

APRIL 2008

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



Looking for Rest in a
Restless World

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VOL. VI | NO. 4 | APRIL 2008

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: ARTTODAY, INC.

Published 10 times per year, with online news updates throughout the week.

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The Real Truth magazine is provided free of charge. This is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members of The Restored Church of God, and by the offerings and donations of co-workers and donors. Contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax-deductible in the U.S. and Canada. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support the Work of God in preaching and publishing the gospel to all nations are gladly welcomed as co-workers. Contributions should be sent to the address below.

The preparation and production of this magazine involved the work of editors, proofreaders, graphic artists, illustrators, writers, researchers and those who support the Work of God.

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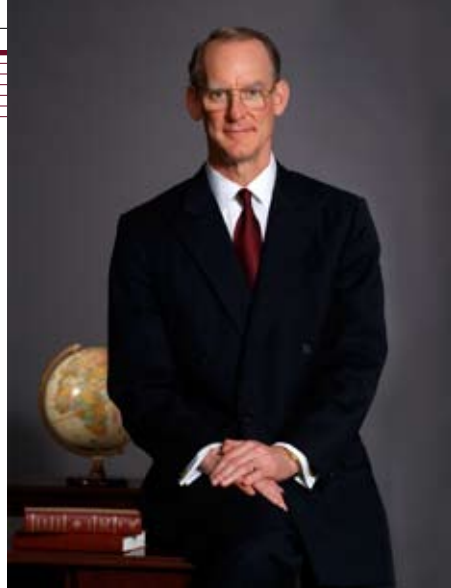
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Do the Saved Go to Heaven?

YOU SAY HEAVEN is the reward of the saved. Are you certain? Have you sought proof? Almost all professing Christians believe the saved go to heaven upon death. Why? What assurance do they have? By what AUTHORITY have countless millions believed that they are bound for heaven when they die?

Be honest. You probably consider yourself a Christian. You certainly want to be saved. You have probably also been assured that you will go to heaven some day. Should you not demand PROOF that heaven is really what you seek—and where you will go?

It is about time you know if you will spend all eternity in heaven!

An Easy Formula

Romans 10:9 states, “That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be *saved*.” Verse 13 adds, “For *whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be *saved*.”

Certain popular verses are routinely cited to validate the simplicity of just believing in Christ to be saved. This makes salvation seem routine and easy. Heaven becomes little more than an assumption in a formula that virtually every professing Christian takes for granted: “Believe in Jesus, go to heaven.”

Yet when a famous evangelist was asked, “What will we *do* when we get to heaven?” he answered, “I don’t know, but it will be wonderful.” Such igno-

rance!—and if he does not know, how can he “know” it will be wonderful?

Answers like this are why people assume that they will “ride clouds in heaven”—“walk the streets of gold in front of the pearly gates”—“play harps”—“grow wings”—or generally “roll around heaven all day.” All of these ideas are man-made, fiction. The Bible teaches *none* of them—yet almost *everyone* believes them as fact.

So, let’s get the *facts*—the TRUTH—of what God teaches.

We have many booklets explaining in detail the real reward of the saved. Though this article will address some of the truth on this matter, it will not and cannot cover everything about the *truth* of salvation. This is not the purpose or focus here. This article is written to examine whether heaven is the destination of the saved.

One of the fundamental rules of Bible study is to *always* start with the clearest scriptures on any subject. Then fit all less clear scriptures into the basic overall picture that has been established.

The subject of going to heaven is a classic example of the need to start with the most plain, obvious verses. We will examine a number of them. After doing this, we will examine all the *supposed* “proof texts” about going to heaven. They will be correctly understood and the false idea of the saved going to heaven will collapse!

Plain Scriptures

Perhaps the plainest scripture in the Bible about going to heaven is in the Sermon on the Mount—and it does not even mention the word *heaven*. While most know of

this Sermon, few know of this most important verse. Christ said, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall INHERIT THE EARTH” (Matt. 5:5).

Have you ever heard even one minister say that God’s purpose for Christians is to “inherit the EARTH”? I doubt it. And yet there it is—at the very beginning of the New Testament.

What may be more amazing is that Christ was quoting Psalm 37:11. It states the exact same thing. It would not have been strange for Him to reference Psalms, since all His listeners would have been familiar with this scripture. To have said that “the meek shall inherit *heaven*” certainly *would* have been strange to their ears!

Let’s examine another plain scripture, which adds another element.

The apostle John recorded the following: “And has made *them* [the saints] unto our God *kings and priests*: and *they* [the saints] shall REIGN ON THE EARTH” (Rev. 5:10).

The reward of God’s saints is to inherit future rulership “on the earth”—as “kings and priests.” This is plain!

I’ll ask again: Have you ever heard a minister say that God’s purpose for you is to “reign on the earth,” as “kings and priests”?

Be honest—of course not! You must at least admit that becoming a KING is more appealing than riding clouds, playing harps or rolling around heaven.

Now, will you believe the plain words of the Bible—or continue in popular but baseless assumptions?

What Daniel Knew

Now go to the Old Testament. The prophet Daniel, amplifying the saints’ role as kings and priests, writes about the Return of Christ and the establishing of God’s kingdom on earth. Before examining three key verses, some background is important.

Before Christ’s Return, God will officially grant Him the authority to

rule the world. Notice: “And there was GIVEN Him [Christ] dominion, and glory, and a *kingdom*” (Dan. 7:14).

Where will this kingdom be? Daniel answers, “...that all people, *nations*, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His *kingdom* that which shall not be destroyed.”

It will be on earth.

But *how* will God rule the peoples and nations of earth? Daniel explains: “But the *saints* of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even forever and ever” (vs. 18). The Christian’s ultimate destiny is to join Christ and share rulership in the kingdom of God over all nations and peoples ON EARTH!

Now read verse 22: “...and judgment was given to the *saints* of the Most High; and the time came that the *saints* possessed the *kingdom*.” And verse 27: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the *saints* of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”

Christ and the saints will rule peoples and nations *on earth*.

You have surely heard Christ referred to as “KING *of kings* and LORD *of lords*.” Now you know *why*!

Let’s confirm *where* this rulership takes place. Christ states, “And he that *OVERCOMES*, and KEEPS MY WORKS unto the end, to him will I give POWER OVER THE NATIONS: And he shall RULE them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father” (Rev. 2:26-27). A few verses later, He adds, “To him that *OVERCOMES* will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne*...” (3:21).

Christians are overcomers. They do not sit idle, “just believing” in

Jesus and waiting for heaven. They recognize that they are in training to become *teachers and rulers*! This is why the apostle Jude wrote, “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord *comes* with ten thousands of His *saints*, To execute *judgment* upon all...” (vs. 14-15).

Did you notice Christ “comes” to earth rather than we “go” to heaven? And the saints assist Him in “executing judgment.”

The phrase “in My throne” (Rev. 3:21) is used because Christ understood that His throne is on this earth—unlike the Father’s throne, which is in heaven. Luke 1:32 shows that Christ will sit in Jerusalem on the throne of David.

Now notice Revelation 20:4, 6: “And I saw *thrones*, and they sat upon them, and *judgment* was given unto them...and they lived and REIGNED with Christ a *thousand years*...Blessed and holy is he that has part in the FIRST RESURRECTION: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be *priests* of God and of Christ, and shall REIGN with Him a *thousand years*.”

What could be plainer than these verses? When Christ returns, the saints rule with Him! Together, they will reign over the entire world!

What Christ Did Say About Heaven

Let’s turn the coin over. We have seen what Christ says IS the calling and reward of a Christian—but did He ever say what it is NOT? Did Jesus make any plain statements about men in heaven? He did—in stunning clarity!

He said, “And *no man* has ascended up *to heaven*, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

There it is! Jesus *did* address people going to heaven. Take this verse for exactly what He said, neither

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 22

14 STATEMENTS of JESUS

ALMOST NO ONE BELIEVES
And Your Minister Doesn't Want You to Understand!

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

Similar in style to our “Seven Questions” articles, this three-part series analyzes 14 statements made by Jesus Christ, found in the Bible. Some are well-known; others are overlooked. Hundreds of millions who claim to be Christian assume they understand and therefore accept—believe!—these statements, but the reality is that virtually no one does.

Do not allow yourself to discount this series or any of its explanations simply because you are accustomed to a particular belief system, even one you have held your entire life. And do not permit your minister to use shallow assertions or smooth “answers” (or non-answers) to dismiss this series. Instead, diligently investigate in the pages of your own Bible what is stated herein, and ask God for understanding. Throw aside all preconceived ideas. Be like the Bereans in the book of Acts, who “received the word [Paul’s preaching] with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Recognize that a three-article series cannot address every conceivable issue pertaining to each of these 14 statements. To gain a fuller picture of each, it is imperative you study the referenced literature. This material will expound upon each subject in thorough detail.

In our “Seven Questions” series, we addressed 14 questions ministers do not want to be asked. Based upon numerous letters we received from our readers, we have found that many, including ministers, hastily jump to conclusions before thoroughly reading a particular explanation in its entirety, with some assuming their church agrees with our positions, when this is *not* the case. It is evident that few took the time to study the literature referenced in both articles—or even to read each article closely.

Again, do not draw conclusions before (1) reading an entire explanation with an open Bible—and open mind—and (2) studying the referenced material. Otherwise, you will do yourself a great disservice.

MILLIONS TALK about the “love of God”—and believe they love Jesus. Sunday sermons are filled with the subject. How does Jesus define love?

Millions are aware of John 3:16, perhaps the most recited verse in the Bible. Is there a hidden element in this verse indicating that human beings do not have immortal souls?

Millions believe Jesus was crucified on a Friday and rose on a Sunday—two days later. Did Jesus teach He would be in the grave for three *full* days?

Millions believe that tithing is no longer in effect. Ministers teach that Jesus never mentioned it in the New Testament. But is there a verse in which Jesus specifically addresses tithing?

And millions of professing Christians assume they are “saved” upon being “born again”—and that their salvation cannot be lost. Did Jesus teach otherwise?

As was the case in Part 1, be prepared to learn things VERY FEW ministers accurately teach and VERY FEW people truly understand!

JOHN 14:15 – “IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.”

If you are one of the roughly two billion people who profess to be Christian, and someone asked whether you love Jesus Christ, you would no doubt answer yes. But what would you do if asked to prove it? What solid evidence would you provide?

To most, love is little more than a feeling, a vague idea that cannot be properly defined. Ask 100 people to define love and you will receive 100 different responses—everything from a feeling in the heart to just “doing good” to others. Diversified ideas occur because few consult the only source that provides an absolute definition.

Notice how the Bible defines love: “Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore *love is the fulfilling of the law*” (Rom. 13:10).

What law? The Law of God—as expressed overall in the Ten Commandments! The Bible defines love as obedience to God’s laws. It is that simple. There is no ambiguity or confusion whatsoever! Yet those who profess to be Christian are confused about, or ignorant of, the true definition of love.

Also read I John: “For this is the love of God, *that we keep His commandments*: and His commandments are not grievous” (5:3). Many who claim to have love believe that God’s Commandments ARE grievous. But God clearly states they are not! The apostle Paul called the Law of God “holy, and just, and good...spiritual” (Rom. 7:12, 14).

The first four Commandments—not serving false gods, not making or worshipping images (idols) of God, not taking God’s name in vain, and observing the Sabbath—reveal how to love God; the remaining six—honoring one’s father and mother, not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing, not bearing false witness,

and not coveting—reveal how to love other human beings. When one obeys the Law of God, he *automatically* shows love—toward God and toward others. And it is easily verifiable that one is showing love either toward God or others because *action* is required in obeying God.

When one obeys any of the last six commandments, he—whether knowingly or not—is outwardly indicating love toward his fellow human beings. Consider the seventh commandment for a moment. Though an ever-increasing number of people are breaking it, most would agree that committing adultery is *not* showing love toward one’s spouse. Few, if any, would suggest otherwise. Think of the devastation that results: broken trust, broken marriages, broken homes, broken relationships with children, etc. By not committing adultery, a man or woman shows love toward their spouse.

Similarly, when a person obeys any of the first four commandments, he is showing love toward God. Sadly, however, most do not live according to these commandments—and thus do *not* truly love God, despite what they may proclaim.

Jesus knew full well that most only *profess* with their mouths that they love Him—but their hearts are FAR from obeying Him (Matt. 15:18). This is why He said, “If you love Me, keep [obey] My commandments” (John 14:15). Seven verses later, He added, “He that has My commandments, *and keeps them*, He it is that loves Me” (vs. 21). Nowhere in the Bible does Jesus say, “He who professes He loves Me—yet breaks My commandments—is He who loves Me.”

What about YOU? Do you believe Jesus’ plain words that, to truly love Him, you must be obedient—you must keep His commandments—which requires ACTION? Or will you believe the smooth, cunning words of false ministers who teach that it is not necessary to obey God—despite Jesus’ plain statements to the contrary?

To learn more about love, you will want to read our article “Love – What

It *Is* and *Is Not*,” archived on our website: www.realtruth.org.

JOHN 3:16 – “FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.”

One could make a case that this is the most popular verse in Scripture. Seemingly, everyone is able to quote it verbatim, even those who are not familiar with the Bible. This verse is usually mentioned in the context of explaining the love that God has for mankind. He sacrificed His Son so billions of human beings would have an opportunity to receive eternal life.

But most fail to notice a subtle point in this verse: Human beings do not possess immortal souls!

The vast majority of professing Christians believe that within every individual is an immortal soul that goes either to heaven or hell upon death. Most ministers, evangelists and religionists speak of “when we all get to heaven” or the “reality of an ever-burning hell” waiting to eternally roast those who do not “give their hearts to the Lord.”

What most fail to recognize is that if human beings possess immortal souls, then it means they already *have* eternal life! But Jesus said that “whosoever believes in Him should not *perish*, but have *everlasting life*” (John 3:16). There is a definitive contrast in this statement between perishing and eternal life.

How is it possible that human beings could perish if they have immortal souls? The answer: IMPOSSIBLE! Otherwise, Jesus’ statement in John 3:16 is not sensible. Why state that His death and resurrection opens the door to eternal life if everyone *already* has it within them?

Those who do not believe in Jesus—which means those who fail to submit to His authority over their lives, who reject the Law of God—will perish for eternity! They will *not* be given eternal life. See Revelation 21:8.

Notice that Romans 6:23 also contrasts death from eternal life: “For the wages of sin is *death*; but the gift of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is in perfect harmony with John 3:16.

The Greek word translated from “perish” is *apollumi*, which means “to destroy fully, to die, lose, perish.” There is no doubt what these words mean. “Perishable” items, such as fruits and vegetables, are those that rot—until they are “fully destroyed” or “lost.” This is not hard to understand when one is talking about anything other than a human being. Those who receive salvation are promised that they “should not perish” but “have everlasting life”!

If hell was a place of eternal torture, then the people suffering there have eternal life. But John 3:16 says, “should not *perish*,” which does not mean “should not suffer eternal life in torment.” If it did, then the rest of the verse—“but have everlasting life”—would not make sense.

Have you ever thought about John 3:16 in this light?

Of course, some will say that the words “perish” and “death” do not mean we cease from being alive. Rather, they contend we are simply alive somewhere else, either in heaven or hell, despite plain biblical teaching to the contrary. See Psalm 146:3-4, 115:17 and Ecclesiastes 9:5.

This article does not permit an examination of all the clear verses indicating what happens upon death. For much more detail, read *Is There Life After Death?* and *What is Your Reward in the Next Life?*

MATTHEW 12:40 – “FOR AS JONAS WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE WHALE’S BELLY; SO SHALL THE SON OF MAN BE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH.”

Every spring, the world of professing Christianity celebrates the Good Friday/Easter tradition. Millions put on their “Sunday best” and attend

Easter morning services to supposedly honor the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The commonly held view is that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and rose on Sunday.

Yet in Matthew 12:40, Jesus said that He would be in the grave for three days *and* three nights—a total of 72 hours—just as the prophet Jonah. Can we be sure that Jesus meant three full days?

Jonah 1:17 plainly says, “And Jonah was in the belly of the fish *three days and three nights*.” Most scholars acknowledge that this Hebrew phrase must mean a 72-hour period. Without getting into specifics, there is no room for any “approximations of time” theories in the Hebrew.

Jesus said His time in the grave would be “as Jonah.” The word “as” means there is a comparison. In other words, just like Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three entire days, Jesus was to be in the grave for three entire days. This comparison does not allow one to “negotiate” the meaning of the Greek, as some like to do, since the Hebrew phrase can only mean three full days.

Did Jesus understand the length of a “day” or the length of a “night”?

He did! In John 11:9, He asked, “Are there not twelve hours in a day?”

In several places, the Bible mentions that Jesus rose “the third day.” How long was this? The first half of the creation chapter, Genesis 1:4-13, plainly states that God “divided the light from darkness. And God called the light Day and the darkness He called Night. And the evening [darkness] and the morning [light] were the first day...And the evening [darkness] and the morning [light] were the second day...And the evening [now three periods of darkness called night—three nights] and the morning [now three periods of light called day—three days] were the third day.”

This is the Bible’s definition of the length of time accounted for within the phrases “the third day” and “three days and three nights.” It spanned three periods of darkness and three

periods of light. Six times 12 hours equals 72 hours!

Why then do so many believe that Jesus was dead for less than 48 hours? How is it that intelligent, well-educated Bible scholars seem to “know” that Jesus was crucified on Friday and resurrected on Sunday? What is it about Christ’s clear, straightforward statement they cannot accept?

The answer lies in the comfort of long-held—but clearly false—traditions!

To learn much more on the timing of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, read our booklet *Christ’s Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* and reprint article “Christ’s Crucifixion Was Not on Friday.”

MATTHEW 23:23 – “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 OUGHT YOU TO HAVE DONE, AND NOT TO LEAVE THE OTHER UNDONE.”

Most professing Christian churches teach that, among other laws of God, Jesus abolished tithing. The thinking is that tithing was an Old Covenant law, and Jesus’ death supposedly freed us from such “harsh, legalistic rules and regulations.” Many will cite a lack of a clear tithing command in the New Testament as proof it is no longer in effect.

In Matthew 23, Jesus *does* give a clear command to tithe! But most overlook it. In verse 23, when Jesus said, “and not to leave the other undone,” He meant that the Pharisees were correct in tithing—and should continue to do so! In other words, tithing is still in effect! Notice that Jesus did *not* say, “These [judgment, mercy and faith] ought you to have done, and not concern yourselves with the other [tithing].”

The argument is often raised that this verse teaches tithing is not impor-

tant—that it is least among God’s laws. But verse 23 does not state this. It merely states that the Pharisees neglected *weightier* aspects of God’s Law. Jesus was pointing out to the Pharisees that they should have been as meticulous in areas of faith, mercy and rendering proper judgments as they were in tithing. A careful reading of the verse and context reveals Jesus was NOT saying that tithing is “unimportant,” as many claim.

Within God’s Law, there are small and large points. Some commands carry more “weight” than others. Jesus clearly acknowledges this. If one were to assign importance to tithing compared to judgment, mercy and faith, the latter are indeed more important in building God’s holy, righteous character, which is necessary for entering the kingdom of God. But this does not mean tithing and all other “lesser” laws are of no value or no longer binding!

Jesus explained that tithing is something that people must not “leave undone”!

In Matthew 24, Jesus gave an extraordinary prophecy of what His Church would be doing at the end of the age. Notice: “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” (vs. 14).

Taking the true gospel to the world (doing “the Work,” as it is often called) requires money. God’s Church must continually hire more staff to perform the many functions of running a growing worldwide organization. It publishes a vast number of booklets, magazines and other types of literature, teaching God’s truth. Also, the true Church has members around the world who need to be fed the spiritual truth of God by faithful ministers and elders (John 21:15-16; Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2). The number of those whom God is calling is expanding and will continue to expand as the age draws to a close.

Yet both preaching the gospel and feeding the flock require money!

It is through the biblical principle of tithing that God finances His Work

and feeds His flock. This is how He finances ALL that He does. Doing His Work is how He chooses to spend His tithe. Without tithes, there would be no Work—no good news of the soon-coming kingdom of God being announced to the entire world!

For much more on tithing, read *End All Your Financial Worries*. This thorough booklet will clear up any misconceptions you may have about this most crucial subject and help you determine to whom God’s tithes should be given.

MATTHEW 24:13 – “BUT HE THAT SHALL ENDURE UNTO THE END, THE SAME SHALL BE SAVED.”

Have you ever heard the phrase “Once saved always saved”? It is a common saying in the realm of traditional Christianity. The belief is that once a person acknowledges Jesus as their Lord and Savior and “accepts Him into their heart,” they are “saved”—their salvation sealed, and on their way to heaven upon death. No matter what a person may do from that point forward, religionists claim his salvation cannot be lost.

Yet Jesus said, “He that shall endure unto the *end*, the same shall be saved” (Matt. 24:13). The end of what? A person’s life! In other words, only those who endure—persevere!—the many tests and trials associated with being a true Christian either until the end of their lives or the Return of Christ will be saved—and no one else! According to Jesus, salvation does NOT occur at the moment of conversion, but culminates at the end of one’s life.

Contrary to popular belief, a Christian can lose salvation. He can be truly converted—receive the Holy Spirit—and then spiritually “abort.” This is because salvation is a *process*, not a moment.

Romans 6:23 explains that the wages of sin is death. At repentance, baptism and con-

version, a Christian is forgiven by the blood of Christ and is immediately saved from the penalty of PAST sins. In one sense, it can be said that the person has been “saved,” at that precise moment, from death.

But this is not the end of the story. There are two more applications of when and how a person is saved.

The second way is the most obvious—receiving eternal life—the pinnacle of salvation. This occurs at the resurrection of the dead in Jesus (I Cor. 15:50-55; I Thes. 4:13-18), upon His Return. This is to occur in the future!

But no one receives eternal salvation now. All must first undergo a life of trial, testing, learning, growing and overcoming, thus building the very character of God!

The third way one is saved is that he is “being saved”—a process that occurs throughout his lifetime. Many verses reveal that spiritual begetting of the Holy Spirit does not mean one will automatically receive salvation. Only a careless reading of the Bible would indicate this. To believe that salvation is complete upon conversion is to ignore all of the scriptures clearly indicating that salvation can be lost, such as Hebrews 10:26-27 and I Corinthians 9:24-27, among *many* others.

Consider. If human beings are saved at the moment of conversion, then what would be the point of continuing to live? Why would God not immediately take you directly to whatever is the afterlife after you “accept the blood of Jesus”? Furthermore, why would God inspire a book—the Bible—that is thousands of words? The Bible would only need to be a sentence or two. And why all the scriptures about striving against sin?

Will you believe Jesus’ plain statement that you must ENDURE TO THE END to be saved?

Be sure to read our booklet *Just what is Salvation?* to gain the complete picture on salvation, and learn why most are deceived. □



Looking for **Rest** in a Restless World

In the Internet age, people are connected to technology all day, every day. This is causing some to look for rest from their hectic lifestyle.



BY KEVIN D. DENEK

LIFE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: checking email dozens of times a day—receiving and sending text messages by cellular phone at any time—accessing the Internet in an airplane 36,000 feet above the ground—checking the weather report on a handheld device—learning of news as it breaks through cable television and news websites—taking and sending photographs through a cellphone—finding wireless hotspots to access the Internet—instant messaging friends and family—blogging—communicating through social networking sites—receiving and reading personal feeds from dozens of newspapers and other sources around the world—building playlists and listening to songs on an MP3 player—using a small ear piece to talk on the phone with greater flexibility in the car, in the grocery store...

Technology's fingerprints are everywhere. Electronic devices of every sort have formed the foundation of modern life. It is hard to comprehend how much the availability of these devices has changed over the past few decades. Almost everyone today has a mobile phone, a device that did not exist 40 years ago. Personal computers are commonplace, both at home and in the workplace. The Internet alone has created a number of virtual devices that now play a vital role in daily life.

Technology continues to rapidly change. As soon as you buy the latest phone, a newer model with more gadgets, a larger screen and better connectivity, another version is released. As soon as you think you have purchased the thinnest laptop, a thinner one is available. When you have finally made the move from VHS to DVD, you learn that you now have to consider moving up again, to Blu-Ray. You can't imagine there will be bigger TV screens, but there always are. It is hard to comprehend smaller MP3 players, but there always are. In the Western lifestyle, there is an unsaid expectation of "What's next?" And we can say with

confidence that there always is a "next," a "latest."

There are no indications that the importance and predominance of new technology will subside.

What would happen if the world did not have electricity for an entire day—or worse, a week? What if every electronic device stopped working? Companies would cease to function. Transportation would grind to a halt. Grocery stores would be unable to stock their shelves. Our world as we know it would collapse. Chaos would ensue so quickly, it would be hard to fathom.

Human beings have become dependent on technology.

Consider your own circumstances. What part does technology play in your day-to-day living? Do you find yourself checking your email incessantly? Do you feel somewhat unsettled at the thought of your inbox filling up? Have you ever been in your home office or work office when your computer was turned off? Was the silence deafening—almost unnatural? Do you often find yourself surfing the Internet, or on your favorite chair surfing television channels? Could you turn off your cellphone for one day—or one hour? Could you go without the Internet at the same time?

Plugged in

Technology has been mobilized to allow employees to become more efficient and effective in the workplace. To successfully compete, companies and employees must utilize every device available. In many ways, it is surprising what an employee can accomplish. Just picture a common occurrence on Western city streets: a man or woman walking to work, talking on the phone and checking email on his or her PDA—all at the same time.

But work is not the only area that has been affected. Human beings have grown accustomed to always being connected. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 62% of Americans are involved in some form of digital activity away from home or work! Nearly half access the Internet when not at work or home. People are no longer left with their own thoughts. They are always moving on to the next thing, the next digital connection.

When home, Westerners spend an inordinate amount of time in front of the television, often watching mindless entertainment. They also spend time aimlessly surfing the Internet. Consider one shocking statistic: According to *worldometers.info*, in the first three months of 2008, human beings have spent—wasted—*seven trillion hours* waiting for web pages to download!

Additionally, children are practically being reared by electronics. Many simply go from one device to another, to another—from the television, to the Game Boy, to the iPod, and back again.

Numerous behavioral problems result from this constant connectivity.



bly unconsciously immediately check their mail whenever they hear an email message come through. When you are stuck in a habit, it is very hard to do something different. However, this habit of always being connected will slowly but surely engulf every aspect of your life.

Another result is that individuals are losing any sense of quiet or solitude. There is no balance or moderation in life. No time to think—to stop and “smell the roses.” When people are running from one thing to another, there isn’t time to assess situations, make wise decisions, enjoy moments in life, build friendships, etc.

Also, people become unproduc-



■ **MINDLESS DISTRACTIONS:** Millions are so connected to and reliant upon technology that they are distracted from leading productive lives.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

The end-result is that children are never taught to simply think. They always have something bombarding their senses. Their own thoughts are foreign to them. What will happen when these children become adults?

No Time to “Smell the Roses”

If you do something long enough, it eventually becomes a habit. For example, many office workers proba-

ble. In an effort to become ever more productive, people are so connected to technology that it actually becomes a distraction, an interruption. There are no long periods of time for focusing on bigger decisions, problem solving, etc. Days become full of interruptions rather than productivity.

If human beings remain connected 24/7, life will pass them by. It will turn into one continual, nonstop blur—like

the posters on the walls of subway stations being passed at full speed.

“Secular” Sabbaths

Some have come to realize the toll of this 21st-century lifestyle. There have been certain movements to combat this always-plugged-in way of living. One is “Information environmentalism.” In effect, as the term implies, people should be concerned with their information environment. One man is calling for a “blackout Sabbath” on June 21, 2008. He recalled the sense of relief he felt when the power was out in New York City in 2003.

Another term that is beginning to grow popular is “secular Sabbath,” a day when people disconnect all their devices for one day each week. No Internet, no computer, no phone, no MP3 player, no television, etc. Those who have tried this realize that, at first, it is difficult. But in the end they benefit from it.

The term “secular Sabbath” comes from the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday), observed in Judaism and by some Christian groups, a day when labor is not performed. Similarly, many professing Christians consider Sunday as their Sabbath, but most do not keep it in the sense of not working, turning things off, etc.

A writer for *The New York Times*, in a quest to apply a “secular Sabbath” in his life, wrote an article on his experience. This is how he concluded the article: “I would no more make a new-agey call to find inner peace than I would encourage a return to the mimeograph. But I do believe that there has to be a way to regularly impose some thoughtfulness, or at least calm, into modern life—or at least my version. Once I moved beyond the fear of being unavailable and what it might cost me, I experienced what, if I wasn’t such a skeptic, I would call a lightness of being. I felt connected to myself rather than my computer. I had time to think, and distance from normal demands. I got to stop.”

This quote summarizes the concept of a secular Sabbath well. It gives one the opportunity to stop and think. It’s a

chance to be disconnected from a computer and get in tune with other aspects of one's life.

But this is not the real solution.

The Real Solution: God's Sabbath

Mankind has been cut off from God for 6,000 years. Humanity has refused to listen to God's Laws—human beings have ignored the “instruction manual” God gave His creation—the Holy Bible.

It is somewhat ironic to see human beings attempting to find solutions to their problems that result in something similar to what God explained thousands of years ago. After millennia of learning the hard way, human beings will occasionally stumble upon something that, if they were listening in the first place, they could have learned from and saved themselves much trouble.

When God created mankind in Genesis, He also created the Sabbath: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the *seventh day* God ended His work which He had made; and He *rested* on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and *sanctified* it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made” (Gen. 2:1-3).

God, who created everything, certainly did not *need* to rest. Since He is all powerful, He does not experience fatigue or weariness. However, He rested on the seventh day to set an example of what humans beings are to do.

Most have heard of the Ten Commandments, but few know them—and even fewer practice them. Notice the fourth commandment: “Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the *seventh day is the Sabbath* of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the

TIME TO THINK!

Knowledge continues to increase each day, creating a high-speed approach to life. The prophet Daniel foretold this: “...many will run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Dan. 12:4). People no longer have time to think!

God actually instructs human beings to “think”! To meditate!

Meditation is not the act of day-dreaming or letting your mind wander—and it is not dozing in a comfy chair either. Meditation involves conscious control of your thoughts, which most people have a difficult time doing, and many do not even know how.

Find a quiet place, perhaps in your room on your bed with the door closed: “When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches” (Psa. 63:6).

Or take a stroll or long walk in a park: “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide” (Gen. 24:63).

Carefully focus on Philippians 4:8 and practice it: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Only positive results can come from meditating properly. Studies have shown that when people meditate for brief periods during the day (even if they are not meditating on God), their stress level decreases. Individuals with high blood pressure are able to lower it by relaxing and thinking about pleasant, uplifting thoughts. □

sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:9-11).

How many people actually keep the Sabbath as God designed it? Most Christians believe Sunday is the correct

take a day off, as they should—as they are commanded? How many people disconnect from their weekly activities and reconnect with their Creator?

What most people do not understand is that human beings were designed to take one day off every seven days. You will get far more accomplished, and be a far more productive and happy human being if you work six days and keep the Sabbath, rather than working seven days a week. The high-paced lifestyle of today proves this!

Do you want to become a success? Do you want to become more productive? Prove that you should keep the Sabbath, and start doing so! You will find that you will be blessed as a result. The benefits will astound you. This article is too short to address all the ways that you will profit, but you will!

(To learn how to keep the Sabbath, read our articles “Why the Sabbath Command to Assemble?” and “How to Make the Sabbath a Delight.”)

So, take the step. Unplug yourself from society's rat-race lifestyle and all your electronic devices, and keep the true Sabbath as it was meant to be kept. You will benefit beyond measure. □

“What most people do not understand is that human beings were designed to take one day off every seven days.”

day (read our book *Saturday or Sunday – Which is the Sabbath?* to learn which day is correct), but they do not even know what it means to correctly keep the Sabbath. The fourth commandment clearly states that you should not work on this day. By extension, this also applies to other regular weekly activities, such as grocery shopping, working around the home, etc. How many truly

AFGHANISTAN'S “Merry-Go-Round” War

How Will It Finally End?



How long can international coalitions fight to stabilize an unstable nation?

THROUGH SPEECHES, interviews and press conferences, American political figures describe the “unjust,” “unfounded” and “immoral” Iraq war. But in the same breath they praise the “well-intentioned” and “necessary” war in Afghanistan.

Critics claim the Iraq war has only been a huge distraction from the real terrorists in the mountainous country of Afghanistan.

The ongoing international battle against the Taliban, an extremist Islamic terrorist group, ousted from Afghanistan’s government in 2001, is often crowded out of news reports.

What is the current state of affairs in war-torn Afghanistan? With an international force attempting to keep terrorists at bay, does a solution lie just over the horizon?

A Resurgent Taliban

After the September 11 attacks against America, U.S.-led forces overthrew

the Taliban in “Operation Enduring Freedom.” This, however, did not completely free the region of the Taliban’s influence. The Taliban and al-Qaeda are still active, and constantly threaten the stability of the region. The most violent area has been the nation’s south. Osama Bin Laden—the leader of al-Qaeda, and said to have been responsible for the planning of 9/11—has still not been brought to justice by the U.S. government.

Two years ago, the Taliban increased its campaign against foreign troops, with its main goal to wear down public confidence in the Western-backed Afghan government and the presence of NATO/foreign forces. The United Nations estimates that since 2006 more than 12,000 people (350 said to be soldiers) have been killed. According to these same estimates, the total death count for 2007 was 8,000, well above previous years. Most of these deaths are said to be rebels, with about 1,500 of them civilian deaths.

Last year, the Taliban carried out more than 140 suicide attacks, consisting of car bombs and roadside bomb attacks. Due to the military now having better armored vehicles, the majority of the victims are civilians.

With the death toll swelling, the Taliban’s presence in Afghanistan continues as the international coalitions struggle to prevent the terrorists from regaining ground.

Two Coalitions

To ensure the nation does not become a safe haven for international terrorists and return to a state of anarchy, Western nations, along with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), are seeking to control and stabilize the region.

The main force in Afghanistan—the International Security Assistance Force, organized and led by NATO—includes an estimated 47,000 troops from 40 nations.

■ **GUNS ON PARADE:** Taliban troops parade through Musa Qala in Afghanistan.

PHOTO: MCT

A separate coalition is led by the U.S. and has approximately 20,000 troops in the country, with the majority American.

Of the nations involved, only a few—the United States, Britain, Canada and the Netherlands—are stationed in the dangerous southern region. France, Germany, Spain and Italy have forces in the more peaceful northern areas.

NATO has been calling for allies to increase their troops and help supply equipment. The international organization and the United States hope that more allies will expand their commitments.

The U.S. plans to send 3,600 more marines in late April to combat the increase of Taliban attacks expected when warmer weather arrives. The first group arrived in March, and will work under NATO. Some units will assist in training and developing Afghan security forces.

Other nations are following America's lead. Canada's Parliament recently voted to extend its country's stay in Afghanistan for three more years. This would be the longest extension of Canadian troops since 2001, when the war began. Turkey is also considering increasing their 1,200-strong contribution, which is deployed in the much safer region of Kabul. Turkey has refused to send troops to the more dangerous south.

No Permanent Solutions

NATO's involvement is part of a five-year plan among the governments of Afghanistan and the international community to establish workable solutions for the future. Due to Taliban resistance in the south, NATO forces face numerous challenges.

According to Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the country is far from being stabilized. After meeting with U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney in Afghanistan, Mr. Karzai expressed that the Afghan security forces could not stand on their own for quite some time. "Some day Afghanistan will be fully in charge of the security of this country, defending the borders. But

that is not going to be anytime soon" (*AFP*).

Three main obstacles make attempts to stabilize the country difficult. Afghanistan has a greater population than Iraq, it is larger in terms of its land mass, and the number of soldiers is far less than those in Iraq (nearly one-third). Afghanistan's difficult terrain requires that forces use specialized equipment, such as helicopters, for transport of troops and reconnaissance of the region. The country's broken infrastructure and one of the largest quantities of deployed land mines in the world also make it difficult to curb the drug trade and root out terrorists. Piles of deployed land mines were left behind after the Soviet-Afghan war.

NATO is also struggling to find funding for their military activities in Afghanistan. Since 9/11, most of the nations belonging to NATO have cut their defense budgets to around 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while the United States has increased its budget to almost 5% of its GDP. Provisions for funding to successfully control the problem in the region have not been enacted.

NATO's Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said, "This is one of the most challenging tasks NATO has ever taken on, but it is a critical contribution to international security" (*The Guardian*).

It has become an extended war, with some NATO allies growing weary of the "merry-go-round," as Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd frustratingly described current conditions there. Mr. Rudd has become a vocal critic of NATO's strategy and believes that no permanent solutions are being achieved. He recently implied the possibility of pulling Australian troops out of the international task force. His point appears to be valid, as the Afghanistan war seems to have no end in sight. NATO appears to be fighting a losing battle, desperately trying to stabilize an unstable nation. □

AFGHANISTAN SERIES: Articles and sidebars written by H. Chris Lomas and Justin T. Palm.

FINALLY—STABILITY AND PEACE!

Many would agree that the only true solution to the crisis in Afghanistan is a permanent, stable government. Yet what most do not recognize is that this government could never succeed in the hands of men. For thousands of years, man has strived to bring lasting peace, yet he has sadly been without success.

Afghanistan is no different. Over the years, Afghanistan has seen many different forms of government. But each has ultimately failed to bring its people peace and prosperity.

Only one system is capable of bringing true peace and stability—the soon-coming kingdom of God, a government brought and administered by the hand of God, prophesied millennia ago to appear in our time.

The Bible, the only true source for revealed knowledge, describes a time just ahead when God will send Jesus Christ to establish a world-ruling supergovernment over all nations of earth. Notice this clear verse found in the book of Daniel: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

Also read Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above all the hills" (Isa. 2:2).

The ushering in of God's kingdom will bring the problems facing Afghanistan to a screeching halt. A region that has long been a breeding ground for terrorists, and the epicenter of a thriving drug trade, will soon be transformed into a stable and peaceful nation. The drug trade will be wiped out. The Taliban's presence will finally be nonexistent. Political infighting over troop levels will disappear. There will be no need for an international coalition, costing billions of dollars and many lives. In the future, real change *will* be enacted, but not by NATO forces or an American-led coalition. God's government—and nothing else—will bring this to pass!

For more information, read our booklets *Are These the Last Days?* and *How World Peace Will Come!* □

AFGHANISTAN'S TURBULENT HISTORY

AFGHANISTAN—WITH ITS ABUNDANT untapped resources and infamous drug trade—is a country with a tumultuous and violent past. Located in South Central Asia, and consisting of 34 provinces, each subdivided into districts, Afghanistan's land mass encompasses 251,825 sq. miles (652,225 sq. kilometers). It is landlocked between several countries, and its longest border is with Pakistan to the east and south, stretching for 1,125 miles. It also shares borders with Iran to the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north, and to the extreme northwest, China, at the end of the Vakhn Corridor.

Afghanistan's history dates back to between 2000 and 1200 BC, when the Aryans—better known as the Assyrians, who later became the modern Germans—were thought to have populated the northern region, then known as Eranshahr, meaning “Dominion of the Aryans.”

■ **KABUL:** The sun sets on the dusty streets of Afghanistan's capital.

PHOTO: MCT





The nation has been filled with turmoil from its beginning and is today rated among the most unstable countries in the world.

Historically, Afghanistan has served as a buffer zone between other powers, such as between the British Empire and the Soviet Union.

Throughout its existence, Afghanistan has experienced uprisings, coups and wars that have rendered the nation a land of lawlessness. Since gaining independence from British rule in 1919, it has enjoyed relative stability, but with moments of turmoil.

In the last 80 years, the nation of Afghanistan has been involved in numerous conflicts: the Khost rebellion (1924-25), the Afghan civil war (1928-1929), a coup d'état in 1953, the Pakistan border crisis (late 1950s and early 60s) and another coup (1973). Then in 1979, the country was invaded by Soviet forces.

Soviet-Afghan War

After World War II, a rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union led to the Cold War, with East and West competing on various fronts.

In 1978, the Afghan government requested the intervention of Soviet forces to provide security and assist in the fight against Mujahedeen rebels. The conflict that ensued was between the Soviet forces supporting the Marxist People's Democratic Party and the United States, who supported the Mujahedeen resistance. More than one million civilians have been killed, resulting in the exodus of five million Afghans to Pakistan, Iran and other parts of the world.

After losing thousands of troops in the war, Soviet forces finally withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. America's secretive involvement in the conflict, which was the supply and training of

the Mujahedeen rebels, was seen as a great victory. Following the withdrawal, the U.S. lost interest in the war-torn nation and did little to rebuild its economy. This left a void in the country since most in leadership positions had gone into exile.

The Taliban

Eventually, Afghanistan was taken over by the divided warlords of the Mujahedeen. Two years after the Soviet withdrawal, the Taliban, with the help of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, regained two-thirds of the country from the Mujahedeen warriors. The Taliban returned to Afghanistan, where they became students in several of the religious schools.

They imposed the strictest adherence to Islamic law ever seen in the modern world, resulting in severe discrimination against women. For instance, women were prohibited from working and from being educated beyond the age of eight.

It was estimated that in 2002, 49% of men and 79% of women were illiterate. During the same year, it was reported that only 53% of boys and a mere 5% of girls were enrolled in elementary school. Then, if they were able to graduate from elementary school, only 32% of males and 11% of females continued their education in secondary schools.

During the Taliban's reign of terror, many women were executed in public—for offenses such as continuing their education in an underground school or rising up against the abuse toward them. It eventually reached the point where they could not even visit a doctor if they were not accompanied by a male. Sicknesses were left untreated and numerous women became captives in their own homes.

The words of an Afghan lawyer, Belquis Ahmadi, ring true concerning this period (emphasis ours): "Afghan women have lost lives, family members, basic human rights, human dignity and the right to be respected. Soon they might lose something that destroys humanity. They might lose *hope*." □

UNTAPPED NATURAL RESOURCES

Since the U.S.-led invasion, the production of opium has soared. It is estimated that Afghanistan is now producing 87% of the world's opium. This in itself equates to 50% of the country's Gross Domestic Product, about \$3,200 (USD) million per year.

The large drug industry contributes to the major corruption within the government. This in turn provides financial and logistical support to many international extremist groups that operate within its territory, as well as outside.

Another way the Taliban could see an increase in funds is through the nation's resources. Due to the instability of the country, its natural resources have largely been untouched. One of the largest copper deposits in the world was discovered about 20 miles east of Kabul. It is estimated that the deposits could yield as much as 11 million tons of copper, which would result in a huge cash injection for the people of Afghanistan.

The government hopes that this supply will catapult the nation into the modern era. Ongoing exploration on the natural resources of the region have revealed that the country also has vast untapped deposits of zinc, silver, marble, coal, as well as 700 billion cubic meters of natural gas and 300 million tons of oil. These resources could soon become a contentious issue in the region.

In a war-torn Afghanistan with limited funding, projects to tap these resources will more than likely come from outside. Since it is landlocked in Asia, Western nations view the development of this wealth as more of a risk than an advantage.

Yet China has not stalled in acquiring the rights to these minerals, and sees Afghanistan as a means to providing China's growing economy with the necessary resources it needs to keep pace with production. Agreements have already been signed with the China Metallurgical Group Corporation.

But there is a problem: Many of the resources are located in the southern regions of the country, where the Taliban is active. In order to mine these resources, China must make agreements with the Taliban, who in turn will expect money. These funds will then assist them in their military onslaught against NATO and support their Jihad (holy war) against the West. □



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

WHY THIS SERIES

Despite all the advancements in technology, industry, science, medicine and education over the past 100 years—despite all the humanitarian relief programs, policies and initiatives—poverty still exists. This article series (1) examines the true state of poverty in the United States, (2) compares this to the daily lives of millions in the underdeveloped regions of the world, and (3) reveals why poverty has persisted throughout history—and how it will ultimately be erased.

The Great “Poverty Line” Lie!

Just How Poor Are America’s Poor?

BY ROBERT W. PACK

OF THE 300 million-plus people living in the United States of America, 37 million live at or below the poverty line! This is according to an annual report on poverty released in 2006 by the U.S. Census Bureau, which studied the nation’s standard of living and included various factors related to the population’s daily living conditions.

The realization that more than 12% of U.S. citizens are struggling to survive day to day is used as evidence by politicians, pundits and news organizations to prove that two Americas exist: “the have’s” and “the have not’s.”

Yet certain questions arise: Just how bad have economic conditions become for tens of millions of Americans? How can so many be living below the poverty line? Is there something that can be done?

Before solutions can be proposed, a key question must first be answered and understood: What are the factors used to determine who is poor in America?

Living in Poverty?

In a Jan. 27, 1838, public address, Abraham Lincoln, who later became the 16th President of the United States, stated the following: “We find ourselves in the peaceful possession, of the fairest portion of the earth, as regards extent of territory, fertility of soil, and salubrity

of climate...We...found ourselves *the legal inheritors of these fundamental blessings*. We toiled not in the acquirement or the establishment of them.”

Does this still hold true today? Are the American people still the recipients of blessings that Lincoln clearly recognized almost 170 years ago?

The U.S. government derived “poverty thresholds” in 1963-64 to determine levels of economic stress and food budgets for low income families. Today, the poverty index bears little resemblance to what most typically associate with poverty or the poor.

In 2003, for example, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development asked the following question of the general public: “How would you describe being poor in the U.S.?” The vast majority of responses indicated that “homelessness, hunger, not being able to eat ‘properly,’ and not being able to meet basic needs” were criteria for considering someone as “poor.”

In 2006, the Heritage Foundation, a prominent conservative think tank, conducted a comprehensive and comparative study to determine how the poverty line is defined. Based on research on living conditions reported by those classified as poor, the findings were quite revealing.

One of the clearest and most easily definable factors in determining daily living conditions around the world is whether a person has enough daily food and a minimum quality of food. According to the 2006 Heritage report, “Survey data shows that nutriment den-

sity (amount of vitamins, minerals, and protein per kilocalorie of food) does not vary by income class...In reality, government data show that most poor households do not suffer even from temporary food shortages.”

Overall, 98% of U.S. households reported that they *always* had “enough food to eat” during the past four months (although not always the types of food they would have preferred). Some 1.8% of all households reported they “sometimes” did not have enough food to eat during the previous four months, while only 0.4% said they “often” did not have enough food.

In other words, although a small few of those considered poor reported there were “temporary shortfalls” of food availability, there was no discernable difference in the quantity of food available. The only real difference, when compared with those with higher incomes, was in food *choices*.

Ironically, the biggest problem facing America’s poor is OBESITY—or *over* consumption—which is reaching near epidemic proportions.

Also included in the Heritage report findings for those defined as poor:

■ 43% *own* their homes.

■ The “average home owned by persons classified as poor by the Census Bureau is a three-bedroom house with one-and-a-half baths, a garage, and a porch or patio.”

■ They have significantly more “living space” than does the average citizen living in affluent international cities such as London, Paris, Vienna and Athens. Only 6% of those living below America’s poverty line reported their living conditions as being “overcrowded.”

Next, consider that most today take pleasure in amenities that were considered luxuries just a generation or

■ **THE DESTITUTE AND THE BOUNTIFUL:** Top, a homeless woman panhandles in downtown Philadelphia, Pa. Middle left, a single mother has been hit hard by recent economic times, and relies on food stamps and a local food pantry to help feed her children. Middle, FEMA trailers house displaced residents following Hurricane Katrina. Right, mother and daughter live at a public housing development where a gang rape case shed light on escalating violence and domestic disturbances in the community. Bottom left, a charity activist feeds the homeless at a soup kitchen in Moscow, Russia. Right, abundance will be universal in the world to come.

PHOTOS: MCT (except bottom right)

two ago. For instance, of the 37 million labeled “poor” in the U.S., 80% enjoy the comforts of air-conditioning, as opposed to only 36% of the *entire* population in 1970.

America’s “poor” are also swimming in technology-related goods and services:

- 97% own color televisions (over half have two or more).

- 63% have either cable or satellite access.

- Over 99% have refrigerators.

- 73% own microwave ovens.

- One in three households have automatic dishwashers.

- One-third have cellphones, land line phones and telephone answering machines—less than a paltry 10% “survive” without telephone service at all.

- Almost three-quarters own a car and—more surprisingly—over 30% own two cars or more!

These are hardly the difficult conditions most Americans envision when describing the poor. One is left to wonder: *Where are* the millions of U.S. citizens who are living in “incredible poverty,” as so many politicians and media pundits adamantly assert?

Compared to Other “Developed Countries”

Billions of poor around the world live in conditions that those in Western Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are unable to fully comprehend—from tiny huts on the islands of Indonesia, where people are still struggling to recover from the catastrophic effects of the 2004 tsunami, to war-torn Central Africa, where hundreds of millions struggle daily to find enough—and drinkable—water and food to survive.

However, comparing the daily living conditions of America’s poor to those living in countries of “low human development” (as the United Nations defines them)—commonly referred to as “Third World” nations—is an unfair comparison.

A better gauge of the standard of living and blessings that the United States enjoys is to compare it with other “first world” or “high human development”

nations, such as Brazil and Russia. For instance, 10% of the Brazilian population does not have access to an improved water source, and only 23% have land line telephones. The UN also found that from 1990 to 2005, 45% of Russian citizens lived on less than \$4 per day.

According to the United Nations *2007/2008 Human Development Report*, “average” citizens living in many of these countries live well below America’s standard of living for its poor. In general, the homes, cars, food intake and luxury items that the poorest U.S. citizens enjoy are well beyond the levels that *average* citizens residing in other highly developed nations possess.

Still the Land of Opportunity

Make no mistake: The poor do exist in the United States. There are, for instance, “the working homeless,” who live day-to-day in deplorable circumstances; people such as Chris Gardner, whose life the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* was based upon. Living on a \$1,000 monthly stipend from an internship, Mr. Gardner and his son struggled to survive, experiencing homelessness to the point of sleeping in a subway bathroom and spending the night underneath his desk when shelters were full.

However, Chris Gardner did not remain trapped in poverty. Employing vision, diligence, resourcefulness and perseverance, his life vastly changed for the better—and he became a self-made millionaire.

America offers something unique to citizens and noncitizens alike: the opportunity to succeed. Mr. Gardner and others before him proved this to be true.

Senior research analyst Robert E. Rector summarized the Heritage Foundation’s findings of the “typical poor person” in the U.S.: “The typical American defined as ‘poor’ by the government has a car, air conditioning, a refrigerator, a stove, a clothes washer and dryer, and a microwave. He has two color televisions, cable or satellite TV reception, a VCR or DVD player,

and a stereo. He is able to obtain medical care. His home is in good repair and is not overcrowded. By his own report, his family is not hungry and he had sufficient funds in the past year to meet his family’s essential needs.”

Astounding!

The true causes leading to citizens living in less than desirable conditions—at least compared to the average middleclass American—can be traced to a number of factors, often tied to moral choices than to circumstances outside their control: failed marriages, children born out of wedlock, illegal immigration, and substance abuse—all of which are, ultimately, choices.

According to the Heritage report, the single largest contributing factor related to child poverty is the low levels of parental work. The report stated, “In good economic times or bad, the typical poor family with children is supported by only 800 hours of work during a year: That amounts to 16 hours of work per week. If work in each family were raised to 2,000 hours per year—the equivalent of one adult working 40 hours per week through the year—nearly 75% of poor children would be lifted out of official poverty.”

The second leading factor contributing to child poverty is (usually) a preventable one: an increase in single parenthood and a measurable decline in marriage levels. According to information and data analyzed:

- “Nearly two-thirds of poor children reside in single-parent homes”

- Each year, 1.5 million are born out of wedlock

- “If poor mothers married the fathers of their children, almost three-quarters would immediately be lifted out of poverty.”

Another significant contributing factor that may surprise most is that the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, upon which official poverty estimates are based, does not take into account whether a person is a legal or illegal immigrant. Surprisingly, in the most recent population survey, the number of “self-identified” immigrants was ten and eleven million higher

than the government's count of legal immigrants. However, illegal immigrants are counted; conservative estimates indicate that 10% of America's 37 million "poor" are in the country illegally (Pew Hispanic Center's *Unauthorized Migrants: Numbers and Characteristics*).

Yes, There Are "Two Americas"

"Two Americas" do exist—but they are not the "have's" and "have not's," but rather the "blessed" and the "extremely blessed." Even those who live in the "worst" conditions in the U.S. enjoy a standard of living that has not been realized for hundreds of millions throughout mankind's history.

Yet an attitude of entitlement is pervasive throughout American society, treating material possessions, such as color televisions, cellphones and other luxuries, as needs. These are largely

viewed as "inalienable rights" in the minds of those spoiled by the nation's vast wealth and abundance.

Still, with all of these unbelievable blessings and material possessions, the U.S. is sinking to previously unseen lows in regard to moral standards—the daily choices that our citizens make. Millennia ago this was foretold to happen to the birthright nations descended from ancient Israel, primarily the American and British peoples.

God Almighty stated, in Jeremiah 5:7-8, "When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife." So many of the problems facing those in the U.S., the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and other nations of the West are a direct result of their

being blessed beyond imagination—and as our Creator said, they have been "fed to the full."

With human nature in control, one of the quickest ways to destroy a people is to give them too much. Collectively, the luxuries that have become commonplace in our nation, accompanied by an attitude of entitlement, have begun to destroy it from the inside out. While only a tiny number of the American population is *physically* poor (compared to the rest of the world), the nation as a whole is poor *spiritually*. People are "fed to the full" when it comes to material possessions, yet live miserable lives—ignorant of the way that results in true abundant living!

As men search for answers to improve the physical lives of all citizens, few truly understand the miserable *spiritual* conditions they are in. □

The Reality of Global Poverty

While pockets of genuinely severe deprivation do exist even in the Western world's lands of plenty, most notably in inner cities and rural areas such as Appalachia, the overall picture of the poor in the United States is starkly different from the rest of the globe. On other continents—in slums, rural villages and jungles far from any kind of government-funded social programs—what is it like to be among the "have not's"?

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

THE DOLLARS AND cents of poverty beyond the shores of North America is sobering beyond words. According to the United Nations-commissioned Millennium Project, "More than one billion people in the world live on less than one dollar a day. In total, 2.7 billion struggle to survive on less than two dollars per day. Poverty in the developing world, however, goes

far beyond income poverty. It means having to walk more than one mile every day simply to collect water and firewood; it means suffering diseases that were eradicated from rich countries decades ago. Every year, eleven million children die—most under the age of five—and more than six million from completely preventable causes like malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia.

"In some deeply impoverished nations less than half of the children are in primary school and under 20 percent go to secondary school. Around the world, a total of 114 million children do not get even a basic education and 584 million women are illiterate."

Living on less than a dollar or two per day—well below the earning potential of a homeless panhandler in a large North American city—equates to a life that most Americans would rather not think about, much less experience.

But this is reality for roughly 40% of the human beings on the planet!

The scourge of poverty affects every country to a degree, but in certain parts of the globe, it is the rule rather than the exception.

Poverty in Asia

A resident of a dying fishing village near Pakistan's increasingly polluted Manchar Lake told interviewers for

the United Kingdom group Panos, “We have been living here since the beginning. Seven generations have lived and died here... We, who are standing on the edge of death now, have seen our hair grow white here.

“Today again, my mother-in-law has an upset stomach and is vomiting. This is an injustice to us: the water of Manchar has turned to poison. Children go to bathe in this water and... even if one drop of this water enters their mouth, they will lose their lives...

“Recently three of our women, who each had eight-month-old babies, died due to the poisonous waters. In our homeland... there is only misery for us... We have no livelihood... there are only small fish. We now survive by begging.

“In the times of our forefathers, the water was so sweet that if you... drank water out of the small hollows left in the ground by the cattle’s footprints, even that was sweet. The water has been bad like this since the last 10, 15 years... now even dogs will die if they drink it, let alone human beings...”

In China, which has made great strides in developing an urban middle class, there are still millions who live in miserable conditions. “When she gets sick, Li Enlan, 78, picks herbs from

the woods that grow nearby instead of buying modern medicines.

“This is not the result of some philosophical choice, though. She has never seen a doctor and, like many residents of this area, lives in a meager barter economy, seldom coming into contact with cash.

“‘We eat somehow, but it’s never enough,’ Li said. ‘At least we’re not starving.’

“In this region of southern Henan Province, in village after village, people are too poor to heat their homes in the winter and many lack basic comforts like running water. Mobile phones, a near ubiquitous symbol of upward mobility throughout much of this country, are seen as an impossible luxury. People here often begin conversations with a phrase that is still not uncommon in today’s China: ‘We are poor’...” (*International Herald Tribune*).

A recent World Bank study suggests that 300 million in China live in poverty—three times as many as the bank previously estimated (*ibid.*).

India

The largest city on the Indian subcontinent—and the world’s largest city proper—holds millions of impover-

ished residents within its confines: “All cities in India are loud, but nothing matches the 24/7 decibel level of Mumbai, the former Bombay, where the traffic never stops and the horns always honk. Noise, however, is not a problem in Dharavi, the teeming slum of one million... where as many as 18,000 people crowd into a single acre (0.4 hectares).

“By nightfall, deep inside the maze of lanes too narrow even for the putt-putt of auto rickshaws, the slum is as still as a verdant glade. Once you get accustomed to sharing 300 square feet (28 square meters) of floor with 15 humans and an uncounted number of mice, a strange sense of relaxation sets in” (*National Geographic*).

Those who live in the country fare little better. According to an affiliate of *The Wall Street Journal*, “India still has the world’s largest number of poor people in a single country. Of its nearly 1 billion inhabitants, an estimated 350-400 million are below the poverty line, 75 per cent of them in the rural areas” (*IndiaOneStop*).

South America

In a resurgent Latin America, with countries such as Venezuela rising in wealth on the crest of oil profits, many have not yet felt the flush of success. “The poverty rate in Venezuela was about 50 percent when [President Hugo] Chavez’s presidency began in 1999, according to the government’s own figures. Since then, roughly equal

■ **GLOBAL POVERTY:** Bottom, starting from left to right, several houses built on unstable hill land in the Pedrera slum of Caracas, Venezuela, collapsed from a mudslide. The Labor Camp area of Mumbai’s Dharavi slum in India. Mothers wait with their babies for an experimental malaria vaccine in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. Children, whose homes were destroyed by a tsunami, drink from a faucet in the coastal town of Kalmunai, Sri Lanka.

PHOTOS: MCT



numbers of people have fallen into and out of poverty at various times, with a spike to more than 60 percent in 2003 and a drop below 40 percent in 2005...

“Many experts on poverty prefer to measure outcomes like literacy, infant mortality and life expectancy, rather than—or in addition to—purchasing power.

“By those metrics, which are similar to the ones used in the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index, Venezuela’s progress isn’t too dramatic. Its reduction in infant mortality through 2004...was just below the regional average of 17 percent, and the percentage of babies born underweight or under height has increased...

“...research showed only a small decline in illiteracy, with most of the drop due to changing demographics” (IHT).

Africa

On a continent with a name that is nearly synonymous with poverty, the statistics are stunning.

According to the Millennium Project:

- More than 40% of Africans are unable to obtain sufficient food daily.

- In 1960, Africa was a net exporter of food; today, the continent imports one-third of its grain.

- Declining soil fertility, land degradation and AIDS have led to a 23% decrease in food production per capita

in the last 25 years, despite dramatic population increase.

- Conventional fertilizers cost African farmers two to six times more than the world market price.

- More than 50% of Africans suffer from cholera, infant diarrhea and other water-related diseases.

- A child in Africa dies of malaria every 30 seconds—more than one million child deaths per year.

Conditions are particularly bad in the Sahel, the countries on the southern border of the Sahara Desert, stretching from Senegal to Ethiopia. In many regions there, more than half of all children under age five are underweight, according to the Center for International Earth Science Information Network.

The View From a Distance

In the developed world—where typical daily obstacles may include an extended wait at a red light, a slow commute, spotty cellphone coverage and rising gasoline prices—it is nearly impossible to comprehend a world where an open sewer may run past one’s front door. Where a simple latrine exists nowhere near one’s home. Where the most basic necessities such as food and water may be available tomorrow—but may not. Where going to bed hungry is a given.

Those who care enough to think about this at any length cannot help but throw up their hands and ask, “What can be done?”

This fundamental question remains unanswered in most minds: *Is there a solution?*

The Templeton Foundation posed a related question to a number of notable figures: “Will Money Solve Africa’s Development Problems?”

Dr. Donald Kaberuka, president of the African Development Bank and former minister of finance of Rwanda, replied in part: “Alone, money cannot solve Africa’s development problems. Proof, if any was needed, is the fact that many of Africa’s natural resource-rich countries score very low on human development indicators.”

William Easterly, a professor of economics at New York University, shared the same opinion: “...after fifty years of trying and \$600 billion worth of aid-giving, with close to zero rise in living standards in Africa, I can make the case for ‘No’ pretty decisively. Aid advocates talk about cheap solutions like the 10-cent oral rehydration salts that would save a baby dying from diarrheal diseases, the 12-cent malaria medicine that saves someone dying from malaria, or the \$5 bed nets that keep them from getting malaria in the first place.

“Yet despite the aid money flowing, two million babies still died from diarrheal diseases last year, more than a million still died from malaria, and most potential malaria victims are still not sleeping under bed nets.

“Clearly, money alone does not solve problems.” □



The Poverty Trap

How It Will Be Eliminated!

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

NEARLY 2,000 YEARS ago, Jesus Christ uttered words that have proven true throughout the history of man: “For you have the poor with you *always*” (Mark 14:7).

But why?

Philanthropists, charities, relief agencies, governments and popular movements alike have struggled to stamp out poverty. Religions of virtually every belief have called for adherents to assist the poor. In the wealthier nations of the world, food banks exist to feed the disadvantaged. Governments, from federal to local, have set up programs to house the unemployed and those who live paycheck to paycheck. The “Great Society” of the 1960s spent multiple millions of dollars as America waged war on poverty.

Sadly, poverty “won.”

Still, the destitute living in the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada and other prosperous nations of the West nearly live like royalty in the eyes of millions trapped in the living nightmare of day-to-day existence in developing regions—Third World nations in which refrigerators and indoor plumbing are practically nonexistent and brutal regimes are a way of life.

Again, why did Christ say, “For you have the poor with you *always*”?

Because all the programs, policies, efforts and good intentions have been implemented with manmade solutions.

“Destroyed for Lack of Knowledge”

Governments have created public housing developments for the jobless and working poor, crowding them in low-quality living conditions built by

contractors of the lowest bids. Third and fourth generations have come and gone, yet the same families remain trapped in “the projects,” urban environments where substance abuse, single-mother families, teen pregnancies and gang activity are the norm. And where young minds who strive to



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

acquire an education, and desire to escape society’s bottom rung, keep their dreams and aspirations secret, lest they fall under the suspicion and scorn of their peers, whose only goal is to “make it through the day.” No wonder the public housing developments that were once new and clean are now dilapidated and filthy, victims of graffiti, trash and vandalism, and of carelessness, ignorance, shortsightedness and despair.

Politicians, advocates and policy-makers have worked to help the economically disadvantaged: programs for first-time home buyers (for both the lower and middle class); subsidized housing for the working poor; rent control for high cost-of-living

cities such as New York and San Francisco. However, these efforts are akin to applying a small bandage to a gaping gunshot wound: They only slow the “bleed” of perpetual poverty. Society is far from being healed.

Why? “For you have the poor with you *always*.”

Efforts to aid the homeless are commendable. But giving money to panhandlers—donating shopping carts for the homeless—relaxing municipal laws so that vagrants can loiter wherever they please, without “harassment” from authorities—calling the homeless “displaced”—only serves to ease the collective conscience of the social order. They ultimately do nothing to eradicate poverty from existence.

Let’s face it, America has long been—and still is!—the land of opportunity. In what other nation could a descendant of slaves and a witness to the atrocities of “Jim Crow” grow up to become a classically trained pianist, a professor at Stanford University, and the U.S. Secretary of State, personally representing the global interests of the world’s greatest superpower? In what other country could a college dropout go on—through initiative, innovation and ingenuity—to become the wealthiest human being on the planet?

Yet despite the opportunities America offers—to acquire a free education, to pursue a lucrative career, to build one’s own business, to worship without government persecution—its citizens have been weaned on the belief that housing, healthcare, the minimum wage and other entitlements are “rights.” The U.S. is now, in effect, a “mommy state” whose adult children still live at home, refusing to grow

up, and insisting on being taken care of—from womb to tomb!

We “have the poor with [us] always” because human beings have failed to recognize there are two opposing ways of life. For 6,000 years, mankind has lived according to the way of self-knowledge, with each man deciding for himself how he and others should live. History—its infamous record of wars, coups, monopolies, corruption, depravity and ineffective governments—stands as a witness to the way of men.

Consider a passage from the book of Proverbs, renowned for being a treasure-trove of wisdom: “As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, *so the curse causeless shall not come*” (Prov. 26:2). In other words, life does not “just happen”—there is a *cause* for every EFFECT!

Again there are two ways of life. Man has long practiced the way of self-knowledge, but has rejected—and thus cut himself off from—the way of true knowledge, and subsequent direction, instruction and blessings, from his Creator.

In Hosea 4:6, God declares, “My people are destroyed for *lack of knowledge*”—HIS knowledge—the laws, statutes, judgments and overarching spiritual principles that would teach all peoples, small and great, to exercise vision, to plan ahead, organize, and apply due diligence and discretion, training them how to get out of poverty—or how to avoid it altogether!

Yet man insists on having his own way, which is founded upon fulfilling personal lusts and greed at the expense of others: “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. 4:2-3).

Man’s history—its governments, systems, cultures and societies—is written in blood, caked in many layers. The end-result? A dying world in which the socio-economic gap between the “have’s” and the “have not’s” widens without end.

Cause and Effect

In his March 2008 election-season essay, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer David Mamet wrote the following:

“I took the liberal view for many decades, but I believe I have changed my mind.

“As a child of the 60s, I accepted as an article of faith that government is corrupt, that business is exploitative, and that people are generally good at heart.

“These cherished precepts had, over the years, become ingrained as increasingly impracticable prejudices.”

“And, I wondered, how could I have spent decades thinking that I thought everything was always wrong *at the same time* that I thought...that people were basically good at heart? Which was it? I began to question what I actually thought and found that I do not think that people are basically good at heart; indeed, that view of human nature has both prompted and informed my writing for the last 40 years. I think that people, in circumstances of stress, can behave like swine, and that this, indeed, is not only a fit subject, but the only subject, of drama.

“I’d observed that lust, greed, envy, sloth, and their pals are giving the world a good run for its money, but that nonetheless, people in general seem to get from day to day; and that we in the United States get from day to day under rather wonderful and privileged circumstances—that we are not and never have been the villains that some of the world and some of our citizens make us out to be, but that we are a confection of normal (greedy, lustful, duplicitous, corrupt, inspired—in short, human) individuals...”

“What about the role of government? Well, in the abstract, coming from my time and background, I thought it was a rather good thing, but tallying up the ledger in those things which affect me and in those things I observe, I am hard-pressed to see an instance where the intervention of the government led to much beyond sorrow.”

Even a self-described “child of the

60s,” who for decades believed that government policies and initiatives can solve society’s problems, can come to see that the governments of men are, at the very heart, driven by human nature—which, like King Midas’ touch in reverse, ultimately corrupts all that it handles. To take license with an old adage, “The road to oblivion is paved with the good intentions of the carnal mind.”

Take, for instance, a hard look at the rapidly crumbling state of the family unit. This foundational building block of every thriving society is eroding, chipped away by the “Do what feels good” philosophy of human misconduct: rampant adultery and teenage promiscuity—and subsequent “quickie divorces,” unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

Regarding man’s nature, the apostle James, a brother of Jesus, asked a series of questions: “Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh” (Jms. 3:11-12).

“But the tongue,” he observed, “can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (vs. 8-10).

Carnal nature will lead political candidates to attack each other’s record and character without mercy. Yet that same mindset will suddenly “find a conscience” in the one who is elected, leading him or her to “fight for the good of the common man.”

The words people use, particularly in times of severe trial, reveal one’s inner being. “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth *from the heart*; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphem-

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PERSONAL

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adding to nor taking from it. He said, “NO MAN” (not a single one) has gone to heaven!

Do you believe Him? Or do you believe the ministers of this world who virtually suggest, with their ideas about salvation, that Christ was misleading or did not know what He was talking about?

Now think of all God’s servants who had lived during the 4,000 years prior to Christ’s statement. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and many more, cannot be in heaven. So says Christ!

If heaven is the reward of the saved, then none of these men made it. They all must have FAILED! Every one of them missed out on salvation.

But, of course, they did *not* fail. Heaven is *not* the reward of the saved—inheriting rulership over earth is, as we shall learn.

Notice that verse 13 comes only three verses prior to the most universally quoted passage in the Bible—John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Why is almost *everyone* willing to believe this verse while virtually *no one* believes what is said just three verses earlier?

Now ask: If all the above men are *not* in heaven, where are they?

Where is David?

King David reigned over the nation of Israel about 1,000 years before Christ. Christ knew exactly where David was when He made His statement in John 3. He was not confused or misinformed. Since we know David was not in heaven, then where was he?

Here is plain proof.

The apostle Peter answers this question in his sermon delivered on the day Christ built His Church: “Men and

brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch DAVID, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre [tomb] is with us unto this day” (Acts 2:29).

David is literally “dead and buried.” You have almost certainly heard this common phrase. It comes from this verse and is a reference to David’s whereabouts!

Some believe Peter’s statement was incomplete or he just forgot David was in heaven. This is a ridiculous twisting of the verse. Here is what he said five verses later, removing all doubt: “For David is NOT ascended into the *heavens*...”

This is a direct statement. David is *not* in heaven. Yet God said that David was “a man after Mine own heart” (Acts 13:22). If heaven is the reward of the saved, and *David* did not make it, then *nobody* is going to make it.

David is in the grave awaiting the resurrection of the dead, when the just receive their eternal *inheritance*.

The Bible is quite specific about David’s coming resurrection—and his position as a ruler over the tribes of Israel. It adds further proof that David is *not* alive now but is, in fact, “dead and buried.” Centuries after David died, the prophet Jeremiah said he would be resurrected: “But they [the twelve tribes of Israel] shall serve the LORD their God, and *DAVID* their king, whom I will RAISE UP unto them” (30:9). To “raise up” is to resurrect.

The prophet Ezekiel also foretold David’s resurrection: “And I will set up one shepherd over them [the tribes of Israel], and he shall feed them, *even My servant DAVID*; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My servant *DAVID* a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it” (Ezek. 34:23-24). Also see 37:24.

Carefully read this verse with the whole chapter. It is obvious that Ezekiel 34 is talking about the physical tribes of Israel (vs. 2, 3, 30, 31) and how David will shepherd them *after he is resurrected from the dead*.

The Apostles Rule Under David

Consider the twelve apostles. They heard Peter’s sermon (Peter was the lead apostle, so he gave the sermon). They knew what *their* own role would be after the resurrection.

Christ had previously explained to them “That you which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, *you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt. 19:28).

The apostles knew that they will report to David in the kingdom of God. Each will rule one tribe, with David over all twelve tribes.

Much more needs to be understood—but first read where *you* may some day fit in.

Joint-heirs With Christ

When God calls people to repentance, and they are baptized, He gives them His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). It is God’s Holy Spirit within the mind that makes one a Christian. Paul stated, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

This much is clear. What is NOT so clear—or even *known*—to most is what Paul added in verse 17: “And if children, then *HEIRS*; heirs of God, and *JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST*; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also *glorified together*.”

A true follower of Christ and the Bible is an heir *with* Christ! Heirs are not yet *inheritors*. An heir is one who later *inherits* what has been promised to him.

We have read that Christians are to “inherit the earth”—and “rule with Christ.” *How, when, where* and *why* does this take place? Once the answers are known, the counterfeit salvation

about heaven, taught by almost every professing Christian church, collapses for the fiction that it is!

But how does one become a “joint-heir with Christ”? (To learn more, read my booklet *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*) □





GOOD NEWS FOR CUBA?

Cubans have seen this before: the possibility of change for the better. Should they look to newly elected President Raul Castro with hope? Or have nearly 50 years of ration lines and communist control left them disenchanted?

SINCE FIDEL CASTRO came to power, Cuba has charted the same course—and Cubans under the age of 50 have grown up experiencing little change in their nation. They have waited in ration lines and endured socialist propaganda. They have been taught about the “empirical” United States and the stifling effects of its trade embargo against Cuba. Government control of consumer goods, \$15-a-month salaries,

and tight restrictions on travel and voicing one’s opinion about the government have made life difficult for millions.

For those born after 1959, the only Cuba they have known has been a nation of a single-minded communist vision, orchestrated by Fidel Castro.

During the latter half of the 20th century, Cuba remained on an even keel—dissenters were silenced and the “bourgeoisie” (the middle class) did not have upward mobility in society. Cuban-U.S. relations came to an impasse; although both nations made demands, neither side would budge.

“Fidel’s Cuba” witnessed 10 different U.S. presidents take office; saw America move through the “Swinging 60s” and the 1970s “Me Decade,” into the economic boom of the materialistic 80s; weathered the fall of the Soviet Union, onward to the Information Age

in the 90s, and past the September 11, 2001 attacks.

During those years, many Cubans became disillusioned about what they hoped for when Fidel Castro came into power.

However, on Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2008, the Communist dictator announced he was resigning from the presidency, stating in the Cuban daily *Granma* that the office requires “more mobility and dedication than I am physically able to offer.”

Just days later, his brother, Raul, was chosen by Cuba’s National Assembly to be President of the Republic of Cuba.

Fidel Castro’s resignation leads one to wonder: What does this mean for Cuba? Will Cubans finally live in a nation where all citizens can lead productive and rewarding lives?

Changing of the Guard

While acting as a stand-in head of state since July 2006, Raul Castro remained in his brother’s shadow, not deviating from the overall vision of “Fidel’s Cuba.”

However, since being affirmed after Fidel’s resignation, his conflicting actions have made it impossible to determine Cuba’s future.

Raul Castro, 76, the “fist” of the revolution, has long commanded the

Cuban Revolutionary Army. Upon taking office, he filled his new government with staunch senior communists—including his 77-year-old vice president. In a speech announcing his presidency, Raul Castro said his brother will still be consulted on big decisions and will maintain the title “Commander in Chief of the Revolution.”

“Fidel is Fidel,” he said, referring to him as “irreplaceable.”

However, as Cubans and international onlookers maintain there will be no transformation, Mr. Raul Castro appears to be slowly changing long-held policies.

Shortly after being sworn in, the new president signed two international human rights treaties that his brother long opposed, and hosted a visit from a Vatican representative. He lifted strict limits on consumer goods; products such as microwaves, televisions and DVD players will eventually be available to the public. He also promised to expand to other appliances in upcoming years.

In addition, Cubans will soon be able to purchase cellphones, even cars and homes as well.

BBC reported that Cuban officials have discussed easing travel restrictions, which have made it nearly impossible for Cubans to leave the island.

The younger Castro has seemingly shown he is his “own man,” and will bring change to how the communist state is run. Unlike his brother, he has not (at the time of this writing) hosted anti-U.S. rallies. Since taking office, he has worked to fix the post-Soviet economy and often seeks counsel from multiple sources. He was even quoted by *Granma* as telling Havana University students to debate “fearlessly” and bring their concerns directly to him.

In response to decisions made by Raul Castro, Fidel claimed his brother has “all legal and constitutional faculties and prerogatives to lead Cuba” (*Associated Press*). With Raul in charge, Fidel has seemingly taken a sideline role, even though he regularly contributes anti-American editorials to *Granma*.

But after 50 years of the same leader, will this “passing of the torch” signal a change in thinking for Cuba’s government, its citizens—and America? Or are these revised policies and loosening of the communist grip merely a face-lift?

Despite seeing small but hopeful changes take shape, for now it appears the Cuban people will have to continue to wait for a government that will deliver on its promises.

U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON CUBA

The possibility of change in American-Cuban relations is not lost on U.S. voters, given that Fidel Castro’s resignation occurred during a U.S. election year.

Since President George W. Bush began his second term as president, travel restrictions to Cuba have tightened and U.S. citizens are only allowed to send \$100 dollars per month to Cuba.

While both Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have said they are interested in pursuing relations with Cuba’s government, Republican nominee John McCain is firmly opposed to any compromise.

“This moment, this opportunity when Fidel Castro has finally stepped down, I think, is one that we

should try and take advantage of,” Mr. Obama said, asserting that he would meet with Raul Castro “without preconditions,” reverse President Bush’s monetary policy toward Cuba, and lift travel restrictions.

Mrs. Clinton was more reserved. On the day of Mr. Castro’s resignation, she issued a statement to the new Cuban government: “The people of the United States are ready to meet you if you move forward towards the path of democracy, with real, substantial reforms.”

On the other hand, Mr. McCain said that if elected, he will maintain the same hard-line stance as Mr. Bush, adding that “Raul is worse in many respects than Fidel was.”

While addressing veterans who participated in the Bay of Pigs

invasion, Mr. McCain, a former U.S. Navy pilot and Vietnam War veteran, told the audience he was tortured by Cubans while imprisoned in Hanoi, Vietnam—a claim Mr. Castro hotly contested in an editorial in Cuba’s *Juventud Rebelde*.

“Let me remind you, Senator McCain,” Fidel Castro wrote, “The commandments of the religion that you practice prohibit lying. The years in prison and the wounds that you received as consequence for the attacks on Hanoi do not excuse your moral responsibility to the truth.”

But now that Cuba is under the control of Raul Castro, who has shown an apparent willingness to cooperate with others, will the new U.S. government be able to restore its tarnished relationship? □

Identity Based on Oppression

For years Cuba has identified itself by its oppression from governments—both at home and from abroad.

Generally, most Americans think little about the island nation; any hardships that sanctions may have initially caused have long been absorbed and forgotten.

But stepping onto Cuban soil reveals the embargo's crippling effects. Turquoise 1950s Chevys prowl past faded facades of crumbling Spanish-style stucco buildings of a once-prosperous Havana. Barefooted Cubans, their skin tanned from the hot sun, fish using metal hangers along the Malecon, or the boardwalk, where the Straits of Florida crest over Havana's sea walls. Outside the nation's capital, children play baseball on unpaved, dusty streets, many players wielding bats brought to the island by Americans before sanctions were imposed.

The U.S. trade embargo is not the first time Cuba has been controlled, whether directly or indirectly, by an outside nation.

Since Christopher Columbus first landed there on behalf of the Spanish crown in 1492, Cuba has been tossed among larger nations—Spain, England and the U.S.

For more than two and a half centuries, Spain controlled Cuba, deciding what and with whom Cuba could trade. In 1762, England took control of the island nation for one year and allowed it to trade freely. But Cuba was restored to Spain the following year.

Eventually, the U.S. helped rid Cuba of Spanish control. However, subsequent Cuban governments supported by the U.S. brimmed with crooked politicians, gross corruption and heavy censorship—and largely benefited the wealthy. Many Cubans grew to despise American influence over their nation. Political unrest bred the socialist revolution, which gave way to Fidel Castro's ascent to power in 1959.

Mr. Castro was a strongman who promised stability for the country. Trumpeting slogans such as "Cuba for the people!", he easily convinced

Cubans he could restore pride to the nation. It seemed that the bourgeoisie's dreams of equality and freedom would finally become reality.

However, these dreams diminished as relations between the U.S. and Cuba soured. In 1962, the White House imposed a trade embargo, banning all Americans from entering or trading with the island nation.

From then on, Mr. Castro toiled to create a society in a constant state of defense—with many Cubans believing the United States was preparing to attack them. He lined the country's highways with billboards to remind Cubans of the purported U.S. threat. "Always in Combat!" proclaimed one sign. "They will never have this country!" read another near Mariel. Others, typed in large block lettering, decreed, "Fatherland or Death!" During his rule, newspapers regularly featured full transcripts of Fidel Castro's six-hour, mostly anti-American, speeches.

With the revolution, many citizens happily pledged their loyalty and unending faith to the socialist system. In eager anticipation that a positive new era for the nation had arrived, they cheered, "¡Viva Fidel! ¡Viva la Revolution!"

But their high hopes soon gave way to a harsh reality: The nation was now Communist; it stressed the interests of the state over the individual. It was an atheist state; officially, religion had no place among the people. Cuba no longer received trade from its largest trading partner; Washington now viewed the island nation as a threat to national security. To be a Communist in Cuba meant gaining government approval—but at the cost of being cut off from religion and the financial backing of the U.S.

Citizens were forced to rely upon the socialist state.

On the Ground

Cuba today is a crumbling shadow of what it was in the 1950s. Unlike the burgeoning economy then, the people are now forced to wait in long lines for food rations doled out by the government.

Margarita Alarcon, an international relations specialist at the Casa de

Las Americas, an educational institution in Havana, said before the 2004 U.S. presidential elections that Cubans understood how much their lives could change if Cuba is exonerated from U.S. trade sanctions.

"Cubans are aware of the fact that once the embargo is lifted, life will be different," she said.

Cuba's 11.2 million people are rationed about four bars of soap a year per person and a pound of chicken a month per person. Other rations include rice, beans and milk.

On an island that boasts the highest ratio of doctors per capita, medicine cupboards are often bare, with no way to treat patients ailing from even the most curable illnesses.

Some feel a little bit of chicken here and there is enough. "At least there is always rice and beans," goes a common saying among the people. "In Africa, they have nothing."

But, those who make enough to move economically upward cannot. "I could have bought a car," a thirty-something Cuban man said, while walking through Havana, "and a nicer apartment, but the government won't let me."

Despite the negative propaganda, most Cubans do not see Americans as adversaries.

"American leaders bad, Cuban leaders bad," a taxi driver said, while driving in Cuba's capital late one night. "American people good, Cuban people good."

During a visit with American students, Reinaldo Taladrid, a Cuban journalist and news anchor, said that the world looks at Cuba differently compared to other countries. "We are analyzed under a big [microscope] and other countries are not," he said. "People in Cuba don't see Americans as the enemy... It's not an ideal situation."

Although most people are hesitant to talk on the streets, and access to computers is limited, it appears the Cuban people are becoming more vocal about their country's future.

According to a report from the *International Herald Tribune* regard-

Please see **CUBA** page 29

READER COMMENTS

From online subscribers of our weekly news updates

AUSTRALIA

■ “My beloved Dad used to read *The Plain Truth* and listen to *The World Tomorrow* broadcast when I was very young in Africa, and I can recall those times and his belief in the views of Herbert W. Armstrong. Your website brings me much inspiration.”

■ “Good to see Mr. Armstrong’s writings back.

CANADA

■ “Wonderful website.”

INDIA

■ “I am fascinated by your presentation of the real situations and wish you all the strength for your efforts.”

ITALY

■ “You are helping to spread the GOOD NEWS to those who need it.”

JAMAICA

■ “I find your articles really interesting and would like to learn more. Keep up the good work you are doing.”

KENYA

■ “A good, educational, informative and entertaining site.”

■ “You are doing a great job. Keep it up.”

■ “The article “Seven Questions Your Minister Does Not Want You to Ask” was encouraging and educative.”

■ “Your articles are great to read. They are an eye-opener!”

■ “*The Real Truth* is a very good, analytical and truthful paper. It is very educative as well as informative. I would encourage its circulation to enrich as many people as possible.”

MEXICO

■ “I am very interested in the Book of Revelation; as a matter of fact, I am making my own research. A good friend sent me to this website, so I hope I can find all I am looking for.” **[Editor’s note: We recommend you read our booklet *Revelation Explained at Last!*]**

NEW ZEALAND

■ “I have just read your booklet on healing **[Editor’s note: *The Truth About Healing*]** and for the first time in my life I have been able to believe it in all the fullness of its meaning. Suddenly

I understand! Thank you so much for revealing the real truth.”

■ “Very, very interesting and encouraging. Thank you for your magazine.”

NIGERIA

■ “It is amazing to be filled with undiluted truth.”

PAKISTAN

■ “Your website is excellent.”

■ “Your article “Seven Signs of a Falling Nation” impressed me. Thus, I want to be your student in learning; the country I live in is fraught with ignorance.”

PHILIPPINES

■ “Wonderful...resource instrument.”

■ “Your online magazine is a great source of information.”

■ “I am just interested in general knowledge. I am like a sponge. I love to absorb knowledge that I can get. The internet is giving opportunities to learn more and more. It seems that your site is teeming with good information and it’s interesting too.”

■ “I am reading global news almost every night and compare it with Bible prophecy. Now that I have visited your website, I find it as a square figure that fits a square hole.”

■ “I find your explanations biblical. I am interested to learn more.”

SOUTH AFRICA

■ “Four years ago I saw your magazine at a relative’s home. I borrowed it and it stimulated my spirituality greatly. That’s why I’m subscribing for your online subscription.”

■ I really appreciate and enjoy your programme **[Editor’s note: *The World to Come* broadcast]**. I am learning a lot from it.”

■ “What I read was an eye opener. It really gave so many answers that I could not answer when asked by the people. Yes I knew, but could not quote. Thank you so much.”

UGANDA

■ “Quite gratified with your work.”

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

■ “You have very good information.”

UNITED KINGDOM

■ “I want to know what the Bible

teaches. I want peace in my life, and I want to know that my life is not pointless.” **[Editor’s note: Our booklet *Why Do You Exist?* is a great starting point to understand the true purpose of human existence.]**

■ “I am a minister and hungry for information on any Bible prophecy, or anything that relates to the Bible and today’s troubled world.”

UNITED STATES

■ “Please send me any information that will help me in studying the book of Revelation. Thank You.” **[Editor’s note: Our booklet *Revelation Explained at Last!* is designed for that purpose.]**

■ “I am an ex-member of the Radio Church of God. I just want to find out more about your organization.”

[Editor’s note: To get an overview of the organization that publishes this magazine, read our booklet *Here is The Restored Church of God.*]

■ “Thank you for having this site available for learning.”

■ “I have just started reading your material over the Internet—it is a true blessing from God to be able to study such wonderful lessons!”

■ “Your site is so informative. Thank you for all the information here.”

■ “I like the site very much.”

■ “Excellent website!”

■ “I want to learn more.”

■ “I accidentally found your website, but I am glad I did. I used to listen to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong years ago; I did not know that he had passed away. I always enjoyed his teachings on the word of God.” **[Editor’s note: These teachings continue today in books, booklets, articles and other literature archived and freely accessible at realtruth.org and therc.org].**

■ “I see it before my very own eyes that all that is happening is leading up to the end. I find it exciting and scary. It just lets me know once again the Word of God is Truth.” **[Editor’s note: You may wish to read our booklet *Are These the Last Days?*]**

■ “I’m really excited to learn all I can about Bible prophecy and keeping informed on current events now occurring in today’s world.”

ZAMBIA

■ “I am very keen to learn more.”

POVERTY TRAP

Continued from page 21

mies: these are the things which defile a man” (Matt. 15:18-20).

Man’s nature—its proclivity to judge for itself right from wrong—has created a world in which destitution thrives. Partly, this is because those trapped in poverty are ignorant of the laws and principles that would free them from their circumstances. And partly because the “have not’s” have fallen victim to the callous whims and insatiable appetites of the “have’s.” Both cases are the handiwork of man’s nature.

But man was not born with carnal nature—it is acquired. (Our booklet *Did God Create Human Nature?* provides further detailed explanation.) Unless that nature is changed—from the “get” way of selfishness, vanity, greed and competition, to the “give” way of selflessness, service, moderation and cooperation—solutions founded upon human reasoning will fail. The rich will continue to get richer, and the poor, poorer. Government programs and non-profit organizations can address the EFFECT, but are ignorant of how to identify the TRUE CAUSE.

There is another way.

Poverty—Soon To Be Eliminated!

A future government is on the horizon. It will administer perfect laws that will deliver equity to all nations, lands and peoples—but this will not be accomplished by the hands of carnal men. That worldwide SUPERGOVERNMENT—the kingdom of God!—will be ordered and established “with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (Isa. 9:7).

Ancient Israel, when it was obedient to the One who miraculously delivered the slave nation out of Egypt, was to be a model nation, a type or forerunner of God’s kingdom. When the Israelites faithfully obeyed their Maker, they lived by laws that helped the poor and needy.

■ **Year of Release:** Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15 record laws regarding

creditors and debtors, and explain that those in need could borrow to pay for necessities—not desires. Loans were to be repaid; if, at the end of six years, they were not paid in full, the lender forgave the borrower of the debt—giving him a clean slate (Deut. 15:1-11).

God’s Year of Release, a way of providing debt relief, included the return of any land or farm that may have been mismanaged and confiscated. This was God’s way of ensuring that poverty did not plague a family generation after generation.

In the coming millennial rule of Jesus Christ, the Year of Release will arrive every seventh year, ensuring that every child will have a home, and every family will live without financial worries. All people will be happy, helping each other and showing mercy and brotherly love toward fellowman. Every debt will be gone. All will pay God His tithes (Mal. 3:8-10), and in turn have all their needs provided for them. People will then wonder why so many did not keep His laws before. They will come to realize that the only luxury—necessity—worth anything is that of true happiness and abundant living as God has always had in store for mankind.

■ **Jubilee Year:** Every 50th year—the year of Jubilee—all land in Israel was to revert to its original owners, again eliminating third and fourth generation poverty.

■ **Gleaning:** God established laws that allowed the fatherless, widows, and foreigners living among the Israelites to follow behind the workers who reaped the harvest, and collect the grain that was left for them, called gleaning (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21).

Just as God had mercy on His people Israel and delivered them from Egypt, He expected them to have mercy on the poor. But instead of simply giving them the food, God expected the needy to gather it for themselves. In this way, they would appreciate God’s merciful ways and not take them for granted.

■ **Tithing:** Obedience to God involves recognizing that He owns the earth and everything in it (Psa. 24:1; 50:10-12; Hag. 2:8). This means He

owns everything we possess—it all belongs to Him! But God desires to share His creation and its resources with others. All He requires is 10%—a tithe—of the income of one’s labor. God promises to bless those who obey His tithing law.

This tithe is used to support the Work of God, which involves preaching the good news of His kingdom to all nations (Matt. 24:14). This is being accomplished through *The Real Truth* magazine and its website: www.realtruth.org.

Rather than giving them money, Jesus said that He gave the *gospel* to the poor (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:18; 7:22). This “good news” message of hope is also a *way of life*—it is to be OBEYED (I Pet. 4:17). Those who believe Christ’s true gospel (as opposed to the popular false gospel *about* Christ) will reap bountiful benefits—both in this life and especially in the world to come.

God also requires another tithe from His servants, to be paid every third year (not including the Year of Release). He commanded this of ancient Israel: “At the end of three years you shall bring forth all the tithe of your increase the same year, and shall lay it up within your gates; and the Levite, (because he has no part nor inheritance with you,) and the stranger [foreigners], and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within your gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do” (Deut. 14:28-29).

God’s solution to helping the poor makes sense! His laws, which are founded on outgoing concern for others, teach personal responsibility, both to those in need and those who have the means to provide their needs. God’s statutes and judgments train the obedient to exercise vision and plan ahead—to organize and apply diligence—to “count the cost” and never forget the principle of “cause and effect.”

The world of today rejects these laws—yet they will be taught and faithfully practiced by all in the world to come. And only then will perpetual poverty be eliminated. □

ASIA

China's Increasing Military Budget Draws U.S. Concern

China announced this week that its defense budget for 2008 will total about \$58.79 billion—a 17.6% increase over last year. This will be the twentieth consecutive year China's military budget sees double-digit growth.

Earlier this week, the United States Congress received its annual report from the Pentagon on the Chinese military. The report stated that the U.S. was unsure of China's intentions and that the actual spending for last year was between \$97 billion and \$139 billion—about three times official estimates. However, due to lack of transparency, the U.S. cannot know for sure how much was spent or the specifics of how funds were used.

While announcing the release of the report, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia David Sedney questioned China's military intentions: "The real story is the continuing development, the

continuing modernization, the continuing acquisition of capabilities and the corresponding and unfortunate lack of understanding, lack of transparency about the intentions of those and how they are going to be employed. What is China going to do with all that?"

The report goes on to say that in recent years Beijing has purchased many submarines and aircraft carriers for its expanding navy, as well as improved nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles. Concerns were also expressed regarding China's anti-satellite missile test and cyberwarfare tests against U.S. government computers.

A statement by the Chinese government called for the U.S. "to abandon the Cold War thinking." Chinese official Jiang Enzh responded to the allegations by saying the increases are "defensive in nature," also adding that China spent less on defense, as percentage of GDP, than the U.S.

(whose defense budget for the next fiscal year will exceed \$500 billion), the United Kingdom, France or Russia (*BBC*).

The focus of the international community's concern is on the possibility of China deploying its most advanced weaponry on the coast facing Taiwan. Beijing has warned the island that any move toward further independence would be followed by military action by China. Currently, according to the Pentagon report, China is in position to launch air and missile campaigns, set up blockades and perform a sea invasion.

Yet the report affirms that the U.S. "welcomes the rise of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous China."

"However," the report continues, "much uncertainty surrounds China's future course, in particular in the area of its expanding military power and how that power might be used." □

Protests Continue as China Prepares for the Olympics

What began as a peaceful march by Tibetan Buddhist monks in Lhasa, Tibet's capital, quickly turned into one of the largest protests against Chinese rule in almost two decades.

On March 10, the first day of protests, 11 monks were detained after anti-Chinese demonstrations in front of Jokhang Temple, the holiest site in Tibetan Buddhism. The following morning, some 600 monks attempted to march out of Sera monastery, about three miles north of Jokhang, but Chinese troops used tear gas at the monastery's gate to stop them.

The march coincided with others around the world marking the 49th anniversary of the failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule in the region. The attempt forced the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan political and spiritual

leader, into exile and set up Tibet's government in Dharamsala, India.

There has been dialogue between the Dalai Lama and Beijing since 1979, but without evident progress.

Tensions between Tibetans and the Chinese have escalated since the first day of demonstrations. Many local Chinese residents fled Lhasa as Tibetan demonstrators ransacked and destroyed their shops. Thousands of Chinese police and troops were deployed across the capital to subdue the violence.

The aggression that originated from Lhasa has spread throughout neighboring ethnic Tibetan areas. Many riots have taken place since the first day of protests.

Since the clashes began, the Chinese government has reported 19

deaths. Meanwhile, the Tibetan government-in-exile reports as many as 140 dead. Due to an imposed news blackout by the Chinese, reports are unconfirmed.

China, along with Russia, condemns the protests, claiming these acts are being used by Tibetans to gain the world's sympathy.

Activists recently broke through police lines in an attempt to disrupt the torch relay ceremony in Greece, but were quickly subdued by security.

With the 2008 Summer Olympics in August approaching, the world is closely monitoring Beijing and how it handles the situation.

As China continues to crack down on demonstrators, the world has a watchful eye. □

S. African Schools: Breeding Ground for Rape, Other Crimes

A report by the South African Human Rights Commission found that the most severe crimes against children were committed at school—not only by pupils against each other, but also by teachers against pupils.

The commission learned that 40% of all children were assaulted with fists, machetes or guns, or were even victims of rape.

The act of “corrective rape” was also being committed against lesbians, as it is believed this will make the victims heterosexual again. Children play school games such as “rape me, rape me,” in which they pretend to rape each other—often resulting in actual sexual assaults being committed in school washrooms, empty classrooms, corridors and dormitories.

The Guardian newspaper reported that South Africa is the rape capital of the world, and that talk show host Oprah Winfrey said, “It is almost impossible for us to imagine the frequency in which these horrific crimes happen, not only to women, but also especially to children.”

Statistics released by *The Times* (London) reveal that each year more than one million women in South Africa are raped. “It is a fact that a woman born in South Africa has a greater chance of being raped, than learning how to read” (*BBC*).

As crime within the country continues to spiral out of control, the nation’s AIDS infection rate is also at its highest level ever, with rape a major contributing factor in spreading the

virus. In Nelspruit, in the province of Mpumalanga, it is reported that 31% of the town’s population is infected; in certain rural areas, the infection rate is higher.

Even more disturbing: Prior to the year 2000, most rapes were committed against adults; since then, 65-70% of all South African rapes have been against children—with some as young as two weeks old, as a myth exists that sex with a virgin will cure AIDS.

Solutions to the problems children face are further hampered by school authorities who urge girls to keep quiet about the abuse they suffer, and who also urge their families not to alert the police, as this would draw unwanted publicity. □

CUBA

Continued from page 25

ing Internet usage, “University students recently clashed with the president of the National Assembly over the subject, an embarrassing scene for the government that was filmed and distributed clandestinely throughout the island.”

Those who have fled Cuba say that its government has brought nothing but shame to the country and should be scrutinized.

“The image is one of the defender of the oppressed and defender of just causes,” said Cuban-born Cristina Martinez, who fled the country and moved to Spain after Fidel Castro took power. “People who understand the Cuban reality know it is not like that. It is not something they would want for themselves or their own country. Or, they are opportunists who use Cuba as a symbol knowing full well what is happening” (*The New York Times*).

Hopes Dashed

Throughout history, the citizens of Cuba have been subject to the whims of governments, political figures and corpora-

tions that fulfilled their own interests at the people’s expense. Each time a new and possibly better beginning came into view, their hopes were dashed. The Cuban people seem to have reason to be cynical about their new president. After all, he still bears the name Castro.

The small changes seen under the rule of Raul Castro appear to be slow-moving, requiring additional patience from the average Cuban.

There are still no new electronics in sight. They still cannot travel freely. They still must wait in line for rations.

And some have already given up on how much Cuba will change for the better under Raul Castro. They look instead to the day he will no longer be president. They look to a “Cuba for the people”—a government that will truly deliver equitable laws and fair judgments across all socio-economic classes.

Such a government is coming—and soon! Billions of professing Christians are unaware that when Jesus Christ came “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15), He was talk-

ing about a SUPERGOVERNMENT that will rule over all nations for 1,000 years. Christ will rule His government—God’s kingdom—and administer true justice for all.

Notice: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: *and the government shall be upon His shoulder*: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. *Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end*, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with JUSTICE from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa. 9:6-7).

The peoples of Cuba and all nations throughout the earth will reap innumerable benefits from Jesus Christ’s perfect rule.

Until then, how much Cuba can change under Raul Castro remains to be seen. The citizens of Cuba must, as they have done in the past, continue to wait—but not for very long.

To some, it seems a government truly “for the people” is impossible, and will never come. But God’s Word promises otherwise! □



REASONS TO VISIT WWW.REALTRUTH.ORG

- All of our articles and "World News Desk" briefs are archived on our website, and most provide links to related *Real Truth* articles, as well as to the extensive books, booklets and other literature regularly promoted within the print version of the magazine.
- Many articles and news briefs feature additional news photographs and informational graphics not published in the print version.
- While the magazine is printed ten times a year, we also post on our site (www.realtruth.org) additional news articles, reports and analyses throughout each week.
- We offer free email subscriptions of weekly news updates.
- The site features our unique "pop-up scriptures" function.
- Visitors can listen to *The World to Come* program, presented by David C. Pack, publisher/editor-in-chief of *The Real Truth*.

