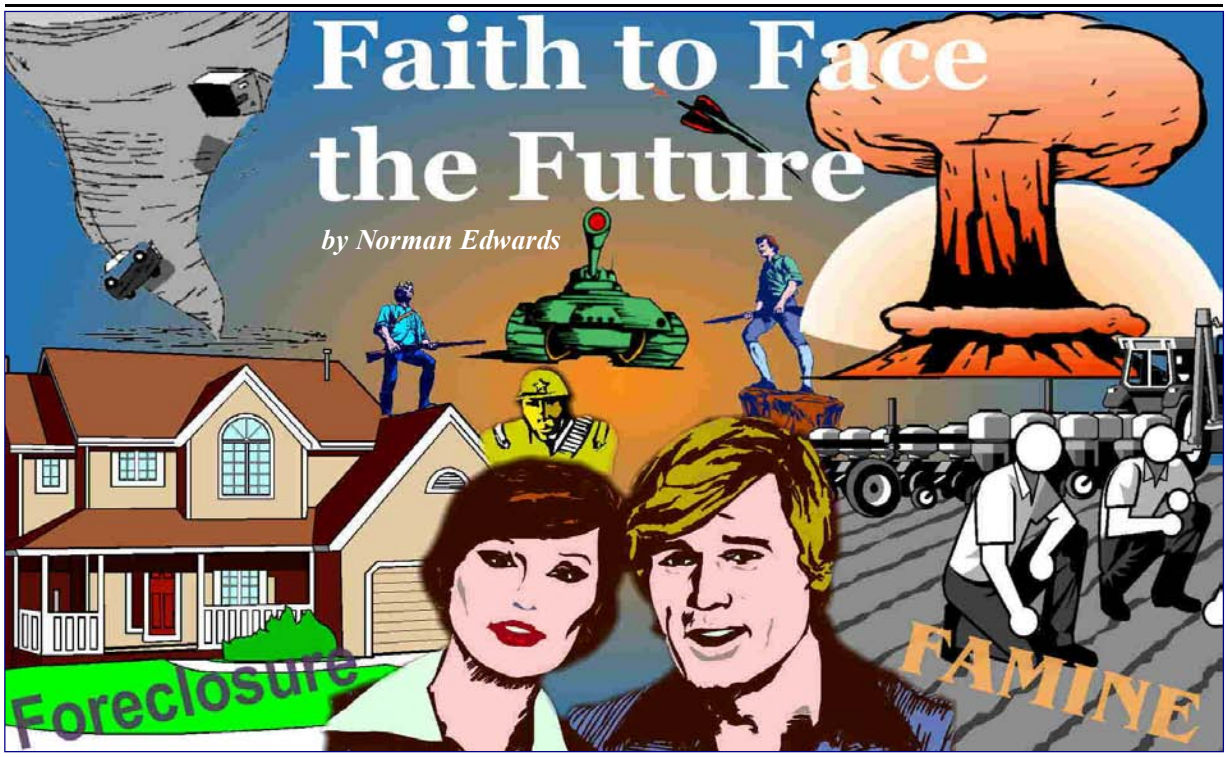
Servants' NEWS

Vol. 13, No. 2 *A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be* **July-Aug 2009**



Billion-dollar bank failures! Government rescues with trillions in bailouts, but somehow, nobody is at fault!

Global crop failures! Caused by global warming, or by genetic engineering and mass agri-business practices? Solved by the carbon tax—governments charging us to use the atmosphere?

Who are our enemies and who are our friends? Europe, Russia, Arabs, China, Korea? We do business with them all, but we don't trust each other. We waged expensive war, based on lies, and have not reduced terrorism. We claim to bring freedom to other nations, but our own government wants to imprison and torture people without trial, to completely control healthcare, schooling, and just about everything else.

We need not fear any of this! The Bible shows us how we may

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What is True Forgiveness?

by Norman Edwards

Forgiveness is a rather complex subject in the Bible. There are many verses that discuss it from many points of view. It always involves at least one **offender**, who needs to seek forgiveness and be forgiven, and the **offended**, who, at the appropriate time, needs to forgive. There are times when forgiveness is not warranted, and even God does not forgive. But more often, there are situations where forgiveness should occur: sometimes it

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Port Austin Bible Campus Update:

Looking for Young People, Agricultural Progress

by Norman Scott Edwards

We are beginning to recover from the five months I spent in Arkansas taking care of my parents' terminal illnesses and funerals (see previous PABC update). This is the second *Servants' News* in sequence and barring unforeseen circumstances, we expect to continue. This update contains three subjects:

1) New PABC member Rick Heath and his wife, Karen.
2) Looking for young people to come to PABC, especially to sell on Ebay—no experience necessary.
3) PABC's natural agricultural production: growing, preserving, cooking and eating.

Rick and Karen

Rick Heath moved to PABC just after the Feast last year. Rick has spent years in various aspects of the construction trade. He is a woodworking expert and very skilled at getting a lot done at little cost. Rick has been organizing our shop and the many tools that have been donated by various people. He would like to at least begin corresponding with any young people who are seriously interested in learning woodworking and construction skills. (Use contact info at right or e-mail richardheath36@yahoo.com.)

Rick is quite a Bible student. He has attended a variety of home fellowships and Church of God groups over the past 30 years—since he was in his 20's (see article, p. 17). He has read and saved nearly every *Servants' News* since the original April 1995 issue. He has done a lot of independent research on his own, and has been a great addition to the diversity of understanding and Bible study here at PABC. He, like the other PABC members, also understands our Father in Heaven does not teach everyone the same thing at the same time—so that we can work at peace with other Believers who have some doctrinal differences.

Rick believes that the Eternal caused him to come to PABC so that he could be a blessing to it, and all of us here agree that that plan has certainly worked so far.

Earlier this year, Rick married Karen Bednark, a Christian woman with no Church of God background, but who has come to understand many of our teachings and practices here at PABC. Rick and Karen now live in the ground floor apartment of our main ministry building. Karen has suffered from MS and other maladies over the years, having been completely blind at one point. She is still largely confined to a wheel chair (see her wheelchair garden photo on page 20).

By the grace of God, early this year, Karen was able to leave the nursing home, where she had lived for the past five years, marry Rick and move to PABC. She has already been a great help to PABC in cooking, crafts and other areas. She has run small businesses before and has become very skilled at

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The purpose of Church Bible Teaching Ministry is to continue the work of the Church that was started by Jesus Christ (Yashua the Messiah) and His Apostles in the first century. This work involves expounding the truth of the Bible by means of teaching, writing, music and video as well as taking positive action to help and serve other believers and all people of the world. CBTM and those people who work within it are just a few of many parts of the Church, which is the body of Christ. *Servants' News* is a publication of CBTM.

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What Are the Holydays FOR?

Of All Biblical Subjects, God's Annual Holydays enjoy the Least Regard in most of the Professing Christian Community. The Disdain for them is due Largely to a Mis-Representation of their Ultimate Purpose

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In the greater Christian Community, there are few subjects which are met with greater disinterest than the seven annual Holydays found in the pages of Scripture. Despite the Early Church being seen as having observed them, and despite the Apostle Paul's direct instruction to a Greek (Gentile) congregation to keep one set in particular, (1st Cor. 5:7-8) yet the attraction to **non**-biblical religious holidays seem the more compelling, to our secular society and even among the religiously inclined.

It's All About Grace

Factoring into people's sentiments in this matter is the issue of Grace. It is counter-posed that we are not in any way obligated to keep Biblical Holydays as means of attaining salvation. Despite this being technically correct, a greater matter is overlooked. These days are not our *means* of attainment, rather they are educational tools created by God to permit us to better understand the process of salvation, both personal salvation and ultimate world salvation, and to provide a framework upon which to be able to better understand Bible Prophecy.

Observing these before-ordained Holydays and focusing on their illustrative meaning gives each disciple a more in-depth comprehension of how personal salvation is attained and how that opportunity will be extended ultimately to all who have ever lived!

It is ironic that the one place in the New Testament which most specifically mentions Holydays is used to discourage interest in them! Colossians 2:16-17 admonishes the Christian: "*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which* ***are a shadow of things to come****; but the body…of Christ.* What this verse says is to let no man judge them in how they were observing these things, but rather to let the Church (the body of Christ) do so. (The word "is" was added by translators, and it clouds the point.) Notice please, that Paul wasn't indicating that 'men' were judging them for **not** keeping these things, but rather for **how** they **were** keeping them. The New Testament Church **kept** them somewhat differently than did the religious zealots of the day! What has been largely overlooked here is the explanation of their ultimate purpose, that they're a '*shadow of things to come*'. Why would Paul want them to disregard observances which present an '*outline of future events*'? (A modern way of saying it.)

Biblical Holydays offer a framework for a more in-depth understanding of redemption and prophecy. Most perceive prophecy to be only dark predictions of end-time events. Anyone with a reasonably correct understanding of prophecy will immediately see the correlation between prophesied events and God's Holydays, particularly the Fall Holydays. Anyone not finding Bible Prophecy to be clear and understandable can gain much from a familiarity with Biblical Holydays in knowing how events interrelate and why they happen.

Holyday observance isn't our means of earning salvation, nor was it ever intended to be, but of enhancing understanding, (growing further in grace and knowledge).

Greater Salvation

The Spring Holydays illustrate the process of **personal salvation**. (Passover, the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost (also known as the Feast of Firstfruits.)

God's Annual Holydays powerfully incorporate the fundamental Biblical Doctrine of the Resurrections from the dead. Spring Holydays end with the First Resurrection, the Fall Holydays sequence begins with it.

The Fall Holydays illustrate how the process of salvation will be afforded to **all** who have ever lived (or will live beyond the Great Tribulation in the Millennial Age): **world salvation** (pictured by: The

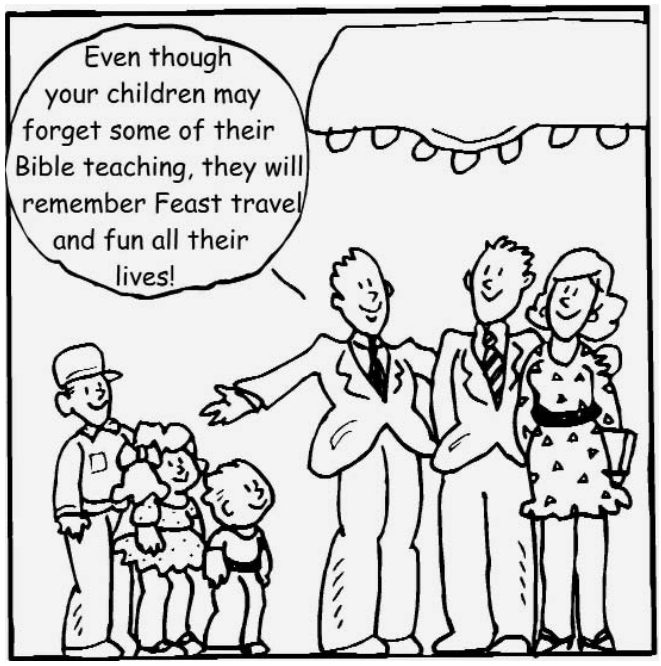
Day of Trumpets, Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day).

All Nations Will Come

The world will one day be introduced to them. The set of Holydays into which all nations will be invited (gently coerced) into observing is that set which illustrates what is then being offered them! The Feast of Tabernacles! Zech. 14:16 has:

*"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up **from year to year** to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. 17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of **all the families of the earth** unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be **no rain**.* [1] *18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have **no rain**; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite **the heathen** that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of **all nations** that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 20 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowl's before the altar.* [A reference to Zechariah 9:15?]

Clearly here, Gentile nations, bar none, will be called upon to be adequately represented in Jerusalem, annually, before the returned and reigning Christ, to worship Him at the Feast of Tabernacles. The Saints having been raised immortal (in the First Resurrection (Rev. 20:5) at the Feast of Trumpets) and having been made 'one' with Christ (at the Day of Atonement) before the others' era of opportunity is come to them!



Test Yourself

Consider a brief test as to whether or not you could benefit from a familiarity with biblical Holydays:

1. Do you understand about the Millennial Rule of Christ and His Glorified Immortal Saints on Earth? (Rev. 2:26, 5:10, 20:4 & 6)
2. Do you understand the need for the resurrections from the dead? (1Cor. 15:13-17, Heb. 6:2)
3. Can you explain how many resurrections there are and generally when they occur? (Rev. 20:5)
4. Do you know that Pentecost originally was an Old Testament observance? (Lev. 23:15-16)
5. Do you understand what will happen in the post-millennial age and beyond that?
6. Can you explain when it is that all the uncalled dead will have the opportunity that they never had in their lifetimes? (Rev. 20:12, John 6:44, & 6:37-40, Ezekiel 37, etc.)

God has a Plan by which all who have ever lived, who never had opportunity, will have opportunity for salvation. That Plan is laid out rather specific-ally in His Holydays. (Man's holiday inventions present none of this! Man's theology doesn't have answers for this wide-open redemptive situation.) Modern theology holds to the opinion that this is the **only** day of salvation, that 'whosoever will' may come today, despite the clear qualification by Jesus Christ Himself that anyone in this first harvest **must** be drawn toward salvation specifically as a result of the Father having called him. [2]

There are two general 'harvest periods' in the process, known by the terms: "the early and the latter rains". (James 5:7, Zech. 9:9 thru 10:1, Deut. 11:13-17) My articles addressing the resurrections from the dead further explain their essential part (www.goldensheaves.org). We place ourselves at a perceptual disadvantage whenever we consign God's Holydays to practical irrelevance. 🕮

Footnotes:

[1] This is that period generally known as 'the latter rain', suggesting that they must respond positively to be afforded the opportunity then open to all. It isn't the rain itself that's harvested, it's the fruit of that outpouring.

[2] John 6:37 "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*" Verse 44 "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day*."

Does God Still... Talk to People?

by Norman Edwards

The answer is essentially "Yes". But the Bible teaches much about how, why and when He talks. Almost everyone has heard that God spoke to the prophets in the Old Testament:

> Then He said, Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, *I,* the LORD, make Myself known to him in a **vision**; I speak to him in a **dream**. Not so with My servant Moses; He *is* faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD...." (Num 12:6-8).

In the New Testament, the Son of God comes to earth giving great spiritual teaching not generally known before. Luke says, "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it" (Luke 16:16; Heb 1:1-4 similar).

Did the coming of Christ eliminate the need for prophetic dreams and visions or the speaking of God through angels and His Spirit? No! **The pouring out of the Holy Spirit <u>increased</u> the number of people who received divine messages!** Please read these many verses showing God speaking.

> Then the **Spirit said** to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot" (Acts 8:29).
>
> And in these days **prophets** came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and **showed by the Spirit** that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28).
>
> As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the **Holy Spirit said**, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2).
>
> Now Judas and Silas, themselves **being prophets** also, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them (Acts 15:32).
>
> ... We who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had **four virgin daughters who prophesied** (Acts 21:8-9).
>
> ... A certain **prophet** named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his *own* hands and feet, and said, "Thus **says the Holy Spirit**, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:10-11).
>
> Except that **the Holy Spirit testifies in every city**, saying that chains and tribulations await me (Acts 20:23).
>
> ... As it has **now** [not 400 years ago] been revealed **by the Spirit** to His holy apostles and **prophets**... (Eph 3:5).
>
> Therefore, as **the Holy Spirit says**: "Today, if you will hear His voice" (Heb 3:7).
>
> And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will **prophesy** one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.... And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two **prophets** tormented those who dwell on the earth (Rev 11:3,10).
>
> Now I, John... fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the **prophets,** and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God" (Rev 22:8-9).

What is a Prophet?

A prophet is someone who speaks for God. (Deut 18:18-19; Dan 9:6; Amos 3:7). Most Bible prophets carefully relate exactly what God told them—not putting their own interpretation on His words. Some serve God this way many times, while others may do it only once (Jdgs 6:7-10; 2Chr 15:1-7). Even with the major role Solomon had as King of Israel and writer of the Bible, God only talked to him twice (1Kngs 11:9). **A person speaking for God, is <u>prophesying</u>, but if he does not do it regularly, he may not be called a <u>prophet</u>.**

A prophet does not usually have authority over the people to whom he delivers the words of God. The people may or may not obey His words. Many Old Testament prophets were imprisoned or killed by the people to whom they were sent. Sometimes, even the prophets did not listen to what God was saying (2Pet 2:15-16; Jonah 1:1-3). In the New Testament, many of those who prophesied were not apostles or church leaders. But at times those who were prophets also had authority as a judge (Samuel), a king (David) or an apostle (John).

Some people quote this verse to claim that any speaking guided of God is prophesying:

> But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men (1Cor 14:3).

Edification, exhortation and comfort are the effect of prophecy, not its definition. Every place in

the scripture where we have the actual words of a prophecy, we can see that they are given by God (John 11:48-52; Acts 11:27-30; 13:1-3; 21:10-11; Rev 1-22). Prophesyings may be about the future, or they may be something that an individual or a church needs right now.

In Acts 21:8-9, quoted previously, we see that women—Philip's four daughters—can be prophets. Others are Deborah (Jdgs 4:4), Miriam (Ex 15:20), Huldah (2Kgs 22:4) and Anna (Luke 2:36).

The Effect of God Talking to Someone

When God talks to people, they still have control of themselves—He does not "take control" of them: "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1Cor 14:32). Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah and others seemed to have little emotional difficulty. Neither did Ananias in the New Testament:

> Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "**Here I am, Lord**" (Acts 9:10).

But for others, even Isaiah, Daniel and the Apostle John, receiving a message from God was an emotionally powerful experience:

> When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He *was* the Angel of the LORD. And Manoah said to his wife, "**We shall surely die**, because we have seen God!" (Jdgs 13:21-22).
>
> So I said: "Woe *is* me, for **I am undone!** Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts" (Isa 6:5).
>
> Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, **was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him**... (Dan 4:19).
>
> ... As for me, Daniel, my thoughts **greatly terrified me**, and my face turned pale; but I kept the matter in my mind (Dan 7:28, NRSV).
>
> My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have **overwhelmed me,** and I have retained no strength. "For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me" (Dan 10:16-17).
>
> As he [the apostle Paul] journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. **Then he fell to the ground**, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? (Acts 9:3-4).
>
> Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "See *that you do* not *do that.* For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God" (Rev 22:8-9).

Prophecy, Most Listed Spiritual Gift

Of the five different lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Rom 12:6-8; 1Cor 12:7-11, 28-31; Eph 4:11-15; 1Pet 4:8-11), **prophecy is mentioned in all of them**; other gifts are mentioned in three lists or less. The word "prophecy" is not used in 1 Peter 4:11, instead it mentions speaking the "oracles of God" or "very words of God" (NIV, NRSV, etc.). The Greek here is *logion* and is used for God's words in the three other verses that use it (Acts 7:38; Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12).

> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them:* if **prophecy**, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith (Rom 12:6)
>
> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another **prophecy**...(1Cor 12:7-10)
>
> And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second **prophets,** third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues (1Cor 12:28).
>
> And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some **prophets,** some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11).
>
> If anyone speaks, ***let him speak* as the oracles of God.** If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1Pet 4:11).

We Are Commanded to Let Brethren Prophecy; Watch out for False Prophets

> Therefore, brethren, **desire earnestly to prophesy**, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order (1Cor 14:39-40).

Unfortunately, there are "false prophets" who claim messages are from God when they are not (Deut 13:3; 1Jn 4:1; Rev 2:20). We must learn to examine messages for conflict with the Bible, determine if a speaker has a motive for delivering a false message, and develop spiritual discernment. We can do these things and work together in peace.

> Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1Tim 4:1),
>
> Let two or three **prophets speak**, **and let the others judge** [whether or not the message is from the Eternal (Deut 13:2; 18:22)]. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And **the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets**. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1Cor 14:29-33). 🕮

Teaching and Preaching

by Roj Beaumont

Teaching and preaching are 2 different words. **Matthew 11:1** relates that Jesus departed to preach and to teach. Since two different words were used to identify what Jesus did, we might reasonably conclude that he did two different things. But in what ways are they different? What did Christ, Paul or the apostles teach and what did they preach, and to whom?

The vast majority of times when the words teaching or teach occur in the New Testament they are translated from the same Greek word; *didasko* (Strong's #1321). In Thayer's explanation of the word it says: 'to **hold discourse with others** in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses.' Didactic means to instruct but the definition of a discourse is to talk, **converse**, hold forth in speech or writing.

So **teaching** is more of a **two-way** process **involving interaction** with others. The question-answer process acted out in schools is a typical example of this. Pupils have interaction with a teacher often asking questions when information is not clear or it needs reiteration. The final instructions Jesus gave to **his followers**, "Go ye therefore, and **teach** all nations, baptizing them…" (Matt 28:19) is to **teach not** preach. "For indeed because of the time, you **ought to be teachers**, you have need that one **teach** you again what are the first principles of the oracles of God. And you have become in need of milk, and not of solid food" (Heb 5:12). So it appears we are to develop the ability to **teach** others. Since congregations are generally only "preached" to or at, this is going to be a difficult assignment because people learn by example. "But the **servant** of the Lord must not strive, but to be gentle to all, **apt to teach**, patient" (2Tim 2:24).

But what about **preaching?** In the New Testament preaching is generally translated equally from two Greek words, *kerusso* (Strong's #2784, 62 times) and *euaggelizo* (Strong's #2097, 54 times). Thayer's Lexicon explains the word *kerusso* as, '**to proclaim** after the manner of a herald; **always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority, which must be listened to and obeyed.**' The suggestion here is, be quiet and listen because I have something to say to you. In Thayer's it adds, 'to proclaim openly, especially used of the public proclamation of the gospel and matters pertaining to it, made by John the Baptist, by Jesus, by the apostles and other Christian **leaders**.' This is significantly different from teaching. What about *euaggelizo*, '…in the New Testament used esp. of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ, and of what relates to this salvation.' (*Thayer's*)

There are scriptures that include both words, teach and preach. In **Matt 4:23** and **Matt 9:35** we find on both occasions that Jesus was teaching in the synagogues and preaching the **Gospel**. Later the two words are used in Acts 28:31 where it relates how Paul spent 2 years in his rented home in Rome preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God **and teaching** about Jesus the Christ.

> Whom we preach (Christ), warning everyman, **and teaching every man in all wisdom;** that we may **present every man perfect** in Christ Jesus (Col 1:28).'

It must be noticed however other things on occasions are preached in the New Testament: the resurrection (Acts 4:2), Christ/Jesus (Acts 8:5, 35), Christ is the Son of God (Acts 9:20), and the remission/ forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38, Luke 24:47).

Teach Fellow Believers, Do Not Preach to Them

Having looked at **all** the scriptures that include the words teach and preach and their derivatives, **a very clear pattern shows up**. On **only one** occasion can I find **disciples or believers preached** to and that is in Acts:20:7. This is the occasion that Paul 'preached' in Troas until dawn, and as stated in the NLT **"…since** he was leaving the next day.' Actually here the word 'preached' is neither from the Greek word *kerusso* or *euaggelizo*. Of the 60 times the word for "preached" occurs in the New Testament it is translated on this one occasion only from the Greek word *dialegomai* (Strong's #1256). Here Strong's adds; 'i.e. discuss (in argument or exhortation)'. In Thayer's Lexicon it adds; 'to converse, discourse with one, argue, discuss', adding 'drawing arguments from the Scriptures.'

So on the **one** occasion Paul is recorded as **preaching** to his fellow believers (in the KJV), **he didn't!** He is, in fact, involved in **discussion!** Indeed, most other translations say "spoke", "talked", "discoursed" or something similar. This Greek word: dialegomai is where we get the word dialogue. Looking up the definition of this word in the Oxford Dictionary it says, 'Conversation…between two or more persons.' In order **to follow Christ** we **must** imitate Paul (1Cor 11:1):

Paul's **habit** was "**reasoning with** them out of the scriptures" (in the synagogue) (Acts 7:2).

Paul, **every** Sabbath "**reasoned** …and **persuaded**…" (Acts 18:4).

Paul "….entered into the synagogue and **reasoned with**…" (Acts 18:19).

Paul, for 3 months, was "**disputing and persuading** the things…" (Acts 19:8).

Reasoning and **disputing** **again** comes from Greek word **dialegomai.** Paul did not preach to them **but discussed** with them most probably 'drawing arguments from the Scriptures'.

Gospel Preached to Unbelievers

A large proportion of the times that preaching occurs there is the mention of the **Gospel;** examples include Acts 9:10 and Matthew 10:7**.** It would have been difficult holding a dialogue or **two-way** conversation in teaching the Gentiles since they would not have a basis on which to discuss much, as regards Christianity. The interaction with the Jews was different. So what was Christ's example? It was Christ's habit to go to the synagogue and meet others on the Sabbath **(**Luke 4:16**)**, but what did he do there? There are **10** occasions where it **records** he **taught** there, **one** where he read and **only two** occasions he **preached**. But what happened with the apostles and how often did they preach? They certainly preached among the Gentiles (Gal 2:2), but what about when they were in the synagogues? It was **a place of verbal interaction**, **NOT** one of an ordered and regular format. There are however 2 recorded examples of Paul preaching in the synagogue; Acts 9:20 and Acts 13:5.

But what about the meetings of Christians in the New Testament? There appears to be little to go on here except in 1 Corinthians 14:23-40. **Orderly involvement** could be the words to summarize what Paul advocated when he wrote to the Corinthians about their meetings. It would appear teaching applies mainly to the converted while preaching is to the unconverted.

In the churches today the vast majority of those attending each week are believers; therefore it would seem to be inappropriate and unnecessary to preach (proclaim) to them **week after week.** Particularly when one considers that to preach is from the two Greek words; *euaggelizo* from which we get "evangelise" and the other, *kerusso*, which is to proclaim **'always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority, which must be listened to and obeyed.'** As the congregations are effectively being taught to just listen and never to participate in discussions on religious matters, they will be relatively ineffective discussing 'religion' particularly with those outside the environment of the church, among friends and family. However after services in **many** places I have found it rare that fellowship is about the sermon or in fact religious matters in general, which it appears it should be:

> ….call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shall honour him, **not** doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, **nor speaking your own words** (Isa 58:13).

Discussion Helps Us Remember a Teaching

Discussion in a service **definitely** encourages 'debate' after the formal service has finished. When no interaction occurs within a service this seems rare, it is as though the end of a service is the finish, what is said is a done thing and not open to debate or discussion. From my experience people rapidly forget even the topic of the sermon let alone the content of it. **Discussion and interaction** cements the information in the memory, it **makes you think** rather than just listen and maybe doze or dream of other things.

Did Paul, as he went from church to church, ever give a formal, *kerusso*? **No,** he taught them, *didasko*. **"**…He will remind you of what I **teach**…in all the churches **wherever I go**.'(1Cor 4:17, NLT) As already stressed previously teaching involves interaction, preaching doesn't. The services are, certainly from my experience, notable in their **complete** absence of **any** interactive contribution from the congregation.

But does it matter? Is it important?

> **Follow** me as I **follow** Christ (1Cor 11: 1)

Or as other translations put it: '**Imitate me**…' This obviously applies to both the 'ministry' and the congregations. Both Christ and Paul regularly attended the synagogue on the Sabbath. **(**Luke 4:16, Acts 7:2**).** So we today need to go to an equivalent place to meet fellow believers. Since the Synagogue at the time of the N.T. was **merely a meeting place**, **(not** a 'church building'**)** we need to go somewhere where we can meet fellow believers whether it is at a 'church-meeting' or someone's house.

Based on the information we have in the New Testament **what do we find Jesus** and **Paul** doing in the Synagogue? In reiteration**:** Jesus is recorded as reading on one occasion, twice preaching, yet 10 times teaching. (**Five times as much teaching as preaching?**)

> As for Paul, his habit was to reason from the scriptures while there on the Sabbath (Acts 17:2).
>
> Every Sabbath reason and persuade (Acts 18:4).
>
> Three months disputing and persuading on the Sabbath in the Synagogue **(**Acts 19:8**)**

Yet in only two recorded

examples do I find Paul preaching there, Acts 9:20 and Acts 13:5. So when they met others on the Sabbath preaching occurs on occasions but definitely **not** every week. If 'we' preach or sit listening to preaching regularly we are **not** imitating or following Christ or Paul. **If we are involved where teaching, being taught or discussing the scriptures occurs most or even some weeks, then we are imitating or following Paul and of course Christ. Preaching** is a **one-way process** while **teaching** is **two-way process**.

All Believers Need to Be Ready for Some Teaching

Should all Christians endeavour to be faithful? If so, then this verse is relevant:

> And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the **ability to teach others** as well (2Tim 2:2, NAB).

Yes; we are all to develop into faithful people. Therefore we also need the know-how, the practice and then the learned ability to become effective teachers. This is not in any way in conflict with James 3:1: "…let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgement." There is a difference between someone in a capacity of teaching, in the case of giving an active discourse in front of an assembled group (Apollos, Acts 18:26), and that of being approached by one or more and asked why we believe or do things as we do.

Many will also hold the view that with a 'free for all' people will end up believing different things and this will result in 'anarchy'. But it says in John 16:13: "However, when the Spirit of Truth, has come, it will guide you into all truth." The assumption I make, however, is that the believers present will possess God's Spirit. Note the word 'guide'; it is not ramming anything down ones throat.

> ...and be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear … (1Pet 3:15).

Meekness and fear is important to stress in this context**.** 1 Corinthians 14:30 is a scripture that appears to be ignored by most. However if this was applied then God's Spirit would be allowed the opportunity to correct abuses and inaccuracies that I am sure we are aware happen all the time.

> If a revelation is revealed to another sitting by, let the first be silent." In this way, all who prophesy [or teach] will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. Remember that people who prophesy [or teach] are in control of their spirit and can wait their turn. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the other churches. (1Cor 14:30-33).

John's' Gospel account (KJV) does not even include the word 'preach' or its derivatives: preached, preaching or preacher. The same however cannot be said for the word "teach". It occurs 3 times referring to the teaching of Gentiles, Jews and believers. The word "taught" occurs 8 times usually referring to Christ as having taught in the temple or synagogue. "Teacher" occurs on one occasion: "The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher **(Not preacher!)** come from God (John 3:2).

Some have quoted Paul when he tells Timothy 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine' (2Tim 4:2**)** to say that here he is instructing Timothy to preach to the brethren. But does it say that? In context we read in the New Living Translation, "Preach the word of God. Be prepared whether the time is favourable or not." Note that these are **separate sentences from what follows:** "Patiently correct, and encourage your people with good teaching." So we have the first part to preach persistently, the assumption that most appear to have is that it is to the brethren. The second part is **to teach**, but here in context it is to 'your people', in other words the brethren. Some may say the whole context of **chapter 4** is that of instructing Timothy on how to minister to the brethren. This is **not** the case, since in **v5** Paul instructs Timothy to 'Work at bringing others to Christ.' *NLT* Or '..do the work of an evangelist.' *KJV* , and you do not do that with brethren.

Summary

So what do I conclude after studying **teaching** and preaching**?**

1. All believers **need to develop** the ability to **teach others**, but **not** to preach to them. Probably a much larger proportion of people are converted due to their interaction with friends and relatives than the 'written word' or mass media. Probably more success in 'converting' people would be incurred if some of our energy was directed to this end, that of teaching rather than preaching.

2. Teaching is a two way process, so there is the obvious need for us to be actively encouraged to talk about our beliefs. **(Hence 'interaction' is essential.)** Since this definitely was not an activity that was at all encouraged in the past we therefore 'all' **need** this practice. Practice as they say, makes perfect.

3. Preaching the Gospel (Gal 4:13) or 'Christ' (Acts 8:5, 35) is the active intention of people who are 'called' to such an activity "And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom 10:15). This should be directed to nonbelievers in particular.. 🕮

BibleStudy.org averaging 10,000 daily visitors

FARMINGTON HILLS, Michigan - BibleStudy.org's popularity now exceeds 10,000 visitors a day, reports Webmaster and site owner Alan Ruth.

"For the first six months of 2008, BibleStudy.org experienced only **two** days where its daily visitor count exceeded 10,000. For the first six months of 2009, however, the site has **averaged** more than 10,000 daily visitors. Additionally, the site's Question and Answer service which is manned by seven mature Christians handled 785 e-mailed questions from the general public."

"This performance has been especially encouraging and exciting since, historically, the **second** half of a given year is the site's busiest period." states Alan.

For the first half of 2009 BibleStudy.org drew 1,865,230 visitors or an average of 10,305 a day and served more than 4 million Web pages. This denotes an exceptional increase in site traffic of 31% above the same period in 2008. Visitors now average a record five (5) minutes accessing the site's quality Bible study materials.

Alan projects the site will attract 3.8+ million visitors this year and will exceed last year's visitor total sometime during 2009's Feast of Tabernacles.

Donations to defray costs of effectively reaching the world with the gospel can be made by credit card at https://dxdc2.secureserving.net/~barnabas/order.php or by check to: Barnabas Ministries, PO Box 3393, Farmington Hills, MI. 48333, USA.

BibleStudy.org Web Site Statistics

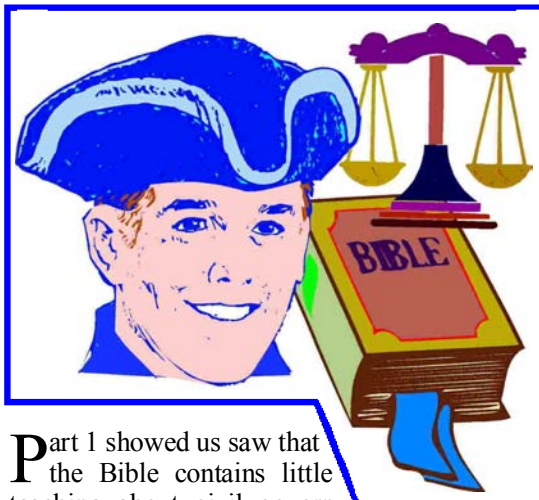
(January 1 to June 30, 2009)

Total Number of Visitors:	1,865,230 for daily average of 10,305 visitors.
Total No. Web pages viewed:	4,078,562 for daily average of 22,533 pages viewed.
Increase in visitors compared to same period in 2008:	443,099 or 31%
Increase in web pages viewed compared to same period in 2008:	704,582 or 21%
No. of Email Questions Handled:	785
No. of Email Questions Handled since service started Oct. 2002:	8,357
Busiest Day in Site History:	April 6, 2009 (14,742 actual visitors)
Busiest Month in Site History:	April 2009 (346,742 actual visitors, 718,847 Web pages viewed)
Average Time Visitor Spends on Site:	5 minutes

God has increased BibleStudy.org's ability to reach the world with the Gospel every year since its inception. God willing, 2009 will be the 14th consecutive year BibleStudy.org will experience increases in BOTH number of visitors and number of Bible Study materials accessed.

14 Years of Independent Ministry

This recently found photo was taken at the 1995 Feast of Tabernacles. Norman Edwards, left, and Alan Ruth, right, were both committed to serve the Sabbath-keeping brethren in a non-denominational manner. Ruth encouraged Edwards to publish *Servants' News*, including Ruth's articles, and Edwards encouraged Ruth to start biblestudy.org. Since then, the two have worked together at other Feasts, conferences, etc. Both were mainframe computer professionals by trade. They have struggled for subsistence-level funding throughout most of their ministries, which is especially amazing in Ruth's case, since his website reaches more people than most Sabbatarian evangelistic programs.



To Whom Does God Give Authority for Civil Government, Today? (Part 2)

by Norman Edwards

Part 1 showed us saw that the Bible contains little teaching about civil government before Moses, the outstanding exception is that God certainly did not approve the human "one world government" of Babylon. God gave Moses extensive information about civil government, which was to be largely local and consist of judges and officers appointed by the people. He said other nations would be impressed by His wise laws if Israel followed them (Deut 4:6). This government worked during the time of Joshua and the elders, but degenerated as the people disobeyed the Eternal during the time of the judges. Eventually, the people demanded a King (1Sam 8). God told them that they could have one, but that they would suffer for it. Yet, He still promised to work with the people and their king, and to teach them the right way through His prophets (1Sam 12).

This study continues with selected examples from the Old Testament that will help us understand answers to some of these big questions:

- What civil government(s) should we submit to?
- To any and every one that claims authority over us?
- Only to ones that are clearly put in place by God?
- How does one know which those are?
- Is it ever all right to participate in a revolution against an evil government?

The situation is not simple—it is actually quite complex. By examining both Old and New Testament examples, we can learn how civil government has and does work. Every effort has been made to base this study on the teaching of the Scripture. We reprint the key verses and summarize the longer chapters, but encourage the reader who is interested to read all of the references for themselves.

We start this section with five important points

Five Principles of Biblical Civil Government

1) The Eternal Takes an Active Role in Human Leaders

God apparently leaves some things to our own free choice, or even time and chance (Eccl 9:11; Luke 13:1-5). But, He does promise to take an active role in leadership.

> "...In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men" (Dan 4:17).
>
> For exaltation *comes* neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. But God *is* the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another (Pslm 75:6-7).

There are many times in the scripture where God specifically sets people up as leaders (1Sam 15:1, 28:17; 2Sam 2:4; 1Kngs 11:31; 19:15-16; 1Chr 28:5; Dan 5:28, etc.) There are places where He either commands or allows people to choose their own leaders (Deut 1:13; 16:18; Judges 11:6; Isa 3:6-7;Acts 6:3)

2) It is Good to Have a Righteous Ruler:

> When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan (Prov 29:2).

While the above principle may seem obvious and simple, it is frequently overlooked by people debating government. People argue that the best form of government is democratic, republican, socialist, communist or something else. Usually, they claim that if the world or their nation would just use that form of government that everything would be so much better. Whereas, the Bible teaches that it is not the system of government that matters as much as the righteousness of the people.

The books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles give God's evaluation of many rulers. Generally righteous Old Testament leaders include: Moses, Joshua & the Elders, David, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah and, Josiah. None of these were perfect, but most of the others were a whole lot worse. Solomon and Jehoash were

Please Insert the Green Page into the Previous Issue

The printers mistakenly printed page 32 twice instead of page 38 in the previous issue. The loose green page in this issue can be inserted into the May-June 2009 issue so you will have the complete part 1 of the Civil Government series.

noted for righteous rule at the beginning, but going bad in the end. King Manasseh had the longest unrighteous rule, but repented in the end. The Bible always simply comments on the relative righteousness of the ruler, not the form of government whereby he governed.

The Bible has numerous other verses commanding righteous and just government. Here are a few:

> To do righteousness and justice *Is* more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice (Prov 21:3)
>
> "But a beautiful palace does not make a great king! Why did your father, Josiah, reign so long? Because he was just and right in all his dealings. That is why God blessed him" (Jer 22:15).
>
> He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

3) God Frequently Allows Unrighteous Rulers

When Israel demanded a King, God told them exactly how a **king** would use, and abuse, his power. In our modern world, presidents and prime ministers operate much like kings: they are individuals who have been given large amounts of authority by the people of a nation. Before Israel had kings, they only had judges—people with authority to decide cases brought to them. A king or president, once empowered by the people, has proactive authority to draft soldiers, wage war and to selectively enforce a myriad of laws against whom he will. Here is that vital statement, with a few notes to help us clearly see that what God told them is what happened back then and is what is happening in the USA today.

> And he [Samuel] said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take [military draft] your sons and appoint *them* for his own chariots and *to be* his horsemen [Department of Defense], and *some* will run before his chariots [Secret Service]. 12 He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties [endless Civil Service], *will set some* to plow his ground and reap his harvest [huge state owned lands, Dept. of Agriculture], and *some* to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots [military-industrial complex]. 13 He will take your daughters *to be* perfumers, cooks, and bakers [the Federal government employs millions of women as clerks]. 14 And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants. [Most land in the USA is owned by the government or big business with government contracts.] 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. [income tax rates are now higher than 10%] 16 And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put *them* to his work. [Nearly every business pays sales, income and other taxes.] 17 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. [We pay government fees to use public roads, build buildings, drill wells and many other things that were free years ago.] 18 And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day" (1Sam 8:11-18).

Some governments, such as David's, Solomon's and our own, start out largely righteous, but they tend to deteriorate over time as people stop taking responsibility to watch them. Since God had promised David that Solomon's throne would be established forever (2Sam 7:8-16), the next king of Judah was always a descendant of the last. Most of them were unrighteous. Often, the king was so young that he was not able to rule by himself. He looked good and wore the royal robes at official functions, but the real question became, "Who controlled the king?"

This writer believes that the situation in the USA, today, is similar. We have leaders with charismatic personalities who are good at reading speeches and making TV appearances. Some of them become president with very little previous governing experience. Their policies and legislation are nearly always written by someone else—often, we do not even know who. As with the Kings of Judah, the important question is, "Who controls them?"

Since God made no promise of a continued line of Kings in Israel, it had many short dynasties. The next king of Israel was frequently the person who killed the previous king. This did not always work, however, sometimes the person who killed the last king was not popular with the people, so they killed him. **Israel never had a king that the Bible calls righteous.** But the kings of that time, as our leaders today, fought the nation's "enemies"—both real and imagined—took the people's money, gave some of it back, and continued to convince the people that kings were necessary.

If one asks why ancient Judah and Israel put up with so many unrighteous kings, the answer can probably be seen in our people today: It is easier to complain about, put up with, and maybe even profit from an unrighteous ruler, than it is to go to the effort to install a righteous leader.

4) Sometimes God Gives us a Choice of Leaders

Some Christians read the scriptures in Principle 1, above, and conclude that God sets up all leaders and that Christians would be working against God if they voted or got involved with choosing a leader. This is like reading the scriptures where God miraculously fed people and concluding that we should not do anything to feed the hungry because we would be infringing on God's work. In this light, most people realize that God usually does not do for us what we can do for ourselves. We can grow

food or work for money to buy it. There are scriptures that command us to do those things—for ourselves and for others. But if these methods fail, we would certainly pray for God to miraculously feed us. So there are biblical commands to choose good leaders when we have the opportunity, and to pray for leaders.

In this most fundamental verse God commands Israel to set up courts in their cities and tribes:

> "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you (Deut 16:18-20).

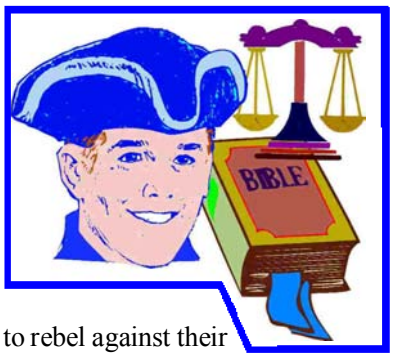
This is the basis of local and tribal (state) government upon which much of the rest of the Old Testament depends. These were the judges that carried out the punishments for the many Scriptural laws. There is no doubt that the people addressed here are the common people. Only two verses prior (Deut 16:16), the same people are commanded to bring offerings three times a year. It is not the elders, priests, ministry or some other special class that should choose the judges of the land, but **all** of the heads of household.

There are other times when conflicting leaders arise and people must choose which leader they will follow based on their understanding of the situation.

The Israelites had to choose between Moses and a coalition of 250 elders of the people, headed by Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who properly pointed out that Moses had taken them out of Egypt, a place with plenty of food, and had yet to deliver the "land flowing with milk and honey" that he had promised. That was a true statement. They just left out the fact that they had been mistreated slaves in Egypt and that the Creator of the universe was taking them to a good land. The people who followed Moses, the established leader, lived. Those who chose to follow Korah and his new leadership group died in an earthquake (Num 16). While some people may have followed Moses simply because he was the "established leader", the right reason to follow him was because he had been and still was representing God to Israel.

Many centuries later, an opposite sort of decision faced the people of Israel. They **should have** departed from their established leaders to listen to some new, traveling leaders. For many generations, Israel had not gone to Jerusalem to worship to keep the Feast days at the temple there (1Kngs 12:26-33). They believed it was not necessary. But King Hezekiah of Judah sent messengers inviting the people to come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. Most people laughed the messengers to scorn, but some humbled themselves and rejected their established king, who was wrong, for the good king of Judah. Only a few years later, the nation of Israel was taken captive, but Judah remained. (2Chr 30).

First Kings 18 tells an interesting story. The evil king Ahab and queen Jezebel were ruling Israel, worshipping Baal and killing the Eternal's prophets. Elijah was a faithful, true prophet, but was on the run from the government to escape arrest. Obadiah, a government employee at Ahab's palace, chose to hide and feed 100 of the Eternal's prophets in caves, rather than following his job description and betraying them. Later, Elijah appeared and challenged them to a bull-sacrificing contest—the rules being that each contestant's God would be responsible for setting the bull on fire. Elijah's God—the true God—won! The people chose



to rebel against their government and obeyed Elijah, who told them to Kill the 450 prophets of Baal (as Deut 13 instructs). After such a powerful miracle, was choosing Elijah's leadership over Ahab's leadership a no-brainer? No, it was a choice. The next chapter describes Jezebel's efforts to kill Elijah—even Elijah became depressed. What would she do to those people who killed her prophets of Baal?

When there is a lot of freedom in a land, we must all chose, on a daily basis, whether to serve the true God, or the false Gods in the land around us. Joshua was not a king and did not control what the people did. But he did set them the right example.

> **Joshua 24:15** "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

5) Sometimes The Eternal Does Not Give us a Choice

The story in Numbers 13 and 14 is an excellent example of how the Eternal's instruction supercedes apparent physical circumstances. The story is not reproduced here for lack of space, but it is worth reading. The important points are:

- God told Israel to conquer the land of Canaan.
- He had them send 12 men on a 40-day preliminary reconnaissance mission.
- Two of the men reported the

great resources here and were eager to conquer it. The other 10 were fearful of the people there and exaggerated their power.

- The 10 fearful men convinced the people that they should not go into the land and stirred them to look for a leader to lead them back to Egypt.
- The 10 men died by a plague from God.
- The people were told that they would die in the wilderness during 40 years, and that only the two faithful spies were to enter into the promised land.
- The people repented of their sin and decided that they wanted to go and conquer the land anyway.
- Moses told them not to go, that they would not succeed.
- They went anyway and were defeated.

The lesson is simple. The land of Canaan or its inhabitants had not changed. It was God who would have blessed the conquest of the land when he told them to do it. Once God decided not to bless it, choosing leaders who wanted to do the conquest anyway was of no use. God had now closed the door. The people who sinned were left with the only choice of wandering in the desert for 40 years until they died.

Judges, Kings and Chronicles contain many stories of when the nation of Israel would sin, be conquered by enemies, repent, and then be delivered by God through some courageous military operation. There were times, however, that God told Israel that they would not be delivered and that they must submit to the conquering kings. The King of Babylon is one example:

> "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Because you [Judah] have not heard My words, 9 'behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10 'Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 'And this whole land shall be a desolation *and* an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jer 25:8-11).
>
> "Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon.' 10 For they prophesy a lie to you, to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish. 11 But the nations that bring their necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let them remain in their own land," says the LORD, "and they shall till it and dwell in it" (Jer 27:9-11).

Even with this warning, there were still people of Judah who refused to service the King of Babylon. Jeremiah chapters 40 through 43 chronicle the story of how the Babylonian King appointed Gedaliah governor of Judah, and then how the king of the Ammonites sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to murder Gedaliah. The people of Judah were afraid that the King of Babylon would take vengeance against everyone for killing his appointed governor, so they wanted to flee to Egypt. In addition, food was becoming very scarce in Judah during the war. Even though God had previously told the people that they must serve the King of Babylon, they asked Jeremiah to petition God for them and promised to do whatever He said. When God told Jeremiah that they must remain under the King of Babylon, the people still insisted on going to Egypt. Jeremiah said:

> "'If you will still remain in this land, then I will build you and not pull *you* down, and I will plant you and not pluck *you* up. For I relent concerning the disaster that I have brought upon you. 11 Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid; do not be afraid of him," says the LORD, "for I *am* with you, to save you and deliver you from his hand. 12 And I will show you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and cause you to return to your own land." 13 But if you say, "We will not dwell in this land," disobeying the voice of the LORD your God, 14 saying, "No, but we will go to the land of Egypt where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor be hungry for bread, and there we will dwell" — 15 Then hear now the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah! Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "If you wholly set your faces to enter Egypt, and go to dwell there, 16 then it shall be *that* the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; the famine of which you were afraid shall follow close after you there *in* Egypt; and there you shall die" (Jer 42:10-16).

It was amazing that God had mercy on them and actually promised them protection in their own land, if they would simply trust him. But from their own human political and economic wisdom, Egypt looked better. So they called Jeremiah a false prophet, and they went to Egypt, forcing Jeremiah to go with them—maybe thinking that he would certainly no let disaster strike while he was there. But the King of Babylon conquered Egypt, Jeremiah escaped, and the people died as prophesied.

We Need to Know the Will of God for Each Situation

There are some times that God gives us a choice, and sometimes He does not. He may command us to serve a certain leader, even though the leader may be a foreigner and an unbeliever. The question often boils down to,

"What is the will of God for a particular situation?" In all the situations above, the will of God was clearly known to the people, they simply chose to listen to their leaders, who were saying what they wanted to hear, rather than a known prophet of God.

The reader might rightfully ask, "How can I know the will of God in the messy political situation that we find ourselves in today?" One of the most important things a Christian should develop is the ability to know the will of God for their life on a regular basis. Some people do this through prayer. Some gain understanding by the Holy Spirit. Others have confidence in the council of their local congregation.

Knowing the will of God for a governmental—or a personal situation is another multi-faceted subject that exceeds the scope of this article. The article, "Does God Still Talk to People" on page 3 may provide some help.

One Individual can Make a Big Difference

But supposing that one does not have a clear revelation from the Eternal, but feels compelled to get involved in governmental affairs for good. Does God allow that? Certainly. An entire city was saved by the actions of an unnamed, but wise woman in the city of Abel of Beth Maachah. The Scripture says nothing about her being commanded or prompted of God to do this:

> And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name *was* Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said: "We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!" So every man of Israel deserted David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king.... So Joab's men [of Judah], with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, went out after him. And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri (2Sam 20:1-2, 7).
>
> Then they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maachah; and they cast up a siege mound against the city, and it stood by the rampart. And all the people who *were* with Joab battered the wall to throw it down. 16 Then a wise woman cried out from the city, "Hear, Hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come nearby, that I may speak with you.' " 17 When he had come near to her, the woman said, "*Are* you Joab?" He answered, "I *am."* Then she said to him, "Hear the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening." 18 So she spoke, saying, "They used to talk in former times, saying, 'They shall surely seek *guidance* at Abel,' and so they would end *disputes*. 19 "I *am among the* peaceable *and* faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?" 20 And Joab answered and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy! 21 "That *is* not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." So the woman said to Joab, "Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." 22 Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw *it* out to Joab. Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem (2Sam 20:15-22).

When Lot was captured and taken prisoner, this was the manner in which his brother Abraham showed individual initiative:

> And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained *servants*, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued *them* unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which *is* on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people (Gen 14:14-16).

The Scripture does not say that Abraham knew ahead of time how his rescue effort would turn out. Melchizedek told him after the fact that it was blessed by God (Gen 14:20). Abraham was doing a wonderful job of applying the golden rule. If we were taken prisoner unjustly, would we want our relatives to try to rescue us?

Probably one of the most charming individual effort stories is the one recorded in the book of Esther. Esther, a young Jewish woman, became queen by winning a beauty contest. Later, when the evil Haman extracted a law from the king calling for the death of all Jews in the empire, she realized that she might have to go before the king to plead for their safety. However, this was not a trivial matter: We enter the story at Esther's message to her uncle Mordecai, who raised her:

> "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." So they told Mordecai Esther's words. And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?" (Esth 4:11-14)

The story ends happily, with Esther saving her people and the evil Haman dying on the gallows that he built for Mordecai. But this was a marvelous example of two

people taking action against a major government and saving many thousands of people.

Does God Ever Support Revolutions?

Some Bible students conclude that it is always wrong to oppose an existing authority because it is God that sets up leaders (Dan 4:17; Rom 13:1-2). But the plain history of the Bible is that many leaders are apparently deposed or appointed by other human leaders. While certainly nothing escapes the attention and control of God, it is obvious that he frequently uses other men to set up the leaders that he wants. When men attempt to overthrow good leaders, they run the risk of failure and God's wrath. When men with righteous intent oppose evil leaders, they often meet with Gods approval and sometimes divine intervention.

While Ehud was a judge whom God raised to deliver Israel, the Bible does not say that God gave him the plan to break the yoke of the Moabites off of Israel (Jdgs 3:15-30). Ehud simply took his normal trip to Moab to pay the tribute money, asked for a private audience with the Moabite King, and pulled out a hidden dagger and killed him. In the confusion that followed, Israel was victorious in battle.

Probably the best Bible Story of good people overthowing evil is the priest Jehoiada's revolution against the evil queen Athaliah. 2 Kings chapters nine and ten tell of all the royal heirs of Israel and Judah that were killed by the treacherous Jehu—including the son of Athaliah. Did this mother weep and morn over this loss? No, she finished off the rest of the heirs to establish her own power. This wonderful story shows how a righteous conspiracy was made to work through the courageous efforts of a woman, a priest, and hundreds of soldiers. They confident enough that they were doing God's will that they carried it out on the Sabbath, in the temple and using the weapons of the temple.

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs. 2 But **Jehosheba**, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and **stole him away** from among the king's sons *who were* being murdered; and they hid him and his nurse in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed. 3 So he was hidden with her in the house of the LORD for six years, while Athaliah reigned over the land. 4 In the seventh year **Jehoiada** [the priest] **sent and brought the captains of hundreds**—of the bodyguards and the escorts—and brought them into the house of the LORD to him. And he made a covenant with them and took an oath from them in the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son. 5 Then he commanded them, saying, "This *is* what you shall do: One-third of you who come on duty on the Sabbath shall be keeping watch over the king's house, 6 "one-third *shall be* at the gate of Sur, and one-third at the gate behind the escorts. You shall keep the watch of the house, lest it be broken down. 7 "The two contingents of you who go off duty on the Sabbath shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD for the king. 8 "But you shall surround the king on all sides, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whoever comes within range, let him be put to death. You are to be with the king as he goes out and as he comes in." 9 **So the captains of the hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded.** Each of them took his men who were to be on duty on the Sabbath, with those who were going off duty on the Sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. 10 **And the priest gave the captains of hundreds the spears and shields which *had belonged* to King David, that were in the temple of the LORD**. 11 Then the escorts stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, all around the king, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, by the altar and the house. 12 And he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and *gave him* the Testimony; they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!" 13 Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the escorts *and* the people, she came to the people *in* the temple of the LORD. 14 When she looked, there was the king standing by a pillar according to custom; and the leaders and the trumpeters were by the king. All the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. **So Athaliah tore her clothes and cried out, "Treason! Treason!"** 15 And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the army, and said to them, "Take her outside under guard, and slay with the sword whoever follows her." For the priest had said, "Do not let her be killed in the house of the LORD." 16 So they seized her; and she went by way of the horses' entrance *into* the king's house, **and there she was killed** (2Kngs 11:1-16).

The story continues, showing that Jehoiada was not simply interested in power for himself, but real change to righteous government. He led the people in tearing down the temples of Baal, reinstituting worship of the true God, and providing justice in the land.

This is not to say that God is behind every revolution—or even every revolution against an evil government. As stated previously, sometimes He allows people to choose their leaders or choose among leaders, and sometimes He does not give people a choice. The apocryphal books of Maccabees and other secular history record Jewish efforts to rebel against other oppressors. Sometimes they were marvelously successful, other times they were not. God is not impressed, when people rise up to replace an evil government, with another evil government. Even within the last few centuries, the USA, as well as other nations, have revolted against oppressors to

obtain freedom from centralized hierarchical civil government and religion. Much of the world has enjoyed a lot more prosperity and freedom of religion as a result.

The overwhelming teaching of the Bible is that God upholds righteous nations, and punishes evil ones (Lev 26; Deut 28; Jer 18:7-10). There are also many cases where righteous individuals or groups of people escaped the fate of evil nations. God would have spared Sodom if there had been 10 righteous people there, but there was only Lot's family, so he brought them out and destroyed the rest (Gen 18-19). The Bible teaches us that God works in a great variety of ways. To know which civil governments to support and which to oppose, and how to do that, keep these four keys in mind:

- Study the Bible to know what righteousness is.
- Live it, by the Spirit of God.
- Evaluate civil governments by biblical standards of righteousness, judging them no more or less severely than you judge yourself. Do not give favor to your own governments or to ones that are economically beneficial to you at the moment. Do not believe what governments say about themselves, look at what they actually do.
- Seek God's will in how to act.

One More Part in This Series

The final Part 3 will appear in the next issue. We will see what the New Testament says about civil government and how it relates to the believer. We will answer questions like..

How much should the believer participate in civil government?

Should he make suggestions to leaders?

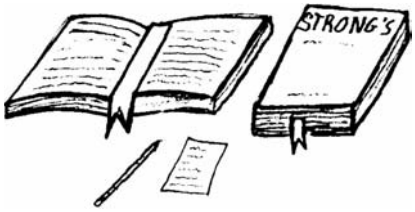
Should he vote?

Should he run for office?

The answers may surprise you!

Overseers in the New Testament

by Richard Heath



Recently, *Servants News* has run articles about government—civil government in particular. I would like to expand on that theme in this article, and look more particularly at church government (as it is sometimes called); specifically at the job title and description of "bishop" as the King James Version has it.

"Bishop," or **"overseer"**, as modern translation say, is a job filled by various individuals in the assemblies that we find in the New Testament portion of scripture. Quite honestly; "Bishop" is far too religious sounding, and so I will drop it from here on out. "Overseer" is much more accurate, as it describes what the person with this job does: he oversees things! Profound yet simple. Simply profound!

I was originally drawn by YHWH (John 6:44) into His assembly in 1975; with no knowledge of any Church of God groups, their magazines or their broadcasts. I was immediately convicted though, to begin observing both the weekly and annual Sabbaths. As there wasn't anywhere to meet (that I knew of at that time), I simply invited a fellow believer to come to my home on Saturdays for Bible study and research. Unbeknownst to me for decades, YHWH had thus not only called me, but He had also placed me in His assembly as the **overseer** of the home group that met in my abode—simply because it was now my job to have my place presentable and conducive to serve Him during that period of worship each week. (I don't believe I actually came to this understanding until I read about church government issues in the *Servants' News* some twenty years later!) I was **not** an "elder," as I was only 20 years old. So, it seems obvious to me, in retrospect, that being an "elder" is neither a prerequisite, nor synonymous with being an overseer of the assembly. (And please realize that an assembly **can** be as small as two believers studying together; per Matt.18:20)

This writer utilizes the tetragrammaton (YHWH) to identify our heavenly Father, and Yahoshua as the spelling of our Savior's Name.

Some time after my initial conversion, my friend and I found a local congregation of the Worldwide Church of God in upstate New York, and began attending with them. I was immersed (baptized) by the area elder, and spent the next approximately two decades blissfully unaware of Biblical government topics, except as they were portrayed in that church organization's rather biased publications. This situation changed however, when I separated myself from that group and its offshoots. I became a member of another home fellowship, this time in Florida, and part of our early Sabbath studies centered on church spiritual gifts and positions: What are they, who's got them, and how are they to be understood?

Apparently, there are several ways to understand this job of

"overseer", as it is utilized in the Bible. First; there were small, home fellowships meeting in private houses. In these instances the believing head of household would preside as overseer of the guest believers. The same thing is quite common in my own experience. While in Florida; our group was wont to meet at each others' homes each week. Thus; whoever's house we assembled in became "overseer" by default—whether the host individual happened to be a host **or** hostess!

A second, and more business-like option appears both in scripture **and** in life when an assembly outgrows the home setting, and begins to meet in a larger hall. At this point, an individual is appointed in some manner to oversee the meeting place. For instance; here at PABC, Norman Edwards is our overseer. He pays the bills (keeping the lights & heat on!), generally suggests a topic for study, and proclaims when we will be meeting (so that visitors can plan to come) among other things. None of these chores places him somehow in a superior position with either God or man, I'm certain. In both of these examples you will note that an overseer is a local position. In other words; I wouldn't usurp your position as host if I was a guest in your home for Sabbath services, neither would Norm aggrandize himself as the overseer if and when he visits another assembly or festival location.

Before I leave this point, it is worthy to mention Acts 20, where "overseers" and "elders" appear simultaneously. Some conclude therefore that these two terms might or even must be synonymous. (As I said earlier; I became an overseer almost before I became a believer! Let alone an elder!) The word "elder(s)" appears in v.17, and the word "overseer(s)" appears in v.28. However; the "brethren" likewise appears in v. 32! Is it logical to conclude that **all** brethren are elders or overseers because **they** appear here too? I think not.

Paul is obviously talking to a group of brethren, some of which are elders or overseers, and he is addressing specific parts of his message to those subgroups. The elders were specifically called to be there in verse 17, and the verses that follow may be addressed primarily to them. Acts 20:25, though, is addressed to "you all" and obviously refers to all the brethren:

> And indeed, now I know that **you all**, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of YHWH, will see my face no more.

It is not reasonable to say that only the elders would "see his face no more", but the brethren would still see him. Finally, the overseers, mentioned in Acts 20:28 had the specific task "to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

As a second witness; you can turn back to Acts 15:22, where Silas and Barsabbas are **not** mentioned as elders, but as "chief men among the brethren." (The elders are classed with the apostles at the beginning of this verse.) Now Silas was a close associate of Paul, and Barsabbas may be the fellow identified as a possible replacement for Judas Iscariot (in Acts 1:23), however **neither** is identified as anything more than "brethren!" Not too supportive of hierarchy, is it?

There is however; a third description of an "Overseer" used in scripture. I capitalized the word because it identifies our Master and Savior, Yahoshua Messiah, as "the Shepherd and Bishop (i.e. Overseer) of your souls," in I Peter 2:25. In reality; whenever, and wherever we meet in His Name we place ourselves under His capable and guiding Hands. He is the One Who is truly "running the show!"

Interestingly; the apostle Peter not only mentions Yahoshua as our ultimate Overseer, but he also warns of certain individuals who will desire to usurp the legitimate overseer's position on the physical level. The King James language hides this fact, but you can read it plainly via any reference book. It is in I Peter 4:15:

> But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a **busybody in other men's matters**."

All of the **boldface** words above are rendered from one Greek word in Strong's Concordance: S.E.C. #244. This word literally means "overseeing others' affairs" or "a meddler!" This action was considered to be heinous enough to be listed alongside murder, thievery and other evils! In church history, it blossomed into the position of Pope, Presiding Elder, Pastor General, and numerous other titles!). For the job of overseer was never meant to be a church-wide position, but only a local job description—be it in a home setting or in an assembly hall.

Because of these considerations, I will state that I see no reason to narrow the criteria of being an overseer to only men, or only elders. That isn't to say that elders are not to be in the assembly or that they could not also serve as an over seer. **No!** it is only that the terms "elder" and "overseer" are not synonymous.

May YHWH bless and keep you, I pray.

Simple Definitions:

Elder: an older person appointed by the brethren, charged with responsibilities to them, such as anointing the sick (Jms 5:14).

Overseer: a person who oversees essential functions of local congregations.

If you wish to discuss this or any other Biblical topic, I can be reached at: Richard Heath, 8180 Port Drive, Port Austin, Michigan, 48467; richardheath36@yahoo.com .

"PABC Update" from p. 2

using the Internet to locate hard-to-find items and do research in general. One of her discoveries was a means of growing numerous potatoes from a single plant by starting a potato plant on the ground and gradually adding tires and earth to it. The idea is to produce higher yields and easy digging. Rick agreed to try it out. The plant (see photo, below) has lived all summer, and the tires, hopefully, will be full of potatoes at year-end.

As Karen continues to improve, she hopes to take even more active roles at PABC.

Tires should be full of potatoes soon.

Looking for Young People to Move to PABC

After the Feast of Tabernacles, we will be ready for a few young people to move to PABC to help do eBay and other online selling. We received over $6000 from online sales in 2008 (before the Edwards had to leave for Arkansas), and have since reorganized our work space to make it much more efficient. You can see some of the product racks and the empty boxes at right. We also have accurate scales and other professional shipping equipment.

We would provide the young people one to two furnished rooms , with their own bathroom, and all the healthy food they want to eat. PABC pays for utilities, including phone and Internet. PABC would also provides essentials like bedding, towels, soap, toilet paper, and used clothing if needed. PABC does not pay for anything beyond these basic necessities. We would train the young people to do online sales, and then expect them to work hard to sell for PABC. We also expect them to occasionally help in the kitchen or in taking care of facilities as the need arises, learning a lot of life skills in the process. Young people could raise some spending money by starting their own online sales accounts.

At this time, we do not have the resources to accept young people unless they can be an overall economic benefit to PABC. (That might change with a few hundred per month more in regular offerings.) We need young people who are pioneers and want to help us get started with our goal for a Sabbatarian Christian community serving our young people.

As we have written before: The biggest problem facing Sabbath-keeping young people is not lack of college or a job, but it is dismissing their biblical teaching. If our doctrines and practices are worth keeping and worth teaching to others, then it is worth establishing a place to teach them to our young people, so they can learn the Bible as they learn job skills, learn life skills, and look for a spouse.

If you are or know of a young person who might be interested in spending 6 months or so at PABC, please contact Norman Edwards at nedwards@portaustin.net or call 989-738-7774. We would be glad to provide more information.

Thanks for Things to Sell

We appreciate those who have sent things of value to us to use or to sell. We will continue to accept these offerings, especially as young people come to sell them.

PABC's Natural Agricultural Production:

In an effort to keep our costs down and our health up, we planted a bigger garden than normal this year. Most of us at PABC believe that this is more important than health insurance—which none of us here have. The combination of almost daily exercise and food without chemicals or genetic modification has proved beneficial. We must also thank our Father as we had the typical invasion of potato bugs early this year, which can be devastating, but we prayed for them to go away and they did!

The majority of the food that we eat now comes from our garden. Furthermore, we have put many hundreds of pounds in the freezer or other storage, so we will have food through the winter provided we can keep our utility bills paid. Please enjoy the PABC garden photos that follow. May our Father bless you.

eBay room: all items ready to be sold except the computer, which is ready to use

Boxes & packing material

PABC Garden: squash, Brussels sprouts (blue-green), tomatoes

More garden from front: basil, carrots/beets, corn (in back)

Cabbage row, left, broccoli, right

Nice head of broccoli ready to pick

Romaine lettuce growing up

Karen's wheel-chair-level garden, flowers

Big groups of cucumber vines

Potatoes & onions don't show much, but...

Hundreds of pounds of red and white potatoes!

About 100 containers of green beans to our freezers

Baskets of tomatoes of many types

A refrigerator full of cabbage heads

Sauerkraut in stone crock, jar is a weight

Huge chest freezer full, starting a 2nd

Onions & basil drying via oven pilot light

Dried basil, cilantro, parsley, onions, comfrey...

Put that food to work! One PABC kitchen food preparation area at left; the stove, grill, oven, & serving line at right; the big section of the dining hall at lower left. **What would food be without someone to eat it?** Karen and Rick, the two newest PABC members, below; and to recycle what we'd rather not eat, the chickens!

Shekhinah Glory: What Is It?

by Norman Edwards

As a child, this writer had heard the expression "*Shekhinah* Glory" used to describe the presence of God in the early tabernacle and then later on in the temple. It seemed that "shekhinah" was a word in the Hebrew Old Testament that was probably translated as "presence", "glory", "cloud" or "filled" in scriptures like these:

> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the **presence of the LORD God** among the trees of the garden (Gen 3:8).
>
> And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the **pillar of cloud descended** and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle, and *the Lord* talked with Moses (Ex 33:9).
>
> Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, **the cloud covered the tabernacle**, the tent of the Testimony; from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire (Num 9:15).
>
> And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that **the cloud filled the house** of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD (1Kngs 8:10-11).
>
> Indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, *saying:* "*For He is* good, For His mercy *endures* forever," that the house, the house of the LORD, **was filled with a cloud** (2Chr 5:13).
>
> And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the **glory of the LORD had filled** the LORD's house (2Chr 7:2).

In reality, the Hebrew word s*hekhinah* does not appear in any of the above verses—or anywhere else in the Bible. The words for "presence" (*paniym*), "glory" (*kabowd*), "cloud" (*anan*) and "filled" (*male'*) in these verses are all normal Hebrew words used to refer to both divine things and human things. After reading the Encyclopedia of Judaism and several other Jewish sources, all of them agreed that the word ***shekhinah*** (שכינה) **is not in the Scripture,** but is found in the Talmud, a book of Jewish oral tradition that was written down in the second century A.D, and that it refers to the presence of God in a physical place. They agree that it comes from the Hebrew *shakan,* which Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines as:

> 7931 שָׁכַן shakan {shaw-kan'}
> Meaning: 1) to settle down, abide, dwell, tabernacle, reside...
> Origin: a primitive root [apparently akin (by transmission) to 07901 through the idea of lodging]; TWOT - 2387; v
> Usage: AV - dwell 92, abide 8, place 7, remain 5, inhabit 4, rest 3, set 2, continue 1, dwellers 1, dwelling 1, misc 5; 129

As can be seen, *shakan* is used 129 times and refers to dwelling—the majority of which is human dwelling. The first place *shakan* is found in the scripture is here:

> Gen 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He **placed** cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible states that this passage should be rendered: "And he dwelt between the cherubim at the East of the Garden of Eden and a fierce fire or Shekhinah unfolding itself to preserve the way of the tree of life." Unfortunately, no reason is given why this translation should be that way. None of the thirty other translations this writer checked agreed.

There are some places where the Hebrew *shakan* is used along with other words indicating the presence of God. In the verse below, *shakan* is translated "rested", but the words for "glory of the Lord" and "cloud" are the words that convey the meaning that the presence of God was there.

> Ex 24:16 Now the glory of the LORD **rested** on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

The much more common use of the word *shakan* would be found in scriptures like this, where it simply refers to the place that someone will **dwell**:

> Gen 9:27 May God enlarge Japheth, And may he **dwell** in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant."

Christian writers have adopted the concept of s*hekhinah,* apparently from the Talmudic sources. They similarly use it as the "presence of God", without explaining its origin or definition in Scripture. Nave's Topical Bible defines it this way:

> Shekhinah — The visible sign of God's presence on the ark of the testimony in the Holy of Holies (Ex 25:22; Le 16:2; 2Sa 6:2; 2Ki 19:14,15; Ps 80:1; Isa 37:16; Eze 9:3 10:18; Heb 9:5)

None of the above scriptures contain the Hebrew *shakan.* What they do have in common is they all refer to Cherubim and/or the Mercy Seat.

In short, *Shekhinah* appears to be a doctrinal word, like "trinity" or "rapture", that does not appear in the Bible—so people end up arguing a lot when they try to determine its meaning from the Scripture. This writer thinks we would be better in our teaching to use the terms "glory", "cloud", "dwelling", "presence" and their underlying Hebrew and Greek roots that **are** in the Bible, and avoid building doctrines on words that are not there. 🕮

"What is True Forgiveness?" continued from p. 1

does, sometimes it does not.

The **offended** can be any of these:

1. God forgiving the offender
2. God not forgiving right now
3. A person forgiving (sometimes they **should be** forgiving, sometimes not)
4. A person struggling to forgive but having trouble with it
5. A person not realizing they need to forgive
6. A person not forgiving (sometimes they **should be** forgiving, sometimes not)

The **offender** can be any of these:

a. A person who has truly and clearly repented of their sin
b. A person who has repented of their sin, but who has not made it clear to the "offended"
c. A person who does not know they sinned, but would probably repent if they understood
d. A person who has partly repented of their sin, and not in danger of repeating the sin
e. A person who has partly repented of their sin, but is still in danger of repeating it
f. A person who has no idea that they sinned, and who is not interested in finding out
g. A person who has been confronted about their sin, but who does not believe they have sinned

With such a great number of possible situations of the "offended" and the "offender" (42, mathematically), it is easy to see why there is no "one size fits all" formula for forgiveness. Real life is even more complicated: There are many subtle shades between the above points, some offenses are trivial while others are life-threatening, and there are often multiple offenses that occur together, with which the parties may deal differently. For example: "I've forgiven her for breaking my blow-dryer, but not for her telling me it was all my fault because I had a cheap one".

This is not to say that the solution to forgiveness is to classify each offense properly into one of some huge number of possible categories. But it is vital to realize that all situations are not the same and to think about the differences. Here are five factors that come into play after an offense occurs:

Five Factors to Forgiveness

Communication – It is good for the offender and the offended to come to a mutual understanding of what happened and why. This takes courage on the part of both. Often, one or both of the parties are not interested in honest communication and may even cloud the issue by refusing to talk about it, refusing to perceive it accurately or by deliberately lying about it. On the other hand, here are times when communication is impossible—the parties have lost contact with each other, or may be dead.

Repentance – The offender realizes they did wrong and desires to change. Example: A thief admits to his theft and expresses a desire to stop stealing.

Restitution – The offender does something to compensate the offended for his offense. Example: A thief restores two to five times the value of the stolen item (Ex 22:1, 4). Zacchaeus restored fourfold for what he stole (Luke 19:8). For non-economic offenses, this may not be necessary or even possible. As another example: Fred calls Tom evil names and later repents, but Tom does not want Fred to contact everyone that heard his name-calling and retract it somehow. That could be almost as bad as the original problem. Tom wants to accept Fred's apology and to pray that everyone forgets what Fred said.

Recovery – The offender has exhibited a pattern of change to where others can reasonably expect him not to repeat the offense. Example: people feel no need to hide their valuables around a former-thief, because they have become confident that he no longer desires to steal from them.

Forgiveness — The person offended is at peace with the situation, and expects nothing else from the offender in regard to the particular offense in question. In some situations, **repentance** needs to be sincerely **communicated** for this to happen. **Recovery**, and sometimes **restitution**, may take much longer, so forgiveness can often take place before those two items complete. On the other hand, even in situations where there is poor communication, evidence of **restitution** or **recovery** ought to elicit forgiveness on the part of the offended. Beyond these things, there are times when the offended realizes the offender acted in ignorance, and may choose to forgive when there has been no communication, repentance, restitution or recovery.

Forgive as We Want to Be Forgiven

The "bottom line" on forgiveness is that we need to forgive others in the way that we would want to be forgiven. When we fully repent, we want it to be over—no longer held against us, no longer brought up. But when we are sinning—and may not even know it, do we want to be mindlessly forgiven, not growing to be ready for the Kingdom of God? We know that God corrects us because he loves us (Heb 12:5-6). We would want others to do the same for us, and we should do the same for others when they will accept it.

> "And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors….For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt 6:12,14-15).

Refusing to forgive can often hurt the "unforgiver" more than the unforgiven. The stress of being angry and unforgiving causes men-

tal stress which frequently leads to a great variety of physical illnesses. Our Savior took the time to tell the following parable, which is well worth our time reading:

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "**I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven**. 23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 **Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant,** just as I had pity on you?' 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, **from his heart,** does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (Mat 18:21-34).

How God Forgives

If we want to learn perfect forgiveness, we should learn to forgive like our Father in Heaven, who is perfect (Matt 5:48). The overwhelming teaching of the Scriptures is that God is a forgiving God, in the past, present, and future. Here are four of the many verses explaining this:

"Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as **You have forgiven this people**, from Egypt even until now" (Num 14:19).

For You, Lord, *are* good, and **ready to forgive**, And abundant in mercy **to all those who call upon You (**Ps 86:5**).**

[God] **Who forgives** all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases (Ps 103:3).

"**In those days** and in that time," says the LORD, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but *there shall be* none; And the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; **For I will pardon** those whom I preserve" (Jer 50:20).

Unfortunately, there are times when mankind does not seek repentance and forgiveness, but desires to go on sinning. Our Father, in His perfect wisdom and judgment, does not always forgive sins, but sends corrective punishments in an effort to reach people. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 explain this in detail. Other specific warnings include:

But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. **He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the LORD** and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good" (Josh 24:19).

Thus says the LORD to this people: "Thus they have loved to wander; They have not restrained their feet. Therefore the LORD does not accept them; **He will remember their iniquity now, And punish their sins**" (Jer 14:10).

How Christ Forgives

Did Jesus, the Christ, change all that? Did He forgive all the sins of the world? He certainly came for that purpose (John 1:29; 1Jo 2:2). Unfortunately, some Christians wrongly teach that all sins have already been forgiven, so there is no particular need to avoid sin. The Apostle Paul answered that question directly:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (Rom 6: 1-2).

Christ paid the penalty for all our sins (1Pet 3:18), but forgiveness does not usually occur until we actually ask for it.

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive** us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (John 1:7-9).

There are many people who do not even understand—or even want to understand—that they have sin. There are many people who know they have sin, and do not want to repent. Here are three of the many scriptures about that:

"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but **the blasphemy *against* the Spirit** [declaring a work to be of Satan when one knows it is of the Spirit] will not be forgiven men" (Matt 12:31).

And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; **Lest they should turn, And *their* sins be forgiven them**' " (Mark 4:11-12).

Jesus said to them [religious

leaders], "**If you were blind, you would have no sin**; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains (John 9:41).

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22).

The last two scriptures help us understand that a person who is blind, who really does not know what he is doing, does not have sin. "Sin" means to "miss the mark" or "miss the standard". A person who is not even aiming at a standard can hardly be faulted for missing it. The overwhelming message of Christ, like His Father, is forgiveness for sins. Christ used His miracles to prove his authority. Christ forgave not only those who sinned against others, but He also forgave the very soldiers who nailed Him to the cross

And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? **Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'?** But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" — He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Luke 5:21-24)

"Therefore I say to you [religious leaders], her [a sinful woman's] sins, *which are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:47-48).

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they [the soldiers] crucified Him… Then Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."** And they divided His garments and cast lots (Luke 23:33-34).

In this last example, Christ asks the Father for forgiveness for the soldiers, not because they repented, but because they did not know what they were doing. As far as they were concerned, they were obeying the orders of their leader, and they considered Jesus to be just one more criminal like the other two thieves that were being crucified—and like many others who had been crucified at previous times. Christ realized that the soldiers were not like the Jewish leaders who falsely accused Jesus to keep political control (John 11:48-50) or like Pilate who found it easier to go along with them than do what he knew was right (John 19:12-16).

When someone has caused us great harm in ignorance—like the soldiers who killed Jesus, we are much better off to forgive them, even without any communication or repentance.

Does God Forget Our Sins?

Lastly, when we consider the forgiveness of God, we need to understand the scriptures that talk about God forgetting—not remembering—our sins. Some Bible teachers go as far as saying that when God forgives us, he no longer has any memory of the thing that we did that was a sin. As far as this writer knows, these are the only three scriptures used to support this idea:

"I, *even* I, *am* He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And **I will not remember your sins**" (Isa 43:25).

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their **sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more**" (Heb 8:12).

"This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," *then He adds,* "Their **sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more**" (Heb 10:16-17).

Checking Strong's or other Hebrew/Greek language references, they all give a definition of the word translated "remember" as "call to mind". This would be a much better rendering. Indeed, the Bible in Basic English uses it:

And I will have mercy on their evil-doing, and **I will not keep their sins in mind (**Heb 8:12, BBE).

In other words, God still knows what we did that was a sin, but he does not bring it to mind in any future judgments, either for punishment or reward. He will not bring up forgiven sins to us and they will not be used against us. If God actually completely forgot all information about forgiven sins, He would have to forget large portions of the Bible—because it discusses many sins committed and forgiven. Most of us, somewhere in the family tree between ourselves and Adam, probably have an ancestor who was born from an adulterous relationship. Will God no longer be able to trace our family tree when those sins are forgiven, because he has forgotten who the parents were that committed adultery?

God's memory of history is not like Swiss cheese—full of holes wherever there are forgiven sins. He will not continually bring to mind the sins of those whom he has forgiven. That is a very helpful clue to us to know when we have forgiven someone. When we see our friend John, if we always think "there's John that wrecked my car three years ago", then our forgiveness may not yet be complete.

An opposite would be the person who was mistreated when he was a child, but now loves and embraces his parents with open arms. He can intellectually remember what happened as a child, but no longer thinks about it when he sees them, nor does he hold it against them. He has forgiven them, as God forgives us. God no longer "calls it to mind".

God Does Not Always Remove Consequences of Sin

While God often promises for-

giveness from sin, the Bible clearly teaches that the consequences of sin often remain. Our life experience teaches us that if a murderer repents, the person he killed does not come back to life. Similarly, when adulterers repent, a baby they conceived does not disappear or somehow take on the genes of legitimate parents. The Bible contains many examples—even warnings—of situations where consequences of sin will not be removed, even when the sinner repents.

> Lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, **he was rejected**, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears (Heb 12:16).
>
> And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint *them* for his own chariots and *to be* his horsemen, and *some* will run before his chariots.... [Six more verses explain how a king will tax and oppress his people] 18 And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and **the LORD will not hear you in that day** (1Sam 8:11,18).

One of the best examples of forgiven sin with continuing consequences was David, a man with the Holy Spirit (Pslm 51:11; Mark 12:36). God said he will have eternal life (Jer 30:9; Ezk 37:25; Hos 3:5—all of these verses were written after David was dead). He is listed as one of the "faithful" in Hebrews 11:1-3, 32). But David sinned. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, then had her husband, Uriah, killed (2Sam 11). Such sins deserved the death penalty (Lev 20:10; 24:17), but God forgave or **"put away" David's sin** (2Sam 12:13).

Second Samuel 12 explains how Nathan the prophet told David the story of a wealthy man who had many sheep, but took a poor man's only lamb to feed some visitors. David said, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for the lamb four times over" (v5-6). This was based on Biblical law (Ex 22:1). "Then Nathan said to David, '"You are the man!'" (v7). God gave David consequences based upon his own judgment to Nathan. "**Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house...** Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. **Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight....** But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, **the son born to you will die**" (v 10, 11, 14)

These consequences came to pass. David's son, Absalom, appointed himself king and appropriated David's harem (2Sam 15:10; 16:22). While David's life was spared, he had to "restore fourfold" by the death of four of his sons. His child of adultery with Bathsheba died (2Sam 12:18). Later, David's firstborn son, Amnon, raped his half-sister, Tamar, then was killed by her full brother Absalom (2Sam 13). Even though David made a great effort to save Absalom when he rebelled and made himself king, Absalom was caught by the hair in a tree and killed by Joab, David's nephew (2Sam 15-18). Finally, when David was on his deathbed, another son, Adonijah, tried to make himself king and was ordered to be executed by his half-brother Solomon (1Kngs 1-2).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul, who at one time persecuted the church (Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-2), was called by God and told that he must suffer for Christ (Acts 9:16). Paul certainly understood forgiveness in Christ's blood (Col 1:14), but also knew that his great suffering (2Cor 11:23-28) was a consequence of his persecution of the church (1Cor 15:9).

God is love (1Jo 4:8). And love sometimes involves not forgiving people who are unrepentant, or allowing sin's consequences to continue upon those who do repent, so that they and others may learn not to sin.

> But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you* (1Pet 5:10).

Human Forgiveness

It would be best if Christians could forgive others in just the same way God does:

- Forgive those who are truly repentant or who sin in ignorance, and do not bring up the sins any more.
- Continue consequences to those who need to make restitution or learn lasting lessons.
- Do not forgive those who are not repentant, but continue to show them their past and ongoing sins.

Unfortunately, we lack God's capabilities, so we cannot do these things like He does. But helping other's who have offended us is an important part of a Christian's life (Matt 7:2; 2Cor 5:10).

God knows the hearts of other people perfectly. We have to struggle to understand others and their motivations. We can think that others are doing us great evil when the main problem is with ourselves. Nevertheless, when someone offends us, Matthew 18:15-17 tells us what to do. If we do not think the issue is important enough to go to our brother, and then take witnesses, etc., then we should just forgive them, assuming they made a mistake, and let go of the issue. But there are issues that are better off resolved.

> "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three wit-

nesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector (Matt 18:15-17).

When this writer has seen the above verses put to use, most cases were resolved in the first step, and there is often less forgiving to do than the parties initially thought. More offenses probably result from misunderstanding than from sin. But sin and evil certainly do occur. Sometimes, the Matthew 18 process will show that the other party is clearly not repentant—they may not want any forgiveness. While this is sad, it at least clears up the matter.

The Bible teaches us we should forgive whoever asks for, or is willing to accept, our forgiveness, unless their actions plainly show their request to be in vain. For example, Simon the Sorcerer asked the disciples to pray for his deliverance, but history shows that he continued on his evil path (Acts 8:9-24). In most cases, if a person realizes they have sinned and asks our forgiveness, a Christian should grant it. It is not only a matter of our Christian attitude; it is important to the offender in their repentance and overcoming of sin.

We must also consider when it is better to forgive those who sin in ignorance—even when we have no communication with them. The forgiveness may not matter to them, but it allows us to resolve an issue that might otherwise plague us..

Showing Our Brother His Sin

Both the Old and New Testaments teach us that we have a responsibility to let others know when they are sinning, for their benefit and our own. We cannot make them accept our help, but we do not know if they will until we try.

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him" (Lev 19:17).

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted (Gal 6:1).

Paul adds a wise point at the end of his admonition: **Do not get involved if you will be tempted to sin.** Supposing that someone whom you asked to keep your child was careless, resulting in a major injury to your child. While that careless person may need someone to teach them responsibility, you may not be the person to do it if all you have is anger for them. For deep hurts, it may take prayer and fasting to get over them.

Jesus clearly indicated that there would be times to overlook that which we rightfully deserve in order to be His son.

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. 29 To him who strikes you on the *one* cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask *them* back. 31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. 32 But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil (Luke 6:27-35).

It is good to remember this principle of "forgiving others like we want to be forgiven"—or even going above and beyond that.

Forgiveness Compatible With Restitution & Consequences

Just because we have forgiven someone does not mean that there is no need for restitution or that consequences go away. We can forgive a thief that takes something from us, even though we require him (or a court may order him) to **make restitution for it**. We are not asking him to restore it to get even with him, but to help him and others avoid sinning in the future. Solomon said:

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil (Eccl 8:11).

Dealing with someone who has sinned against us is a lot like disciplining children: It should be done in love for the child, not in anger against him. Supposing a homeless person offered to cut your lawn for a fee and you let him use your riding mower. He claimed to know how to use one, but lied, crashed it and did minor damage. He apologized and asked if there is anything he could do to make up for the damage, but said he does not have any money. You asked him to cut the lawn for free with the hand-mower instead and he agreed—that was **restitution.** You also realized that he was just not ready to drive a riding mower, so you do not offer him that choice again. That is a wise **consequence**. Both the **restitution** and the **consequence** are for his good. You can still forgive him and be at peace with him.

Again, learning from the child analogy, if a child is too strong for a parent to effectively discipline, the parent would be better off not to try to discipline him than to start a contention that the parent will lose. Similarly, an offended person is not wise to try to enforce restitution or consequences against an offender if they have no effective way to do it. In the example above, if the homeless person refused to make restitution, or insisted that he

be given another chance to use the riding mower, you would be better off just to avoid them. There is likely no way you can personally enforce this, nor is there an effective way to do it in a court.

Balancing Recovery with Avoiding Sin and Sinners

Consequences can include decisions we make that last until we are sure an offender has **recovered**. For example, we might not trust a thief with our money until many years later, after he has a proven track record of not stealing. Similarly, we may forgive a child abuser, but may not trust him with our children until we are sure he has recovered—which may not occur until they are grown up. In a simple example, someone might regularly use profane language or be otherwise offensive in their talk. If that person asks our forgiveness, we should grant it. However we still may choose not to invite that person to be around our family or around other new believers until we are sure that he has recovered from these undesirable patterns.

The Bible teaches the avoidance of people known to be flagrant sinners.

> A prudent *man* foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished (Prov 22:3).
>
> Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; Yes, strife and reproach will cease (Prov 22:10).
>
> It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? (1Cor 5:1-2, NIV).
>
> But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us (2Th 3:6).

When somebody has offended us, especially if it is a serious offense, it is often very difficult to sort out our feelings. It is difficult to tell if we are still angry and unforgiving, if we are trying to make sure he learns his lesson through consequences, or if we just feel a need to keep our distance lest we be hurt again. There is a great tendency to avoid someone who has greatly offended us, even if we think we have forgiven them. One must ask oneself, am I avoiding them to help them make restitution, to help them recover or to avoid some real, ongoing, danger to myself? Or am I avoiding them just because I am still angry at them? This is a sign that forgiveness may not be complete.

Sometimes we avoid people because we think they are angry at us, and they may avoid us because they think we are angry at them. The easiest way to break this deadlock is to say something like this to them, "I still want you to know that I have forgiven you in this matter. Are you at peace with me about it?"

Another good way to decrease hurt is to realize the true purpose of our earthly life. Whatever wrong somebody has done to us does not take away from our Eternal life. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:10). If someone stole our fortune, killed a close friend, destroyed our marriage or abused us as a child, it will certainly lessen the quality of our life on Earth. But it should strengthen us in God and cause us to draw closer to Him and His Word—which has Eternal value. Jesus Christ certainly suffered unjustly more than anyone:

> And if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him,* that we may also be glorified together (Rom 8:17).

When we cast our cares upon our Father (Pslm 55:22, 1Pet 5:7) and forgive those who have offended us, we can be at peace with them. We do not think "there is the person that did that to me" when we see them. Even if they have not yet finished making restitution or if they have not fully recovered from a habit of sin, we can hope and encourage them to do well in those processes rather than disdain them because of it. Even if they have stumbled and fallen, but there is still hope for them, we can pray for them.

> If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does* not *lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that (1Jo 5:16).

Forgiveness Flowchart

The following steps summarize the biblical admonition regarding forgiveness. One should always pray their way through these situations, asking for God's specific guidance and instruction in each case.

1. Offender's Knowledge & Significance. If you can see that offends have no idea what they did, then follow Christ's example with the soldiers who crucified him. Forgive the offenders in their ignorance, and the process is over. Do the same for tiny offenses too small to bring up. In cases where the offenders are unknown to you, forgiveness can help one put the issues to rest in their mind, and no longer dwell on it. In situations where the offenders are known, and the offense might be repeated, figure out the best way to communicate to the person that they are causing offense. If you do this in love, it will be good for everyone involved. If that is not worth doing, then be prepared to go on patiently forgiving future minor offenses..

2. Communication. Before one can decide to forgive, there must be agreement on what the offense is. Sometimes, there is already agreement, other times you may need to talk to the person—even though they may not want to talk to you. If they refuse to talk, you may safely treat them as non-repentant in step 3. If they do talk, you must be willing to consider that the problem is not as bad as you think,

or that you are part of the problem. When the other party can no longer be contacted, they are effectively "out of your life" and steps 3, 5 and 6 are irrelevant, so all that is left is **to be willing to forgive when the person repents someday**, and then to go on to steps 7 & 8, making peace with the situation. The same is true when we refuse to talk to a person—either because we wisely realize that we might not be effective, or because we are afraid to do so. If we cannot establish whether a person has repented or whether they are continuing in the same sin, we must be willing to forgive (step 4), then go on to make peace (step 7 & 8).

3. Repentance? When people say they have repented, a Christian will normally accept it, even though he might be somewhat suspicious that the repentance is not genuine. These decisions are not set in stone and one can change one's actions if a self-professed repentant person proves unrepentant. When the offender is repentant, the Christian's focus should be on forgiveness and the steps thereafter. When a person is not repentant, the Christian should prayerfully decide if it is best to "turn the other cheek" or to do something else. If the offender is indeed a danger to others and the Christian can take some corrective action designed to bring repentance, that may be best. He might take the matter to witnesses or the church, or for unbelievers, to a secular court or administrative agency. When the person does not repent, the best one can do is be willing to forgive when they do repent (step 4), and be at peace with that until repentance occurs—maybe not until the Kingdom.

4. Forgive / Be Willing to Forgive. If repentance has been generally established, then the Christian should forgive the offender. Unpardonable sins are in God's domain, so we don't have to worry about them when somebody sins against us. When the offender is unavailable or when we do not believe that we can be effective in going to the offender, we can simply determine that we are willing to forgive the individual when they repent, and go on to step 7.

5. Restitution. If the offender offers restitution, it is a very good sign that he is truly repentant. If the offended asks for restitution and receives it, that is also good. If the offender refused to restore, does that mean that he is not repentant? Not necessarily. It may be a problem with his understanding of the Scripture—he may not believe restitution is ever necessary. There certainly are Biblical examples where it was not required of some sinners. Restitution is a good thing when everyone involved sees it as a biblical way to settle an offense. It is not as effective when either party sees it as a means of vengeance against the offender. If you have settled a dispute with someone and forgiven them, do not later decide that you are due some kind of restitution and go demand it. Any restitution should be agreed upon when apologies are made and when forgiveness is granted. Later desires for additional restitution often indicate that forgiveness has not really taken place, but that the offended is holding a grudge. How can the offender ever feel forgiven if the other party could come at any time in the future and demand additional restitution? Has the offended really forgiven if he is still thinking about how much restitution he should receive?

Memory Spot

If you only remember one thing, remember this:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Matt 6:14-15, NIV).

6. Recovery. It is up to the offended when to accept that an offender has recovered from a pattern of sin. It is more a personal matter of trust, than the legal amounts stated for restitution. Any limitations or consequences exercised upon the offender should be done for Godly reasons, not as an excuse for avoidance or non-forgiveness. Skip this step if the offense is an untypical, non-repeated sin. For example, if a friend has many years of driving experience with no accidents, but then on a very stressful day have a freak accident with you in his car, should you refuse to ride with him for many years? Do you refuse to ride with other friends who have had more accidents, clearly their fault, but just none with you in their car? We must be fair in our judgment of when others have recovered to the point where we can again trust them in their area of offense.

7. Peace Now. If we have forgiven those who offend us and if our ongoing actions toward them are for their good—not for our vengeance or avoidance—we can be at peace with them now. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Pslm 119:165). As God no longer brings to mind our forgiven sins, we should not bring to mind or hold anything against those whom we have forgiven. "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous" (1Pet 3:8).

8. Peace in God's Kingdom. "For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim 2:3-4). God will not keep people out of his Kingdom just because we were offended by them or cannot get along with them. His kingdom is a place of unity and peace for all peoples (Isa 2:4). If we are not at peace with someone now, and they are willing to communicate with us, we need to make an effort to make peace now, so we can be ready for His Kingdom. . 📖

Books Worth a Look

by Bill Buckman

The Exodus Case

by Dr. Lennart Moller
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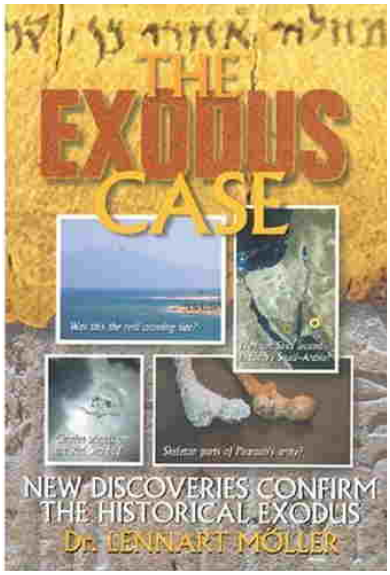

Many of you may be familiar with the late Ron Wyatt. He claimed to have made many Biblically related archaeological discoveries; such as the location of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Noah's ark and the Ark of the Covenant. This reviewer definitely disagrees with Wyatt's claims on the Ark of the Covenant. Wyatt places the crucifixion on the hill north of Jerusalem, but there seems to be a lot of good evidence that the crucifixion took place on the Mount of Olives east of the city. This review, however, deals with a book that follows up on Wyatt's discoveries concerning Israel's Red Sea crossing and the location of Mount Sinai.

Over the years there have been numerous proposals for the location of Mt Sinai. This writer agrees with this book's author that Jabal Al Lawz is the best candidate for Mt, Sinai.

Dr. Moller is a professor and researcher at the Karolinska Institute, the Medical University of Stockholm. His research focus is on DNA lesions and related illnesses, however he also has background in marine biology, archaeology, photography, scuba diving, and ecology. The author's fundamental thesis is that "The Bible texts with which this book deals (Genesis 11:27 to Exodus 40:38) are a true historical document." Dr. Moller has traveled over much of the ground covered in this book and has done underwater exploration in the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba) and many of the photographs in the book were taken by him.

After the introduction the book is divided into three major areas: The Pre-Exodus Period, The Exodus, and At the Mountain of God. In part I the author begins with Abraham and makes a case for "Ur of the Chaldees" to be located at Urfa in far northern Syria, rather than in southern Babylonia. Many Biblical names are found in the area around Urfa and photos of old maps showing these names are provided. Moller then discusses an unusual geologic formation near the southern end of the Dead Sea that has balls of sulphur scattered through it. He believes this formation is the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah, as Wyatt did. Dr. Moller presents evidence for identifying Joseph with the famous Imhotep of Egypt's Third dynasty and makes some interesting observations concerning pharaoh Zoser's pyramid complex at Sakkara and on pyramid building in general. Other authors have identified Joseph with other personalities in other dynasties in Egyptian history. Is it possible that some of these are the story of the same man, just written from different perspectives by different ancient writers?

In part II the author makes an interesting case for placement of the Exodus in the 18th dynasty. For archaeological reasons this reviewer cannot accept this scenario, believing strongly that dynasty 18 is parallel with Israel's united monarchy and then the divided monarchy down into the late 800s B.C. The route of the Exodus is then traced across northern Sinai and down to the Nuweiba beach on the western side of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Several excellent satellite photos of the Aqaba Gulf area, as well as the Jabal Al Lawz area, are provided. There are also numerous pictures of the underwater evidence: chariot parts and animal and human remains. Some objects are fairly easily discerned in the photographs, some are not.

In the last section the author attempts to identify several items mentioned in the scripture in the vicinity of mount Sinai including: the rock Moses struck to produce water, the altar Moses built, 12 pillars, and Elijah's cave. Dr. Moller deals with many other details that indicate Jabal Al Lawz may well be Mt. Sinai. The top of the mountain is blackened; it is in the land of Midian; and the possible home of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, is nearby.

The book is 317 pages long with more than 550 figures (mostly color photographs) and several tables, a bibliography and index. A minor complaint of this reviewer is that some of the photos are quite small and therefore hard to discern. A major complaint is that while the author references the Bible and Josephus quite well, most of his other references are to the book or periodical only and not to a page. The reviewer notes that there is a new edition of the book, which he has not seen, which may address these issues.

The reviewer found most of this book to be very interesting reading. Whether or not the book is accurate in any or all of its suppositions the reader must decide, as the author also states. 🕮

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object.

To avoid any difficulty, writers should specify how much of their name and address they would like us to print.

Cities and Plowshares in the Kingdom of God

LETTER: August 8, 2008

Greetings Norm,

This is in response to John E. Robinson's article, "treasures in Heaven", in the July-Aug '08' *SN*. I enjoyed his article, and agree with most of his conclusions. So my following comments are intended to perhaps build on what John presented.

Scripture clearly shows that the future will definitely see an increased emphasis on more earth-related activities: farming, ranching, and like way of life. "each man will live under his own fig tree!" [Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10]. Yet, those same Scriptures seem to teach a large emphasis on a capitalistic society!

"Cities will be rebuilt"! [Ezk 36:10, 33]. People will live in those cities. And, it is very unlikely they will have farms and ranches in those cities. Thus, what purpose do the cities hold? The weapons of war will be made into "plowshares"! (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3). Yet, "plowshares", while picturing nature activities, do not seem to point to "other" activities.

Ask yourselves. In the future, are wives and mothers going to hand make all of the clothes for their families? Will they take the clothes they make, and wash them in a homemade tub, made by their husbands? Or will they take them to the nearest stream and beat the dirt out of them with rocks?

Or, will their husbands manufacture modern "washing machines" and "sewing machines"? And everything else that are very acceptable necessities? Electricity, furniture, toilets, windows, mirrors, shoes, etc and et al. Will the ranchers only raise animals for their own needs, or will they raise animals to feed and clothe the "bigger" multitude that live in the cities?

Does it not make sense that the produce of the land will find its way into the cities, meaning more than food and clothing? How about lumberjacks? Miners? Fishermen? Yes, the acts of those who deal with and in nature, will be "sold" to those in the cities, who will manufacture and process for all men. They will make the washing machines, refrigerators, etc. They will process food for the masses! And they will sell much of it back to the farmers and ranchers!

And if the above is true, then there will be banking institutions, that can finance people who desire to enter into the capitalist ventures. Manufacturing, hotels, motels and restaurants! And, they **must** charge interest!

Only, it will be done the righteous way!

—Ray E. Daly, North Dakota

RESPONSE: I agree with all of your letter, except some of the second to last paragraph. The prophecies of cities indicate the kind of industry and trade that one finds in cities. Who will beat swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks? Where will the hammers come from that they use to beat these things? Does every farmer need to do his own metallurgy? I have seen people who know the trade use a hot fire and a few tools to accomplish in minutes what an untrained person, pounding away with a hammer, might take days to accomplish. Will the use of metal tools in the Kingdom end once all the old swords and spearheads are used up? Probably not.

Many Christians see all the evil done with technology and conclude that we cannot have technology in the coming Kingdom of God. Consider that great evil has also been done with music, writing and sex. The answer is not to eliminate these four things, but to eliminate the evil use of them.

Sure, there are many technological things that should never have been created, and there are many good things that have been greatly misused. The computer fits this category big time! Computers are used for evil games, pornography, spying on people and placing all manner of complex, nearly-unfathomable financial, tax and other burdens on people that would never have been implemented without computers. On the other hand, the nice layout of this magazine would have taken hundreds of hours for someone to manually typeset by using the old method of pulling letters one at a time out of a huge bin and placing them on a frame for printing.

The ability to instantly see writing and pictures of one's own choosing from around the world is truly wonderful. Computers now make it possible for the average child to compose music for an entire symphony orchestra and have it played by very good sounding digital instruments. This was something available only to children of kings and the very wealthy for most of mankind's existence.

I disagree with the need for banking institutions, loans and interest payments to bring about worthwhile businesses and technology. We do not need banks for money, as the scripture teaches the use of silver and gold for money (see Sept/OCt '08 *SN*). We do not need banks for business loans:

> Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but those who gather little by little will increase it (Prov 13:11).

This writer has a degree in business administration and has been through the math taught in college showing why businesses should borrow money: If a man has $100,000 to invest and a good idea that will grow a business at 20% per year, in five years his business will be worth $100,000 × 1.2 ^{5} or about $250,000. However, supposed the man were to borrow $900,000 so he could start with a million, and still grow his business at the same rate. It would be worth ten times as much, $2,500,000 at the end of five years. If he paid back the $900,000 loan and $300,000 simple interest at 6.7% per year, the business would still be worth $1,300,000—a 13-fold return on the man's $100,000 investment. The interest paid to the bank seems worthwhile for such a big gain.

What happens if the business does not grow at 20% per year as planned? The table below shows what will happen at various rates of business growth. If the man simply invests only his own money, his money increases as long as the business grows. Even if it shrinks 5% or 10% a year, he would still have enough to end that venture and begin a different one. Whereas with the loan, if the business only grows at 5%, the man's $100,000 investment shrinks to $80,000. With a loan, if the business shrinks, the man will loose everything he had and much more. He will not be able to pay the bank back interest or the entire principle. He will be forced to either sell his other businesses or personal possessions, or the bank will go unpaid, requiring some kind of bailout.

Results of $100,000 investment with or without a $900,000 loan

Actual Percent Annual Growth	Net Worth after 5 Years **No** Loan	Net Worth after 5 Years **With** Loan
20%	$250,000	$1,300,000
15%	$201,000	$810,000
10%	$161,000	$410,000
5%	$128.000	$80,000
0%	$100,000	– $200,000
-5%	$77,000	– $430,000
-10%	$59,000	– $610,000

I can still hear my business teachers saying, "Of course, you would want to form a corporation to run this business, so that the liability would be limited to the corporation, protecting the owners personal assets."

And today, we are reaping the results of centuries of these practices. Trillions of dollars are managed and mismanaged by high-paid heads of banks, corporations and governments. When huge sums are lost, the taxpayers have to bail them out, and nobody is punished because these leaders are not personally liable for loss of corporate money.

When the corporations make billions of dollars, they get to keep it, and often put it into tax exempt foundations and other entities whereby they can exert great control over government and education but pay little or no tax. All of this is very far away from the Bible teaching of personal responsibility for actions.

One thing business school did not teach: when **nearly every** business is trying to grow quickly through borrowing money taking over market share, some of them—maybe most of them—are not going grow as fast as they planned. When corporations spend billions on ad campaigns trying to cajole people into buying more fancy cars and other items that they do not need, there comes a day of reckoning when people realize they have more than they need and sales dry up for a good long while.

The Bible recognizes the need to borrow money for emergencies—when one's crops or business fails. Suppose that the man in the example was making plowshares, he made them incorrectly, and they broke, causing injury to the farmers who bought them. That would be the time to borrow money, so that he could make the farmers whole and possibly recover his business. Loans are a safety net. If people start their business by borrowing as much as they can, where is their safety net?

Borrowing to try to make lots of money quickly is not a biblical principle. It is much less stressful to manage the $100,000 business with no debt rather than the $1,000,000 business with lots of debt. People should only make and sell what is good for everybody, not just themselves. People should not try to buy out or drive out the competition to their business to keep their profits high, but they should welcome it "as iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Prov 27:17).

—NSE

Biblical Economy & Christian Involvement

LETTER: Dec 31, 2008

Dear Norman,

Well, I opened an icon on my desktop the other day that showed me I hadn't read Sept/Oct *SN* yet (no doubt due to the rush of pre- and post-Feast) so I read it—all last night. It was a great essay you did on biblical economy! I think you're the only person who has tried to put together a macro-economic model better than I did. I took a different approach in [my book] Blueprints of the Kingdom. You have some great theories:

- Factories/businesses [are to be] no bigger than family land.
- You are the only one I ever heard who equated business revenue forecasts with population growth and personal disposable income. That is ingenious and realistic!

RESPONSE: I realize that most people today—even many professing Christians—think that the Old Testament principles are terribly insufficient to run a modern economy. Similarly, in the 1700s the European kings and clerics said that the "American experiment" would never work—that people need a civil and ecclesiastical hierarchy to tell them what to do. The truth was that an unbelievable amount of innovation and progress was made in the USA during the 1700s and 1800s, through free people who largely believed in the God of the Bible. Land was available to all and people were free to grow, mine, hunt or build what they wanted on it.

Today, most land is in the hands of a comparatively small group of wealthy people, and innovation is

squashed by endless regulations and taxes. Today, much of the creativity of the people is not used to figure out how to produce the most from their crops or shops, but on how to get on the most government and charity hand-out programs at once. I've heard young people, barely out of high school say things like:

"You can apply for a scholarship and sign up for a full load of classes. Then on the third week, you drop all of the classes but one and you get most of the money back and put it in your pocket—the scholarship people never complain."

"You work the real job during the summer, then collect unemployment in the winter while working a cash-job at the same time. You have more money in your pocket and pay less taxes than if your real job lasted all year."

Similarly, the creativity of the wealthy is used to write deceptive ads, contracts loans, credit card agreements, etc. to fool the poor into paying more than they realize for things they do not need.

We do not need to simply tweak our present system, but we need a Jubilee year (Lev 25), redistribute the land and to set people free from slavery and debt.

LETTER: The letters section showed (to me) why the Sabbatarian Christian people never succeed in this life. I will be keeping this issue close at hand. I do like reading hardcopy, but I have gotten used to reading *SN* electronically, if you want to send future ones by PDF.

RESPONSE: I would not say that Sabbatarian people never succeed in this life, but we certainly have our difficulties—some unique to us and some the same as everyone else—though we often do not recognize it. We sometimes suffer because of persecution by others, but we also suffer from our own foolishness. Because we have an understanding of parts of the Bible that most other Christians do not have, it is **way too easy** to begin thinking that we understand all of the Bible better than others. Others believers need to learn from us, and **we need to learn from them.**

LETTER: I have a new point of contact for PABC for you. The reason I'm going to be struggling again this year (& maybe in future years) is because I'm stepping out to do more and more non-paid work. I refuse to waste anymore of my life. I am a regular contributor/blogger for Christian Exodus and I am planning on doing more political work from now on.

More on those when I have more time and can write on my computer.

Your servant in Messiah Y'shua,

— John Qavah, Oregon

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouraging letter. I hope other's listen to your message about not "wasting our lives". We often spend too much time or entertainment or trying to better our economic circumstances. The day-to-day practice of Christianity for so many people is going to church, giving money and praying for Godly solutions for one's problems in life. While these things should be done, the focus of the New Testament seems to be on a powerful method of Christian life that was radically different from the people around them. They formed separate communities (Acts 2 & 4), they publicly healed people, they taught in the synagogues and public places, they declared their message to the leaders of their nations, they got jailed and driven out of town for their teaching, they collected money and distributed it to the poor themselves in the name of Messiah (not just giving to some other group's charity).

Even if we don't have miraculous gifts of healing, we can still do the rest. May our father in heaven help more of us to do it.!

—NSE

Servants News' readers my be interested in John Qavah's sort, 2-3 times-per-year publication called *Voice of Reconciliation,* which encourages peace among the various Church of God groups and also accepts paid advertising for business among brethren.

Also, John encourages brethren interested in good government to look at the following website:

www.progressive-conservative.com

A Look Into The Identity of Galatians

LETTER: Jan 22, 2009

I have come to the conclusion from my personal studies of the Scriptures that the Galatians were not Gentiles as is commonly taught by many teachers of the Bible, but rather, they were Israelites, possibly from the so-called "lost ten tribes." Please allow me to illustrate.

I did a Strong's Concordance search under the words "Gentiles" and "heathen". In the King James Version of the Scriptures the term "Gentiles" (Strong's Greek #1484 *ethnos*) is used in the Epistle of the Galatians only seven times: 2:2,8,12,14(twice),15; 3:14; and the term "heathen" (Strong's Greek #1484 *ethnos*) is only used three times in the Epistle to the Galatians: 1:16; 2:9; 3:8. If you notice, Paul never addresses the Galatians as "gentile" or "heathen" as he commonly does in some of his other epistles to Gentile Assemblies (Rom 1:13; 11:13; 15:10,11; 1Cor 12:2; Eph 2:11; 3:1; 4:7), but rather, it seems like he is addressing fellow Israelites discussing his ministry **to** the Gentiles.

The Gentiles were exclusively committed for Paul to minister unto as the "circumcision" was committed unto Peter's ministry (Gal 2:7-8); but Paul wasn't exclusive only to the Gentiles; "But the Master said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, **and the children of Israel:..."** (Acts 9:15, WOY, emphasis mine). So, we shouldn't assume that all of Paul's epistles were addressed to just Gentiles. On the other hand, even though we do see some interaction between Peter and Gentiles (Acts 10; Gal 2:11-14), it really isn't established that his apostleship is to any other but the circumcision (Gal 2:8). So, now, notice in Peter's first epistle the locations of the "circumcision" he is writing to: "Peter, an apostle of [Yahshua Messiah], To the pilgrims of the **Dispersion**)Strong's Greek #1920 *diaspora*) in Pontus, **Galatia,** Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,..." (1Pet 1:1, NKJV, Sacred name restored). Notice in the New King James Version that the word "dispersion" is capitalized, I believe indicating that Peter was addressing either those of the "house of Judah" that were taken into Babylonian

captivity, or those of the "house of Israel" that were taken into Assyrian captivity. I like to think that it was to both when you take James opening greeting in his epistle into consideration: "James, a servant of [Yahweh] and of the [Master Yahshua Messiah], **to the twelve tribes which are scattered** (Strong's Greek #1290 *diaspora*) abroad, greeting" (Jms 1:1, KJV, Sacred Names and titles restored).

In part, Commentator Matthew Henry agrees with me as he writes: "1. By their external condition—Strangers dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, etc. They were chiefly jews, descended (as Dr. Prideaux thinks) from those jews who were translated from Babylon, by order of Antiochus king of Syria, about two hundred years before the coming of [Messiah], and placed in the cities of Asia Minor. It is very likely that our apostle had been among them, and converted them, **being the apostle of the circumcision,** and that he afterwards wrote this epistle to them from Babylon, where multitudes of the Jewish nation then resided" (Mather Henry's Commentary on the WHOLE BIBLE COMPLETE and UNABRIDGED, p. 2421, Sacred title restored ,emphasis mine).

Another Commentator, Dr. Henry H. Halley disagrees with this as he writes on 1Peter 1:1: "Strangers" (1:1), seems to mean Scattered Jewish Christians. But 2:10 [1 Peter] indicates they were mainly, Gentiles" (Halley's Bible Handbook, p 663). This can easily be proven otherwise, as 1Peter 2:10 is quoting Hosea 1:6,9; 2:23 which is addressing Israel! So now, who exactly were the Galatians? Dr. Henry H. Halley writes: "Galatians were a branch of Gauls, originally from north of the Black Sea, split off from the main migration westward to France, and settled in Asia Minor, 3rd century B.C." (Halley's Bible Handbook, p 608). In the American Heritage College Dictionary, Third Ed., under the word "Gaul" we find: **Gaul**[1] (gôl) n. **1.** A Celt of ancient Gaul. **2.** A French person. **Gaul** [2] (gôl) Formerly **Gal•li•a** (gäl 'e-ä). An ancient region of W Europe S and W of the Rhine R., W of the Alps, and N of the Pyrenees, corresponding roughly to modern-day France and Belgium; conquered by Julius Caesar in the Gallic Wars (58-51 B.C.).

Now I have ready many books and booklets that have been put out by the various "Church of God" splinter groups on this subject of the identity of the so-called "lost ten tribes" of Israel. I am an uneducated prisoner with limited resources and study aids; my question to those of you that I send this treatise to is this: Is this possible that the Galatians were of the lost ten tribes of Israel? And if so, what significance would this revelation have? Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration in this matter.

In Yahweh's service,

John Joseph Adkins #B-23557; Kinross Correctional Facility, 16770 Water Tower Dr, Kincheloe, MI 49788

RESPONSE: I have seen literature claiming that Paul's letter to the Galatians was written to Gentiles, Israelites, Jews, and even a certain sect of apostate Jews. Many of these views were developed by someone who felt Paul's writing would better agree with their doctrine if it was understood as written to a very specific group of people. This is not the best way to approach Biblical research.

We should believe what Paul said: the letter was to "the churches of Galatia" (1:2), to the "brethren" there (1:11; 2:4; 3:15; 4:12,28,31; 5:11,13; 6:1,18). It is not as the book of James, written to scattered Israelites (Jms 1:1) who meet in synagogues (Jms 2:2, Greek *sunagoge* is everywhere else translated "synagogue", and so should be here, rather than "assembly"). Nor is it as the book of Colassians, to non-Israelites, which contains no significant Old Testament quotes.

The book of Galatians contains many Old Testament quotes and much debate about whether salvation is by grace or works of the law. Gentiles would not normally be seeking salvation by the works of the law. On the other hand, it talks about a time when the Galatians did not know God (4:8), and when they observed "days and months and seasons and years"—a description of pagan practices as opposed to the Sabbaths and Feast days of God.

There were obviously people from both Jewish (or Israelite) and Gentile (nations) background in Galatia, and Paul was trying to bring peace between them:

> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:28).
>
> For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! (Gal 5;14-15).
>
> Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal 6:1-2).
>
> And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God (Gal 6:16).

I believe that Paul does not specifically call them "Jewish brethren" and "Gentile brethren" because he wants them to think of themselves as just "brethren". But he certainly addresses problems that each had.

Finally, when we ask the question "who were the Galatians?" we need to realize that the answer may be every bit as complex as the question, "who are the Americans?". We are a combination of Jews, Israelites, and many other nations. Some people know who they are descended from, and some have forgotten. Some people diligently practice their religion, others in a token fashion, and others no longer remember what they were. The Galatians were probably a very similar mixture.

I believe that some and maybe a majority of Galatians were Israelites, and your research bears that out. I see value in historical research. But as Paul says, we are all one in Messiah, so all believers can learn the many spiritual lessons from the book of Galatians. We do not need to know the ethnic composition of Galatia or the churches in it for this book to be a great blessing to us.

Keep on studying!

"Faith to Face the Future" Continued from p. 1

have faith to face the future without fear—whether the "great tribulation" (Matt 24:21; Rev 2:22; 7:14) occurs in our day or many generations later. This faith is not dependent upon correctly understanding Bible prophecy! This is not to say that Bible prophecy is false or that nobody can understand it. **It is saying that faith goes above and beyond Bible prophecy!**

Faith not Fear

The following short verses tell us the story:

> But He [Christ] said to them [disciples], "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"... (Matt 8:26).

Are we fearful? Do we have faith?

> There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casts out fear**, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love (1Jo 4:18).

With the love of God in our hearts, we know he is working things for our Good (Rom 8:28) and we do not need to fear what happens to us.

> *Let your* conduct *be* **without covetousness**; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD *is* my helper; **I will not fear**. What can man do to me?" (Heb 13:5).

It is easy to fall into the trap of covetousness. Big government and big business still live lavishly, and more media continue to trumpet money as the means whereby security and pleasure come to us. We hope to build a solid financial foundation for the future. But trust in those things is what produces **fear** in us. Indeed, the financial crisis and wars ahead might claim our homes, our cars, our savings and almost everything we have. But they will not claim what is eternal and important (1Pet 1:3).

> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have **not** received the spirit of bondage again **to fear**; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom 8:14-15).
>
> For you are all **sons of God through faith** in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26).

Good human fathers will let their children earn there own living and take care of themselves as they are able. But if they fall into disaster, especially not of their own making, they will take care of them. God will take care of us!

> "I [Paul—and all believers] **have been crucified with Christ**; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I **live by faith** in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Our purpose on the earth is to grow to be sons and daughters of God, to live forever with Him. We are here to learn to live by faith in God and reflect Him. We can continue to serve him with the resources we have now, knowing that we can trust Him to take care of us wherever we have to go, and whatever kind of good or evil leaders we may find ourselves under.

The Results of Fear

People who fear the future often spend a lot of time and money on prophetic books, videos, CDs, etc. While it is good to read Bible prophecy (Rev 1:3), one can waste a huge amount of time trying to prove or disprove the thousands of prophetic interpretations of the Bible. These things often make their authors wealthy or powerful, but rarely can one find anything that accurately predicts events before they happen without error.

Prophetic interpreters usually have elaborate charts showing how Bible prophecies predicted the dates of past events and how yet unfulfilled prophecies predict the dates of future events. What is virtually always missing is a past "track record" of the prophetic interpreter, showing that his predictions of ten years ago all came to

pass as stated. Rather, one usually finds that the prophetic interpreter has revised his prophecies over the past 10 years because they **did not** come to pass as stated. Sure, they will claim that God gave them new revelation or changed His plan to give mankind more time. But how do we know that God will not do that again with their current prophetic interpretation?

So do we need to know the dates of anything in advance?

Indeed, it is **the people who do not have enough faith in God that desperately want to know when the major trials will come upon the world.** They will take time "to figure out prophecy" or spend money for someone else to do so to protect their lives and possessions. They want to pull their money out of the banks or stock market before they collapse. They want to flee to another city, state or country if trouble is coming to theirs. They want to store food and supplies for themselves before a famine strikes. None of those things are wrong by themselves. But trusting in our ability to physically take care of ourselves produces fear—because we might not be able to do it. But trusting in God does not.

> "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the

birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matt 6:24-26).

While the Bible teaches the wise use of our physical resources, no scripture says that we will be judged by how much wealth we acquired during our life. The decisions we make in how we treat others, in developing the love, mercy and justice of God in our lives are far more important. God may choose to show us personally when a disaster is coming so that we may save our resources to share them with many people. If he chooses not to show us, and we lose everything we have to military action or a natural disaster, he does not hold us responsible.

Let us consider an example in concrete terms. Suppose a Christian has a million dollars that he wants to save for difficult times in the future—for his family, friends and neighbors. The best thing he can figure out to do with it is spread it out among several accounts so that all the money is insured. But suppose the banking system collapses with no bailout and he looses all his investment. Is God going to hold him accountable for not interpreting prophecy or finding out about the secret backroom deals that bankers and governments make? Probably not. While this writer has seen and read about this kind of case occurring, there is another kind that is far more common.

Many Christians, unfortunately, intend to horde their resources for their own benefit during the troubled times to come. Even worse, some have wealth that they have dedicated to God, but which they are still using largely for their own benefit. Sure, these people probably do not think of it that way—they think they are taking care of their own **needs,** not **desires.** But if they would tell their story to in impartial group of brethren—or to Christ in the Judgment, the conclusion would probably be that they are serving themselves.

And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry."' 20 "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:15-21).

This writer has seen the above happen—Christians who amassed wealth, and died young. He has also seen cases where selfish Christians amassed wealth and lost it—their life being spared. Maybe God preserved their life so they could learn from the experience and go on to grow and be in the first resurrection.

The circumstances of each case vary considerably. Some people simply had much-above-average savings and investments, knew that they could help others from their abundance, but chose not to do so and lost it due to unexpected illness or financial reverses. Others had property or investments that they believed God wanted them to use for a specific purpose, but instead of selling them right away for a moderate price, they hung on to them hoping to get more—only to later see their value dwindle to little or nothing. These unfortunate situations were almost never foreseeable from a human perspective and in most cases the technical financial advisor might have said the people were doing the right thing. But they were not putting God first.

The Results of Faith

If disastrous days are nearing, we need to have the **faith** to be ready for them. If we believe that God has told us (see the article, "Does God Still Talk to People?" on page 3.) to sell our house for a third of its current value and move elsewhere, would we have the faith to go through with it? What kind of revelation would it require for us to do something like that? A personal revelation to us? One to our local congregation or our church headquarters? What if our church leaders or members were divided on the validity of the revelation? (This writer has seen this happen.) Sure, we might receive $100,000 more by waiting for the right buyer. But if we stay, our city may be destroyed by a cataclysmic event, one for which insurance companies will not pay. If we wait for evidence so obvious that everyone knows a disaster is coming, nobody will be buying houses.

We need to learn to live by faith each day. We need to be led by the Spirit of God in what we do:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Rom 8:14).

We can oppose the evil of our day, without fearing it—even though it comes to pass. When we see corrupt laws passed or injustice done in our nation, we can speak, write and sometimes vote against it, just as John the Baptist, Christ and the apostles condemned evil in their day and as the "good and just" Joseph of Arimathea voted against it (Luke 23:50-51, NWT). If we are successful in resisting evil and implementing righteousness, praise the Eternal. However, we cannot make the mistake of thinking that either our salvation or the salvation of mankind depends upon our successes in dealing with corrupt human governments. If our efforts to implement righteous rule do not succeed in implementing it, they do succeed as a public witness that there are Godly people with righteous options, who were rejected by the masses.

But even when the evil that we strongly opposed comes upon our nation, we need not fear it.

Most of mankind, and specifically those who believed in God, have suffered under corrupt governments ever since the Tower of Babel. Hebrews chapter 11 chronicles righteous people who suffered, and who are going to reign with Christ in the first resurrection. Some people mentioned there lived a long time, others died young. During the first couple of hundreds years after Christ, the church was persecuted greatly, but it grew!

While we realize many people will suffer in difficult times, we also realize that many people come to God in those times. The goal of the Christian is to bring people to God, not to live the middle-class American dream. Peace and protection come from God, not from getting ourselves (or our children and grandchildren) into nice houses, good schools and good jobs. It is not wrong to have good things, but all of these things should be used to advance the Kingdom.

As we see the time of the end approaching, we should not be hiding ourselves and our provisions away where we think we will be safe. Rather we should be:

1. "…Consider[ing] one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another,* and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:24-25). See also Malachi 3:16-18.
2. "…Sigh[ing] and cry[ing] over all the abominations that are done within it [our nation]" (Ezk 9:4). "And [God] delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed [or distressed—NIV] by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) — then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment (2Pet 2:7-9).
3. Resolving to refuse to cooperate with evil religious and economic systems, even at great risk to ourselves. We may not know exactly what the "Mark of the Beast" is, but we know that people both worship the Beast and receive economic benefit from his mark, and that we should do neither (Rev 13:16-17; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).
4. **Making preparations to reach people with the gospel during troubled times as many people will come to repentance because of it** (2Cor 7:10; Rev 7:9-14). This seems like such an obvious idea, but this writer has heard few ministries that are stockpiling Bibles or booklets to bring people to God in difficult times. Many plan to escape the tribulation, but they should consider Matthew 16:25; 24:45-47; and Luke 12:42-44.
5. Making sensible preparations—even secret preparations—to sustain lives of people in danger, even at a risk to our own lives (1Kngs 18:3-4). This would include basic things like food, water and shelter, and maybe more sophisticated things like alternate energy, agriculture and construction facilities. The question to always ask: Is it for you or is it for the kingdom?
6. "Let[ing] no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being" (1Co 10:24). "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil 2:4).
7. Realizing "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (John 12:25).

Knowledge and Power

There is a tendency among Sabbath-observing believers to value the spiritual gifts of knowledge, wisdom and teaching very highly. These gifts are indeed valuable. Sabbatarians have managed to come out of much error that entered Christianity through paganism and unbiblical church tradition. However, knowledge must still be kept in perspective. God does not always work through knowledge. As difficulty increases toward the end of the age, even correct knowledge of prophecy, governments, business, farming, food preservation, alternate energy and other survival skills will probably not be the only means by which God takes care of his people.

Several different Scriptures contrast the **knowledge** and the **power** of God.

> Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine **power** has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the **knowledge** of Him who called us by glory and virtue (2Pet 1:2-3).

The Greek word for "power" here is *dunamis*, from which we get words like dynamic, dynamo, etc. It refers **to "miracle working power"** as in "And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for **power** [*dunamis*] went out from Him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19). This word *dunamis* should always be understood as miracle working power, as there are other Greek words used for being strong, full of energy or political/military power. The Bible shows that the corrupt Sadducees did not understand either the Scriptures or the Power of God, but that God wants us to understand both:

> Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not **knowing the Scriptures** nor the **power** of God" (Matt 22:29).
>
> Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the **power** [*dunamis*] of the Holy Spirit. Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all **knowledge**, able also to admonish one another. (Rom 15:13-14).

The Apostle Paul teaches that certain people tend to seek after different things, in this case the Greeks sought wisdom, an off-

shoot of knowledge, but the Jews sought a sign.

> For **Jews** request a **sign**, and **Greeks** seek after **wisdom** but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the **power** [*dunamis*] of God and the **wisdom** of God (1Cor 1:22-24).

Of course, Christ gave the Jews a miraculous sign, his resurrection from the dead (Luke 11:29-30), but most of the Jewish leaders started a conspiracy to defame it rather than accept it (Matt 28:11-15). The apostle Paul showed the Greeks at the Areopagus the wisdom of God, but most mocked him or put him off indefinitely, not accepting the wisdom of God (Acts 17:18-34).

When the Corinthians were being deceived by false teachers, Paul said he would not enter an argument with them, deciding the issue through knowledge, but would deal with them according to the miraculous **power** of God.

> But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the **word** of those who are puffed up [**knowledge** puffs up—1Cor 8:1], but the **power**. For the kingdom of God *is* not in **word** but in **power** [*dunamis*] (1Cor 4:19).

Future Understood by Power of Holy Spirit

When it comes to the trials at the end of the age, Peter made it very clear that the power of God would see us through, not someone else's understanding of biblical prophecy. This author realizes that many people are very serious in their desire to understand Bible prophecy and work very hard at it—many hours per week for many years. But even so, much of that work may be out of their own fear of the future, or from a desire to be considered spiritual by others. Even so, unless one's prophetic understanding is inspired by the Holy Spirit, the most intricate prophetic interpretation, even if it explains every prophetic verse, is still a "cunningly devised fable".

> For we did not follow **cunningly devised fables** when we made known to you the **power** [*dunamis*] and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain [the "Transfiguration" Matt 17:1-9]. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed ["more sure word of prophecy"—KJV], which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that **no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation**, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit (1Pet 1:16-21)

Prophecy cannot be understood simply by man trying to understand it! While some of the New Testament writers wrote as if Christ might return in their lifetime, there is not one place where they said that God had revealed that to them—because He hadn't. Nor did they ever claim that they knew Christ was returning based upon the prophecies of Scripture. They just knew the times they were living in were extremely difficult—so much so that Paul's human wisdom caused him to recommend that single people not marry, though he said it was not sin to do so (1Cor 7:25-28).

> That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of **wisdom** and **revelation** in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; **that you may know what is the hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His **power** [*dunamis*] toward us who believe, according to the working of His **mighty power** (Eph 1:17-19)

Paul is speaking to all believers here. The "spirit of revelation" gives us understanding of the hope of our calling. This revelation is a part of his "miracle working power" (Greek *dunamis*). This theme of revelation by the Holy Spirit to all believers is found elsewhere in scripture.

> But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." **But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, **not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual** (1Cor 2:9-13).

Christ taught his followers that they would understand the future through the Holy Spirit:

> "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own *authority,* but whatever He hears He will speak; and **He will tell you things to come** (John 16:13).

The same knowledge and power duo is here, too. The spirit guides us into truth—helps us to study the Bible and history so that we understand the plan and purpose of God. But it also shows us things to come, something that can only be done by miraculous power.

How Do We Experience the Power of God?

We receive the miraculous power of God by asking, by asking a lot, by asking for it to do God's will, not for our own benefit. We receive it by faith.

> Rejoice always, pray without ceasing (1Th 5:16-17).
>
> …Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for

it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure (James 4:2-3, NLT).

Does not James understand the way many believers are? How often do we ask our Father for His miraculous power to serve others? How often do we ask for miraculous revelations of the future, so that we can know what to do now? Some people, who claim to believe in God, would think we are "nuts" for doing such a think. This is not power so that we can become a religious leader and have a following after ourselves. This is power so we can serve others and do his work now!

Then He spoke a parable to them, that **men always ought to pray and not lose heart**, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. **And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him**, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, **will He really find faith on the earth?"**

Some Christian writers have gone as far as to say that God is no longer working by miracles, but only through the efforts of church organizations, collecting and spending money to do His work. Certainly, some of His work has been done that way and He will give His servants credit for it (1Cor 3:12-14) But it is also understandable why people who only understand this kind of work would fear the future. The financial structure of the world—and also these church organizations—is likely to fall apart.

Those who trust in the power of God realize man can do nothing to exceed God's power. We do not need to fear the future, even the collapse of our economy or nuclear war. If we do not feel close enough to God that we are comfortable with His care, then we need to begin to get there, now.

One way to strengthen ourselves is to get in the habit of continually speaking to others, confirming our trust in God to deliver us in difficult times.

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard *them;* So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him" (Mal 3:16-17).

We should be able to talk about our trust in God for miraculous deliverance with the same practicality that we talk about our jobs, our school, going shopping, etc. We should not have a "practicality voice" which we use to discuss physical things, and a sanctimonious voice we use to discuss religious things. The same God that created the food we eat and the ground upon which we stand is the one that will deliver us by his miraculous power. Our Messiah and Savior commanded that we not be ashamed of Him and His words:

When He had called **the people** to *Himself,* with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? **For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels"** (Mark 8:34-38)

Through our prayers and ongoing sharing of His words with those we meet, we can have faith to face the future, through the miraculous power of His Holy Spirit. Amen. 🕮

One Reason For Faith to Face the Future

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D. Ohio) has been warning the USA about the dangers of voting machines since the 2004 election. At that time, he was aghast that "**Diebold Election Systems**, which came under the harshest criticism from the California elections panel, is headed by CEO **Walden O'Dell**, who [in 2003] became active in the re-election effort of President Bush, even attending a strategy meeting with wealthy Bush benefactors at the President's private ranch in Texas. Soon after, O'Dell wrote a fund-raising letter where he said he was 'committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the president next year.'"

Both Kucinich and other election watchdogs have pointed to demonstrations by computer experts of how possible it is for a skilled person to alter the results of electronic voting machines.

Now, on 9/9/09 **blackboxvoting.org** has news of the planned merger between Election Systems & Software with Diebold/Premier Election Systems, which will leave one vendor of voting machines. Blackboxvotingg.org also explains the abandonment of all paper ballots in many precincts and the continued non-prosecution of election law violations—such as officials who take unsupervised possession of voting machines and records for hours at a time. It is very possible that we will not have a fair national election again.

Christians can oppose corruption and tyranny, while simultaneously being confident that even if evil leaders succeed, God has handled them before, will take care of His people, and will soon judge them!

Port Austin Feast of Tabernacles 2009

The Port Austin 2009 Feast of Tabernacles site should be a relaxed, enjoyable, yet Biblically spiritual and interesting 8 days this year. The traditional Hebrew calendar is being used (October 3-10), but those observing other calendar systems are welcome.

Please call, write or e-mail as soon as possible if you intend to come: PABC@portaustin.net, 989-738-7700 or use the address below. On campus rooms are available on an offering basis. There are also motels two miles away in Port Austin.

Bible studies will be conducted by Rick Heath, Jim Graves, Mike Zaeske and possibly others. Two special speakers will be coming, also.

Barbara Burns, CNHP

Barbara Burns will give three lectures throughout the Feast. She is a Certified Natural Health Professional (CNHP). In our legal system, only doctors make diagnoses and prescribe treatments. Nurses and people with other certifications carry out those orders. CNHPs are outside this system. They don't diagnose or treat illness, but provide health information on how to promote natural health in general. Barbara has not been a Church of God member, but learned of the Sabbath and Holy Days from other groups.

Connie Hawkins, author

Connie Hawkins of *Giving and Receiving Joy Ministries*, will be speaking Sunday, October 4 at 1:30 pm in the dining hall. She is a Michigan wife, mother, author and speaker who travels with her husband, giving inspirational talks based on the Bible. She has suffered from cerebral palsy and other illnesses, but has learned to keep joy in her own life and bring it to others.

May the Eternal bless your Feast where you go!

Utica, Illinois Site

Norman Edwards and his family will not be at Port Austin for the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles, but will be attending the Feast located at Grizzly Jack's Grand Bear Resort in Utica, Illinois. The site is sponsored by the same independent group that organized the tremendously successful Lake Geneva, Wisc. site last year. Norman will be teaching for three sessions and hosting Feast Extravaganza 2009—the fun show.

At press time, **245 people** had been registered to attend the site and meeting space was beginning to be an issue. The site is not "closed" yet, but anyone who is planning to attend who has not registered yet, should do so immediately. For full information, see **www.feast2009.org**, e-mail feast@feast2009.org or contact Aaron Baker at 517-281-2073.

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