

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2005

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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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A R T I C L E S

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3

Should Christians Be Activists?

Recognizing the problems facing humanity today, many people actively set out to *promote* change according to their world view. Many activists are secular, but professing Christians are increasingly becoming involved. Should they?

Page 3



10

New Year's "Resolutions"

What Do They Mean—and Will They be Kept?

Most have made a number of New Year's resolutions throughout their lives. Yet, practically every resolution is broken a short time after being made. Why is this failure in achieving resolutions so common?

Page 7

Coping With Depression

Today, depression has become a widespread problem. Why are people unable to find true happiness? Why do they look for it in seemingly all the wrong places? And why do society's proposed solutions fail?

Page 10



16

Special Report: Tsunamis – and the Message They Bring

Page 14

What's All the Rage About?

Numerous recent headlines suggest that sports violence is on the rise. Why? Is it just "part of the game"? Or is it an indication of something bigger?

Page 16



20

Canada's Moral Decline

Canada is largely a secular nation. Why? How did this happen? By taking an open and frank look at this vast country and the events that led to the shaping and molding of its current state, we can better recognize and understand the slippery slope that Canada has taken.

Page 20

The Truth Behind St. Valentine's Day

St. Valentine's Day is the world's "holiday of love." Since the Bible states that God is love (I John 4:8, 16), does He approve of the celebration of this day? Does He want His people—true Christians—partaking of the candy and cards, or any customs associated with this day?

Page 23

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F E A T U R E S

Personal from David C. Pack
World News Desk

1
28

ABOUT OUR COVER:

On December 26, 2004, one of the greatest natural disasters in history occurred. This satellite photo offers a brief glimpse of the devastation.

PHOTO: DigitalGlobe

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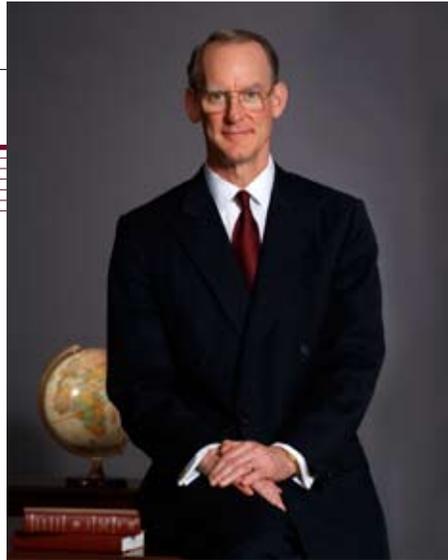
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



What Makes Your Mind Unique?

MODERN SCIENCE is continually bringing new knowledge to civilization. Each important scientific discovery—each new piece of knowledge—is received worldwide with excitement and acclaim.

Reflect on all that science has given to mankind at large. It has put men on the moon and created weapons of mass destruction. It has broken down the genetic codes of DNA and cloned numerous different creatures. It has learned much about the staggering size and nature of the universe—outer space—and discovered incredible things about the tiny sub-atomic particles in different kinds of atoms—inner space. It has made numerous medical breakthroughs and accomplished amazing feats of engineering.

The scope and potential of science seems limitless. Most believe that, given time, scientific discoveries will solve most or all of mankind's problems. Yet science is limited in a vitally important way that involves you. There is a discovery it will never—and can never—make about the nature of the human mind!

Your mind contains a dimension that cannot be understood or discovered by any process or experiment known to science. This world's religions have missed it. Their theologians neither teach nor comprehend it. They have completely overlooked this critical component—

this single vital key—that unlocks the enormous difference between men and animals. Only by understanding this revealed key can you learn your purpose for being!

The Amazing Human Mind

Look at all of the amazing works of nature—both on earth and throughout the heavens. The kaleidoscope of God's handiwork that can be seen by the human eye is staggering.

Consider the planets, stars and galaxies. Each is its own marvel. Then reflect on all of the species of plants found on earth. There are millions, diverse in color, shape, size and beauty. The brilliance of their various designs and purposes is incredible! Now think of the many millions of different kinds of animals and insects. They are as marvelous and fascinating as the world of plants, with their diversity of purpose, appearance and behavior.

But none of these creations rival the complexity and nearly unlimited capability of your mind. And as fascinating, marvelous, beautiful and amazing as are all the things described above, none is more amazing than the human mind. It is the absolute pinnacle of all living organisms. Nothing else in God's creation even comes close. What else can plan, think or create to even a fraction of the same degree?

Just think about how many things the human mind can design and produce: Houses, telephones, trains, automobiles, planes, rockets, computers, fax machines

and other sophisticated devices that are practically limitless in complexity and usefulness. The only thing it cannot design and build is itself!

Who Made Your Mind?

When the psalmist said, "...for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa. 139:14), this is most true of your brain—the human mind!

The Creator of your mind sent with it a detailed Instruction Manual containing vital information, explaining the nature, design and purpose of this greatest of all creations. He identifies the hidden key—the MISSING DIMENSION!—to the right and proper use of the mind, opening the way to peace, happiness, abundance and universal prosperity.

But this Instruction Manual is almost universally ignored, misrepresented, misunderstood and rejected. I speak of God's Word—the Holy Bible! As a result, the problems, troubles and evils of civilization mount with no solution in sight and conditions only growing worse.

Stop and think! Apply basic logic.

Would God create His marvel of engineering—your mind—and send it without an Instruction Book explaining how to use it? Of course not!

Yet this most amazing of all books remains a mystery to so many—with few even professing to understand it. Most spend their entire lives worried about what people think and say. Few concern themselves with what God thinks or says. Be honest and examine yourself. Do you derive your opinions from people? Or do you regularly search and accept the plain Word of God as the guide for your life?

The following scripture explains why even the most brilliant minds are completely unable to learn certain understanding, unless it is revealed to them. Notice: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things

from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25). The greatest thinkers of this world cannot fathom the things God has revealed in His Word! They are literally hidden from them.

We must be willing to examine God's Word for what He reveals about your mind. It will open your thinking to incredible new understanding about why you were born—and of your awesome future and potential. However, we must start at the beginning.

A Non-Physical Component?

Many suppose that the composition of the human mind is entirely physical. Is this true? Others believe that each person possesses an immortal soul. Is this true? What does the Bible say? Does it endorse either of these ideas? Or does God's Word teach something completely different—something completely overlooked by all religions, and unable to be discovered by all methods of science?

First, we must consider the difference between human minds and animal brains. There are facts that science tells us about the comparative qualities of both. All understand that in some way animal brains are entirely different from human minds. But in what way? How are they different?

For instance, certain creatures, such as chimpanzees and dolphins, have brains that are relatively similar in size and weight to that of humans. Some larger animals, like whales and elephants, have larger brains than man. Yet they are far less intelligent, far less creative and incapable of understanding any kind of complex thought.

Science has never been able to explain—to adequately account for—the vast difference between the human brain and the brains of animals. While man has a brain that may be only slightly more complex than animals of relatively similar brain size, the difference in capability is vast. There is simply no comparison.

Animals function almost entirely on instinct. They do what they do automatically, and from birth. For instance, almost immediately after birth, a calf knows exactly what to do—how to stand up and take steps, and where to find milk. Human babies require far longer to even stand up with support, and have to be taught how to do virtually everything.

Having minds, human beings have been given hands so that they can create. Merely having brains, animals function on instinct and possess paws, claws and hooves. This leaves them incapable of building something complex like a television—let alone a jet airplane or a space-traveling rocket—even if a mind were directing them. Animals are also not capable of acquiring knowledge beyond a very rudimentary ability to react to certain stimuli.

Humans are capable of acquiring knowledge, drawing conclusions, gathering and assessing facts, making decisions—and of building character. This is the single, greatest, overarching difference between men and animals.

Animals are greatly limited because God has merely programmed into them, through instinct, everything that they need to function effectively within their environment.

On the other hand, people do not instinctively know everything necessary to function successfully in life. They must continually acquire more knowledge throughout their lives to address new challenges and demands made upon them.

This is made possible by an unseen, unrecognized component of the mind. Without this invisible, non-physical element, mankind would be just another dumb beast!

A Spirit in Man

Let's now establish a basic Bible teaching. The patriarch Job wrote, "But there is a spirit in man: and the

Please see PERSONAL, page 9

Should Christians Be Activists?



Recognizing the problems facing humanity today, many people actively set out to *promote* change according to their world view. Many activists are secular, but professing Christians are increasingly becoming involved. Should they?

BY JAMES F. TURCK

THE WORLD IN WHICH we live is vastly different from that of just a century ago. Many of the conveniences we take for granted were yet in their infancy, or had not even been conceived. The automobile, airplane, telephone and electricity, and the devices it powers, were relatively new inventions not yet completely embraced by the masses, let alone available to them.

Life in the early twentieth century moved at a much simpler, slower pace. There were far fewer demands on a person's time and attention. There was no evening or world news and no "news flashes" on television—no mass transit or intercontinental supersonic flights transporting people across the globe in a day's time—no Internet to spread information at lightning speed, making known, almost instantly, events happening a world away—no complex, complicated, interconnected

national and international issues with the capacity to affect lives almost instantly.

Rather, the problems faced by individuals and families were centered much more on their immediate surroundings. What was happening far away *stayed* faraway, and had little effect on their lives.

However, this is not the case in today's society. The world has become a complicated, complex place with multiple competing interests and organizations. Life moves at almost breakneck speed, with so much to do and so little time to do it. Millions of cars traverse the highways. Hundreds of airplanes move passengers to all parts of the globe daily. Events taking place halfway around the world are broadcast the same day on the evening news. The World Wide Web enables people everywhere to be instantly informed of the latest developments *everywhere*. All of this has served to make planet earth a much smaller place.

The book of Daniel speaks of this time: "...the time of the end [when] many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4). We are living in a time when events unfolding thousands of miles away can affect our lives only a short time later. For example, when war breaks out in a major oil-producing nation, the effects at the gas pumps are often felt the next day.

Increasing Troubles

As modern technological advancements have increased, so have the problems, troubles and worries facing mankind. Although modern conveniences promise mankind more leisure time and a

better life, there are ever-increasing problems—poverty, injustice, disease, stress, war, violent crime, pollution, environmental concerns, endangered species, civil unrest, decaying morals, international strife, etc.

In fact, many of the problems humanity now faces are by-products of advancements in technology. For example, who would have imagined that the automobile and its associated manufacturing factories would be a major contributor to air pollution? Who would have foreseen that the need for oil and gasoline to run the internal combustion engine would lead to water or ground pollution? Who could have known that keeping an uninterrupted flow of “black gold” pumping at cheap prices would cause strife between nations? Could any have foreseen huge oil rigs spilling millions of gallons of petroleum products, causing destruction to wildlife and its habitat?

And who could have peered into the future and realized that the advent of electricity would one day bring the dangers of PCBs found in the transformers bringing power to homes? Who could have foreseen the air pollution that has resulted from coal-fired generation plants and the radioactive waste that has been a by-product of nuclear power plants?

Worldwide travel via ocean liners and commercial aircraft has afforded people the opportunity to reach distant places in short spaces of time. These same transportation vehicles bring food and products from distant lands for the consumption and enjoyment of the populace.

Yet, at the same time, they have the potential to spread what would have otherwise been localized diseases, from one part of the world to another in a matter of days, possibly creating a pandemic. Insects infesting cargo in the hold of a plane are easily introduced into a different country where, lacking natural predators, they can cause widespread destruction. The Emerald Ash Borer, introduced to North America from Asia, is now devastating whole ash groves in Michigan and Ohio. It is but one example.

Though the Internet has given people the ability to instantly communicate with others from around the world, it has also been responsible for an explosion in all forms of pornography, contributing to further declining morals, destroyed lives, shattered marriages and broken homes.

The push to acquire the raw materials and other resources needed to sustain and advance modern life, with an ever-increasing population, is taking its toll on society and the environment. Technologically advanced nations grow wealthier, while the “have-not” nations are left behind. The peoples of the poorer countries naturally become resentful and bitter because of the social injustice that they feel has been perpetrated on them. Even within industrialized, technologically advanced nations, the gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” widens with the passing of time.

World Views

Many from all walks of life recognize that despite endless inventions and technological advancements, or the increase in mankind’s fund of knowledge, the world is still faced with seemingly unending social and environmental problems. They know that something must be done and that someone must do it. A recent Nobel Peace Prize winner expressed it this way: “Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system” (*Associated Press*).

Where is the utopian world that so many seek? Can the world become a better place? Can man bring it about? Does he possess the solutions to the myriad of problems he now faces?

Many individuals and organizations see this as possible. The above-mentioned individual went on to say, “We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds, and in the process heal our own—indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder” (*Ibid.*).

Yet, people have differing visions of what this world should be like. And,

whether secular or religious, they go to varying lengths and means to promote their world view.

Some take a passive approach, simply making changes to their own lifestyle—including their buying habits and the organizations they support. Others are more vocal, more active—raising money, organizing events, staging protests and targeting individuals, corporations or institutions.

For some, the protection of the environment is their cause. They envision a pristine world in which there is no air, ground or water pollution. To that end, organizations are formed, and millions of dollars are spent to identify, target and hold responsible, by any means (within or outside the constraints of the law), those who pollute the earth. Governments are lobbied to create agencies to oversee and regulate what can and cannot be released into the air, rivers, lakes and oceans or poured out onto the ground. Treaties between nations are sought to bring a worldwide effort to bear.

Others envision a world in which no trees are ever cut down, no animal habitat is ever destroyed and man no longer encroaches on nature. To bring this about, they even resort to such tactics as living in trees in order to prevent them from being cut down, or destroying multi-million-dollar developments to protect animal habitats.

Some want to make the world a better place by bringing an end to world hunger, the death penalty, animal cruelty, racial injustice, economic injustice and so on. And of those who do, many simply see it as their duty as those, according to one source, “belonging to a larger family of life, with which [they] have shared [their] evolutionary process” (*Ibid.*).

A Higher Sense of Duty

There is also a growing number who believe they have a higher “sense of duty or calling” to battle national and world troubles. They too see the overwhelming issues facing the inhabitants of earth and want it to be a better place. Believing in a Creator, “Christians”

know that this present world's state of affairs is not what God intended. Motivated by their faith, they feel that they have a right and a responsibility to be involved in the world around them—an involvement including community, social and political action.

These individuals read from the book of Genesis, and understand that “the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to *dress it and to keep it*” (2:15), not to *pollute or destroy* it. They know that while mankind was given “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26), he was not supposed to wipe them from the face of the earth. Indeed, some want the Christian religion, as an advocate of a “God of love,” to speak loudly and to clearly condemn the abuse of, and cruelty toward, our “fellow creatures.”

Still, while sometimes working toward common goals with “secularists,” professing Christians often find themselves at odds with them, because their world view is different. For professing Christians, the concerns of declining morality, legalized abortion, acceptance and embracing of alternative lifestyles, attacks on traditional Christianity and the traditional family often take center stage—issues for which many “secularists” are often on the opposing side.

Fervently believing that a better, more “godly” world can be accomplished through their individual and combined efforts, many churchgoers are taking a much more active role. Galvanizing through like-minded organizations and using the power of the Internet, Christian activists are determined to change the world. They believe that *they* possess the cure for a sick and ailing civilization.

Many are concerned by what they see as an effort by some to “[do] everything in [their] power to restrict religious expression, and literally suck God out of every [facet] of public life” (www.geocities.com/stokjok0/). Cited as proof are the following examples: prayer being taken out of pub-

lic schools; the Ten Commandments ordered taken down from the walls of public buildings or removed from public places along with other Christian religious symbols; the Bible largely banned from schools; and, most recently, what is viewed as an attack on Christmas.

As a result, counter-lawsuits, candlelight vigils and demonstrations are staged in an effort to counter this threat. Or, as a counter-effort, other “non-Christian” religious symbols are targeted. One Christian activist, defending the Ten Commandments monument at the Fargo, North Dakota City Hall, sought the removal of a statue of Themis (a Greek goddess) from the top of the County Courthouse on the grounds that it was also a religious symbol (*Grand Forks Herald*).

Witnessing the present-day holocaust of abortion moves others to focus on the agencies, professionals and individuals who provide or seek those services. One activist declares, “Christians must be willing to stand up for the 4,000 babies who are aborted daily...abortion will end only when Christians care enough to take a public and vocal stand for the unborn” (www.gatherinhisname.com/briefs/248.html). Believing that the ends justify the means, some have even gone to the extreme of bombing clinics or taking the lives of abortion providers. Jesus Christ said that there would be those who would take the lives of others, thinking that they do God's service (John 16:2).

Of course, the concerns over alternative lifestyles, moral decay and the attack on the traditional family bring the same efforts and response.

Increasingly, evangelical leaders are urging their followers to become more active in the political system. In this way, they can install “godly” men or women into office and change the moral compass of the nation. They believe that they could then be able to more effectively lobby government bodies to enact or change laws to bring about the return of a “Christian nation.” Indeed, the recent U.S. presidential election was seen by Christian

conservatives as a great victory, since they feel they have now installed “God's man” into office. Many may feel that the tide has finally turned in their favor. (To learn more about what God's Word says about voting, read our booklet *Should Christians VOTE?*)

Do They Have the Answers?

Man has tried every conceivable form of government, organization, religion and movement to bring about a utopian world. Yet, that world still eludes him. Far from solving local, national or world troubles, man's woes only escalate, becoming more complex with each passing year.

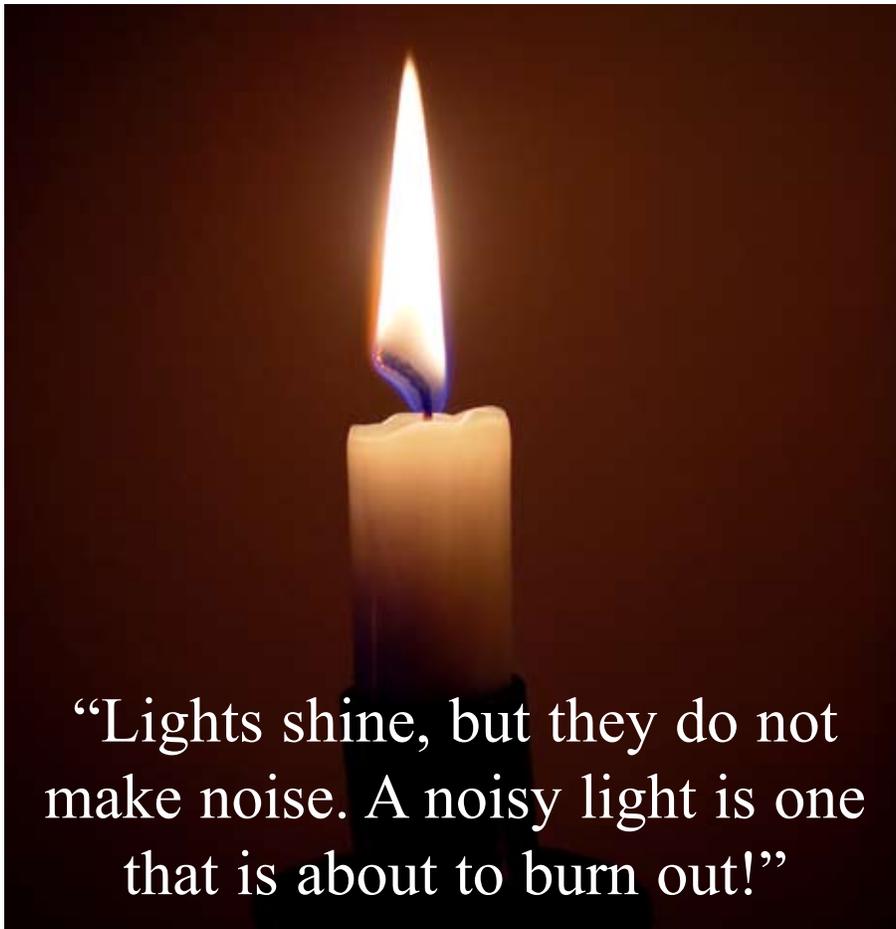
Why?

As the prophet Jeremiah wrote, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (10:23). Man, cut off from the true God, simply *does not know* how to live. He simply does not have the answers to the very problems he has created. He does not know the way that brings true peace, happiness, prosperity, abundance and every good thing. Almost 6,000 years of human history show this to be the case!

But can Christian activists fix the world? Should a Christian *try*? Just what should a *true* follower of Jesus Christ do?

When on trial for His life, Jesus spoke these words: “My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight...but now is My kingdom not from [here]” (John 18:36). Christ clearly said that His kingdom is not of or derived from this world—and neither are His *true* servants! Of them, He said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14, 16).

This present evil world belongs to—is owned by—the *god* of this world, Satan the devil (II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9; Matt. 4:8-9; Gal. 1:4), and Christ is not trying to fix it. This society, which man has built under the sway of the devil, began long ago in the Garden of Eden. It started when



“Lights shine, but they do not make noise. A noisy light is one that is about to burn out!”

the first humans chose to rebel against their Maker and Supreme Educator and to follow Satan instead.

Today’s world is built on a wrong, faulty foundation. It cannot stand. It cannot be fixed! No amount of activism on anyone’s part can save or change it. Instead, it must be totally torn down and replaced with the coming kingdom—government—of God, which Christ will bring at His Second Coming (Rev. 11:15-18). This is the *only* solution to *all* of the problems facing mankind. And it is what Christ alone will do! At that time, He will deal with and judge all of those left alive after the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:22) who damaged the earth (vs. 21-31).

True Christians are called out of this world—out of its ways, organizations, systems, religions, practices and politics, and they do not participate in them (I John 2:15-17; Rev. 18:4). Rather, they are AMBASSADORS for Christ (II Cor. 5:20) and are in training to rule with Him when He returns to the earth.

(Rev. 1:6; 5:10). As such, they represent (as does Christ) that coming world-ruling government. Ambassadors of that government do not engage or entangle themselves in the affairs of this world. They are lights—shining examples of true Christianity. They live God’s Word and practice it in all areas of their personal lives, following *every* example of Jesus Christ. Understand. Lights shine, but they do not make noise. A noisy light is one that is about to burn out!

What Should They Do?

But does this mean that true Christians must turn a blind eye to all the pain and suffering of their fellow man? Do they close their eyes to world troubles and do nothing? Doesn’t serving a God of love and having His love in them mean that they should do something? If so, what?

Yes, the love of God *should* motivate His true servants to desire to help individuals in need under certain circumstances. Notice Christ’s words:

“For you have the poor with you always, and whensoever you will you may do them good” (Mark 14:7). Christ knew that, as long as man would do things his *own* way, there would always be those in need and that society would always face insoluble problems.

Christians are admonished to “not be weary in well doing...[and] as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, [but] *especially* unto them who are of the *household of faith*” (Gal. 6:9-10). Christians can do “good unto all men” when there is *truly* a need, when the opportunity may arise directly in their presence—when *your* neighbor’s house is on fire. But they also know that their *first* responsibility is to those of “the household of faith” and their own family (I Tim. 5:8).

If they see “a *brother* or *sister*... naked, and destitute of daily food,” Christians cannot simply say to them, “Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled,” and neglect to offer them the things that they need (Jms. 2:15-16). Yet, neither can they support “fix-the-world” programs that are purely the efforts of men in a world cut off from God (Isa. 59:2), and are, at best, comparable to applying band-aids on cancer. They simply will not work!

God’s servants “sigh and cry” (Ezek. 9:4) over what they see happening in the world. They pray fervently, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10), understanding that it is the only *true* solution that will last for eternity. They give their time, energy, efforts and contributions in support of the *true* Work of God that is taking the good news of the coming kingdom of God as a witness to all the world and helping to prepare Spirit-begotten sons of God to qualify for rulership in that kingdom.

You too can support that great Work!

When Christ does return, His true servants will *actively* take part in the only solution to all of man’s woes. That time is just ahead! (To learn more about this soon-coming, world-ruling government, read our booklet *What is the KINGDOM OF GOD?*) □



New Year's “Resolutions”

What do they mean—
and will they be kept?

Most have made a number of New Year's resolutions throughout their lives. Yet, practically every resolution is broken a short time after being made. Why is this failure in achieving resolutions so common?

ONCE AND FOR ALL, Frank decided that he was going to quit smoking. In late December, he gathered a list of goals he had tried to achieve last year but didn't accomplish: quit smoking, lose weight and drink less alcohol. Unlike the past few years, Frank was sure that he would be successful in fulfilling his list of New Year's resolutions. "This year," he told himself, "it will be different."

But by the middle of February, Frank again found himself drinking heavily, smoking a pack of cigarettes

a day, and even more overweight due to the holidays. He discovered that human “steam,” or willpower, was not enough to drive his mind and body to comply with his desire to change.

Regardless of how positive he had been about achieving his goals, Frank had *again* failed to accomplish his resolutions for the year and was back in the same destructive behavior that he was so accustomed to.

The same is true with most people today. Over 88 percent of Americans will make at least one “resolution” at the start of the year. Of these resolutions, the most common are: (1) lose weight, (2) save or earn more money, (3) quit smoking, (4) spend more time with family, (5) maintain a budget, (6) find a better job, (7) eat better, (8) become more organized, (9) exercise more, and (10) become a better person. While these are all goals that one should strive for—with 88 percent of Americans setting out to accomplish them each year—less than 20 percent are successful in attaining success in *even one* of their resolutions.

Why this recurring reality for most people today? Why the pervasive lack of control in conquering problems such as alcoholism, smoking, consuming an unhealthy diet, laziness, gambling, lying, being overweight, etc.? Additionally, why the sudden urge for people to try to make changes in their lives at this one point of the year?

A Brief Look at New Year’s Resolutions

Most people never question their actions or beliefs, generally accepting long-established traditions as the standard. Few seek to understand the origin of things. They choose instead to follow common practices without question, doing what everyone else does because it is convenient. Likewise, most people do not know where the custom of New Year’s resolutions originated.

Historians track the origin of this custom to the ancient Babylonians, who used the new year to try to make amends for their wrongdoings of the past year. The New Year’s celebration originated around 2000 B.C. in Mesopotamia. Using various events

(such as the spring or autumn equinox, or the winter or summer solstice) to determine the date of when the year began, other cultures soon followed suit in celebrating their humanly-devised “first day of the year.” For example: Egypt’s new year came not long after the summer solstice; the Phoenicians and Persians began their new year with the autumn equinox (September 21); the Celts celebrated the new year on November 1; and until the 5th century B.C., the Greeks observed their new year on the winter solstice (December 21).

New Year’s celebrations included elaborate parties and merrymaking, as well as the custom of making resolutions for the upcoming year, attempting a “fresh start.” Notice: “Many ancient peoples...performed rituals to do away with the past and purify themselves for the new year. For example, some people put out the fires they were using and started new ones” (*World Book*, 2002).

One of the most common resolutions in ancient Babylon was to return all borrowed farming equipment. Additionally, depending on the culture, various gods were worshipped on that day and asked to bless the upcoming year. From these early traditions, the custom of New Year’s resolutions was passed down through generations, becoming the tradition that so many participate in today.

However, contrary to the common belief of not questioning “the normal,” we must determine whether following such a custom is correct. Although practiced by most of the world, are these traditions acceptable to God? Notice what Christ said of such humanly-devised traditions: “...in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...full well you *reject* the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:7, 9). God’s words clearly explain His views of such customs.

To learn more about the history of New Year’s Day and the origin of its customs, read our article “WHY CHRISTIANS DON’T CELEBRATE NEW YEAR’S.”

Is it Wrong to Want to Change?

One cannot help but ask, “What is the harm in wanting to change negative aspects of my life?” There is nothing wrong with aspiring to improve oneself. This desire to overcome weaknesses and problems is a proper attribute. However, it is a mindset that one should have *all year long*—actively trying to overcome *every day*—not just starting on January 1st and lasting just a few days at best.

The mentality of waiting to address a certain problem at a particular point of the year *is* wrong and sets the person up for failure. Why? Because the person holds on to a particular weakness or habit that is already a part of his routine, further ingraining it in his behavior. Quite often, once the person finds that he has fallen back into old habits, he continues in them, deciding to wait for next year to again try to overcome the problem. This reasoning prolongs the vicious cycle of failed resolutions, which will again commence the following year and the year after that.

Ironically, most people set out to overcome a problem in a day or two, although they have spent a great deal of time establishing the bad habit. These goals are shattered shortly after being made because it is very hard to change one’s negative attributes and because there is a missing element in the person’s life.

Change Is Difficult

Why is it so hard for people to change their habits and attain success in their resolutions? Because change is *difficult!*

Jesus Christ explained “...for wide is the gate, and broad [easy] is the way, that leads to destruction, and *many* there be which go in thereat: because strait [difficult] is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). Again, change is difficult. That is why so many people avoid trying to change their behavior.

At some point, everyone has had to address a bad habit. Most understand how difficult it can be

to overcome such habits. Often, the individual will not even recognize the habit until someone brings it to his attention—and removing these subtleties from one’s everyday routine is a struggle.

Similarly, New Year’s resolutions are desires to *immediately* overcome certain habits that have perhaps taken *years* to establish. This is very hard to accomplish. In fact, overcoming is a lifelong struggle, and, because change is uncomfortable and sometimes even painful, most people avoid it. For those who do try to change, an accidental slip-up is sometimes viewed as total failure, instead of an opportunity to learn, grow and to strive harder to succeed. This attitude, unconsciously, is an excuse for the person to return to familiarity—his bad habit.

Why do people make “changes” at just one time of the year? Why do people soon go back to their old habits, deciding to try again next year? Why do people follow each other’s lead in failure—not questioning their true motives and beliefs, or the traditions they follow? The answer to these questions is the same: because it is an easy alternative!

People will almost always choose to do what comes naturally. Realize that you have spent your entire life doing as you please, yielding to your human nature and establishing behavior patterns—whether good or bad. A *habit* is defined as “a recurrent, often unconscious pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition.” Just like anything else that you do for a long time, you are probably very good at doing this!

Habits are often so ingrained that they seem impossible to overcome. Though overcoming is difficult and will not happen overnight, it is far from impossible! Christ explained, “...with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

The Missing Element to True Change

There is a major element missing in most people’s lives that would help them achieve success in overcoming

bad habits, reaching goals and providing strength in times of doubt and weakness. This power, while absent in so many, is present in a few individuals. What is this element?—God’s Holy Spirit!

A Christian is one who is led by God’s Spirit. Upon repentance (defined as true, lasting change from one’s old ways) and baptism, the Holy Spirit enters the individual (Acts 2:38). This Spirit in the newly converted mind empowers the individual with the drive to change habits and overcome faults. Human “steam” or “willpower” cannot compare with God’s Spirit working within an individual. Notice: “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of *power*, and of love and of a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7). The apostle Paul also wrote, “my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the *power* of His might” (Eph. 6:10).

Individual determination will only take you so far. You need the “Spirit of power” to actually change who you are. People try to change their lives in various ways. Yet, they almost always find it impossible to change long-established habits because they do not have God’s Spirit driving them forward.

The Greek word for “power” is *dunamis*. It means, “special miraculous power or force.” Notice what Paul recorded: “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, *through the power of the Holy Spirit*...that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge...” (Rom. 15:13-14). God gives His Holy Spirit to those who truly desire to receive it—to those who set out to obey Him!

Jesus Christ recognized the power of God’s Spirit and declared that He could do nothing by His own strength (John 5:30). He understood that only through God’s power in Him—the Holy Spirit—could all things be done (14:10).

This power is unlimited and is sufficient to defeat any sin, problem or attitude—no matter how long you have been burdened by it or how serious

it may be. There is a way to stop the endless cycle of failed resolution after failed resolution, and this solution is available to you *if* you truly want and seek it.

Paul wrote, “...be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). That message is for you—God wants to fill you with this dynamic power!

Remember: “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). If you have been struggling with overcoming old habits and problems, do not settle for the repeated failure of shallow New Year’s resolutions. Instead, go to God in prayer and ask Him to intervene in your life and give you His power.

Then, and only then, will you find *lasting* success in overcoming your habits and problems! (You may wish to read our article “You Can Overcome and Prevent Sin.”) □

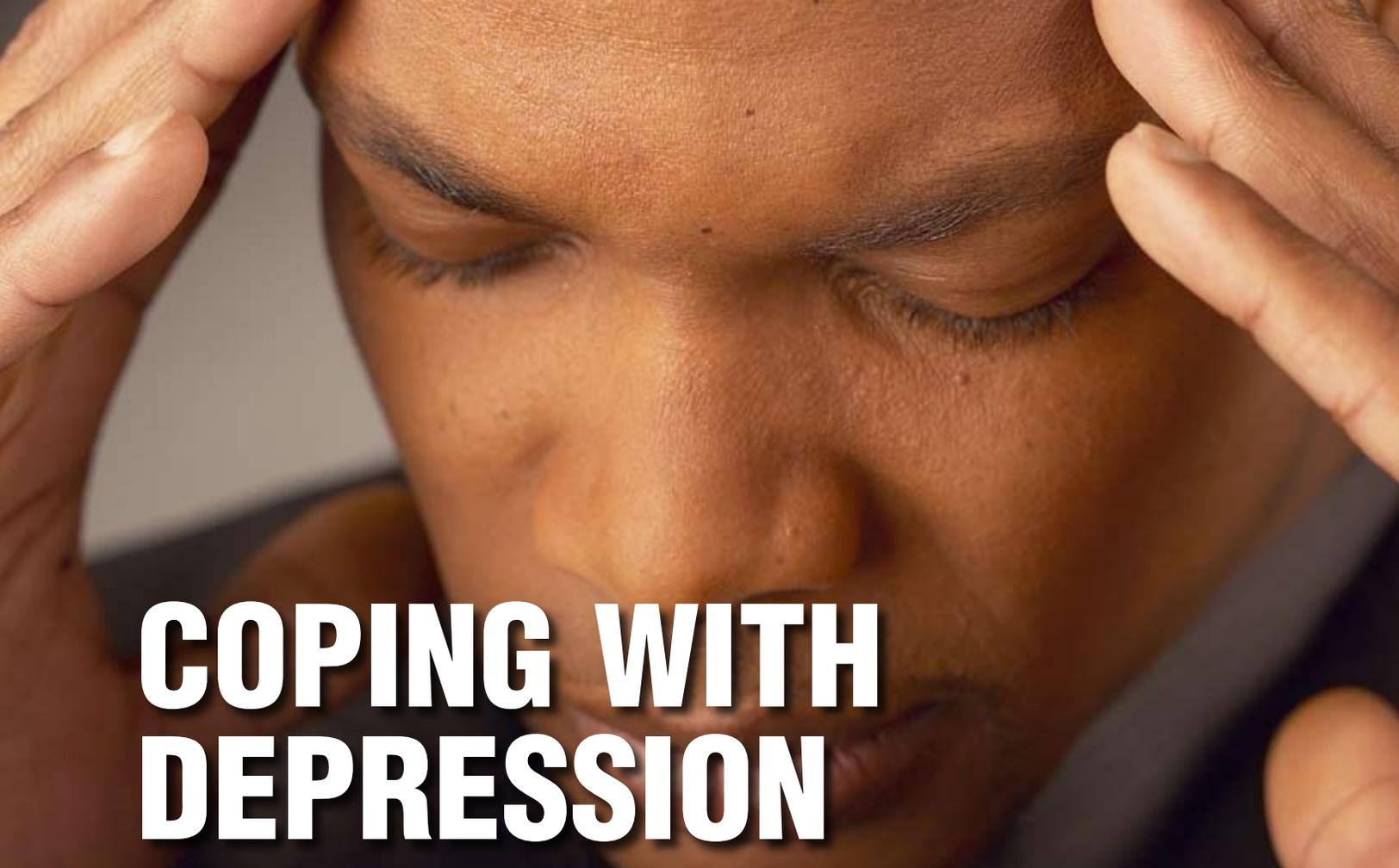
PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding” (32:8). This is a plain statement. Through Job, God revealed that men possess a kind of spirit, called the “spirit in man.” Fully understanding this spirit requires an examination of the other scriptures that describe it.

But before looking into the truth of this matter—before searching to see what the Bible says about this human spirit—one must understand and accept what the Bible does not say.

To do this, one must examine the most popular fallacy—the idea that man is born with an immortal soul—taught and believed by countless millions about this subject, and this is thoroughly addressed in our booklet *What Science Will Never Discover About YOUR MIND*. This booklet will open your understanding to things you could never imagine—and they have been right there, hidden in the Bible all along. □



COPING WITH DEPRESSION

Today, depression has become a widespread problem. Why are people unable to find true happiness? Why do they look for it in seemingly all the wrong places? And why do society's proposed solutions fail?

BY CHARLES E. HERZOG

ONE OF THE MOST common illnesses to have plagued mankind is depression. It has resulted in broken families, loss of productivity in the workplace, and addictive behavior, among other problems. Those who suffer from depression often feel a sense of hopelessness and despair. Why?

The *National Institute of Mental Health* (NIMH) states, "In any given 1-year period, 9.5 percent of the population, or about 18.8 million American adults, suffer from

a depressive illness. The economic cost for this disorder is high, but the cost in human suffering cannot be estimated. Depressive illnesses often interfere with normal functioning and cause pain and suffering not only to those who have a disorder, but also to those who care about them. Serious depression can destroy family life as well as the life of the ill person. But much of this suffering is unnecessary."

"Most people with a depressive illness do not seek treatment..." (www.nimh.nih.gov).

The above article goes on to

describe different treatments that are common in today's society. But do any of these treatments actually help? Or are they merely treating the *effects* of depression without addressing the *cause*?

What Is Depression?

Depression is a psychological (mental/emotional) disorder, which involves the moods and thoughts of a person. There are different levels of severity, ranging from mild (feeling down after a mild disappointment) to severe (a lifelong debilitating illness, which can completely cripple a person).

Depression can affect several different areas of one's life, including sleeping and eating habits, resulting in peripheral problems associated with improper diets and irregular sleep. It can also lead to the abuse of alcohol and the use of mind-altering drugs, persistent sadness, anxiety, feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, guilt, helplessness and worthlessness. There may be a loss of interest and pleasure in hobbies and activities. Many experience

decreased energy, increased fatigue, difficulty remembering, concentrating or making decisions, restlessness and irritability. Some even suffer from persistent headaches, digestive disorders and chronic pain.

These symptoms can eventually lead to the loss of employment, family and friends. But often, severe depression leads to thoughts of suicide. Feeling that he has come to the lowest point in his life, a person can conclude, "All is lost" and "Life is not worth living anymore."

Most Everyone Affected

Depression is a universal problem, plaguing every human being at some point or another in life. Occasionally, everyone has a "blue" day. Feeling slightly discouraged about certain circumstances is normal in today's society. It can be a response to a minor setback, the loss of a loved one or the loss of a job. Whatever the situation, most people will address the *effect* of their depression and not the *CAUSE*.

According to the *NIMH*, "Women experience depression about twice as often as men. Many hormonal factors may contribute to the increased rate of depression in women—particularly such factors as menstrual cycle changes, pregnancy, miscarriage, postpartum period, pre-menopause, and menopause. Many women also face additional stresses such as responsibilities both at work and home, single parenthood, and caring for children and for aging parents."

The *NIMH* further states, "Although men are less likely to suffer from depression than women, 3 to 4 million men in the United States are affected by the illness. Men are less likely to admit to depression, and doctors are less likely to suspect it. The rate of suicide in men is four times that of women, though more women attempt it. In fact, after age 70, the rate of men's suicide rises, reaching a peak after age 85."

"Depression can also affect the physical health in men differently from women. A new study shows that, although depression is associated with

an increased risk of coronary heart disease in both men and women, only men suffer a high death rate."

Even children can suffer from depression. A child's life should be without worries—carefree. But this is not the case in today's society. With divorces increasing, rising peer pressure at school, etc., what appeared years ago as the carefree child's life is no more.

"Only in the past two decades has depression in children been taken very seriously. The depressed child may pretend to be sick, refuse to go to school, cling to a parent, or worry that the parent may die. Older children may sulk, get into trouble at school, be negative, grouchy, and feel misunderstood. Because normal behaviors vary from one childhood stage to another, it can be difficult to tell whether a child is just going through a temporary 'phase' or is suffering from depression" (Ibid.).

How can one break free from the bonds of depression? Is there any hope?

Hiding the Causes by Masking the Effects

As mentioned earlier, society treats the effects of depression in several different ways. The most common is through medication. Dozens of drugs are prescribed to those who need a "quick fix." Often, as with so many others, these drugs cause side effects, for which are then prescribed other drugs to cover the side effects of those drugs—and the endless cycle continues.

Some drugs have such adverse side effects that they are blamed for even more bizarre behavior than that for which they were prescribed!

Biblical Examples of Depression

Depression has a very long history. The Bible records examples of extraordinary men who suffered bouts of depression. For example, carefully consider the following four men through whom God worked in Old Testament times.

Job was a perfect and upright man.

After going through a series of trials, he asked God to take his life. Notice: "But Job answered and said, Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up...Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God *to destroy me*; that He would let loose His hand, and *cut me off*! Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One" (Job 6:1-3, 8-10).

Moses also experienced feelings of depression. When the people of Israel were constantly complaining about the manna, and wanted meat to eat, he said to God, "Wherefore have you afflicted Your servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in Your sight, that You lay the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that You should say unto me, Carry them in your bosom, as a nursing father bears the sucking child, unto the land which You swore unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? For they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if You deal thus with me, *kill me*, I pray You, out of hand, if I have found favor in Your sight; and let me not see my wretchedness" (Num. 11:11-15).

The prophet Elijah wanted God to take his life when the wicked Jezebel sought to kill him: "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belonged to Judah, and left his servant there. But he

himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself *that he might die*; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, *take away my life*; for I am not better than my fathers" (I Kgs. 19:1-4).

Then consider the prophet Jonah, who was angry that God had mercy on the people of Nineveh and changed His mind about destroying the city. This led to discouragement and depression on Jonah's part: "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray you, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that You are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repent You of the evil. Therefore now, O LORD, *take, I beseech You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live*" (Jonah 4:1-3).

Each one of these men, having bouts of depression, asked God to take his life from him. But Hebrews 11:34 shows that they did go on to overcome their desire to die. God helped all of them through their depressed state. They "quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, *out of weakness were made strong*, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

An Example From Recent History

Even some of the great men of our time have fought depression. Winston Churchill was one such individual. As war ravaged Europe, Mr. Churchill was powerless to do much about it. He admitted that many times he could not even get out of bed because the "depth of the depression" had overtaken him. His wife stated that "I thought he would die of grief."

Mr. Churchill understood how important it was to not give up the fight during World War II. He understood how different the world would be if Nazi Germany defeated Britain, and that he had to remain strong in order to defeat Hitler. As the entire

nation looked to him for strength, he knew that he could not appear discouraged. He forced himself out of the depths of depression, knowing that others were depending on him.

In the article "Churchill: The Man," Anthony Storr wrote, "His own name for depression was the 'black dog.' In the course of his life he experienced many reverses. Disappointments which might have embittered and defeated even a man who was not afflicted by the black dog. Yet his dogged determination, his resilience and his courage enabled him, until old age, to conquer his own enemy, just as he defeated the foes of the country he loved so well."

Depression on the Rise

Typically, during the winter months, there is an increase in the number of people who suffer from depression. Why? Some may argue that it is the length of daylight in a day. Although studies have shown that people are affected by sunlight, is this the biggest reason?

Can the real answer lie in the fact that this world has separated itself from the true God—the God of the Bible? Think for a moment. The Christmas season has just ended. Many people will feel that their expectations went unfulfilled.

Many people exceeded their credit limits. Now, they have accumulated a considerable amount of debt, which will take months to pay off. They are living unbalanced lifestyles—trying to "keep up with the Joneses," while going deeper into debt.

People who are constantly pursuing this life's ideals have no idea of what is about to happen (very shortly now) in their lives. Too many things get in their way, such as toys, hobbies and the pursuit of pleasures. After all the "fun," they have to deal with the hangover. And after the hangover has run its course, they realize that their problems have not disappeared, but are still there, and are even compounded.

But what is the true source of the problem?

The Cause of Depression

Typically, when people experience depression, they do not realize why. Because they are focused on the "here and now," and people and events in their "own little world," they fail to realize or consider the big picture. Where do these attitudes, feelings, motives and impulses come from?

The Bible reveals the answer. It talks about one who is "the prince of *the power of the air*" (Eph. 2:2), who deceives the *whole* world (Rev. 12:9) and stirs the spirits of humans, broadcasting attitudes, moods and impulses of selfishness, vanity, lust, greed, resentment, jealousy, envy, competition, strife, bitterness, violence, murder and war. People do not see Satan. They do not hear his voice. They do not know that these attitudes come from him. Unaware of Satan's ability to broadcast his attitudes, people absorb them until they become their normal attitude.

Depression is a *spiritual* problem and thus demands a *spiritual* solution. God's Word reveals the solutions to spiritual problems. Hosea 4:6 states, "My people are destroyed for LACK OF KNOWLEDGE: because you have REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest to Me: seeing you have forgotten the LAW OF YOUR GOD, I will also forget your children."

The reason so many suffer from depression is that the world has forgotten the true God. It has taken upon itself to decide right from wrong, rejecting God's laws, statutes and judgments. And God's Word shows that when His laws are broken, there are penalties.

Referenced earlier, Numbers 11:14 provides two key points as to why people suffer from depression. Notice what Moses said to God: "*I am not able* to bear all this people *alone*, because it is too heavy for me."

The first indicator of Moses' frame of mind is the term "I am not able"—in other words, "I can't." When someone says, "I can't," they are, in effect, saying, "I won't." This type of attitude limits one's ability to *overcome* his

fears and despair. For some, these feelings become so large in their minds that they are unable to even begin to *address* their fears.

The second point is summed up in the word “alone.” Those who suffer from depression often feel alone. Even with people all around them, they can feel left out.

However, one must have an attitude of more than just “I’ll try” or “I think I can” in order to be able to address and overcome depression. In order to overcome any obstacle—including feelings of depression—one must face it head-on, with the attitude reflected by the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:13: “I *can* do *all things* through Christ *which strengthens me*.” Those who are trying to please God will be able to tap this power.

There Is a Solution!

The Creator of the universe never intended human lives to be empty, depressed or unhappy. If you suffer from bouts of depression, turn to God for the answers to your problems. If you are unable to “see yourself out of this,” God *can*—and with His help, you *can* succeed! As with any caring and loving parent, God the Father is concerned about your well-being and happiness.

You may feel trapped by your feelings of depression—not knowing where to turn. Yet, Christ said, “you shall know the *truth* and the *truth* shall make you FREE” (John 8:32). It is spiri-

tually revealed knowledge that will set you free—free from depression and fear! Turn to God’s Word for answers to your depression.

Few people have suffered as much as the apostle Paul (see II Corinthians 11:23-33). Yet, he did not become depressed by his afflictions. Notice his reaction: “We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day (II Cor. 4:8-9, 16, NKJV).

Be prepared for setbacks and other trials along the road to recovery. But never forget that God will deliver you: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivers him out of them all” (Psa. 34:19). Paul also took comfort in this: “Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: *but out of them all the Lord delivered me*” (II Tim. 3:11).

Jesus Christ came to earth with a message about the GOVERNMENT OF GOD, to be established at His Second Coming! At that time, God’s Way will be practiced by all, and fear and depression will at last be conquered.

While this magazine points toward that World to Come, you do not have to wait until then to address the depression you may be facing and to experience the joy that God intends for you. Christ said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have *peace*. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good *cheer*; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Also, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My *joy* might remain in you, and that your *joy* might be full” (15:11).

Be determined to daily consider the following scripture: “This is the day which the LORD has made; we will *rejoice* and be *glad* in it” (Psa. 118:24). Also determine to apply the lesson that Paul learned: “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be *content*” (Phil. 4:11).

Determine to turn yourself around and to allow God to fulfill His purpose for you in this life! He does not want your life to be full of despair and depression, but rather one filled with joy and supreme happiness. Our article “You Can Live the ABUNDANT LIFE!” and our booklet *The Laws to SUCCESS* will show you how to achieve the success and happiness that God wants for every human being—including YOU! □

This article should not be construed as a complete solution for any mental health problem, and it is not intended to discourage people who have a mental health condition from seeking appropriate counseling or treatment from an experienced mental health care provider.

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TSUNAMIS

and the Message They Bring

DECEMBER 31, 2004: Wailing mothers clutch dead babies. Bodies are entangled in fences and caught in treetops. In Thailand, a little boy visiting from Sweden walks among survivors carrying a sign that reads, “Missing parents and two brothers.” And, as the ocean waters continue to spew out the dead, beaches that once thrived with villages and seaside resorts have turned into makeshift open-air morgues.

Days earlier, the most powerful earthquake in 40 years triggered a tsunami that rippled across the Indian Ocean, causing death and devastation along the shores of southern and eastern Asia and east Africa.

After the first wave surge struck, many people rushed to the strangely water-vacant shore to grab fish that had been left on the beach. But all were caught by surprise when a larger set of waves came crashing down upon them.

“Initially we just heard a bang, a really loud bang,” a British vacationer said. “We initially thought it was a terrorist attack, then the wave came and we just kept running upstairs to get on as high ground as we could.”

Massive walls of water—some two and three stories tall!—smashed into bungalows and hotels, hurled fishing boats onto coastal roads and

swept away cars, animals and people. Snorkelers were dragged along the coral floor and washed up onto the beach, while sunbathers were pulled into the sea. In an instant, family members and friends were gone. One woman lost all eleven of her children, who were on the beach at that time.

As survivors search for missing loved ones among the stench of hundreds of corpses rotting along the shore—and buried in the sand—there are other obstacles they must hurdle. Food will be scarce, as will shelter. The bodies of humans, dogs, fish, cats and goats threaten to contaminate drinking water. Disease may become rampant. Help from other countries may not arrive in time.

In Sri Lanka, where a 30-foot wave submerged the coastal town of Galle, the country’s president said, “We are not well equipped to deal with a disaster of this magnitude because we have never known a disaster like this.”

Caught Without Warning

The 9.0-magnitude earthquake struck six miles under the seabed, off the west coast of northern Sumatra. A 620-mile section of a geological plate shifted, setting off several aftershocks, ranging from almost 6 to 7.3 in magnitude. According to the *New York Post*, scientists estimate that the quake was so powerful that it was nearly equal to the force of one million atomic bombs!

The seafloor suddenly shifted up approximately 20 to 50 feet, pushing the overlaying water, with immense force, triggering a tsunami (a Japanese word

meaning “harbor wave”). Columns of water thousands of feet deep traveled beneath the ocean’s surface at nearly 600 mph—nearly the typical cruising speed of a Boeing 737. As the tsunami reached Asian and African shorelines, massive wave surges came crashing down upon the beaches of the entire Indian Ocean basin, where unsuspecting villagers and tourists were caught without warning.

Some geophysicists now know that the earthquake was so great that it caused the whole planet to vibrate, and that it even disturbed the earth’s rotation! Others scientists believe the quake caused the island of Sumatra to actually shift by as much as 100 feet! According to one U.S. geological expert, several small islands may have moved as much as 12.5 miles.

Currently, more than 155,000 people—and growing—are feared dead, with thousands still missing. In Indonesia, at least 94,000 are confirmed dead. India estimates that more than 9,479 are dead, with 5,796 still missing. Officials in Sri Lanka say that 47,062 people there have died, with one million residents left homeless. Nearly 5,000 are feared dead in Thailand, and the government expects its death toll to exceed 11,000. And up to half of all the dead are children. Disease epidemics, resulting from rotting bodies that contaminate water and food supplies, could cause the death toll to double.

The Aftermath

What may happen in the wake of this disaster is as frightening as the catastrophe that has already taken place. In

fact, an even larger disaster may happen next, turning the lives of millions from bad to worse.

Survivors are left facing the hopeless task of burying or burning the hundreds of corpses fast enough. And, with bloated, waterlogged bodies rotting in the streets—so many that drivers must steer around them—the potential for disease is enormous.

Doctors, aid workers and local citizenry are terrified of outbreaks of malaria and cholera. Many of the areas that were hit were poor and overpopulated, and are especially susceptible to the spread of disease. The fear of epidemics spreading like wildfire is very real, as millions try to cope with their devastating loss.

The World Responds

News photos have shocked and deeply saddened the world. Home videos of the disaster are being televised by the international news media, enabling viewers across the planet to watch in horror—over and over again—as the tsunami waves smash into unsuspecting tourists and villagers.

If an earthquake of this magnitude had struck on land, the damage would have been far more localized. The fact that the resulting tsunami struck eleven different nations—from Somalia in Eastern Africa to Indonesia—has caused the aid response to be a logistical nightmare.

A coalition of nations has formed to help those in dire need, offering hundreds of millions of dollars to the affected countries. Yet, the United Nations is asking for more, understanding that the potential for further disaster is imminent if action is not immediately taken. While the vast scope makes it very difficult to respond in a succinct manner, aid deployment is picking up speed.

With some survivors subsisting only on coconut milk, aid agencies are beginning to respond with food drops. Countries are also donating relief packages, tents, helicopters, sanitation materials, medical supplies, aid workers, medical and search-and-rescue teams, and more.

There are estimates that up to five million people are without the essentials needed for survival. From nation to nation, people are asking, “What can I do to help?” and “Is there anything else we can do?”

Others, closer to the chaos, have wondered why America and other nations have not responded fast enough.

Gifts Seen as Entitlements

Time and again, whenever natural disasters strike other countries, the United States of America, along with Britain, Canada and other nations of the West can always be counted on to provide aid and assistance. Yet, amazingly, the U.S. has been accused of

being “stingy” and not giving enough! It has been said that the greatest way to earn someone’s contempt is to give them too much. It appears that the more America gives, the more she is hated. The generosity of the U.S. and her close allies has become expected—viewed as entitlements!

So far, more than \$450 million has been raised or pledged for the relief efforts. The World Bank will divert another \$250 million from existing projects.

Due to obstacles such as civil war, lack of communication in desolate areas and lack of transportation, aid may not be distributed to those who need it most. In some cases, more than enough supplies are distributed to an area and are hoarded, creating shortages in other regions.

How long will the more affluent nations be able to help others before they are in need of help? Disasters can—and will—strike the West. God’s Word reveals that even greater earthquakes are on the horizon, bringing with them multiple aftershocks and tsunamis mankind has yet to experience!

The Greatest “Tsunami” Lies Ahead!

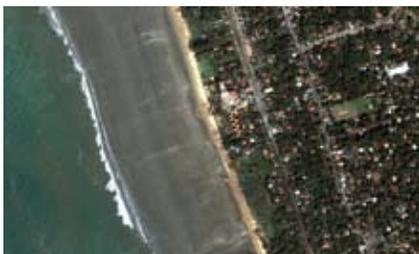
As aid agencies and governments rush to provide food, medicine, makeshift shelters and other relief—orchestrating the greatest global relief effort the

*Please see **Tsunami**, page 27*

NORMAL COASTLINE



WATER RECEDES BEFORE TSUNAMI



WATER RETURNS AFTER FIRST WAVE STRIKES



PHOTOS: DigitalGlobe



Numerous recent headlines suggest that sports violence is on the rise. Why? Is it just “part of the game”? Or is it an indication of something bigger?

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

IT STARTED ON the basketball court, with a foul that turned into a shoving match between two opposing players. At first, the scuffle seemed to subside as the two men were separated. But, with fans pelting athletes in the face with popcorn and cups of beer, fistfights broke out between athletes and spectators in the stands, which then spilled onto the court. Punches were thrown. Chairs and other objects were tossed. Police had to use pepper spray to get the situation under control.

What had started as a routine basketball game between the Detroit Pistons and the Indiana Pacers went down as one of the worst brawls in U.S. sports history. NBA commissioner David Stern described it as “shocking, repulsive, and inexcusable, a humiliation for everyone.” A basketball player for the Sacramento Kings said, “Soccer fights get brutal. People die in soccer fights, but this is the worst I’ve ever seen in the NBA.”

The November 19, 2004 incident resulted in the suspension of nine athletes, ranging from one game to 73 games (the remainder of the season). The suspended players collectively lost

approximately \$11.5 million of their annual salary.

The melee also yielded criminal charges. Prosecutors charged five players on one team with assault and battery, misdemeanor assault and battery, and felony assault. These charges can carry a penalty of three months in jail and a fine of up to \$500 to four years in prison. One player could face more time due to a prior criminal record. Seven fans also face assault charges.

The day after the incident, an American college football game turned into chaos. Police had to be brought in to end the violence.

And the following day, in Turkey, a sixteen-year-old was stabbed to death by another fan while watching a soccer match.

Clearly, violence in sports is becoming common, and fans can be just as guilty as the players. Just take a look at “hooliganism”—disorderly, aggressive and often violent behavior by spectators at sporting events. Gangs of rival fans arrange to meet at specific locations

before and after soccer matches to fight. England has the worst reputation for hooliganism, though other countries are struggling with the growing problem.

Many spectators show up at sporting events with one thing in mind—heckling the athletes.

Of course, most are there just to enjoy the game. However, if “their” team does not perform to their liking, they too can quickly become violent. People have a tendency to take the team’s performance *personally* and allow this to affect their lives.

Why is this happening? Has it always been this way? Will things ever return to “normal”?

A Mirror of Society

Sports writers, columnists and others have offered their opinions as to why the sudden burst of violence in sports. But have you considered that sports rage is a mirror of today’s society? There was a time when road rage did not exist. There was a time when the phenomenon known as “going postal” was unheard of. These, along with sports rage, are symptoms of a society that is becoming increasingly violent.

A brief look at our world reveals that people are consumed with material possessions. The image and idea of *self* is all-important. Many allow their thinking to be ruled by envy, greed, and the lust for power. People are so accustomed to the comforts of “the good life” that if these were taken away, they would not know how to continue living. Most would resort to any means necessary to ensure that they get what *they* want.

On December 16, 2004, an American woman viciously attacked another woman, cut open her womb and removed her baby. The alleged assailant had posed on the Internet as a customer for the victim’s dog-breeding business in order to arrange the rendezvous. It appears as though she had been plotting this horrible act for months. She had been announcing that she was due to give birth on the same day as her victim. After the crime, she took the baby across the border to her Kansas home and showed it to her neighbors

and friends—saying that the baby was her own. Incredible!

The woman wanted so desperately to have a baby that she stole another woman’s *unborn* baby! Slaughtering the baby’s mother like an animal, all that she could think of was herself. Unfortunately, events such as this are becoming more and more commonplace.

In his first inaugural address in 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower made the following statement: “A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both.”

President Eisenhower was correct. The natural result of valuing privileges (blessings) above principles (or laws) is that people will cease to be concerned about the needs and welfare of others. Notice what the Bible states about this: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt. 24:12). A cursory look at society will show this to be the case.

A More Gentle Time

A look back to the time of the early 1900s will reveal an altogether different attitude in society. Of course, violence was still an issue. However, people generally had concern for each other and were not completely consumed with themselves, as is the case today. Earning millions of dollars, driving fancy cars and being part of the latest fad were the furthest things from most people’s minds. There were more important things to consider, such as rearing children and providing for one’s family. To get an idea of what life was like in 1929, take notice of the following:

“Beans were a common meal and were often given to us by a farmer friend. We usually had lots of homemade cookies and cakes, too. But it was kind of great, going to family reunions and eating their ‘store bought’ cookies and bread. My mother would cook for hours and hours on a little wood-burning laundry stove.

“With all the canning my mother did from our garden, our weekly grocery bill wasn’t that big. We only bought the bare necessities.”

“Mostly I remember if it hadn’t been for my mother who was an excellent seamstress, and she seemed to find jobs here and there with the department stores, I don’t know how we would have made it, because my father was a common laborer, a factory worker, and there just wasn’t any jobs at that time.

“Sometimes during the winter... when the snow fell in Detroit they called for people that they wanted to shovel the snow, and of course everybody didn’t get hired—you just had to go out there and the foreman or whoever would be throwing the shovel and if you happened to catch it you’re hired. And so my father would go out there and on occasion he would be hired and earn a couple of dollars or so for the day’s work there” (www.michigan.gov).

People in those days learned to persevere by going through adversity. As a result, they developed character. Everyday life was a struggle, but they took each day as it came and were thankful for what they had. Coveting the “big life” was less of an issue. People had to deal with things that most people today do not understand. But through it all, they learned to appreciate the more important things in life.

During that time, sports were also different. People generally understood that it was just a game. Players were not grossly overpaid and were not elevated above the rest of society. Many athletes had part-time jobs during the off-season in order to supplement their incomes. The fans enjoyed the games for what they were, and the athletes just enjoyed playing. Contrast that with today.

Chronology of Sports Violence

If today’s sports could look into a mirror, it would see today’s *society*. As long as society is violent, sports will be violent. It is that simple. Take a look at any number of sporting events around the world, and you will find violence—fights, riots, beatings, bombings, and murders. Notice the following accounts:

March 17, 1955: Maurice Richard, a player for the Montreal Canadians,

had been suspended by NHL president Clarence Campbell. In a game against the Detroit Red Wings in Montreal, Mr. Campbell had a tear gas bomb thrown at him. The stadium was evacuated and the game forfeited. The violence was taken out onto St. Catherines Street. More than sixty arrests were made because of looting and breaking of windows.

The interesting part of this story is that the suspension was labeled as anti-French by the French-Canadian populace of Quebec. It was called the “Richard Riot” and became a slogan during Quebec’s independence movement.

1974, Cleveland Stadium, Ohio: Fans watching the Cleveland Indians play the Texas Rangers were only charged ten cents for a glass of beer—a definite recipe for disaster. Thousands of drunken fans later charged onto the field. Their purpose: Attack the umpires and players. They succeeded, and the game was forfeited.

1979, Comiskey Park, Chicago: A local DJ held an anti-disco promotion during a game between the Detroit Tigers and the Chicago White Sox. Any fan that showed up with a disco record was charged only ninety-eight cents for admission. The records were thrown into a box, placed in center field and blown up. A riot soon took place, with about 7,000 fans brawling and setting bonfires.

1980, Wembley Arena, United Kingdom: After Marvin Hagler knocked out Alan Minter to win the world middleweight boxing title, many of Minter’s supporters threw beer cans, bottles and other objects into the ring. Both the boxers and their handlers had to be escorted out by Scotland Yard.

1985, Heysel Stadium, Brussels: Liverpool soccer fans attacked rival supporters, who fled in panic. Trying to escape, they became trapped against a wall that collapsed, resulting in 39 deaths.

1993, Hamburg, Germany: Monica Seles, a tennis player, was stabbed by a fan of the opposing player, Steffi Graf, during the match. She survived but never regained her dominant status.

1994: A Colombian soccer player was shot outside a local bar in Medellin, after a game in which he mistakenly scored a goal for the opposing team.

2000: A Los Angeles Dodgers player was sitting in the bullpen when a fan stole his hat and hit him on the head. The player, along with several other players, went pouring into the stands.

2001: In a game against the Philadelphia Flyers, a player from the Toronto Maple Leafs wrestled with a fan, while he was in the penalty box. The athlete poured water over fans who were taunting him while he was in the box. A fan threw a punch at him; and when the glass panel that separated the two collapsed, he pulled the fan into the box.

November 20, 2004: A South Carolina versus Clemson college football game turned into chaos when a Clemson player kicked a South Carolina player in the head during a fourth-quarter brawl. The violence covered sixty yards of the playing field and needed police officers to bring it to an end.

As you can see, violence is a definite problem in the sports world. But one might ask the question, “Are these just isolated incidents?” Remember. *Society* is violent; therefore, we can conclude that this is happening more often than we might think. An investigation of various news sources will show this to be the case.

Athletes’ attitudes have changed as well. They are now paid ridiculous amounts of money and are treated as gods. The following are examples of the prevailing attitude in today’s sports world:

“I don’t pay attention to what people are saying. They don’t understand what is going on, as far as [being] a basketball player. The way I look at it, they don’t know nothing about me, they don’t know nothing about basketball. They never played before.”

“The guys in the locker room are the ones I am playing for.” This was stated after a basketball player was booed for calling a seven-million-dollar-a-year-contract offer “insulting” and said, “I got a family to feed.” He

said that he was being “disrespected” by the team that he was playing for.

Man’s Solutions

What can be done about all of this violence? Are there solutions? There *are* solutions that *man* proposes, and there are solutions that *God* will implement.

When addressing any issue in life, one must seek out and find the causes. In the long run, treating only the effects will not solve anything. If the cause is fixed, then naturally, the effect will also be fixed. Let’s take a look at various solutions to the violence that are proposed by a newspaper.

■ Student groups who incite rival players should be kept at least fifty yards away from the opposing team.

■ Fans should find a happy medium between rooting for their teams versus being caught on an emotional roller coaster.

■ Fans that are bent on mayhem should not be allowed to attend any more games until they have “vowed to clean up their act.”

■ Coaches should pull from a game any player who engages in any “cheap shot” that results in pain or injury.

■ Stadiums should implement a “fan code of ethics.”

■ Parents should show some responsibility and monitor what their children do in their spare time.

■ We should watch less MTV and violent movies and watch more TV Land and TMC.

■ Schools should crack down on vulgar and unsportsmanlike chants.

■ We should remember an 11-word phrase: “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” (Notice Christ’s exact words in Luke 6:31: “And as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise.”)

Stop for a moment and consider the ideas that you have just read. Do they sound like solutions that will work? Yes. However, we must venture back to the cause-and-effect principle. Are man’s solutions addressing the cause? No! They are aimed at the

effect—the effect of HUMAN NATURE! The solutions that people devise will not—cannot—work.

The Source of All Rage and Violence

People have many ideas about the reason for violence and offer a host of theories too numerous to mention in this article. They err by rejecting the true foundation of all knowledge—the Bible. In this Book (actually, a collection of books) are the answers to life's biggest questions. However, most shrug it off as a collection of fairy tales. But those who are serious about finding the real answers to the source of all of society's ills will want to investigate what it says. Notice:

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

Fights—violence—come from lusts raging inside. All human beings have acquired this violent *human nature*. We see something that we want and we fight for it. A supposed “injustice” is done to us and we fight about it. When things do not go our way, we “lose it.”

But where did human nature come from?

Notice what God's Word says: “Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the *prince of the power of the air*, the *spirit* that now works in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph. 2:2-3).

This is referring to Satan the devil. Like a radio station broadcasting its signal into every home, Satan (whose name means “adversary”) broadcasts wrong thoughts, attitudes, and desires into the mind of every human being—

regardless of whether or not one is aware of it. Thus, Satan's nature *is* human nature.

Of course, most people do not believe this, or that the devil even exists. The Bible reveals why: “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which *deceives the whole world*: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:9).

Satan is the ultimate cause of this world's violence and destructive habits. People neglect the reality of Satan and the words that the Bible contains. The result is growing evils and ignorance of solutions to this world's rapidly increasing problems.

With violent attitudes such as sports rage, road rage and others occurring so frequently, it is no wonder that Jesus Christ compared our world today with that of Noah's time (Matt. 24:37). Here is a look at those days:

“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen. 6:5, 12).

Take a look around you. Mankind is quickly taking on the likeness of that time. (To learn more, read our booklet *Did God Create HUMAN NATURE?*)

The Only Real Solution

There is only *one* solution to the violence so prevalent in sports and society—the GOVERNMENT OF GOD. Unlike human governments that rise and pass away into history, once this government is established, it will stand throughout all eternity! Very soon, Jesus Christ will return in full glory as King of kings and Lord of lords, and all violence *will* come to an end.

Before this can take place, something must be done with Satan. When a new ruler comes to power, the old one must be put away. Satan cannot remain

free to influence mankind during the rule of Christ. This is precisely what the Day of Atonement (one of God's Holy Days) pictures—the putting away of the devil at Christ's Return.

Unlike holidays such as Christmas and Easter, God's Holy Days are rich in meaning. Each one reveals a segment of His MASTER PLAN. The world is ignorant of these days; and thus, they are oblivious to what God is doing here on earth. (To learn more about God's Master Plan, study our 30-lesson *Bible Introduction Course*.)

Knowing he now has but a short time, Satan is about ready to unleash a time of tribulation. The increasing violence happening around the world is indicative of this. But it is going to get worse—much worse! All of this will culminate in what the Bible calls the Great Tribulation.

One thing is certain: After those terrible days, an everlasting government of righteousness *will* rule earth—and the entire universe.

“And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, 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*” (Dan. 7:14).

Imagine a world without fights, murders, rapes, bombings and war—a world of absolute peace and harmony! Christ and His saints will replace these things with peace, cooperation, joy and godly love. People will take the wants and needs of others into consideration before themselves. Mankind will practice the GIVE way of life, instead of the GET way. Violent human nature, along with the sports world as we know it, will be no more!

Notice: “And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: *nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*” (Micah 4:3). □



CANADA'S MORAL DECLINE

BY RYAN P. DENEÉ

*O Canada!
Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.*

*With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!*

*From far and wide,
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.*

*God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.*

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

THESE ARE THE LYRICS to the Canadian national anthem. Yet, to many Canadians, these words no longer ring true. Over the years, we have seen patriotism dwindle. Where are the “stalwart sons” and “gentle maidens” of Stanley Weir’s 1908 poem, on which the national anthem was based?

Today, Weir’s words seem strange and far removed from the typical Canadian mindset—especially the last verse: “Ruler supreme, who hearest humble prayer, hold our dominion within thy loving care; Help us to find, O God, in thee lasting, rich reward, As waiting for the Better Day, We ever stand on guard.”

Canada is largely a secular nation. Why? How did this happen?

By taking an open and frank look at this vast country and the events that led to the shaping and molding of its current state, we can better recognize and understand the slippery slope that Canada has taken.

The Good of the Nation

Even though most of Canada is frozen for almost 12 months of the year, there are many good things about this country. For example, surviving life-threatening winters creates a certain friendliness and willingness to help others in a time of need. In Weir’s poem, he mentions “stalwart sons.” *Stalwart* means, “one who is physically and morally strong.” The word is related to the “hardy explorers of Northern Canada.” It was physically demanding work to survive in the Canadian north. The original pioneers were, by necessity, hard workers and thankful for each day.

The vast Canadian north is largely uninhabitable, but filled with immense natural wealth. Here is a listing of the major points of that natural wealth: Its lakes, rivers and

streams make up 9.2% of the world's fresh water. With its unconventional oil reserves, Canada is second in the world, amounting to 186 billion barrels. The gas reserves make it the third largest producer of natural gas and second largest exporter. Canada's lakes and rivers help make it the largest producer of hydropower in the world and the list of mineral wealth is endless. Its financial wealth is also great, with a GDP of \$958.7 billion USD and a GDP per capita of \$29,800 USD, making it the ninth largest economy in the world.

The government system that the British left Canada gives less freedom to the general populace in some ways, but more power to the government. An example is the Niagara Parks Commission, established in the late 1800s to ensure that the beauty of Niagara Falls would be kept and not exploited. This commission runs the park system along the entire length of the Niagara River, keeping it clean and well landscaped for the Falls' millions of annual visitors. In 1886, the first council of Vancouver created a 1,000-acre park on a peninsula near what would become its downtown core. This park is North America's third largest urban park and has an estimated 8 million visitors a year.

Besides the creation of public lands to preserve its natural beauty, Canada has also moved to secure a national health care system. Canadians do not have to worry about the cost of having a baby or losing their home in the event of a serious health crisis. The UN Development Index rated Canada as the best place to live in the world for ten years straight starting in 1992.

A Brief History

After the American Revolution, many Loyalists fled to Canada. This boosted the English settlement of the areas known today as Southern Ontario and the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This had a lasting effect on Canada. The money and people were much welcomed, and their opinions helped shape Canada's outlook on the world. They were the roots of the general Canadian view—that Canada

looked more to Europe for direction and less to America. This would later help Canada steer toward a more liberal society than its neighbor to the south.

Before the American Revolution, much of Canada was a colony of France. During the Seven Years War between Britain and France in Europe, war also broke out between the British and French colonies in North America. On September 13th, 1759, Quebec was taken by the British, as they defeated the French on the Plains of Abraham outside of Quebec City. France finally ceded its North American possessions to the British in the Treaty of Paris in 1763.

Afterwards, the French Canadians were allowed to stay in Canada and many attempts were made by the British to assimilate the Quebecers into British culture and institutions. However, the Quebecers wanted to keep their language, culture and laws—in essence, creating within Canada two opposing views on how to do everything. At every turn, it seemed that compromise had to be made to keep Canada together, which has weakened its ability to make decisions and hold fast to values that it once held dear.

As the Canadian colonies grew, they increasingly became aware of the need for responsible self-government and the need to counter the growing presence of the United States. Through many debates, conferences, reports and delegations, the British North American Act was presented to the British Parliament in 1867 and confederation was granted. The Dominion of Canada was formed on July 1, 1867.

Moving ahead to the end of World War II, as America embarked on the Cold War, arming itself and protecting the world from the menace of communism, Canada took a different path. With America footing most of the bill for defense in North America and with Canadians presuming that the United States would always be there to defend their country, Canada had ample room in its budget to pursue a socialist agenda. This presumption has resulted in a common feeling among Canadians

that the war on terror is an American problem and that Canada will never be attacked. The truth is much different. With little spending on protection and prevention, every government report states “when”—not “if”—an attack will happen.

Steady Decline

Canadians have been living on the benefits of God's blessing to the descendants of Abraham and the hard work and dedication of past generations, forgetting the Source of their prosperity.

As compromise became more and more a part of the average Canadian's thinking, it became harder to remain morally strong to resist the cultural revolution that began after World War II. A turning point of this revolution occurred in 1967, when Mr. Pierre Trudeau, then the justice minister, stated, “The government has no business in the bedrooms of this nation.” He made this declaration while introducing a bill to decriminalize homosexuality.

This statement has become such a part of Canadian society that it is nearly biblical in importance. Growing from this has been a general acceptance of homosexuality in Canadian society; many now believe it is not a matter of choice, but is decided by genetics. Toronto has the largest Gay Pride parade in North America and is considered a homosexual tourist destination. On July 12, 2002, the Ontario Superior Court ruled that banning same-sex marriage is unconstitutional and is a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This quickly led to the courts allowing same-sex marriage the following year. Canada unfortunately leads the way in North America on moral decay.

Under the heading “transnational issues,” *The World Factbook* (published by the CIA) states that Canada is an “illicit producer of cannabis for the domestic drug market and export to US.” Apparently, many Canadians are not too concerned with this issue, considering the headlines and the “talk radio” discussions about decriminal-



“No longer does Canada stand on any moral ground when seeking solutions to its problems.”

ization of the drug. At present, the American government looks sorely at any attempt by Canada to legalize the drug, and Canadians do not seem to think any effect will come of it.

The Canadian Senate made recommendation to legalize marijuana, stating that it is no more harmful than alcohol and tobacco and does not lead to stronger drugs. Not only is this a conclusion by the highest house of government, but it is also the general belief among the majority of marijuana proponents. This is no surprise when federal studies show that 30% of 15- to 17-year-olds and 47% of 18- to 19-year-olds used marijuana in the past year. Other statistics that seem to be missed are: The amount of THC (the substance in marijuana that creates the “high”) per marijuana cigarette

has increased from less than 1% in the 1960s to today’s level of nearly 25%, and the smoke is 50% to 70% more cancer-causing than tobacco cigarettes. Again, in a country that aims to be liberal just to be different and cannot stand firm on any issue, it is no wonder that Canada is steamrolling past all the stops signs on this issue!

Following in Canada’s Footsteps

After the recent election in the U.S., news articles circulated stating that many disgruntled Americans would move north to Canada. Many Americans look to Canada as an example to follow, an example of a kinder, gentler and more progressive society. Soon after an Ontario judge ruled in favor of gay marriage, the mayor of San Francisco started allowing gay marriage.

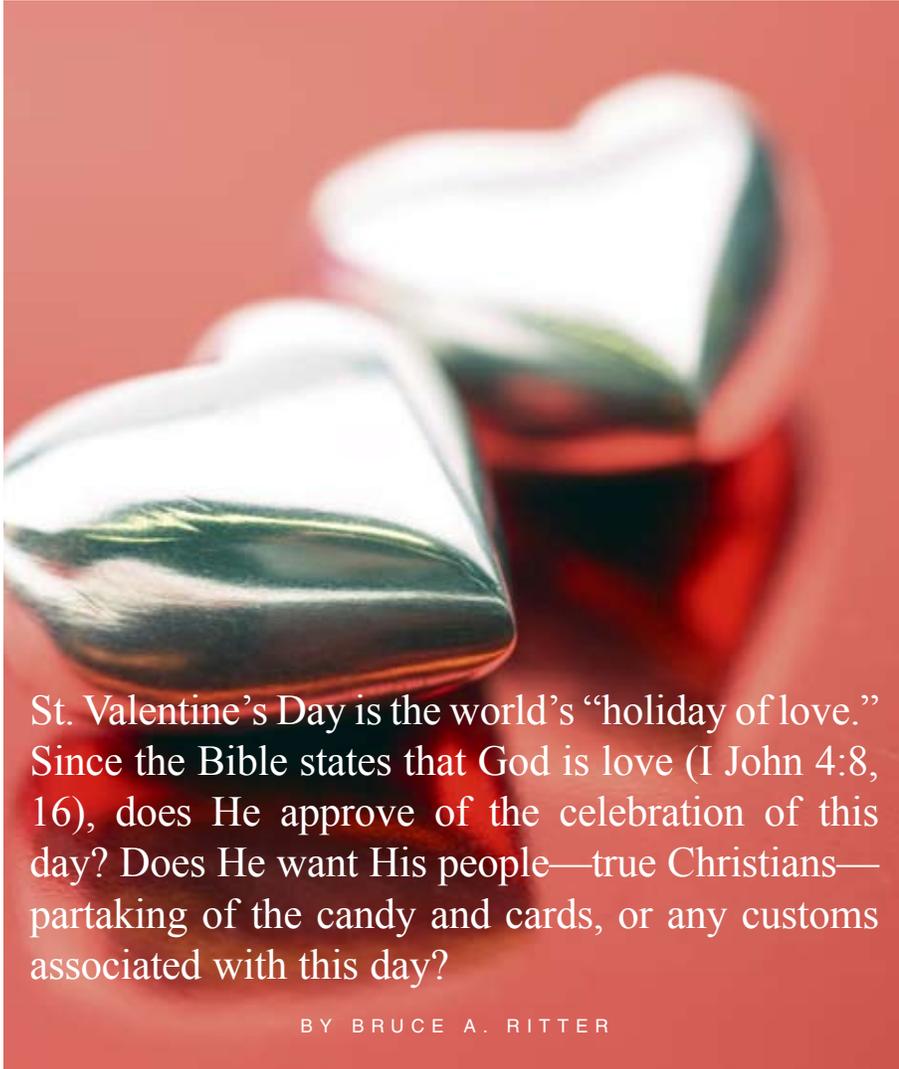
Also consider that *prostitution* is legal in Canada. In almost every Canadian city, there are escort services that will provide “entertainment” for those inclined. It is already legal in some areas of Nevada, and both Reno and San Francisco are pushing to legalize the “trade.”

Americans look to Canada and see a foreign policy largely based on diplomacy and wish that America could take the same approach. They feel that the funds allocated for defense spending would be better directed toward improvement of various social programs. Many Americans see Canada’s moral and social landscape as “greener pastures.” However, if only they would look a little deeper, perhaps they would see the effects of Canada’s direction and seek to *change* their own direction before it is too late.

The approach in Canada seems to be that if a problem cannot be solved, it should simply be legalized so that it can be “controlled.” For example, in Vancouver, the problem of heroine addiction is addressed by providing addicts with facilities in which they can “safely” abuse the drug. No longer does Canada stand on any moral ground when seeking solutions to its problems. Concepts of “right vs. wrong” are abandoned in favor of whatever is the current popular sentiment.

The path that both the U.S. and Canada are following is an example of man doing things his way instead of God’s way. As it was in the time of the Judges, everyone is doing what is right in his own eyes (Jud. 21:25). Soon, the 6,000 years that God has allotted for man to rule his own way will come to an end, and Christ will return and establish God’s kingdom on earth. Mankind will then learn to do what is right in the eyes of God. Just imagine what a blessed country such as Canada will be like when it is under the proper rulership of God’s kingdom. Canada’s ability to find a middle ground and come to a solution will be found without compromising with any of God’s laws. For the first time, Stanley Weir’s poem will ring with truth and clarity! □

The Truth Behind St. Valentine's Day



St. Valentine's Day is the world's "holiday of love." Since the Bible states that God is love (I John 4:8, 16), does He approve of the celebration of this day? Does He want His people—true Christians—partaking of the candy and cards, or any customs associated with this day?

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

WHEN GOD SAYS He wants you to live life abundantly (John 10:10), does that include celebrating a festive, seemingly harmless holiday like Valentine's Day? The God who gives us everything—life, food, drink, the ability to think for ourselves, etc.—surely approves of St. Valentine's Day, the holiday

for lovers to exchange gifts—right?

Do not be so certain. Do not assume anything. Do not even take this article's word for it. Go to history books and encyclopedias. Go to the Bible. Then you will know the *real truth* behind St. Valentine's Day. And you will know what God expects you to do about it!

Valentine's Past

Like Christmas, Easter, Halloween, New Year's and other holidays of this world, St. Valentine's Day is another attempt to "whitewash" perverted customs and observances of pagan gods and idols by "Christianizing" them.

As innocent and harmless as St. Valentine's Day may appear, its traditions and customs originate from two of the most sexually perverted pagan festivals of ancient history: Lupercalia and the feast day of Juno Februata.

Celebrated on February 15, Lupercalia (known as the "festival of sexual license") was held by the ancient Romans in honor of Lupercus, god of fertility and husbandry, protector of herds and crops, and a mighty hunter—especially of wolves. The Romans believed that Lupercus would protect Rome from roving bands of wolves, which devoured livestock and people.

Assisted by Vestal Virgins, the Luperci (male priests) conducted purification rites by sacrificing goats and a dog in the Lupercal cave on Palatine Hill, where the Romans believed the twins Romulus and Remus had been sheltered and nursed by a she-wolf before they eventually founded Rome. Clothed in loincloths made from sacrificed goats and smeared in their blood, the Luperci would run about Rome, striking women with *februa*, thongs made from skins of the sacrificed goats. The Luperci believed that the floggings purified women and guaranteed their fertility and ease of childbirth. *February* derives from *februa* or "means of purification."

To the Romans, February was also sacred to Juno Februata, the goddess of febris ("fever") of love, and of

women and marriage. On February 14, billets (small pieces of paper, each of which had the name of a teenage girl written on it) were put into a container. Teenage boys would then choose one billet at random. The boy and the girl whose name was drawn would become a “couple,” joining in erotic games at feasts and parties celebrated throughout Rome. After the festival, they would remain sexual partners for the rest of the year. This custom was observed in the Roman Empire for centuries.

Whitewashing Perversion

In A.D. 494, Pope Gelasius renamed the festival of Juno Februata as the “Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary.” The date of its observance was later changed from February 14 to February 2. It is also known as Candlemas, the Presentation of the Lord, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin and the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

After Constantine had made the Roman church’s brand of Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire (A.D. 325), church leaders wanted to do away with the pagan festivals of the people. Lupercalia was high on their list. But the Roman citizens thought otherwise.

It was not until A.D. 496 that the church at Rome was able to do anything about Lupercalia. Powerless to get rid of it, Pope Gelasius instead changed it from February 15 to the 14th and called it St. Valentine’s Day. It was named after one of that church’s saints, who, in A.D. 270, was executed by the emperor for his beliefs.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, “At least three different Saint Valentines, all of them martyrs, are mentioned in early martyrologies under the date of 14 February. One is described as a priest at Rome, another as bishop of Interamna (modern Terni), and these two seem both to have suffered in the second half of the third century and to have been buried on the Flaminian Way, but at different distances from the city...Of the third Saint Valentine, who suffered in Africa

with a number of companions, nothing is further known.” Several biographies of different men named Valentine were merged into one “official” St. Valentine.

The church whitewashed Lupercalia even further. Instead of putting the names of girls into a box, the names of “saints” were drawn by both boys and girls. It was then each person’s duty to emulate the life of the saint whose name he or she had drawn. This was Rome’s vain attempt to “whitewash” a pagan observance by “Christianizing” it, which God has not given man the power or authority to do. Though the church at Rome had banned the sexual lottery, young men still practiced a much toned-down version, sending women whom they desired handwritten romantic messages containing St. Valentine’s name.

Over the centuries, St. Valentine’s Day cards became popular, especially by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These cards were painted with pictures of Cupid and hearts, and meticulously decorated with lace, silk or flowers.

First Man Called Valentine

But who was the original Valentine? What does the name Valentine mean?

Valentine comes from the Latin *Valentinus*, which derives from *valens*—“to be strong, powerful, mighty.” The Bible describes a man with a similar title: “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a *mighty one* in the earth. He was a *mighty hunter* before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the *mighty hunter* before the LORD” (Gen. 10:8-9). He was said to have hunted with bow and arrow.

As mentioned, the Romans celebrated Lupercalia to honor the hunter god Lupercus. To the Greeks, from whom the Romans had copied most of their mythology, Lupercus was known as Pan, the god of light. The Phoenicians worshipped the same deity as Baal, the sun god. Baal was one of many names or titles for Nimrod, a mighty hunter, especially of wolves. He was also the founder and first lord of Babel (Gen.

10:10-12). Defying God, Nimrod was the originator of the Babylonian Mystery Religion, whose mythologies have been copied by the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans and a multitude of other ancient peoples. Under different names or titles—Pan, Lupercus, Saturn, Osiris—Nimrod is the strong man and hunter-warrior god of the ancients.

But what does the heart symbol have to do with a day honoring Nimrod/Valentine?

The title *Baal* means “lord” or “master,” and is mentioned throughout the Bible as the god of pagans. God warned His people not to worship or even tolerate the ways of Baal (Nimrod). In ancient Chaldean (the language of the Babylonians), *bal*, which is similar to *Baal*, meant, “heart.” This is where the Valentine heart symbol originated.

Now notice the name *Cupid*. It comes from the Latin verb *cupere*, meaning “to desire.” Cupid was the son of Venus, Roman goddess of beauty and love. Also known as Eros in ancient Greece, he was the son of Aphrodite. According to myth, he was responsible for impregnating numerous goddesses and mortals. Cupid was a child-like archer (remember, Nimrod was a skilled archer). Mythology describes Cupid as having both a cruel and happy personality. He would use his invisible arrows, tipped with gold, to strike unsuspecting men and women, causing them to fall madly in love. He did not do this for their benefit, but to drive them crazy with intense passion, to make their lives miserable, and to laugh at the results.

Many of the gods of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Assyrians and others were modeled after one man—Nimrod.

But what does this have to do with us today? Why should we be concerned with what happened in the past?

What God Thinks

Read what God commands His people concerning pagan customs and traditions: “Learn not the way of the heathen...For the customs of the people

are vain” (Jer. 10:2-3). Also notice Christ’s words in Matthew 15:39: “... in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Throughout the Bible, God describes “heathens” as those who worship things that He had created (animals, the sun, the moon, stars, trees, etc.), or man-made idols, or *anything but* the one true God. He calls such people and their practices pagan. True Christians understand that God hates any customs, practices and traditions that are rooted in paganism.

But just how serious is God about paganism?

When He rescued the twelve tribes of Israel from brutal slavery and led them out of Egypt, He commanded them, “After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein you dwelt, shall you not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, where I bring you, shall you not do: neither shall you walk in their ordinances” (Lev. 18:3). God demanded the Israelites not to defile themselves with the pagan practices and customs of surrounding nations (vs. 24-29). “Therefore shall you keep Mine ordinance, that you commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that you defile not yourselves therein: I am the LORD your God” (vs. 30).

God cursed Egypt—a nation of nature-worshippers—with ten plagues and freed Israel from slavery. He rescued Israel from Pharaoh’s army by parting the Red Sea and leading His people to safety. He fed the Israelites manna—special bread made by God—from heaven. He protected them from battle-tested Gentile armies, delivered them into the Promised Land and drove out their enemies.

How did Israel treat God in return? “Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Your mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea...They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert...They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped

the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea...they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word: But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD...They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their intentions” (Psa. 106:7, 13-14, 19-22, 24-25, 28-29).

God explicitly commanded Israel to cast out and utterly destroy all nations that occupied the Promised Land (Canaan). Above all, His people were not to make political alliances with them or marry into their families (Deut. 7:1-3, 5, 16). “For they will turn away your sons from following Me, that they may serve other gods” (vs. 4).

But the Israelites thought they knew better than God. They decided to do things their own way. “They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yes, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils [demons], and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions” (Psa. 106:34-39).

To wake them up and get them back on track as the model nation He had originally intended, God gave Israel over to their enemies. Israel repented and cried out to God. God rescued them. With their bellies full and lives protected, the Israelites went back to pursuing other gods. God punished Israel again. Israel repented and cried out to God.

And so went the deliverance-idolatry-punishment-repentance cycle (vs. 40-46), until finally, God had no other

choice but to divorce unfaithful Israel (Jer. 3:6-11).

He used the Assyrians, one of the most brutal warrior nations in history, to invade, conquer, enslave and relocate the entire northern kingdom of Israel (II Kings 17). Having “disappeared” from history, the modern-day descendants of those ten “lost” tribes are unaware of their true identity even to this day.

Later, God sent the southern kingdom of Judah (mainly the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi) into Babylonian exile (II Kings 24 and 25). Because they kept (at least physically) the true Sabbath, which is a special sign that identifies the one true God and His people (Ex. 31:12-18), the Jews were able to retain their true identity.

The Israelites were severely punished because they lusted after pagan customs, rituals, traditions and practices. As you can see, God does not take paganism lightly.

Why Paganism Is Wrong

Just why does God hate anything that resembles pagan customs? Is it possible to “whitewash” or “Christianize” pagan practices and make them clean? Is it okay to practice pagan customs as long as you “worship God”?

Notice what God says in Leviticus 18. After rescuing Israel from slavery, God warned them not to practice the customs they had picked up in Egypt, or learn the ways, customs and traditions of the Gentile nations that they would encounter in the Promised Land (vs. 1-3). Instead, God commanded Israel to follow His ways (vs. 4-5).

God then describes the pagan ways of these ungodly nations in great detail. In verses 7-20, He condemns all kinds of heterosexual sex relations that fall outside the holy boundaries of marriage—incest, fornication, adultery, etc. In verses 22-23, God condemns homosexuality and bestiality. Together, these sins break down and destroy the family unit that God had so lovingly created and instituted.

Notice what God links to these per-versions: “And you shall not let any of your seed [children] pass through the fire to Molech, neither shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD” (vs. 21). God ties in the perverse sexual practices of ungodly, pagan nations with human sacrifices—parents offering the lives of their children to pagan gods!

The Bible shows that Israel not only disobeyed God and wholeheartedly embraced the sexual immorality of the Gentiles, they even went a step further.

“And they have turned unto Me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house [the temple at Jerusalem], which is called by My name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into My mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin” (Jer. 32:33-35). (To learn more about these child sacrifices to Molech, download from our website our sermon *Santa Claus is Molech* and our booklets *The True Origin of CHRISTMAS* and *The True Origin of EASTER*.)

Imagine. Israel committed a sin so vile, so disgusting, that it even shocked God!

But that was then. What about today? Surely, parents do not sacrifice their children to pagan gods today—or do they?

Do not be so certain. Perhaps their *lives* are not being sacrificed—but what about their *innocence*?

Parents today expect their little ones to “fall in love” and have boyfriends and girlfriends. They think it is “cute” when little boys and girls hold hands and act like a couple, sneaking a kiss or two when no one is watching. Some parents get worried when their kids do not show romantic interest in the opposite sex. They constantly ask

them, “Do you have a boyfriend yet?” or “Who’s your girlfriend?”

Yet these same parents are surprised when their teen-aged “little girl” gets pregnant. Or catches a sexually transmitted disease. Or gets an abortion behind their back.

St. Valentine’s Day is just one of many tools the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4) uses to get parents to sacrifice the *innocence of their children*.

When little boys and girls draw each other’s names in a lottery and send Valentine cards and gifts to each other, declaring their “love,” they are learning the first stages of intimate relations that the Creator God designed specifically for emotionally mature adults. Instead of embracing the carefree innocence of youth, growing up without the headaches and heartaches of adulthood (finding a job, paying bills, marriage, raising a family, etc.), children today are taught to lust after each other. They are caught up in a daily drama of “If-you-loved-me-you’d-sleep-with-me; I’m-pregnant; it’s-not-mine; she-had-an-abortion.” By the time they reach adulthood, virtually every shred of innocence, sincerity and moral decency has been stripped from them. Emotionally drained, they have world-weary, “been there, done that” attitudes. And their lives are just beginning.

This is why we live in a world where a teenage virgin is a rare find. Where what used to be called “shacking up” and “living in sin” is now simply “living together.” Where sex is nothing more than meaningless physical recreation—no emotional attachments, no cares, no concerns. Where people change sex partners as conveniently as they change clothes. Where unmarried twenty- or thirty-somethings have had at least *five* sexual partners—and that is considered a low number, especially in the United States. Where men are not referred to as “my husband,” or “my fiancé,” but as “my second baby’s father.”

How pathetic!

Satan has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9) in multiple ways—

especially when it comes to intimate relationships. St. Valentine’s Day is just one of his tools for deception. (To learn more about this great deceiver, read our booklet *Who is the DEVIL?*)

“Come Out of Her, My People”

Concerning the near future, when man’s Satan-influenced world is about to collapse, God declares, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils [demons], and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed [increased] rich through the abundance of her delicacies” (Rev. 18:2-3).

Concerning this pagan, satanic system, God commands true Christians, “Come out of her, My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues” (vs. 4).

St. Valentine’s Day originates from the ancient paganism of this Satan-influenced world. It is designed to deceive mankind by appealing to fleshly, carnal desires—or, as the Bible calls them, *the works of the flesh*. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest [made obvious], which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry...drunkenness, revellings, and such like” (Gal. 5:19-21). Do any of these sound like Lupercalia to you?

Ultimately, “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” A true Christian is focused on God’s soon-coming kingdom (Matt. 6:33) and the world to come—not on the fleshly cravings of this world. A true Christian must strive to “put off the old man” and actively imitate the perfect, righteous example of Jesus Christ. A Christian knows that he must actively come out of this world, out of its pagan-infested customs, practices and traditions.

Christians do not celebrate St. Valentine’s Day! □

TSUNAMI

Continued from page 15

world has ever seen—the recent tsunami tragedy has left many to wonder, “Why did this happen so suddenly—and without warning?”

While men struggle to answer this question, an even greater “tsunami” looms on the horizon—one that will rock civilization, first upon the nations that have descended from ancient Israel, then upon the whole earth. God’s Word describes it as the worst time of calamity man will ever experience.

Notice: “And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:4-7).

What these nations recently experienced was merely a foretaste of the prophetic events that lie just ahead: “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in [various] places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:7-8). Christ meant that, as a sign, earthquakes would proliferate as the time of His Return drew near. You can be certain that these prophetic earthquakes, some of which will strike under the sea, will set off powerful tsunamis, even more devastating than what civilization has recently experienced.

Luke 21:25-26 describes what lies ahead: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring [tsunamis]; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the

earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

The “Big One”

Whenever a massive earthquake strikes, journalists ask experts, “Was this the ‘big one’?—was this the earthquake of all earthquakes?”

The Bible actually describes the final, most powerful quake man will ever experience! Notice: “And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great...And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Rev. 16:17-18, 20). The topography of the entire earth will literally change!

The following verses further describe a future worldwide calamity:

“Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger” (Isa. 13:13).

“The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again” (24:19-20).

“...and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at My presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground” (Ezek. 38:20).

“The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel” (Joel 3:16).

“For thus says the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations” (Hag. 2:6-7).

With such devastation certain to come, is there any hope of escape?

A World Soon to be Blindsided

It has been reported that some nations received warnings of the recent tsunami as much as two hours before it struck the coastline—but they did not respond. Immediate action could have been taken. Lives could have been saved. Yet, inaction resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of lives. People were living their lives, totally unaware of the danger that would spring upon them. In an instant, they perished!

Today, there is a warning message going out—through the pages of *The REAL TRUTH* magazine—about the greatest “tsunami” that lies ahead, called the Great Tribulation, soon to strike an unsuspecting world. The Bible speaks of a time of cataclysmic earthquakes, contaminated water supplies, military invasions, starvation—all on a worldwide scale!

And similar to the death and destruction witnessed on December 26, men will be caught unawares: “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:35).

Global calamity will come suddenly—and without mercy. Verse 34 reveals why: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” People will continue to “eat, drink and be merry” (Luke 12:19), believing that life will go on without interruption.

Speaking of the religious leaders of this world, God says, “they have seduced My people” (Ezek. 13:10), “...from the prophet even unto the priest every one deals falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:13-14; also see 8:10-12).

Like the lull before a mighty tornado, fury will surely come—but there is a way of escape. To learn more, read our prophetic conditions report *EARTHQUAKES and VOLCANOES in Prophecy*. □

WORLD NEWS DESK

AN EDITORIAL ANALYSIS OF WORLD NEWS, TRENDS AND CONDITIONS



RELIGION

Europe in Grave Cultural and Moral Crisis

American Papal biographer George Weigel states that Europe is suffering from “Christophobia” and is, therefore, experiencing a grave cultural and moral crisis. In explaining the differences between America and Europe, he says, “It would be too simple to say that the reason Americans and Europeans see the world so differently is that the former go to church on Sundays and the latter don’t. But it would be a grave mistake to think that the dramatic differences in religious belief and practice in the United States and Europe don’t have something important to do with those different perceptions of the world.”

“European high culture,” he continues, “is, largely, Christophobic, and Europeans themselves describe their cultures and societies as ‘post-Christian.’ Why did so many European intellectuals deem any reference to the Christian sources of contemporary European civilization a threat to human rights and democracy? Was there some connection between this internal European debate over Europe’s Constitution-making and the portrait in the European press of Americans as religious fanatics intent on shooting up the world?” inquired Mr. Weigel. “My proposal is that Europe is experiencing a crisis of cultural and civilizational morale...”

As history has shown time and time again, crises are opportune moments for some to implement and exert their power. Interestingly, Mr. Weigel went on to explain, “That crisis of civilizational morale helps explain why European man is deliberately forgetting his history and is abandoning the hard work and high adventure of democratic politics, seeming to prefer the false domestic security of bureaucracy and the dubious international security offered by the U.N. system.” Deliberately forgetting history? Now that is dangerous! We know that those who forget history are doomed to repeat it.

Source: *Zenit News Agency*

GEOPOLITICS, STRATEGIES & ECONOMIES

Turkey Warns of Terror if EU Membership Declined

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned EU leaders that violence from Islamic extremists could escalate if the EU rejects his country’s membership bid: “There is nothing we can do if the EU feels that it can live with being simply a Christian club...but if these countries burn their bridges with the rest of the world, history will not forgive them.” Turkey first applied in 1963, and it is expected that a two-day summit will finally decide whether or not membership talks will proceed. “No other country had to wait for 41 years at Europe’s door. We have fulfilled all

the criteria, but despite this Europeans are hesitating,” the Turkish leader said in Ankara.

Accepting Turkey’s 69 million, mainly Muslim, population into the Union has been widely controversial. France, Austria and Denmark are insisting that membership is not guaranteed. The French have even suggested that they will let their people decide their position in a referendum. In Germany, the leader of the Christian Social Union, Edmund Stoiber, told the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that he and his party would do whatever it takes to pre-

vent Turkey from being a full member of the EU.

French President Jacques Chirac had earlier floated the idea of a “privileged membership” status for Turkey, to which Mr. Erdogan has replied, “There is no such thing in the EU as privileged partnership. No other country has been offered this and there is no way that we will accept such an option for Turkey.”

In any case, even if membership talks were given the green light, it is expected that Turkey would not become a member of the EU until 2014.

Source: *EU Observer*

China and Russia Hold First War Games

In a sign of their ever-growing alliance, China and Russia will hold their first joint military exercise this year. The announcement came as Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov visited Beijing and was expected to discuss increasing Moscow's multibillion-dollar annual arms sales to China. "We want... to promote the development of the two countries' strategic collaborative relationship in order to safeguard and promote regional and world peace," the official China News Service quoted President

Hu Jintao as telling Mr. Ivanov. The former Cold War rivals have built up military and political ties since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, driven in part by a joint desire to counter-balance U.S. global dominance.

China has become Russia's largest customer of military technology and products. It is expected that the 2004 package will be worth \$2 billion. While the U.S. and the EU have banned weapons exports to China since the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters,

Russia has greatly assisted in advancing and growing the Chinese military, supplying it with high-performance Su-27 fighters and other advanced arms.

Mr. Ivanov also met with Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan and Guo Boxiong, deputy chairman of the Communist Party commission that runs China's military. Chinese President Hu Jintao is expected to visit Moscow in May during festivities commemorating the end of World War II.

Source: *Seattle Post Intelligencer*

WEATHER



Mount St. Helens' Growing Dome

Most will recall the rumblings of Mount St. Helens earlier this year. Since then, an unusually smooth and swiftly growing lava dome within the crater is being considered by scientists to be an "extraordinary and perplexing" event with an unknown outcome. While no major eruptions are expected in the near term, the dome's construction can be likened to a "runaway freight train in terms of the steady forces involved." "There's a truckload of hot rock coming out of the mountain every second," said Dan Dzurisin of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). "We're scratching our heads about it."

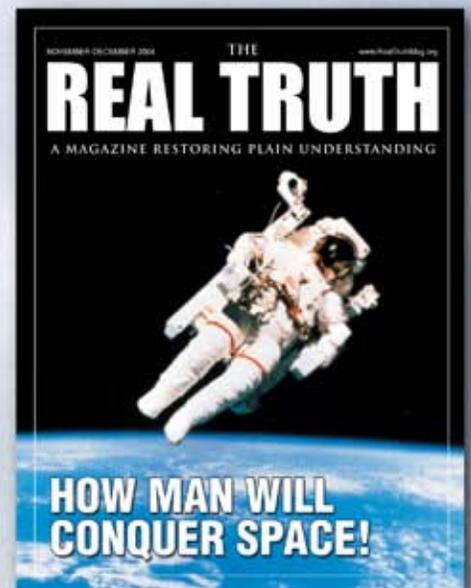
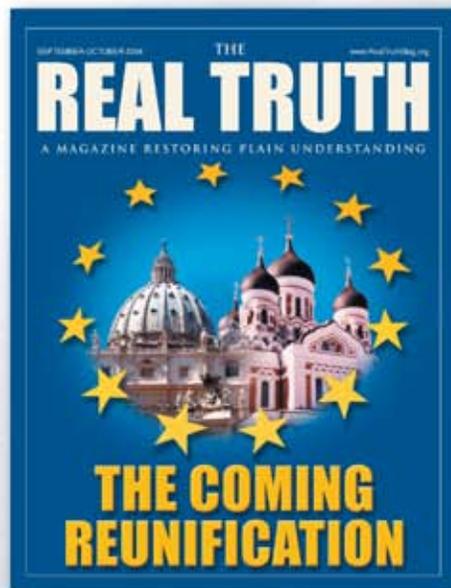
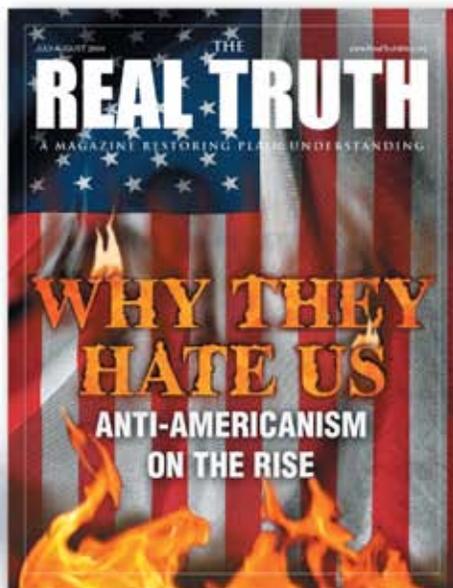
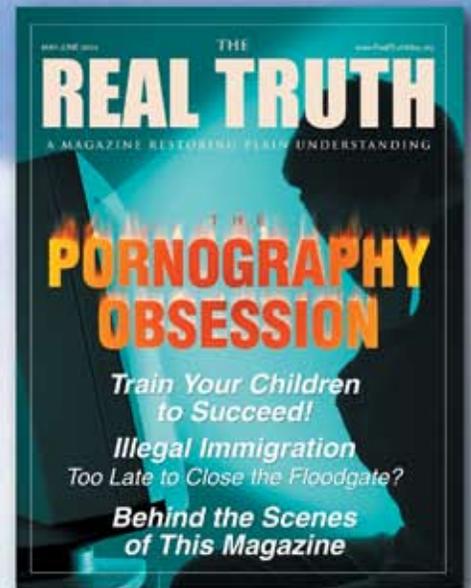
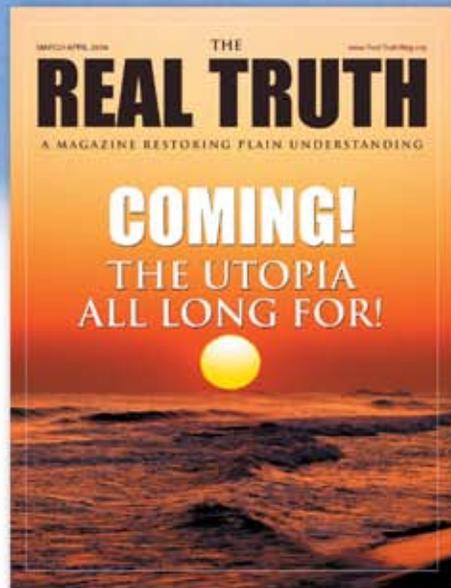
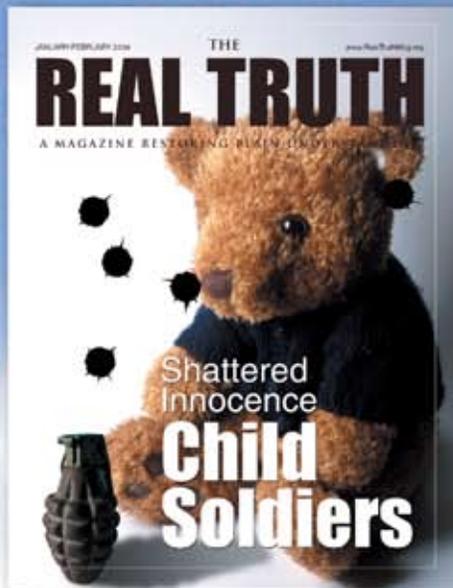
The September activity caused the original dome inside the crater to grow a welt on its south side. That welt has quickly become a separate dome, and looks different, part of it being as smooth as an "overturned ship." The size of

this new dome is now bigger than an aircraft carrier, with a central head between and above two shoulders. Inside a crust of about 10m (33ft.) thick, the dome is loaded with magma, scorching molten rock. The whole structure is pushing its way south as it grows, "bulldozing its way into the glacier," Mr. Dzurisin said, "shoving it out of the way, cracking it, lifting it."

Scientists simply do not know what the mountain has in store. An eruption like the one in 1980 is not expected, but if this new dome continues to rise, an eventual collapse, causing magma and ice to mix and releasing a large ash cloud up to 40,000 feet (12 kilometers), would be significant. "Collapses," said USGS researcher Cynthia Gardner, "can happen without warning."

Source: *Live Science*

Have you missed out on previous issues?



You can read them online at your convenience!