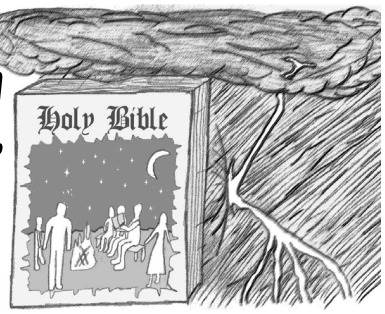
Shelter in the Word

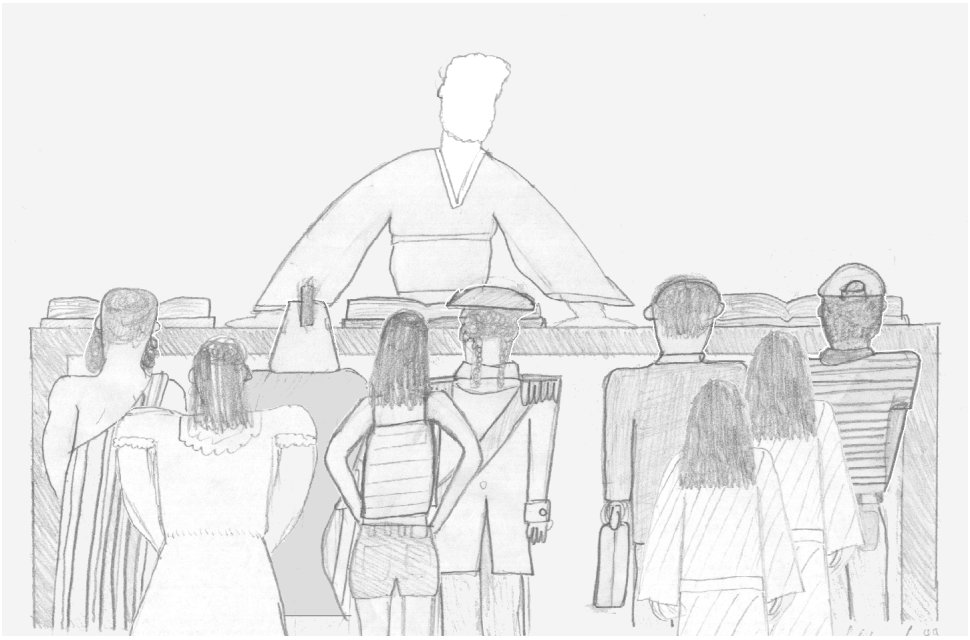


He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty
You are my refuge and shield: I have put my hope in your Word. ***—Psalm 91:1, 119:114***

Vol. 2, No. 2 Helping you become self-sufficient in the Word—for a lasting relationship with the Almighty **Mar/Apr 1999**

Will Christians Be Judged???

by Norman Edwards



Most people who have heard a little about Christianity know that Jesus Christ died for the sins (evil, mistakes, failings) of all mankind. They are right! Notice these verses:

> 1Jn 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
>
> 1Pet 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,...

This message is obviously the most important message of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul makes that abundantly clear in his writing.

> 1Cor 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

If you do not understand the Bible teaching about how you can forgiven for what you have done wrong, and how you can be given a new life through the forgiveness and power of Jesus Christ, please write for our free article: *A New Life*.

Whether you have accepted the Sacrifice of Christ for your sins or not, it is vital that you understand the purpose for that sacrifice. Did He die to forgive any sin that anyone might commit no matter what? Was Christ's sacrifice like an endless deck of "Get Out of Jail Free" cards for the "Monopoly" game of life? If a person sins, do they simply call upon Jesus to "turn in a card" and then they are instantly freed?

"Yes," and "No."

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Forgiveness When We Repent of Sin

Christ's sacrifice is capable of covering any sin. But the Bible contains no promise to forgive sins when an individual does not repent. "To repent" means "to turn around and go the other way"—"to change".

> Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,
>
> 1Cor 11:31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.
>
> 32 When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

These verses show the need for repentance—the desire to change in order to receive forgiveness. Does that mean that eternal life comes through things that we do? (Is "salvation by works"?) No, salvation is a free gift which produces good works by Christ:

> Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
>
> 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.
>
> 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Salvation is a free gift, but any gift can be thrown away. If people do not want to let Christ do the good works that He wants to do in their life, they can stop Him. Christ has given us free moral agency and will not force us to live His way.

No Forgiveness for Deliberate Sin by People Who Know Better

> Heb 6:4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,
>
> 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age,
>
> 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.
>
> Heb 10:26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,
>
> 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

A person who thoroughly understands the sacrifice of Christ, but still wants to sin—plans it out—makes no effort to stop it, no longer has a sacrifice available for sin. If you are reading this article and want to repent of all your sins—then there still is a sacrifice available for you. Christ promises "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb 13:5). We have to want to leave Him; He will not leave us.

Do Believers Still Sin?

What about believers—those who have accepted the sacrifice of Christ and strive to live by his word? Can they still sin? Yes they can. We still have to contend with the imperfection of our own human nature along with the evil forces of Satan and his demons. A

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substantial section in the book of 1 John answers many of the questions we might have about this. Notice that it clearly starts out talking about believers:

1Jn 1:6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.
7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.
8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
9 **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**
10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

The statement here is so very plain. All believers sin, but Christ will forgive those sins if we confess them. The next chapter of the book goes on to explain that believers must change and do what Christ says. If a person confesses sin, but then makes no effort to change it, is he or she really repenting? John makes it clear that the *goal* of following Christ is to eliminate sin and to obey His commands.

Why? Because sin hurts other people. Stealing, lying, hitting, lusting and other sins all hurt other people. This is why John puts such an emphasis on **not** "hating one's brother" in verse 9 through 11 below.

1Jn 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.
2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.
4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:
6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.
7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.
8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.
9 **Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.**
10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.
11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

What Happens to Unconfessed Sin?

Is it possible for a believer to sin and not know about it? Yes. Even David prayed "Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults" (Pslm 19:12). We should pray this with David, but we still have no guarantee that we will see all of our hidden sins.

As a matter of fact, it is fairly easy to prove that most believers still have faults that are hidden to them. Have you ever seen two people both of whom you consider to be believers disagree on something? Have you seen them "fight" over something? Have you seen one offended so that he or she will not talk to the other? Have you been a person in such a situation?

Have you heard ministers in different church groups call each other "false" or "deceiving" ministers? Yet, both seem to claim to live by the Bible, worship the same God and preach mostly the same doctrines.

Certainly, one or both of the believers or ministers in the above examples are sinning in some way. But in almost every case, both sides will believe that the problem is the **other** believer's fault. If they believed that it was their own fault, they would repent and go to the other, and the difficulty would be over. Unfortunately, disagreements between believers are caused by sin on the part of one or both believers—sin that the believers do not quite understand right now.

When we do not see our own sin, we are neither confessing it to Christ nor to those we have sinned against. The blood of Christ is not covering it now and we will be judged for it. But the purpose of this judgment is not to make us suffer, but to correct us so that we may understand our sin and not repeat it.

Judgement of Believers

The concept of believers being judged may be new to you, as it is not commonly taught. Yet, it is found throughout the Bible. One of the clearest places it is taught is in Luke 12:42-49. Christ is clearly addressing those who are "His servants".

> Luke 12:42 The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?
>
> 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.
>
> 44 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.
>
> 45 But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk.
>
> 46 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.
>
> 47 "That servant **who knows his master's will and does not get ready** or does not do what his master wants will be **beaten with many blows.**
>
> 48 But the one who **does <u>not</u> know and does things deserving punishment** will be **beaten with few blows.** From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Notice that many "blows" ("stripes"—KJV) are given to the person who knows better, but less are give to the person who does not know. What is the purpose of a "blow" or "stripe"? It is a corrective punishment to discourage a person from making the same mistake again. In our modern terminology, we might call it a "spanking". Does it make sense to "spank" someone who has been given (or is about to be given) eternal life? Does it make sense to "spank" someone who is about to be "thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:15). No, a "spanking" is for a person who will live on to change and make it right.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the work that we do for Christ will be judged and that we will receive varying rewards based on how the work endures. Notice that a person with poor work can be saved, but will need "fire"—an additional purifying process (Mal 3:2):

> 1Cor 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
>
> 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,
>
> 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.
>
> 14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.
>
> 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; **but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

Here are some other key scriptures that show believers will be judged:

> Rom 14:10 ...For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.
>
> 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"
>
> 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

> 2Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Judgment Is For Everybody

There are specific things that believers should do when they or fellow believers sin. But before covering them, it should be made clear that judgment is for everyone, **not only the believer:**

> Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

> Matt 12:36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment **for every careless word they have spoken.**
>
> 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Rom 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

7 **To those who by persistence in doing good** seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

8 **But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil,** there will be wrath and anger.

9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;

10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

11 For God does not show favoritism.

12 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.

13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,

15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

What Should We Do if We Sin?

Some sins are only against God—such as putting physical things before Him, taking His name in vain, etc. Those things we simply need to go to God about, ask His forgiveness, and repent—turn from doing it. Other sins are against other people, but we may have no idea who they are. For example, stealing an unattended item in a crowded place, or throwing a trash bag out the window of a car or train. By the time we have realized what we have done, finding the people we sinned against may be impractical or impossible. These sins can be treated like sins against God.

But many times, we specifically sin against others and we should go to them as well as repenting to God. The following scripture shows that reconciling with our brother is actually an **integral part** of reconciling to God:

Matt 5:23 Therefore, **if you are offering your gift at the altar** and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 **leave your gift** there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

25 Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

26 I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

1Cor 11:32 When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

What Should We Do When a Believer Sins Against Us?

Prayer and effort is required to see our own sins and repent of them. But it takes almost no effort at all to realize that someone has sinned against us. If the sin is from an unbeliever, it is often best to "turn the other cheek" (Matt 5:39) and overlook the sin. There are other times when action may need to be taken, but that exceeds the scope of this article.

But what should we do if the person who sins against us is a believer? Should we just let him or her go on sinning and say nothing? If the sin is minor or incredibly hard to prove, then it might be better to forget about it. If someone in one particular instance bumps into you, looks at you funny or speaks to you with a voice that sounds unfriendly, you might be better off to do nothing about it. It is not likely that much will be accomplished. But in cases when sins are much more obvious or serious, then you should do something.

The first thing we need to do is realize that there is some possibility that we are in the wrong, and not the other person. But the problem is significant, do not just say "I could be wrong" and give up there. Go ahead and follow the procedure outlined in Matt 18:15-

17. These four little sentences are a wonderful plan given by Christ for resolving perceived conflicts. The plan works well, no matter which party is at fault.

> Matt 18:15 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.
> 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."
> 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

The obvious goal of this plan is to **help the sinner repent.** When people believe they have been "sinned against", they will often go and tell others about it—saying, "isn't what they did to me awful?" This kind of gossip just stirs up discord among brethren. The right thing to do is to go directly to the person. Sometimes you will find that what you thought was a sin against you was a mistake or not a sin at all. Other times, the person will have no idea that you were offended, and will accept responsibility and apologize. Most matters are settled here and need not go any further.

If this doesn't work, then there are two more stages. At first, take two or three other people with you to witness your message and the other's response. These witnesses may be able to point out flaws or Scriptural problems with either your or the other's reasoning. It is amazing how "good" an argument can sound to one person, and how silly it can sound to several unbiased people. Hopefully, the witnesses will help the person at fault to see his or her error and the matter can be resolved. If the situation cannot be resolved, the "witnesses" will indeed be witnesses that the person "went to his brother" and that the two could not resolve the issue.

The word "church" in Matt 18:17 means "assembly of believers". In most cases that will be a local congregation. (If believers in a group live all across the country but are connected by TV/Radio programs, publications and/or the Internet. In this case the "church" may consist of the people who participate in those things.) In practice, many people take problems with other believers to the pastor or minister of their congregation, but that is not what the Scripture says. It says "church" or "assembly" (Darby, YLT translations). Many silly, frivolous problems are taken to ministers which would never be taken to a whole congregation—they would seem too frivolous. Also, many severe problems are concealed by pastors when the whole congregation should know.

Most importantly, the entire congregation needs to learn to hear matters and make Godly judgments:

> 1Cor 6:1 If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?
> 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?
> 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!
> 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

What Should We Do When We See a Brother Caught in a Sin?

Sometimes, we may see a brother who is sinning against himself or herself (alcoholism) or against other unbelievers (theft, fornication, etc.). We should avoid being picky, but it is wrong to let other brothers continue on in a major sin without their knowing it is a sin. Paul gives precise instruction, and repeats that believers will be judged for what they do in this life:

> Gal 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.
> 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
> 3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
> 4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,
> 5 for each one should carry his own load.
> 6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.
> 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.
> 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap de-

struction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Judged Both Now and Later

The Bible shows that people will be judged in the future when the dead are raised, but also that believers are being judged now:

> Heb 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,
>
> 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

> Rev 20:12 And I saw **the dead**, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.
>
> 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.

> 1 Pet 4:17 For **it is time for judgment to begin** with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Judgment is something that takes time. It takes time in this life, and it will probably take time after the resurrection. Exactly what happens after the dead are raised is a subject for another article. However, we do know that our loving God will not condemn people without giving them a chance to understand:

> 1Tim 2:4 [God] who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

God can certainly condemn people for doing what they knew was wrong even if they did not know about Him (Rom 2:11-15) But how can God deny salvation to those who have never had a knowledge of Him or His plan of salvation? Can He condemn those who did not know they were sinning?

> John 9:41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin...".

Numerous Bible passages make it clear that all will be judged, and that people are not condemned unless they know what they are doing. But for now:

> 2Cor 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

What We Do Now Matters—A Lot!

We should not be afraid to be judged. We know that God does it because He loves us, cares for us and wants us to improve. **Judgment** is *not* the same as **condemnation,** which is always negative. Judgment is a just process of evaluation. God wants us to live our lives to develop Eternal spiritual values, not to live for the works of today:

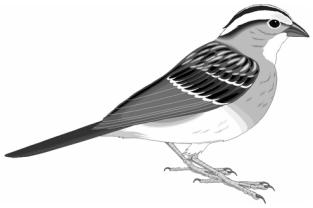
> Heb 12:6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

> 1Pet 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

At the same time we can know that "God is love" (1Jn 4:8) and that He will treat every person fairly. We can realize that there is a resurrection to a later judgment for both the believer and the unbeliever. Also, we can know that our asking and letting Christ live in us (Col 1:27) makes big differences in our lives. Those who build solid work on the foundation of Christ will receive a greater reward (1Cor 3:10-15). Some, by their deeds in this life, are able to achieve a "better resurrection" (Heb 11:35). This is certainly the first resurrection:

> Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

The Bible is not absolutely clear about who will be in this first resurrection, though the early part of this chapter gives some information. It is clear, though, **what we do in our life now makes a big difference.** it is very important to realize that we will be judged on our own life—we will not be judged by our church organization's programs, works or doctrines. We need to strive to live a Godly life now, but also realize that we are His children and that He will not cast aside His family. We can trust our loving God to teach us and judge us in righteousness, both now, and in a resurrection to come if necessary.



Natural Faith

by Ramona M. Leiter

Biblical Principles Seen In God's Creation

"Consider the lilies of the field..."
—Mat. 6:28

Journey's End

When I was young and would visit my grandparents in northern Michigan, I went several times to spend a summer's afternoon at the Sleeping Bear sand dunes.

Routinely, the visit would consist of trudging up the steep face of the several-stories-tall dunes and then gleefully rolling the long way down with other children and the young at heart. And when we had our fill of that, it was off to nearby Glen Lake for a refreshing swim. That was pleasant enough.

But when I was there one time when I was 9, along with my 16-year-old cousin, she and I grew curious what lay beyond the top of the dunes. The Lake Michigan shoreline could not be too far. Why not take a walk and see what we find?

So she and I climbed once more up to the top, left the crowds behind having their fun, and headed off across a wasteland of sand. The sun was sweltering, not to mention the hot sand that stung the sides of our sandaled feet. How far could it be? After walking a while with only sand ahead of us and sand behind us, we still couldn't see anything that looked like our destination. But we must keep going, because we had come too far to turn back now. Would we ever reach what we expected?

Then suddenly, there it was! The sand ended at a steep precipice. Ahead was a glorious visual mixture of the rocky drop-off that ended dozens of feet below at the beach; white foamy waves crashing on the shore; and, reaching to infinity—sparkling waters, an incredible blue. I had seen Lake Michigan before when staying at a summer cottage. Hey! I'd even seen the Atlantic Ocean. But somehow this seemed more dramatic and beautiful.

After pausing for several minutes to enjoy the panoramic view, my cousin and I trekked our way back. As each of us reflected on what we had seen, I knew how I felt: "If that had to be the last scene I see before I die, I would be happy!"

How long had we been gone on this adventure? Neither of us had a watch, so we didn't know. But I became suspicious that it had been too long when we made our way back down the front side of the dunes. There was my grandmother talking to a man in a park ranger's hat. Oops! I hadn't realized that we had been away so long. The experience had been so engrossing that we had lost all track of time.

I regretted that we made my grandmother worry, and I certainly didn't care for the blisters that had developed on my feet. But it was all worth it! Why? Because my cousin and I had done something different from others—to make the journey, however long it took. We weren't sure what we would find at the end, but we were willing to take the risk with the hope of being rewarded. It was, in many ways, the journey itself that had made the destination so worthwhile.

Life is a journey. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Let us make the effort to walk in that light. It will shine on the path of our life's journey. And then we can reach our true destination. And believe me, it will all be worthwhile! 📖

It's About Time

Biblical Chronology Made Easy!

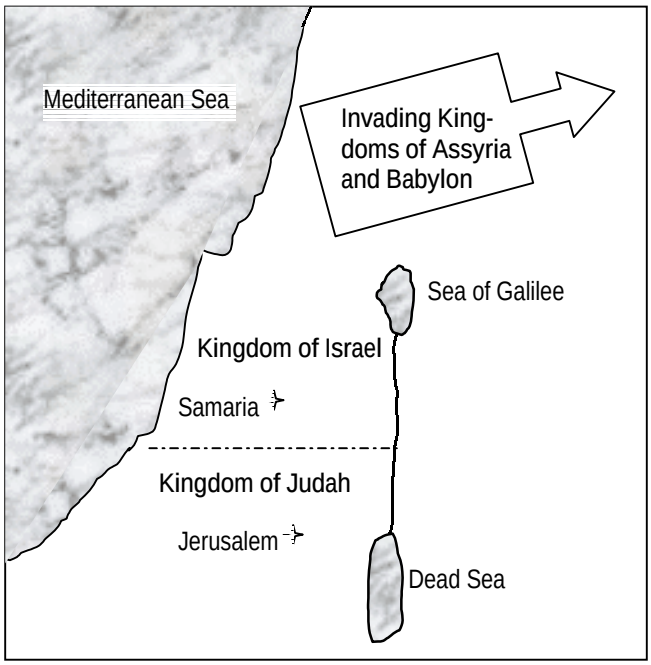
Daniel

In our previous installment, we considered the approximate central date for the life-time of David, 1000 BC. Knowing that date, we can pinpoint the *relative* time for many incidents in the scripture, and the general lifetime of many Bible characters. In the Biblical accounts, the first king of Israel, Saul, is soon replaced by David, and then David's son Solomon. The period of their inclusive reigns is the only time that **all** of the **12 tribes** of Israel are united under one king. Because Solomon sinned and did not follow God, God did not allow a united Kingdom to continue under his son. When Solomon died, there was a struggle over who would reign in his place. You can read the whole story in 1 Kings chapters 12 and 13.

The southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin were ruled by Rehoboam, and became known as the **"House of Judah".** The northern 10 tribes were ruled by Jeroboam, and become known as the **"House of Israel".** The House of Judah and the House of Israel have not joined back together to this day. However, God prophesied that He would bring them together in the end (Eze 37:15-28).

Jerusalem was in the southern kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam did not trust God for his Kingship, so he commanded his subjects to make many changes to the worship that God had given them. This prevented them from going to the Temple in Jerusalem to worship. The tribe of Levi was originally scattered throughout Israel to judge, teach, and perform other work for God. Jeroboam deposed these trained men from the priesthood and replaced them with untrained people. This caused many of the Levites to leave Israel for the kingdom of Judah.

A rivalry between the two kingdoms continued for the next few hundred years. Sometimes they were at war, sometimes there was an uneasy peace, and sometimes they joined together to fight a common enemy. The exact border between Israel and Judah moved due to a variety of wars and negotiations. But the southern House of Judah always had its capital Jerusalem and the northern House of Israel had its capital at Samaria.



The time period of all these things is about 1000 BC to 500 BC. The books of 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, and 1&2 Chronicles cover the period of the Kings. The book of Psalms (written in large part by David), and the book of Proverbs (written in large part by Solomon) and the book of Ecclesiastes (written by Solomon) belong to the early part of this period. Biblical prophets active during this period include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, and Jonah among many others.

The Bible gives a summary of the life of each king. David was the only "good" king of the combined kingdom. All of the Kings of the **House of Israel** had a bad report. Only six of the kings of the House of Judah have a good report (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham).

Around the latter part of the 700s BC, the 10 tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel were defeated in war by the Assyrian empire, most of its population was taken captive and dispersed from the land of Israel and it ceased to be mentioned as a political entity in the Bible. Almost 100 years later, the southern kingdom of Judah was likewise subjugated in war by the Babylonian empire. Many of its citizens were taken captive to the land of Babylon, and it also ceased for a time to exist as a viable "nation". The Jerusalem temple was destroyed, much of the city itself left in ruins.

It is during that period of captivity in Babylon that the next individual on our timeline, the prophet

Daniel, rises to prominence. Actually, Daniel himself was taken captive as a young man from Jerusalem to Babylon in about the year 600 BC (some historical sources pinpoint the year as 606 BC). Thus the events of his life **lead up to** the year 500 on our timeline. As we noted in the beginning of these lessons, we do not intend the timeline dates to be exact, just general *reference points* which clarify the **relative** positions in time of the people and events of scripture. Thus the lifetime of David spanned both before and after 1000 BC, the lifetime of Daniel is just slightly before 500 BC.

The book of Daniel is of interest for several completely different reasons:

1. It gives historical details of the Kingdom of Judah.
2. It contains many detailed prophecies for the future.
3. It explains how Daniel, a righteous man, lived in a country where the government had little regard for God—a situation that many Christians find themselves in today.

You are probably already familiar with some of the stories of the book of Daniel. Some are less familiar, but still quite valuable. When the Kingdom of Judah was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Daniel and his friends were educated, young men who were taken to work at the palace in Bablyon. Daniel served several different kings there. Chapter 1 shows how he and his friends had to tactfully ask not to eat the regular food given to the king's servants—which was not healthy for them (the fancy "junk food" of 500 B.C.).

Daniel chapter 2 is **a famous prophecy** about four world-ruling empires extending from Babylon in Daniel's day to the return of Christ as king on the earth. Chapter 3 deals with a command from the king to worship a statue. Daniel's friends; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refuse to worship it and are thrown into a fiery furnace, but rescued by an angel.

Have you ever heard the expression about seeing **"the handwriting on the wall"**? It comes from Daniel 5. Belshazzar, grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, was having a party in the palace, using the gold cups that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, but praising false gods. Fingers of a hand appeared and wrote a brief message on the wall. Daniel was called in to interpret the writing which was from God. He told Belshazzar that his kingdom would be taken from him. While the party was going on, the armies of the Medes were camped outside the walls of the city of Babylon, but the walls were too high and strong for the Medes to get through them. Other historical records show us that the Medes dammed up the river that flowed *under* the city walls and marched in via the dry riverbed. This happened the same night that Belshazzar "saw the handwriting on the wall". The expression is now used to refer to any "sign" that something is sure to happen.

Daniel 6 is the famous story of **Daniel in the lions' den**. Corrupt politicians made it illegal to pray for 30 days in the hope of killing Daniel. Daniel was thrown into a den of hungry lions, but an angel was sent to protect Daniel and the lions did not eat him. The next day, king Darius brought Daniel back out of the lion's den and threw in the corrupt politicians. The lions suddenly regained their appetite.

The rest of Daniel is mostly prophetic, with **chapter 9 predicting the timing of the first coming of Jesus Christ.**

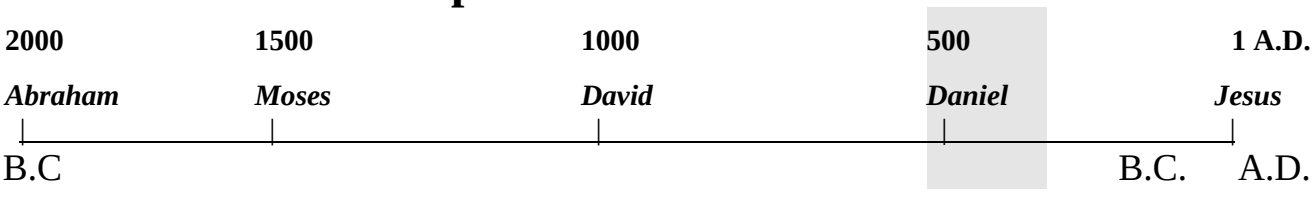
The Medes, part of the Persian Empire, eventually allowed some of the captives to return to the land of Israel and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple. This was **70 years** after they went into captivity. The Bible does not tell us if Daniel was able to return, but he would have been a very old man if he did.

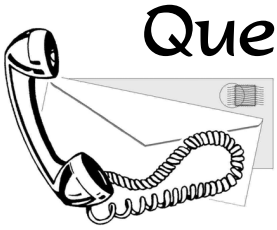
This new Kingdom of Judah never achieved the strength and political power it had during the "Golden Age" of David and Solomon, but at least it had a national identity. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther describe the **return from captivity** in detail. The latter part of the major prophet Jeremiah deals with this time. Other prophets of this time period included Habakkuk, Obadiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

In our next installment, we will discuss briefly those events between the time of Daniel and the time of our next reference figure, Jesus Himself. Thus all those events would be clustered between the current focal point on our timeline, 500 BC and 1 A.D.

—PSD & NSE

Simplified Bible Time Line





Questions & Comments
from Our Readers

April 18, 1999

Dear Mr. Norman Edwards,

I have been reading your interesting article on Titanic and Outside of City. Personally, I think they are addressing some of my private problem. So far, I feel your magazine is very enlightening.

As many Chinese Christians, we belong to 3-self Protestant church (self-funding, or two other self I don't remember). I attend the church regularly and believe the Lord is playing most important role in my life. However, I still the boat of my life is full of dangerous signs. After reading your article, I don't know whether I should be fearful of those dangerous signs or not. But my Lord is leading my way and I feel secure about it. Since I believe you did a good job in your magazines, I will try to spread them as much as possible. The problem is the language. But again, I didn't spent four years on learning English for nothing. I will explain your message to others as much as I can.

In Jesus,

—Andy Goh, China

Dear Andy Goh,

Thank you for your letter. Most Americans are not aware of the extent of the Christian Churches in China. I believe the 3-selfs are "self-supporting", "self-governing" and "self-propagating". The latter point means that each group is responsible to evangelize—teach others what they know so that the congregation will continue. These are largely biblical principles.

Much good teaching has been accomplished by many different church organizations. The main difficulty with church organizations is that their programs, doctrinal statements and leadership sometimes begin to replace the teaching of the Bible and individual direction by God. If a person discovers that they are relying too much on a church organization and not enough on God, leaving the church organization will not solve the problem. **The solution is to quickly return to Bible study, prayer and a close relationship with God.** From there, God may direct the person to stay in their church organization and help others there, or to begin working with a new group.

I do not know exactly what are the "dangerous signs" that you speak of. However, I think that you do not need to fear them. Simply ask Christ to empower you to overcome them. If progress is too slow, talk about the problems to others and ask them to pray for you (James 5:16).

Thank you very much for sharing *Shelter in the Word* with others in China. I hope that it is a blessing to them. Please let us know if you need any other literature.

—Norman Edwards

The following was not a letter to us, but a summary of a letter by Paul Weyrich by the editors at ReligionToday.com. I think its insight is helpful.

March 9, 1999

"We probably have lost the culture war," a founder of the modern conservative movement said. Paul Weyrich, who coined the phrase "moral majority," sent a personal letter last month to supporters saying "politics has failed" and that "I no longer believe there is a moral majority." Americans have "adopted, in large measure, the MTV culture that we so valiantly opposed just a few years ago, and it has permeated the thinking of all but those who have separated themselves from the contemporary culture."

"What we've been doing for 30 years hasn't worked," said Weyrich, who was influential in forming the Christian Coalition, the Free Congress Foundation, and the Heritage Foundation. "While I'm not suggesting that we all become Amish and move to Idaho...we need some sort of quarantine."

Radicals during the 1960s used the slogans Turn on, Tune in, and Drop out, Weyrich said. He suggested that conservatives Turn Off (the television and video games), Tune Out (the mainstream culture), and Drop Out (of politics).

He urged conservatives to keep voting, but to stop expecting big changes from the ballot box. If conservatives have a choice between campaigning for a pro-life candidate and volunteering at a Crisis Pregnancy Center, choose the latter, he advised. Even if abortion was declared illegal, "in this culture you would create such an enormous underground you'd make Prohibition seem paltry."

Weyrich's disillusionment shocked some conservatives, and he reportedly heard from a number who asked for a retraction. The letter "touched a chord like nothing else I've ever done," Weyrich told The Washington Post. "People keep writing to say that I've put into words something they have been thinking for a long time."

While we can never underestimate how the Eternal might work with nations, our ability to bring the strength of God to a few individuals is often more clearly beneficial than massive political effort that goes nowhere.

—Norman Edwards

CULTS

by Pam Dewey and Norman Edwards

In November 1978, a new word passed into the common vocabulary of most American citizens. The word itself wasn't new, but up until the Thanksgiving weekend that year, the word "cult" was usually confined to history books and sociological research papers. It took the deaths of hundreds of adults and children in a mass suicide/murder rampage at a place called Jonestown in the South American country of Guyana to make the word "cult" a household word.

The residents of Jonestown were mostly American citizens who had been mesmerized by the teaching of a flamboyant minister named Jim Jones, and who had followed him to the jungle in Guyana to set up a utopian society. Their utopian plans were cut short by the paranoia of their leader. They followed him into death just as they had followed him to this place.

In early 1997, another group of people followed their leader into a similar fate, making the headlines around the world just as the Jonestown massacre had. This time a group called "Heaven's Gate" followed their leader, Marshall Applewhite, in a suicide pact. They were found in the communal home they shared, heads all covered with blue shrouds, feet all shod in new tennis shoes, lying on beds in death waiting for the flying saucer to come and get them and take them to a "better world".

It is through images such as these that the average American has developed a concept of what the word "cult" means. Headlines scream "Cult members commit suicide" and "Cult leader used brainwashing to control followers." But are you sure you know just what the word "cult" means?

In spite of the totally negative image that these and other such stories give the word "cult", it really is not an "evil" word in itself. *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines it like this:

> A system of religious worship or ritual
>
> Devoted attachment to, or extravagant admiration for, a person, principle, etc, especially when regarded as a fad [like the "cult of Elvis Presley fans"]
>
> A group of followers; sect

The word has long been used by sociologists and historians to designate such things as parts of the belief system of ancient Rome, as in the "cult of Diana worship", or the devotion of the Japanese to their emperor, as in "the cult of emperor worship".

It is the **use of the term in recent decades** to describe "dangerous religious groups" which may be a threat to themselves or society at large that has given the word a bad reputation. But since it is common usage that really, in the long run, defines what words "mean", we will be using the word "cult" in this article to designate that concept: **a religious group which may pose a danger** to its members' physical, emotional or spiritual well-being.

What Is a "Cult"?

Because the meaning of "cult" has changed so much, various dictionary definitions do not completely answer the question. Another dictionary, *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (1996) lists one of the meanings of "cult" as **"formal religious veneration: worship**." There seems nothing necessarily negative implied by that definition—it would apply to most members of any religious denomination or organization, Christian or otherwise. Another definition however is "**a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious [and] its body of adherents**."

The latter definition is probably the one most intended in religious circles today. Cults are often considered "unorthodox" groups that could be dangerous. Exactly what makes a group unorthodox depends greatly on who is doing the defining. Many "Christian Cult-watch" groups which write anti-cult literature classify any group a cult if the members do not accept a certain set of narrowly-defined doctrinal beliefs held by the authors.

But in the secular media, the real issue is not usually "doctrinal beliefs", but actual practices of the members that could adversely affect the safety of themselves or others. Writers who have no particular doctrinal position to uphold may view groups which hold slightly "unorthodox" beliefs as just a harmless variation of religion in general.

What causes a group to be considered a "cult"?

With thousands of religious groups in the USA alone, nearly every shade of doctrine and organizational policies exists in one group or another. Completely aside from any specific doctrinal issues, if a

group has several of the following characteristics, it **may** find itself, justifiably, labeled "a cult".

1) Started and controlled by **one** very persuasive teacher/leader
2) Have a **tightly organized** and **highly restricted** membership
3) Apply highly **negative sanctions** against anyone leaving the group
4) Rely on **fear** to keep members in line
5) Encourage members to sever relationships with anyone not in the group, including close family members
6) Rely on **isolation**—highly discourage members from reading **any** religious writings outside their own.
7) Teach that only members of their group have any meaningful relationship with God, that they are the "**one true church**"
8) Use **Christian terminology**, but have teachings opposed to **true Biblical principles**
9) Disguise or hide some of their more unusual teachings when dealing with the public
10) Claim that their leader is divinely guided, so any strange things that happen are "all right".

Even if a group has all of the above characteristics, it is still possible for the following factors to be true: **Many religious cults do *not*:**

1) Have radical or violent tendencies.
2) Use "brain washing" to get or keep members.
3) Have any "occult" or "New Age" connections or beliefs. (For information on the differences between "cult", "occult" and "New Age", see the *Closer Look* on page 14.)

Avoid Being Called a "Cult"

Individuals and groups who have beliefs which are not totally in line with "mainstream" Christian doctrine", or who have practices even slightly different from the societal norm, may find themselves unjustly considered part of a "cult", with all the negative implications the word implies. Even something as simple as being enthusiastic about home-schooling children, or adopting a simple lifestyle avoiding the materialism of much of American society can cause suspicion!

Worst of all, a group of people who actually try to live their lives by their understanding of the Bible may be wrongly labeled a "cult". Unfortunately, most of Christianity involves attending a church for one, maybe two hours per week. Many professing Christians do not let their religion "get in the way" of the rest of their life.

But don't let fear of being labeled a "cultist" stop you from living by God and His Word. There are many biblical principles one can use to help eliminate or reduce the misunderstanding that might cause a Bible-believer to be considered a "cultist".

1) Welcome non-members as visitors to meetings (1Cor 14:24).
2) Do not forbid members to read literature from elsewhere (Eph 4:14).
3) Do not teach that your group is the only way to salvation (1Cor 3:4-8, Phil 1:15-18, 1Jn 2:27).
4) Do not socially ostracize people who leave your group (Matt 5:44, Luke 15:22-32, Jude 1:22-23, 2Cor 2:6-8, Gal 6:1).
5) Avoid isolation—be good neighbors (kind and helpful) to people and groups that are not part of your own group (Gal 6:10; 1Tim 3:7).

Cults May Deceive Many in Future

To some, the situation may seem simple. Those who are truly serving God will be easy to recognize and liked by everyone. Those who are evil will also be clearly seen as evil. It would be wonderful if we all had the necessary Bible knowledge and discernment to see the difference between the good teachers of God and those who are founding dangerous cults. But Christ gave us several warnings showing that it would not be easy. Righteous people will be persecuted and false religion will deceive many:

> John 15:20 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.
>
> Matt 24:5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.
>
> Matt 24:11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.
>
> Matt 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.

May our Father grant all of us the wisdom and favor and to avoid the deception of dangerous cults, to live our lives by His Word, and to avoid being classified a "cult" by others! For more information, ask for our free booklet, *How Not to be Caught in Cults.* 📖

A Closer Look

Common Misconceptions About Bible Topics

New Age and Occult

by Pam Dewey

Most large secular bookstores have a section labeled "Religion". On these shelves the browser can find Bibles, Bible handbooks and inspirational books written by Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or other writers. Some may even include religious books about other world religions such as Buddhism or Islam. But in recent years shoppers have been sometimes surprised, even shocked, to see new "sections" spring up nearby with such labels as "New Age" and "Occult". What is this all about? What would you find if you looked into some of the books in those sections? Although the phrase "New Age" and the word "occult" have become quite common in the public press, many people have only a vague idea of what these words really signify. Does the word "occult" have something to do with the word "cult"? Does the phrase "New Age" just mean "modern" or "up to date"?

This article is a brief overview of these terms. We feel that it is important for the person who is seeking to know more about the Bible, our Creator and Father, and our Savior Jesus of Nazareth, to have at least some general understanding of the sort of "spiritual counterfeits" which are available in our society. Political tensions in the world, upheavals in society, natural disasters and other factors have left many people in these troubled times looking for "meaning" to life beyond just their daily existence. We believe that the only lasting answers for such longing are found within the pages of the Bible. But there are many authors out there offering other answers. One of these answers can be found in the philosophy represented by the phrase "New Age."

New Age

New Age is a phrase that describes the **collection of beliefs and practices** that are based on the idea that Mankind is about to enter into a "new age" of peace, prosperity and spiritual enlightenment brought about by **Man's own efforts** to change himself.

Many teachers promoting ***New Age*** philosophy believe Man will be able to do this as a result of contact with higher spiritual beings who will teach him to be "at one" with the universe.

New Age is a fairly recent term. It is used to describe a wide variety of beliefs and practices. There is no carefully organized ***New Age Movement*** that covers all the related individuals, groups and practices.

Examples of ***New Age*** ideas and practices:

- Reincarnation
- Transcendental meditation, and other types of non-Biblical meditation
- "Channeling" (claiming to speak messages for "ascended masters"—humans who have become exalted spirit beings)
- "Astral projection" (claiming that your "soul" or "spirit" can leave your body at will to travel throughout time and the universe)
- Belief that humans are not special creations in the image of God and are of no more value than animals and plants
- Belief that there is not an "external" Creator God who made the universe—rather that "god" is within everyone already just waiting to be tapped into

The Occult

The noun phrase ***The Occult,*** as well as the adjectives ***occult*** and ***occultic***, refer to the **collection of beliefs and practices** that are based on the idea that there is a supernatural world that Man can "tap into" in order to control the environment or other people through **secret, special knowledge and rituals.**

The words ***occult*** and ***cult*** do **not** have the same origin, and are **not** specifically related. Therefore:

- An individual **can** be involved in **occult** activities without belonging to a **cult.**
- An individual can belong to a **cult** and **not** be involved in any **occult** activities at all.

(For more details on just what the word **cult** implies, please see the previous article in this issue of *Shelter in the Word*.)

Examples of *occult* activities include:

1. Ouija boards,
2. fortune-telling by methods such as palm reading

3. astrology
4. witchcraft (including what is often termed "Wicca" or "white witchcraft"—individuals who claim supernatural powers, but claim to use them only for good.)
5. tarot cards
6. Dungeons and Dragons and similar "role playing games"
7. Voodoo
8. Spiritism (contacting the dead)

People identifying with the ***New Age Movement*** often use some **occult** practices while rejecting other practicess. Both the *Occult* and *New Age* practices are **occasionally** used as "false fronts" by **Satanist** religions. Satanist religions involve practices so evil and illegal that they must be kept secret from the public, so they often pretend to be merely an *Occult* or *New Age* religion.

A Warning for Christians

Some ***occult*** and ***New Age*** practices and ideas may be counterfeits of actual Biblical ideas and practices. And recently many serious Bible students have become concerned that occult and New Age ideas and practices are creeping into television preaching that is called "Christian", and are being spread by books and tapes available in Christian Book Stores.

Many sincere Christians are worried about the ***cults*** like the followers of Jim Jones or the members of the "Heaven's Gate" group that committed mass suicide. They can see the danger of these cults clearly, when the results are so violent.

But when there are new teachings being offered by "regular Christian" evangelists, these same Christians may let down their guard and accept ideas and practices that are every bit as **un**-Biblical and **spiritually** dangerous.

And when there are those who teach much sound doctrine who, at the same time, use some of the **methods** of a cult to get or retain members, sincere Bible students may be swept along into **un**-Biblical bondage by involvement with such teachers. We plan in future issues of *Shelter in the Word* to point out some of these unsound ideas and practices in light of the words of the Bible.

Let us "search the scriptures daily, whether these things be so" (Acts 17:11) for the Apostle John warned:

> 1Jn 4:1 Dear Friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Vital Information About Ritalin,

Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder and the Politics Behind the ADHD/Ritalin Movement

[I do not have personal experience with this doctor or his book, but it would seem to be a valuable "second opinion" for those dealing with doctors caught up in the Ritalin/ADHD fad. Why a fad? Because children have been raised without it for thousands of years, and the current practice has made no great improvements. The Eternal did not design millions of children to need continual drug doses to "be normal". The problem must lie elsewhere. —NSE]

Summarized from *Talking Back to Ritalin* by Peter R. Breggin, M.D, Available in most local book stores. For the purpose of alerting the public to the dangers of stimulant drugs, this appendix to Talking Back to Ritalin by Peter R. Breggin, M.D. may be reprinted without permission in unlimited numbers provided that no fee is charged for the materials and that no profit is made from the distribution. The source must be identified and the material must be reproduced in its entirety, including this page.

Talking Back to Ritalin by Peter R. Breggin, M.D. is published by Common Courage Press, PO Box 702, Monroe, Maine 04951. Phone: 800-497-3207.

- Several million children are being treated with Ritalin and other stimulants on the grounds that they have attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and suffer from inattention, hyperactivity, or impulsivity. The stimulants include: Ritalin (methylphenidate), Dexedrine and DextroStat (dextroamphetamine or d-amphetamine), Adderall (d-amphetamine and amphetamine mixture), Desoxyn and Gradumet (methamphetamine), and Cylert (pemoline). Except for Cylert, all of these drugs have nearly identical effects and side effects. Ritalin and the amphetamines can for most purposes be considered one type of drug.
- The number of children being drugged has escalated several-fold in the last few years.
- Ritalin and amphetamine have almost identical adverse effects on the brain, mind and behavior, including the production of drug-induced behavioral disorders, psychosis, mania, drug abuse, and addiction.
- Ritalin and amphetamine frequently cause the very same problems they are supposed to treat—inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.
- A large percentage of children become robotic, lethargic, depressed, or withdrawn on stimulants.

- Ritalin can cause permanent neurological tics including Tourette's syndrome.
- Ritalin can retard growth in children by disrupting the cycles of growth hormone released by the pituitary gland.
- The recent finding that Ritalin can cause cancer in some animals was not taken seriously enough by the drug company or the FDA.
- Ritalin routinely causes gross malfunctions in the brain of the child. There is research evidence from a few controlled scientific studies that Ritalin can cause shrinkage (atrophy) or other permanent physical abnormalities in the brain.
- Withdrawal from Ritalin can cause emotional suffering, including depression, exhaustion, and suicide. This can make children seem psychiatrically disturbed and lead mistakenly to increased doses of medication.
- Ritalin is addictive and can become a gateway drug to other addictions. It is a common drug of abuse among children and adults.
- ADHD and Ritalin are American and Canadian medical fads. The U.S. uses 90% of the world's Ritalin. CibaGeneva Pharmaceuticals (also known as Ciba-Geigy Corporation), a division of Novartis, is the manufacturer of Ritalin. It is trying to expand the Ritalin market to Europe and the rest of the world.
- Ritalin "works" by producing malfunctions in the brain rather than by improving brain function. This is the only way it works.
- Short-term, Ritalin suppresses creative, spontaneous and autonomous activity in children, making them more docile and obedient, and more willing to comply with rote, boring tasks, such as classroom school work and homework.
- Short-term, Ritalin has no positive effect on child's psychology or on academic performance and achievement. This is confirmed by innumerable studies and by many professional reviews of the literature.
- Longer-term, beyond several weeks, Ritalin has no positive effects on any aspect of a child's life.
- Labeling children with ADHD and treating them with Ritalin can keep them out of the armed services, limit their future career choices, and stigmatize them for life. It can ruin their own self image, subtly demoralize them, and discourage them from reaching their full potential.
- There is no solid evidence that ADHD is a genuine disorder or disease of any kind.
- There is a great deal of research to confirm that environmental problems cause ADHD-like symptoms.
- A very small number of children may suffer ADHD-like symptoms because of physical disorders, such as lead poisoning, drug intoxication, exhaustion, and head injury. Physical causes may be more common among poor communities in the United States.
- There is no proof of any physical abnormalities in the brains or bodies of children who are routinely labeled ADHD. They do not have known biochemical imbalances or "crossed wires."
- DHD is a controversial diagnosis with little or no scientific or medical basis. A parent, teacher, or doctor can feel in good company when utterly dismissing the diagnosis and refusing to apply it to children.
- Ciba spends millions of dollars to sell parent groups and doctors on the idea of using Ritalin. Ciba helps to support the parent group, CH.A.D.D., and organized psychiatry.
- The U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) push Ritalin as vigorously as the manufacturer of the drug, often in even more glowing terms than the drug company could get away with legally.

Our society has institutionalized drug abuse among our children. Worse yet, we abuse our children with drugs rather than making the effort to find better ways to meet their needs. In the long run, we are giving our children a very bad lesson—that drugs are the answer to emotional problems. We are encouraging a generation of youngsters to grow up relying on psychiatric drugs rather than on themselves and other human resources [or on the God who created them —NSE].

The material in this summary is documented with citations to scientific literature in Talking Back to Ritalin. The book also describes non-drug approaches to helping children diagnosed ADHD through identifying and meeting the basic needs of children, and through improvements in school and family life.

If you want to support efforts to stop the psychiatric drugging of children, and to receive a newsletter, we invite you to join the International Center for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology, 4628 Chestnut Street, Bethesda, MD, 20814. Visit our web site at www.breggin.com. If you have comments or suggestions, write us, above, or e-mail us at breggin@tmn.com

—Peter R. Breggin,

Forgiving One Another

By Richard Wiedenheft

Forgiveness is one of the most fundamental of all godly characteristics. It's one of the central themes of the Bible. The New Testament in particular repeats the message of forgiveness over and over again:

- ♦ Don't bear grudges
- ♦ Don't seek revenge
- ♦ Don't feel you have to get even and settle every score
- ♦ Let God take care of settling the accounts of those who do you evil
- ♦ (Rom 12:14-21).

In fact, forgiveness is so important that God predicates His forgiveness of our sins on our forgiveness of others! "But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matt 6:15).

Forgiveness Is for Our Benefit

God commands forgiveness for Christians because He knows what is best for us, what will bring us health and happiness. In recent decades, psychologists and psychiatrists have been learning just how important forgiveness is. It is estimated that between 75 and 90% of all physical ailments are caused by or are significantly affected by mental attitudes. Neuroses are closely linked to guilt, resentment, and anxiety. Of these three natural human tendencies, two involve forgiveness. **Guilt** is the inability to forgive ourselves or to believe that God has forgiven us; and **resentment** involves our inability to forgive others.

What this all means is that if you don't forgive, you are going to pay a price for it—right now. If you nurture bitterness, you are literally poisoning yourself physically and mentally, as well as spiritually.

Unfortunately, all too often we are not consciously aware of deep-seated resentments—yet they affect us just the same. Perhaps we rarely think about the raw deal we got; perhaps we've all but forgotten the person or group that took advantage of us, or perhaps we've forgotten that we were angry at God for having allowed a loved one to suffer.

Yet, if deep down inside, we harbor hatred or feel that it sure would be nice to have an opportunity to settle an old account, then we really haven't forgiven all the way. Even if the other person was completely in the wrong, and deserves severe punishment, even if he was deliberately trying to hurt us, we still poison ourselves by not forgiving!

Forgive to the Point of Gratefulness

How can we know if we've really forgiven all the way? How can we know that even our subconscious mind is free from all bitterness? The answer is simple, but difficult to accomplish: Forgive to the point of being grateful!

That's a tall order! Our human nature doesn't want to forgive, let alone be grateful for past hurts. We would rather stay hurt and hang on to our cache of gall even though we know it is poisoning us! The desire to settle old scores is that strong!

However, with God's help we can learn to forgive to the point of being grateful. We can learn to find good things in evil. Just think of **Joseph,** who was sold by his own brothers. For years his father, Jacob, believed he was dead and undoubtedly nurtured bitterness toward his other sons and toward God. How wasted it all was! For God was working out a wonderful plan. Years later Joseph who, like Jacob, had very human reason not to forgive, would tell his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good…" (Gen 50:19). He had forgiven to the point of thankfulness!

Consider **Job,** who lost everything he had except his nagging wife. Yet he eventually became grateful for his suffering because it brought him into a much deeper relationship with His Creator (Job 42:5-6)

In some cases it's easy to forgive to the point of being grateful. It can be obvious that a bad business deal teaches us prudence. The abuses of an ill-tempered parent help us be better parents ourselves. A tragedy can bring us into a much closer relationship with God. However, in some suffering, there seems to be absolutely no possible good, absolutely nothing to be grateful for. In such cases, we have to **forgive by faith.** We have to forgive ourselves and others even though we can't see how any good could come from an evil situation. We must trust God to fulfill His promise of Rom 8:28, "and we know that all things God works for the good of those who love him…" We must learn to follow Jesus' example when He said of the hypocrites who put Him on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

We must learn to forgive to the point of being grateful—even if we have to do it by faith. **Once we're truly grateful, we'll have no desire for vengeance.** We'll be blessed physically, mentally, and spiritually. We'll be happier and healthier. And we'll be blessed with the forgiveness of Almighty God, who will blot out our sins as we forgive others (Matt 6:12). 🕮

Learning Patience for Growth

by Tommy Willis

It is extremely important for believers to learn patience for their spiritual growth. Growth takes time, and impatience can be like a self-destructive fuse—it can burn out.

As important as prayer and Bible study are, if we go about these the wrong way they will not be as productive. Many who are frustrated because they feel their growth is too slow will often try to increase their Bible study and prayer, looking for immediate results by doing so. This impatience only adds to the frustration that they were feeling in the first place.

If I would have understood this principle early in my Christian growth it would have saved me a lot of frustration and **given me more peace** over the years.

Growth takes time. But in our immaturity we rarely want to accept this fact. We would rather try to rush the process. We are raised in an "instant" society, wanting instant foods and instant service. And we often go about looking for our spiritual growth the same way.

Some have dropped out of the race feeling they were failures because of their slow growth. Because of their impatience they have allowed themselves to self-destruct in their spiritual growth. What they would have needed to learn is the admonishment of Luke 21:19 (KJV): "In your patience possess ye your souls."

> James 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.
>
> 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

If we are patient, then just like the farmer who goes out in the morning and finds that there has been a slight increase in the corn—likewise, in time, we will notice our growth. You may not notice it week by week, but the years will add up and your growth will become evident. If you stay with it and keep seeking God out and keep trying, your growth is assured. Your heavenly Father will not fail you. Your growth will be assured as much as any plant or tree that has been given all the necessary water and sunshine and nutrients. It will come!

Each child of God will have different stages in their growth. Sometimes we will have "desert periods" to go through. But even that is part of the process that God takes us through for our edification and preparation.

Many times in my studies now I may meditate on one scripture for long periods of time. To someone watching me, it may seem like I'm just staring off into space daydreaming. I would say that it's creative daydreaming. During times such as this, when I've been engrossed in thought, there's been growth. There is no growth without thinking.

I remember one day by the park when I sat down in the morning to do a lot of reading in the Bible. I prayed for God to guide me to what He wanted me to read that day. Instead of my plans to read much, I wound up spending most of the day going over one chapter in the Book of Psalms. I kept stopping to talk to God after each verse, because He was showing me something after each verse. The clock by the park struck every hour to remind me of the passage of time.

As I sat by the park talking to God and watching the ducks play in the water and the squirrels play in the trees, I was experiencing the joy of the present moment. And on this peaceful day I realized that the ducks and squirrels were doing what they were put on earth to do. And that I was doing what I was put on earth to do—get to know God. There's harmony with creation on days like this. Even the tree I sat under to get shade from the sun was serving its purpose. Slow down, brethren. Don't let the busy rushing schedules take you away from God. Jesus warns us of this:

> Luke 21:34 Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.
>
> 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth.
>
> 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

He tells us that **the cares of this life can destroy us if we let them.** Spend time with God, let Him teach you patience which will lead you to a full life, and teach you how to embrace the present moment.

Remember: "In your patience possess ye your souls."

Y2K Update

Y2K, the year 2000 computer problem, continues to make news of various kinds. Some news seems very good; some is quite ominous. (See articles in the past two *Shelter in the Word issues* for a thorough background on Y2K.)

A massive repair effort seems to be underway in most USA government and industry. So many people are working on the problem that there are extreme shortages of workers in some areas. On the other hand, the international situation is looking nearly hopeless. So many old computer systems are integral parts of international manufacturing—and there simply are not enough people to analyze the problems. Fixing them in the next few months will be impossible. The greatest impact on the USA may well be the loss of internationally purchased products and raw materials. This will be bad enough for the USA, but probably a disaster for the other countries.

We live in an extremely complex global world. Many complex things are made from thousands of parts from many different sources, including dozens of countries. Such things include automobiles, aircraft, computers, medical equipment, modern buildings, etc. It may take months or years to recover the ability to produce such things in the year 2000. Because of free trade (which is good), the world economy has grown in a way that nobody thoroughly understands. Like the Y2K bug itself, the effect of various countries being unable to export their normal products will not be known until it actually happens.

The April NERC report on electric power in the USA was very favorable, with many more utilities reporting compliance, or expecting to be ready by July 1. Unfortunately, some of the reporting was so positive that it is hard to believe. How does a utility go from 10% complete to 80% complete in only two months? The difficulty with the current reporting is that it is completely self-reporting—no outsiders verify it. Also, utilities can report themselves compliant with "known exceptions"—but not have to state how long it will take to fix the exceptions. In reality, we will probably not know exactly which utilities are ready until January 1, 2000.

The fact that utilities feel so much pressure to list themselves as compliant is good in that it shows they are very concerned about the issue. This is a great contrast to one year ago when it was difficult for some of them to admit that Y2K was even a significant issue. As you can see from the interview below, people in charge of local governments are not at all convinced that electric power will be working.

On Sunday, May 23, 1999 (7:00 PM ET), the CBS network show *60 Minutes* contained a revealing segment. The headline for the show was:

> Y2K; Look At How Local Governments, Including Washington, DC, Are Less Prepared For A Possible Y2k Crash Than Many Think

The anchor person was Steve Kroft, and most of the segment was spent interviewing Mary Ellen Hanley, a computer specialist hired to make the city of Washington DC's computer systems Y2K compliant. To date, this is one of the most widely publicized admissions that some of America's major cities may be in big trouble come January 1. We excerpt some of the interview below:

> KROFT: In the testing process, have you had failures?
>
> Ms. HANLEY: We have had some failures, principally in the area of the District's payroll, a subject very close to all our hearts who work here in the District. We had a failure date of December 18th. We were able to find it. We were able to fix it and test it and return it to production. We had a...
>
> KROFT: How long did that take?
>
> Ms. HANLEY: That took us approximately 60 days.
>
> KROFT: So if this had happened and you hadn't found it, you--your payroll department would've been out of commission for two months.
>
> Ms. HANLEY: We would've been unhappy.

The above dialog shows that Washington DC would not have been able to pay its employees for sixty days in the year 2000 had they not tested their payroll system ahead of time. It is good that they fixed this system. But other parts of the interview clearly showed that they would not be able to fix all of their other systems on time.

> KROFT: (Voiceover) One of the prime concerns for Washington and other communities around the country is drinking water. Computerized water and wastewater treatment facilities use embedded computer chips in their control systems. Some of the chips in those water systems have been tested for Y2K and have failed. Mary Ellen Hanley believes that Washington's water system can run without its computer controls, but she acknowledged she may have to develop contingency plans for water rationing.
>
> KROFT: What would cause water to be rationed?
>
> Ms. HANLEY: If we lose power, through the power grid--as any other state or city around us, including Montgomery County--we will not be able to function normally and we'll have to go to considerable

slowdowns that will produce--could produce rationing, for example.

KROFT: You're preparing contingency plans that there might be no power?

Ms. HANLEY: Yes.

KROFT: For how long?

Ms. HANLEY: We're looking, roughly, at what we would consider national averages, one to two weeks.

KROFT: One to two weeks without power?

Ms. HANLEY: One to two weeks.

KROFT: You think that's possible?

Ms. HANLEY: Right now, we don't think it's impossible.

(*60 Minutes* showed footage of Y2K brochure from the American Red Cross; excerpt from pamphlet reading, "Stock disaster supplies to last several days to a week..."; "...nonperishable foods, stored water...prescription and nonprescription medications...")

KROFT: (Voiceover) And apparently neither does the American Red Cross. The Red Cross Y2K checklist suggests that Americans stock enough 'disaster supplies to last several days to a week,' including 'non-perishable foods, stored water and an ample supply of prescription and non-prescription medications.'

Ms. HANLEY: We—we think there will be some disruptions, and we think they will be localized in many cases, if the supply chain works. That's a big if. If power works; if gas works; if Bell Atlantic works; if people who supply groceries to the inner city work; if pharmaceutical companies make enough pharmaceuticals; if people should horde things. All of those are big ifs. But I haven't yet seen, since I have been in—in this position and working with this project, that those groups are ignoring the kinds of concerns that you justifiably are raising that people have.

KROFT: I want to read you some advice that somebody gave about Y2K. "You can do the marauder approach and move to the mountains and take everyone with you, including your mother-in-law, and hole up for a year. Or you can buy four weeks' worth of water, put $100 in your pocket and make sure you're safe in your own home."

Ms. HANLEY: I know that quote.

KROFT: Who said it?

Ms. HANLEY: Actually, I said that.

KROFT: The quote get you into trouble?

Ms. HANLEY: I've had several conversations with interested people concerning that quote.

KROFT: How high up the food chain?

Ms. HANLEY: High enough for me.

KROFT: Is it good advice? Is it legitimate advice?

Ms. HANLEY: I believe it's—I—I believe the advice is that all of us do personal preparedness, as we would for any event that we know is coming. This event can't be legislated away. It's going to occur. I think it's wise to prepare, and I think it's wise for us in city government to take all the necessary steps that we can to serve our public, and you try to do that in the best way that you can.

KROFT: Earlier this spring, the federal government gave Washington, DC, $61 million for its Y2K work. Most of that money has already been spent, paying outside contractors like IBM, who had been working for months without being paid. Washington's government is now asking for an additional $50 million to finish the job.

It is clear that Ms. Hanley, the person in charge of Y2K corrections for Washington DC, is not at all sure that her city will have power or water on January 1, 2000. The interview also contained statements by Senator Bennett indicated that 73% of counties throughout the USA do not have any kind of contingency plans for these things. We find it utterly amazing that American leaders are not directly addressing the American people on these issues. But bringing bad news does not boost "approval ratings" or win elections, so most of our leaders are not openly discussing the problem. We hope *Shelter in the Word* readers will prepare for Y2K problems—for themselves and, as much as possible, for others. 🕮

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.

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