

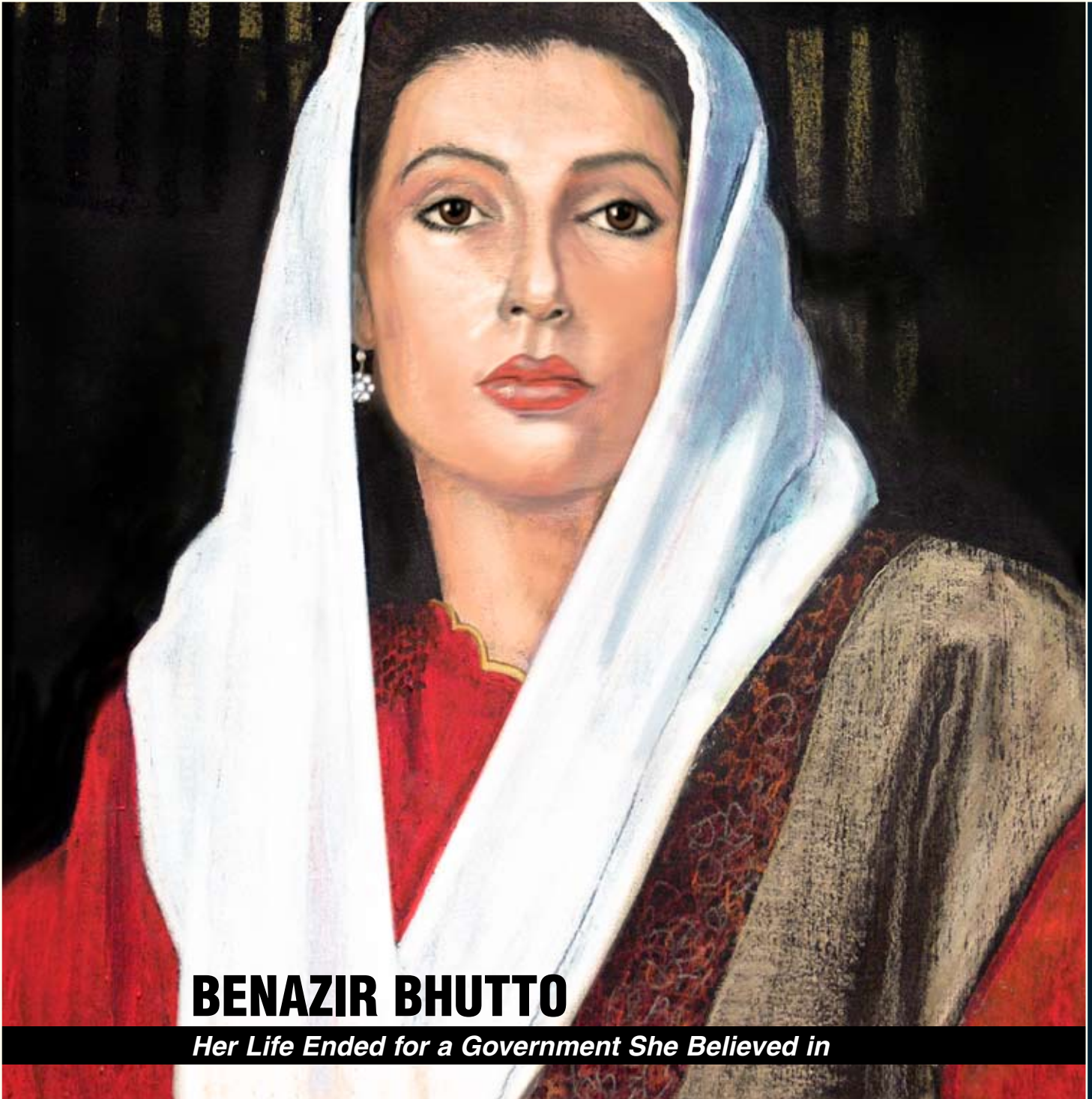
JANUARY 2008

THE

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



BENAZIR BHUTTO

Her Life Ended for a Government She Believed in

THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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A R T I C L E S

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Criminal Minds – Would God Use Prisons to Rehabilitate?

The Founding Fathers framed much of the United States on Judeo-Christian values. It should come as no surprise that its prisons also have roots in religion. But is modern imprisonment biblical? What is preventing prisons from deterring crime?
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ABOUT OUR COVER: Two-time prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto, who was seen as an advocate for women, democracy and the future of the nation itself, was killed by terrorists on Dec. 27, 2007.

RCG ILLUSTRATION: PAULA C. RONDEAU

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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Solve Your Financial Worries!

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS season has come to an end. The presents, family dinners and corporate parties are all things of the past. Yet many will wake up in January with a financial hangover.

Americans are increasingly incapable of keeping up with credit card bills. An *Associated Press* analysis of financial data from many major credit card companies showed double-digit percentage increases in bill payment delinquency. According to the Federal Reserve Bank, Americans owe \$920 billion in credit card debt.

Some say the expanded debt is partly the product of the deep-rooted American attitude that credit card debt is “no big deal.”

“The desires of consumers to want, want, want, spend, spend, spend—it’s the fabric of our nation,” Howard Dvorkin, founder of Consolidated Credit Counseling Services in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., told *AP*. “But you always have to pay the piper, and that can be a very painful process.”

Despite affluence in the Western World that is unparalleled in human history, personal bankruptcies are soaring. *Why?* Consumer credit has never been so high. *Why?* Up to 25 million people in America are “two paychecks from the street,” with nearly 15 million just “one paycheck from the street.” *Why?* The U.S. national debt is measured in the trillions of dollars, requiring annual interest payments in the hundreds of billions! *Why?* Money woes are considered the second leading cause of

divorce. None of this need be.

Much of the national news is devoted to the roller-coaster ride of the “leading economic indicators”—and whether they are moving up or down. Unemployment, inflation, recession, interest rates, bull or bear markets, stocks, housing starts, auto sales, layoffs, hires, available energy and fuel prices are all household words dominating the news.

What about you? If you are honest with yourself, you will admit that you spend a lot of time thinking and talking about MONEY. You probably wrestle with financial difficulties daily. Sometimes you feel that you are winning the battle, only to learn that you are either treading water or falling behind. Many today find it almost impossible to “get ahead.” For most, the “money struggle” is constant, and the pressure can seem unbearable. Just the stress of these problems can drive away the happiness and peace that everyone seeks but few find. All of this is unnecessary if you have God’s *key* to financial prosperity.

What You Earn is Not Your Own

Your house belongs to *you*, right? So does *your* car, doesn’t it? You bought the clothes on your back with *your* money, didn’t you? Haven’t you heard yourself say, “*I* earned my money, it’s *mine*”? Isn’t it true that “what’s yours is yours and what’s mine is mine”? Not so fast!

Certainly we would all agree that before we have fully paid off the things that we have purchased, they are not truly ours. Banks and other lenders hold liens against houses, cars, boats and other expensive things that people buy on credit. Everyone understands this. But have you ever considered whether you really own everything that

you *think* you do? Do you really have title to the things you own “free and clear”?

We must consider whether others could lay claim to what is “ours.”

“Death and Taxes”

Most are familiar with the phrase, “Nothing is certain in life except death and taxes.” Indeed, death is certain. Of course, everyone also recognizes that the government is entitled to a certain percentage of one’s income. Few dispute this, though most seek to get around taxes in as many ways as possible. No one wants to give the government a penny more than “its fair share.” Most feel that *less* than “its share” would be better.

Have you stopped to consider whether *God* instructs us to pay taxes? *He does!* These scriptures prove it. Paul wrote, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers... Wherefore you *must* needs be subject...for conscience sake. For this cause pay you *tribute* [Greek: taxes or assessment] also...Render therefore to all their dues: *tribute* to whom *tribute is due*” (Rom. 13:1, 5-7).

Christ was asked if He felt that taxes should be paid—with the question actually directed to Him for the purpose of tempting Him into giving a wrong answer. Notice that those who questioned Him said, “Is it lawful to give *tribute* to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?” Christ asked to be given a penny for the purpose of illustration. He then answered, “Render to Caesar *the things that are Caesar’s*, and to God *the things that are God’s*” (Mark 12:13-17). Christ taught that there are things that *belong to man’s government* and things that *belong to God*.

We will momentarily address what belongs to God. However, what belongs to the government are *taxes!* In some countries this includes city, state and federal taxes. Woe to those caught not paying them! Interest, penalties and even prison can be the

result for those guilty of tax evasion. But in doing this, people have disobeyed not only the laws of the land but also God’s plain instruction. So then, taxes *are* an undisputed fact of life for most people on earth. The fact that you *earned* the money you have does not negate the fact that human governments have a prior right to take a certain legal percentage of it to ensure their own operation. No government can function without tax revenue.

This is one way that what is yours is *not* always entirely yours.

Who Really Owns Everything?

Despite the fact that governments can legally collect taxes for themselves from the taxpayers of a country, no one would suggest that they own everything *else* that a taxpayer has. All that is left belongs to the taxpayer—or does it?

Now for a basic question. Look around you and ask yourself: Where do we get the things that we have? Where did they actually come from?

God says, “For all the earth is *Mine*” (Ex. 19:5). Have you ever considered this? The Bible also states, “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *is the LORD’S* your God, the earth also, with all that therein is” (Deut. 10:14) and “whatsoever is under the whole heaven is *Mine*” (Job 41:11). In the Psalms, King David was inspired to write, “The earth *is the LORD’S*, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1). Paul recorded the same statement in I Corinthians 10:26.

God says, “For every beast of the forest is *Mine*, and the cattle upon a thousand hills...If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for *the world is Mine*, and the fulness thereof” (Psa. 50:10, 12). Finally, the prophet Haggai said, “The silver is *Mine*, and the gold is *Mine*, says the LORD” (2:8).

In a sense, God is saying that *all* money is His (remember, the value

of money is generally attached in some way to gold and silver). God *owns* absolutely *everything* there is to own. Human beings are “squatters” on His land and “renters” in homes that belong to Him. This is what these verses say! Make no mistake—what you think is yours is not! Everything that you *think* you own is actually owned by God. You are merely its temporary custodian.

People may manufacture products from natural resources, which come from the earth, but it is God who makes both the natural resources and the earth in which they are found. Men may own mining or timber rights, but it is ultimately God who owns the mine and created the timber, which grew because of the elements found in the soil of the earth—which He created and owns!

Any time He wishes, God could take back all that is His. After all, *it is His!* This includes your income. While you may have “earned it,” God *OWNS* it.

“The Things That Are God’s”

We have seen Christ said that, in addition to taxes belonging to Caesar, there are also “things that are God’s”—or things that *belong to God*. What are these things? We have read that God owns everything. And Christ said to “Render...to God the things that *are God’s*.” Render means *give*. Since the heavens and the earth (or the land on which we live) cannot be “rendered” back to God by human beings, to what is this referring?

We have proven that our entire income (salary, wages, interest earned, investments, bonuses, commissions and any other kind of financial increase) actually belongs to God.

What of a farmer and the produce from his field? What is the process whereby things grow? The farmer does his part—tilling, planting, fertilizing, watering, etc.—but so

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 21

BENAZIR BHUTTO

1953-2007



ROG ILLUSTRATION: PAULA C. RONDEAU

Her Life Ended for a Government She Believed in

In the wake of the former prime minister's violent death, governments and societies can expect senseless bloodshed and carnage to escalate!

SHE WOULD LET nothing stand in her way. Not the assassinations of family members, not charges of government corruption or removal from office, or self-imposed exile—or even death threats. She was a staunch advocate for a government she believed in, and was more than willing to risk her life for it.

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was assassinated by a suicide bomber as she exited a public campaign rally in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The bombing, which took place in a crowded park, killed at least 20 people and injured several others.

It was originally reported that Ms. Bhutto was leaving the rally when an unidentified gunman on a motorcycle shot her in the neck and chest and then detonated a bomb as she stood in an open-top jeep. (The next day it was learned she was not shot.) Terrified supporters screamed and scrambled for cover while others frantically searched for loved ones among the mutilated bodies strewn on the ground after the blast. Ambulances and emergency personnel circled around the smoky remains of the former prime minister's vehicle, quickly assessing the carnage while trying to find others who had been hurt.

Ms. Bhutto was rushed to the hospital for emergency surgery, but was reported to have died in the ambulance on the ride there. She was officially

pronounced dead at the hospital.

Both a military spokesman and representative of Ms. Bhutto's political party, the Pakistan Peoples' Party, confirmed her death.

"She has been martyred," said Rehman Malik, Ms. Bhutto's security adviser.

Ms. Bhutto's violent death came after decades of surviving rejection from government opponents, threats of violence, failed assassination attempts and other obstacles. No matter what she faced, she supported a form of government she believed would be best for her people.

Campaign to Restore Democracy

Earlier this year, Ms. Bhutto survived an assassination attempt when a suicide bomber attacked her cavalcade during a welcome parade held in her honor; over 130 people died. She had returned to Pakistan from an eight-year self-imposed exile after being granted amnesty by current President Perez Musharraf.

"We have to modify our campaign to some extent because of the suicide bombings. We will continue to meet the public. We will not be deterred," said Ms. Bhutto shortly after the October suicide bombings during the procession welcoming her home.

On the day of her death, as she campaigned for the January elections, she acknowledged concern for her safety to the crowd who had gathered to hear her speak. "I put my life in danger and came here because I feel this country is in danger," she told the rally before she was killed. "People are worried. We will bring the country out of this crisis."

At the news of her death, former Prime Minister and political opponent Nawaz Sharif expressed his remorse outside of



Rawalpindi General Hospital, where she was pronounced dead. "My heart is bleeding and I'm as grieved as you are," he said amidst anti-Musharraf chants from grief-stricken Pakistanis.

Ms. Bhutto, 54, and a graduate of

Harvard and Oxford, was backed by both Washington and London. She was a key member in the Pakistan Peoples' Party and had twice served as Pakistan's Prime Minister between 1988 and 1996.

She was the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, one of the most democratically minded prime ministers in Pakistani history (who was taken from power and executed). Ms. Bhutto was the first female prime minister of a Muslim country, holding the position for two separate terms. But she was removed from office due to allegations of corruption.

In the preface of the second edition of her autobiography, *Daughter of the East*, Ms. Bhutto wrote, "I didn't choose this life, it chose me."

"Born in Pakistan, my life mirrors its turbulence, its tragedies and its triumphs. Pakistan is no ordinary country. And mine has been no ordinary life."

Ms. Bhutto was on a campaign to restore democracy to Pakistan—drawing many death threats from terrorist groups. With her assassination, the January elections are now in question, possibly to be postponed.

"We repeatedly informed the government to provide her proper security and appropriate equipment, including jammers," Mr. Malik said, "but they paid no heed to our requests."

The district police in charge of security for the event had called their security plan "foolproof."

International Response

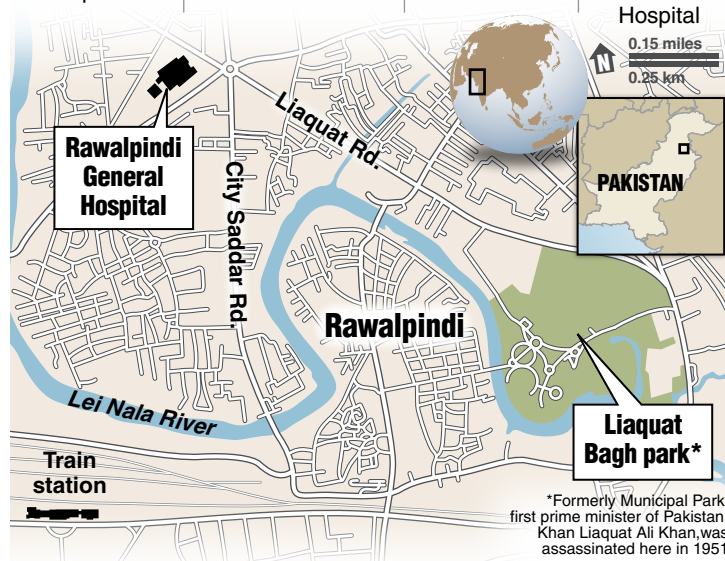
Nations across the globe were shocked by the news of the attacks, concerned that progress toward democracy would be disrupted, and that national unrest would destabilize nuclear-armed Pakistan. They also feared the act

Benazir Bhutto Assassinated

The Pakistani opposition leader and former prime minister was killed at a campaign rally in Rawalpindi.

How attack happened

- 1** Benazir Bhutto gets into car to leave rally in park
- 2** Gunman shoots Bhutto in chest and neck as she waves from car
- 3** Attacker blows himself up, kills at least 20 others
- 4** Ms. Bhutto declared dead at Rawalpindi General Hospital



Source: BBC, Guardian, AP, Digital Globe, InfoHub

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would ignite more terrorist activity in the region.

U.S. Deputy State Department spokesman Tom Casey said, “Certainly, we condemn the attack on this rally. It demonstrates that there are still those in Pakistan who want to subvert reconciliation and efforts to advance democracy.”

“I am deeply shocked by news of the latest attack in Rawalpindi which has claimed the life of Benazir Bhutto and killed at least 15 other people,” said British Foreign Secretary David Miliband in a written statement, also saying that Bhutto “knew the risks of her return to campaign but was convinced that her country needed her.”

President George W. Bush said, “The United States strongly condemns this cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan’s democracy.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel also condemned the attacks as “cowardly,” saying that the attacks targeted the “stability and democratic process of Pakistan.”

The Vatican spokesman Reverend Federico Lombardi said, “One cannot see signs of peace in this region.”

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said Ms. Bhutto had “risked everything in her attempt to win democracy in Pakistan and she has been assassinated by cowards who are afraid of democracy.”

“Benazir Bhutto may have been killed by terrorists,” he said, “but the terrorists must not be allowed to kill democracy in Pakistan. This atrocity strengthens our resolve that terrorists will not win, there, here or anywhere in the world.”

In a letter to Mr. Musharraf, French President Nicolas Sarkozy called the attack an “odious act” and said “terrorism and violence have no place in the democratic debate and the combat of ideas and programs.”

Awaiting the Perfect Government

Though Benazir Bhutto’s life was so violently and suddenly taken, she established a legacy of boldly facing and surmounting obstacles. She was



FORMER
PRIME MINISTER
OF PAKISTAN

BENAZIR BHUTTO

EARLY YEARS

Born: 1953 in Karachi; oldest child of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, former prime minister, and Nusrat Bhutto, former deputy prime minister

Family: Married, three children

Education:

- Harvard University, U.S.; degree in political science (1973)
- Oxford University, UK; degree in political science, philosophy and economics (1977)

POLITICAL CAREER

1977: Assistant to her father

1979-84: Imprisonment follows father’s hanging

1984-86: Exile in UK; leader of Pakistan People’s Party

1988: First woman and youngest prime minister to lead a Muslim nation; party leader

1990: Resigned after corruption charges

1993: Prime minister again; coalition government

1996: Resigned after corruption charges

1999: Fled to exile in Dubai and UK

2007: Returned to Pakistan; assassinated at rally

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Source: benazirbhutto.net, famousmuslims.com, BBC, dr.dk, MCT Photo Service

a survivor, a woman who felt deeply that democracy would bring success to her fellow Pakistanis. She died for a form of government she strongly believed in.

Throughout history, others have died for a government they strongly believed in—“a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). That utopian government, otherwise known as the kingdom of God, will soon be established on earth. The freedom, abundance and success that Ms. Bhutto and countless others through the years have longed for will become a reality. It will give humanity the laws, statutes and judgments necessary for universal peace and prosperity to spread to—and

thrive in!—all nations. That world-ruling supergovernment, established on earth at the Return of Jesus Christ, will give direction, true purpose and meaning to all institutions and systems: economies, education, marriage, family, religion, etc.

But before God’s government is established, certain prophetic events must occur.

When His disciples asked Him about the sign of the closing of this modern age, Jesus Christ warned, “Take heed that you be not deceived: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: go you not therefore after them” (Luke 21:8).

Today what do we see across this world’s religious landscape? Thousands of differing, competing and disagreeing churches, denominations and movements, all claiming to be led by Christ. Yet Jesus Himself said that His Body—His Church—could not be divided.

Christ also told His disciples, “But when you shall hear of wars and commotions [including acts of terrorism], be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by” (vs. 9).

Man can expect more wars, more terrorism, more senseless bloodshed and carnage to erupt—and escalate. Jesus said that as these horrific events occurred and intensified, something else would unfold: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14). The parallel account of Mark 13 states, “And the gospel must first be *published* among all nations” (vs. 10).

That gospel message, foretold to be published to all nations at the end of the age—the same message Jesus proclaimed throughout His ministry: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15)—*is* being published today! It can be read in this magazine (archived at www.realtruth.org) and in the vast literature library of books, booklets and other material at www.thercg.org. □

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, *The REAL TRUTH* published an article addressing seven questions most preachers are unable to answer correctly from their Bibles. The response to that article has warranted seven more questions our readers can take to their ministers.

To many the Bible is a confusing book, written in code. Left discouraged, most feel they *must* believe what their pastors teach, assuming they are being instructed from God's Word. However, those teachers are at best only *partly* correct.

55:8-9). Jesus Christ warns against ministers who ignore, reject or dismiss the plain truths of the Bible to follow what is popular.

Allow Christ's words to frame the rest of the article.

Jesus Christ had harsh words for the religious leaders of His day and all who follow their ways: "Well has Esaias [Isaiah] prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit *in vain* do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For *laying aside* the commandment of God, you hold the *tradition of men*... And He said unto them, Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may *keep your own tradition*" (Mark 7:6-9).

SEVEN MORE QUESTIONS

YOUR MINISTER DOES NOT WANT YOU TO ASK

The Bible contains many teachings that are commonly avoided or obscured in mainstream Christianity. Can your minister correctly answer these seven questions from the Bible?

Again, open your Bible and examine the scriptures covered. Will you believe God's Word on any particular subject?—or are you willing to "lay aside the commandment of God" and keep "the tradition of men"?

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

Do not assume you know the biblical answer to each of these questions. Read each, and their proofs, with an open mind—and an open Bible! You will learn more about God's Word than you have ever thought possible.

Origin of Knowledge

After our original "Seven Questions" article, a number of ministers wrote stating they "enjoyed" answering the questions we posed. Such responses were insightful, because their replies confirmed that they gave the standard answers—ignoring Scripture or using only snippets of verses completely out of context. Do not be fooled by carefully chosen excerpts used in each case to explain away a series of clear biblical passages.

Our goal is not to explain *every* argument for a particular doctrine, but to give readers the foundation—and the starting point—to understand basic truths of the Bible. Each question covered is explained in much greater detail (including "proof texts") in the literature referenced after each question. You will find it helpful to read this literature before approaching your minister.

Do not allow a pastor to sweep aside the questions with human reasoning. Man's opinions never apply to *any* teaching of God. Without God's help, human beings are incapable of properly assessing true and false spiritual knowledge (Isa.

(1) "What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ?"

The most misunderstood, confused and butchered teaching in the Bible is also the most fundamental. Billions assume many things about the gospel. Different denominations have created gospels of healing, salvation and grace, to name a few.

The word *gospel* means "good news." When properly understood, the gospel is marvelous good news, far greater than the narrow focus brought by so many.

"Gospel" is found 101 times throughout the Bible. Sometimes it is found alone, and other times with the phrases "of the kingdom," "of the kingdom of God," or "of the kingdom of heaven." It is also tied to Jesus Christ, in that it is His message. The phrase "gospel of Christ" appears 11 times in the New Testament.

These passages have unnecessarily confused many Bible students. Simple English grammar makes them plain and the meaning obvious. The preposition "of" *always* denotes possession. The "gospel of Christ" could easily be written as "Christ's gospel." Breaking it down even further, the "gospel of Christ" could be written as "Christ's GOOD NEWS." When Scripture describes the gospel as "of the kingdom of heaven," it is heaven's kingdom—meaning it is God's kingdom, since heaven is where He resides.

Tying this with the numerous times the gospel is attached to the kingdom of God (meaning God's kingdom), the picture

clarifies further. Since “kingdom” is a King James term meaning government, and “of” denotes possession, “kingdom of God” can be written as “government of God” or “God’s government” (ruled by the Family of God).

Now let’s put everything together. “Christ’s gospel of the kingdom of God” can be expressed as “Christ’s good news of God’s government.” How plain! Jesus’ *good news* was the ANNOUNCEMENT of God’s government coming to earth.

STIONS

There is no need to complicate the subject. Mankind has narrowed the gospel to a message of healing, salvation or even a message *about* the person of Jesus Christ. How sad that Christ’s real message is lost in the confusion! When the Bible is taken at face value, its meaning and purpose is always greater than what men narrowly purport.

God takes the truth of the gospel seriously. The apostle Paul warns the first-century Church—and all Christians thereafter—that some would “pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7). He goes on to state twice that any who do this are cursed (vs. 8-9)!

That is a serious warning from God!

Jesus Christ and Christians through the ages were put to death for this important message. Of course, God demands the true gospel to be taught.

Is your minister—your church!—teaching Christ’s GOOD NEWS of the coming government of God? Almost certainly, NO!

Our booklet *Which is the True Gospel?* greatly expounds upon this subject.

(2) “What is the Difference Between God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?”

Confusion abounds about what is the Godhead. Attempts to fuse the Holy Spirit, the Father and Jesus Christ into

one Being have made certain scriptures appear contradictory. This need not be so. Paul told the Corinthian brethren that there was simplicity in Christ (II Cor. 11:3).

Untangling the Gordian knot of the trinity doctrine begins in the gospel of John. The first chapter describes the earliest time period revealed in the Bible: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God. The same was in the beginning *with* God” (vs. 1-2).

This account describes *two* God Beings. One is called the “Word.” Verse 14 makes clear that the Word is Jesus Christ: “And the Word *was made flesh*, and *dwelt among us*...”

Who is the other God Being?

Let Christ answer that question:

“I can of My own self do nothing... because I seek not My own will, but the will of *the Father which has sent Me*” (John 5:30). The Word came to earth and became Jesus Christ, leaving the One who sent Him—the Father. Scores of other verses demonstrate the relationship between the human Jesus and the Father, who remained in heaven.

To further understand the name God, we must go to the beginning of the Bible. Genesis adds more details: “And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness” (1:26).

Two points jump from this passage. God is referenced and is followed by plural terms—“us” and “our.” The Hebrew word translated God is *Elohim*, which is a uniplural term. (The singular is *Eloah*.)

Elohim always refers to more than one being. This is comparable to a father and son sharing the last name Smith. Both can be referred to as Smith. Of course, they are not the same person; they simply share the same name. In a similar manner, Jesus Christ and the Father share the name, God. This is a family relationship—the God Family—not a closed trinity that denies the very reason the God Family created man after “OUR image, after OUR likeness.”

Some confuse the terms Spirit of

God and Spirit of Christ. One verse makes it clear that these are the same Spirit—the Holy Spirit: “But you are not in the flesh, but in the *Spirit*, if so be that the *Spirit of God* dwell in you. Now if any man have not the *Spirit of Christ*, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9).

Space does not allow for the many verses proving that the Holy Spirit is NOT a person. Do not fall victim to preachers who attempt to prove the trinity by pointing to passages such as I John 5. Most scholars realize that half of verse 6 and all of verse 7 were inserted, and not found in the original Greek text. In verse 8, the translators added “in earth.” With proper context, this chapter explains that Christ’s baptism, blood and sacrifice did not “do away with” the Ten Commandments. Only clever, deceitful manipulation allows the trinity to be injected into this passage. Any thinking person who reads the entire chapter will realize it in no way espouses the trinity.

David C. Pack’s book *The Trinity – Is God three-in-one?* explains this subject unlike anything else ever written.

(3) “Are People Inherently Good?”

How many times have you heard the adage, “Most people are inherently good, except for a few bad apples”? Most believe this to be true, leading them to strive to “make a difference.” Their thinking is that if the “good” people rise up and join together, the problems of the world can be fixed.

Let’s put aside human opinion and ask, “How does *God* answer this question?”

The philosophies, feelings and ideas of men are easy to dispel when one is willing to let the Bible interpret itself. Let’s begin with two short verses: “For *all have sinned*, and *come short* of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and “the *whole world* lies in *wickedness*” (I John 5:19). Next read Romans 3:10-12: “As it is written, There is NONE righteous, no, not one: There is NONE that understands, there is NONE that seeks after God. They are ALL gone out of the way, THEY ARE TOGETHER become unprofitable; there is NONE that does

good, no, NOT ONE.” Together, these powerful verses describe the true state of humanity.

Allow God’s Word to focus on individuals. Notice each passage literally describes the hearts and minds of all people. The first of two verses is from the Old Testament: “The HEART is *deceitful* above all things, and *desperately wicked*: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9).

The second passage is found in Romans 8: “Because the carnal MIND is *enmity against God*: for it is *not subject to the law of God*, neither indeed can be” (vs. 7).

The second verse adds a new element. Notice it is the *carnal mind* that is enmity (which can be translated “enemy” or “hostile”) against God. This makes the question of what distinguishes a Spirit-led mind from a carnal one extremely important.

No wonder Paul wrote a chapter earlier in Romans, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing” (7:18). Further, it becomes clear why Christ said even of Himself, “Why call you Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God” (Matt. 19:17).

Are you surprised at the plain clarity of these passages? Are you surprised to see that human beings are not inherently good?

God sees human beings and their conduct far differently from how we see ourselves. Our Creator is also able to recognize what each of us can become *if* we obey Him and become true Christians.

Our booklet *Did God Create Human Nature?* presents many more aspects of this subject.

(4) “What is a True Christian?”

While this question should not be confusing, billions have no idea. It can be answered with a verse we have already covered: “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the *Spirit of God dwell in you*. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*” (Rom. 8:9). A Christian is one who has the Holy Spirit. It is that simple.

The next question should then be

How can one acquire the “Spirit of Christ”? Jesus begins the answer in Mark 1: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: *repent you, and believe the gospel*” (vs. 15).

This is one of Christ’s first commands. We are told to “repent,” which means *to change*. This may be the perfect summary of Christianity. It is a life of constant change from a carnal mind to one taking on the desires and character of God. As the second step in the Christian walk, it should now be clear why our opening question about the gospel is crucial—that you must believe in the true gospel Christ preached, the kingdom of God.

The apostle Peter’s sermon in Acts adds another element: “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (2:38). One must be baptized to receive the Holy Spirit.

Time and again, clear scriptures reveal the core teachings of the Bible.

Our booklet *What is true Conversion?* expands much more on this question.

(5) “What is the Bible Definition of Love?”

The subject of love is perhaps the single most popular teaching in Christendom. Each week, billions hear sermons about the “love of God,” how the “love of Jesus is in our hearts” and nearly every version of what is supposedly godly love. But is your minister teaching love as defined by the Bible?

Let’s start with a popular verse. The apostle Paul wrote, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). As we have seen, having the Holy Spirit is the starting point of *being* a Christian. It is only through God’s Spirit that we can have true love—the love of God.

How does the Bible define the “love of God”?

The apostle John wrote, “For *this* is the love of God, that we *keep His commandments*: and His commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). We demonstrate the love of God *if* we happily keep God’s commandments. This

makes perfect sense because God’s Law is “holy, just, good and spiritual” (Rom. 7:12, 14). Later in Romans, Paul adds more: “Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the *fulfilling of the law*” (13:10).

Putting these two verses together demonstrates that the love of God is fulfilling the Law by keeping His commandments. Yet, amazingly, millions believe that God’s Law has been “nailed to the cross.”

How many sermons have you heard about “love” that ignored these fundamental verses? God’s *only* definition of love is not preached because it requires ACTION! *Godly* love requires a Christian to OBEY.

(6) “What is the Purpose of the Ten Commandments?”

After the last question, the purpose of the Ten Commandments—God’s Law—should be obvious. As a Being who says He *is* love (I John 4:8, 16), God (like any responsible parent) prescribes conduct that allows His children to lead happy, successful and abundant lives.

Sin leads to death (Rom. 6:23), so God has created laws to distinguish righteousness from sin: “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. No, I had not known sin, *but by the law*: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shall not covet” (Rom 7:7). With what you have learned thus far, the idea of dismissing the Ten Commandments should seem ridiculous.

However, let’s humor the notion that some or all of the Ten Commandments have been done away. Of the two notions, dismissing all the commandments is a more “honest” position; at least the proponent is saying he rejects all of the basic principles of the Bible.

Most ministers pick and choose individual commandments as being valid or invalid. Ask your minister if it is permissible to murder. His answer will be obvious. If he answers with a scripture, he will undoubtedly cite the Ten Commandments as God’s position

Please see **SEVEN**, page 11



SOMALIA'S DAILY NIGHTMARE

James 4 Explains Why!

**As people search for a solution,
they ignore the very nature of the problem.**

BY BRUCE A. RITTER AND SAMUEL C. BAXTER

ROADSIDE EXPLOSIVES and suicide bombings take the lives of the unsuspecting. Rocket-propelled grenades and hand grenades shatter walls and windows—tearing apart human beings. Empty houses lie in ruins. Gunshots and explosions ring out. Guttled by continuous gunfights between Islamic insurgents and Somali/Ethiopian forces, the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, are rife with lawlessness.

Since the start of 2007, some 600,000 people have fled the city's ongoing bloodshed. Many live in makeshift huts—tree branch frames covered with fraying pieces of fabric and scraps of plastic—that line the roads on the outskirts of Mogadishu. In all, 750,000 are internally displaced in the nation.

Somalia has been under siege from within since 1991, when warlords overthrew former dictator Mohamed Siad Barre. Since January 2007, U.S.-backed Ethiopian forces have been present in Mogadishu, aiding the Somali Transitional Federal Government in ousting the Islamic Courts from the city. The insurgents have pledged to continue fighting until the Ethiopian troops leave the nation.

The current transitional government, the 14th attempt to secure national rule, has been unable to halt the insurgency and bring peace to the nation.

The unending violence and destruction has had rippling effects throughout Mogadishu: 80% of schools are shut down; 6,000-plus city residents, including eight journalists, were killed in 2007; and the United Nations has put into effect "security phase five"—all UN staff have been evacuated from

■ **WAR-TORN CITY:** The streets of northern Mogadishu's once bustling government district are mostly empty as thousands of residents have fled the area due to a growing insurgency in Somalia.

PHOTO: MCT



■ **HUMANITARIAN CRISIS:** The Mustahil camp houses some 600,000 people who have fled the fighting between government forces and Islamist insurgents in Mogadishu, Somalia. United Nations officials call the humanitarian crisis in southern Somalia the gravest in Africa, where more than 200,000 people live in camps along a 10-mile stretch of road leading west from the capital city.

PHOTO: MCT

the city—and “phase four” for the rest of the country.

A November UN report stated the Transitional Federal Government and Ethiopian forces have only made “limited progress” in securing Mogadishu. The UN also reported incidents of both Somali and Ethiopian troops opening fire “indiscriminately,” leading to “many civilian casualties.”

Somalia is facing one of the worst humanitarian crises in Africa’s history.

Meanwhile, government leaders, diplomats and dignitaries, both from Somalia and the international community, grasp for solutions to end the chaos—yet are fundamentally ignorant of the root cause.

Obstacles to Assistance

As the crisis continues to unfold, humanitarian workers are encountering numerous obstacles in rendering aid, such as government soldiers demanding money from aid workers before allowing them through roadblocks.

Pirates in unpatrolled waters have attacked ships carrying aid supplies (80% of the World Food Program’s supplies are shipped by sea). The num-

ber of ships willing to carry the WFP’s cargo has been cut in half. To combat piracy,

France has promised warships to protect the humanitarian supplies for two months.

According to the UN, 1.5 million people need humanitarian assistance—up 50% since last year. Of the \$304 million needed for Somali aid in 2007, only 53.2% was collected (as of the end of September). For 2008, the UN is appealing for \$400 million in aid.

Somalia is a maze of competing interests throughout all levels of society as high-ranking government officials struggle for power and dominance. Some welcome outside aid; others do not. Warlords, who have learned to make a living from anarchy, oppose any peace effort.

Cause and Effect

The physical effects—violence, piracy, anarchy, power struggles, strife, extortion, etc.—experienced daily in Somalia, as well as other volatile regions in the world, result from spiritual causes.

The apostle James was inspired to

write, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts” (Jms. 4:1-3).

Every conflict, every battle or disagreement, boils down to this—lust! It is why governments and nations are overthrown, suffering upheavals and violent coups. It is why they struggle under the burden of bureaucracies, stalemates, opposing interests and corruption.

Diplomats, heads of state, military leaders, and think tanks grapple with devising workable solutions—but at best, these are only temporary.

Even religious leaders are at a loss, ignorant that the root cause of the problem is *spiritual* in nature. Only by understanding this—and thereby applying the right solution—can humanity’s mounting ills, the physical symptoms, be effectively addressed. □

SEVEN

Continued from page 8

on murder. The same will be true for adultery, stealing, lying, etc.

Taken in a general sense, most religionists say the Ten Commandments are an important “framework” of Christian conduct. However, if you discuss each commandment with them, you will find their doctrines *force* them to reject one or more of the ten, usually the Second and Fourth commands—regarding idolatry and the Sabbath, respectively.

Effectively, your minister is deciding that *he* has the authority to twist, modify or dismiss something *God* created!

Notice how God describes the Ten Commandments: “But whoso looks into the PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a *doer* of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (Jms. 1:25). Chapter 2 of James, focusing on verse 12, proves the “law of liberty” is the Ten Commandments.

Our book *Should You Obey The Ten Commandments?* covers each commandment and its link to God’s love in much more detail.

(7) “Why Was I Born?”

The most important question in this article is rarely asked. While questions regarding doctrines are interesting and important, they are only the springboard to the *real* purpose for being a Christian—what has been called your “incredible human potential.”

Again, Romans sheds some light on this potential: “...that He [Christ] might be the *firstborn* among many brethren” (8:29). The key in this verse is the phrase “firstborn among *many* brethren.”

More details are revealed earlier in the same chapter: “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead *shall also quicken* [give life to] *your mortal bodies* by His Spirit that dwells in you” (vs. 11).

Again, notice the parallels to what Christ has experienced and what is

planned for man. “The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the *firstfruits of the Spirit*, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption [Greek: ‘sonship’ or ‘placing as a son’]...” (vs. 22-23).

The parallel should be clear. Further, our reward is covered in an inspiring passage that again parallels Christ! It is much greater than popular religion’s ridiculous concept of spending eternity floating on clouds in heaven:

“You made him [man] a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: You have put *all things* [Moffatt translation renders ‘all things’ as ‘the universe’] in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He *left nothing* that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor...For it became Him, for whom are *all things*, and by whom are all things, in bringing *many sons* unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:7-10).

The Christian goal is to be born into the kingdom of God, which is the family of God—to become an immortal spirit-being who will rule “all things”—the universe—under Jesus Christ! What could be more wonderful—more GLORIOUS?

Our booklet *Why Do You Exist?* provides much more understanding and scriptural proofs for this subject.

Take Action!

Now that you have read one or both of the “Seven Questions” articles, your knowledge of God’s truth has grown. What will you do with this precious understanding? You can choose to believe what the Bible *plainly* teaches or you can ignore Christ’s warning and “keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9).

What choice will you make?

The Creator expects action! You

must follow through with what you have read, or your new understanding will be lost: “Be you *doers* of the word, and *not hearers only*, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [Greek: mirror]: for he beholds himself, and goes his way, and *straightway forgets* what manner of man he was” (Jms. 1:22-24).

When knowledge is not acted upon, it is lost. Life’s many cares and pursuits will fill your mind and you will “straightway forget” the precious truth you now understand.

Beware of Human Reasoning

False ministers will always try to confuse, explain away, blur or reject outright the truth of God’s Word. This has been happening for thousands of years. Of course, such men pose as true ministers to lure the unsuspecting—and unstudied—from God: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (II Cor. 11:13-15).

If your minister dismisses plain scriptures, he is proving he is NOT a servant of Jesus Christ. So says your Bible!

No matter how sincere he may appear—and even be—he is sincerely wrong! Do not accept human reasoning or Scripture out of context in vain attempts to dismiss what you have learned. Ministers, church members, friends and family may not accept truth from God’s Word.

You must worry about how God sees *your* action—*your* conduct: “Wherefore, my beloved...work out *your own salvation* with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

Be willing to take the next step—be a doer of the Word! Work out your own salvation and experience God’s purpose for you. Fulfill your ultimate human potential! □



Criminal Minds

Would God Use Prisons to Rehabilitate?

The Founding Fathers framed much of the United States on Judeo-Christian values. It should come as no surprise that its prisons also have roots in religion. But is modern imprisonment biblical? What is preventing prisons from deterring crime?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

SEVENTEEEN-NINETIES AMERICA was a fledgling nation—"a clean slate." It was thought that any problems of the past could be solved with the high aim of constructing a perfect nation.

One of the first projects was to revise the criminal justice system.

Colonial America punished criminals through swiftly executed punishments, which were generally performed publicly to bring shame and humiliation to the perpetrator and to prevent similar crimes from occurring. Typical sentences involved being

whipped or a stint in the stockades.

Jails did exist, but they were only used to hold criminals awaiting trial and sentencing.

However, after the Revolution, the elite in America saw this system as archaic and inhumane, and determined to improve and update it.

Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signatory of the U.S. Constitution, proposed a new system of punishment, one that would work to rehabilitate criminals, turning them into functioning members of society. Drawing from a Quaker belief that all humans have an "Inner Light"—an inherent goodness—Rush devised a

system of solitary confinement (this practice also has roots in Catholic monasteries, where disobedient monks were isolated as punishment).

In this new system, men were placed in a tiny cell and given only a Bible to read. The prisoner was referred to by number rather than name and kept in his cell most of the day, except for a short period of exercise in an adjoining pen. Silence was maintained at all times. When an inmate was allowed out of his cell, a hood was placed over his head to continue his isolation. Being alone with one's conscience was considered to be the most effective form of punishment, allowing the inmate time to meditate on his actions and repent.

Although this system of complete isolation was scrapped after the American Civil War due to its high cost, it marked a move toward imprisonment as the primary form of punishment. Less strict variations of Rush's system spread throughout America and



■ **NO REAL HOPE:** Far left, a teacher conducts a writing class for young offenders at the Orange County (Florida) Jail. Above top left, inmates prepare to enter a dormitory at the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit, in Texas. Above top right, Broward Correctional Institution, which houses Florida's death-row women. Bottom left, two inmates on death row wait in the visiting room at McAlester, Oklahoma. Bottom right, an inmate who Texas prison officials call the "meanest man on death row" sits in his cell at the Ellis I Unit near Huntsville, Texas.

PHOTOS: MCT

the world. This led to the prisons of today.

Modern prisoners are still stripped of all earthly possessions, given a number and locked up in a cell as punishment—rather than being flogged and released, publicly humiliated, or executed. More recently, high-security or “supermax” prisons have resurrected a type of Rush’s model of solitary confinement.

Given the roots of the modern prison system in two different sects of Christianity, a few questions must be asked. Are prisons biblical? Does the God of the Bible prescribe this as an appropriate and effective way to curb crime? And can prisons actually rehabilitate—bring a change of mind to those who inhabit them?

America's Prison System

Today's prisons have three basic objectives: punish a criminal by taking away his time, remove him from society (in

an attempt to remove crime as well) and rehabilitate inmates to become better functioning members of society upon release.

The problems inherent with this system have remained the same for years: recidivism (repeated relapse into criminal acts), overcrowding, cost and, most tellingly—despite the large amounts of funding—the utter inability of the system to reduce crime.

A recent trend by state governments has been to pass laws calling for stricter mandatory sentences, with the thinking that longer prison time will deter future crimes. A variation of this is the “three-strike rule”: If convicted three separate times for a felony, the criminal receives automatic life imprisonment.

Laws such as these have not prevented a dramatic increase in the prison population.

At the end of 2006, roughly 1 in 31 adults in the United States

were in prison or jail, or on parole or supervised release, according to the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

During the late 1970s, there were about 268,000 prison inmates in all 50 states. By the end of 2006, there were over 2.4 million. Despite this drastic increase, crime rates remain high.

More prisoners also equal higher costs. In 2001, the average inmate cost over \$22,500 annually, or about \$62 a day (BJS). If the amount spent on inmates has remained the same since then, prisoners will have cost the nation over \$50.5 billion annually. Some reports claim the costs are over \$60 billion per year.

Correctional facilities are also criticized as being a “college” for criminals. While housed with other offenders, inmates have time to discuss, learn and hone their craft—whether grand theft auto, breaking and entering, or learning how to better escape capture. Rather

than being rehabilitated, prisoners are released, only to commit criminal acts again—but now more effectively.

Of the prisoners released in 1994 (the most recent nationwide study by the BJS), 67.5% were rearrested within three years. It is likely this percentage has increased since that time.

A new batch of problems has been added to the above list. Illegal immigrants are greatly contributing to both prison costs and the problem of overcrowding. Prisoners have also begun to sue state and federal governments for inhumane conditions, stemming from the problem of overcrowding. Often, the inmates win, with the courts ordering the institutions to clean up their acts.

America's prisons have failed to produce any tangible results. Simply put, they do not work. Again, can this system of imprisonment, which *apparently* stems from Christianity, be found in the Bible?

Biblical Criminal Justice

Imprisonment is found throughout Scripture. As a young man, Joseph was thrown into prison in Egypt (Gen. 39:20). Samson, after having his eyes put out, was put to work in a grinding mill prison house of the Philistines

(Jdg. 16:21). Jeremiah spent many of his days in the “court of the prison” (Jer. 32:2).

Also, throughout the New Testament, men such as Paul, James, John the Baptist and Peter, among others, were imprisoned.

This shows that variations of imprisonment have been used for thousands of years.

However, prisons are *not* God's way of dealing with crime. The above examples were all from nations not led by God!

When Israel was led out of Egypt, God gave the nation a civil code of laws that would cause the Gentiles to view Israel as a “great nation” that was both “wise and understanding” (Deut. 4:6). However, in this code God included no provision for prisons. Instead, there were swift and sure punishments for each broken law.

In contrast to America's current prison system, a broken law generally resulted in a predetermined punishment—with no gray areas.

Once a man was sentenced, the punishment was swiftly and *publicly* carried out—often with citizens helping to execute sentences.

This system of corporal and capital punishment was used so that other

citizens would “hear and fear” (Deut. 13:11; 17:13; 19:20), realizing the consequences of breaking the law.

The closest thing to a prison were wards, where criminals awaited sentencing, followed by their quick and sure punishment (Lev. 24:12; Num. 15:34).

On top of this, penalties fit the crime. In the 21st century, what and how long a sentence should be are usually left to a judge to decide. For the same offense, one man will receive years in prison, while another only a handful of months—or even none at all!

Physical punishment under Israel's civil laws was made to fit the *crime*, not the criminal. Some crimes meant flogging or a mandatory death sentence. Others incurred less severe punishments. For example, if a man were caught stealing he was ordered to pay back twice the stolen amount (Exo. 22:4-9).

By consistently and publicly punishing criminals, the ancient Israelites knew what consequences would result if they broke these laws. In doing so, crime was thwarted.

If this were to be enacted today, it would still work. However, this system would be derided as archaic

■ **SERVING TIME:** A Pueblo County Sheriff Deputy, holding a 12-gauge shotgun, keeps watch over a chain gang of convicted felons as they pick up litter along I-25 in Pueblo, Colorado.

PHOTO: MCT



and outdated (just as similar punishments were from Colonial America). While modern prisons are plagued with mounting problems, God's Way involves swift sentencing, with swift punishment.

It may seem that what is outlined in the Bible is "too simple" and critics could decry that it could never fit every case. However, applying God's Law would work to effectively reduce crime—if a nation diligently applied it.

United States prisons cannot produce real rehabilitation or change in inmates. Modern systems are *not* based upon God's Law, rather the ideas of men! Because of this, prisons cannot get to the core problem of crime—human nature!

If prisons did not come from the God of the Bible, then who is responsible for conceiving this form of punishment?

The "God" of Modern Prisons

Recently a type of Dr. Rush's solitary confinement has been brought back into practice in the form of supermax prisons. However, instead of facilitating repentance—bringing change in mindsets of inmates—these prison cells are reserved for the "worst of the worst"—prisoners who, given the current system, could not follow the laws of government nor the rules of lower security prisons. Virtually labeled *unfixable*, these criminals will live out their lives in solitude—with little hope they will change.

Over 20,000 inmates, spread across 30 states, are kept in lockdown and complete isolation in a 10-foot by 14-foot room for 23 hours a day. During the remaining hour, prisoners are escorted to an exercise pen, and then returned to their cell, which contains only a desk, a bed with a thin mattress, a sink and a toilet. The metal door is soundproofed to ensure as little contact as possible with adjacent prisoners, and the three meals a day are delivered

through an opening on the door for the prisoner to eat in solitude.

Interestingly, there is one future case in which God will use a sort of "supermax prison" for His own purpose. A sentence for someone He deems *unfixable*—but whose imprisonment will yield tremendous results!

What flows off of this example reveals both the author of modern prisons and why they cannot succeed in

Note that the devil and his demons—whose minds are twisted and perverted—are imprisoned (Rev. 20:2) that they "*should deceive the nations no more*, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (20:3). During those years the earth will be free from Satan's sway!

Establishing a New System

With Christ's Return, all the earth's governments will be wiped away: "The God of heaven [will] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people [not left to the ideas of men], but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). The earth will be a clean slate! But unlike the early years of America, the government will not be "left to other people"—it will not be based upon the

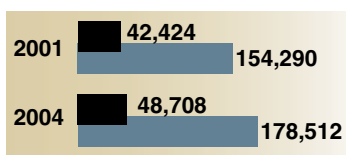
Undocumented Criminals

Criminal aliens, illegal aliens convicted of crimes, are a growing problem for federal and state prisons and local jails.

Share of prison population

In federal prisons

■ Criminal aliens ■ Total prisoners



• In 2004, there were criminal aliens from 173 countries; 63% were from Mexico

MCT

Cost of incarceration

For criminal aliens in federal prisons



State prisons, local jails

• More than 300,000 criminal aliens expected to be held in 2007

Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office

rehabilitating men and curbing crime in society.

The book of Revelation describes when Satan *himself*, a being who cannot die, will be imprisoned. Notice: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and *bound him a thousand years*, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him" (20:2-3).

Unbeknownst to man, Satan is currently ruling as "the god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4). *He* is the one who broadcasts *his* nature to all mankind, spawning "children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). It is *he* who is the author of all crime. And it is *he* who has inspired both ancient and current prison systems. Satan, who has deceived the world into following his own twisted form of prison, is himself sentenced to a *soon-coming* prison sentence. God uses this unique prison system because the fallen angels who willfully rebelled against Him cannot be put to death (they are immortal) or rehabilitated.

ideas of Satan or men. This government—THE KINGDOM OF GOD—will be built upon God's Law, following and administering it perfectly.

With Satan's nature removed, God will pour out His Spirit upon humanity (Joel 2:28)—enabling the whole of mankind to change and overcome selfish desires. Minds that were once ruled by the power of the devil will be able to make right decisions, to grow, change and overcome their old ways. This Spirit allows for true repentance—TRUE rehabilitation! Even the darkest glares of the most hardened criminal will be brightened into joy!

This newly established kingdom will teach man to solve his most persistent problems, which stem from his flawed systems and governments. No longer will anyone live out their days without human contact, or move in and out of prison cells, unable to break free of a life of crime. With this kingdom's establishment, the problems of correctional facilities will be forever removed. Mankind will be freed from the corrupt system of prisons! □

Where is JESUS CHRIST?

And What is He Doing Today?

FCG PHOTO: DARNITRA D. MAIDEN

Untold millions call upon His name, declaring He has “entered their hearts”—but where is Jesus, and what has He been doing the past 2,000 years, up to our time? Now you can know!

BY JUSTIN T. PALM

MORE THAN 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ lived an extraordinary and controversial life, and was ultimately killed for the message He brought. And although most professing Christians would say they believe the record of His ministry, crucifixion and His resurrection, when many picture Christ they envision a *dead* Jesus.

Some believe He is coming again, and are awaiting His return. Among them are those expecting a secret rapture to occur, an event in which Christ will “sweep up” all true Christians to heaven just before calamity strikes the Earth.

But these beliefs and theories do not speak to where Jesus is today and what He is doing.

What has Jesus Christ been doing the past 2,000 years, up to our time now? Is He trying to help the poor through charity organizations or missionary campaigns? Is He constantly entering into people’s hearts when they give their lives to Him? Is Jesus spreading the kingdom of God on earth through evangelizing Christians? Is He working through all churches that profess Christianity, just a few, or only through individuals?

Although the subject is not often discussed, there need not be any mystery of where Christ is and what He is doing. You will soon have no doubt about His role. You are only required to believe the words of the Bible.

The Right Hand of God

Let’s begin by examining the gospel accounts of Christ’s life and death. A key prophecy describing where He went after His resurrection is found in Luke 22: “And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led Him into their council, saying, Are you the Christ? Tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell you, you will not believe: And if I also ask you, you will not answer Me, nor let Me go.

Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God” (vs. 66-69).

Christ’s words are clear. Before His death, He prophesied He would ascend to heaven. But did this happen? Can we find more evidence in the gospels?

After Jesus was raised from the dead, He continued to teach His disciples and prepare them for the work they would carry out after He was gone. The account in Mark records that after fulfilling His task, Christ ascended into heaven: “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, *He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God”* (16:19).

Upon making the ultimate sacrifice, Christ was raised by God to the highest possible position on earth or in heaven. Notice: “When He [the Father] raised Him [Christ] from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, *far above* all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and has put *all things* under His feet” (Eph. 1:20-22).

The Bible reveals that Christ “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).

This picture is very different from what you may be accustomed to. After fulfilling His purpose on earth, Jesus Christ was glorified and exalted to sit at the Father’s right hand. Although we do not have space to explore every reference to Christ’s position at God’s right hand, it should be clear that Christ is alive and well. With all the talk of Jesus in Protestant churches, rarely does anyone speak of what Christ is doing at the right hand of God.

Now that it has been established *where* He is, what does Christ actually do?

A Living, Active High Priest

If Jesus has been in heaven during the past 2,000 years—through the fall of Rome, the bloody crusades, the Renaissance, World War I and II, and the advent of the Information Age—how does He spend His time?

The key to this question lies in one of the most important offices Christ holds. Among His many roles and titles, such as Prince of Peace, Savior, Apostle, King of kings, Lord of lords, Jesus Christ is also referred to as the High Priest.

Take note of this clear statement not only about Christ’s location, but also one of His offices: “Seeing then that we have a great HIGH PRIEST, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:14-15).

Let’s examine more proof of Christ’s all-important office. In Hebrews 3:1-2, Paul writes, “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed Him.” The Bible makes clear that God the Father has appointed Jesus Christ to the office of spiritual High Priest. This is the office through which Christ works.

But what does Christ *do* as High Priest? The answer can be found by taking a more in-depth look at Hebrews.

Making Intercession

In Hebrews 8, Paul elaborates on Christ’s responsibilities as High Priest. “We have such an HIGH PRIEST, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices” (vs. 1-3). Jesus Christ is described as a “Minister” in God’s sanctuary. He is working in God’s Temple, acting as a type of mediator between Christians and the Father. His sacrifice gives Christians access to God.

In Ephesians 2, Paul records, “But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are *made near* by the blood of Christ...for through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (vs. 13, 18). In order to

break this wall of separation, Christ's death was required. Through prayer, Christians are now permitted to enter the throne room of God (Heb. 4:16). It is only through Christ, as the active High Priest over His New Testament Church, that this is possible. It is His responsibility to present their spiritual sacrifices, their prayers, to God the Father.

The apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore He [Christ] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). Christ *lives* to intercede on a Christian's behalf. The word *intercede* means to "intervene between parties with a view to reconciling differences." In I Timothy 2:5, Christ is also called

by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5).

However, human beings cannot join the Church—God must call them into Christ's Body. Notice: "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him" (John 6:44; also see verse 65).

Christ places His ministers in the Body to teach, strengthen, counsel and edify its members (I Cor. 12:18-28).

Preparing and Refining a People

Christ has also been preparing Christians for positions in the soon-coming kingdom of God. Jesus told His disciples, "In My Father's house are many *mansions*: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2-4).

What did He mean by these state-

ments? The term "mansions" means "rooms, abode or residence"—or offices. In ancient Israel, the Levitical priesthood served in various rooms in the temple of God; these rooms represented positions of authority. So "mansions" refers to authority.

which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...after He had offered *one sacrifice for sins forever*, sat down on the right hand of God...For by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (vs. 10-12, 14).

The Greek word for "perfected" means "to complete, accomplish, consummate (in character), consecrate, finish, fulfill or to make perfect." Coupling this with Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:48, the process of becoming more like God—developing holy righteous character—to rule in His kingdom becomes clear.

The greatest work God is doing right now is perfecting His character in true Christians. Christ is described in

“God’s servants are being trained now to serve under Christ as kings and priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10).”

the "Mediator between God and men." When fully understood, it is plain that Christ takes a crucial and active role in working with true Christians and the Father.

Guiding His Church

Another responsibility Christ has is to build, guide and protect the New Testament Church (Matt. 16:18). An earlier quoted verse from Ephesians reveals Christ's role over the Church: "When He raised Him [Christ] from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places...and has put *all things* under His feet, *and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church*, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all" (1:20, 22-23).

Just as Jesus worked through His physical body during His earthly ministry, He now works through His *spiritual* Body—the Church (I Cor. 12:27). Christ is building His Church to fulfill God's plan for humanity. The apostle Peter describes this process: "You also, as lively stones, *are built up a spiritual house*, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God

ments? The term "mansions" means "rooms, abode or residence"—or offices. In ancient Israel, the Levitical priesthood served in various rooms in the temple of God; these rooms represented positions of authority. So "mansions" refers to authority.

Christ was speaking of His Second Coming, when He will establish the government of God on earth and give positions of rulership to His followers. God's servants are being trained now to serve under Christ as kings and priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Recall from I Peter 2:5 that the Church is called "a holy priesthood."

Jesus Christ is training this advance team of leaders to rule under Him in God's kingdom—a world-ruling supergovernment. But God will only trust leaders who have been properly trained and proven for such a task.

This leads to another aspect of what Christ has been doing for the past two millennia. Recall the phrase "perfecting of the saints" from Ephesians 4:12. From the start of the first-century Church, Jesus has also been helping the Father in the refining process of all Christians. Hebrews 10 states, "By the

Hebrews as the "Author and Finisher" of a Christian's faith (12:2). Jesus Christ is, in a sense, helping to *finish* Christians.

"Confirming the Word"

By now you should have a much more comprehensive view on what Jesus Christ is doing. Although He is now in heaven, He will not remain there for much longer (I Thes. 4:16-17).

Before concluding, it is important to examine one final passage in Mark 16. "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word [what they preached] with signs following" (vs. 19-20).

Verse 20 reveals that Jesus Christ worked with the first-century disciples *from heaven*. In Matthew 16:18, He promised His Church that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This means Jesus is actively working with His Church today—but where is it? For more information, read *Where is God's True Church?* □



PHOTO: MCT

THE ANNAPOLIS PEACE SUMMIT

A New Hope for the Mid-East?

BY MARK P. DENEE

IT SEEMS as though almost every U.S. President must attempt a summit of some sort to kick-start yet another round of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, along with the greater Arab world. Such was the case in late November when President George W. Bush invited Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to Annapolis, Maryland, along with more than 40 international participants.

Many wonder, after decades of continued fighting in the Mid-East, why such attempts at conducting

endless peace talks are still made when they obviously yield little peace. “Aren’t there more constructive issues to tackle,” one might rightfully ask, “such as global warming or combating AIDS in Africa?”

Americans might wonder why their country dedicates so many of its resources to the Middle East, and why each U.S. presidency is held responsible for attempting to solve the problem.

Clearly, regional stability is important for the global economy, primarily due to the world’s dependency on Arab-controlled oil. Certainly, expatriates from the region are naturally concerned about the well-being of relatives

in the “old country.” In addition, the Middle East—particularly Israel and Jerusalem—is the worldwide religious focal point for professing Christians, followers of Islam and adherents to Judaism.

The international community often expects the United States, the world’s leading democracy, to instill or maintain relative peace wherever possible. This puts America in an unwinnable position: If, when intervening in foreign affairs, the U.S. takes an unpopular stance, it is accused of exerting itself as the “world’s policeman”; but if America refrains from acting, nations criticize it for failing to intervene.

Therefore, presidents exert varying degrees of effort concerning the Middle East. Some act to build upon their

presidential legacy as their departure from office draws near. Others bow to domestic political pressure or in fear of damaging international relations. And some might make the attempt to solving the Mid-East trouble simply because they truly desire peace.

But regardless of motives, peace talks have resulted in more talk than actual peace.

A Brief History

In the 1978 Camp David Accords, in which U.S. President Jimmy Carter hosted Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, peaceful negotiations ultimately resulted in two agreements: (1) to set up a self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza; and (2) a framework that eventually led to the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

The 1991 Madrid Conference saw Israel and Egypt meet again, this time with Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Even the Palestinians (who were not directly involved with the Camp David Accords) were represented—but as a part of the Jordanian delegation rather than by Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which the Israelis rejected at the time. The talks ultimately resulted in a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994, as well as continued negotiations between Israel and Syria.

The Oslo Agreement of 1993 provided direct communication between the Israeli government and the Palestinian people represented by the PLO. An agreement followed that spoke of putting “an end to decades of confrontation and conflict” and of each side recognizing “their mutual legitimate and political rights” (*BBC*), implying a future separate state of Palestine. But the November 4, 1995, assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin ended the course at that time.

Keep in mind also that during the peace talks, the Palestinians and Israelis continued to fight. What are known as the First Intifada (1987 to 1993) and the Second Intifada (2000 to

present) killed thousands. The failure of the Camp David sessions of 2000, in which President Bill Clinton hosted Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, essentially resulted in renewed violence, the Second Intifada, which continues to this day.

Following the efforts of U.S. Senator George Mitchell in 2001 and a statement by President George W. Bush in 2002 calling for a Palestinian state (first such statement by a U.S. President) came the formation of the “Quartet”: the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations. In 2003 they presented a “Road Map” to a “final settlement”; the world still awaits its implementation.

Quick to Criticize

As Mr. Bush’s presidential term approaches its end, the seeming obligatory attempt at yet another round of peace talks has come to the fore. He himself suggested that it was not a risk, but rather “an obligation.”

Expectations were extremely low, and conflicts in direction became evident between the State Department and the White House. The date was set for Tuesday, November 27, and the place was Annapolis, Maryland, where Mr. Bush hosted Mr. Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Later that day, the three released a joint statement, calling for an immediate resumption of negotiations between Israel and Palestinian government: “We agree to immediately launch good-faith bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues without exception, as specified in previous agreements. We agree to engage in vigorous, ongoing and continuous negotiations and shall make every effort to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008.”

Critics were quick to question the timing and reality of such a target, suggesting that both Messrs. Olmert and Abbas are politically weak. The militant Palestinian faction Hamas imme-

diately rejected Mr. Abbas’s speech. Meanwhile, the Saudi Foreign Minister suggested it was equally important for Israel to negotiate with Lebanon and Syria.

The next day, November 28, Mr. Bush met privately with each of the leaders and then jointly before the three appeared together for an official send-off from the Rose Garden. Mr. Bush then declared the conference a success: “No matter how important yesterday was, it’s not nearly as important as tomorrow and the days beyond. I wouldn’t be standing here if I didn’t believe that peace was possible.”

But elsewhere, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called the conference a “failure.” He also said, “It is impossible that the Zionist regime will survive. Collapse is in the nature of this regime because it has been created on aggression, lying, oppression and crime.”

Interestingly, Mr. Olmert also warned of Israel’s end. Referring to the demographic challenge of the current situation (i.e., the Palestinian portion of the Israeli population is growing faster than the traditional Jewish portion), he suggested that his nation would ultimately lose if a Palestinian state were not created. “If the day comes,” he said, “when the two-state solution collapses and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights, then, as soon as that happens, the State of Israel is finished” (*Haaretz*).

The ongoing state of suffering, misery, despair and violence in the Middle East—as well as other parts of the world—will cease, replaced with hope, prosperity, universal harmony and peace. But this future scenario will not come about as a result of peace talks, despite the noble intentions of diplomats and negotiators. Neither will the world’s secularists nor religionists provide the answers that will solve humanity’s increasing troubles and ills.

Only a perfect government, led by perfect leadership, will bring this hope to fruition. Such government and leadership is the only way. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

does God, in that He sends rain and sunshine and provides the very soil in which the fruit, vegetables or grains take root and grow. Who did most of the work? In truth, the farmer did little more than a fraction of the work, while God did perhaps 90%. As a matter of fact, the farmer is far more dependent on God's effort than God is on the farmer's. Without God's contributions, the farmer would produce nothing and, in fact, *would not even be alive* because no one would be able to produce the food necessary for all human beings to survive.

Think of it this way. You formed a partnership with God—whether you knew it or not—the day you took a chosen profession, job or vocation. You are using materials that belong to God, in order to invest, sell, distribute or produce goods or services, whereby you can earn a living—you *have become a partner with God!* There is no other way to view or understand this. Admit to yourself that, without God's role and help in earning a living, it would be impossible to produce anything! God knows this and has chosen to make a special arrangement with you. His Word describes it.

God lays prior claim to the first 10% of everything that people earn as income. This is called the *tithe*, and it means “the *tenth*.” You may be familiar with the term. To tithe, or to be a tithepayer, means the same as to “tenth” or to be a “tenthpayer.” The word *tithe* is actually an old English word. The King James Version of the Bible was translated nearly 400 years ago—in 1611. At that time, the word was commonly used to mean *tenth*. People have long understood that to tithe is to pay a tenth of one's income. We will thoroughly explore to whom this tenth was paid in the Old Testament, and to whom it is paid today.

There are small and large points within God's Law. Some commands carry more “weight” than others. When

speaking of some lesser points within God's law, Christ said in Matthew 5:19 that, “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.”

Let us now examine an important verse about tithing. Christ said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For *you pay tithe* of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the *weightier* matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: *these* [the weightier matters] *ought you to have done*, and *not to leave the other* [tithing conscientiously] *undone*” (Matt. 23:23). God also inspired Luke to record the same account—and to repeat the same command (11:42). Love, mercy and faith are, indeed, weighty matters within the overall law of God. Christ acknowledges this. However, He also explains that tithing should not be something that people “leave undone.” The argument is often raised that tithing is not important—that it is *least* among God's laws. This verse does not actually say that it is “least” among God's commands. Matthew 5:19 merely says that, *if it were*, it is still required to be kept today by all who value the commands of God!

Any who are learning the truth of God's tithing laws must pay His tithe—once it is clear where His chosen representatives are working! We will learn that tithing is the manner in which He finances the Work His true servants perform. Only after God's tithe has been paid does God give the rest of one's income back to the tithepayer. God's generosity and love for those who are His children is why He gives nine-tenths of what He owns to the one faithful in tithe-paying. In other words, we are not giving God *one-tenth* of what is *ours*. God is giving us *nine-tenths* of what is *His!*

We should now examine several scriptures about tithing. People who dismiss this practice as a valid command often attempt to make the truth of tithing into a highly technical sub-

ject. Tithing is not a technical subject. It is not difficult to understand. It does require some careful examination of a relatively *few* scriptures. Doing this will make clear that tithing has always been, is now and always will be the means whereby God finances His Work and His Church.

The Tithe is God's

Some theologians and “Bible critics” attempt to create confusion by saying that tithes in the Old Testament belonged only to the Levitical Priesthood of ancient Israel. Is this true? Does the Bible say this? We must ask, is there a place, anywhere in scripture, where God plainly says that *tithes belong to Him?* There is!

God states, in Leviticus 27:30, 32, “And *all the tithe* of the land...IS THE LORD'S: it is *holy unto the LORD*...And concerning *the tithe* of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.” These verses are direct. They are plain. Tithes belong to God alone. *He* may choose to give them to His servants, but it is completely within *His* discretion what *He* does with them.

These same “higher critics” often attempt to use Numbers 18:21 and 24 to prove that the tithe belonged to the *Levites*. Carelessly reading these scriptures causes them to be misunderstood by those who will not accept their plain meaning. This passage says, “And, behold, *I have given* the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve...But the tithes of the children of Israel...*I have given* to the Levites to inherit.” Carefully consider this verse. Did *Israel* give their tithes to the Levites? No! *God* gave His tithe, which was merely supplied by the Israelites, to the Levites. He twice said, “*I have given.*”

The tithes were God's, not Israel's, to give to whom *He* chose. Reading verse 20 makes this more plain.

There is much more to learn about God's financial principles. You may wish to read *End All Your Financial Worries*. □

READER COMMENTS

From online subscribers of our weekly news updates

CANADA

■ "I'm very glad to see a magazine that's not afraid to tell 'it' as 'it' is. Keep up the good work."

■ "Your articles are very enlightening and thought-provoking! Thank you for your insight."

■ "Please inform me whether or not you are affiliated with *The Plain Truth* magazine, which as I recall was Herbert W. Armstrong's original publication." **[Editor's note: *The Plain Truth*, which was published under the direction of Herbert W. Armstrong from 1934 to his death in January 1986, was the predecessor to *The Real Truth*, led by Publisher/Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack.]**

CHINA

■ "I have printed out the article 'Coming—The Utopia All Long For!' from your website and am very impressed of its content."

GHANA

■ "Your publication has really reformed my brother's marriage and this has given me the strength to build my relationship with my fiancée as we prepare for marriage."

INDIA

■ "I read the article 'Innocence Lost – The Sexualization of Youth.' I liked it, therefore I am requesting a subscription to your weekly email updates."

■ "I had just looked at your website for a few minutes and found that it has a different view of the world and what is going on in the present situation." **[Editor's note: We recommend you read our article "Why We Analyze News, Trends, Problems and Conditions From a Biblical Perspective," archived at our website: www.realtruth.org.]**

KENYA

■ "I find your articles to be very truthful and inspiring. I would like to read *The Real Truth* magazine regularly."

NIGERIA

■ "You are doing a wonderful job. Your write-ups are soul-searching, mind-blowing, thought-provoking and

heart-touching. They spur readers to ACTION."

PAKISTAN

■ "My friend told me that a magazine named *The Real Truth* is a good source of news, which is why I am subscribing to receive the weekly email updates."

PHILIPPINES

■ "It's good to find out that *The Plain Truth* is still in continued publication through *The Real Truth*."

THAILAND

■ "I am interested to receive knowledge about why we are created and placed on earth, and after death where are we going." **[Editor's note: Our booklet *Why Do You Exist?* and our article "What Happens When You Die?" answer these questions.]**

UGANDA

■ "I read every single piece of information on this website and I have come to like it so very much."

UNITED STATES

■ "This article on predestination **[Editor's note: "Has Your Life Been Predetermined?"]** was incredibly good! Wow. I learned so much. Thank you."

■ "Very interesting, educational and sobering."

■ "Thank you for bringing *The Real Truth* magazine to me, and explaining from the Bible God's plain purpose for mankind's future."

■ "Thank you for such a wealth of information. I look forward to reading your material."

■ "Excellent information."

■ "I found your book on the trinity **[Editor's note: *The Trinity – Is God three-in-one?*]** and I am reading it with great interest."

■ "I have just completed reading your 'Seven Questions' article **[Editor's note: "Seven Questions Your Minister Does NOT Want You to Ask"]**. WOW!!! What food for thought!"

ZIMBABWE

■ "I am interested in knowing the real truth behind world events."

Q&A

Who are the two witnesses, described in Revelation 11?

The identity of these two individuals is unknown. However, when they do come on the scene, it will be clear that Christ's Return is imminent.

Verse 3 shows that these two men will be given incredible power for the three and a half years preceding Christ's Return. If anyone tries to harm them and interfere with their ministry and testimony, "...fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies" (vs. 5). This is comparable to the power that was given to Elijah, as demonstrated in II Kings 1:9-15. They will be empowered to bring drought and famine upon the earth, just as Elijah did (I Kings 17:1-7; Luke 4:25). They will also be able to strike the earth with plagues (Rev. 11:6).

The two witnesses will deliver a final warning to this world's government leaders, for which they will be martyred. The world will rejoice at the sight of their corpses, which will remain exposed in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days (vs. 9-10). But all will be struck with tremendous fear when the two men are raised to life and rise skyward in a cloud (vs. 11-12).

You may wish to request our free booklet *Revelation Explained at Last!* It further explains prophetic end-time events. □



In Mark 8:22-25, why did Christ not immediately heal the blind man?

Christ could have healed the man by the simple touch of His hand, or even with His words. But He probably realized that the man's faith was weak.

We find that even after Christ had been resurrected, His *disciples'* faith was weak. Their human nature required "physical evidence" of the miracle that had taken place (even above and beyond Christ's presence among them). (Read Luke 24:40 and John 20:27-29.)

Christ healed the blind man in a "step-by-step" manner, rather than all at once, in order to increase the man's faith, before *totally* healing him. □

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Will Faster Supercomputers Help Solve World's Problems?

Over twice as fast as today's most commonly used supercomputers, petascale processors—which are able to perform 1,000 trillion calculations per second—are slated to be released as early as 2008.

With the power of 100,000 desktop computers, the newest generation of supercomputers is predicted to have a profound impact in the fields of business and industry. Not only will stock brokers be able to use their processing power to better predict swings in the stock market, but the automotive industry will be able to use the higher processing speed to limit the need for building vehicle models—thus mitigating most defects before a prototype is built.

Advancements in supercomputing are also projected to aid in scientific discovery and speed up research. Experts maintain that as supercomputing technology advances, new models will be able to more quickly analyze massive data sets and test complex scientific models. Already supercomputers are used where experimentation is impossible or too dangerous, costly or time consuming.

In an interview with *iTnews*, David A. Bader, editor of the first book on petascale computing, said that scientists have high hopes for this next level of computing. He said that not only will the new machines make calculations easier, but they will be applied “to address our national and global priorities, such as sustainability of our natural environment by reducing our carbon footprint and by decreasing our dependencies on fossil fuels, improving human health and living conditions, understanding the mechanisms of life from molecules and systems to organisms and populations, preventing the spread of disease, predicting and tracking severe weather, recovering from natural and human-caused disasters, maintaining national security, and mastering nanotechnologies.”

But despite petascale computers' ability to help solve mankind's persistent problems, experts have already turned their sights on the *next* generation of supercomputers. Exascale computing, estimated to be released in 2018, will be capable of running one *million* trillion calculations per second. □

Lightning Speed

Supercomputers, the fastest type of computer, are very expensive and used for specialized applications that require large amounts of calculations.

Calculations per second:

- Gigaflop** 1 billion
- Teraflop** 1 trillion
- Petaflop** 1 quadrillion
- Exaflop** 1 quintillion

Year	Performance	Maker
1993	16 gigaflops	Thinking Machine C-5
1994	236 gigaflops	Fujitsu Numerical Wind Tunnel
1996	368 gigaflops	Hiatchi CP-PACS
1997	1.8 teraflops	Intel Ascii Red
2000	12.3 teraflops	IBM Ascii White
2002	36 teraflops	NEC Earth Simulator
2004	280 teraflops	IBM Blue Gene/L
2008	1 petaflop	IBM Blue Gene/P
2011	10 petaflops	IBM Blue Gene/P
2017	20 petaflops	IBM Blue Gene/P
2022*	1 exaflop	To be determined

*In development, IBM has not set a timeline

Source: top500.com

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ECONOMY & PERSONAL FINANCE

U.S. Sinks Deeper Into Credit Card Debt

Americans are increasingly unable to keep up with credit card bills. An *Associated Press* analysis of financial data from many major credit card companies showed double-digit percentage increases in bill payment delinquency.

Accounts at least 30 days late increased 26% over the previous October to \$17.3 billion—a \$4.5 billion increase. Discover Financial Services Co. reported a jump of 25,716 accounts that were more than 30 days late over November 2006. The number rose at least another 6,000 during October of this year.

Accounts more than 90 days overdue saw the greatest increase; some lenders reported a 50-plus% increase over the number from the same month in the previous year.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank, Americans carry \$920 billion in credit card debt. Credit card companies saw an 18% rise in defaults (in which companies write off debt, deeming the cardholder unable to pay) over the previous October. These defaults total about another \$961 million that is owed but cannot be repaid.

Experts say the expanded debt is partly the product of the subprime mortgage crisis in the U.S., while other economists point to the deep-rooted American attitude that credit card debt is “no big deal.”

“The desires of consumers to want, want, want, spend, spend, spend—it's the fabric of our nation,” Howard Dvorkin, founder of Consolidated Credit Counseling Services in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., told the *Associated Press*. “But you always have to pay the piper, and that can be a very painful process.” □

WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENT

Global Food Supplies Threatened

A number of organizations warn that changing temperatures and other global factors are contributing to a worldwide depletion of food supplies.

As food reserves disappear, costs have skyrocketed. Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Jacques Diouf cautioned the United Nations on global food security. With rising transportation costs choking food shipments to developing nations, starvation for more of the world's poor appears just over the horizon.

Climate specialists at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization in Canberra, Australia, claim the average temperatures of many Third World nations are rising, affecting local agriculture.

An increase of only one to three degrees Fahrenheit could result in widespread blight, or traumatic conditions such as drought, hurricanes or floods. These events would severely inhibit "traditional" growing techniques. Since farmers depend on

good weather for their crops, they would be defenseless against a drastic change in local climate.

Josette Sheeran, executive director of the World Food Program, said in a telephone interview that the cost of providing food for the program has doubled in the last five years. With the rise in oil prices, ship transportation costs also doubled. This has limited the ability to provide food for countries where shortages are imminent. As Ms. Sheeran explained, the world's poor are being "priced out of the food market" (*International Herald Tribune*).

A 2006 report released by the FAO estimates that 854 million people will be at risk of starvation and malnutrition, with 820 million of those from developing countries.

Since technology allows flexibility in addressing food shortages, climate change has less effect in modernized nations such as the United States, Britain and many countries in Europe. These nations use genetically modified crops, which resist high temperatures.

Europe is planning to use its economic leverage to remove taxes on grain imports in January to ease the cost of domestic cereals, which will adversely affect nations with weak economies.

In the United States, farmers are shifting from growing food-grade corn toward corn used in biofuels, which is also contributing to food shortages. The lucrative subsidized sale of ethanol has attracted farmers who are looking to make a profit. Although the American government has made little progress moderating this "exodus," Europe has made strides by setting low target budgets in their biofuel subsidies, allowing farmers to garner a small profit by selling to the government.

Most suppose that a global food shortage crisis is impossible. In response to this common misconception, Francesco Tubiello of Columbia University said, "Many people assume that we will never have a problem with food production on a global scale, but there is a strong potential for negative surprises." □

Study: Fish Farms Driving Wild Salmon to Extinction

Scientists involved in a study published in the journal *Science* expect a 99% drop in wild salmon populations that swim past farms during migration within the next four years.

Salmon crowded in farms just off the Canadian coast create an environment in which sea lice thrive. The parasite is then transferred to wild salmon populations because of the farms' open-net design, releasing the multiplied lice into open water.

Most at risk are young salmon as they migrate from rivers where they hatched to the ocean. Juvenile salmon are more likely to die from sea lice infestation due to their small size and thin skin.

A co-author of the study ("Declining Wild Salmon Populations in Relation to Parasites From Farm Salmon") explained the situation: "Salmon farm-

ing breaks natural law. In the natural system, the youngest salmon are not exposed to sea lice because the adult salmon that carry the parasite are offshore.

"But fish farms cause a deadly collision between the vulnerable young salmon and sea lice. They are not equipped to survive this, and they don't."

After collecting data on adult wild salmon returns in British Columbia's Broughton Archipelago region dating back to the 1970s, researchers compared populations that had not been exposed to salmon farms to those that were.

The scientists found that wild salmon numbers in regions with many fish farms were drastically lower.

Also, the study found that when farms were closed, the numbers in that region rebounded.

The argument over the negative impact of fish farms is heated. Fish farm advocates argue studies such as these rely heavily on conjecture and not hard science—claiming the reasons for the rise and fall in salmon populations are too complex to directly link rapidly declining wild populations to fish farms.

Recent years have seen a drastic increase in demand for nutrient-rich fish such as salmon, leading fish farm supporters to advocate large-scale expansion of farming.

If these plans are realized, and the study's findings are correct, ever-greater numbers of salmon will be threatened.

Wild salmon is a vital part of the ecosystem; orcas, grizzly bears, birds and even trees would all be adversely

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■ **SEA LICE:** Young pink salmon with sea lice infestation.
PHOTO: Alexandra Morton

affected by a drastic drop in the number of wild salmon.

Currently, there are two main solutions for limiting fish farms' effects on the natural environment:

- Move existing farms away from the rivers salmon use to spawn.

- Change the farms into closed-net operations, containing the pathogens.

However, both of these proposals are expensive, meaning increased costs for farmers and higher prices for consumers.

The Washington Post reported that legislation involving a major expansion of fish farming is currently before the U.S. Congress. □

EUROPE

EU Leaders Sign “Milestone” Reform Treaty

December 13, 2007, has become yet another historical marker for the European Union as representatives from the 27 EU member-states gathered in Lisbon, Portugal, to sign the Lisbon treaty (or Reform treaty), a 250-plus-page document intended to streamline EU's decision making, further unify its member-states and add to its political clout.

Current EU President and Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates remarked, “This is not a treaty for the past. This is a treaty for the future, a treaty that will make Europe more modern, more efficient and more democratic.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called the agreement “a historic success” and “decisive milestone” for Europe, also saying it “lays the groundwork for a new European Union in the 21st century.”

Despite receiving signatures of leaders from each member-state, the treaty has spurred heated criticism from citizens throughout the EU—especially in Britain (which has long been able to opt out of

EU decisions). Critics feel the new agreement is merely the failed 2005 constitution renamed and are angered that their leaders would sign such a document without a vote from their citizens. Others believe the treaty forces member-states to relinquish too much power, hindering their ability to govern themselves.

The treaty is, in fact, a less aggressive, stripped-down version of the 2005 European constitution that was shelved after France and the Netherlands rejected it. But because it carries the name *treaty* rather than *constitution*, it can be approved without individual national referendums. The document amends the current constitution, rather than replacing it.

The new treaty...

- gives more power to the EU president, who can now remain in power for a total of five years, to be elected by leaders of the member-states.

- creates a rotating six-month presidency for the European Council.

- gives the EU “legal personal-

ity,” allowing it to sign international treaties as a single governing entity, rather than an international organization.

- removes national veto power for over 50 policies.

Included in the treaty is the Charter of Fundamental Rights—a document that lays out many political, civil and social rights for EU citizens. If a citizen feels his or her rights have been violated by a member-state's government, they may use this charter to take their case before EU courts. Before the treaty, individual nations had the final say.

EU leaders hope the document will be ratified by May 2008, allowing most measures to come into effect by 2009. France, Germany and Poland have vowed to be among the first to ratify the document. However, if just one country does not agree with the document, it will be nullified.

Currently, only Ireland is scheduled to hold a referendum on the issue; polls regarding the treaty have shown that citizens there are largely undecided or indifferent. □



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