

*Understanding what lies ahead*

# *Tomorrow's News*

December 2006

Free!

Christmas Goes  
Overboard

The Evolution of  
Christmas

*No More  
Christmas?*

God's Master Plan

The Origins of the  
Christmas Tree

*Special Christmas Edition*

## Tomorrow's News

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## Inside this issue:

### **My Feasts**

*page 3*

### **The Evolution of Christmas**

*page 4*

### **The Empty Manger**

*page 5*

### **The Origins of the Christmas Tree**

*page 6*

### **Christmas Goes Overboard**

*page 7*

### **Saturnalia**

*page 8*

### **God's Master Plan**

*page 9*

### **No More Christmas?**

*page 11*

### **Where Is the Good News?**

*page 13*

### **Living In Wonderland**

*page 14*

### **Who Really Killed Jesus Christ?**

*page 15*

### **The Birth of Christ**

*page 19*

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## My Feasts

**A**t this time of the year, many people have been planning for weeks or even months about how they intend on spending their time during the holiday season. They all look forward to having the most wonderful time of the year, in keeping with the popular expectations of this festive time of Christmas.

People are so busy with their holiday planning that they have little time to stop in their tracks and ask themselves this salient question: What is so wonderful about this celebration? Is it to honour our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Is it about *getting* the gifts, or *giving* the gifts; is that what really matters? How about the feasting that goes on: the drinking, the partying, meeting families and just having a jolly good time? Suppose they were to learn that “the main reason for the season” is not in this picture at all. Would it still be a wonderful time of the year? We have often heard the phrase, “Jesus is the reason for the season.” But is that really so? You can easily discount whether *Jesus is the reason for the season*, if you are willing to allow the Bible to be your standard. Any theologian will clearly tell you that Jesus the Christ, was not born on December 25th or anywhere near that date for that matter. Many history books and encyclopaedias, secular and religious, will confirm that Jesus was not born on Christmas Day. But how is this possible, you may ask?

As you will see, presented in the articles of this issue of *Tomorrow's News*, the concept of Christmas and all of its associated celebration did not originate with Christ. He did not instruct the early New Testament church to observe this day. Instead, Christmas, as we currently know it, has its roots in paganism, and is derived from the Roman feast of Saturnalia.

In essence, Christmas is a man-made holiday, not sanctified by the Word of God, but rather, is simply an invention of a culture that did not know Jesus Christ. Yes, as surprising and perhaps disturbing as that may sound, this is the reality of what we know today as Christmas. It is not a celebration that honours Christ

or for that matter, is even considered Christian in any way, shape, or form.

Please stop for a minute and ask this question: What do Santa Claus and the Christmas tree, (two of the most popular symbols of this celebration) have to do with the birth of our Saviour?

Surely, if God wanted us to celebrate the birthday of His only begotten Son, He would have given us the exact date and specific instructions on how to observe it. Presently, the way it is portrayed, the obvious “god” of Christmas is Santa Claus. It would have been plain idolatry if Christmas was a commanded holiday by God, because Santa has certainly stolen the spotlight!

Would it come as a surprise to you to realize that in the pages of your Bible, specifically Leviticus 23, God commands some very important days for us to observe and celebrate until Jesus Christ returns?

Without a doubt it would be an interesting study for you, spiritually and otherwise, to learn about these annual Sabbaths (or Holy Days) and the meanings behind them. In so doing, you will begin to see just how meaningless Christmas is to God.

And after all, isn't it more important to please God rather than risk His displeasure by observing man made traditions? It would do you well to review Leviticus 23 since these Feasts are the ones He calls, “*MY FEASTS.*”



*Horane Smith*

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# The Evolution of Christmas

by Jasmin Smith

Every year, Christians around the world sing hymns in celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Today, Christmas is widely recognized as a season for charity, kindness, generosity and other virtues. Love is in the air and hearts are filled with joy. However, many would be surprised to learn that this season of love and good tidings has its roots in pagan traditions.

It is believed that the origins of Christmas can be traced back to the ancient Roman pagan holiday Saturnalia and the pagan religion, Mithraism. Saturnalia was one of the most popular ancient Roman festivals, running one week-long, in the month of December. During this festival, Roman courts were closed, and lawlessness ensued as Roman law dictated that no one could be charged for property damage or assault during Saturnalia celebrations.

To initiate the festivities, each Roman community selected a victim to represent the "Lord of Misrule." These individuals were forced to indulge in gluttony and more perverse physical pleasures for the duration of the festival. The peak of Saturnalia came on the final day of the festival, December 25. On that day, the individuals representing the "Lord of Misrule" were brutally murdered in a spectacle believed to destroy the forces of darkness (please see the article '*Saturnalia*' in this issue).

Besides sharing the December 25 date, what could this pagan festival possibly have to do with Christmas and the birth of Christ? To answer this, we must look back to the 4th century Roman Empire. At this time, Mithraism was also a popular religion in Rome. Mithraism was a pagan religion that bears a striking resemblance to modern Catholicism. Mithra, the Persian god of light and sacred contacts, was born in a cave on December 25, assisted by shepherds. Interestingly, his adherents called him the "Redeemer," "The Good Shepherd," and "The Light of the World." They also partook in communion and called their priests "Father."

Rome was no stranger to pagan religions,

but as Christianity spread throughout the empire, it took the interest of Roman leaders. It is believed that in an effort by the Empire to establish Christianity as Rome's official religion, Roman leaders allowed the pagans to continue celebrating Saturnalia, Mithraism and other pagan festivals in order to win

Therefore, once Christianity became Rome's official religion, setting December 25 as Jesus' birthday was simply a strategic action to satisfy the pagans who were already celebrating on December 25.

Thus, Christmas was instituted (some 400



**Hundreds of years ago Christianity was merged with pagan religions;  
Do you know what you're celebrating?**

over as many pagan adherents as possible. To spawn mass appeal, rather than stamping out paganism, Christianity in Rome was merged with the popular pagan religions of the day.

As such, prior to the institution of Christmas, December 25, was already a high day in Rome through Mithraism, Saturnalia and various pagan religions, whose god's celebrated their birthdays on December 25.

years after Christ's birth). Previously, the birth of Christ was not celebrated by Christendom. Despite some efforts from the Church to Christianize December 25 by declaring it Jesus' birthday, the first Christmas bore a striking resemblance to the degeneracy of Saturnalia.

Continued on page 22

# The Empty Manger

by Olivia Doyle

The day arrived, the time was right and a place was found for the birth of the Son of God. The very first place Jesus laid His head was in a manger. The voice of an angel called the lowly shepherds to come and see for themselves the long awaited Messiah.

*Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And you will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12)*

This was wonderful news and so good, that they couldn't keep it to themselves. They were eyewitnesses of a prophetic event foretold by the prophets for thousands of years. They just had to tell everyone about this good news revealed to them from heaven, concerning the birth of the Messiah (Luke 2:17-18).

Also, many others who were in Bethlehem and heard the news desired to see this New Born King. Joyously, they found their way to Mary and Joseph and came upon the Lord Jesus in His manger. However, some time later, another sign appeared in the sky, visible to all, but only understood by the Magi of the East.

The Magi were the watchers of the sky. They recognized this star and understood it to be the sign of the "King of the Jews." This king, Jesus the Christ, was very important to them. So important, that when they saw this star, they immediately embarked on a pil-

grimage to the place where it lead them. The only reason for this trip was to acknowledge Him as the King of the Jews, worship Him and lay their precious gifts at His feet.

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." (Matt. 2:1-3)*

Now keep in mind, by the time the Magi appeared in the land of Palestine the census had long been completed and this was some-time after Jesus was born. Mary and Joseph were now at their home, in their house. Upon arriving in the area of Jerusalem the Magi inquired about Jesus Christ's birth. But Herod,

**"And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him..."**

Matthew 2:9-11

the current ruling king, inquired of the wise men about the time of the star's appearance and sent them to Bethlehem (Matt. 2:7-8). However, after speaking with Herod, they did not listen to him; instead they continued to follow the star until it stopped over the place where Jesus was staying.

*When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly*

*great joy. And when they had come into the house, [not the manger] they saw the young Child with Mary His mother and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense and myrrh." (Matt. 2:9-11, emphasis added)*

Their lengthy journey was over. They had found the King of the Jews at His home with His mother! They found Jesus by following His star, the heavenly sign. But, did you ever wonder what if they had listened to Herod instead? What if they had listened to the people who remembered the extraordinary birth of a child born in a temporary shelter in Bethlehem? What if they had, instead, gone to the manger where He had lain in swaddling clothes? What would they have seen? Sorrowfully, they would have found an empty manger and no New Born King of the Jews. What a sad and dismal disappointment that would have been!

At this time of the year, many well meaning and good hearted, so called, professing Christian people prepare to celebrate the birth of this King of Kings, the Saviour of mankind, Jesus the Christ. But sadly, and unfortunately, the "traditional Christian" notion you are given, is that Jesus is still in the manger, when in fact, *He is not.*

Though the mortal and incarnate birth of Jesus Christ is important and crucial to God's plan for humankind's redemption, ironically there is no biblical injunction to celebrate and/or observe the day of His human birth.

Continued on page 18

# The Origins of the Christmas Tree

by Waive-Ann McLaughlin

The Christmas tree is said to have originated in Germany with the decoration of pine trees with fancy ornaments. However, there are alternate theories that suggest otherwise. In fact, there are many legends about the Christmas tree that led to the widespread belief that the Christmas tree is an essential part of the Christmas season and its celebration.

There is the legend of St. Boniface, an English monk, who is said to have saved a child from being sacrificed by pagans. When they were gathered around an oak tree to sacrifice the child, the Saint flattened the tree with one blow of his fist. A small fir sprang up in its place and St. Boniface told the pagans that it was the "tree of life," and represented the life of Christ.

Another legend traces the story of the church reformer Martin Luther. It tells of his journey through a forest on Christmas Eve, as he was amazed by the glistening of the many stars that shone through the evergreen trees. He cut down one of the trees and took it home.

The truth is that the Christmas tree tradition has been around long before the Germans, St. Boniface and Martin Luther. The Nordic pagans and the Celtic Druids revered the evergreen tree as a symbol of everlasting life and hope for the return of spring. While other plants and trees died, the evergreen trees remained alive continually; hence, they were revered as manifestations of deity.

As a symbol of prosperity, the Druids decorated the evergreen outdoors. It was the Scandinavian pagans who were the pioneers in bringing the decorated trees indoors; and the Saxons, a Germanic pagan tribe, who were the first to use candles to illuminate the tree.

In addition to these pagan rituals, the tree is also linked to the celebration of the Winter Solstice. Pagans would celebrate the Winter

Solstice, and as a part of that celebration, they would decorate trees. This celebration represented the end of the long, dark winter days and the beginning of the spring and its connection to life. The triumph over the winter darkness was the reason for the celebration.

There are many other theories about the origin of the Christmas tree. Researchers have failed to accurately pinpoint a single origin, but it is correct to state that it evolved from pagan traditions. Understanding how the tree was used in the past will shed light on its meaning in the Christmas celebration. Many Christians unwittingly partake in tree decorating without knowing the cryptic meanings behind the adoration/decorating of a tree. The fact that the evergreen tree was considered in pagan religions to symbolize everlasting life, robs us of the reality of Jesus' supreme sacrifice that enables us to have true eternal life. The evergreen tree is believed by some pagans to hold continual life, and as such, is commonly used in pagan worship and celebrations.

I often wonder, do believing Christians *really* know what they are doing when they place a Christmas tree in their home?

Do they *really* believe that the decking of a tree has something to do with the birth of Christ?

In Jeremiah 10:2-8 we read,

*Thus says the Lord: "Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven. For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will*

*not topple. They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot go by themselves...But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; a wooden idol is a worthless doctrine."*

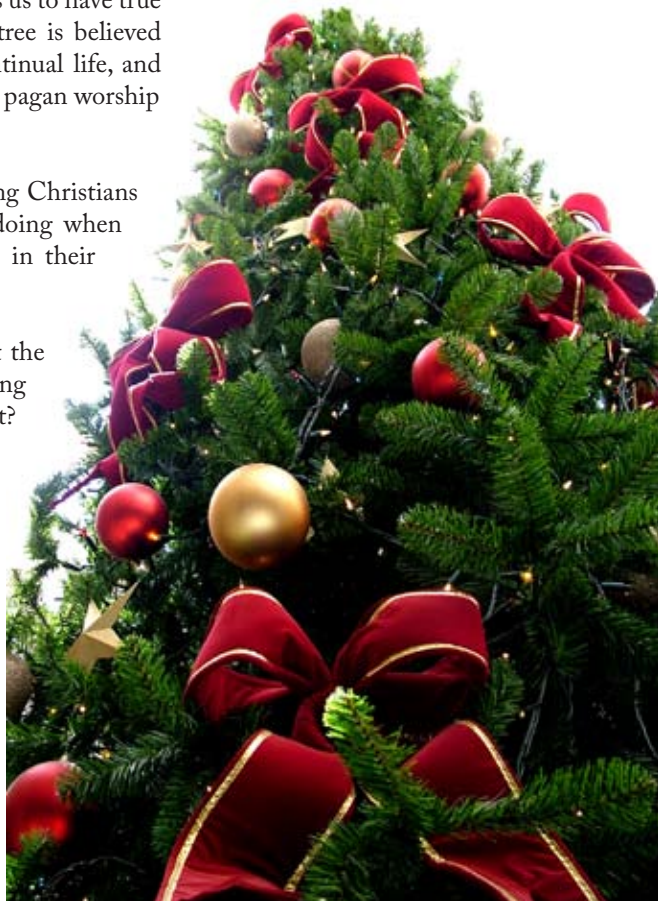
Those are the words of the Lord from your Bible. Why do so many Christians overlook this very important chapter in the Bible and do precisely what God warns us not to do? It is certain that God condemns such practices and warns His people not to adopt these pagan ways; yet many people who consider themselves Christians, do exactly that.

Here is something that all Christians should consider. If God was against the cutting down of trees, bringing them into our homes and decorating them way back then, and He is the same yesterday, today and forever; do we honestly believe He changed His mind and is now somehow happy with it?

*Waive-Ann McLaughlin is a financial advisor and a member of the CGI.*



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# CHRISTMAS GOES

by Dan Alexander



**Y**ears ago, at Christmas you were fortunate to get an extra lump of coal in your stocking to warm yourself by the pot belly stove. Times were very hard and many didn't have much. Occasionally, your mother was able to surprise the whole family with an extra piece of meat and, perhaps, bake some plum pudding or sugar cookies. How lucky the family would feel at Christmas with these little extra blessings. I'm sure a discussion with your parents or grandparents about how they celebrated Christmas in the pre and post depression eras would be quite an eye-opening conversation. Most were truly thankful, considering how little many people had.

Surely, many were thankful to their employers for the few extra dollars coming their way in bonuses at that time of year. Others may have thanked their parents for putting money aside so that Christmas would be special for the family. Without a doubt, many gave thanks to our Father in Heaven for all their extra blessings, even though our Heavenly Father and Saviour had no part in

these Christmas season celebrations. In fact, they have never been a part of this ancient pagan festival. Christ is *not* the reason for the season.

You may be surprised to learn that the Holy Bible states in several verses not to take part in this pagan commemoration.

"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it or take away from it" (Deut. 12:32). Also,

*"Thus saith the Lord: Learn not the way of the heathen and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers that it move not." (Jer. 10:2-4)*

It is true that Christ was born in the flesh, but the Bible does not mention the day or month in which He was born. If our Heavenly Father really wanted us to celebrate Christ's human birth, wouldn't you think that He would have given us the date in the Holy Scriptures? Yet, the fact is, you can search from Genesis to Revelation and find *no* statement concerning when Christ was born, and definitely no instruction to observe, commemorate, or celebrate His birth.

To further illustrate this non-biblical connection, have you ever wondered if it was really Christ's birthday, why do people buy gifts for themselves and others as opposed to buying gifts or giving more to the church? Did you ever wonder how the big guy with the beard and the red suit, you know Santa Claus, got into the picture regarding Christ's birth? He doesn't even exist, yet he purportedly flies around the world in one night giving presents, made by elves, to every good boy and girl; assuming, of course you made his list. Children write long lists and send them to Santa at the North Pole and expect results; they are

subconsciously being taught greed and excess at a very young age during this confusing, charade of a holiday. When Christmas comes, consider for a moment and observe your children and other children when they are opening their gifts. Carefully observe their reactions as they tear into one present after another. And then, bear in mind their attitudes toward each other. Admittedly, it's quite an education in human nature.

In addition, sooner or later some time after the holidays have come and gone, you might find yourself saying, "What's that gift doing in the basement collecting dust? I paid good money for that!"

It's also not uncommon for friends or family to ask, "How come you never wear the clothes or jewellery I bought you for Christmas?" And many will honestly admit when the credit card bill comes in the mail, it's "OH NO!" not "HO-HO!"

Today, the world's message is this: the more you spend (and go into debt for your family and friends on this so called "holy" holiday,) the more you care for them. Unfortunately, the opposite may occur if you don't meet their expectations. Not surprisingly, many friendships, marriages, and other relationships become strained and even result in violence at this time of the year.



*"When the credit card bill comes in the mail, it's 'OH NO!' not 'HO-HO!'"*

Sadly, statistics confirm that the Christmas holiday season is the most volatile time for violence compared to any other period during the year.

The children of God however, should be filled through Christ, not the carnal things of this world. In John 10:10, Christ says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."



The movie studios show the reality of this Christmas season. They portray parents doing whatever it takes to purchase that hot new game or fashion fad for their children. If it doesn't show up under the tree come Christmas morning, the parents are in big trouble! Studios call them Christmas comedies: art imitating life. It's a fairly true reflection of the season, but it's no joke. The excess is out of control!

This is my fifth year since giving up the Christmas holidays. I'm thankful to God that I've been blessed to understand the truth concerning this holiday and consequently am free from all the pressure and high expectations of this "stressmas" time of year.

As an example of what I'm talking about, last December, my daughters and I went to see a movie. It was still early when the movie ended, so I asked, "What would you like to do for the rest of the day?" They answered, "the Mall." Without thinking about the time of year I said, "Okay." We spent longer looking for a parking space than we stayed in the mall. However, when we finally entered, it was a full blown shopping frenzy! People, with their boxes and bags were banging into us, and one another! I turned to my daughters and screamed in horror, "What was I thinking, let's make a run for our lives!" Out to safety we went, into the parking lot maze. "Oh no! Where's the car?" Again, there was difficulty locating it because of the mass of parked vehicles. It was quite an experience and quickly reminded me of why I don't regret, nor miss observing this holiday.

If you choose to change your ways and, like me, stop observing Christmas and instead follow God's way, you can be assured God will bless you for it. Remember, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). In the end, we know what's popular is not always right, and what's right is not always popular. And though we know God's way is *always* right, it's not always the easiest road to follow (2 Tim. 3:12). May God give you the courage to stand up and make the right choices for His Truth, because if you do, He will bless you for it!

*Dan Alexander is a member of the CGI.*

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# SATURNALIA

by Beverley Smith

**S**aturnalia was an ancient Roman festival celebrated to honour the god Saturn. The celebration would start in mid-December and last from five to seven days, during which the courts and normal community business would be suspended.

The Collins Encyclopaedia describes Saturnalia as a "large and important public festival" that took place in ancient Egypt from as early as 3000 B.C. in the days of King Osiris and his wife, Isis. After the death of King Osiris, his wife Isis propagated that a full-grown evergreen tree had sprung up overnight from a dead tree stump, symbolizing the spurning forth unto new life of Osiris. On each anniversary of his birth, she claimed Osiris would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts there. December 25 was the birthday of King Osiris.

Saturnalia was instituted by Romulus, the founder of Rome under the name "*Brumalia*" which means "*Winter Solstice.*" This huge festival was held from December 17-23; it was a time of merry-making described as "the best of days."

During this celebration, there were no distinctions of rank or class; everyone was equal. Slaves were allowed to wear their masters' clothing, masters served their slaves, and children and adults exchanged gifts such as dolls and candles.

The customary greeting for the occasion was "Io, Saturnalia" (pronounced "yo"). It is believed that the popular Santa Claus greeting, "Ho! Ho! Ho!" has its roots in its Saturnalia counterpart.

When parts of Rome began converting to Christianity, some of the pagan rituals, such as Saturnalia, were carried over as compromises to make the transition less challenging.

Much of the Christmas celebration today closely resembles the Saturnalia of ancient Rome. The decorated trees, the exchange of gifts, feasting, and the merrymaking that occur during Christmas are almost an exact re-enactment of this ancient festival that paid homage to the pagan deities and practices of this season, *not* the God of the Bible



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# God's Master Plan

by Patrick Bastien



In every country, we find that people devotedly celebrate their national holidays. These special days are reminders of important events in a country and/or culture's history. They provide permanence between a nation's past and present. Most often, citizens can understand and explain at least some of the significance of these national celebrations. Yet, in contradiction, those same citizens seldom have much understanding about the holidays on which they worship God. The non-biblical roots of these religious practices are quietly ignored in their celebrations.

As a result, people usually assume that popular observances such as Easter and

Christmas serve as true representations of particular themes described to be observed in the Bible. Yet, God's Word *nowhere* commands their observance, nor does the Bible record their commemoration in the early New Testament Church. However, God *does* command other rarely noticed festivals, (or Holy Days) outlined in Leviticus 23, such as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles for our consideration.

Why does God desire that we observe these Holy Days? It is because they hold the key to understanding our destiny, which answers the question: why were we born? He reveals

to us in these Holy days His Great purpose for the future of mankind: His Master Plan for humanity. Through the Holy Days, God explains why He put us on the Earth. He reveals our ultimate destiny and tells us how we can attain a better understanding of it through observing the Holy Days.

God's Holy Days hold great meaning. Comparably, commercialized "*holi-days*" such as Christmas, Easter, and other non-biblical holidays come up absolutely empty when equated against these Holy Days.

Picture a typical Christmas Eve, with all the commercial advertisements and shopping



## 1 Passover

The first Holy Day of the year is the Passover. It pictures the death of Christ, as our Passover Lamb. This is the first stage in God's Plan for Salvation. We have to really repent and accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, whom we should obey. The death of Jesus Christ is the pivotal event that lays the foundation for the remaining Holy Days and Festivals. It is the most momentous step in God's plan. Jesus came for this purpose so He could draw all of mankind unto Him (John 12:27, 32). Therefore, it is important for those who have been baptized to share in the emblems of the wine and unleavened bread, showing their continued dedication to the covenant they made when they accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

## 2 Days of Unleavened Bread

Immediately following the Passover, comes the seven Days of Unleavened Bread (again, the number of perfection). This Festival pictures putting sin out of our lives so that we can grow in grace and knowledge and live as God's redeemed people (Exod. 12:15; Lev. 23:6; Acts 12:3). Additionally, eating unleavened bread underscores the importance of Christ's broken body for us and how we are healed by His stripes (2 Pet. 2:24).

## 3 Pentecost

Third is the Feast of Pentecost. This pictures the need for God's Holy Spirit to be poured down on us (Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Days progressively reveal how God is working with humanity now and how He will continue to work with us in the world to come.

## 4 Feast of Trumpets

Fourth in the sequence is the Feast of Trumpets. Celebrated in the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, it pictures the end times and the first resurrection of the dead. In the Old Testament, trumpets were blown to sound the alarm for war in ancient Israel. Trumpets picture a time of war and chaos just before Christ's return. They represent the culmination of the present age of mankind and the beginning of an incredible time during which God will play a much more direct role in world events by sending Christ back to the Earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:11-21).

## 5 Day of Atonement

Next is the Day of Atonement. This day depicts Satan's banishment, when the world finally has "at-one-ment" with God (Lev. 23:27; Acts 27:9). The Bible tells us that Satan has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9). And because of that he will be restrained for a thousand years, but ultimately put out and pitched from God's kingdom forever and ever (Rev. 20:1-3, 7-10).

## 6 Feast of Tabernacles

Sixth in the sequence that God wants us to observe is the Feast of Tabernacles, which runs for seven days, (there's that number of perfection again) and pictures the Kingdom of God on Earth. In Old Testament times it was called the Feast of Ingathering. It represents, metaphorically, the big harvest of souls during the millennium, when God will open everyone's minds to His plan for the ultimate destiny of mankind. All human beings will eventually understand who God is and what He stands for.

## 7 Last Great Day

At last, the grand finale is the Great White Throne Judgment (Last Great Day). This day pictures the rest of the dead coming back to life (Rev. 20:5). It is a time when billions of human beings who lived throughout the course of mankind's history and were either deceived, or had never had a chance to hear the true Gospel of Jesus Christ to finally come to know the true God, our Saviour, and purpose for life. These people will be given a genuine chance to accept Jesus as their Lord, Saviour, and Creator whom we must obey. They will be given their first real opportunity to understand God and accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

sprees. Many people all over the world feel duty-bound to give presents to others, but they often give little or nothing to Christ for His work and the monumental sacrifice that He made for us.

In this article, I'd like to present an overview of what the biblical Holy Days illustrate. As mentioned, described in Leviticus 23, are seven religious festivals that God gave mankind to observe. Also, it is interesting to note that biblical numerology reveals that seven is the number representative of perfection.

Unequivocally, God has a magnificent plan, which is revealed through His Holy Days. These are the religious Holy Days we ought to be keeping! They picture the *true* God, and the *true* plan He has for us—a great plan that is pictured by these Holy Days of Almighty God which sadly, most of the people on Earth have never heard about.

Finally, *if* the truth were known, most people would want to worship God in the right way. Admittedly, it is fair to say they would want to do what the Bible says.

Continued on page 22

“Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the Lord: ‘Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, for the customs of the people are false. A tree from the forest is cut down, and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. Men deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.’” (Jer. 10:1-5)  
(all scriptural quotes are from the RSV, 1952)

Sometime in late November, every year, the issue of *Christmas* rears its head at my house. My wife (a devout Catholic) is an adamant supporter of Christmas, while I, a Church of God adherent, am not. We don't foolishly quarrel over Christmas, but we do seem to go over the same ground year after year without much resolution. Both of us are extremely firm in our opinions and unyielding on this issue. We respect each other and our mutual right to a fair expression of opinions, but why can't she see my point of view? Why can't she see that Jeremiah 10:1-5 is a direct rebuke of the Christmas tree? “Why make such a big deal about this?” she might ask.

### Good King Wenceslas

Surprisingly, understanding the clarity of this argument had not been possible for me in my youth. As a child, I grew up in a secular house where there were very few religious ceremonies or icons. December was Santa time—period. My theme song for those days was the Christmas Carol “Good King Wenceslas,” which I sang over and over. As Christmas drew closer, the festive trappings of the season would begin appearing one by one. The tree was put up and decorated. The decorative lights were strung round the outside of the house. The Santa poster was nailed to the front door. Decorative “snow in a can” was sprayed discreetly everywhere and eventually was complemented by real snow falling outside.

When the night before Christmas arrived, my brother, sister, and I were excited. We had steadily watched the mountain of presents grow, and we knew that by the next day, it would be even larger. On that night, each of us was usually allowed to open one of the presents under the tree. We had in actual fact spent many days shaking and examining each of the presents after having chosen them carefully and strategically.

The last ritual for the whole event was Santa's reward—carrots for Rudolph with cookies and milk for Santa were laid out on the kitchen table. Finally, with everything completed, we went to bed hoping for the best from our wish list.

My parents' part in all of this was a little different. Both my mother and father come from a largely secular background. For them, Christmas was the big day to show their love for their children, a love that was best expressed by giving generously. They also saw it as their duty to provide each of their three children with the best that money could buy. When all of my aunts and uncles added their annual “Christmas tithe,” it became a treasure of immense proportions, especially if you're only eight years old and about three feet high. The funny thing though, was the thrill only lasted until about lunch or dinner and then it was gone. As the years went by, the excitement surrounding the season seemed to fade. I noticed that my parents' enthusiasm for the Christmas season and celebration diminished over time. Eventually, it became obvious that like Alice in Wonderland, Christmas was a fantasy that had become meaningless with little or no staying power.

My wife's *memory* of Christmas and her understanding of her own parents' motivations for gift giving are similar to mine. Additionally, Christmas was a time of visiting among the many members of her extended family. However, for her family unlike mine, Christmas was also a religious event. To this very day, she continues to see Christmas as a significant religious event to be celebrated with friends and family.

The religious aspect of Christmas is one of our points of disagreement. My family and I never embraced this aspect of Christmas. If one does not believe that Christmas is God ordained, it is much easier to abandon the entire season with very little guilt. For my wife and others, however; there is a strong belief that this day is God centered and that to not honor and observe it is wrong. Accordingly, by the middle of every December, the Christmas season (tree, wreath, decorations, Christmas lights etc.) makes its

# No Chri

by Steve Agnew

“How did society

# More Christmas?

get to this point?"

appearance at my house.

One of the few things that my wife and I seem to agree on is that today, a spirit of commercialism has largely invaded Christmas and distorted its intent. In particular, I now mostly see Christmas as a time of cynicism and emptiness. For many people, Christmas has become a time of financial profit at the expense of others goodwill and gullibility, while for others it is merely a day, or season of feasting and drinking. The shallowness of happiness today and depression tomorrow when hopes are unfilled and bills come due, troubles me. I should not be surprised though, since the Bible warns that people generally prefer deception to truth (Isa. 30:9-11) and that Satan himself is the author of much of this deception (Rev. 12:9). Additionally, since people everywhere are also lovers of pleasure and money, but not God (2 Tim. 3:1-5), they also do as they please ignoring all admonishments to the contrary.

How did society get to this point?

## Herbert Reboot

The original founders of the Church of God movement had definite ideas about the pagan origins of Christmas.

The writings of Herbert W. Armstrong and his associates spawned many articles on the subject. Today, the Church of God International has one such article which is readily

available to everyone.

It is entitled, *Facts You Should Know About Christmas*. This article discusses the history of Christmas and the origins of many things normally associated with it. The booklet is a quick read and worth the effort. It

is not my intention to review it here but very briefly, the article proposes that most of what we consider to form part of our Christian Christmas is actually pagan in origin and unworthy of a Christian label. The booklet also suggests that Jesus was not born on December 25 and so, there was never any Christ in Christmas.

How did this come to be? The early church, under pressure from the Roman Empire, chose to evangelize everyone at the lowest common denominator. The pagans of that time were brought into the church with their customs assigning a Christian label to everything. Perhaps, this is why so many people today sense a spiritual emptiness in Christmas. For these people, the holiday contains almost no measure of God's Spirit. The true manifestation of God's Spirit is in the Fruits of the Spirit not the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-24). Please read this passage of scripture and *see for yourself* how the 'spirit' of Christmas measures up.

The counter perspective of many mainstream Christians is that while Christmas may have pagan origins, the present day celebration is a perfectly acceptable means of honouring the birth of Jesus in a way which is harmlessly festive. The booklet has a fascinating response to this perspective. Why not read it for yourself and see what the booklet actually says about this attitude? I won't spoil the surprise for you.

## Soft Words Turn Away Wrath

Regardless of your point of view, there is I believe, an equally important consideration; this is actually the main point of my message to you. When you meet someone who disagrees with you about the observation of Christmas, how do you proceed? Should you argue and fight, standing your ground against all opposition? Or is there another approach?

The book of Proverbs suggests the following:

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1).

"The wise of heart is called a man of discernment, and pleasant speech increases persuasiveness" (Prov. 16:21).

Continued on page 21

# Where is the good news?

by Horane Smith

**A**s someone who has worked in journalism for nearly 20 years, I can always remember the days when going for the top story of the day was the whole point of working as a newsman. When you got that top story, it made your day, or week for that matter.

What was the “good news” that was so important to get? Most of the time, it was something bad—a scandal, serious crime, accident, economic troubles, or something to do with the breaking of God’s laws.

In fact, the good things never seemed to make the news very often, and even when they did, they were not the top stories.

How’s this for homework? Make some time and try to watch the major evening news. Note carefully, the nature of the news being broadcasted and you will be surprised either way. It will either be too much negative news, not enough good news, or no good news at all.

The news that you’ll watch will merely be a reflection of the state of affairs in our society today, where lawlessness has penetrated every sector. Where is the good news you may ask? The good news is this: there *is* good news (pardon the pun).

The Church of God has good news for everyone. It has been saying this all along. What is the good news? It is the Gospel (which means *good news*) of Jesus, the Christ, and His coming Kingdom, which will soon take over all human governments and replace them with the Kingdom of the Most High God.

That’s the good news!

*Horane Smith is a journalist and an award-winning author of six published novels.*

**TN**



## HOLY DAY CALENDAR 2007

FEAST DAY	DATE
Passover	April 1
Days of Unleavened Bread	April 3-9
Pentecost	May 27
Feast of Trumpets	September 13
Day of Atonement	September 22
Feast of Tabernacles	September 27 - October 3
Last Great Day	October 4

# Living

by Mark Agnew

# wonderland

In the television show *24*, Kiefer Sutherland plays Jack Bauer, a federal agent for the United States Government's fictional Counter Terrorism Unit. In the show, Bauer is portrayed as a man of action who always comes out on top, against all odds. Unfortunately, Jack Bauer also makes many questionable moral decisions. One

such decision is the execution of a former colleague because of a personal vendetta. Considering that many of these story lines are often written to appeal to a younger audience that enjoys the action genre with its attendant cliff hangers, what message does this send to our youth?

This television series is just one example among a variety of programs, including comedy, "reality," and drama shows that portray an unreal picture of everyday life.

Television is not the only medium used in creating fantasy concepts about life. There is also online gaming. Games like *Counter Strike* depict a world where someone can be killed and then, of all things, come back to life or "respawn" 10 seconds later.

Fashion, presented in magazines, on television, or in the stores at the mall is another category representing a world of expensive and elaborate clothing that most people are persuaded to want, but can never own. For many, this results in additional frustrations because of those *wants* that are never obtained due to the constant demand of meeting the *needs* of life.

Music videos are notorious for showing average people driving expensive cars, wearing lots of "bling bling," and living in ten-thousand square foot mansions: something that is not the norm for most people.

Due to the emphasis on materialism and the spotlight put upon satisfying the cravings of the physical, there is a challenge presented to young and old Christians in today's secular culture. That challenge is to understand the balance between the

real and unreal; the practical and the impractical.

For instance, you can enjoy some of this entertainment, but you must not let it pre-occupy you to the point you allow it to control or pattern your life. When we lose our perspective on what is real and what is fantasy we are setting ourselves up for future problems. We need to guard what we allow to influence our ideas, emotions

and of course the goals we set for ourselves that define our lives. The reason for this is simple. If we're not careful, subtly, incrementally, before you know it, we're distracted by this "world of fantasy," wasting our time chasing after things that really don't matter.

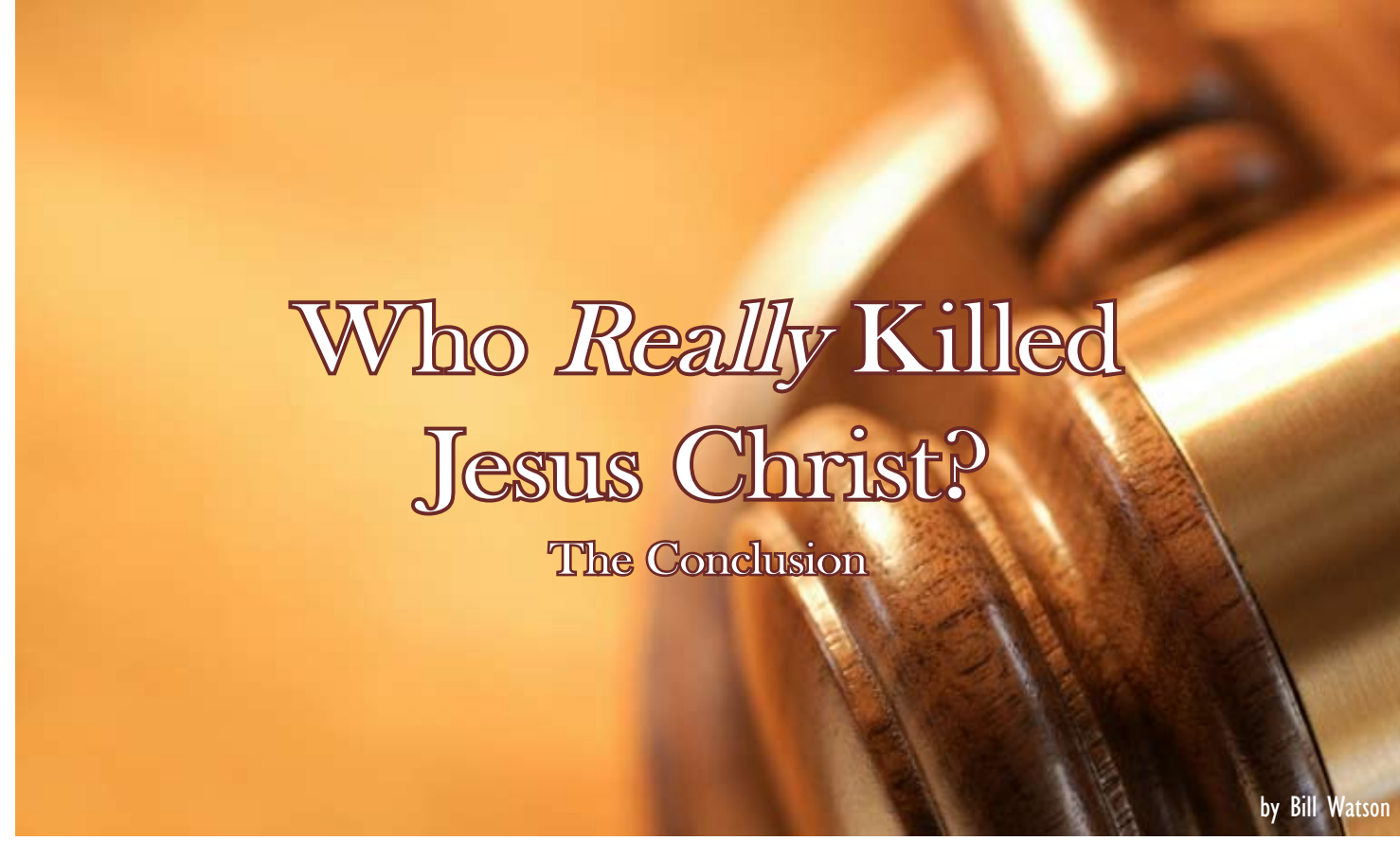
The fundamental problem of a media created "world of fantasy" is its ability to distract us from our main goal in life—which should be to serve God. The Bible advises us, "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33, NIV) and also, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14, NIV). We cannot serve two masters. The Bible says: "no one can serve two masters.

Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other" (Matt. 6:24, NIV).

Getting caught up in this fantasy world will only lead us down a path that is not God's way. The makers of the surreal would have us shut God out of the equation. No one dies and then lives again within 10 seconds.



Continued on page 21



# Who Really Killed Jesus Christ?

## The Conclusion

by Bill Watson

**N**ow, I know it's hard to get our minds around this and go outside of our human perspective. However, our Bible demands that we view life from God's outlook. Unless we are able to do this and rise above the quagmire of human prejudice, bias, personal opinion, partisanship, cultural standards and values, along with any other human or worldly influence, we stand no chance of seeing life's realities clearly. As human beings we must surrender to the fact that we have no right to question the methods of God's will. Notice this is exactly what the apostle says,

*"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" (Rom. 9:19-24)*

As Paul concludes, the rest of this chapter

clarifies the fact that the rejection of Jesus Christ by His own fellow Israelites and Jewish tribesmen has actually served the good purpose of affording the Gentiles (non-Israelites and/or non-Jewish) access to righteousness by faith. Thus, when viewed from God's perspective, we see even this issue has good reason as far as God is concerned. This point is further illustrated in Romans 10 and 11.

### SO WHO REALLY KILLED JESUS CHRIST OUR CREATOR?

With all this in mind we are now ready to answer the question presented when we originally asked, who really killed Jesus Christ. As you will see, without this background, answering this question correctly is virtually impossible because so much of our understanding is predicated on mere human perspective.

For example, we could easily answer this question very directly and simply say a Roman soldier stabbed Him. This is the most direct answer to the question concerning who killed Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Your Bible is quite clear on this matter. Notice what the apostle John writes when describing the concluding moments of the crucifixion and the assessment of Jesus Christ's

physical condition.

*Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him (the two thieves). But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers **with a spear pierced his side** and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knows that he saith true, that you might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him **whom they pierced**. (John 19:32-37, emphasis added)*

John makes reference to Exodus 12:46; Psalms 34:20, 22:16-17; Numbers 9:12; Zechariah 12:10; and Revelation 1:7, which all indicate how this event would be a prophetic fulfillment and crucial component validating Jesus Christ's role in this plan of salvation, designed to afford mankind immortality.

The Fenton and Moffatt translations further substantiate this event by including a statement in Matthew 27:49, "But another taking a spear pierced His side, when blood and water came out." Unfortunately this



scripture was left out in the King James translation, regardless of the fact that ancient manuscripts like the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Echiopic, and many of the Syrian translations, and some of the oldest Greek manuscripts, which included it up to and until approximately the early 6<sup>th</sup> century.

If you are interested in studying this point more thoroughly, obtain copies of the Fenton and Moffatt Bible translations. You will notice that Matthew 27:48-50 will read differently than the King James translation. Why was this verse left out? That's a question for another time. Suffice it to say, many scholars recognize this verse was included in some of the oldest Greek manuscripts we have today.

However, the fact a Roman soldier is directly responsible for stabbing Jesus Christ *does not* answer the question sufficiently. There are far too many reasons and circumstances surrounding this enormously important historical event to reduce the answer to a mere Roman soldier stabbing the creator of the universe and personally be held responsible for the death of this Creator God, Jesus Christ.

Nor can we simply say the Jewish leaders are solely accountable. Yes, they certainly played a part in the event and without a doubt share in the culpability of His crucifixion, but they cannot to be held in *total blame* for our Creator's execution. Pilate, who gave reticent approval for the execution to be initiated, and Herod, who also had a role, cannot be held *exclusively responsible* either; or even Judas, for that matter who betrayed Him, because this whole saga is *much* larger than all the individuals, ethnic groups and/or Roman government that played a part in this colossal display of eschatology.

It is much more immense in scope than any individual component because it *was designed before the world was* by God Beings, outside of our physical dimension, who were motivated by love to share life with those who could be entrusted with the power to be immortal Sons of God.

The Salvation Plan that assures these God Beings that only those who qualified would be rewarded was complex, and involved many circumstances of *their own selection*.

Notice what Jesus said in the book of Matthew when discussing His identity and destiny with His disciples. He said,

*"Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."* (Matt. 16:20-21)

Did you notice? Jesus is speaking prophetically about His future death and how He would be resurrected the third day. He knew *in advance* of His execution just exactly what was going to happen. How did He know? He knew because this was all pre-ordained to occur and designed *before* the world was to accomplish a procedure for mankind's redemption and consequent adoption as im-



**"He knew in advance of His execution just exactly what was going to happen..."**

mortal Sons of God (Rom. 8:14-17).

Now back to Matthew 16. Did you notice Peter is upset at what Jesus mentions to them? He verbally rebukes Jesus, the Christ, and says it won't be so (Matt 16:22). This generates a response from Jesus, which was rather firm and perhaps somewhat demonstratively agitated. Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (verse 23).

Jesus is telling Peter he is out of line. By His own words, Jesus claims He is offended by Peter's boisterous statement implying he

would attempt to thwart the will of God. Again notice Jesus' comment, "for you savourest [consider] not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (ibid.). Jesus is clearly saying that *God's will* supersedes anything man has *regardless of our opinion, wants, or preferences*. All that matters is God's will. Now that's quite a concept and was certainly an important lesson for Peter.

Additionally, this should be quite a revelation to all of us as well, because what Jesus is saying is that His crucifixion, all along, was *God's will*. In other words it was God the Father's will, that He, the creator of all things, Jesus the Christ, should die this horrible death and fulfill the Law (Sacrificial Law) in this fashion.

Now Paul portrays this principle in concept when he says, "For Christ is the end (goal) of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes" (Rom. 10:4). In so many words Paul is saying that Jesus the Christ, our Creator, was *destined* to accomplish all *pre-ordained* prophetic events mentioned throughout the scriptures, which at that time were exclusively reserved to Old Testament writings, and fulfilled all provisions for Jew and Greek to obtain salvation (Rom. 10:1-13). The Sacrificial System was one fulfillment of many aspects pointing to Christ provided throughout His ministry.

We must remember that Jesus the Christ was sent to this earth, visited our dimension of time and space, for the exclusive purpose of doing the Father's will (John 6:38-40). Christ was the living bread. It was the will of the living Father that sent Him that those who should believe on Him should live forever (John 6:57-58). Jesus continues to clarify the relationship between us, Him, and the Father, by saying those who believe Him, believe the Father (John 12:44-50).

What Jesus Christ did was reveal to us the Father. Before this time no man knew this aspect of the mystery of God. It was hidden throughout the ages, revealed now in these end times to us. And in addition, we did not know what the will of the Father was, but Jesus the Christ manifested it to us. For three and a half years, He shared the details of the process with primarily twelve specific men He called disciples.

In the course of His ministry He explained by teaching, He explained by His example, and He explained by confrontations with various individuals, that we are the Sons of

God. It was the Father's will and intent we understand this (John 10:24-39). This is central to the New Testament Gospel message.

So, it is obvious, Jesus Christ's death was planned *before* the world, and was necessitated by the anticipation of mankind's failure to obey God. This plan was designed with redemption in mind. However, the shedding of blood was required in order to accomplish this purpose.

Jesus Christ, formerly the Word of God and our Creator was most suited for serving in the capacity of the suffering servant and oblation for atonement; because, He was the creator and His life was greater in value than all of humanity. So, the choices were made, the patterns in the heavens were established and the program was initiated upon the physical creation of Adam and Eve. The rest is *His-story*.

In summary, it was the will of the Father that Jesus the Christ, our Creator, formerly the very Word of God, should live a life of

sacrifice, teach the things He did, and die the grisly death of crucifixion.

Yes, our sins necessitated it; without question, transgression of God's Law was the underlying cause of Jesus Christ's death (1 John 3:4-5).

Nevertheless, *it remained the will of the Father* to guide and steer it in the direction it went — even until the very end. Consider what Jesus said three times while praying to the Father right before His arrest in the garden. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, *but as thou wilt*" (Matt. 26:39, emphasis added). Also, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, *thy will be done*" (Matt. 26:42, emphasis added). And finally the third time was the "same words" (Matt. 26:44).

Therefore, all of the choices and selections throughout the ages of mankind's history were God's reserved prerogative: to serve His purpose in carrying out His pre-ordained will. This is why no individual, ethnic group,

or government can be held responsible for the death of Jesus Christ.

As a matter of fact, the ultimate responsibility remains with God for designing the Salvation Program in the fashion He did. But thank God He had the foresight, compassion, grace and love, to see this Salvation Program through. For that reason, immortality has been brought to light and disclosed to us in these last days. And now we too can obtain immortal life if only we will repent of our sins, obey God, and accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour, and soon coming King of Kings.

*Bill Watson serves as a CGI minister.*



TN

## Tomorrow's News

What will the future bring?

Be sure to get your copy of our next issue by:

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London, Ontario N5Y 5L4



Telling you Tomorrow's News, today...

# The Empty Manger

Continued from page 5

As a matter of fact, contrary to this understanding, we are instructed to remember His death instead (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

It is troubling to think how so many well intentioned people are led to believe by the holiday imagery portrayed, that figuratively, Christ is still a child needing the nurturing of His human parents, when in fact, as humans we need His nurturing.

Undeniably, I'm sure it was quite a shock in the life of Mary, (His human mother) when realizing that Jesus at the young age of 12 years old was discovered teaching at the Temple with the religious leaders of His day, when His parents had every right and indication to believe that He still needed them! Remember His words,

*"Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. (Luke 2:49-50)*

What a stark surprise this must have been. Undoubtedly, though, we are told they did not understand. Assuredly, it must have been astonishing and amazing to see Him there when they expected him to be with the family, in the caravan going home.

Allegorically, this is quite characteristic of what Christmas is like. We are led to believe by the pomp and celebration of the "traditional" Christmas Holidays, that "Christ is in Christmas" and that "He is the reason for the season," when He's not even anywhere close to condoning this observance; and furthermore, never was in it in the first place.

So often, many today look for Jesus Christ in all the wrong places. They claim to be followers of His way, but don't do the things He asks (Luke 13:22-28). Sadly, many today insist on having Jesus Christ on *their* terms, never realizing that the "traditions of men" (i.e. Christmas) make the laws of God of no effect (Matt. 15:7-9)

We need to understand that God expects us to conform to *Him*. Jesus Christ is the pattern we should follow. If we are going to please God, then we need to understand that Jesus Christ has been born, (but rather this time born from *above*), not in a manger, but from the *grave*. He was born as an immortal spirit and High priest at the right hand of

Let us be empowered by the Holy Spirit, taking on the form of the substance of truth Jesus told us we must have in order to worship Him correctly (John 4:23-24).

It begins with expressing the love of God in our lives by keeping *His* commandments. "And this is the love that we walk after his commandments" (2 John 1:6). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Contrary to what many believe today, "the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12)

So it is imperative that if we want to be



the Father, alive, interceding for you and me. The sooner we realize this, the sooner we will recognize where He *really* is and what He *really* expects from us.

Don't be like the many who just follow the "Herod's" of this world. Remember, if the Magi had followed Herod's instructions, they would have found an empty manger with no Lord to be worshipped.

Instead, we need to follow the light of God's Word, like the star of old, and let our Bibles teach us of His way. Let the instruction of the Word of God lead our lifestyles.

*real* Christians, it begins with distancing ourselves from going in the wrong direction. And though the choice is ours, Christmas happens to be one of those items going in the wrong direction. Begin to turn your life around. Start distancing yourself from the things of this world that mislead you from the truth of God (Jer. 10:1-8).

*Olivia Doyle is a member of CGI.*

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# The Birth of Christ

by Horane Smith

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, the Christ and Saviour of the World, was born of a virgin and became flesh. If you are a true Christian, you have to believe this, or you cannot claim to be a follower. There is absolutely no way to argue around this reality. Let the Bible speak for itself.

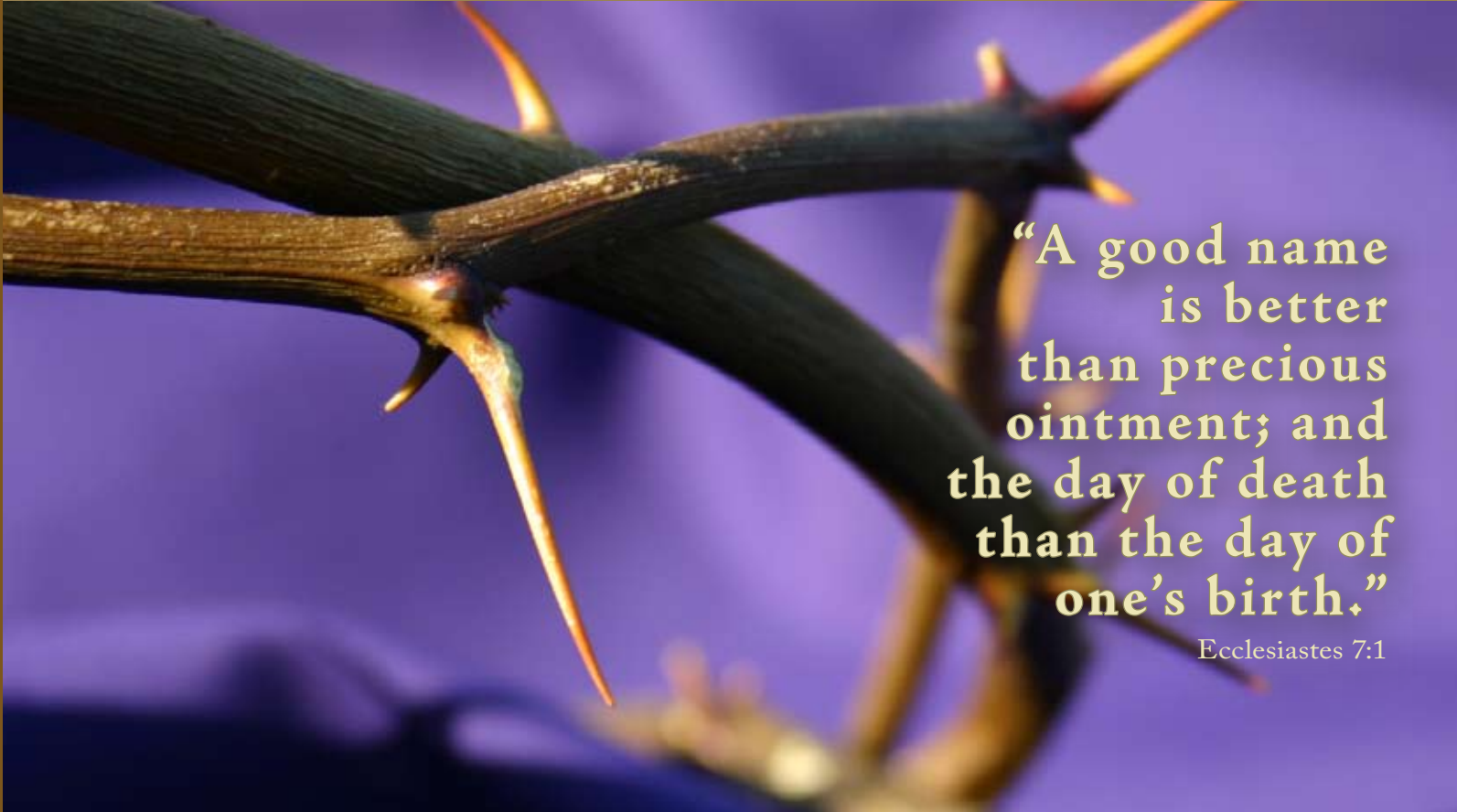
*"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every*

*spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God"* (1 John 4:2)

a cave. There are some who accept the birth date as December 25, yet many have come to realize that there was no way Jesus could have been born on December 25. As you have read in other articles in this issue, December 25 is nothing but the date of an old pagan festival; it has nothing to do with the birth of the Christ. Nevertheless, Jesus was born Emmanuel (God with us) of the Virgin Mary, to die for the sins of humanity.

admit it would seem rather silly and foolish.

We don't know exactly when Jesus was born, so December 25 was set as an acceptable date, some may argue. Well, let's stop right there for a moment. If we truly wanted someone to throw a birthday party wouldn't we give them the right date? My deep conviction about this is that if the Saviour of all humanity wanted the world to observe His



**"A good name  
is better  
than precious  
ointment; and  
the day of death  
than the day of  
one's birth."**

Ecclesiastes 7:1

*spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God"* (1 John 4:2)

Jesus went through a similar birth process as any regular human being because He "emptied himself" of His divinity to become a human being. Although there are still sceptics who doubt His incarnation, the vast majority of Christendom accepts the birth of our Saviour.

Some believe He was born in a manger, while others theorize it could have been in

We may not agree on the December 25 birthday, but that doesn't mean we don't believe He was born. Of course, Jesus had to come as a man to die for your sins and mine. Where the disagreement comes is in the celebration of what is supposed to be His birthday. It seems rather strange, and absurd for that matter, to be celebrating someone's birthday on a day he wasn't born. How would you like it if a friend deliberately threw you a huge birthday bash every year on a date far from the one you were born on, or a month or two from the true date? I think we must

birth, He would not have us questioning the date of His birth. This omission by God tells us that His birth should not be celebrated. The scriptures are clear; whatsoever God wants us to celebrate is outlined in His Word. Any religious celebration that is not stated in the Bible is not sanctified by the Word of God.

How about this? "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). This scripture is in reference to the Lord's

Supper/Passover, which says we should observe His death until He comes. In other words, what we should be putting our efforts towards is recognizing, and celebrating each year the memorial or death of Jesus Christ. It is through His death and ultimately His resurrection that all of us have been given a promise of eternal life. Indeed, in Ecclesiastes 7:1 it says, "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth."

On the other hand, the birth of Jesus Christ cannot, and should not, be dismissed as an insignificant event. It was through that birth that the world got its Saviour, who would later die for the sins of every human being that was ever born. What is important is to realize that the celebration of His birth neither makes us any more righteous or pleasing in the sight of God. We still remain wretched sinners who have come short of the glory of God. It is only through repentance, acceptance of His supreme sacrifice and His shed blood for our sins, that we are afforded the opportunity of standing justified before Him through faith.

Engaging in this ritual of feasting that inherently has nothing to do with His birth, (but was borrowed from ancient false religions, which God Himself forbids) does not glorify God. In fact, one has to be very mindful of the idolatry in all of this, as nowadays, *Santa Claus* seems to be the central character in a celebration purporting to be the birthday of Jesus Christ. In the next issue of *Tomorrow's News*, we will be showing you the importance of observing the *death* of our Saviour, instead of His birth.

*Horane Smith is an award-winning author and serves as a deacon for the CGI.*

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## No More Christmas?

Continued from page 12

I suppose that some of you who are Church of God (COG) members or alternatively Christmas supporters will say that we are entitled to our opinions. Unquestionably, this is true and we can be very thankful for that today. However, many COG members will rightly remind me that we are not to accommodate the world since friendship with the world is enmity with God (Jam 4:4). Furthermore, no one can serve two masters (Matt 6:24) you might add. However, Jesus also said “Judge not...” (Matt 7:1). On this point, consider Jesus’ response to the woman caught in the sinful act of adultery. Due to her behaviour and under God’s laws she was worthy of punishment (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Jesus said:

*“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her... Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.” (John 8:7-11)*

In this story, Jesus shows mercy to the sinner but is unwavering in his definition of righteousness and right behaviour. We should follow His example when the issue of Christmas returns each year. In the quiet strength of soft words and friendly speech, the knowledge of righteousness and disapproval of non-biblically based behaviours (sin) can be strongly shown without all the animosity that fighting produces. If you are a *Christian* supporter of Christmas, the same should be true for you. God is after all, allowing us freedom of choice in this life with all that it implies. Choose you now (Josh 24:15; Deut. 28; Deut. 30:15-20).

*So what do you say when Christmas comes to town? God bless you as you follow the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!*

*Steve Agnew is a member of CGI.*



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## Living in Wonderland

Continued from page 14

Yet it’s portrayed as reality! Don’t kid yourself into thinking this doesn’t have influence on, specifically and especially, our young people. Also, some will go as far as to satirize God, and even tell lies about Him. Consider the portrayal of Ned Flanders as the not-so-cool churchgoer in *The Simpsons*. All designed to portray God as some out-of-sync character who has no relativity to the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century man. Many people are now accepting these portrayals as normal and conceptually healthy characterizations.

Unfortunately, when God is removed or at best marginalized, we as a society and/or culture begin running the risk of redefining social norms. That is what’s happening today. Much of what used to be considered the absolutes are now being challenged and changed. What was formally considered abnormal is now beginning to be considered normal. This is the natural result, when allowing the fantasy world of pop culture define for us what is right and wrong. The Bible says,

*“... turn away from Godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in doing so have wandered from the faith.” (1 Tim. 6:20-21, NIV)*

Another problem associated with chasing after this world of fantasy is that it sets up false expectations which, when and if we fail to fulfill, can lead us to additional psychological or relationship problems. This can lead us into additional complications that often result in making bad situations worse.

Consider the following. If you compare yourself to the rich and famous, but you are not so blessed, yet you insist on attempting to live like them and over extend yourself by purchasing items you can’t afford, you just may find yourself with a broken marriage and in bankruptcy.

In no way is this an endorsement of giving up on everything, throwing out the television, cancelling all your fashion magazine subscription and heading for the hills to hide in some remote cave. Jesus said, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them *out* of the world, but that thou shouldest *keep them from the evil*” (John 17:15). So it’s *not* about “dropping out,” but rather minimizing and/or eliminating the negative, anti-God influences on our outlook toward life and our personal relationships from this “agenda driven” fantasy world of pop culture. The fact is, there are some very good and enjoyable things in this world. The challenge is making choices that *include* God’s preferences in our lives.

This fantasy world is all around us and is only one of the many issues that confront the young and old alike. Facing the modern changes that are normalizing the abnormal is not an easy task. Like a snowball going down a hill, once we allow certain compromises to occur in our lives, it becomes more difficult to recover.

So consider the times we are living in (2 Tim 3:1-5). Don’t underestimate the potential influences this “fantasy world” of video games and superheroes may have on you. It can subtly be very influential on all of us, especially at this time of the season. So be vigilant! It reminds me of what a current pop singer once said, “Space may be the final frontier,” but on the other-hand, the real battleground is the frontier right here on Earth, dealing with conflicts intended to push God from your life and to direct your mind and emotions toward a more secular, hedonistic lifestyle.

*Mark Agnew is a Political Science and Economics Double-Major.*



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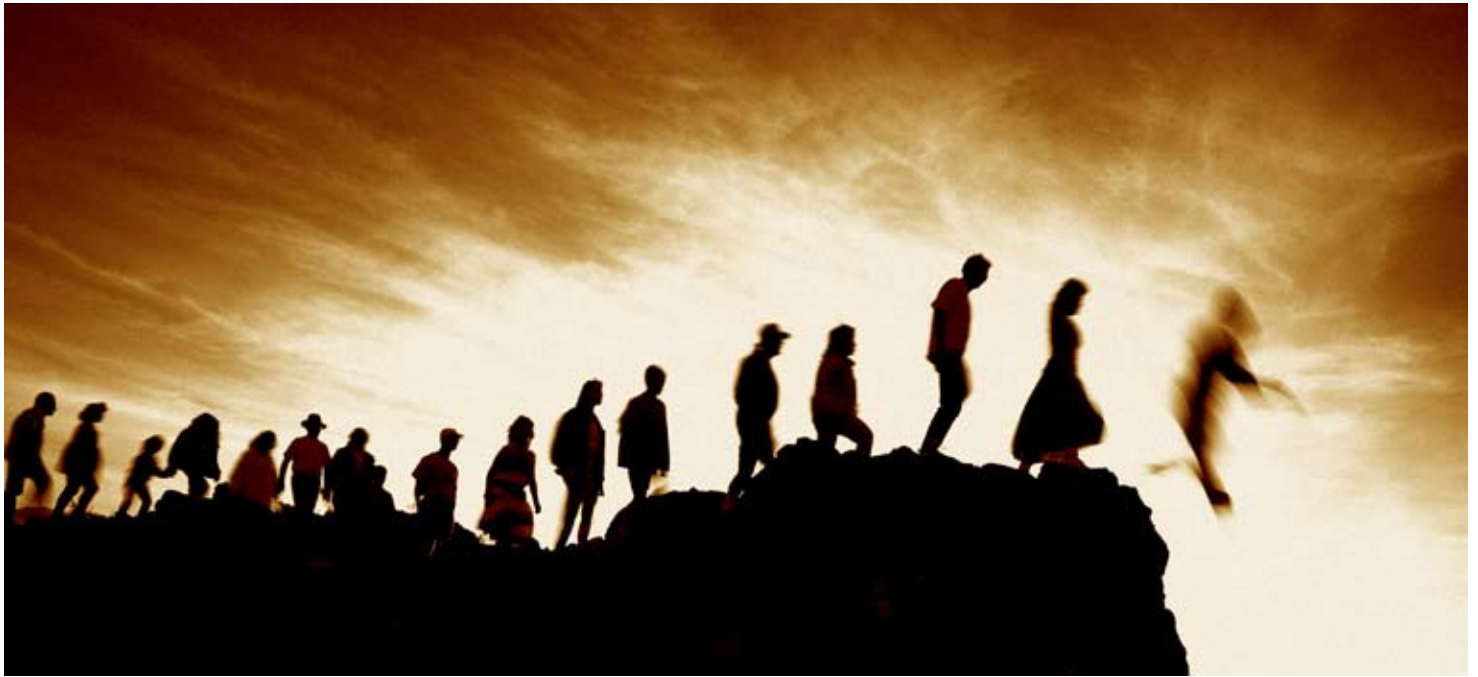
## God's Master Plan

Continued from page 10

And what the Bible says is, if we really love Jesus and in fact accept Him as our Lord and Saviour, then we must heed what He said in

the Bible tells us *not* to follow the traditions of men, and without realizing it, most Christians, though very sincere, are doing just that: following the traditions of men rather than following the plan of God. Most of them are well meaning people, but have just grown up keeping the days they were taught

booklet: "God's Seasonal Plan." Without a doubt this booklet will help you to better understand what these Holy Days are all about complementing in more detail what we have introduced to you in this article. So don't hesitate. Request this *FREE* booklet.



**"...most Christians, though very sincere, are doing just that; following the traditions of men rather than following the plan of God."**

Luke 6:46, "Why call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things I say?"

If Jesus is indeed our Lord, we must do what He says, and follow His examples. Take a look at 1 Peter 2:21. It says we should follow His example. His example illustrates that He kept all of the Holy Days outlined above, as did His disciples, along with the early New Testament Church. The God of

as children, taking them for granted, simply believing they are true.

Notice what Jesus told the religious leaders of His day in Matthew 15:3-9. We must not follow the traditions of men instead of God's ways. This is why it's so important to understand more about the *real* Holy Days that God would rather have you observe. So let us encourage you to request our *free*

(Also available online at: <http://www.cgi.org/booklets/seasonalplan.cfm>)

*Patrick Bastien is an author and member of the CGI.*



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## The Evolution of Christmas

Continued from page 4

These activities included gift giving, feasting, and singing naked in the streets in addition to excessive drinking and sexual indulgence.

Historically, December 25 has been a day marked with sexual depravity, gluttony, drunkenness and some of the most horrible sins. Today, the world looks upon December 25 as a day of joy and celebration with no interest in what this day has meant in history or how it *became* "Christian."

There is nothing intrinsically Christian

about Christmas. December 25 is a birthday borrowed from pagan gods to appease the Roman masses when Christianity swept through ancient Rome. In fact, upon investigating the pagan roots of Christmas, the holiday was banned, and its observance made illegal by the Puritans in Massachusetts between 1659 and 1681.

Church history cannot dispute the relationship between ancient pagan religions and the practices that were adopted by Christianity decades after Jesus' death. Furthermore, The Catholic Encyclopedia admits that there is no evidence marking December 25 as the birthday of Jesus Christ. The date of His birth is not revealed in the Bible.

Christmas was not celebrated by the early church; it is not mentioned in the Bible, and there is no scriptural basis for its adherence today.

This Christmas, will *you* celebrate?

*Jasmin Smith is pursuing a B.A in Sociology & BEd and is also a member of the CGI.*



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# Armor of God



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AUS Brisbane  
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Sunday

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Sunday, 11:30 pm Central  
Monday, 12:30 am Eastern

#### **Philippines**

RPN9  
Sunday 8:30 a.m.

#### **United States**

The Word Network  
Sunday:  
7:30 am PST  
8:30 am MST  
10.30 am EST  
9.30 am CST  
3:30 pm CST - Lincoln, Nebraska,

#### **Channel 13**

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