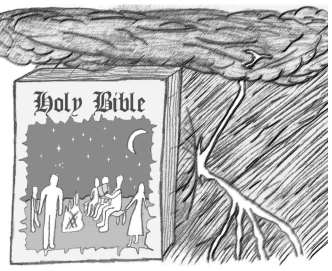
Shelter in the Word



He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. You are my refuge and shield: I have put my hope in your Word. ***—Psalm 91:1; 119:114***

Vol. 4, No. 2 Helping you become self-sufficient in the Word—for a lasting relationship with the Almighty **Mar/Apr 2001**

Why Does God Command Christians to Fast?

By John Eastman.

The purpose of this article is to show that fasting is commanded by God and why. In order to understand the principle of fasting, we will explain how to fast, the importance of fasting for spiritual growth, and examples from the Bible of why God's people have fasted throughout the ages.

In Matt. 9:14-15, the disciples of John the Baptist came and asked Christ, "Why is it that we and the Pharisees observe the fast, but your disciples do not?" Christ answered them, "…the day will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, they *will certainly* fast then" (Phillips Translation). Another Bible translation reads, "…and then they *will* fast" (Revised Standard Vision). These verses tell us that fasting is a command from God. Christ said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). If you have a righteous love and fear for God, then you will want to be obedient and will heed His command to fast.

What instructions does the Bible give us about how to fast? First, the Bible explains that fasting means to go without food or water. In Esther 4:15-16, "Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 'Go gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan and fast for me; *neither eat nor drink for 3 days, night or day.*'" Generally, fasting is from sunset to sunset (Lev. 23:32). Secondly, Christ instructed his disciples not to boast when they fasted:

> More over, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father, who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (Matt. 6:16-18).

It is clear that God expects fasting to be a private matter between you and your Father in Heaven. Most importantly, God Himself defines how to fast in the Book of Isaiah. God says:

> …Is this not the fast I have chosen; to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor that are cast out; when you see the naked that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily; and your righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. (Isa. 58:6-8)

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In the days of Isaiah, when the nation of Israel fasted, they were fasting for their own personal deliverance, but they were not concerned for other people around them that were starving, naked, and homeless. God wanted them to have a heart, to fast about other people's spiritual needs as well as their own, and to bring forth good works of helping the needy. God is telling us that fasting brings us closer to God's will, and His will is to have humility, love, and concern for others. With this type of attitude in fasting and good works, God promises, "Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer. You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am'". (Isa. 58:9) This is the most important principle of fasting, to draw closer to God and to seek His righteousness and His will in our lives.

Fasting should be a regular part of a Christian's life, not just on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:32), but several times in a year. The Bible says that Paul fasted *often* (2Cor. 11:27, Acts 9:9). The Apostle Paul knew that fasting would be a way of life for Christians (1Cor. 7:5) Christ fasted for 40 days and nights to prepare Himself for the time that He would come face to face with Satan because He knew He would need His Father's strength. You may think you don't need to fast, but after you have fasted and felt the closeness of God and His strength in you, then and only then will you see the true gauge that shows you how weak and how far away from God you really are. Fasting is a tool that God has given us to use to become spiritually stronger so that we can go on our spiritual journey with strength and power from God, instead of having very little spiritual strength.

One reason Christians fast is that the world we live in is saturated with evil. Like in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, we can be overtaken by the evil that surrounds us. As Peter said in 2 Peter 2:7-8, "…Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked. For that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day hearing and seeing their lawless deeds." Christians not only need to study and pray, but also need to fast to fortify and maintain a close relationship with God. Fasting helps Christians to seek God's righteousness, His wisdom, His will, and His strength in a world that is overcome with evil. If you feel you are not very close to God and things are not going right for you physically or spiritually, that your prayers are not going higher than the ceiling, then fast!

Before you fast, it is best to ask God to help you to have an effective, fervent, and heartfelt fast. I believe the best method to conduct your fast is to alternate between prayer, studying, and a period of meditation throughout the fast. Praying is when we talk to God, and studying His word is like God talking to us. Fasting is like receiving a spiritual vitamin shot that gives you more spiritual strength to grow in God's righteousness. Sometimes you can't see the forest when standing too close to the trees. Likewise, we can't see what this evil world is doing to us and how weak it makes us. Fasting removes the blinders of deception that Satan has put over our spiritual eyes.

Believers fast to have a true godly repentance of sin. David fasted because of the sin he committed with Bathsheba (2Sam. 12:15-16, 22). God accepted David's fast and forgave him. In the Old Testament (Jonah 3:5-8,10), Nineveh, a gentile nation, was guilty of sin and God had intended to destroy their city. Incredibly, the King commanded every person and beast to fast to beseech God's mercy and to forgive them. "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways, and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it."

Not all examples of fasting in the Bible are for repentance. The whole church in the New Testament fasted for the ministry of Paul and Barnabus (Acts

Shelter in the Word is designed to help people become self-sufficient in their Bible study, so that they may be able to serve the Almighty Creator, and receive salvation through His Son. *Shelter* is not affiliated with any denomination, and teaches that eternal life is available to **individuals** who live by the Bible, regardless of their belonging to a church organization.

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Circulation: 2100

Send subscription and literature requests to the nearest address. (If you want to help defer our costs, please write checks to the name shown below).

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Shelter in the Word is published 6 times a year. **Subscriptions are free** to people who request the publication and are genuinely interested in it. The publisher reserves the right to refuse subscriptions. *Shelter in the Word* is published by Norman Edwards, 3690 Bath Rd, Perry, Michigan 48872 (this is **not** a mailing address). Postmaster: send address changes to *Shelter in the Word,* PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107.

13:2-3). Fasting was part of appointing the elders of the church (Acts 14:23). Daniel fasted that God would deliver Israel from slavery (Dan. 9:3). A gentile king even fasted for Daniel when he was thrown into a lion's den (Dan. 6:18). Moses fasted 40 days and nights to draw close to God (Ex. 34:27-28). King David fasted for his sick friends (Ps 35:13). Christ said the only way to cast out difficult demons was through prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29). Anna the Prophetess (Luke 2:3) fasted and prayed night and day (she was 84 years old!). Clearly, all Christians should fast. I believe that if someone has a sickness where fasting would harm their health, they can still fast with some nourishment during the fast. In some health conditions (diabetics, etc.), one may want to consult a doctor for medical advice before fasting.

In the days of the Apostles, fasting was connected in one way or another to great signs and wonders, miracles, mighty works, and doors being opened for the Gospel. Likewise, I do not believe that God's church today (the body of Christ) will go forth in power to do the Work of God unless it also becomes a fasting and praying church. Yes, God commands Christians to fast, and true Christians will desire to fast for God's righteousness in their lives. 🕮

Fasting Is Not "Penance"

I have fasted a number of times over the years and have certainly drawn closer to God. I have many dozens of friends who have fasted. One thing we have learned is that you cannot fast "so God will do something for you." The idea that "God does things for us when we make ourselves suffer" is not in the Bible—though it is a common concept in many of the world's religions. We fast to be closer to God so we can learn His will, not so He will do our will.

I remember when a church group that I attended asked members to fast because their leader was in poor health. I remember praying during that fast, praising God for his greatness and how easily He could heal the man. I asked God to help me understand why he was sick: Did the man need to learn something? Did the members need to learn something by his sickness? I realized God could let the leader die. Did the members need to learn to rely on God more than their leader? That latter thought stayed on my mind, so I shared it with some others who were fasting. They did not want to hear it. But the leader died not long after, and many others and I learned much from that.

Fast as long as you need to focus your mind on God. One or two days are usually enough. It is medically unsafe to go more than three days without water. Even 1-day waterless fasts can be dangerous in hot weather or if you are working hard. Multi-week fasts with water are possible, but get competent advice before beginning one. Remember, a long fast will not "make God answer you". — NSE

An Answered Fast

By John Eastman

A couple of years ago, my wife and I decided we would build a house and then sell it as part of our financial plan for our retirement security. After almost 2 years of marketing the home we had built, I realized that I needed God's intervention. I decided to fast that God would bless our plans, to beseech God for his mercy and blessings, and to give me understanding about what is His will. It was then that I received an answer. After a few hours of fasting, I noticed there was a message on our phone, which had been placed 3 hours prior to starting my fast. The message was from an unknown woman, as follows:

"How are you, this is (name not clear). I am sharing a thought from the Bible, and I wanted to see if you are interested in listening to an encouraging verse. A scripture is found in Psalms 37:29. Maybe I'll call back when you have time."

The first thing I noticed was that she wanted to share a thought from the Bible with me. And, she indicated it would be an encouraging verse for me. I felt like this might have been an answer I was looking for from God because it would be a verse that would encourage me. I then turned to Psalms 37:29, and found the following:

> The righteous shall inherit the land,
> and dwell in it forever.

Since the Bible interprets the Bible, I turned to a supporting verse about the righteous. I found a verse in Philippians 3:9 (Today's English Version), "…no longer do I have a righteousness of my own, the kind to be gained by obeying the law, I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is based on faith." Here the verse is telling me that I am a righteous person through Christ. So, I understood from Psalms 37:29 that as a righteous person, God would bless me with a house and inheritance and that I would be able to keep it. Forever means two things in the Bible. First, it means for eternity, as God lives forever. Secondly, forever means for as long as I live in the flesh and blood. Here the verse is saying as long as I am flesh and blood that God will bless me with this inheritance.

I believe God has sent me a message that He is going to give me a house and land for an inheritance to be kept as long as I am flesh and blood. The most amazing thing about this phone call is that I never knew this person, a complete stranger, and yet she called and left a message that had to do with the very thing I was fasting about. I have learned that when I fast for anything, it should be done in faith. 🕮

Involvement!

by Tommy Willis

When God tells us to come out of the world He does not mean we are to live a monk's life of isolation from the world. God intended that we become involved.

Just like we give our children problems to solve in school, God knows as we go about the responsibilities and struggles on this planet that we will learn the lessons we need to if we will seek Him out.

I once read a story about a girl raised in a millionaire's home with servants and lawyers to do everything for her; she grew up physically, but remained a child emotionally and intellectually. A great disservice was done to her. She was crippled in life and was not able to function.

God will not do this to us—instead He will see to it that we experience life, so that we will grow and learn from the interaction we have. Yes, even the pain and suffering is for our benefit.

Paul had to learn this vital lesson when he kept asking to be relived of his suffering of the "thorn in the flesh" he had (2Cor 12:7-10). Here it says that he begged God three times that it might depart. Whether it was an illness, injury or enemy is a subject of debate, but what is important is that God could have stopped the suffering and did not. Paul's attitude toward suffering was the key. As he learned how God was working to increase Christ inside of him, he learned to rejoice in the suffering. Having physical afflictions in my own life God has used this scripture to help me many times. The physical affliction continues, but so does the spiritual healing. We <u>may</u> not be delivered physically as Paul was not, but our spiritual deliverance will continue. And this will give us the courage of Christ to face and be involved with life.

Paul goes on to say that he found joy in the infirmities and persecutions—all the interaction with life he came to see that God was working this involvement for the good.

> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28).

This principle of Paul's thorn can apply to <u>every problem</u> that we have to face! We need to keep in mind that God is the Master Arranger, and that He knows just what trial each child needs. So if He allows it to come upon us then He sees we need it. And we should learn to take comfort in this fact.

But the problem is when we are going through trials we often lose sight of this because we draw inward. When we are in suffering and pain we often feel that God is not there. But the trials are what God uses for our growth. And we need to learn to trust in Scriptural facts and not feeling.

There's an element in human reasoning that think its trials are unique, that it is suffering so much more than those around it. We allow the pain to cause us to draw inward and we lose sight of reality. Others around us may be suffering more than we are but we will never see it as we draw inward and can get into a self-pity party.

We need to keep in mind that God is faithful and will not allow us to be tempted above what we can bear (1Cor 10:13). This is an important principle to stay in focus with, because sometimes we feel we are reaching the breaking point.

The more we are involved the more we will grow. It is through the interaction and involvement with life that God brings us along better in our growth pattern. But some would rather run from life; they would rather be a spectator and retreat from the involvement because of the suffering involved. But this hinders them from experiencing the joy also—it's all connected. The same central nervous system that allows us to experience the pain and suffering also allows us to experience the joy and ecstasy. But most people run from the fullness of life they could have.

This line of thinking can shipwreck our faith. Many don't want to endure the suffering of involvement and will give up the race before the end. It's important to understand that "In your patience posses ye your souls" (Luke 21:19).

Of course we need to keep all this in balance, realizing there will be times that we will need space. But our God knows when that time is; and if we will learn to follow the lead of His Spirit then He will see to it when we need a breathing spell; and we will be given a space from that involvement as necessary.

But in the meantime don't allow the suffering to cause you to retreat from life. Let God take you through the growth process that He has in mind for you. And instead of being a spectator God will teach you to face life as a warrior, and have you find the joy of involvement and participation in the arena of life.

> …I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

Remember Paul's thorn: God uses the interaction of this life to bring us the increase of the Life of Christ that we might walk in the fullness of His peace and joy.. 🕮

The History of the English Bible

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John Wycliffe

The first **hand-written** English language manuscripts of the Bible were produced in 1380's AD by Oxford theologian John Wycliff (Wycliffe). Curiously, he was also the inventor of bifocal eyeglasses. Wycliff spent many of his years arguing against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church which he believed to be contrary to the Bible. Though he died a nonviolent death, the Pope was so infuriated by his teachings that 44 years after Wycliff had died, he ordered the bones to be dug-up, crushed, and scattered in the river!

Gutenburg invented the printing press in the 1450's, and the first book to ever be printed was the Bible. It was, however, in Latin rather than English. With the onset of the Reformation in the early 1500's, the first printings of the Bible in the English language were produced—illegally and at great personal risk of those involved.

Gutenburg

William Tyndale

William Tyndale was the Captain of the Army of reformers, and was their spiritual leader. He worked most of his translating years alone, but had help from time to time as God discerned he needed it. Indirectly, he had the help of **Erasmus** in the publication of his Greek and Latin New Testament printed in 1516. Erasmus and the great printer, scholar, and reformer John Froben published the first non-Latin Vulgate text of the Bible in a millennium. Latin was the language for centuries of scholarship and it was understood by virtually every European who could read or write. Erasmus' Latin was not the Vulgate translation of Jerome, but his own fresh rendering of the Greek New Testament text that he had collated from six or seven partial New Testament manuscripts into a complete Greek New Testament.

Erasmus

The Latin that Erasmus translated from the Greek revealed enormous corruptions in the Vulgate's integrity amongst the rank and file scholars, many of whom were already convinced that the established church was doomed by virtue of its evil hierarchy. Pope Leo X's declaration that "the **fable** of Christ was very profitable to him" infuriated the people of God.

With Erasmus' work in 1516, the die was cast.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther declared his intolerance with the Roman Church's corruption on Halloween in 1517, by nailing 95 Theses of Contention to the Wittenberg Door. Luther, who would be exiled in the months following the Diet of Worms Council in 1521 that was designed to martyr him, would translate the New Testament into German from Erasmus' Greek/Latin New Testament and publish it in September of 1522. Simultaneously, William Tyndale would become burdened to translate that same Erasmus text into English. It could not, however, be done in England.

Tyndale showed up on Luther's doorstep in 1525, and by year's end had translated the New Testament into English. Tyndale was fluent in eight languages and is considered by many to be the primary architect of today's English language. Already hunted because of the rumor spread abroad that such a project was underway, inquisitors and bounty hunters were on Tyndale's trail to abort the effort. God foiled their plans, and in 1525/6 Tyndale printed the first English New Testament. They were burned as soon as the Bishop could confiscate them, but copies trickled through and actually ended up in the bedroom of King Henry VIII. The more the King and Bishop resisted its distribution, the more fascinated the public at large became. The church declared it contained thousands of errors as they torched hundreds of New Testaments confiscated by the clergy, while in fact, they burned them because they could find no errors at all. One risked death by burning if caught in mere possession of Tyndale's forbidden books.

Having God's Word available to the public in the language of the common man, English, would have meant disaster to the church. No longer would they control access to the scriptures. If people were able to read the Bible in their own tongue, the

church's income and power would crumble. They could not possibly continue to get away with selling indulgences (the forgiveness of sins) or selling the release of loved ones from a church-manufactured "Purgatory". People would begin to challenge the church's authority if the church were exposed as frauds and thieves. The contradictions between what God's Word said, and what the priests taught, would open the public's eyes and the truth would set them free from the grip of fear that the institutional church held. Salvation through **faith**, not works or donations, would be understood. The need for priests would vanish through the priesthood of all believers. The veneration of church-canonized Saints and Mary would be called into question. The availability of the scriptures in English was the biggest threat imaginable to the wicked church. Neither side would give up without a fight.

The **Tyndale New Testament** was the first ever printed in the English language. Its first printing occurred in 1525/6, but only one complete copy of the first printing exists. Any Edition printed before 1570 is very rare and valuable, particularly pre-1540 editions and fragments. Tyndale's flight was an inspiration to freedom-loving Englishmen who drew courage from the 11 years that he was hunted. Books and Bibles flowed into England in bales of cotton and sacks of flour. In the end, Tyndale was caught: betrayed by an Englishman that he had befriended. Tyndale was incarcerated for 500 days before he was strangled and burned at the stake in 1536. His last words were, **"Lord, open the eyes of the King of England".**

Myles Coverdale and **John Rogers** were loyal disciples the last six years of Tyndale's life, and they carried the project forward and even accelerated it. Coverdale finished translating the Old Testament, and in 1535 he printed the first complete Bible in the English language, making use of Luther's German text and the Latin as sources. Thus, the first complete English Bible was printed on October 4, 1535, and is known as the **Coverdale Bible**.

John Rogers went on to print the second complete English Bible in 1537. He printed it under the pseudonym **"Thomas Matthew"**, as a considerable part of this Bible was the translation of Tyndale, whose writings had been condemned by the English authorities. It is a composite made up of Tyndale's Pentateuch and New Testament (1534-1535 edition) and Coverdale's Bible and a small amount of Roger's own translation of the text. It remains known most commonly as the **Matthews Bible**.

In 1539, **Thomas Cranmer**, the Archbishop of Canterbury, hired Myles Coverdale at the bequest of King Henry VIII to publish the "Great Bible". It became the first English Bible authorized for public use, as it was distributed to every church, chained to the pulpit, and a reader was even provided so that the illiterate could hear the Word of God in plain English. It would seem that William Tyndale's last wish had been granted...just three years after his martyrdom. Cranmer's Bible, published by Coverdale, was known as the **Great Bible** due to its great size: a large pulpit folio measuring over 14 inches tall. Seven editions of this version were printed between April of 1539 and December of 1541.

The ebb and flow of freedom continued through the 1540's...and into the 1550's. The reign of Queen Mary (a.k.a. **"Bloody Mary"**) was the next obstacle to the printing of the Bible in English. She was possessed in her quest to return England to the Roman Church. In 1555, John Rogers ("Thomas Matthew") and Thomas Cranmer were both burned at the stake. Mary went on to burn reformers at the stake by

Bible History Is Vital for Today's Believer

We can look at the history of the Bible to see a powerful example of how God actually works in relatively modern times. We can be sure that He had his hand in the preserving, translating and publishing of His Word. Studying Bible history is more useful than studying church history: church groups come and go, and there is always the question of how much of God's work did a group do versus how much did thy just build themselves?

Studying Bible History quickly shows that God works through people from a variety of backgrounds who are not perfect. Every translation produced had errors of several kinds. Some of the men had character flaws. They certainly did not all believe the same doctrines that you believe today. Yet nearly all of these men claimed to have a great personal faith in God **and indeed took action** based on that faith. They all suffered and some were killed because of their action. But they took the Bible out of the hands of only the educated hierarchy, and gave it to the common man. Because of their work, all people can read the Bible today.

Let us learn about the people who served God to bring us the Bible, and think about the action that we should be taking to serve God today! — NSE

the hundreds for the "crime" of being a Protestant. This era was known as the Marian Exile, and the refugees fled from England with little hope of ever seeing their home or friends again.

John Calvin

In the 1550's, the Church at Geneva, Switzerland, was very sympathetic to the reformer refugees and was one of only a few safe havens for a desperate people. Many of them met in Geneva, led by **Myles Coverdale** and **John Foxe** (publisher of the famous Foxe's Book of Martyrs, which is to this day the only exhaustive reference work on the persecution and martyrdom of Early Christians and Protestants from the first century up to the mid-16th century), as well as Thomas Sampson and William Whittingham. There, with the protection of **John Calvin** and **John Knox**, the Church of Geneva determined to produce a Bible that would educate their families while they continued in exile.

John Knox

The New Testament was completed in 1557, and the complete Bible was first published in 1560. It became known as the **Geneva Bible**. Due to a passage in Genesis describing the clothing that God fashioned for Adam and Eve upon expulsion from the Garden of Eden as "Breeches" (an antiquated form of "Britches"), some people referred to the Geneva Bible as the Breeches Bible.

The Geneva Bible was the first Bible to add verses to the chapters, so that referencing specific passages would be easier. Every chapter was also accompanied by extensive marginal notes and references so thorough and complete that the Geneva Bible is also considered the first English "Study Bible". William Shakespeare quotes thousands of times in his plays from the Geneva translation of the Bible. The Geneva Bible became the Bible of choice for over 100 years of English speaking Christians. Between 1560 and 1644 at least 144 editions of this Bible were published. Examination of the 1611 King James Bible shows clearly that its translators were influenced much more by the Geneva Bible, than by any other source. The Geneva Bible itself retains over **90%** of William Tyndale's original English translation. The Geneva in fact, remained more popular than the King James Version until **decades** after its original release in 1611! The Geneva holds the honor of being the first Bible taken to America, and the Bible of the Puritans and Pilgrims.

With the end of Queen Mary's bloody rein, the reformers could safely return to England. The Anglican Church, under Queen Elizabeth I, reluctantly tolerated the printing and distribution of Geneva version Bibles in England. The marginal notes, which were vehemently against the institutional Church of the day, did not rest well with the rulers of the day, however. Another version, one with a less inflammatory tone was desired. In 1568, the **Bishop's Bible** was introduced. Despite 19 editions being printed between 1568 and 1606, the version never gained much of a foothold of popularity among the people. The Geneva may have simply been too much to compete with.

By the 1580's, the Roman Catholic Church saw that it had lost the battle to suppress the will of God: that His Holy Word be available in the English language. In 1582, the Church of Rome surrendered their fight for "Latin only" and decided that if the Bible was to be available in English, they would at least have an official Roman Catholic English translation. And so, using the Latin Vulgate as a source text, they went on to publish an English Bible with all the distortions and corruptions that Erasmus had revealed and warned of 75 years earlier. Because it was translated at the Roman Catholic College in the city of Rheims, it was known as the **Rheims (or Rhemes) New Testament**. The Old Testament was translated by the Church of Rome in 1609 at the College in the city of Doway (also spelled Douay and Douai). The combined product is commonly referred to as the **"Doway/Rheims" Version**.

In 1589, Dr. Fulke of Cambridge published the **"Fulke's Refutation"**, in which he printed in parallel columns the Bishops Version along side the Rheims Version, attempting to show the error and distortion of the Roman Church's corrupt compromise of an English version of the Bible.

With the death of Queen Elizabeth I, Prince James VI of Scotland became King James I of England. The Protestant clergy approached the new King in 1604 and announced their desire for a new translation to replace the Bishop's Bible, first printed in 1568. They knew that the Geneva Version had won the hearts of the people because of its excellent scholarship, accuracy, and exhaustive commentary. However, they did not want the controversial marginal notes (proclaiming the Pope an Anti-Christ, etc.) Essentially, the leaders of the church desired a Bible for the people, with scriptural references only for word clarification when multiple meanings were possible.

This "translation to end all translations" (for a while at least) was the result of the combined effort of about fifty scholars. They took into consideration: The Tyndale New Testament, The Coverdale Bible,

The Matthews Bible, The Great Bible, The Geneva Bible, and even the Rheims New Testament. The great revision of the Bishop's Bible had begun. From 1605 to 1606 the scholars engaged in private research. From 1607 to 1609 the work was assembled. In 1610 the work went to press, and in 1611 the first of the huge (16 inch tall) pulpit folios known as **"The King James Bible"** came off the printing press.

A typographical error in Ruth 3:15 rendered the pronoun "He" instead of the correct "She" in that verse. This caused some of the 1611 First Editions to be known by collectors as **"He" Bibles**, and others as **"She" Bibles**.

It took many years for it to overtake the Geneva Bible in popularity with the people, but eventually the King James Version became the Bible of the English people. It became the most printed book in the history of the world. In fact, for around 250 years...until the appearance of the Revised Version of 1881...the King James Version reigned without a rival.

Although the first Bible printed in America was done in the native Algonquin Indian Language (by **John Eliot** in 1663), the first English language Bible to be printed in America (by **Robert Aitken** in 1782) was a King James Version. In 1791, **Isaac Collins** vastly improved upon the quality and size of the typesetting of American Bibles and produced the first "Family Bible" printed in America...also a King James Version. Also in 1791, **Isaiah Thomas** published the first Illustrated Bible printed in America...in the King James Version.

In 1841, the **English Hexapla New Testament** was printed. This wonderful textual comparison tool shows in parallel columns: The 1380 Wycliff, 1534 Tyndale, 1539 Great, 1557 Geneva, 1582 Rheims, and 1611 King James versions of the entire New Testament...with the original Greek at the top of the page.

Consider the following textual comparison of John 3:16 as they appear in many of these famous printings of the English Bible:

> 1st Ed. King James (1611): "For God so loued the world, that he gaue his only begotten Sonne: that whosoeuer beleeueth in him, should not perish, but haue euerlasting life."
>
> Rheims (1582): "For so God loued the vvorld, that he gaue his only-begotten sonne: that euery one that beleeueth in him, perish not, but may haue life euerlasting"
>
> Geneva (1557): "For God so loueth the world, that he hath geuen his only begotten Sonne: that none that beleue in him, should peryshe, but haue euerlasting lyfe."
>
> Great Bible (1539): "For God so loued the worlde, that he gaue his only begotten sonne, that whosoeuer beleueth in him, shulde not perisshe, but haue euerlasting lyfe."
>
> Tyndale (1534): "For God so loveth the worlde, that he hath geven his only sonne, that none that beleve in him, shuld perisshe: but shuld have everlastinge lyfe."
>
> Wycliff (1380): "for god loued so the world; that he gaf his oon bigetun sone, that eche man that bileueth in him perisch not: but haue euerlastynge liif,"

It is possible to go back to manuscripts earlier than Wycliff, but the language found can only be described as the "Anglo-Saxon" roots of English, and would not be easily recognizable as similar to the English spoken today.

For example, the Anglo-Saxon pre-English root language of the year **995 AD** yields a manuscript that quotes John 3:16 as:

> "God lufode middan-eard swa, dat he seade his an-cennedan sunu, dat nan ne forweorde de on hine gely ac habbe dat ece lif."

I hope that this short essay has served to enhance your appreciation for the Bible of our language. 🕮

Comment from the Authors

Should you wish to learn more...or see full-color pictures of all of these Bibles...or even purchase any of these ancient treasures, please visit our online Book Vault. We also have a special information section on selected Four-Century Old English Bibles from under $1,500 on our Family Heirloom Page. Of course, the **most** affordable way to begin a Bible collection is to obtain a single leaf from one or more of these famous Bibles. Visit our unique online Giftshop for more information, pictures, and prices. You may also wish to read about the chronology of the famous printings of the Bible on our 2,500 Year Bible Timeline Page. May the Lord richly bless you as you study and appreciate His Word.

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Time-Line of Steps Bringing Us an English Bible

400 BC: Completion of all original Hebrew manuscripts that make up the 39 books of the Old Testament.

200 BC: Completion of the first Septuagint Greek manuscripts which contain the 39 Old Testament books and 14 Apocrypha Books.

1st Century AD: Completion of all original Greek Manuscripts which make up the 27 books of the New Testament.

390 AD: Jerome's Latin Vulgate manuscripts produced which contain all 80 books (39 Old Test. + 14 Apocrypha + 27 New Test).

500 AD: Scriptures have been translated into over 500 languages.

600 AD: LATIN was the only language allowed for scripture by the institutional church.

995 AD: Anglo-Saxon (early roots of English Language) translations of the New Testament produced.

1384 AD: Wycliffe is the first person to produce a (hand-written) manuscript copy of the complete Bible—all 80 books—translating from the Latin Vulgate.

1455 AD: Gutenberg invents the printing press; books may now be mass-produced instead of individually hand-written. The first book ever printed is Gutenberg's Bible in Latin.

1516 AD: Erasmus produces a Greek/Latin Parallel New Testament which will be used extensively to produce translations into many languages.

1522 AD: Martin Luther's German New Testament.

1525 AD: William Tyndale's New Testament; the first New Testament to be Printed in the English Language. It was translated largely from Greek, with only minimal use of the Latin Vulgate. Excepting the Douay-Rheims, all of the Bibles listed here up to and including the King James were essentially expansions and revisions of Tyndale's work.

1535 AD: Myles Coverdale's Bible; the first complete Bible to be printed in the English Language (80 Books: O.T. & N.T. & Apocrypha).

1537 AD: Matthews Bible; the second Complete Bible to be printed in English. Done by John Rogers, who used the alias "Thomas Matthew" to avoid persecution for his work (80 books).

1539 AD: The "Great Bible" printed; the first English Language Bible to be authorized for public use (80 books).

1560 AD: The Geneva Bible printed; the first English Language Bible to add numbered verses to each chapter (80 books).

1568 AD: The Bishops Bible printed; the Bible of which the King James was a revision (80 books).

1609 AD: The Douay Old Testament is added to the Rheimes New Testament (of 1582) making the first complete English Catholic Bible; translated from the Latin Vulgate (80 books).

1611 AD: The King James Bible printed; originally with all 80 books. The Apocrypha was officially removed in 1885 leaving only 66 books.

1782 AD: Robert Aitken's Bible; the first English Language Bible (a King James Version without Apocrypha) to be printed in America.

1791 AD: Isaac Collins and Isaiah Thomas respectively produce the first family Bible and first illustrated Bible printed in America. Both were King James Versions, with all 80 books.

1808 AD: Jane Aitken's Bible (daughter of Robert Aitken); the first Bible to be printed by a woman.

1833 AD: Noah Webster's Bible; after producing his famous dictionary, Webster printed his own revision of the King James Bible.

1841 AD: English Hexapla New Testament; an early textual comparison showing the Greek and 6 famous English translations in parallel columns.

1846 AD: The illuminated Bible; the most lavishly Illustrated Bible printed in America. A King James Version, with all 80 books.

1885 AD: The "Revised Version" Bible; the first major English revision of the King James Bible.

1901 AD: The "American Standard Version"; the first major American revision of the King James Bible.

1971 AD: The "New American Standard Bible" (NASB) is published as a "modern and accurate word for word English translation" of the Bible—<u>not</u> a KJV revision.

1973 AD: The "New International Version" (NIV) is published as a "modern and accurate phrase for phrase English translation" of the Bible—<u>not</u> a KJV revision.

1982 AD: The "New King James Version" (NKJV) is published as a "modern English version maintaining the original style of the King James." 🕮

Lessons from the Book of Esther

by Pam Dewey

There are many popular Old Testament Bible stories that almost every adult who ever attended a Protestant church even for a short time knows about—particularly if they ever attended Sunday School classes classes as an impressionable youngster. Who can forget "Miz Lois" (insert your own teacher's name) and her Flannelgraph presentations of *David and Goliath*, *Daniel in the Lion's Den*, *The Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace*, *Moses in the Bulrushes*, *Joseph and the Coat of Many Colors*.?

Then again, who can remember Esther, Mordecai and Haman? I don't know about your experience, but as a child growing up in the 1950s, those folks were not on my list of Famous Bible Characters. Perhaps the Flannelgraph people just didn't produce a set of figures for the Book of Esther, so it wasn't really my Sunday School teacher's fault.

You would think that this problem would be solved for adults, since most church Pastors don't use Flannelgraphs in their sermons. So what kept **them** from the Book of Esther? I don't know. But I do know that for twenty years I was in churches that had a weekly worship service with a sermon, and a weekly Bible Study session on a separate day. Thus I can account for having listened to nearly 2000—maybe more—messages and lessons based on the Bible. And I can't remember even **one** that had as its theme the events or characters of the Book of Esther.

Given the few female role models in the Bible, this should be somewhat surprising. Why didn't ministers take advantage of the story of Esther to inspire women, young and old, in the churches with messages that would emphasize the importance of the role of a Godly woman in the unfolding plan of God? Again, I don't know, but it seems that the church group I attended featured mostly negative examples of women in sermons or Bible Studies:

1. Eve, who was pointed out as being the cause of all the sin of the world because she seduced her husband into eating the forbidden fruit—in sermons about men being heads of their households (which seemed to gloss over any guilt that Adam may have had coming in the matter).
2. Sarah, who was pointed out as having called Abraham "Lord"—in sermons on husband/wife relationships.
3. Miriam, who was pointed out as being struck with leprosy for questioning Moses' authority—in sermons on respecting church authorities.
4. Bathsheba, who was blamed for David's sin of adultery because she was taking a bath while he was spying on her—in sermons about modesty.
5. Jezebel, who was pointed out as being evil and wearing eye-shadow—in sermons about wearing makeup.
6. Martha, Lazarus's sister, who was maligned for being a fuss-budget—I'm not sure the exact point of such sermons, but perhaps they were about paying attention during sermons (like Martha's sister Mary did at the feet of Jesus).

There you have it—my early memories of Biblical role models for women. And what about the men? They were regaled in sermons and Bible Studies with positive role models galore—the bravery and faith of little David against Goliath; the steadfastness of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in face of the fiery furnace; the triumph over adversity of Joseph; the fiery zeal of John the Baptist; and many, many more.

My daughter Ramona asked me about this disparity one day recently, puzzled why we had never heard any messages about Esther in church. In fact, it wasn't just in church settings that Esther has been ignored. Hollywood, where numerous epic movies and mini-series with Bible themes have been brought to movie and TV screens, has ignored her story too. This particularly puzzled Ramona, as she had recently read the Book of Esther again and noted what a dynamite plot it had. She thought how much the setting in Persia and the colorful characters would lend themselves to the kind of gorgeous historical sets and period costumes that Hollywood reveled in for a while in the 1950s-1960s, such as in the movies *Ten Commandments* and *David and Bathsheba*. Yet Hollywood totally ignored Esther too.

Only in Jewish communities is the book and the characters remembered much. The Jewish festival of **Purim** is celebrated in late winter each year (March 9 in 2001) in memory of the events of the Book of Esther, which tell of the great delivery of the Jewish people during the reign of King Xerxes of

Persia in the fifth century B.C. As part of that commemoration, annual plays based on the story of Esther are staged in almost every local synagogue. Members of the audience are given noisy instruments, and encouraged to rattle, bang, toot and clatter them whenever the name of the villain of the story, Haman, is mentioned, drowning out that hated name. This is particularly exciting for the children of the congregation.

Some more-contemporary synagogues even take a few liberties with the plot—at least one I am aware of re-stages it each year to be a musical parody of famous Broadway musicals. I have seen their hilarious performances of "My Scared Lady" and "Bye Bye Haman", with the tunes from *My Fair Lady* and *Bye Bye Birdie* faithfully reproduced with new words and puns that fit the Esther story.

But back in the Christian Churches, Esther continues to be a forgotten woman. This is a shame, for there is so much to learn from her story.

Starring Queen Esther

If we were to "cast" a movie about Queen Esther, what sort of actress would we get to play the part? If you think like I do, the idea of someone being a queen brings up an image of someone like Elizabeth Taylor in her role as Cleopatra in the movie by that name. I picture an elegant, mature-but-youthful actress, say 30 years old or so. There is only one problem with that picture—it doesn't fit historical reality. The reality is that, at the beginning of the Book of Esther, Esther is a young virgin. In those days, this quite likely meant not much more than 14 years old! And given the chronology of the story, she was likely less than age 20 even by the end of the story. This sheltered young woman, barely out of girlhood, was thrust into a setting where she ultimately had influence with one of the most powerful men in the world, King Xerxes of Persia. All of this was at an age when most modern young women are still concerned with such things as school proms and studying for geometry exams. What incredible qualities God must have seen in such a young woman to entrust the rescue of His People to her courage, wisdom, resourcefulness, self-control and faith.

If you have not read this exciting story recently, let's recap just the highlights of the plot:

The Jews had been in exile for many years in the land of Babylon. When power changed to the hands of the Persians, they were still there. At the beginning of the story of Esther, the King of Persia is displeased with his queen, and removes her from her royal position. Advisors suggest that all the fairest young maidens in the land be brought to the King over a period of time that he might choose a new queen from among them. (Yes, this may well be the original source of such elements in folk tales like *Cinderella*.)

The young Jewess Hadassah, whose Persian name is Esther, is among the young maidens brought to the palace. At the insistence of her guardian, Uncle Mordecai, she conceals her national identity. After winning the favor of the King, she becomes Queen.

Meanwhile, Uncle Mordecai runs afoul of the evil courtier Haman, who decides in revenge to trick the King into declaring a sentence of death on all Jews in the kingdom, to be carried out at a future date to be decided by lot. (The word "purim" in Hebrew means "lots", thus the name of the festival of *Purim*.)

Mordecai learns of the plot, and alerts Esther. She, at great personal risk, decides to accept the role of confronting the King about the plot and begging for mercy for her people. She is successful in this matter. Through a series of fortuitous events (no doubt orchestrated by God) and her wise handling of the circumstances, Haman is shown before the King to be the villain that he really is. In the end, Haman is hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. And the Jews of the kingdom are saved from extinction.

The Lessons

There are many ways to focus on the contents of the Book of Esther. In spite of the fact that most pastors and teachers seem to ignore the book and the character, there have been a few books written specifically about Esther. And radio-teacher Chuck Swindoll has done a whole series of programs going through the book verse by verse.

The purpose of this article is to encourage readers to go back and read through the Book of Esther with a new perspective. Below are five specific general principles/lessons which I have gleaned from the book. It is left to the reader to contemplate how these principles might apply to us as Christians!

1. God has sometimes used armies and sometimes flashy miracles in order to rescue His People. But He is not limited to those strategies. He can just as easily use one obscure person—male, such as Joseph, or female, such as Esther—and manipulate the circumstances around them to allow them to be the agent of His salvation.
2. In our western nations, we appreciate living in basically democratic societies. And rightly so. Christians can thereby be unusually free to worship according to their consciences, and

free to obey God without much fear that such obedience will run afoul of the government in most circumstances. But God never in the Bible destroys kingdoms **specifically because the form of government is a dictatorship** so his servants could have the kind of freedoms we enjoy. Instead He enabled His people to function right within whatever system they found themselves in. Even Paul notes this:

> Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so (1Cor 7:20-21).

Paul is not thereby telling us to give up the freedom we have. He is indicating that God can use us, just as He used Esther, wherever we find ourselves, no matter the nature of the government.

3. Serving God and fulfilling the role He called you to is possible even in an environment where almost everyone around you is a heathen. And it can be done without attempting to change everyone around you. Joseph, Esther and Daniel all served totally pagan kings and won favor with them by their exemplary conduct and example. And they were thereby able to accomplish great deeds.
4. God can use young women, like Esther, just as easily as young warriors, like David, to accomplish His plans for His people.
5. It is comforting to know that God can redeem people with unpleasant pasts and use them to advance His plans for His people—witness Rahab the harlot and Paul, the persecutor of Christians. But in some cases His plans particularly call for those who have kept themselves undefiled physically and/or spiritually. Certainly in the case of Esther, it would have been impossible for her to fulfill God's plan if she had not been a chaste young woman. This brings to mind another chaste young woman, no doubt as young as Esther when she began her role in an even greater plan of salvation—Mary, the mother of Jesus. Just as noted above about Esther, what incredible qualities Mary must have exhibited even as a young woman barely out of girlhood, to be considered mature enough for the responsibility of raising the Messiah!

Epilogue

As for movies about the Book of Esther, there finally is one out on video now. It isn't quite the Hollywood epic that Ramona and I had hoped for, but it is unique. It is the latest release in the extremely popular series of children's inspirational videos called *Veggietales*. The stars of these videos are computer-animated vegetables and fruits. In this case, Esther is played by a lovely young leek, Mordecai is a grape, other parts are played by tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, celery, peas and more. Yes, it's the sort of production that must be seen to be appreciated. My young grandchildren, ages six and eight, think it is touching and terrific.

It is a good thing that producers are recognizing the value of sharing with a wide audience the timeless lessons in the Book of Esther. 🕮

Norman Notes on Edwards Esther

I think we need more articles like this with positive messages to women from the Bible. I would like to make the following additions:

1. Esther videos are available from Christian Book Distributors (800-247-4784, www.Christianbook.com). All are animated except for the one noted. **Tyndale House:** *Esther and the King, Superbook Video #8,* ISBN: 0842368140, $7.50; also *Esther and the King, Vol. 08,* 1982, ISBN: 0842368760, $5.59. **Chordant Distribution Group:** *Esther: The Bible Collection Series*, 91 minutes, real actors, ISBN: 8474024587, $24.98; also *Queen Esther, Greatest Adventure Video Series* (Hanna Barberra series—my children like it), 1991, ISBN: 8474003652, $6.50. **VeggieTales Video Series Word Entertainment, Inc:** *Esther: The Girl Who Became Queen,* ISBN: 801539869X, $9.99. **Vision Video:** *The Story of Esther, Heroes of the Bible Series #6,* ISBN: 1563641240, $5.95.
2. Another lesson of this story: ultimate commitment is often required. Esther could have been put to death for coming before the king without being summoned, but she did it because she believed it was right. There is no religious talk; she just did it. A modern example, though less dramatic might be Linda Tripp. She exposed an evil leader, having personal knowledge that others who opposed the Clintons, such as Vince Foster and Jerry Parks, died in very mysterious circumstances (see www.sebo.net/tripp.html).
3. When God punishes his people by delivering them to a foreign power, they will not succeed in rebelling against it (Jer 27:1-17). At other times, God blesses his people for removing corrupt rulers who should not be there. See the next article.

A Tale of Three Women

by Norman Edwards

Which would you rather be? A queen ruling an entire nation? A princess who had to live among evil leaders? Or a nurse in the royal nursery? In which position could you best serve God?

If you want more information before answering those questions, you are probably exercising wisdom. The Bible contains a story about three such women—two good, and one bad. As we read through this brief story, imagine what it was like to be there. The first woman was Atheliah:

> When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family (2Kngs 11:1).

Most women have a great capacity for kindness and love toward others, but when they lose that, they can become as cruel as any male dictator. Here, Athaliah killed many of her relatives in order to become the unchallenged queen of the land.

> But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes, who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah; so he was not killed (2Kngs 11:2).

Jehosheba is only mentioned in this verse and is seldom considered one of the heroines of the Bible, but she certainly deserves to be. She did not have time to carefully think out this act and consider all the possibilities. Athaliah did not send a note saying: "we plan to execute all the royal family tomorrow at sundown, please be ready." Jehosheba undoubtedly learned of this evil plot just before it happened, and took quick action at great risk to her own life. How she did it, we do not know. Joash was just a year-old baby at the time. She may have concealed him in her clothing or in some kind of container—praying that he would not make a sound as they passed the soldiers coming to kill everyone.

Jehosheba took the additional kindness of making sure the child's nurse was with him. When kings and queens are busy ruling (or partying), the task of raising their children frequently went to a nurse. To the child, she was more like his mother.

We do not even know the nurse's name, but she also deserves to be one of the heroines in the Bible. She would have almost certainly died a horrible death if queen Athaliah had ever found out what she was doing. How long did this nurse have to live in this state—caring for a baby that could cost her life?

> He remained hidden with his nurse at the temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled the land (2Kngs 11:3).

How one raises a young child in hiding for six years is difficult to imagine. Toddlers run around, they make noise, they get into things, and they tell strangers their name. It was not likely that Athaliah would ever see Joash and his nurse at God's temple because she did not worship there—she served the false god Baal. But she certainly had many spies, some of which certainly went to the temple to see what they could learn. Nevertheless, this unknown nurse raised that nation's "most important baby" for six years in hiding. Her hard work paid off.

> In the seventh year Jehoiada sent for the commanders of units of a hundred, the Carites and the guards and had them brought to him at the temple of the LORD. He made a covenant with them and put them under oath at the temple of the LORD. Then he showed them the king's son (2Kngs 11:4).

Apparently, even these loyal commanders did not know about Joash until this time. Today, women who spend nearly all of their time with children long for a few moments to get away and have some adult company. Imagine raising a child for six years and only being able to talk to a very few people about it!

A Woman's Work Saved the Nation

Verses 5-11 explain the plan of Jehoiada, the high priest to bring extra guards into the temple without anyone knowing. Then:

> Jehoiada brought out the king's son and put the crown on him; he presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!" When Athaliah heard the noise made by the guards and the people, she went to the people at the temple of the LORD. She looked and there was the king, standing by the pillar, as the custom

was. The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her robes and called out, "Treason! Treason!" Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders of units of a hundred, who were in charge of the troops: "Bring her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest had said, "She must not be put to death in the temple of the LORD." So they seized her as she reached the place where the horses enter the palace grounds, and there she was put to death.

Jehosheba and Joash's nurse must have been proud to see that their daring acts and hard work paid off. Even though Joash was too young to actually rule, the people of Judah always had kings that were descendants of previous kings and Joash was all they needed to depose the evil Athaliah. As a result, the people turned to God in a way they had not for years:

> Jehoiada then made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they would be the LORD's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people. All the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. Then Jehoiada the priest posted guards at the temple of the LORD. He took with him the commanders of hundreds, the Carites, the guards and all the people of the land, and together they brought the king down from the temple of the LORD and went into the palace, entering by way of the gate of the guards. The king then took his place on the royal throne, and all the people of the land rejoiced. And the city was quiet, because Athaliah had been slain with the sword at the palace.

God Remembers When They Forget

Did the people give credit to Jehosheba and Joash's nurse for deliverance from Athaliah? King Solomon once said: "Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man" (Eccl 9:15). Unfortunately, poor wise women seem to be remembered even less than poor wise men. But there is nothing to worry about. Isaiah prophesied that Christ would come:

> …And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor… (Isa 11:3-4, NKJV).

We can all rest assured that Christ will not forget what we have done and reward us accordingly:

> And if you address as Father him who judges without favoritism according to each individual's deeds, live out the time of your exile here in reverent awe (1Pet 1:17, NJB).
>
> There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28).

In this tale of three women, we can see that the one who potentially had the most opportunity to do good, Athaliah, did evil. Whereas Jehosheba and Joash's nurse, who had, by comparison, very little authority, went above and beyond their duty. If they had simply done nothing and went along with the government—not resisting the killing of the royal family, nobody would have ever faulted them for it. After all, what can two women do against a bunch of armed soldiers? But through bravery (somehow escaping the soldiers) and patient endurance (raising a baby in hiding for six years), they made it possible for Jehoiada and other dedicated people to remove an evil queen and to restore the worship of the true God to the land. 🕮

A Beautiful Prayer

author unknown

I asked God to take away my pain. God said, "No. It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up".

I asked God to make my handicapped child whole. God said, "No. Her spirit is whole, her body is only temporary."

I asked God to grant me patience. God said, "No. Patience is a byproduct of tribulations; It isn't granted, it is learned."

I asked God to give me happiness. God said, "No. I give you blessings. Happiness is up to you."

I asked God to spare me pain. God said, "No. Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me."

I asked God to make my spirit grow. God said, "No. You must grow on your own, but I will prune you to make you fruitful."

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. God said, "No, I will give you life so that you may enjoy all things."

I ask God to help me **love** others, as much as he loves me. God said, "Ahhhh, Finally you have the idea."

This day is yours, don't throw it away! May God bless you. "To the world you might be one person, But to one person you just might be the world."

News of Interest to Christians

Huge Collection of Sermons

A long-time acquaintance of mine made a new website: **www.heartheword.net**. It contains links to other sites with many thousands of audio sermons. Obviously, there will be both wheat and chaff (good and bad) on these sites. But if one sermon is not biblical or not edifying, you are just a mouse-click away from another one. For the person with Internet access and time to listen, there are more sermons to hear than one could finish in a lifetime. Not that one would want to spend his or her life only listening to sermons, but for certain areas of study or personal encouragement they may be very helpful. — NSE

Relieving Christian Discrimination

A March 5, 2001 article by Jason Pierce, a CNS Editorial Assistant of Religion Today, showed a promising trend in court decisions that affect our nation. For 30 years, it has been difficult for Christian or Bible-centered clubs to use school facilities for meetings—even though other religious, "spiritual" and "philosophical" organizations have had access to such facilities.

The Mission Viejo, California, Board of Education voted to prohibit Bible clubs from meeting on their campus or being recognized as official school organizations. In 1997, High School Student Justin Van Schoick filed a lawsuit against the Saddleback Valley Unified School District when they refused to let him start a club for Christian athletes. A lower court upheld the school's ban, but Pacific Justice Institute's attorney, John Mendoza, appealed. The appellate court unanimously reversed the ruling, granting equal access to all religious groups at public schools.

Christian and Bible organizations were rejected from public schools years ago with arguments (probably faulty) against separation of church and state. During the last 30 years, Buddhist, Moslem, spiritist and numerous other clubs and organizations have proliferated at public schools. It is obvious that the use of school facilities for these voluntary groups is not forcing religious beliefs on any of the students. Allowing Bible based groups to use these facilities will not change that equation.

It all seems so simple and obvious. But without the diligence of a high school student, Justin Van Schoick, starting the club and then working through with the lawsuit, this decision would never have happened. Also, without the work of the Pacific Justice Institute, (916-857-6900, www.pacificjustice.org), the appeal would not have been become the policy for so many people. — NSE

Alan Keyes on U.N. Danger to USA

I receive many forwarded e-mail messages everyday. Recently, I received one from Alan Keyes, whom I recognized as a former Republican candidate for the President of the USA. The message title was: **New U.N. Court Threatens Our Rights!** At first it sounded like some of the un-verifiable "conspiracy theory" messages that I receive, but this one was possible to track down—the United Nations web site had the documents for all to see:

http://www.un.org/law/icc/index.html

http://www.un.org/law/icc/statute/romefra.htm

The second website is the main document of the ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT. It contains 128 articles and is nearly 30,000 words. It references additional supporting documents. It is rather complex, but nothing that the average believer could not figure out with the right amount of time and patience.

A quick Internet search revealed some sites that agreed with Mr. Keyes' letter and others that did not. But neither Mr. Keyes' letter nor the disagreeing sites were very good about referring to the actual articles of the STATUTE. I have reprinted Mr. Keyes' letter below *[with supporting comments in italics within brackets]*. From my study of the documents, Mr. Keyes was largely right. And there are even more serious problems that he did not point out:

> Dear Friend:
>
> You need to know how dangerously close the U.N. is to threatening our basic rights and liberties as Americans. You know of the scandals, impeachment and national security failures of Bill Clinton—and the shameful pardons he issued. But there is a ticking 'time bomb' of the Clinton 'legacy' you may have never heard of—even though it could demolish the foundation of freedom if we take no action.
>
> That 'time bomb' is the United Nations International Criminal Court Treaty. In 1998, delegates from 160 countries met in Rome to plan an International Criminal Court (ICC) *[documents were completed July 17, 1978]*. This court:

- would not allow trial by jury. All cases are heard and verdicts rendered by a panel of judges. Americans could be tried by judges from China, Libya, Iran, or anywhere else hostile to our citizens and values; *[Apparently true, articles 34-36]*
- would not allow the accused to confront their accusers; *[Could be true: trial is normally allowed in the presence of accusers, but judges have complete authority to decide that the accused is "disruptive" and remove him from the court-room" see article 63]*
- would let persons being tried to be held in prison indefinitely, because no bail may be set *[The word "bail" never appears in the document. Article 60 says nobody should be detained for an "unreasonable period", but does not define the period and gives complete authority to a pre-trial chamber to decide how long to hold someone. If they decided to hold them till they died, there appears to be no remedy.]*;
- would send convicted persons to serve their prison time in any country it chose. Americans could be sentenced to jail time in Cuba, Cambodia, Rwanda, or wherever! *[Articles 103-107 confirm this and state that the person can be transferred between countries at any time. I cannot find any guarantee that a person will be returned to their original country when their sentence ends.]*
- is run by judges and prosecutors who are answerable to no one! No appeal of the judges' verdict is possible! *[Article 46 makes it possible to remove judges and prosecutors; articles 34 and 39 make provision for separate appeals judges, but the whole concept of this court is flawed.]*

A perfect example of how such a court will destroy fundamental rights occurred when the European Union fired a British economist for writing an article that criticized its plans for one European currency. When the economist appealed to the European Court of Justice *[a different court but using similar principles.]*, that court ruled that the European Union could lawfully suppress political criticism of itself and its leading figures, and punish people who 'damaged the institution's image.'

Bill Clinton himself signed on to the ICC treaty in the closing days of his administration *[December 31, 2000, the last possible day for signing]*. And even though the U.S. Senate has refused (so far) to consider approving it, the U.N. has announced it will begin implementing the treaty as soon as it has 60 signatures in favor of it—including the signature of Bill Clinton *[At this writing the web site lists 139 signatures, but only 36 ratifications by countries and its status is listed as "NOT IN FORCE". Article 126 says it is not in effect until the "60th instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession". According to their records, the USA has supplied no such instrument.]*

We need to WIPE OUT any U.S. participation in this tyrannical treaty. Please join us in a three-pronged effort.

1) go to the website www.conservativepetitions.com to send the petition I am sponsoring to President Bush, calling on him to repudiate this treaty NOW so this 'time bomb' doesn't blow up in our faces.

2) Email Congressman Ron Paul directly, letting him know you are behind his effort to introduce a resolution in Congress opposing the International Criminal Court and calling on the President to repudiate it. We'll email you the address for this, along with a statement of that you can just copy, paste, and forward to Ron Paul, as soon as you sign the petition to the President.

Next, please forward this email to everyone you know! It is imperative you help spread it wide and far so as much pressure is put on the President as possible to repudiate this horrendous 'treaty.'

Thank you for acting promptly.

— Alan Keyes, www.declaration.net

Even though Mr. Keyes' analysis does seem to have mistakes, he is right in insisting that the USA (or any other major country) should not get involved in this STATUTE. The governing body that elects the judges and the Prosecutors is an "Assembly of States Parties" (nations) where each participating nation has one representative and one vote (articles 36 and 112). Larger nations have no more lawful control than small nations, though they are required to pay for the operations based upon their wealth (article 117).

The issue is not: "Should real criminals be tried and convicted?" Everyone but the criminals would probably say, "Yes." The issue is: "Is this STATUTE likely to produce better justice in the world or is it likely to introduce a new level of **government intrusion and injustice?**" Indeed, the STATUTE contains thousands of words about stopping crimes and protecting the poor and innocent, but contains only minute checks and balances for controlling abuse of power within itself. The USA is experiencing enough problems with big government that is exceeding its lawful authority. Accepting this statute is a step in the **wrong** direction.

Biblical Basis for Government

The Bible teaches that the Basis of government should be local (Deut 16:18). It is only when a case is too difficult for the local government that it should be taken to a higher court. (Deut 17:8-13). God specifically warned His People against setting a king over themselves (1Sam 8). And if they decided to set a king over themselves, they were given instructions:

> When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," be sure to appoint over you **the king the LORD your God chooses**. He must be **from among your own brothers.** Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite. The king, moreover, **must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself** [used for war] or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." He must **not take many wives**, or his heart will be led astray. He **must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.** When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to **write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law,** taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. 19 It is to be with him, and **he is to read it all the days of his life** so that he may **learn to revere the LORD** his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and **not consider himself better than his brothers** and **[not] turn from the law to the right or to the left.** Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel (Deut 17:14-20).

The **bold** phrases above make up 10 commandments for kings. While the USA leaders do not follow many of these commandments, a foreign court with jurisdiction in the USA would follow them even less (they are foreigners, and many do not recognize the Christian God at all). Even though the Constitution of the USA specifically prohibits it from being tied to any religious establishment (church organization), the founding fathers clearly recognized the need for God. Leaders swear their oath of office on a Bible (not a church creed) and say "so help me, God). Our coins and bills say "in God we trust". There are many other examples.

The Declaration of Independence **recognizes** "inalienable rights"—given to man by God. This STATUTE grants rights to people on its own authority. The writings of the founding fathers acknowledge a "higher court" in heaven that will judge all men. "Do not take advantage of each other, **but fear your God.** I am the LORD your God" (Lev 15:17). The Bible has many pages describing exactly what is sin, both from a physical and spiritual basis.

The STATUTE for the U.N. criminal court has no such higher moral authority. It has to make due with statements like: "The judges shall be chosen from among persons of high moral character" (article 36) without defining "high moral character". It is interesting to note that when the judges and other officials take up their respective offices, they neither promise to serve God or the people. Read the brief article and ask, "What are they committing to?"

> **Article 45: Solemn undertaking**
>
> Before taking up their respective duties under this Statute, the judges, the Prosecutor, the Deputy Prosecutors, the Registrar and the Deputy Registrar shall each make a **solemn undertaking** in open court to exercise his or her respective functions impartially and conscientiously.

The USA has long held the concept that its leaders are not above the law, that they can be prosecuted, also. Recent leaders have tried hard to change that, but have met with only partial success. The U.N. STATUTE defines bribery, corruption and certain offences for which judges and prosecutors can be **removed**, but completely protects them from any punishment for any crimes that they might commit in office—for the rest of their lives:

> **Article 48: Privileges and immunities**
>
> 1. The Court shall enjoy in the territory of each State Party such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the fulfilment of its purposes.
>
> 2. The judges, the Prosecutor, the Deputy Prosecutors and the Registrar shall, when engaged on or with respect to the business of the Court, enjoy the same privileges and immunities as are accorded to heads of diplomatic missions and shall, **after the expiry of their terms of office, continue to be accorded immunity from legal process of every kind** in respect of words spoken or written and acts performed by them in their official capacity.

Sounds Good, But How Will It Be Used?

As promoted, the STATUTE sounds its purpose is to stop awful things that people of God would never be involved in anyway. So why should we be concerned? Notice this article:

> **Article 5: Crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court**
>
> 1. The jurisdiction of the Court shall be limited to the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole. The Court has jurisdiction in accordance with this Statute with respect to the following crimes:
>
> (a) The crime of genocide;

(b) Crimes against humanity;
(c) War crimes;
(d) The crime of aggression.

2. The Court shall exercise jurisdiction over the crime of aggression **once a provision is adopted** in accordance with articles 121 and 123 defining the crime and setting out the conditions under which the Court shall exercise jurisdiction with respect to this crime. Such a provision shall be consistent with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The U.N. Security Council has stopped wars and military genocide only with overwhelming military force. How would a court make any difference? Could these laws be used to stop "crimes" that are not crimes today? The crime of "aggression" is not yet defined. The UN has been very anti-Christian before, is it likely to change now? Notice one of the articles of the detail document "Elements of Crimes":

Article 6 (b) : Genocide by causing serious bodily or mental harm

Elements

1. The perpetrator caused serious bodily or **mental harm** to one or more persons.

2. Such person or persons belonged to a particular national, ethnical, racial or religious group.

3. The perpetrator intended to destroy, in whole or in part, that national, ethnical, racial or **religious group**, as such.

4. The conduct took place in the context of a **manifest pattern of similar conduct** directed against that group or was conduct that could itself effect such destruction.

If I were preaching the Gospel to a Moslem, Hindu or Buddhist group, I would hope to convert them so their existing religious group would disappear. I would see it as a blessing to the people. But a non-Christian court might see it as genocide. It would seem to fit all of the qualifications of the above law. Could this U.N. Court actually arrest a Christian in the USA for preaching to a non-Christian group in the USA and destroying it, calling it "Genocide"?

I do not see anything that would stop it.

Articles 4 and 12 give the Court jurisdiction over all specified crimes in the "territory" of the nations. Article 21 puts the STATUTE's law over any national laws. Articles 4, 59 and 86 through 89 require that nations pass laws to arrest people and hand them over at the request of the UN Court. While powerful nations like the USA might effectively refused to cooperate on obviously unfair issues, politicians have a habit of sacrificing "little people" to achieve their bigger objectives. USA missionaries in other countries might be in big danger. Article 87 even mentions the use of an "International Criminal Police Organization or any appropriate regional organization"—though I could not find exactly what that was.

What is the "trigger" that could cause the U.N. Prosecutor to begin an investigation and accuse someone of a crime? Articles 13 and 15 spell out three things: any nation itself, the U.N. Security Council, and the Prosecutor. The Prosecutor is an elected office, but for a term of 9 years, and he gets to choose all his deputy prosecutors (article 36). The ballots are secret, and nothing was said about who counts the votes. A pre-trial judge must approve a prosecution, but it would not be hard for a prosecutor to find a judge that will go along with him most of the time (that happens in American courts all too often). I see nothing in the Statute that would prevent a Prosecutor and a judge from prosecuting religious teachers in one place, while ignoring mass murderers in another. Even if thousands of people signed a petition begging the Court to prosecute a mass-murderer, I find no rule requiring the Court to do anything.

This ROME STATUTE OF THE INTER. NATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT does not serve either God or man. If God places us under it, we would probably be bound to stay (Jer 27:8). But if we have a decision to make, God says: "You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men" (1Cor 7:23). Norman Edwards 🕮

Share Your Shelter

Our Savior never argued or tried to force someone to believe in Him. We should not do that either. But if *Shelter in the Word* has helped you, you can share it with others who might be interested in it or helped by it. One of these methods might work for you.

1. Talk to them about what you have learned and encourage them to study the Bible themselves.
2. Copy your *Shelter* and give it to them (almost any office or copy store will do this for $1 to $2).
3. Give them your *Shelter* (we will send you a replacement issue if you write or call).
4. Copy just this page or write down the address or phone so they can request their own subscription.

For subscriptions and other literature, write or phone:

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