth's crust. When it was resumed, the quakes resumed, until it was as if man could "turn on and off" minor earthquakes at will.

But most earthquakes are not related to volcanic activity directly, even if molten rock, deep within the mantle might be an indirect cause.

Few know that there may be as many as one million earthquakes of greater or lesser intensity in any given year, most of which are taking place along the hundreds of fault lines beneath the seas, causing little or no damage.

As the gradually changing masses of molten rocks in the earth's interior shift, the crust is being continually squeezed and stretched. We think of rocks as very hard, and they are. Yet, to a degree, whole mountain ranges of stratified or metamorphosed rocks can bend and stretch to certain tolerances.

When the forces from beneath become greater than the rocks can tolerate, they rupture, causing seismic waves that travel in three ways: compressional, shear, and surface.

Compressional waves are like sound waves; all these waves of shock are measured by seismographic stations all about the earth.

The compressional waves pass completely through the earth in about twenty-one minutes.

While no part of the earth is completely "immune" from earthquakes (there is no such thing as an "earthquake-proof" region), about 95 percent of all earthquakes occur in two of the great "rings of fire," or earthquake belts, represented by the huge chain of mountains circling the Pacific and what is called the "Alpide" belt: the one extending from North Africa and Spain throughout southern Europe and to the Himalayas, Hindu Kush, and beyond.

In recent years, seismology has made dramatic strides. With improved mapping of fault lines, and the constant discovery of smaller, little-known fault lines contiguous to the major ones, scientists have been moving increasingly toward that point in time when earthquakes may be "predicted" on a fairly accurate basis.

Today no such predictions are possible. However, within the framework of years, scientists are able to indicate where major quakes are likely to occur. Scientists have called 1995 the "year of earthquakes" in Japan. Japanese technology prides itself on building tall buildings, elevated causeways, port facilities and the like which are all but "earthquake proof" except for a quake of perhaps 8.0 intensity.

Major buildings are built atop huge, coiled springs; built in sections, with flexibility, so they can reel back and forth, but not shatter, and come crumbling down.

But Japanese technicians were shocked when many modern structures, such as the huge elevated causeway on our cover, came crashing down.

This article is not intended to strike fear into any human hearts. We cannot live our lives in day to day fear of earthquakes. "Perfect love casts out fear," says your Bible. But that is only for those who have repented of their sins, and who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, and soon-coming King. The important thing to remember is that Jesus Christ said many different events would begin to overlap each other; that we would enter a time of wars and rumors of wars; of disease epidemics, famines, and so-called "natural" calamities!

And, just as we entered this time, we would also see an increase in false prophets! We would see a falling away from the truth! We would see a time when the "power of the holy people would be scattered"!

Are we now living in this time?

One thing is certain, you need to be watching world events, as Jesus Christ commanded: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye might be accounted worthy to escape all

these things [the events of the tribulation] and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). That's why this magazine. To help you watch! --End--

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## Answers to Questions About The Sabbath Day

**Did God make the Sabbath to be a sign for Israel only? Is the "Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4) the perpetual life of faith that Christians experience in Christ? Is the weekly Sabbath a bygone shadow? Does the New Testament put the Sabbath and animal sacrifices in the same category? Was the Sabbath established at creation? Or was it first instituted in the time of Moses? These questions have proven challenging for many. Let's see if the Bible provides answers.**

*by Vance A. Stinson*

The Church of God, International is a Sabbathkeeping church. Since we live in a Sunday-observing world, it is not surprising that we receive many questions about the seventh-day Sabbath. Nor is it surprising that some of our readers send us anti-Sabbath material and ask for our response to it.

Obviously, we cannot write a full response to every book, booklet, tract, and taped message taking issue with Sabbathkeeping. But we can address some of the objections most often raised.

The following questions are a fair representation of the questions we most often receive on the subject, and of the objections most often presented by those who claim that the Sabbath is not commanded for Christians.

## The Creational Sabbath

**Question:** The book of Genesis says that God "rested," or ceased, from His labors on the seventh day, and that He sanctified that one day. But the account does not say that every subsequent seventh day was to be observed as a holy day. Nor does it say that the seventh day had an "evening and a morning." Doesn't this indicate that the seventh day was not a literal day, but was the divine rest that Adam and Eve enjoyed with God until they committed sin? Further, we are nowhere told that any of the patriarchs before Moses kept the Sabbath. Doesn't this suggest that the Sabbath was established in the time of Moses, and not on the day God ceased from His work of creation?

**Answer:** The fact that the first six days of creation week have both "evening and morning" indicates that the seventh day also has both evening and morning. In other words, it is a literal day just like the preceding six days. Further, the wording of the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) shows that the Sabbath is a creational institution. God commanded Israel to work six days and keep holy the seventh, "for [i.e., because] in six days the LORD made heaven and earth...and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." God was telling Israel to keep the Sabbath because He had blessed and hallowed it long before.

If you would begin reading in Exodus 16, the first place the Sabbath is mentioned after the creation account, and continue reading until you finish the last chapter of the Old Testament, you would find that large sections, which were written during times the Sabbath was being kept, do not so much as mention the Sabbath. Therefore, the fact that we find no example of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or any of the other patriarchs keeping the Sabbath does not mean that the Sabbath was not being kept.

References to the "week" and to cycles of "seven days" (Genesis 8:10, 12; 29:27,28) suggest that the weekly cycle was known during the patriarchal period. Evidence that the weekly cycle was known during that period plus God's description of Abraham as one who "obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26:5) is substantial evidence that the Sabbath command was included among the laws Abraham kept

## The Sign Commandment

**Question:** The Sabbath was given to Israel as a sign. Therefore it is a sign of the Old Covenant. But Christians are not living under the Old Covenant. Therefore, isn't it wrong to say that the Sabbath is a sign for Christians?

**Answer:** To Moses, God said: "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations: that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you....It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:13,17).

Indeed, the Sabbath was a sign for the nation of Israel. But does this mean that its function as a sign was exhausted under the Old Covenant?

No, not at all. The New Testament provides proof that the Sabbath is, and has always been, a sign of the *New Covenant!*

Before we see this proof, let's understand what the word *sign* means.

The Hebrew word translated "sign" in Exodus 31:13 is *oth*. The term is frequently translated "token" in the King James Version. A token is a symbol, or something that is indicative of some other thing. For the people of Israel, the Sabbath was a *symbol*, a reminder, of the fact that God had sanctified them. By observing the day God had *sanctified* (set apart) at creation week (Genesis 2:2,3), the Israelites were reminded, through observance of the seventh day, that they were a people set apart (sanctified).

So, since the Sabbath was indicative of the relationship between God and Israel, it was in that sense a sign of the Old Covenant. However, it is a mistake to assume that the Sabbath's function as a sign is limited to the Old Covenant.

Hebrews 4 reveals plainly that the creational Sabbath (verse 4) is a symbol (hence, a sign) of both the redemptive "rest" that Christians have entered (verse 3) and the ultimate rest they will enter in the future (verse 11) once the Kingdom of God is established in the earth. *The Sabbath, then, is a sign of the eternal relationship God's people will have with Him through Jesus Christ!*

Now, does that have anything to do with the New Covenant? Indeed, it does! Therefore, the Sabbath is a sign for God's people today, and it is a sign of the New Covenant. *Its function as a sign of the Old Covenant was temporary. Its function as a sign of redemption and ultimate salvation both precedes and supersedes the Old Covenant.*

## **The Sabbath For the People of God**

**Question:** The book of Hebrews says that a Sabbath rest remains for God's people. But isn't this "Sabbath rest" the redemptive rest we have in Christ? Isn't it an ongoing, day-to-day rest, rather than a one-day-per-week rest? Wasn't the writer of Hebrews trying to show how Christ superseded Old Covenant observances? And aren't the "works" we have ceased from our own sinful works?



**Answer:** Hebrews 4 certainly speaks of the present redemptive rest as well as the eternal rest God's people will enter when the Kingdom of God is established. But this by no means suggests that the writer of the epistle did not have literal Sabbathkeeping in view when he wrote: "There remains therefore a *Sabbathkeeping* [Greek: saba-tismos, a technical term for "Sabbath-keeping" in post-canonical Jewish literature] for the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:9,10).

Was the writer spiritualizing the Sabbath? Or was he pointing out that there remains *aliteral* Sabbathkeeping as a perpetual reminder of the present redemption and ultimate salvation available through Christ?

First, the epistle has been called the "Book of Hebrews" because it is obvious that the writer, whether Paul or someone else, is addressing a predominantly Jewish readership. It is well known that the early Jewish Christians continued steadfastly in their observance of the Sabbath, even long after the close of the first century. The writer's use of *sabatismos*, which his readers would have immediately recognized as a technical term for "Sabbath-keeping," could have only reinforced their belief that the Fourth Commandment was still binding.

Second, assuming that the "works" from which God's people cease when they enter His rest (verse 10) are "*sinful* works" leads to an unnatural interpretation of the verse. The verse says that the person who has entered God's rest has ceased from his own works "as God did from His." Did God cease from *sinful* works? Of course not! He ceased from His work of creation. Therefore, entering His rest through ceasing from our work every seventh day reminds us perpetually of the ultimate rest that awaits us.

## **The Shadow and the Substance**

**Question:** In his epistle to the Colossians, the apostle Paul says the weekly Sabbath and annual festivals are a "shadow" of the reality, which is Christ. The epistle to the Hebrews uses identical language in describing the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Doesn't this mean that the Sabbath and sacrifices fall in the same category, and that both are bygone shadows?

**Answer:** The Sabbath and the sacrifices are shadows, meaning that they portray various aspects of Christ and His redemptive work. However, the fact that both the Sabbath and the sacrifices carry a "shadow" aspect does not mean that both fall under the same category. The ceremonial, sacrificial, and administrative laws associated with the Levitical priesthood are said to be "obsolete," "growing old," "ready to disappear," "set aside," and "taken away" (Hebrews 7:18; 8:13; 10:9). A "Sabbathkeeping," however, "remains for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). If the one is "obsolete" and the other "*remains*," they obviously do not belong to the same category.

The sacrifices of the Aaronic priesthood serve as a reminder of sins. For the person whose sins have been blotted off the record, those sacrifices are obsolete, for there is no need to remind a person of sins that are no longer on his account. In such a case, the Substance (Christ and His redemptive work) has filled the shadow (the sacrifices), and the shadow is now obsolete.

The Sabbath, as a shadow, does portray the redemptive rest God's people presently experience in Christ; however, it also pictures that *future* rest (Hebrews 4:11) Christians will experience when Christ establishes His Kingdom on earth. The reality (the future rest\_immortality in God's Kingdom) *has not yet filled the shadow!* It is therefore erroneous to consider the Sabbath a "bygone shadow."

In Colossians 2:16-23, Paul merely tells the Colossians to pay no attention to the asceticists who would judge them in eating and drinking and in matters pertaining to the Sabbath, the holy days, and the calendar. The trouble-makers would have the Colossians adding all kinds of rigorous, man-made regulations (verses 20-22) to the Sabbath. Knowing that adding burdensome regulations to the Sabbath and holy days caused the Jews of his time to miss the point of these observances, Paul endeavored to restore for the Colossians the original purpose of the Sabbath and festivals. They are, and always have been, a shadow. The "body," or substance, that casts the shadow is Christ\_the Person, His teachings, and His work as Savior, High Priest, and King who will usher in the Kingdom.

## Old Covenant Rules?

**Question:** Don't we have to admit that Paul's approach to the Sabbath and holy days radically differs from the Sabbath and holy day rules of the Old Covenant?

**Answer:** Paul probably had principles from the Old Testament in mind when he wrote Colossians 2:16,17. The shadow/substance (or form/substance) principle is clearly revealed in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 1:10-18 and in Isaiah 58, God expresses His displeasure with Israel for having neglected the substance while holding the form. The Sabbath, new moons, and feasts are described as burdensome to God. He *hates* them, and says they are worthless. Why? Because the Israelites observing these times are self-serving, unmerciful, unjust, and oppressive in their dealings with others. The Sabbath, the Day of Atonement, and all the other holy days, in one way or another, portray freedom from bondage\_particularly the bondage of sin. Yet, here were "religious" Israelites who, while observing days that picture freedom from bondage, were putting a yoke of bondage on others. How? By driving their workers excessively, by neglecting the widows and orphans, and by living ruthlessly.

This is the same principle expressed in the New Testament regarding the Sabbath. Paul's approach to the Sabbath clearly reflects the mind of God as revealed through an Old Testament prophet. There is no radical difference between "Old Covenant rules" and Paul's instruction.

**Question:** But isn't it true that the prophets, through "the Spirit of Christ which was in them" (I Peter 1:11), prophesied of the grace that would come? And isn't that why they rarely cited Moses?

**Answer:** Indeed, the prophets, through the Spirit of Christ, foresaw the salvation that would come through Christ's redemptive work. But they saw no conflict between Moses and Christ. They referred many times to the Law, and prophesied of a time when the nations would be instructed from it.

Isaiah, for example, prophesied of a time when "many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: *for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem*" (Isaiah 2:3). The prophet foresaw a time when "all flesh," not just the Jews, would observe the Sabbath (Isaiah 66:23). He declared: "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

Scholars have noted the emphasis on redemption and salvation in Isaiah. The *New Compact Bible Dictionary* states: "Isaiah is preeminently the prophet of redemption," and "has been called the evangelist of the OT..." (pp. 254,255). The prophet certainly foresaw the coming of Christ and spoke by the Spirit of Christ. Yet, interestingly, He *also emphasized the Sabbath!* If the Sabbath belongs exclusively to the Old Covenant, it seems odd that the "prophet of redemption" who spoke by the Spirit of Christ stressed its proper observance so strongly.

Through Isaiah, God pronounces a blessing upon anyone who "keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing evil" (Isaiah 56:2; cf. vv. 4,6). He says: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words [their "pleasure" and "words" involve binding heavy burdens on others, neglecting the oppressed, speaking vanities, and so on (vv. 6,7,9)]: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth..." (Isaiah 58:13,14).

To see how much emphasis the prophets placed on the Law and the Sabbath, simply look up these and related terms in a concordance.

The idea that the prophets deemphasized the Law as they anticipated the coming of the Messiah became popular in the early part of the twentieth century, but is generally rejected by scholars today. Unfortunately, it occasionally reappears.

## **Jesus and the Law**

**Question:** Doesn't Matthew 5 show that Jesus radically reinterpreted the Law and even overturned many of its commandments?

**Answer:** Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19).

The term *fulfill* in verse 17 does not mean or in any way suggest "to bring to an end." On the contrary, it means to fill up, or "fill full." The terms *destroy* and *fulfill* (verse 17) correspond with the terms *break* and *do* (verse 19). Jesus did not come to break, but to do, the Law. He came to teach others to keep the Law, and in so doing He had to strip away the religious leaders' *perversions* of the Law. He came, not to contradict Moses, but to explain what the Law of Moses had meant all along. *That's what Matthew 5 is about!*

Each time Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said....But I say unto you....," He was not contradicting Moses, but taking issue with the way the religious leaders interpreted Moses. In so doing, He "magnified the Law, and made it honorable" (Isaiah 42:21).

One passage often cited as a contravention of Moses is Matthew 5:31,32, where Jesus appears to be overthrowing Moses' "writing of divorcement" law. However, upon closer examination of the text, and in view of the historical context, it becomes clear that Jesus is actually explaining the true meaning of the Mosaic command.

Many of the Pharisees claimed that divorce for any reason was all right as long as the husband obeyed Moses' command to give his wife a "writing of divorcement." Jesus, however, ex-pounds the principle underlying Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (Moses' instruction regarding marriage and divorce). Moses allows divorce on the grounds of "some uncleanness" (verse 1). Christ explains that "some uncleanness" means "fornication" (Matthew 5:32), which includes all types of sexual improprieties. This is not a contravention of Moses, but an explanation of the principle underlying the Mosaic command.

Jesus' rejection of rabbinic perversions of the Law is also seen in His treatment of the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:1-13). In each example, Jesus restores the true purpose and meaning of the Sabbath, and even cites Old Testament examples for support (verses 3-5). Jesus was in complete accord with Moses and the prophets; the scribes and the Pharisees were not.

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## The Real Reasons Christ Came To This Earth

**In the first part of this series (entitled "Christ Did Not Come To Bring Peace"), we looked at some of the things Christ did not do when He came to this earth. He did not come to usher in an age of peace, do away with the Law, or establish a new religion. This month we will begin to look at the true reasons Christ came.**

*by Garner Ted Armstrong*

One could cite many reasons Christ came to this earth. Here are the main ones.

*Jesus Christ came to this earth to qualify, in human flesh, as it's future King of kings, and Lord of lords.*

Notice: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the *government* shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His *government* there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Eternal of Hosts will accomplish this" (Isaiah 9:6,7).

Study this scripture carefully. Do you see the word *religion* included anywhere? Is "revival" of the synagogue, or "doctrines," or "liturgy," or "ritual," or "vespers," or "Christian endeavor," or the lighting of candles, or Gregorian chants, or rosaries, or indulgences, or anything smacking of hidden, "spiritual" *mysteries* mentioned?

No, of course not.

What is plainly set forth is GOVERNMENT! Christ was prophesied to come to assume the role of King, to sit upon a throne which was prophesied to remain *on this earth*\_the throne of David!

The archangel Gabriel said to Mary, the mother of Jesus: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him *the throne of His father David*, and He shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

God made a covenant with David, promising him that his throne would never fail. The prophecies show that throne would be *overturned* a total of three times, until "He come whose right it is [Christ]." It would *remain on this earth* (Ezekiel 21:25-27). For a full understanding about the throne of David, its present location, and how it came to be there, write (or call 903-825-2525) immediately for your free copy of *Europe and America In Prophecy*.

Millions "spiritualize away" the plain meaning of God's Word concerning Christ's return to this earth to RULE it, from the throne of David, with a rod of iron (Zechariah 14:4; Revelation 2:26; 20:4). To them, Christ is somehow "ruling" up in heaven! They are utterly deceived, unknowing, in spiritual darkness.

The prophecies concerning Christ's sojourn on this earth prove He was coming to *qualify* as its future KING! Notice the prophecy of Isaiah again; how His function would be as a *ruler*, as a *judge*, as a *counsellor*; how His government would continually expand!

What are the problems of this world today, and what are the *causes* of those problems? Crime, divorce, poverty, squalor, sickness, □ warfare\_all the result of human lusts, and the feeble attempts of mankind to govern himself apart from the laws of God.

Continually, the prophets of old went to the *political leaders* of their time. They warned *kings* of their chicanery, duplicity, idolatry, dishonesty, corruption, and sins! Study Jeremiah 23, particularly versus 4 through 6, about the return of Christ to inherit David's throne! While *religious* leaders (pastors) are surely indicted for their watering down of truth and exploitation of the flock, an ultimate solution is proposed, which is the overthrow of all present world governments, and the setting up of the *Government of God* in their place!

Study Christ's stirring prophecy of Matthew 24. For decades, I have asked, "What's religious about a *drought*?" Jesus spoke of "natural" calamities, such as droughts, famines, and earthquakes. He also spoke of vast wars to come, as some of the signs preceding His return.

None of these are "religious" exercises. None smack of "ecumenism," or the sugar-coated smarm of the utterly fallacious cliché: "By men of good will working together everywhere, we shall have world peace."

God said the false prophets would be crying, "Peace! Peace!" when there IS no peace! (Ezekiel 13:10).

Jesus Christ plainly said He did not come to *bring peace* to the world then! "Think NOT that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

"For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).

Christ foretold *great tribulation*; a time of wars and rumors of wars; a time of betrayal, of persecution, of suffering and death!

Continually, He reminded His disciples He would become the KING over His Kingdom. What was the very *title* of His message? The *KINGDOM* of God!

Matthew 13 is replete with many of Christ's Kingdom parables. After prophesying that many of His own disciples would "see Him coming in His Kingdom," He provided them with a *vision* about that Kingdom (Matthew 17:1-9).

One of His most outstanding Kingdom parables was about "A certain nobleman [who] went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (see Luke 19:11-27).

In this parable, Christ describes Himself as the young Nobleman, Who, upon returning, apportions positions of *authority* in His Kingdom to His servants, according to their natural, individual abilities and accomplishments. When the first servant showed his accomplishments, Christ said: "Well, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, *have thou authority over ten cities*" (verse 17).

He concluded the parable by describing those who rebel against God; who will not repent, and obey Him. "But those mine enemies, who would not that I should *reign over them*, bring hither, and slay before me" (verse 27).

Dozens and dozens of times in the four Gospels, the whole message, life, and future purpose of Jesus Christ is summed up in the gospel of the *Kingdom of God!*

He said: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, *then shall He sit upon the THRONE* [David's throne, which is on this earth] *of His glory*: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth His sheep from the goats...Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, `Come, ye blessed of My Father, **INHERIT THE KINGDOM** prepared for you from the foundation of the earth'" (Matthew 25:31-34).

For a complete understanding about the Kingdom of God, write, or call, for my book, *The Real Jesus*, and the booklet, *What Is the Kingdom of God?*

## Christ Came To Disqualify the Present Evil World Ruler

The greatest struggle in the history of the world did not involve warring armies. It had nothing to do with border disputes, unfair trade practices, sanctions, embargoes, or politics.

It was a *spiritual* struggle between Jesus Christ, shortly after His baptism and just prior to His public ministry, and Satan the devil, the god of this world.

Satan was hurled down to this earth by God when he failed in his attempt to overthrow God from His throne (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:16). He is called "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2).

Satan was instantly present when God finished His masterpiece of creation: making man in God's own image, and placing our first parents in paradise. By his magnetic, charming, subtle suggestions and lying hints, he *deceived* Eve, who influenced her husband, Adam, to disobey God's commands.

The Hebrew word *nachash*, erroneously translated "serpent" in Genesis, means "whispering enchanter," and has nothing to do with the physical *appearance* of the creature Eve saw. Rather, it implies a creature who charmed, influenced, and deceived the woman. Today, Satan is described as "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, *which deceiveth the whole world*" (Revelation 12:9).

Paul wrote: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:4). Millions *worship* various "gods," or ancestors, or vague, ethereal, metaphysical concepts, not knowing they are deceived by Satan; that he is the "god" of this sin-sick world of poverty, illiteracy, disease, crime, and war.

Satan was present at Christ's birth, influencing Herod, who then viciously slew thousands of little toddlers and babies, all male children from two years and younger, in his attempt to murder Christ. Satan then appeared to Jesus in the wilderness, attempting to appeal to every human instinct in order to cause Christ to sin, and therefore to *fail* in His mission.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4:1). This was *planned* of God the Father. It was a necessary *first step* in Christ's mission on this earth. Before He could fully qualify as the "Messiah," or the "Anointed One" (which is the meaning of the title "Christ"), to qualify as future "King of kings, and Lord of lords," to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, to call His disciples, to die for the sins of the world, He had to *disqualify* the evil world ruler, Satan the devil.



"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered" (Matthew 4:2). You and I cannot imagine a fast of such duration. But Jesus Christ was in *perfect* physical health. Further, He was in complete control of Himself mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. He did not allow Himself to burn up energy needlessly by fretting, worrying, or becoming panic-stricken, like most humans would in only three or four days without food and water. Nevertheless, he was no doubt much thinner, having lost much weight. He would have been right at the point of starvation, His body crying out for food and water!

At this precise time, when He would have been at the lowest ebb of His physical strength, Satan appeared!

"And when the tempter came to Him, he said, `If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread'" (Matthew 4:3).

Notice Satan's subtle suggestion, aimed at human vanity. He did not say, "Since you are the Son of God," but "IF" you are. Most people, when having their legitimacy, their office, their rank, or their authority challenged, will swell up, and say: "Just what do you mean, `IF? I'll show you whether or not...," and so on.

Not Jesus. He did not give in to this human impulse. Instead, He instantly *quoted the Scriptures*, saying: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). The record does not show whether Satan had carefully selected several rounded stones which were the shape and color of bread, hoping to plant the thought in Jesus' mind of fresh-baked, hot, soft, tasty bread, or whether he merely pointed to stones lying about. Whatever the case, Satan not only attempted to appeal to Jesus' starving condition of extreme, painful hunger, he also tried to appeal to *vanity*, to get Christ to "prove" to Satan that He, Christ, had the power of God.

"Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:5,6).

Christ allowed Himself to be transported through the air from the "arabah," or the desert-like wilderness to the east of Jerusalem, to the city itself, where He was placed atop the temple building. Then, Satan quoted scripture. But He misapplied it, taking the intent of Psalms 91:11,12, and *twisting* it, suggesting that Christ tempt God by flinging Himself down as if committing suicide.

Had Christ given in to this temptation, the devil would have laughed in derision, and Christ *would have died!* God would not have saved Him from suicide. No angel would have intervened.

Had Jesus Christ failed this titanic battle of wills; had He given in to the subtle, charming, magnetic, tempting influence of Satan, then you and I would have no *Savior!* Christ would have *failed* in His great mission on this earth, "tabernacling" among mankind in human flesh as the Firstbegotten, as the Firstborn from the dead. Satan would be laughing still.

Christ knew this. He knew the real meaning of David's psalm; that God places His protective angels about His people to spare them from *accidental* injury or death, but will not intervene to prevent suicide!

Christ said: "It is written again, `Thou shalt not *tempt* the Lord thy God'" (Matthew 4:7), once again refusing to give in to Satan's temptations.

"Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain [scholars believe it was Mt. Hermon, which is snow-clad the year around, and provides a breathtaking view for hundreds of miles in all directions on a clear day], and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto Him, `All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me'" (Matthew 4:8,9).

Notice that Christ did not dispute Satan's claim to *possess* the kingdoms of this world; did not contend they were not Satan's to *give*. Here, the devil was implying to Christ that He need not wait for world rulership\_He need not worry about trials and tests, about the terrible beating He was to receive, or about being nailed to a tree (Acts 5:30; 10:39); that He could have world rulership *right then and there!*

But, of course, since Satan had the power to give it, he had the power to *take it away*, didn't he? Further, even though he may have given over the power to rule the world to Jesus, since he was the one who *allowed* Christ to rule, it would have meant he would always have been right there, looking over His shoulder; in the background, like a "kingmaker," the one who was *really in control*.

If the chairman of the board appoints a CEO, but then second-guesses him, alters his every decision, listens to complaints against him, and ultimately decides to *replace* him, the CEO is in a very precarious position, indeed.

Jesus Christ knew this, of course. Satan's suggestion that Christ should *worship the devil* was outrageously blasphemous, hideously revolting. To do so would have meant Christ would have been *abjectly placing Himself under Satan*, obeying him, influenced by him, ordered about by him\_become his slave!

Now, it was time to give Satan a *command!* Now, Christ had taken his wily suggestions and magnetic, charming hints long enough. Now, Satan's outrageous proposal had gone far, far beyond the bounds of temptation!

"Jesus saith unto him, `GET THEE HENCE, SATAN! For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and HIM ONLY shalt thou serve.' Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him" (Matthew 4:9-11).

At Christ's command, the devil had to obey!

Now, God's angels provided Christ with sustenance. Perhaps He ate real "angel food," and drank water they provided. Perhaps, having now passed the supreme test of His life, and having been completely physically *drained* of strength as a result, God really *did* provide miraculous food and drink. It is doubtful the term "ministered unto Him" merely means shaking His hand, or cradling His head, or smiling at Him.

This was no casual encounter. Christ did not toss it off like a super weightlifter in the Olympics, casually picking up a mere 100 pound weight. No, this was a *struggle for control of the nations of this earth!*

Satan appeared as the *present evil world ruler*, even *admitting* this was his position to Jesus.

Christ DISQUALIFIED Satan by overcoming his every wily temptation! Christ *qualified* as future world ruler, as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

## **Christ Came To Preach the Wonderful Good News Of His Future Kingdom**

The word *gospel* should be relegated to an archaic dictionary, where it appears only as a curious relic, long fallen into disuse. Millions hear about the "gospel," and have not the slightest clue as to what it means.

Many think it is a kind of country-western religious music. When they say "gospel," it means the entire religious music industry, "stars," traveling family singing groups, and maybe a Willie Nelson album.

Some use the word as a synonym for "truth." (And that's *gospel*, fella!). To many, anything whatever from the Bible is "gospel."

Millions suppose they have heard a "gospel" ABOUT Christ, meaning a story about His birth, death, and the forgiveness of sins.

Little do they know the word *gospel* is a contraction of two old Anglo- Saxon words, meaning "good news."

Jesus Christ came with a message. His message was *about the future world-ruling government of God*. Millions today believe they are worshipping Christ, worshipping the

*Messenger*, but know nothing about the *message He brought!* Millions "believe ON" Christ, but they do not BELIEVE CHRIST.

Christ's message was called "the gospel [good news] of the Kingdom of God." A king rules over a kingdom. Such a kingdom has *territory, subjects, and laws*. For a fuller understanding of just what is the Kingdom of God, write (or call) for my free booklet, *What Is the Kingdom of God?*

Christ taught His message to His disciples. His "Kingdom" parables (Matthew 13), together with many other examples, stories and analogies, continually emphasized the coming Kingdom of God.

At the annunciation of the impending birth of Christ, the angel said: "Of His *Kingdom* there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33). Christ came to qualify to "inherit the throne [the position of rulership of a king] of His father David." Matthew continually referred to that Kingdom as "the Kingdom of Heaven," while the other three writers, Mark, Luke, and John, all referred to it as the Kingdom of God. It is the Kingdom of God, Who presently dwells in heaven, which shall come down *out of* heaven, to *rule on this earth* (Revelation 20:4; 5:10; 2:26; Zechariah 14:4, Isaiah 11; Revelation 19:11- 21).

Jesus "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel [good news\_news foretold in advance] of the Kingdom..." (Matthew 4:23). When He was about to be martyred, at His last Passover, He told His disciples He would not again drink of the wine that pictured His shed blood until "I drink it new [again] in the Kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25).

On one occasion, "He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the *glad tidings* of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). Here, the word "gospel" is not used, but its *meaning* is plainly set forth: "glad tidings," or "joyful announcement."

Any exhaustive concordance will list literally dozens and dozens of references to Christ's message about the "Kingdom of God."

Here are but a *few* for your study: Matthew 4:17,23; 5:3,10,19,20; 6:10, 13,33; 7:21; 8:11; 12:28; 13:11,19,24, 31,33,38,41,43,44,45,52; 24:14; 25:1, 14,34. I have omitted many from Matt-hew's Gospel in this brief list. There are dozens more in Mark, Luke, and John.

Jesus said: "*Repent ye, and believe* the gospel." Millions do not know what it means to repent. Repentance means contrition, sorrow, remorse. It means to be deeply, emotionally, mentally and psychologically *moved* with shame and sorrow over one's rebellious deeds and thoughts; it means to be broken up, emotionally, over the knowledge that one has *sinned*.

And what IS sin?

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the *law*: for *sin is the transgression of the law*" (I John 3:4). I have in my possession a newspaper ad placed by a major denomination, urging people to learn more about their church.

The ad asks: "What is SIN?" In the text, it says: "But, on this subject of sin, let's ask\_just what is it?"

"The *way we look at it*\_that is, the way it's interpreted to us\_sin is de- fined as the error of imposing our own wills over God's will" (emphasis mine).

What a shameful admission. The writer of the ad for this large, mainstream denomination either was *ignorant* of his own Bible, or else he deliberately tried to deceive his readers. If he had quoted the Bible definition of sin, he would probably have been fired from his job, and someone else would have written the ad.

But it really doesn't matter how one or another group of people, theologians or not, ad writers or not, "look at" the subject of sin! It is God Who defines what is sin, not man in his clever manipulations, twisting of Scripture, and carnal point of view.

Paul wrote: "I had not known sin, but by the law: For I had not known lust, except the law had said, `Thou shalt not covet'" (Romans 7:7). The law defines sin. It is only through God's Ten Commandments that we know what sin IS. Paul also wrote: "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for *by the law is the knowledge of sin!*"(Romans 3:20)

Justification means the forgiveness of sin. It is the removal of guilt from past lawbreaking. Being "justified" means being "rectified," or "made right." It is not a future state, or a future guarantee. It has only to do with God's unmerited *grace*, mercy, and pardon in forgiving repentant believers who are deeply sorry they have broken His laws. Being justified means being forgiven for *sins that are past*.

The law defines sin, not the "way humans look at it."

Christ commanded men and women to *repent of sin*, and BELIEVE His advance witness of the coming Kingdom of God! Millions of professing "Christian" people, including regular church-going people, "believe on" Jesus, but do not know anything about His message! He came to □ deliver His advance good news to the people of His day, and to teach it, privately, to His disciples.

He then commissioned His disciples to announce His coming Kingdom to the world.

## **Jesus Christ Came To Call, Train, and Commission His Disciples**

Millions suppose Christ came to "save the world." They believe He made every effort to convert people, to explain God's Word to them, to get them to repent and believe on Him.

Yet, as you read in the beginning (Matthew 13:10-17), Jesus plainly said it was *not* given to the masses to understand. He said He spoke in puzzles, "*lest* they should understand with their heart, and should be converted...."

While Christ did not attempt to convert the masses, He vigorously taught His disciples. Though they were yet *carnal*, and did not understand much of what He said and did, He prophesied that, when they were converted\_when the Holy Spirit would be sent on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)\_they would *remember*.

He told them the Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth (John 16:13), and would "bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Christ *called* His disciples individually. He said: "Ye have not chosen Me, but *I have chosen you*, and ordained [set apart, appointed] you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." (John 15:16).

Who is not familiar with Jesus' invitation to Peter and Andrew: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?"

He was with them for three and one-half years, eating sleeping, praying, traveling about. During that time, they saw countless miracles. They saw Him cause deaf people to hear; blind people to see. They saw Him cast out demons, heal withered, shrunken human members, and *raise the dead*. They saw Him calm a violent storm with His word. They watched, stupefied, as a basket of food was miraculously replenished each time they divided bread and dried fish, until they fed two huge groups, one of 4000 and another of 5000, by a *miracle!*

They heard His enigmatic messages; heard His condemnation of posturing, hypocritical "religious" leaders; heard His loving concern for the sick, the poor, the elderly, and little children. They *watched Him walk on water*.

Then, they saw Him arrested!

They fled in the night, believing the revolution they had expected was all over, that they would be killed!

They *saw Him killed*; saw Him hoisted into the sky above Golgotha on an upright pale; saw His disfigured face, lacerated body, and huge spikes protruding from feet and wrists. They *watched Him die*

. Then, they saw an empty tomb.

He appeared to them time and again following His resurrection. At first, they were *unbelieving*. He had to virtually *force* them to accept the fact of His resurrection. An outstanding example of this is the famous case of "doubting Thomas," who said: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

In the ensuing verses, you read of how Christ *materialized through the walls when the doors were shut and locked*, and appeared to them.

"And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.' Then saith He to Thomas, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said unto Him, 'My Lord and my God'" (John 20:26,27).

Now, there was no further doubt in any of their minds. They had seen Him die, but He was alive again\_He had been resurrected from the dead, as He had prophesied (Matthew 12:40). Now, they not only "believed"; now, they KNEW.

Finally, Jesus Christ appeared to them and *commissioned* His disciples. He said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age [Greek: aeon]. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

For three and one-half years, He had taught, trained, and led His disciples. He had set them an amazing *example* in His perfect conduct, His sin-free life, His constant *prayer* to His Father, His miracles, His compassion, His forgiveness, His doctrines.

He knew He was constructing a major part of the *foundation* of His assembly of "called-out ones" who would come along over the generations to follow (Ephesians 2:18-22; Matthew 16:18).

This was one of the major purposes for Christ's sojourn on this earth, "tabernacling" in human flesh\_that of choosing, training, and commissioning His disciples. Few understand, today.

His disciples lived in the "here and now" with Jesus. Over and over again it is apparent from the Gospel accounts that they believed He would overthrow the Jewish leadership, that He would become *King*. From His birth, when the Magi from Persia asked, "Where is he that is born 'King of the Jews,'" the stories had persisted.

To His disciples, it was only a matter of time when He would depose the Sanhedrin, throw the Sadducees out of the temple, rouse the masses, and expel the Romans from Palestine. He would restore the kingdom as it had been in the greatest days of David and

Solomon; its borders reaching from the Nile Delta to Syria, from the Mediterranean to the desolate Arabah.

Each time Jesus challenged the hypocritical authorities, they thought this great event was near. Twice, he drove from the temple the cheating money-changers and vendors of sheep, cattle, and doves. When He fed the four and the five thousand, many of those present wanted to hoist Him atop their shoulders and begin a triumphal march on Jerusalem.

When Christ entered Jerusalem in the van of a shouting, tumultuous crowd, His disciples thought this was the moment! At the last supper, thinking Christ would establish His Kingdom at the Passover, when many thousands were in Jerusalem from all over the world, His disciples argued among themselves about who would have the topmost positions: "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

"And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

"But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

"For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth.

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me:

"That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:24-30).

To the disciples, this even might be taking place within the very next day! They were, on that night, sitting at His table in a larger upper room, partaking of the Passover about seventeen hours earlier than usual! No doubt they thought this was because He intended doing something very different; something unique, on the moment of the Passover. "His table" in "His kingdom" might well be set in the governor's palace the following night!

It was with shock and dismay they saw Him arrested!

In a rage, feeling both betrayal and futility, Peter tried to precipitate the revolution at the moment of Christ's arrest. He drew his sword, and tried to kill the closest person to him, which happened to be Malcom, the servant of the high priest.

Malcom dodged, and Peter's razor-sharp sword severed his ear! Christ rebuked Peter on a loud voice, commanded him to put up his sword! Then, He picked up the severed ear,



placed it against Malcom's head, and miraculously healed it! The bleeding stopped, the ear was as before.

At this, His disciples melted away into the night, fearful of being arrested with Him. Only hours later, Peter would curse and blaspheme, standing in a courtyard outside the building where Christ was being beaten, claiming he had never known Jesus.

None of His disciples remotely imagined they would grow to be old men, many of them to be martyred for their faith—that the centuries would slowly pass; that the world would enter a "dark age," gradually emerge into an Industrial Revolution; that World War I and World War II and the Cold War would be waged; that the world would enter the jet and then the space age.

None of them remotely believed that Christ would still not have set up His Kingdom in the late 1990s, AD!

At the last moment of His final appearance to them, they *still* were thinking of the "Kingdom" only in terms of "greater Israel." It did not enter their minds that the whole world would be involved.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, `Lord, wilt Thou *at this time* restore again the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6). They said nothing about Rome, or England, or India, or Africa, or Asia. They asked whether He would restore the kingdom that had existed under Solomon, the kingdom at its greatest heights, the *kingdom of Israel*.

He responded: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and *unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:7,8).

These were the last words Jesus Christ spoke on earth to His assembled disciples. He was taken up visually from them, disappeared into the clouds, and rose to heaven.

They had asked about *restoring* a kingdom to *Israel*, and He had shown them they would carry His message far beyond—to the "uttermost part of the earth."

Few professing Christians really understand that Christ came to call, teach, train, and set an example for His disciples; that He commissioned them; that they would form a part of the building blocks of His "assembly" (Greek: *ekklesia*, translated "church" in English) which would be an instrument in His hands for proclaiming the good news of His coming Kingdom to the world.

(Continued next issue . . .)

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## Valentine's Day Where Did it Originate?

**Sweethearts trading heart-shaped cards. Chubby, cuddly cupids carrying bows and arrows. There isn't anything wrong with celebrating love. Is there?**

*by John Marmero, Jr.*

What was it originally? The original name for Valentine's Day was the holiday called the Lupercalia. It was celebrated thousands of years before there were ever such people known as Christians or saints.

### Lupercus, Hunter

Some of the modern customs associated with Valentine's Day\_such as exchanging cards\_were once practiced in honor of Lupercus, the deified hero-hunter of Rome. These customs "have been handed down from the Roman festival of the Lupercalia, celebrated in the month of February (on the evening of the 14th and the day of the 15th), when names of young women were put into a box and drawn out by men as chance directed," states the *Encyclopedia Americana* (article: "St. Valentine's Day").

This festival was also dedicated to the goddess Venus and observed as a feast "characterized in the later Roman period by wanton raillery and unkindled freedom..." (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, James Hastings, Vol.III, p. 226).

In Roman mythology, the goddess of sexual immorality had sons, called "cupids," who attended her on this festival. They were believed to cause love and also make it cease\_a sort of love potion (*Roman Antiquities*, Alexander Adam, p. 279).

## Nimrod and Semiramis

Other names for Lupercus and Venus, known to historians and mythologists, were Nimrod and Semiramis, or Ashtoreth. They are both mentioned in the Bible as apostates who set up a false system of worship (Genesis 10:8-11; Judges 2:13,14; 10:6; I Kings 11:33; Revelation 17:5).

The Greeks called Lupercus by the name of "Pan"\_the Semites called Pan "Baal," according to classical dictionaries. Baal, mentioned so often in the Bible, was merely another name for Nimrod, "the mighty hunter." So the hunter Nimrod was the original Lupercus\_or wolf hunter\_of the Romans who set aside Valentine's Day in his honor!

Another name for the child Nimrod was *Cupid*, meaning "desire" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article "Cupid"). It is said that when Nimrod's mother saw him, she *lusted* after him\_she desired him. Nimrod became her Cupid\_her *desired* one\_and later her Valentine! So evil was Nimrod's mother that it is said she married her own son! As Nimrod grew up, he became the child-hero of *many* women who *desired* him. He was their Cupid! He provoked so many women to *jealousy* that an idol of him was often called the "image of jealousy" (Ezekiel 8:5).

## Heart-Shaped Symbol

One may ask, what is the origin of the heart-shaped symbol commonly seen today. The surprising answer is that the pagan Romans acquired the symbol of the heart from the Babylonians. In the Babylonian tongue the word for heart was *bal* (see Young's or Strong's concordance). The heart\_*bal*\_was merely a symbol of Nimrod\_the Baal or Bel of the Babylonians!

In Egypt, "this infant divinity was frequently represented with a heart, or the heart-shaped fruit of the Persea, in one of his hands" (*The Two Babylons*, Alexander Hislop, p. 189). Hislop continues: "Thus the boy-god came to be regarded as the 'god of the heart,' in other words, as *Cupid*, the god of love."

What about the name Valentine? The name Valentine comes from the Latin word *Valentinus*, a proper name derived from the word *Valens*, meaning "to be strong," declares *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*. It literally means, "strong, powerful, mighty," hence the association with Nimrod the mighty hunter (Genesis 10:9).

*Valentinus* was a common Roman name. Roman parents often gave the name to their children in honor of the famous man who was first called Valentine in antiquity.

## Sacrifices, Ceremonies

Another custom associated with Valentine's Day (the Lupercalia), was the ancient ceremony performed by a pagan priesthood known as the Luperci. As the festival began, the Luperci priests sacrificed goats and a dog. Afterwards, two of the Luperci were led to the altar, their foreheads touched with a bloody knife, and the blood wiped off with wool dipped in milk. Then the ritual required that the two young men should laugh.

The smearing of the forehead with blood probably refers to *human sacrifice* originally practiced at the festival.

The sacrificial feast followed, after which the Luperci cut thongs from the skins of the sacrificial victims and ran in two bands round the walls of the old Palatine City, the line of which was marked with stones, striking the people who crowded near. A blow from the thong allegedly "prevented" sterility in women.

These thongs were called *Februa*, the festival, *Februatio*, and the day, *dies Februatus* (*Februare* means "to purify" in Latin); hence the name of the month February, originally the last of the old Roman year.

The object of the festival was, by expiation and purification, to secure the fruitfulness of the whole people (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th. edition, article: "Lupercalia").

## Constantine, the Roman Emperor

So far, we've seen where and how this pagan and idolatrous festival originated and what its symbols represented. One might ask, why was it renamed St. Valentine's Day? For what purpose?

When Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, there was some talk in church circles of discarding this pagan free-for-all. But the Roman citizens wouldn't hear of it! So, it was agreed that the holiday would continue as it was, except for the more grossly sensual observances, which probably continued in secret.

Once the Roman emperors became "Christians," the "universal church" grew in numbers. Since her main concern was to convert the pagan populace within the empire as quickly as possible, she felt justified in making it easy on them (*Studies in the History of Oriental Religions*, James Frazer, Book II, p. 202).

One way of gaining an ever-increasing influx of members was to *blend* in and *incorporate* pagan beliefs and practices with Christian ones. "Thus at the first promulgation of Christianity to the gentile nations...they could not be persuaded to relinquish many of their superstitions, which rather than forego altogether, they chose to *blend* and *incorporate* with the new faith" (*Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, John Brandy, p. xi).

Thus, "for almost every pagan ceremony, some Christian rite was introduced" (*Clavis Calendaria*, John Brandy, Vol. 1, p. 196). It was not until the reign of Pope Gelasius that the holiday became a Christian custom. "As far back as 496, Pope Gelasius changed Lupercalia on Feb. 15 to St. Valentine's Day on Feb. 14" (*Customs and Holidays Around the World*, Lavinia Dobler, p. 172).

## God's Reaction

How does God feel about this festival?

"Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after *their gods*, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the Lord God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to *their gods*; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods" (Deuteronomy 12:30,31, the New King James Version).

It may seem like harmless fun on the outside, but why do it? Why do it when you know that the custom derives from an ancient pagan religious observance? Why do it when God says we should not "inquire after their gods"?

Instead of observing holidays of pagan origin, why not observe the holy days that *God* established for His people? (Write immediately for your free copies of *God's Seasonal Plan and Christian Holy Days*.)

**Editor's Note:** John Marmero, Jr. is a graduate of Adelphi University, of New York, with a degree in Communications. He is working part time at the Church of God, International's headquarters in Tyler while attending Imperial Academy.

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