

These Times

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the hour is late



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apocalyptic voices warn our fragile planet

SCIENTISTS cannot be expected to spend much time trying to calm our nerves, but all of a sudden they seem to be going out of their way to scare us. Just over the horizon, we are told, such cataclysms as earthquakes, radiation storms, mass famine and even a new ice age lie in wait."

The foregoing appeared in a recent *Life* magazine editorial. To make matters worse, the comment went on, the experts have found no shelter from these wholesale disasters. "There is no, I repeat, no conceivable technological solution to the problems we face," says Stanford biologist Paul Erlich.



What does the Bible say? Three things. First, it tells us that the end of the world and the second coming of Christ are synonymous. (Matthew 24:3.)

Second, in the Holy Scriptures God has always claimed that before He intercedes in a judgmental way in human affairs, He announces His intentions through His prophets long in advance. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7. God has no tendency whatsoever toward acting irrationally and arbitrarily, thereby causing mankind to be caught unawares. Before the Lord brought the plagues upon Egypt, He warned Pharaoh through Moses. Before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, Jesus Himself foretold the city's destruction.

Third, in our day, before the destruction of the world at the second coming of Christ, God is warning us. In fact, He seems to have gone the second mile, instructing us not only through the prophecies of His Word, but also through the spectacular visions of the experts—scientists and statesmen—that the end could come any time now.

We do well to listen as for our very lives.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT HAS COME. William Vogt, Associate Director of Science and Education for the Office of Inter-American Affairs, stated: "There are too many people in the world for its limited resources to provide a high standard of living. . . . The handwriting on the wall of five continents now tells us that the Day of Judgment is at hand."—"Road to Survival," p. 78.

THE INTOLERABLE SHORTAGE OF FOOD. "Food is the first need of every human being—a fundamental human right. But for hundreds of millions . . . that need is not met and that right is denied. This is intolerable."—Second World Food Congress of the UN, FAO held at The Hague, in Holland.

MOVING TOWARD A HIDEOUS EVENT. "We seem to be moving, drifting, steadily against our will, against the will of every race, and every people, and every class, toward some hideous catastrophe. Everyone wishes to stop it, but they do not know how."—Winston Churchill.

THE EXTINCTION OF PLEASANT SPECIES. "If we continue to degrade our land by dumping nutrients in the wrong places," says ecologist George M. Woodwell, of the Brookhaven Laboratories in Upton, New York, "we will eventually kill off all species of fish, fowl, birds, and animals that we like, while the species that we don't like will survive. Eagles, pine



trees, and trout will disappear." As though all this were not bad enough, Dr. Woodwell adds that the most noxious living forms will not only survive but actually flourish. "We will be left with crabgrass, rats, crows, and inedible fish," he says.



FAMINE—THE GRISLY END TO OVERPOPULATION.

"The most dreadful thing of all," says scientist and novelist C. P. Snow, "is that many millions of people in the poor countries are going to starve to death before our eyes. We shall see them doing so upon our television sets." Barring major agricultural reform and worldwide population control, says Lord Snow, "the major catastrophe will happen before the end of the century. We in the rich countries shall be surrounded by a sea of famine involving hundreds of millions of human beings."

THE FEAR OF UNSEEN POWERS.

Christian workers in Switzerland have reported that there is scarcely a village in that beautiful country that does not have a "witch" or medium who casts spells or brews potions in the manner of their medieval predecessors. There are reportedly 2,000 mediums in Zurich alone.

Similar stories have been reported from all over "civilized" Europe—particularly from Germany, France, and Italy. Dr. Robert P. Evans, founder and director of Greater Europe Mission, in "Let Europe Hear," describes the situation in France: "The spiritual ignorance and moral slavery of many French people almost surpasses belief. Underneath the surface of millions of lives lies a fear of unseen powers and a compulsion to propitiate them."

CATAclysmic Quakes in California.

Professor Peter Franken, of the University of Michigan, an expert on seismological disturbances, foresees a major quake in California within the next twenty years and adds that no one in the field would be surprised if one hit tomorrow. "Any seismologist will, in fact, be surprised if one does not occur in the next ten years," he says. "And the impact would be large. Fatalities would number several tens of thousands."

A SWEEPING STOCK MARKET CRASH.

Of course there will be another stock market crash, says the celebrated economist John Kenneth Galbraith, of Harvard. The only thing he is unsure about is just when it will happen. As soon as the memories of the 1929 crash grow dim, he believes, a new one will descend upon us. As for the current market recession, he takes a gloomy view. "This is a very serious flop, and some of the worst features are yet to come."



BILLY GRAHAM, evangelist: "In the midst of all the pessimism, gloom, and frustration in intellectual circles, there is one great hope: the promise of Christ to return to this earth. He said, 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.' Of all the subjects taught in the Bible, this is one of the greatest."—"Decision," February, 1969, p. 14.

"America is rapidly sinking into idolatry. . . . We are serving the god of pleasure, money, and sex while we are outwardly still religious. If we continue to go the way we are going, I believe we are finished as a free democratic society."—Sermon in Shea Stadium, New York City, June 24, 1970.

HAROLD LINDSELL, editor, "Christianity Today": "Any simpleton must know that we live in a day of revolution. But the great question is: What is the meaning of the revolution? I think there is a message in the wind. Culture and civilization are saying something.

"As I read the Scriptures, the first message I get is this: The center of the real struggle is not here on earth. The center of the real struggle is God versus

Satan. It is light versus darkness. The battle is being fought in the cosmos as well as on the earth. It is an unseen as well as a seen work. What we see is not the totality of reality. Beyond sight and sense and sound and smell, there is the greater reality of the struggle between the unseen forces of God and of Satan.

"The second message I get from the wind is this: This present world is doomed. The scent of death is upon it. It is committing suicide and nothing can save it. It must die before ever it can live again. The judgment of God has already been pronounced upon it."—"Theistic Suicide," in "Action Magazine," Spring, 1970.



J. B. PHILLIPS, British clergyman and Bible translator: "It is impossible without being dishonest to dismiss the question of New Testament hope without mentioning the Second Coming of Christ. . . . The hope may have become deferred in its fulfillment, but it is still a very real hope. New Testament Christians may well have modified their early views as to the immediacy of Christ's return, yet the fact of His coming again in judgment of the world is always implicit in their thinking and hoping. We need to remember that among the early Christians were quite a number who

were actually present when the Son of God ascended back to Heaven—a symbolic action, of course, but historically true. Such men would not readily forget the words of the heavenly messenger who told them quite plainly that ‘this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.’ ”—“New Testament Christianity,” pp. 52, 53.

JESS MOODY, author of “A Drink at Joel’s Place”: “Someone called our time an elephant hanging from a cliff with its tail tied to a daisy.”



JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564), one of the foremost leaders of the Protestant Reformation in Europe: “We must hunger after Christ till the dawning of that great day when our Lord will fully manifest the glory of His kingdom. The whole family of the faithful will keep in view that day.”

JOHN MILTON (1608-1674), English poet and political writer who wrote one of the world’s great epics, “Paradise Lost”: “Come forth out of Thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth; put on the visible robes of Thy imperial majesty; take up

that unlimited scepter which Thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed Thee. For now the voice of Thy bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed.”



MARTIN LUTHER, in the midst of the throes of the Reformation: “I ardently hope that, amidst these internal dissensions on the earth, Jesus Christ will hasten the day of His coming.”

C. S. LEWIS, author of several religious best sellers: “Another possible objection is this: Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in disguise and starting a sort of secret society to undermine the devil? Why isn’t He landing in force, invading it? Is it that He isn’t strong enough? Well, Christians think He’s going to land in force; we don’t know when. But we can guess why He’s delaying. He wants to give us the chance of joining His side freely.

“I don’t suppose you and I would think much of a Frenchman who waited till the Allies were marching into Berlin and then announced he was on our side. God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our

world quite realise what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it's the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play's over.

"God's going to invade, all right; but what's the good of saying you're on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else—something it never entered your head to conceive—comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There's no good saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up.

"Now is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It won't last for ever. We must take it or leave it."—"The Case for Christianity," pp. 55, 56.



ELLEN G. WHITE (1827-1915), most prolific woman writer of all time:

"The Lord will arise to shake terribly the earth. We shall see troubles on all sides. Thousands of ships will be hurled into the depths of the sea. Na-

vies will go down, and human lives will be sacrificed by millions. Fires will break out unexpectedly, and no human effort will be able to quench them. The palaces of earth will be swept away in the fury of the flames. Disasters by rail will become more and more frequent; confusion, collision, and death without a moment's warning will occur on the great lines of travel. The end is near, probation is closing."—"Messages to Young People," pp. 89, 90.

"Cities full of transgression, and sinful in the extreme, will be destroyed by earthquakes, by fire, by flood. All the world will be warned that there is a God who will display His authority as God. His unseen agencies will cause destruction, devastation, and death. All the accumulated riches will be as nothingness. . . . Calamities will come—calamities most awful, most unexpected; and these destructions will follow one after another."—"Evangelism," p. 27.

"We are living in the time of the end. The fast-fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand. . . .

"The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones. The condition of things in the world shows that troublous times are right upon us."—"Testimonies for the Church," Vol. 9, p. 11.

MATTHEW 24:27, 30, 31: "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15-17: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

REVELATION 6:14-17: "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to

the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

ZEPHANIAH 1:14: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly."

JOEL 2:1-3, 11: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them." "And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"

LUKE 21:27-36: "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then

look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

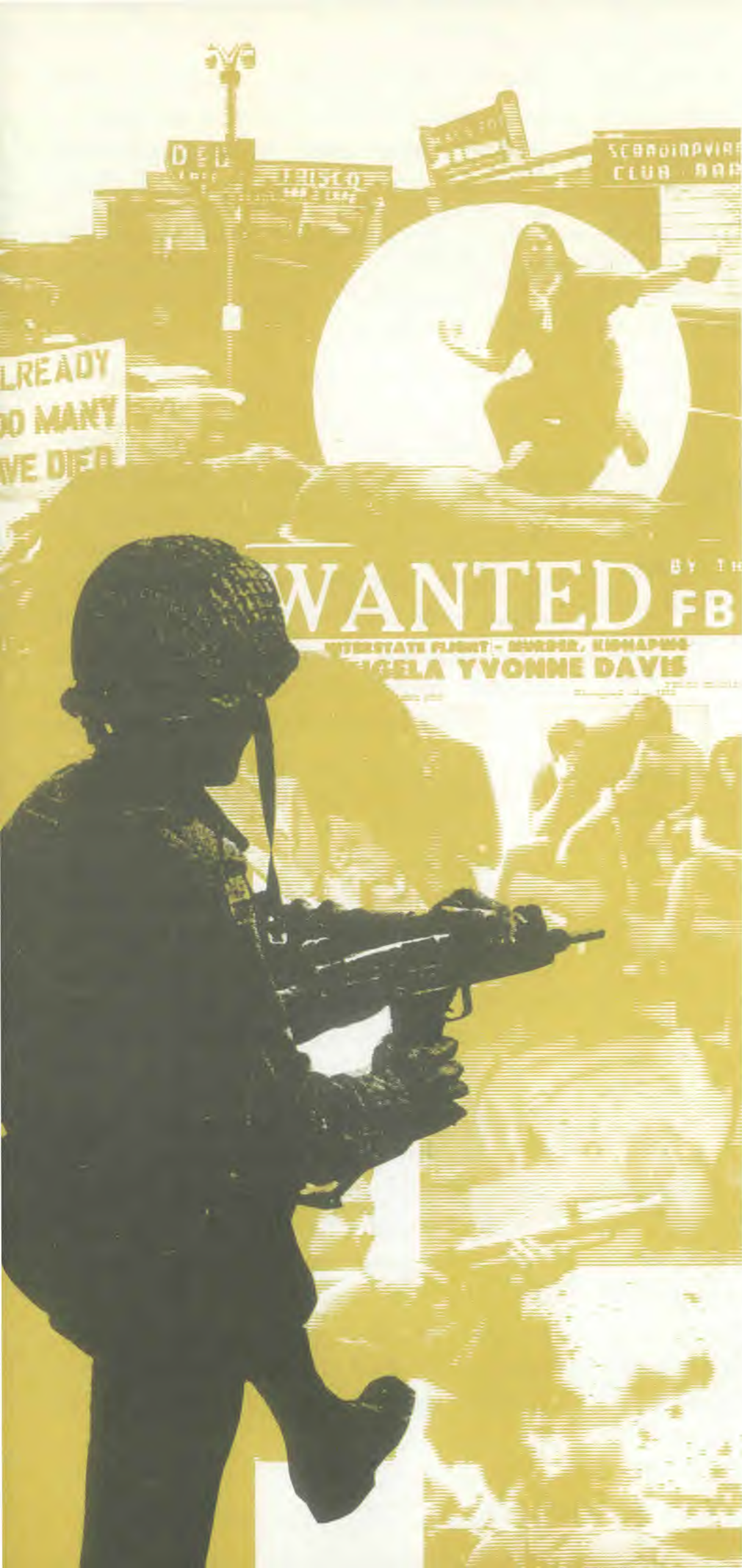
1 CORINTHIANS 4:5: "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."

2 THESSALONIANS 1:7-10: "To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting

destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

2 PETER 3:3, 4, 10-12: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

JAMES 5:7-9: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. . . . Behold, the judge standeth before the door."



With the hour growing late, here is **the case for divine intervention**

By Bryan W. Ball

IT IS a startling fact that the scientist appears to have taken over the role of the preacher in proclaiming that the end of the world is a distinct possibility.

Writing recently in the London *Daily Telegraph*, a British scientist observed, "Time seems to be running out on mankind." According to *Time* magazine, the conclusion to be drawn from Dr. Kenneth E. F. Watt's current study of population increase, limited food production, and rapidly diminishing oil reserves is that "the future looks brutish, nasty, and short."

Referring to the long-term effect of environmental pollution, *Newsweek* (January 26, 1970) noted the apocalyptic convictions of modern science with the comment, "The hour grows late." "A few scientists say only a drastic cure can prevent devastation as thorough as that of nuclear holocaust," it reported. Can man find that cure? Or is there now a valid case for divine intervention in human affairs?

At no time in the checkered history of man has the question of the future loomed as large as it does now. Words which figure prominently in the world's news headlines are the words of a society seemingly bent on destroying itself. Missiles, warheads, fallout, defoliation, herbicides, pesticides, toxic waste, pollution, addiction, violence, megadeath—these, and many like them, are the distinctive words in the vocabulary of twentieth-century man. "Doom-watch" is not the nihilistic creation of science fiction, but a realistic situation developing from scientific fact. Never,

we repeat, has a bigger question mark hung over the future; never has man had the right to demand a positive word of assurance from the Christian church more than now.

From its inception Christianity has anticipated eagerly the time when God Himself would step into the arena of man's activity and transform the world and its society. "Thy kingdom come," Christ taught His disciples to pray, and since that day His followers have looked to the future for the ultimate fulfillment of that hope.

It is a passage in the Book of Revelation that makes this hope meaningful to the twentieth century: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15. In the divine purpose everything moves relentlessly toward this ultimate rule of God, when the present order is superseded by something new and infinitely better.

But when? What makes this particular reference to the coming kingdom more relevant today than any other kingdom reference in the Bible? The remainder of the passage, quoted in part here from the New English Bible, gives four answers to this pertinent question: "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, sovereign over all, who art and who wast, because thou hast taken thy great power into thy hands and entered upon thy reign. The nations raged, but thy day of retribution has come. Now is the time . . . to destroy those who destroy the earth." Revelation 11:17, 18.*

First, the Bible declares that God will intervene in history, that the divine rule will begin at a time when the nations of earth are incensed and *when man is about to destroy* the earth. The reasons which now cause thoughtful scientists concern for the future are the very reasons the Bible gives as evidence that God is about to save man from himself. The significance of this passage, of course, is that it has had no meaning, no specific relevance in the tide of human affairs, until the past twenty or twenty-five years, for only since the end of World War II has man developed the potential ability to literally destroy the earth.

In view of the immense significance of this fact, we do not preach a gospel of fear in asking you to consider the possibilities objectively. This is the age of atomic power and rocket propulsion, and, as one writer recently pointed out,

nuclear weapons now come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and with all types of delivery systems. The current H-bomb is calculated to have a 50-megaton yield, equivalent to 50 million tons of TNT—a force 2,500 times greater than the 20-kiloton bomb which devastated Hiroshima twenty-five years ago. Improvements are already well under way. The great powers are reported to be conducting advanced tests in more sophisticated weaponry: America with the MIRV missile system, and Russia with a gigantic 559 rocket. Both systems are capable of delivering multiple nuclear warheads with a single missile (MIRV stands for Multiple Individually Targeted Reentry Vehicle), vastly increasing the potential destructive power of nuclear armaments.

Meanwhile, thirty-two of America's forty-one nuclear submarines constantly lurk beneath the oceans, each carrying sixteen loaded missiles, and her strategic bombers patrol the skies to counteract the possible effects of Russia's 1,350 land-based intercontinental missile launchers. It is understandable why the recently convened arms limitation talks in Vienna have been described as "the most important arms conference in history." Add to this the expectation of American Intelligence that by the mid-1970's China will have developed an ICBM system with thermonuclear warheads, that France and now India are pushing ahead with nuclear arms development, and the full potential of man's destructive ability assumes truly horrifying proportions.

Beyond nuclear armaments are biochemical weapons such as the GB or VX nerve gases that can kill or incapacitate within seconds. Here, also, the two major powers are attempting to strike a delicate balance of strength. Thousands of tons of nerve gas are already stockpiled at various bases around the world, and Russia controls the original German gas factory which has already provided 50,000 tons of Taban gas for the Red army. Biological weapons rate high on the list of agents

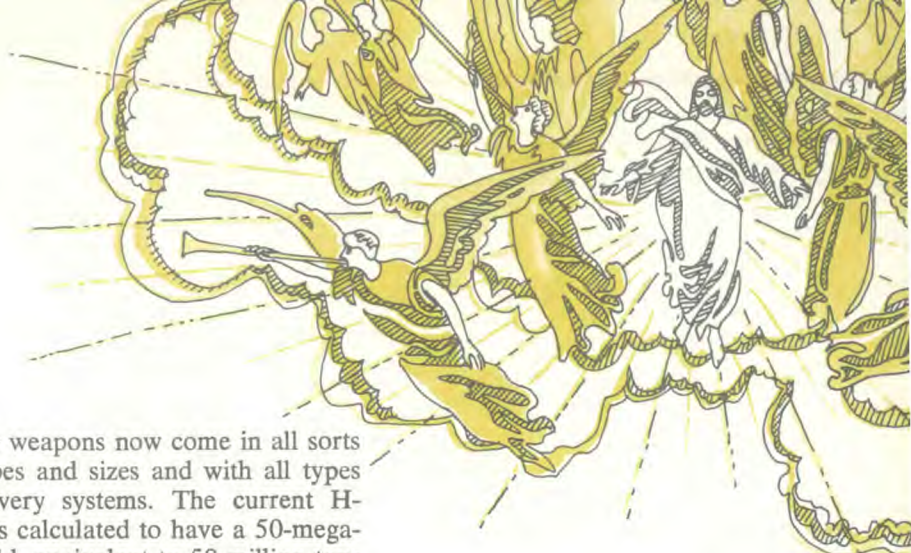
now known to possess global destructive capacity. It has been estimated that six ounces of botulinus toxin, distributed correctly, would be sufficient to kill all human life in the British Isles or North America.

With the availability of missile delivery systems, man now has within his grasp the unquestionable potential for global devastation and the parallel obliteration of all life. Space expert Kenneth Gatland succinctly summed it up when he wrote recently, "We live perpetually on the brink," words that take on new relevancy in the light of the Bible's declaration that the kingdoms of earth become the kingdom of God at the time when men are the destroyers of the earth. For all the plausible arguments that such horrific weapons are essentially deterrents, the case for divine intervention rests in the first place on man's newly acquired potential for global destruction.

A closer look at the passage under consideration reveals a second, even greater relevance to the contemporary world situation. The word translated "destroy" in the King James Version is given the alternate meaning of "corrupt" in the marginal rendering, perhaps a more accurate sense, since the word in the original bears the connotation of wasting, or spoiling. The same Greek word is used in Luke 12:33: "where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." The moth is destructive, not in the sense that it totally destroys, but rather that it spoils, damages, mutilates, thus rendering useless.

A further point of significance may be derived from the form of the verb thus translated "destroy" or "corrupt." It is used twice in Revelation 11:18, and in the second instance it is in the form of a participle, denoting present

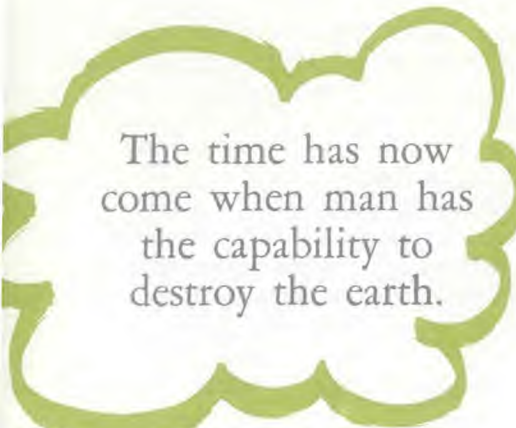
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action, so that the last phrase of the text may be translated "and to destroy those destroying [or corrupting] the earth." (Compare The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament.) In other words, it is at the time when men are actually spoiling the earth, corrupting it, polluting it and rendering it useless, that God intervenes in history.

It is not without significance, then, that the major discovery of the past year or year and a half is man's sudden and traumatic realization that he is already in the process of earth destruc-



The time has now
come when man has
the capability to
destroy the earth.

tion. Speaking at the first session of a twenty-seven-nation committee preparing for a world conference on environment in Stockholm in 1972, U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said that never in the twenty-five-year history of the United Nations had there been a problem of more relevance than the present crisis of environment. Industrialized society is steadily eroding the basic structures of the life cycle and destroying the delicate balance of nature on which all life ultimately depends. A few of the relevant facts concerning this ever-increasing corruption of land, water, and atmosphere will again help to make the issue visible in a true perspective.

It will never be known how many animals, birds, and fish have already been poisoned by pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides used with insufficient care and knowledge. All over the world wildlife is vanishing at an alarming rate. A spokesman at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington recently stated that during the past 150 years the extermination rate of mammals has increased fifty-five times, and he added that if the present extinction rate continues, in about thirty years all remain-

ing species of mammals will have disappeared. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources puts 835 species and subspecies on the brink of extinction at the present time.

Birds of prey are rapidly disappearing in many parts of the world, their breeding pattern severely crippled by high concentrations of DDT in their eggshells, causing in some instances almost complete loss of eggs. DDT has even been found in the livers of penguins in the Antarctic. The effect of the continued use of insecticides and pesticides on the microscopic life necessary to the maintenance of the delicate balance in nature is impossible to ascertain.

The waterways do not escape man's bent for pollution. Dirty rivers, like the notorious Ohio and Cuyahoga in America, are to be found in every continent. In Great Britain thirty gallons of waste per person per day are pouring into the river systems, a rate which causes experts to forecast that by 1990 the British Isles will be drastically short of clear water. Industrial effluent has poisoned Lake Erie to the extent that it now supports only a few plants and creatures. Millions of tons of chemical and atomic waste have been dumped into the oceans in containers which are known to corrode with time. Marine biologists in Edinburgh studying the ecology of the oceans have found that a dozen species of Atlantic plankton have been declining for the past twenty years. The springtime bloom of plankton, "the grass of the sea," now starts approximately four weeks later than it did in 1950. An expert comments, "These changes could have huge and perhaps catastrophic effects on the ecology of the sea if they continue."


The very air man breathes is rapidly becoming polluted by a lethal combination of industrial gases and other fumes concomitant with an advanced technological society. One estimate gives a total of 200 million tons of waste poured into the air each year in America, of which 94.6 million tons come from automotive vehicles—carbon monoxide, sulfur oxide, hydrocarbons, various oxides of nitrogen, and particles of lead. What happens as the number of cars in the world inevitably and rapidly increases? In Great Britain private and industrial chimneys give off nearly a million tons of smoke each year, increasing the incidence and severity of bronchitis ("the English dis-

ease") and other respiratory ailments. Some scientists are already suggesting that it is now distinctly possible for man to contaminate the atmosphere to such an extent that the polar ice caps will melt, or that the solar energy received from the sun will be diminished to the point that an ice age will engulf much of the civilized world.

Much has been written on environmental pollution and man the poisoner. The following paragraph from *Newsweek's* special report on the ravaged environment, January 26, 1970, summarizes the problem:

"It seems the curse of modern man continually to confront new possibilities of self-destruction. He emerged from World War II armed with nuclear weaponry that soon gave him the power to obliterate all human life. . . . And now he has come face to face with a new man-made peril, the poisoning of his natural environment with noxious doses of chemicals, garbage, fumes, noise, sewage, heat, ugliness and urban overcrowding. Nearly unnoticed, the scourge of pollution has already spread so far that a few scientists say only a drastic cure can prevent devastation as thorough as that of nuclear holocaust."

In that light, we do well to take notice of the message in Revelation 11:18, that God will assume His sovereignty at a time when men are in the process of destroying the earth by corruption. The second basis for divine intervention is man's pollution of the



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earth, his home.

A further reading of Revelation 11:18 brings out a third point: Great multitudes of people will be involved when God interposes. The nations of the world, all the dead of the ages, the saints of every generation, the throng of the faithful living at the climax of time, all figure prominently in the

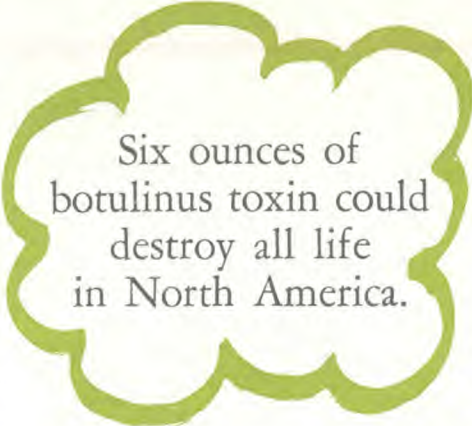
events which, according to the text, surround the time of God's intervention in history. It could be said, indeed, that God intervenes only because of people—because the nations are angry, because the dead are to be judged, because the faithful must be rewarded, because people are destroying the earth.

Against this background of teeming multitudes, the population explosion of the twentieth century must take on an added and forceful significance. People build bombs and missiles and devise ghastly methods of global annihilation. People are responsible for the possibility of mass genocide. People cause pollution and environmental despoliation. And more people patently intensify the problems. "Unless you stop population growth," Republican Paul McClosky recently said, "there is no way you can control pollution in the environment."

But has world population already grown too big for effective control? From the dawn of time to around the year 1850, world population had reached 1,000 million. It then took eighty years, or until 1930, to double that figure, and only a further thirty years to add another 1,000 million. Today the world's population is over 3,500 million; and if present growth rates are maintained, by the year 2000 there will be approximately 7,000 million people struggling for existence on planet earth. Thereafter statisticians expect an additional 1,000 million to be added every five years. Great Britain, Europe's most densely populated nation and already overcrowded, anticipates a further twelve million inhabitants by the turn of the century, and America expects to add another 100 million to a present total of 206 million by the same time.

If this is the picture in Western society, where population control is fairly well understood and accepted, what of the vast, teeming nations of Asia and South America, where the problem is infinitely more urgent and where the fight to control it has hardly begun? It seems inevitable that within the next thirty years the corruption of the earth must increase at an alarming and uncontrollable rate. Small wonder that Stanley Johnson, director of a United Nations study on world population and author of the forthcoming book *Life Without Birth*, said recently, "Population is the overwhelming issue of the century."

Other questions demand answers



Six ounces of
botulinus toxin could
destroy all life
in North America.

with pressing urgency. What is the saturation point in the population boom? And what happens when we reach it? Some answers have been suggested by the work of Dr. Kenneth Watt and a team of researchers in a study of population and related sociological problems, financed by the Ford Foundation. A sample analysis of the results of this research indicates that increased population brings an inevitable increase in crime, divorce, alcoholism, addiction, and related social problems. Estimates made by the study group indicate that world oil reserves may well be depleted by the end of the century. Figures presented to the United Nations World Population Conference in 1965 suggest that world food supplies need to be trebled by the turn of the century in order to keep pace with rising population and to eliminate present hunger and nutritional deficiencies in underdeveloped countries, but the prospect of such a large and rapid increase is remote.

Viewed from every angle, the population issue is one of the most perplexing problems confronting contemporary man. The case for divine intervention is materially strengthened by the population explosion and by its direct relationship to man's potential for corrupting the earth and making life intolerable for hundreds of millions. Nowhere are the teeming multitudes more involved in human destiny than in the last part of the text—"[the time] for destroying the corrupters of the earth." (Amplified New Testament.)

A fourth and final implication demands consideration. The Greek word *diaphtheirō*, translated "to destroy" or "to corrupt" in Revelation 11:18, has distinct associations with the word *phtheirō*, the meaning of which in New Testament usage is "to deprave," "to corrupt morally." In this sense it is used in such passages as 2 Corinthians

7:2; 11:3; Revelation 19:2. The strong overtones of this root meaning of corruption cannot wholly be lost in the setting of Revelation 11:18, where the only obvious difference between the words in the original is the prefix *dia*. Moral decadence is essentially self-destructive, a fact to which the course of past empires and civilizations eloquently testifies. No one acquainted with the history of the Roman Empire, for example, will deny that moral degeneracy materially contributed to the decline and breakup of that monolithic institution.

The message again is clear for twentieth-century man, and is further strengthened by Christ's prediction that antediluvian moral standards would prevail on earth immediately before the final consummation of all things. "As things were in Noah's days" is the analogy drawn by Jesus. What were things like in those days? In describing the moral conditions of that pre-Flood society, the Bible uses one distinctive word, *corruption*: "God saw that the whole world was corrupt and full of violence. In his sight the world had become corrupted, for all men had lived corrupt lives on earth. God said to Noah, 'The loathsomeness of all mankind has become plain to me, for through them the earth is full of violence. I intend to destroy them, and the earth with them.'" Genesis 6:11-13, N.E.B. Here God intervened, and He did so because of moral decay. Christ said a parallel situation would obtain at the end of time.

The postwar years bear witness to a decline in morality, contemporaneous with man's destructive potential and his pollution of the earth. The past two decades have seen the rise of a permissive society, obsessed with sex and more than ever given to the pursuit of pleasure. It may be argued that moralists have always seen their own age as the most corrupt, but certainly an intensified concept of freedom and libertarianism has evolved in recent years. Large numbers now openly question the institutions of marriage and the family, the twin bases of civilized society for centuries. Divorce rates are up, and climbing higher. Illegitimacy and abortion figures, particularly among the young, are leaping ahead. VD, to the alarm of sociologists and physicians, is increasing rapidly, again chiefly in the younger age groups. Pornography and perversion are widely accepted, even

(Continued on page 32)



how to prepare for Christ's coming

It is dangerous to think that we can live as we choose and then prepare for the coming of the Lord at the last minute.

By William A. Fagal

WHEN sixteen years of age, I left home for good. Though I returned for occasional visits, never again was the second-floor "flat" in an eastern industrial city my place of residence.

Nothing dramatic provoked my departure; there had been no "confrontation" between my parents and me. I had not rejected my environment, my relations, or the bourgeois way of life which, to this point, had nurtured me.

Dressed in a very ordinary suit, purchased at a most modest price, I did not even sport long hair or a beard.

And I wore shoes.

Though fraught with the usual problems of adolescence, my life to this point had been reasonably happy. My reason for leaving may seem to some today ordinary, even commonplace. I guess it was "establishment" all the way. I simply left home to attend college.

And, as I remember it, I was not the victim of a single day of homesickness. Being where I wanted to be and securing the preparation for life about which I had dreamed for several years filled my days with challenge and satisfaction. And because I was happy, it honestly never occurred to me to "revolt."

Further indication of my being somewhat "out of touch" came with my surprise at learning that, following my departure, my mother had shed quite a few tears. The conscious sense of my

own personal worth had never been big enough to consider that I was worth crying over! Besides, I had just gone off to school and would be coming back. But she had reasoned that I would never return for any extended period—and time proved her right.

At the first vacation period, I eagerly headed for home. Though furniture and rooms were always kept "picked up" and in good order, this time it was evident to my practiced eye that everything was spotless. Fresh polish gleamed from furniture, and nothing, absolutely nothing, was out of place. With some wonder, I came to recognize that extraordinary preparations had been made for my arrival. Evidently it was important that home should look good to me. And it did!

During the next dozen or fifteen years I watched that phenomenon take place again and again. The expectation of my coming, and later bringing my wife and children, never failed to provoke extensive preparations. These included the choicest dishes, my all-time favorites.

A few years have passed since then. From personal experience we have discovered that history has a habit of repeating itself.

One day my wife and I delivered our precious daughter to a boarding academy—because she so wanted to go and we wanted her to be in a Christian school. Putting off the moment of leaving her for as long as we dared, we at last started for home. For the first thirty miles we said nothing whatever to each other, for the simple reason that we couldn't talk. Busily trying to hide her tears kept my wife fully occupied, and a huge lump, at least the size of Stone Mountain, had completely robbed me of my voice.

Later, when our son left to further his education, it was the same. Now when either of our children returns home for visits, we make the same happy preparations that my parents used to make for me. True, we wouldn't wish them with us again to the exclusion of their places of responsibility in God's service. But because we enjoy being with them, their visits prompt us to the same extensive preparations which evoked my awe and wonder a few years ago. And I understand better now.

One of the books for which I learned respect and love from my earliest years is the Bible. My attitude stems directly from my home training, where rever-

ence for the Word of God was taught my brother and me, not only by precept but also by example. As the result, we never have been willing to get very far away from the principles of the Book.

Primary among the beliefs which have molded our lives and which we have tried to pass on to our children is this: Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour and Redeemer of the world, has promised to return, literally, to this earth, and we must be ready to meet Him.

It is remarkable how that belief, fully accepted without reservation, influences a human life. One prepares for the coming of Jesus with the same expectancy which accompanies preparation for the arrival of one dearly loved.

Just how would one go about preparing for the second coming of the Lord Jesus? In the same way my mother used to prepare for my homecoming? Not exactly, but there are similarities.

To prepare for Christ's coming, one must first believe that He *is* coming. No one can be expected to seriously prepare for an event which He does not really expect to occur. And besides, for this event, halfhearted preparation will not do. But once one really believes that Jesus Christ, the Lord, is going to return to this earth soon, he is compelled to do something about it.

In the same way that individuals clean the house in preparation for the return of loved ones, those preparing for the return of Jesus will spiritually cleanse their body temples. This means that they will put away all sin, repenting sincerely of every act contrary to the will of Christ for them.

Sin tends to blind one to the seriousness of his own condition. Recognizing that fact, our Lord warned, "But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth." Luke 21:34, 35, R.S.V.

"Take heed," to be sure! "Dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life" will surely blind an individual to his spiritually needy condition. Preparation for the coming of the Lord certainly involves the cleaning of the soul temple that includes putting sin out of one's life.

When speaking of Christ's second coming, the prophet John exclaimed, "We know that when he appears we

shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." 1 John 3:2, 3, R.S.V.

One cannot really have the hope of Christ's return without doing something about purifying himself in preparation. The house just must be set in order.

But it is just here that human inadequacy reveals itself. A man may hate the sin which defiles him, and yet be quite unable to shake it from his life. Resolving to have nothing more to do with that evil deed which, alternately, he hates and loves, he yet succumbs to its blandishments again and again. His resolutions are like "ropes of sand." Ultimately he becomes convinced that his case is hopeless, with no possibility for change. And, humanly speaking, he is right.

Sin has a tenacious grip upon every unconverted life. Many an individual feels a real bond of fellowship with the Bible writer who unhappily exclaimed, "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7:18, 19, 24, 25, R.S.V.

It is alone in Jesus Christ, the Lord, that help can be found to overcome evil in a life preparing for the second advent. Human efforts toward sinlessness and purity only result in strengthening the conviction that "nothing good dwells within me." Such experience results in the discouraging conclusion that "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it."

No man can—in his own strength! Everyone needs to discover this.

But there is an answer. Paul found it. When he cried, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" he supplied his own reply, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" And Jesus Christ is the answer today. Help can be supplied to every man by the Saviour, our great High Priest, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16, R.S.V.

Something very specific happens to a life at the moment it is committed and

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yielded to Jesus Christ. A man tells God in prayer, "I know that no good thing dwells in me; I need help; I need to be changed from what I am to what I so much desire to be," and he finds an age-old miracle taking place in his life. No need to wait until we are "good enough." Our willingness is all Christ asks, and from that point on He provides the enabling power. Such a miracle was promised long ago in the Scriptures: "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself." 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18, R.S.V. No man can possibly be ready for the coming of the Lord in whom this miraculous experience has not taken place.

The Bible's promise of a changed life to every humble believer in Christ never ceases to thrill me. Men and women who for years have wanted to be different discover the transforming, enabling power of a new experience when they dedicate their energies fully to the Saviour. This experience of a changed life is real—so real, in fact, that Jesus compared it to being "born again."

He told Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3, R.S.V. Preparation for the second coming of Jesus must necessarily begin with the life-changing conversion experience through which human lives are transformed.

On a stormy January day in 1850, a fifteen-year-old English lad started out for his regular place of weekly worship. But before he arrived, a storm came up, and to avoid it he turned into the Primitive Methodist Chapel on Artillery Street in London. The regular preacher did not appear, and a man, to this day unknown, stepped into the pulpit and took his place. Perhaps the best description of what then happened is that told by the young man himself in a sermon a few years later: "Six years ago today, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, but had yet by divine grace been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery. Seeking rest and finding none, I stepped within the house of God and sat there afraid to look upward lest I should be

utterly cut off and lest His fierce wrath should consume me. The minister arose in his pulpit, and, as I have done this morning, read this text, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.' Isaiah 45:22. I looked at that moment. The grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the selfsame instant, and now I think I can say with truth:

"'E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.'"

—William Cowper.

The lad who had that conversion experience was Charles H. Spurgeon. And God used him in a most mighty way to bring the realities of conversion to thousands who heard him preach during his long and fruitful ministry. That life-changing experience can come to anyone who yields his will to Jesus Christ.

Only a truly converted man can be fully prepared for the second advent of Jesus; others would not even desire to begin. While repentance from sin and conversion of life by the Lord Jesus is the initial step in preparation, it is followed quickly by the putting away of all known sin from one's life. And as a converted individual walks and talks with Jesus Christ day by day, he finally develops a little of the image of the Divine in his own soul. Those who come in contact with him can see that he has been with Jesus.

The Scriptures contain some rather pointed warnings for all of us in these last days. One tells of the danger of thinking that we have plenty of time to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Here is how Jesus expressed it: "But if that . . . servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." Matthew 24:48-51, R.S.V.

It is dangerous to think that we can live as we choose and then prepare for the coming of the Lord at the last minute. Such logic falls apart with the realization that the Master will come at a time when He is not expected and will punish the wrongdoing of men who should have known better. There is no time to delay in getting ready for

the coming of the Lord. We ought to be ready and to stay ready constantly.

The Scriptures contain further warnings against attitudes and practices that fully absorb time and attention to the exclusion of spiritual values. Comparing our day to the antediluvian world, Jesus prophesied, "As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man." Matthew 24:37-39, R.S.V.

Satan will do everything in his power to blind us to the need of preparing to meet Jesus. "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God." 2 Corinthians 4:4, R.S.V. It has always been so. Satan will do all he can to make the doctrine of Christ's soon coming appear silly and unreasonable. And his schemes to this end have worked on most of the world's population. But may it never be so with us! May we see the seriousness of the times in which we live and the nearness of the coming of the Lord and prepare for it.

A missionary had worked with an old Indian chief, telling him about the Saviour who loved him and died for him. After thoroughly considering the claims of Jesus Christ upon his life, he stated, "The Jesus road is good, but I have followed the old Indian road all my life, and I will follow it to the end." But a year later he was seriously ill, and it was felt that he was not going to live. Sensing the seriousness of his condition, he called for the missionary to come to him and then asked, "Can I turn to the Jesus road now? My road stops here. It has no path through the valley."

That is the wonderful part about the "Jesus road." Proceeding straight through the valley of the shadow, it leads on to eternal life. When the whole future looks dark, there is light and life available through Jesus Christ.

Let us prepare for His coming now. Let us put away all sin from our lives, cleaning "the house" from top to bottom. Let us reflect His image as we put away all sin. Let us walk day by day on the "Jesus road." It is a happy road which has no end. END

Jesus is Lord

By John M. Fowler

Encounter No. 178

What is the "day of the Lord"?

Who are the modern gods that compete for your allegiance?

What is meant by the words "Jesus is Lord"?

ALONE he stands in the center of the arena.

A thousand eyes mark him as the object of their next game. A thousand voices shriek in drunken madness: "Away with the Christian. Loose a lion on him."

"The wild beast sports have been brought to a close," answers an official. "Then burn him alive."

But the chief officer regards himself to be a reasonable man. He is touched by the gentleness of this eighty-six-year-old Christian. Besides, this man is not like others. He is not a criminal. He is quiet, refined, soft-spoken, and the very ideal of moral excellence.

The officer wonders if he can't possibly save this man from becoming a human torch.

But the mob is restless. They want their show. They want the smell of burning flesh. They want to see a Christian go up in smoke.

The officer pleads with the old man: "Say 'Lord Caesar,' and you will be free."

Back comes the dignified, but firm, answer: "For eighty-six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

"Then, at least, swear by Caesar's genius."

"If you imagine that I will swear by Caesar's genius, as you put it, pretending not to know who I am, I will tell you plainly, I am a Christian."

"Christian! Ha, ha! Away with the atheist. On to the pyre," scream the maddened crowd.

The pyre is set. The man refuses to be tied—he believes his Lord will give him willpower to stay on the pyre. At last, the fire. The laughter of the crowd. The agony of an old man. The "mercy" plunge of a Roman dagger into the burning body.

Another Christian gone. Another martyr.

The time: A.D. 156. The place: City of Smyrna. The man: Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. The crime: His faith that Jesus is Lord.

The Meaning

Jesus is Lord. Sounds simple. Christians sing it often. They use it in their prayers—if they pray at all. And it has come down to us as another religious cliché.

But to the early Christians, the phrase "Jesus is Lord" meant everything. To them Jesus was not one solution among many. He was the Solver. He was not one branch of the way, one aspect of the truth, or one expression of life—He *was* the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He was *all* or not at all. There was no vagueness about His Lordship. "For there is none other

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name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

No wonder the Apostle Paul placed the confession "Jesus is Lord" in the center of one's salvation experience: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9, R.S.V.

The Greek for "Lord" is *kurios*, which translates the Hebrew *adonai*, one of the Old Testament names for the Jehovah-God. Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, an authority in the Old Testament, no doubt used the word *kurios* under inspiration to impress upon the Christian church the divinity, authority, and power of Christ. To Paul, Jesus was not simply an admirable figure in history, but God, who took upon Himself the likeness of man to save us from sin. (See Philippians 2:5-8.) Jesus is "the head of all rule and authority." (Colossians 2:10, R.S.V.) Without Him nothing exists. To Him all the visible and invisible powers of creation submit, so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." (Philippians 2:10, 11, R.S.V.)

Thus the New Testament presents Jesus as "Lord of lords, and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14), and the Saviour of the world. Therefore when I as a Christian confess that Jesus is Lord, I accept:

- That Jesus is the undisputed owner and possessor of my life.
- That He has absolute authority over my thoughts, actions, and possessions, and that I am merely His servant and steward.
- That I surrender myself to Him as my Sovereign, and to Him I owe my constant homage, allegiance, and loyalty.
- That He is the Lord of all, and that I am called upon to tell the world about Him.

The Consequence

Such is the overwhelming concept of the Lordship of Jesus. The Word of God confronts us with the Lord "who gave himself for us" (Titus 2:14) and who demands everything from us—loyalty, worship, allegiance, service, and all. (See Romans 12:1-3.) In this is no room for reservation; in this, no excuse for hesitation.

No one can claim to be a Christian

without subjecting himself totally to the Lordship of Jesus. No Christian can console himself by simply repeating "Lord" in prayer or song, without letting himself be captured by the burning urgency of this great confession, "Jesus is Lord."

For the apostles and the early church to make such a confession meant burning, crucifixion, and death. "What harm is there in saying, 'Caesar is Lord?'" the Roman proconsul asked Polycarp. But the Christian would rather die than say it. After all, what significance is there in confessing that Jesus is Lord if there is another lord? Jesus is *the*

sticks and "carrots" were used to bend the head and break the will of the early Christian believers. But those valiant ones, like Polycarp, were not frightened by the sticks or enamored by the carrots. To them the Lord Jesus meant everything. They chose to die rather than to betray their Master. To them the name of Christ was dearer than all that the Roman Empire could offer—indeed, dearer than life itself.

Caesar or Christ?

The Choice

This choice—Caesar or Christ—is the choice that ever confronts man. It confronted Polycarp. It confronts me. It confronts Mr. Jones next door. Insist that Christ is Lord, and you divide the world, you divide the nation, and you divide the church. The reason is not far to seek: Jesus is *the* Lord. Absolutely! The Apostle Paul says, "There are many 'gods' and many 'lords'—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6, R.S.V.

There are many gods, many lords. How true of our times! But some may ask, "What are these gods and lords that a modern Christian is confronted with?" Our answer need not concern itself with Hinduism—that religion which has so many idols that if we were to give one idol to each American man, woman, and child, plenty would be left over. Nor need we look to Islam or Buddhism or any other religious system. We need not even be concerned with the idolatry of Marxism, at whose shrine a third of the world pays obeisance. The false gods of these systems are too obvious for the Christian to succumb to.

What, then, are these modern gods and lords that compete for the Christian's allegiance? We need not go far to find them. We encounter them every day in every home on every street of every town.

Take, for example, Lord Sex. If the Victorians pretended that sex did not exist, our society pretends that *nothing else* exists. Not only is it our pretension but also our proclamation. Our society is so obsessed with sex that many a nice girl will discuss intimate sexual details with any man, and in the process both will feel that they are learned, enlightened, and mature. Our business is so preoccupied with the glamour of

PRAYER CIRCLE

"Pray for one another," wrote the Apostle James, "that you may be healed." (James 5:16, R.S.V.) The privilege of prayer is one of God's best gifts, not that He isn't already willing to give us much more than we deserve, but He is waiting and longing for us to just ask Him.

We need your prayers, and you need ours. Pray for us, and we will pray for you. Send your prayer requests to THESE TIMES Prayer Circle, Box 59, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

Lord. Not anyone else. Not Caesar. That's the decisive point.

The mighty Roman Empire used all its pomp and power to enforce the lordship of Caesar against the Lordship of Jesus. Emperor worship was the order of the day. Every head must bend in obeisance to the genius, or spirit, of Caesar, whose authority was visible and tangible: people lived or died at his whim and will. Were not Paul and his followers accused in Acts 17:7 of doing "contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus"?

The threat of the sword, the cruelty of the Roman guards, the curse of the cross, the prospect of being turned into a human torch to light the Roman arena, the pomp and the glory of the empire, the lure of position, citizenship, and status—these and many other



"For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'—yet for us there is one God, the Father, . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6, R.S.V.

sex that the female body has become the chief sales god that rules from New York's Madison Avenue to Calcutta's New Market to sell anything from toothpaste to jumbo-jet travel.

"Male and female created he them," says the Word of God about the origin of sex, and adds, "Behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:27, 31.) But what has man done with the goodness and beauty of God's creation? He has lifted sex out of the marital unity of the male and the female and turned it into a twentieth-century toy to be played with without reference to a moral law—in the name of liberation. He has lifted sex out of the privacy of conjugal love and has made it an object to be viewed in public theaters or on front covers of magazines—in the name of art. He has removed sex from the spiritual arena and placed it on a psychological couch—in the name of research.

In the process, sex has become a goddess of our time—whether it is in the form of pornography, cinema, theater, or premarital and extramarital adventures. It is a goddess at whose shrine millions around the world prostrate themselves.

Alarming! More so when we consider that among the worshipers of this goddess are some churchmen. What else can one conclude when immorality is presented and justified by Christian leaders from pulpits and theological schools in the name of new morality or situational ethics? Listen to one such theologian: "We cannot dogmatize. Any sexual act (hetero-, homo-, auto-) engaged in, in or out of marriage, will sometimes be good and sometimes be bad, depending on the situation. . . . The new morality would . . . say . . . that the right of any sexual act is to be determined by responsible calculation in the situation, not by prefabricated calculations."—Joseph Fletcher, quoted in *The Christian Century*, March 31, 1965.

On what Biblical authority can such views be expressed when the Bible proclaims, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter"? Isaiah 5:20.

Some of our theologians seem so preoccupied with the perversions of the age that they bend backward to accommodate the worldliness of our times. Instead of being guardians of God's standard, they have become accomplices in

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Encounter No. 17

Now It's Your Turn

We would like to hear from you. Answer the following questions to check your understanding of this subject.

Fill in the blanks to the following statements:

1. The New Testament presents Jesus as "_____ of lords, and _____ of kings." (Revelation 17:14.)
2. In the time of Hosea God's people were destroyed for their lack of _____. (Hosea 4:6.)
3. The _____ of God's Ten Commandments warns, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3.)

4. God's Word condemns immorality because of the three following reasons:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Circle the "T" before the statement if it is true, the "F" if it is false:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 5. Jesus is the Lord of all men, whether they acknowledge Him as such or not. |
| T | F | 6. When a person recognizes Jesus as Lord, he accepts the responsibility of telling others about Him. |

We will be happy to check your answers and to answer any questions this article may have raised in your mind. Our address: Encounter, Box 59, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

I would like to begin a systematic study of similar Bible topics. Please enroll me in your FREE, easy-to-follow Bible Correspondence Course.

NAME _____

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STATE _____ ZIP _____

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the watering down of standards.

But let us never forget that right is right even if nobody is right, and wrong is wrong even if everybody is wrong. This is especially so with regard to moral issues. The Word of God condemns immorality on three significant counts: (1) It is a sin against the law of God. (2) It is a sin against another fellow being. (3) It is a sin against one's own body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (See Exodus 20:14, 17; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.)

Next in the pantheon of modern gods comes Lord Science. Reason and science continually attempt to take the place of prayer and faith in the life of many. The dazzling achievements of science have so mesmerized our age and its spirit that we elbow God out from the center of human consciousness. Sickness no longer calls for prayer but a call to the doctor. Stars no longer evoke the praise of the Almighty but appear as objects for some future space mission.

True enough, science has increased our leisure, our standards of living, our means of enjoyment—but can it do anything to bring about inner rest?

True enough, science has alleviated the pangs of pain and suffering, and made long life possible—but can it do anything for us in the area of our most desperate need?

True enough, science has scaled the heights of outer space—but can it do anything to solve the problems of inner space?

True enough, science has transplanted the heart of one into the body of another—but can it transform the evil heart into a good one?

Cries the Word: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6)—not the knowledge the world abounds in, but the knowledge of a living God.

Then we have a third god—Lord Mammon. Mammon in the Bible stands for moneymaking—the spirit of unbridled acquisitiveness and worldly ambition. There is nothing wrong with money, just as there's nothing wrong with sex or science. Indeed, money can be a great blessing. But when money and materialism become an obsession and steal away the space meant for the Lord Jesus, then beware. "The love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10.

How often we find ourselves more concerned about refrigerators than re-

finement, about cars than characters, about television than godly vision! Is eating our cake more important than giving a crumb to a hungry little one? Is changing our bathroom fixtures more urgent than clothing a naked little child across the street, across the country, or on the other side of the world?

You see, Lord Money makes our eyes shortsighted and our vision self-centered. But Lord Jesus gives us the whole wide world. Under His Lordship every man becomes our neighbor, every need our need.

And then, there are other lords of modern man: pleasure, sports, fashion, hobbies, the campus gods of LSD and marijuana, and many more.

The Apostle Paul was right. There are many gods and many lords. These at best can produce what G. K. Chesterton called "cures that don't cure, blessings that don't bless, and solutions that don't solve." These gods must fail. Like Caesar, they and their worshipers will perish. "Idolaters . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 21:8.

This is why the first of the commandments of God warns, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3.

Your Choice

Jesus is Lord—the Lord of all. He is the Lord of President Nixon and of Prime Minister Gandhi of India. He is the Lord of the American people, and He is the Lord of the Russians—*whether they acknowledge Him or not.*

But there comes a day—the day of reckoning, "the day of the Lord" (Jeremiah 46:10)—in which the Lord will demand an account from all His creatures. Every knee will then bow to and every tongue confess the Lordship of Jesus. But too late!

Only those who have subjected themselves to the Lordship of Jesus here and now, only those who have believed in Him and accepted His saving grace here and now, will hear those blessed words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34.

But those who have here and now chosen other gods and other lords will hear the fateful words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Verse 41.

The choice is still yours. Is Jesus your Lord? Now? END



WE PASS the little shop on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. But on Saturday we find it—*closed!*

The time—nearly two thousand years ago. The place—the humble little village of Nazareth. It is midweek as we make our way down the narrow cobblestone street, past the little shops with their open fronts. We see the workmen plying their trades as we pass one shop after another. There is a leisurely atmosphere about it all.

And then we come to a shop that is different. The front is neatly white-washed, and the street has been swept. We enter and find a kindly, stalwart man plying the carpenter's trade, and by his side a young assistant perhaps twenty-one years of age. The young man is planing a piece of wood, making it true, making it straight. He rests a moment and wipes His brow. As He turns, we see that He has the bearing of a prince, of a king. For He is none other than the Prince of heaven, King Jesus, come to cast His lot with the toilers and the poor, to live among men and die in their place.

We hurry on. But we come back again, for we are fascinated by the little shop. We come back on Thursday. We come back on Friday. We come back on Saturday. But on Saturday the shop is closed. The tools have been

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a day to remember

By George E. Vandeman

carefully put away. The shavings have been gathered up from the floor. All is quiet.

We notice that the people are all walking toward a conspicuous building in the center of the village. We follow them and find our seats in the rear of a well-filled auditorium. We wait a moment. Then imagine our surprise as we see the carpenter's Son make His way into the pulpit, open the scroll, and begin to read. The record says of a day some years later: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Luke 4:16.

What are we watching? A man dutifully conforming to the customs of his day—customs acceptable for his generation but not for ours? Or are we watching the divine Example after whose life every Christian desires to pattern his own?

Are we watching a young Jewish carpenter thoughtlessly following the traditions of his time? Or are we watching a Creator resting on the day He Himself had set aside for man?

Are we watching a legalist overcareful about the detail of a religious code? Or are we watching a divine Lawgiver spontaneously, naturally living out the principles of His own constitution?

Are we watching a zealot committed to an unpopular cause? Or are we

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watching the incarnate God about to become a Sacrifice for all men?

What is the truth about what He did the day He closed His shop? What is the truth about the Sabbath? What is the truth about the day God says to remember?

We have read that Jesus, near the beginning of His ministry, observed the Sabbath. We have read that it was His custom. But what about the later years? Did He change? What did persecution do to His standards? Did His example remain clear and consistent?

Now, it is true that Jesus said little about the Sabbath. There was no reason for discussion. The identity of the day of rest was never questioned. The only controversy arose over *the way* He kept it. He was continually healing the sick during its sacred hours—and shocking the religious leaders of His day in the process. They were utterly oblivious, willingly so, to the fact that He who stood before them was He who had made the Sabbath, that He was giving them a divine demonstration of how it should be kept.

No wonder He claimed to be “Lord even of the sabbath day.” (Matthew 12:8.) For, you see, He had made it. No wonder He spoke of it, through Isaiah, as “my holy day.” (Isaiah 58:13.) No wonder John the revelator called it “the Lord’s day.” (Revelation 1:10.) It makes all the difference when we see Him as Creator.

Sometimes we can best discover the strength of a man’s convictions by watching His followers. Shall we, then, move down to the close of Christ’s ministry, to that tragic passion weekend, and watch His associates as they came up to the sunset hour, the beginning of the Sabbath, on that dark Friday? What will they do now? They may have been careful about the Sabbath in the past. But what will they do now—in the hour of the world’s greatest emergency?

Their hopes had been bitterly blasted that day. Their thoughts were those of the disciples who two days later walked to Emmaus: “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.” Luke 24:21.

They had trusted. Now He was dead. No words can describe the depths of their despondency. And I need not tell you that despondent people are often careless people. If ever they were tempted to let down the bars, it would be now.

More than that, it must have seemed

a time for rationalizing. No matter how careful they were accustomed to be about the edges of the Sabbath, it would be easy to reason that caring for the body of their Lord would be permissible. He Himself had said that “it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.” (Matthew 12:12.)

I say, if there was anything in the example of Jesus that would encourage carelessness about the observance of the Sabbath, anything that would lead them to rationalize around its claims just this once, we shall surely detect it now in the attitude of His closest friends. But listen.

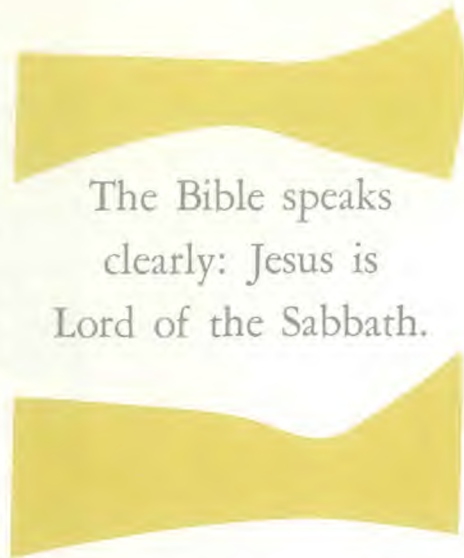
“This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.” Luke 23:52 to 24:1.

No. In the hour of greatest crisis these first vital Christians laid aside their work of love and rested “according to the commandment.” If Jesus had any reservation about the importance of the Sabbath, He had utterly failed to communicate it to those who knew Him best. But then, now that we know He is the Creator, now that we know He made it, are we surprised?

At this point you may be saying, “How can we know which is the seventh day of Bible times?”

I once asked that question of an audience. And I must have stopped to catch my breath or something. I had just asked, “How can we know that the Saturday of today is the seventh day of Christ’s time?” And just as I paused, someone in the heart of the audience exclaimed so that all could hear, “That’s what I want to know!”

You may be surprised to notice that the verses we have just read answer that question. There was no confusion in Christ’s time about which day was the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Luke says clearly that it came in between the day Jesus was crucified



The Bible speaks
clearly: Jesus is
Lord of the Sabbath.

and the day He was resurrected.

There is nothing better established in religious circles than that Jesus was crucified on the day we now call Friday, and that He was resurrected on the day we now call Sunday. And, of course, Saturday is the day between. It is as simple as that!

What about lost time? Any astronomer will tell you that no time has been lost between Christ’s time and ours, that no calendar change has disrupted the continuity of the week. Saturday is still the seventh day. There need be no confusion.

I believe you would be interested in a statement from the historian Dio Cassius on this point. In his *History of Rome*—Book 37, chapter 16—he speaks about how Pompey captured Jerusalem sixty-three years before Christ:

“Most of the city, to be sure, he took without any trouble, as he was received by the party of Hyrcanus; but the temple itself, which the other party had occupied, he captured only with difficulty. For it was on high ground and was fortified by a wall of its own, and if they had continued defending it on all days alike, he could not have got possession of it. As it was, they made an exception of what are called the days of Saturn, and by doing no work at all on those days afforded the Romans an opportunity in this interval to batter down the wall.”—*Dio’s Roman History* (Loeb Classical Library), Vol. 3, pp. 125, 127.

Isn’t that clear? Sixty-three years before Christ the Jews were keeping the “days of Saturn.” Can this be other than our Saturday?

Now, modern man, Christian or not, is pretty well convinced that he needs one day of rest in seven. The clatter

and clash of our struggle to exist must have an interruption. We must periodically come to a halt—or break. One or the other. From a purely physical standpoint the Sabbath is a necessity. Six days we wrestle with the world and wring out of it an existence. Six days is all we can take. Some scientists have concluded that resting every seventh day is a natural interruption that meets a need instilled in the body.

Yes. God made man. And then He made the Sabbath—for man. "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Mark 2:27.

Is it not passing strange that some are willing to consign such a blessing to the Jews—as if they alone among mankind were eligible for, or in need of, its benefits? "The sabbath was made for man."

I was interested to learn that during the French Revolution, lawmakers in Paris discarded the seven-day week and instituted instead a ten-day cycle. But their arrangement did not fit the needs of man or beast. It seemed even the horses in the streets broke down under this new regime. Neither could the people stand it. One writer was so impressed that he concluded Moses was inspired by some supernatural revelation to adopt the week of seven days. "In fact," he wrote, "it would be as easy to believe that Moses came upon this great principle of six days of labor and one of rest by chance as it would to believe that the *Iliad* was written by a hog scribbling with his snout."

Evidently man needs one day of rest in seven. But does it have to be a particular day?

Shall we answer that question by going back to the early splendor of our world, to the day Christ made the Sabbath:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Genesis 2:1-3.

God has given us a day to remember. It is to remind us of the day the stars sang, the day the foundations of the world were laid, the day man emerged a masterpiece from his Creator's hand, the day it was all finished—a perfect creation.

Six days were involved in all this.

But the seventh day God rested. The seventh day God blessed. The seventh day God set apart for a holy use.

Tell me. Can any other day be so satisfactory a memorial as the day on which God Himself rested? Can we get a blessing out of a day God never blessed? Can we keep holy a day that was never made holy?

God has placed His presence in the Sabbath in a special way. He asks me to meet Him on Friday evening as the sun is setting and spend twenty-four meaningful hours with Him. Read Leviticus 23:32 and Mark 1:32. Friday evening at sunset. But I am too busy. It is more convenient to meet Him on Monday. Tell me. Will I find Him there?

Now, I would not for a moment suggest that God is not available to His children at any time, at any hour. I merely say that we shall never get a Sabbath blessing out of a day that was never made the Sabbath.

We move down through the centuries to Sinai. We find on those time-worn tables of stone familiar words:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11.

Here again God is very specific. "The seventh day is the sabbath." Why? "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth."

Did you notice how similar are the words of Genesis and the words of the commandment? The Sabbath and creation are inseparably tied—the one a reminder of the other.

Have you ever heard anyone say that the Sabbath is controversial? It is, friend. It is. Because this generation would rather believe in the chance and chaos of billions of years than in the six days of creation presided over by a loving God. The Lord has a controversy with those who dispute His creatorship. And that's why the Sabbath becomes so important.

If you have read the Bible from cover to cover, you may have noticed that when God wishes to prove that

He is God, He refers to the fact that He is the Creator. His creatorship is His right to be God. No wonder the Sabbath is important. It reminds us of the Creator. And the fact that He is the Creator proves that He is the true God.

As we pause at Sinai, our eyes fixed upon those tables inscribed by the finger of God, will one day in seven do?

May I tell you a personal story? My father, when he passed away, had been a minister for nearly forty years. Before entering the ministry he had been in business in the city of Denver. He was a fine Christian, a Methodist leader of lay groups.

One day out on the shipping platform, one of the workmen had some minor accident—perhaps hit his finger—and began to swear. My father felt some responsibility, and he walked over, put his arm around him, and said, "You know, we ought to be a little more careful. After all, that's one of God's commandments." The man answered, "Oh, yes. Thanks for checking me up. We Christians do get careless sometimes. I surely appreciate your saying what you did."

My father started back through the passageway to his office, patting himself on the back that he had helped somebody keep one of the commandments. But all at once a voice spoke to him, "But, Vandeman, you're breaking the fourth!" And it broke his heart.

You see, this truth about the Sabbath had come to my father's attention. For some months he had been battling with conflicting loyalties, trying to make up his mind. He knew what the Word of God said. But there were church ties, his friends, his work. And now he had tried to help somebody else keep the commandments, when he himself was breaking one of them.

He hurried back to his office and dropped to his knees and confessed his sin before God. Shortly thereafter he sold his business and went off to renew his training along ministerial lines, to become a power in the pulpit for many years.

And now we come to Calvary. We see those devoted friends of Jesus, in the very shadow of the world's great crisis, resting according to the commandment. We see the world's Redeemer resting in the tomb through the sacred hours. He who once rested from the finished work of creation now rests from the finished work of redemption.

Will one day in seven do? As we
(Continued on page 32)

frank answers

By Frank B. Holbrook

remember the sabbath day

The writer of our "Frank Answers" column has rounded up the questions that seem most perplexing regarding the day of worship. Here are his thoughtful answers.

Why do most Christians go to church on Sunday?

For many it is merely a matter of custom. Sunday provides a convenient time to strengthen spiritual values since society in general pauses in its pursuit of business for a leisurely weekend. In recent times some Christians have even begun attending services on Saturday night in order to have Sunday free for their personal activities. Also there are doubtless many genuine Christians who sincerely worship God on Sunday because Jesus Christ arose from the grave on that day.

Since it is a Biblical fact that Christ was resurrected on Sunday, isn't this sufficient reason for our keeping Sunday—to honor His resurrection?

No more than we should observe Friday—the day of His death for our sins. This is a Biblical fact, too!

It must not be forgotten that the religion of Jesus Christ is a matter of God's creation and not of man's improvisation.

Our Lord designed that His *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection* should be symbolically commemorated by every believer in the rite of *baptism*. This important ordinance, along with the Communion service, serves to keep these central facts of the gospel ever fresh in the memories of Christians. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 6:3-6.)

Didn't the early Christians observe Sunday? Doesn't the New Testament somewhere speak of Christians worshipping on Sunday?

The New Testament does indeed refer to Sunday (designated "the first day of

the week") eight times. But although the books and letters that make up the New Testament Canon were written a number of years after Christ's resurrection and ascension, they attribute no sacredness to that day, nor do they refer to any divine command repudiating the ancient Sabbath of the Ten Commandments, or substituting Sunday in its place. Six of the passages simply refer to the first day of the week in connection with the resurrection of our Lord. (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1, 2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19.)

The other two passages are related to the Apostle Paul and his missionary activities. In one of these he asks the Christians of Corinth to raise a special gift of money for the Christians in Jerusalem. They are requested to lay some funds aside each Sunday as they checked out their accounts from the previous week's business and saw how they had prospered. Thus their gift of love would be made up by the time the apostle arrived—on his way to Jerusalem. (See 1 Corinthians 16:1-5; Romans 15:25-27.) Thus it is evident that in the apostle's mind the first day of the week was quite ordinary.

The remaining passage records a farewell meeting which the apostle held in Troas with fellow Christians. (Acts 20:7-12.) This meeting was held on "the first day of the week." It was, however, a night meeting, and the apostle preached until midnight, for he never expected to see his dear friends again. (Compare Acts 20:38.) Even after such a long service, the apostle continued to talk informally with his friends "till break of day." Obviously this passage does not picture an apostolic custom of Sunday observance.

And, further, it must be remembered that the simple holding of a service on a particular day, even the celebrating of the Lord's Supper, does not render a day holy. Only a command of God, not human practice, can hallow a particular day to God.

Since Biblical time is marked from sunset to sunset, some commentators believe that this meeting in Troas on "the first day of the week" was actually held on a Saturday night. The New English Bible reads: "On the Saturday night, in our assembly for the breaking of bread, Paul, who was to leave next day, addressed them, and went on speaking until midnight." Acts 20:7.*

Do you mean that the early Christians worshiped on Saturday?

Yes, they did. Although Jewish traditional law permitted the necessary care for the dead on the Sabbath, such as the washing and the anointing of the body (see *Shabbath*, 23.5 of the *Mishna*, Herbert Danby translation, p. 120), yet the record is that the followers of Jesus after partially caring for His body, placed it in the tomb and "returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment." (Luke 23:56.)

Jesus Himself saw no change in the obligation of the Sabbath. When He foretold the downfall of Jerusalem and the nation—an event which occurred in A.D. 70, nearly forty years after His ascension—He advised the disciples, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." Matthew 24:20. This was not because the gates of the city would be locked as some have assumed, for Jesus

warned that whether they were in the city, in the province of Judea, or in the field when the moment came to flee, they were not to hesitate to leave the area immediately. Rather, they were to pray that the Sabbath, designed for their spiritual uplift, might not have to be turned into a day of fear and flight.

Did Christ ever command mankind to keep the seventh-day Sabbath?

As Creator—yes! One of the significant insights of the New Testament is that Christ was the active agent in the Godhead at creation. “The world was made by him [Jesus Christ]” is the consistent assertion. (See John 1:1-3, 10, 14; Colossians 1:13, 16; Hebrews 1:1, 2.) Hence, *it was God the Son who created the Sabbath, and appointed the seventh day for man’s spiritual refreshment and worship at creation.*

By three definite acts Christ the Creator designated the seventh day as holy time. (a) He Himself “rested on the seventh day from all his work,” and (b) “blessed the seventh day,” and (c) “sanctified it.” (Genesis 2:2, 3.)

Fully conscious of the origin and

purpose of the Sabbath, our Lord in His humanity (several thousand years later) authoritatively declared to the caviling Pharisees, “*The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.*” Mark 2: 27, 28.

Furthermore, enshrined in the heart of the moral law of the Ten Commandments is Heaven’s direct command to observe the seventh-day Sabbath because it is linked with creation. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: *for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*” Exodus 20:8-11. Thus it is evident that the seventh-day Sabbath was originated by the Christ of the creation.

Doesn’t the New Testament state that Jesus deliberately “broke” the Sabbath (see John 5:18), thereby indicating that Christians need not keep the day?

In the eyes of those who practiced rabbinical Judaism, yes; but from the Biblical viewpoint, no. The rabbis had so loaded the Sabbath with restrictions of various kinds that it was a burden to observe the day. The Gospels record at least seven different incidents in which Jesus, His disciples, or the people with whom He was working were accused of “breaking” the Sabbath. (See Matthew 12; Mark 2; 3; Luke 13; 14; John 5; 7; 9.)

In each of these incidents our Lord never once challenged the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath. Rather, *He swept away the senseless restrictions of the rabbis which had made it a curse of bondage, and showed men the true manner and spirit of Sabbath observance.* When Christ openly violated the rabbinical traditions, He was accused of breaking the Sabbath. But it was merely the man-made restrictions that Christ broke. It was His personal “custom” or habit to observe the Sabbath (Luke 4:16), and He could say near the close of His life with all truthfulness, “I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” John 15:10.

If the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Scriptures and of the early Christians in the times of the apostles, how is it that most Christians observe Sunday today and have done so for centuries?

The change of the Sabbath did not occur in Bible times, neither was it authorized by God. The introduction of Sunday sacredness into the stream of Christian thought and custom came along with other non-Scriptural practices such as the veneration of saints and angels, the use of images, prayers for the dead, etc., as Christianity began to apostatize and to veer away from the Scriptures.

There was naturally a feeling among Christians to highly regard the resurrection of Christ, and the historical records indicate that they early began to celebrate *annually* the death and resurrection of Christ. In the eastern part of the Roman Empire Christians celebrated these events at the time of the Jewish Passover, which might fall on any day of the week. But in Rome the insistence was that the resurrection must always be celebrated on a Sunday. (See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. II, p. 209 ff. on the Easter controversies.)

The example and influence of Rome in the Easter observance (for the Roman manner became the general custom), together with the increased anti-Semitic feeling that developed in the empire due to the Jewish revolts of A.D. 70 and A.D. 135, probably led to a *weekly* observance of Sunday in some places, such as Rome and Alexandria—the two centers which supply us the earliest record of weekly Sunday observance. (See Justin Martyr, *Apology* I, ch. 67 [*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, p. 186]; *Epistle of Barnabas*, ch. 15 [*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, p. 147].) The example of these centers doubtless spread to other Christian congregations.

It would appear that for some time *both* the ancient Sabbath and the Sunday were observed side by side by most Christians. The third- or fourth-century document known as the *Apostolic Constitutions* taught Christians to “keep the Sabbath [Saturday], and the Lord’s day [Sunday] festival; because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection.” Again it enjoins, “Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath-day and the Lord’s day let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety.”

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(Apostolic Constitutions, Bk. VII, Sec. XXIII and Bk. VIII, Sec. XXXIII [Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII, pp. 469, 495].) It is also interesting to note that while both days were being regarded, the Latin church in the West required Christians to fast on the seventh-day Sabbath. (See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. II, p. 205.)

Even in the fifth century A.D. most Christians in the Roman Empire observed the Sabbath of the commandment, although many had a regard also for Sunday. Only in Rome and in Alexandria was the seventh-day Sabbath displaced. The fifth-century historian Socrates wrote, "For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries [the Lord's Supper] on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this."—Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, V. 22 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. II, p. 132.

While Socrates noted the general custom of Christians to still observe the seventh-day Sabbath, yet in the fourth century strong efforts were being made to supplant the Sabbath with Sunday. Eusebius, church historian and admirer of Constantine the Great, openly stated, "All things whatever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's day, as more appropriately belonging to it, because it has a precedence, and is first in rank, and more honourable than the Jewish Sabbath."—*Commentary on Psalm 92*. (Italics supplied.) The earliest extant church action in behalf of Sunday came in the Council of Nicea (fourth century). Canon 29 of this council stipulated, "Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ."—Hefele, *A History of the Church Councils*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

It can be seen from this brief historical sketch that Rome and Alexandria early fostered the observance of Sunday. With the rise of the church of Rome in power and prominence in Christendom, also came the prevailing practice of Sunday observance under

her promotion and influence. In view of the exaltation of Sunday sacredness by the bishops of Rome, the Roman Church can quite truthfully claim, "It was the Catholic Church which . . . has transferred this rest to the Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] church."—Mgr. Ségur, *Plain Talk About Protestantism of Today*, p. 225.



The Sabbath lies at the foundation of true worship, ever pointing man to his Creator.

Why did God institute the Sabbath?

Jesus declared that "the sabbath was made for man"—that is, for the sake of man. (Mark 2:27.) It was designed for man's blessing and spiritual uplift. The weekly Sabbath was intended to direct man's thoughts upward to his Creator and Sustainer. The Sabbath commemorates an event which Heaven desires never to be forgotten—the creation of this world by a personal God. It points man back to his origin from the hand of Deity. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11.

The Sabbath reminds man he is a creature and is dependent upon his Creator. As creatures we owe allegiance, loving obedience, and worship to the Creator because He made us and momentarily sustains our lives. Just so long as the fact of our creation remains, so long will the seventh-day Sabbath remain as its memorial. Thus the Sabbath can never be obliterated since it undergirds all true worship,

ever pointing man to his Creator.

The Sabbath not only points the worshiper to the Creator, but it also directs him to the Redeemer. Who can keep the Sabbath "holy" unless he himself is clean? Only as one accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, receiving forgiveness of sin and being covered by His righteousness, can he truly keep the Sabbath holy.

It is the same Christ who created the earth who also creates a new heart in the penitent sinner. (John 1:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17.) God has given the Sabbath as a sign of sanctification as well as of creation. "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Ezekiel 20:12. Thus the rest from the slavery and toil of sin which a Christian finds in Christ is meaningfully commemorated by the Sabbath, a memorial of the creative power of God.

Isn't the Sabbath Jewish, and haven't the laws of Judaism been nailed to the cross?

Is a doctrine automatically invalidated for Christians because it was taught and practiced by the nation of Israel? If so, then remember that all teachings of Scripture, even the Scriptures themselves, are Jewish; the Ten Commandments are Jewish; the new covenant is Jewish; the worship of the true God is Jewish, as are also all God's promises of the Holy City; the prophets and apostles, and even our Lord Jesus Christ are Jewish. (See Romans 3:1, 2; 9:4, 5; Hebrews 8:10; Revelation 21:10-12.) Indeed, the very plan of salvation is Jewish in a sense, for Jesus emphatically declared to the Samaritan woman, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." John 4:22.

The facts are that God deliberately chose Abraham and his descendants for the express purpose of preserving and spreading the knowledge of the true God. Planted at the crossroads of the ancient world, they were to be His witnesses. (Ezekiel 5:5; Zechariah 8:20-23.) It was God's intention that the Temple would be "an house of prayer for all people." (Isaiah 56:7.) It was expected that as Gentiles came to love the true God, they would also observe His Sabbath, thereby acknowledging His Lordship and sovereignty of their lives. (Isaiah 56:6.)

The truths of salvation and the moral law, the Ten Commandments which ex-

press man's duty both to God and to his fellowmen, are permanent and eternal. The ritual or ceremonial laws that served as types and shadows to teach Israel the gospel (Hebrews 10:1-3), naturally came to an end with the coming of the true Lamb of God and His atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 2:15).

With the failure of Israel, the will of God as expressed in the Ten Commandments, the truths of salvation, and the Scriptures became the heritage of Christianity, which is given the similar charge to carry the gospel to all the world. (Matthew 28:18-20.)

Aren't Christians supposed to be under grace and not the law? Isn't it legalism to keep the law by observing the Sabbath?

Legalism is the attempt to *earn* salvation by mere obedience to God's law. This no sinner can possibly do, and the Scriptures soundly condemn such an approach to salvation. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Romans 3:20. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Galatians 5:4. (Compare Galatians 2:16.)

Salvation can be neither earned nor merited. If we are ever to be saved, it will have to be through God's grace and mercy. Thus salvation can come only by divine grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation from sin and its power is a "gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8.)

But genuine salvation results in changed lives and loving obedience to the Saviour. The *fruit* of salvation is a new "delight" to obey the will of God as expressed in His law, the Ten Commandments. (Psalm 40:8.) "If ye love me," Jesus says, "keep my commandments." (John 14:15.) And the Apostle John adds, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. Sabbath-fellowshiping with God is not legalism to the true-hearted Christian. Rather, it is love's delightful response to a gracious Father who has united His child to Himself in an enduring bond of union.

I agree that the seventh day is the Sabbath according to the Ten Commandments, but won't God honor my sincerity if I faithfully keep Sunday?

Heaven does not condemn an individual because he ignorantly but sincerely believes and practices error. "If

ye were blind," Jesus says, "ye should have no sin." (John 9:41.) God regards such persons with pity and compassion, and "the times of this ignorance" He winks at. (Acts 17:30.)

But when the Holy Spirit guides that sincere and honest person to truth (John 16:13), and the will of God is clearly understood and acknowledged—then to refuse obedience is to sin. Our Lord solemnly declared, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." John 15:22, R.S.V.

In the final judgment men will not be condemned because they sincerely believed error, but because they would not believe truth, or because they have bypassed providentially provided opportunities to learn what is truth. Deliberate disobedience to divine decrees is always disastrous!

Saul, the first king of Israel, was rejected by God for his attempt to cover his disobedience to a divine command by offering sacrifices from the spoils of war. The prophet rebuked him: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22. A religious activity (good as it may seem to be) is no substitute with God for loving obedience!

I believe a Christian should live every day for God; hence, every day is holy for me and there is no need to keep a Sabbath.

You are entirely correct in that genuine Christian living is not a once-a-week affair. It is not a special dress or suit for certain state occasions. Rather, Christian principle and perspective are to pervade every aspect of daily life. The Apostle Paul stated it thus: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31.

But the Christian does not honor his heavenly Father if he merely substitutes religious activity for obedience to God's specific commands.

Jesus sadly stated in the Sermon on the Mount that there would be professing Christians, active in religious duties, who would be rejected because of their open disobedience to the known will of God.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord,

Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And *then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" Matthew 7:21-23.

Is the Sabbath relevant to youth and the modern way of life?

More so than ever! Our times are characterized by a lost sense of meaning. To many, life seems absurd and lacks coherence. Modern man lives in the shadow of the atom bomb and a nuclear holocaust. What is the plan and purpose of life, if at some tragic moment a crazed mind is able to push the button that will send civilization into flames? There seem to be no bright tomorrows to the "now" generation.

How important then the Sabbath rest in the go-go whirl! How important to put God back into the center of one's perspective! It is God, the Creator, who gives sense and coherence to human existence.

As one observes the Sabbath, he not only is refreshed physically, but more important, he is refreshed mentally and spiritually. The Sabbath reminds the worshiper of his true origins: he is not the product of blind chance, but a creature made in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26, 27.) He is not a lonely, independent atom, lost in a bleak world. The Sabbath tells him that he belongs to God, his Maker and constant Sustainer. Life is not aimless. His Father has a definite plan and design for him. His life may be marred by sin and shackled with debilitating habits, but by Christ's grace he may find forgiveness of sin, freedom from guilt, and a transformed life. The Sabbath may become an assurance to him that He who created the world by a word is able to create a new, meaningful, and useful life for him.

It was, and continues to be, God's purpose that the Sabbath should serve as a golden clasp to link the heart of His earthborn child with His. It is in the bond of this union—and this union alone—that genuine, satisfying happiness is found. Augustine once prayed, "Thou hast made us for Thee, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee."

END

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God's message for earth's last hour

Long ago the Book of Revelation predicted the explosive political and religious movements of our day.

By Roy Allan Anderson

IN HIS TRANSLATION of the New Testament, J. B. Phillips gives The Acts of the Apostles a new and appropriate title. He calls it The Young Church in Action. Luke was the recognized historian of the early church, and he was the one who wrote the gospel that bears his name. His account of the church in action ranks among the most thrilling literature in all the world. He tells us how the church began. In many ways it was an inauspicious beginning, just 120 praying men and women in an "upper room." But something happened to those assembled in that room, and the world has never been the same since. The Holy Spirit came down in power upon that small group, and they soon became a mighty force. They hastened out from that cloistered spot and gave such witness concerning Christ crucified, resurrected, and reigning in glory that nothing could stand before them.

The gospel "was preached to every creature which is under heaven," says the Apostle Paul. (Colossians 1:23.) And that happened in a single generation. Those were great days. To see

how the church began is wonderful, but it is more wonderful to learn how it will end. This is revealed not in the Book of *Acts* but in the Book of *Revelation*. What a fascinating book this is with its symbols, apocalyptic language, and powerful prophetic pictures!

Since those days when that numerically insignificant group met in the ancient city of Jerusalem and opened their hearts for the reception of the Holy Spirit, much has happened. The message of the gospel has gone forth in power, until today the story of God's love and sacrifice is being heard in every land of earth. Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." Heralds of the cross have borne a powerful witness through the centuries, and today as never before they are hastening from country to country proclaiming the message of salvation and deliverance from sin. They count their converts by thousands, by hundreds of thousands. Their victories are gained not by the power of the sword but by the power of love.

In Revelation 7:9 is revealed the



triumph of the church: "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," all conquerors over sin, and all standing before the throne of God. Every culture and color, every language and tribe, is represented there.

A FASCINATING BOOK

No book is more fascinating than this last book of the Bible. It draws back the veil, permitting us to witness the final events in human history. To one who has studied its prophecy the political confusion of our time is no surprise. Nor do we wonder as we see dictators struggling for control of the world. Are not these the very things we should expect? The ancient prophets have told with certainty what will happen just before our Lord returns. Not only the problems in the political world but also the happenings in the religious world are deeply significant. Witness the efforts of certain leaders to bring the whole religious world into some kind of unity, to establish a universal religion. And this is bound up with laudable efforts to promote worldwide peace. Yet while men are talking peace, we see tremendous preparations being made for war, even a nuclear war, which everyone knows would destroy civilization. It seems a hopeless outlook.

The prophet Isaiah describes it well when he speaks of darkness covering the earth and gross spiritual darkness enshrouding the people. Yet in spite of these conditions he says, "But the Lord shall arise upon thee [that is, upon the church], and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles [the nations who know not God] shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isaiah 60:2, 3. In a blackout of moral darkness God's people will reveal the glory of the Lord. Their lives will radiate integrity and purity, a contrast in every way from those around them.

Despite the spiritual apathy on the part of so many today, despite gross materialism seen everywhere, amid the clutter and clatter of frozen foods, pills, and plastics, there is deep down in the souls of men a heart hunger for God. This is true not only in lands which for millenniums have been in the grip of pagan religions, but it is equally true in so-called Christian communities. There is a death struggle today between truth and error, between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. This

is no make-believe war. It is real, it is desperate, it is decisive. In the prophecies of God's Word, particularly in the Book of Revelation, this struggle is portrayed. We find there the word *throne* used some fifty times. Thirteen times it refers to the throne of Satan and thirty-seven times to the throne of God. Here is clearly portrayed a battle between thrones or kingdoms.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Our Lord's favorite theme was "the gospel of the kingdom." In Matthew, Mark, and Luke we find the expression "the kingdom of heaven" or "the kingdom of God" used one hundred times. Jesus revealed Himself as the King of that kingdom. He showed what it was to be a citizen of His kingdom. And He illustrated the Christian life by His wonderful stories. Every principle in the Christian life is found in the parables of our Lord. Then at the close of His ministry He said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.

The gospel of the kingdom embraces both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. We are in the kingdom of grace now, but at the end of the age we will be ushered into the kingdom of glory. It is to prepare citizens for that coming kingdom that God is sending forth His message into every land. He is gathering citizens not from just one nation, but from all peoples of earth. And when that work is finished, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." What a day of victory that will be! "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever." Isaiah 60:20, 21.

Imagine a world where all the people are righteous; where there will be no more murders and no more theft; no more wars and no more death; when sorrow and sighing will flee away forever! That is the picture the Bible gives to us of the coming kingdom of glory. For nineteen centuries Christians have been praying the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." That prayer is about to be answered.

When John in vision saw God's people being gathered out of all nations in

preparation for our Lord's return, he exclaimed, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. He pictured them as a patient, steadfast people, obedient to all the will of God. They keep the faith of Jesus. This gives them victory over sin. Only grace can enable one to keep the commandments of God, or as it reads in Weymouth's translation, "who *carefully* keep His commandments." They do this not to *become* God's people but because they *are* His people; not to be saved but because they *are* saved. The "commandments of God" embrace not only the ten great precepts He spoke at Sinai, but all the other commandments in His Word. Each is important.

SOME NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

For example, the Lord says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," and He means it. This is not a call for Christian isolationism. It is a call for Christian sanctification. The reason? "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? . . . and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" So the Lord says, "Wherefore come out from among them [the world], and be ye separate, . . . and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." (2 Corinthians 6:14-17.)

The one who has separated himself from the world and its follies finds an inner joy and a peace that "passeth all understanding." The indwelling power of God enables him to live a life of victory, for he has been cleansed "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Corinthians 7:1.)

Cleansing from sin is impressively taught through the Bible mode of baptism, for this signifies the washing away of sin. For the first three centuries Christians were always baptized by immersion. It is the only method taught in the New Testament. Carried out properly, it is a most impressive service, for it symbolizes the burial of the old life of sin and a resurrection to the new life of victory.

As a member of the family of heaven, one who is baptized enters into all the privileges of fellowship. The "table of the Lord," the beautiful service of communion, has deep meaning for those who partake of the emblems of the broken body and spilled blood of

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the Saviour. By this ordinance they "shew the Lord's death till he come." The bread and wine become symbols of victory—not our personal victory, but our Lord's victory over all the power of the enemy. These emblems deepen the work of grace in the life and enable us to stand against all the deceptions of the devil and to come off more than conquerors through Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Sanctifier.

Recognizing that he is in conflict with Satan and his wicked angels, a

stand then with *truth* as your belt, *righteousness* your breastplate, the *gospel of peace* firmly on your feet, *salvation* as your helmet and in your hand the *sword of the Spirit*, the Word of God." Thus armed for conflict we can move forward confidently. But "be sure you take *faith* as your shield," he says, "for it can quench every burning missile the enemy hurls at you." (Verses 14-17.)* How thrilling! No missile from the enemy can hurt us if we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and know the secret of prayer.

gives courage in the face of danger and confidence in the ultimate victory of right and justice. John says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4. Conquering faith takes the long view of history and sees God at work despite the immediate and apparent triumph of wrong.

That faith gripped the prophet of Patmos. With his hands in chains and his feet manacled he could still see by faith the marching hosts of God as they moved on to final triumph. He heard them singing the hallelujah chorus. He saw "the holy city . . . coming down from God out of heaven." Lifting his pen, he wrote, "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Revelation 19:6.

Think of what it will mean to enter in through the gates into the city, to partake of the tree of life and live forever in the presence of the King. Because God wants us to be among that multitude, He is sending a special message of mercy to the world. With that message He is also sending His Spirit to guide our understanding.

The Holy Spirit comes to "guide you into all truth." (John 16:13.) And He is "given to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32.) God is looking for a faithful, obedient people. Our greatest need is not for greater revelation but for deeper consecration, for more complete surrender to the claims of God in our lives.

It is sad that many who profess the name of Christ seem to feel no concern about being in opposition to His expressed will. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. But many make no effort to discover the will of God. The Scriptures declare plainly that "the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." (Exodus 20:10.) Instead of accepting the clear command of God, some by strange and devious reasoning try to evade the truth, and instead of obeying God's Word they content themselves by observing a different day of rest. Perhaps we should not say "a day of rest," for Sunday in the minds of most people is a day of sport, of recreation, even a day of business. There is no command in Scripture for keeping holy the first day. That came from paganism, as is well attested by historians and scholars.



God's law is like a chain.
It takes only one
broken link to break
the whole chain.

THE CLIMAX OF EVIL

true Christian gives special heed to this New Testament command: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Ephesians 6:11. The earth itself has become a battleground for two contending powers, good and evil, and every person young or old must choose to which he will give his allegiance. There is no neutral ground. We are either servants of sin or servants of righteousness.

Although the devil was stripped of his authority at Calvary, he is still a mighty foe with whom we must contend. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," says the apostle, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Verse 12. Phillips' translation reads, "We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil. Therefore you must wear the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist evil in its day of power." Verses 12, 13.* Already we are seeing something of the subtle working of this power. But by God's grace we can be victorious.

So the apostle says, "Take your

As history moves into its final climax, Satan will work "with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10.) He will do everything possible to becloud the issue and delude the nations. He will even appear as Christ and claim to be the Saviour of the world. He will teach things contrary to the Word of God and seek to confirm his claims by working all kinds of miracles. In Revelation 13:13 we are told he will cause fire to come down from heaven as did the prophet Elijah. So overwhelming will be the deception that only those who know the Scriptures will be secure. God's true people will not be confused, for they will recognize in these manifestations a counterfeit of the genuine and will know the Lord's coming "is near, even at the doors." Miracles of themselves are no evidence of truth. The magicians of ancient Egypt matched, at least by appearance, almost everything Moses did before Pharaoh.

These are great days in which we live. Only "the faith of Jesus" will make us victorious. Faith is not just an abstract feeling, a mere sentiment. It is a living, working principle that

WHEN TRUTH WAS COMPROMISED

Christians early began to compromise truth and surrender their faith. Then ancient pagan practices, such as Sunday sacredness ("the venerable day of the sun") and the sprinkling of infants instead of the baptism of adults, crept into church usage.

To ignore the express commands of God and substitute forms of worship that are contrary to His will is to set our wills against the will of God.

If Elijah the prophet were among us, he might well ask the Christian world, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." 1 Kings 18:21. Maybe the response would be little different from what it was then: "The people answered him not a word." How could they? They knew they were wrong. As it was in Elijah's day, so it is in our own day. Every Christian faces the question as to whether he will serve the God of salvation or the god of popularity, whether he will keep the commandments of God or the commandments of men.

The Bible declares that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10.) God's law is like a chain. If only one link breaks, it is a broken chain. When we break the Sabbath commandment, we steal God's time, which means we also break the eighth. Then, too, we give a false witness to the world and break the ninth. We set ourselves up in place of God and therefore break the first commandment. Professing to love Him yet ignoring His commandments, we take His name in vain, breaking the third. Yes, breaking one means breaking all.

There come times in history when real decisions have to be made. This is one of those times. What may have been good enough for other generations will not suffice for this tremendous hour. God is now calling Christians everywhere to reveal their love and loyalty to Him by yielding themselves completely to His will.

Let us look at another New Testament command: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:12. The Bible plainly teaches that each of us is to be judged, and the standard in that judgment is the law of God. Whether we know it or not, whether we believe it or not, whether we like it or not, each

of us has a case pending in the court of divine justice. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God," says Paul. (Romans 14:12.) And again, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Romans 2:16.

THE JUDGMENT IN SCRIPTURE

God's judgment is mentioned more than 1,000 times in Scripture. It will be carried out in heaven just before our Lord returns in glory. Our cases will be brought before that great assize and sentence pronounced. Here is the sentence prerecorded in Revelation 22:11: "He that is unjust [or unjustified], let him be unjust still: . . . and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still." From that sentence there can be no appeal. We are either righteous or unrighteous, saved or lost. Then the Judge says, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Verse 12.

When our Lord descends the skies as King of kings and Lord of lords, He will have finished His work as our Mediator. But today He is our Intercessor.

The everlasting gospel that is reaching all the world today is a call to "fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7.) Note the similarity of these words and those of the fourth commandment, which says, "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." God's message for the world is a definite call to worship Him as Creator, as well as Redeemer. At the creation of the world we read that He "rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it," or made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11.)

The teaching of evolution, or "science falsely so called" (1 Timothy 6:20), in our schools and pulpits has made man lose his sense of a personal God. But we cannot escape this personal God, for it is to Him we must give account in the judgment. As the Son of man He is our Judge. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," "and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." (John 5:22, 27.) Since Christ knows the temptations of men, we can know His judgment will be with mercy. It is reassuring to know that He

who provided salvation by His death on the cross sends forth His Spirit to help us appropriate it. What does His sacrifice mean to you? Do you know you belong to Him?

A city banker greeting a businessman said, "Well, Pete, what do you know?"

Without hesitation his friend replied, "I know that my sins are forgiven, that I am a child of God, and that I'm on my way to heaven."

Could you say that with certainty? That was the kind of assurance in the lives of the early Christians that turned the world upside down. Paul could say with confidence, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Romans 1:16. And through the changing centuries the gospel has lost none of its power. But we must experience its power in our own lives.

The Christian can know that sin, which is "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), has been conquered in his life. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19. Having accepted Christ as our Saviour, we stand secure in Him, knowing that we have "passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.)

GOD'S LAST MESSAGE

Another call to full obedience to God is going to the world today. It comes to you, dear friend. Could you say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"? If that is your decision, then let the Lord help you to put away every unholy ambition and conquer all impurity, that by His grace you may be among those who stand at last "more than conquerors" through him that loved us." (Romans 8:37.)

In the last chapter of the Bible we read, "Blessed are they that do his commandments [or, "have washed their robes"], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14), saved from the penalty of sin through justification, from the power of sin by sanctification, and finally from the presence of sin by glorification. This is God's message of assurance to you and yours and to everybody everywhere. God give us grace to heed it. END

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THE CASE FOR INTERVENTION

(Continued from page 13)

legalized by some governments in the name of enlightenment. High on the current list of nonfiction best sellers are books that advocate trial marriage, free love, and hedonism as the criteria of the man/woman relationship. Films, theater, and television today give unprecedented attention to what some euphemistically describe as adult entertainment.

The frescoes of Pompeii and Herculaneum vividly portray the moral decadence of the Roman Empire and also illustrate the similarity of modern permissiveness to the license of ancient Rome. What modern man needs to realize is that the Biblical account of the moral decay of the last days is significantly akin to its description of the depravity of Rome (compare Romans 1:24-32 and 2 Timothy 3:1-9) and that divine judgment, as in the case of the Noachian age, is the only logical corollary to both.

Morality, we should remember, does not only concern the physical nature of man, but includes every aspect of human behavior. It is just at this point that the real depth of twentieth-century moral decadence seems most apparent. Rising crime figures in many countries reveal an increase in crimes of violence and a growing number of young offenders. A shocking increase in crime in the London urban area shows crimes of violence rising three times as fast as other crimes—in 1969 a 77.5 percent growth over the 1968 figure. Of those convicted of robbery and assault 58 percent were under the age of twenty-one, and 43 percent were under seventeen.

Basic standards of honesty are being eroded by the new morality. Pilfering, shoplifting, and petty theft are fast becoming as acceptable to the individual as industrial espionage is to big business. Disrespect for law, disrespect for authority, disrespect for other people and their property, disrespect for traditional values in society, disrespect for life itself—these are the hallmarks characterizing thousands of rioting young people from Tokyo to Kampala, London to Berkeley. Moral devaluation on a worldwide scale is a fourth argument for divine intervention.

If man could satisfactorily solve the colossal problems of the twentieth century, he would effectively prove his independence of God. But he who

cannot control the basic evil propensities of his own nature cannot be expected to solve the problems that evil bias creates. The hope of the world, the hope of man, the hope of the future, must be the traditional Christian hope of divine intervention. Through Jesus Christ God will bring about a revolutionary change in human affairs.

"I will come again," said Jesus. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven," said the Apostle Paul. "The day of the Lord will come," wrote Peter. He will "appear the second time," declared the author of Hebrews. "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh," said James. And when this happens, the triumphant statement will ring out from heaven: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

A DAY TO REMEMBER (Continued from page 23)

stand so near the cross, its true meaning dawning more and more upon our minds, how can we even ask? We get the feeling that to tamper with the Sabbath would be to tamper with creation, with Sinai, with Calvary itself. How can we see His followers refusing to desecrate the sacred hours even with their labor of love, how can we see Him dying on the cross because the law could not be compromised even to save His own life—how can we stand in the blazing light of Calvary and say it doesn't matter?

Seated in the dining car on a train during World War II, I noticed on the back of the menu an engraving of the Stars and Stripes in full color. As a loyal American, I honor the Stars and Stripes. So you can imagine my surprise and my perplexity as beneath the flag I read these words: "Just a piece of cloth. That's all it is; just a piece of cloth. You can count the threads in it, and it's no different from any other piece of cloth."

My patriotism would have rebelled if I had not read on: "But then a little breeze comes along, and it stirs and comes to life and flutters and snaps in the wind—all red and white and blue—and then you realize that no other piece of cloth could be just like it. Yes, that flag is just a piece of cloth until we breathe life into it. Until we make it stand for everything we believe in and refuse to live without."

I might take an ordinary piece of red

The great Isaac Watts wrote for more than his own generation when he penned the immortal lines, "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun Doth his successive journeys run." And he uttered the unexpressed hopes of millions yet unborn when he added, "His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, Till moon shall wax and wane no more."

The hope of the world lies in the intervention of God in Christ Jesus, in His second coming to earth, and in His fully establishing His divine kingdom at last. Everything indicates that the time of that intervention is now at hand. How will it find you? END

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cloth. You could count the threads in it, and find it no different from any other piece of red cloth. But if I take that piece of red cloth and a piece of white cloth and a piece of blue cloth and sew them together into the Tricolor of France, Frenchmen would die for it. If I sew them together into the Union Jack, Britishers would die for it. Or if I sew those same pieces together into the Stars and Stripes, Americans would die for it—would not live without it!

Just so, God took an ordinary day. You could count the hours in it. In that respect it was no different from any other day. But then He made a Sabbath out of it. He breathed life into it. He made it stand for everything precious and vital, an emblem of all He wants Christians to live for and refuse to live without.

Friend, the deeper you study into this thing, the more thoroughly you investigate, the greater will be your conviction that something is wrong somewhere, that in some very vital issues we have been just slipping along, following the crowd, never thinking to question.

Yet the example of Jesus is unchanged. There stands the little carpenter shop—closed on Saturday. We shall never find it any other way. It is still the same in the shadow of the cross. A day to remember. Shall we find it any different *since the day He died?* END

we quote

Joseph Addison: "Health and cheerfulness mutually beget each other."

Martin Luther: "God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees, and flowers, and clouds, and stars."

William J. Worrell (founder, Pilgrim Book Society), quoted in *Christopher News Notes*, November, 1970: "Top leaders in all fields are invariably avid readers. The ability to communicate, whether in writing, reading, speaking, or even listening, is an essential quality, and it is rooted in good reading habits which are formed early."

"If a parent can create a warm atmosphere on reading pleasure, it could be the beginning of a lifetime interest in reading and learning for that child. The role of the parent and teacher is to inspire the child, not to pressure him to do so before he is ready or able."

J. C. Macaulay, "Exploring the Bible," *Moody Monthly*, October, 1970: "Don't just say the Lord's Prayer. Pray it."

The Nazarene Preacher, November, 1970: "Faith is not trying to believe something regardless of the evidence. Faith is daring to do something regardless of consequences."

J. C. Penney (founder of chain of 1,660 stores): "I never apologize for pleading for better Christian homes, because my entire experience tells me that successful dealings between men in business, government, and social relationships are influenced for good or ill by home backgrounds."

New Testament, John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

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LET'S TELL IT LIKE IT IS

A CARTOON recently appeared in the secular press. It shows a man carrying a sign saying, "The world is coming to an end." In the background is Washington, D.C.; two men look out the window of an impressive government building. One says to the other, "How does he know that? That's supposed to be classified information."

The end of the world has been the subject of countless jokes, but those who are taking a second look at Bible prophecies these days don't see anything to laugh at. They read like current events. Take just one prophecy, for instance—the one in Daniel 12:4 about increasing knowledge. The implication is that the last days of human history will be a time of greatly increased general information and scientific knowledge and unprecedented change. That this has happened recently is a fact that has been dinned into our ears almost to the point of boredom; and yet it can hardly be repeated too often.

In many areas of human knowledge and activity, the change in the past fifty years has been as great as in all previous human history. And the signs are that this rate of change is speeding up.

The point is that this puts a strain of unusual magnitude on man as a person. If the strain on us increases faster than our ability to cope with it, we are in a bad way. And that is exactly what is happening. Someone has put it, "These days if you want to relax, you've got to work at it."

We could cite changes taking place in the great nations of earth. For nearly the whole of the first half of this century the world was still dominated by the so-called great powers. The edifice of colonialism still stood complete. But in the third quarter of the century, from 1950 on, we have just seen one of the most astonishing transformations

in history. The wind of change has blown the old structure of colonialism away. The French, Belgian, and Dutch empires have disappeared. The greatest empire of all, the British Empire, has been transformed into a free commonwealth.

Let's look at other changes. We have grown accustomed to scientific marvels, with all the changes they have brought. And now all of a sudden scientists are telling us our technology is profoundly suicidal. We can't go on much longer simply because it is based on fossil fuels—oil, coal, natural gas, etc. And in the near future all these will be gone.

Up to now the human population has been small enough that we have been able to regard the atmosphere and the oceans and even the soil as inexhaustible reservoirs from which we can draw at will and which we can pollute at will. There is handwriting on the wall, however: Los Angeles has run out of pure air; Lake Erie has run out of pure water; we are changing the composition of the atmosphere and even of the oceans to the point that in a few decades this may become the most overwhelming problem facing mankind.

Everyone knows that we live in the age of the computer. Now experts tell us it will foreseeably take over any task for which decision-making rules can be set in advance. These tasks include not only production and clerical jobs, but also many activities of professionals such as engineers, bankers, accountants, lawyers, and architects.

Recently one expert studied 500 occupations chosen at random. Of these occupations 300 were judged to be replaceable by automation, 171 to be partially replaceable, and only 23 resistant to replacement. Life is changing, and the implications are frightening.

The Bible says knowledge will be increased. The profound meaning in this text is that we shall all be bombarded on every side with extraneous

information that will not benefit our spiritual life; in fact, it will be a detriment to it.

There are 33 million adults in America alone taking advanced schoolwork. They feel they've got to do it to keep up. Theodore Gill, researcher and educational consultant for the World Council of Churches, recently stated, "We all obtain information and our lives are changed by numerous pervasive forces that have an effect on mankind today. I am talking about publications and about politics and about families and neighborhoods, about unions and gangs, about television and beer halls, about race and nations and uncontrolled violence, about movies and their stars and records and pop groups, public relations and galloping vulgarity.

"All this is going on always; all of it is everywhere; all of it is molding us and making us what we will be; and all of it is called education."

The center of life for most people today is not the church as it might once have been, not government as it has often been, not the industrial complex as others today might claim—but the center is education. So this great mass of information we are all getting is one of man's greatest problems today, one which is becoming increasingly frustrating and complex, and it's all taking man away from God.

And so this Bible text, Daniel 12:4, is but one of many authentic indications of the end of human history.

Perhaps this could be categorized as an editorial of gloom and doom, but God's Book tells it the way it is, and so must we.

By the way, we ought to listen to God these days. We listen to everyone else—the hippies, the yuppies, the political commentators, the youth, the dissidents inside and outside the church, the protesters. Why not give God an ear! He is saying some very important things.

K. J. H.

The aftermath of Jesus' second coming

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth:
for the first heaven and the first earth
were passed away; and there was no more sea.
And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,
coming down from God out of heaven,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven
saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is
with men, and he will dwell with them,
and they shall be his people, and God himself
shall be with them, and be their God. And
God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;
and there shall be no more death, neither
sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there
be any more pain: for the former things are
passed away.

"And he that sat upon the throne said,
Behold, I make all things new. And he said
unto me, Write: for these words are true
and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done.
I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and
the end. I will give unto him that is athirst
of the fountain of the water of life
freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all
things; and I will be his God, and he shall
be my son."

"He which testifieth these things saith,
Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so,
come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 21:1-7; 22:20.





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