

Watch March 1995

[Japan--Supergiant of the Orient](#)

The world will be shocked when the next war between the United States and Japan suddenly erupts. Millions of Americans know nothing of the gargantuan size of the Japanese economy; of their quiet but steady military buildup; of Japan's geopolitical goals. For decades, I have been predicting that Japan will once again challenge the U.S. for domination in the Pacific. Here in Tokyo again on the first leg of an extensive trip around the Pacific Rim, I see no reason to alter those predictions.

[Ireland--Where to Now?](#)

Twenty-five years on, "The Troubles" in Ireland are hailed as over. Is a permanent solution to the "Irish question" in sight?

[The Truth About Capital Punishment](#)

The Bible is used and abused in the debate about capital punishment. Some think the Bible can be applied on both sides of any issue. They apparently believe the Bible is not consistent, not authoritative on any subject. What can you believe? What does the Bible really say about capital punishment?

[Knowing God: The Mystery of the Gods](#)

Continuing in this issue, we present a new way of studying your Bible. Using this magazine, your own Bible, a cassette tape recorder, and a notebook, you can dramatically increase your knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Read on to see how it works.

[Imperial Academy](#)

University level courses, taught by senior headquarters staff members, do more than educate, enlighten and enrich the Christian lives of students. Foundations for current and future service to God's people is the goal.



[VISION/News Trends](#)

[The Real Reasons Christ Came To This Earth](#)

In the previous two installments, we looked at several reasons why Christ did not come to this earth, as well as several reasons why He did. This month, in the third and final part of this series, we will continue looking at the real reasons for Christ's first coming.

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Imperial Academy

University level courses, taught by senior headquarters staff members, do more than educate, enlighten and enrich the Christian lives of students. Foundations for current and future service to God's people is the goal.

by William H. Ellis and Shari Alcorn

In early autumn, 1994, the first full-time students enrolled in Imperial Academy. Until then, only brief, single and double-week seminars had been held for those interested. Now the full-time students are well into their second semester and contributing to God's Work through their service.

The success of both programs has been proven. For example, in last month's Twentieth Century WATCH magazine, Imperial Academy full-time student John Marmero, Jr. contributed a well-researched article on the subject of Valentine's Day. Two other full-time students (including the co-author of this article) serve as writers and editors on the staff of a new teen magazine for the youth of the Church of God, International.

Therefore, we are pleased to announce the next opportunity for both the summer seminars and the university level full-time semesters for serious students.

Classes will be held on the Church of God, International headquarters campus on the shores of beautiful Lake Palestine in the piney woods of East Texas.

Imperial Academy Full Time

Beginning September 5, 1995 (the day after Labor Day), Imperial Academy will offer 15 semester hours of required classes. The curriculum (while subject to change) will include:

Old Testament Survey.....3 semester hours
The Major Prophets.....3 semester hours
The Epistles of Paul.....3 semester hours
The Book of Revelation.....3 semester hours
The Bible and Modern Social Issues.....3 semester hours
Practical Public Speaking.....elective

Faculty members are drawn from the Church of God, International headquarters staff and will include Garner Ted Armstrong, Ronald L. Dart, Charles E. Groce, Bronson T. James, and Vance A. Stinson.

Arrangements for part-time work can be made for full-time students. Limited housing is also available for both single and married students. Housing will be allocated according to need and type of accommodations required. Costs and expenses will be discussed thoroughly in literature provided once an application is received.

Acceptance is not based on whether a person has a degree; however, high school graduates only should apply.

Applications for full-time students to attend the autumn 1995 semester of Imperial Academy are now available from:

**The Office of the Registrar
Imperial Academy
22525 State Highway 155 South
Flint, Texas 75762-9241**

Be sure to mention in your request you are interested in full-time attendance.

Imperial Academy Seminars

For those who are not prepared for full-time university level classes, the Church of God, International is again offering two one-week Imperial Academy seminars to be held at our headquarters campus.

Interested individuals can participate in either one of these programs or in both.

Starting August 13, 1995 and August 20, 1995, these short courses will focus on biblical subjects and practical Christian living.

The faculty for these seminars will be drawn from the same headquarters staff members who serve full-time students.

No high school or equivalency is required.

Seminar participants should prepare for a rigorous series of classes, lectures, and discussion groups compressed into a very busy week of activities.

Interested individuals will need to make plans to handle their own accommodations and meals. The Office of the Registrar may be able to assist.

Applications for Imperial Academy one week seminars are now available from:

**The Office of the Registrar
Imperial Academy
22525 State Highway 155 South
Flint, Texas 75762-9241**

Indicate in your request your interest in the week-long seminars and specify which week or both weeks you would like to attend.

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IRELAND

Where to Now?

Twenty-five years on, "The Troubles" in Ireland are hailed as over. Is a permanent solution to the "Irish question" in sight?

by James McBride

The much-vaunted "peace process" in Ireland-hailed triumphantly worldwide-remains shaky, rattled recently by the pedophile scandal which toppled the Irish coalition government.

A dozen questions still preoccupy the headlines. Will Ulster be absorbed into a united Ireland? Has the United Kingdom government made a "secret deal" with Dublin-or with Rome or Brussels? Is a Loyalist or Republican backlash likely? Will the Downing Street Declaration or the Framework Document bring lasting peace? Will the European Union-or the powerful U.S. Irish-American lobby or the Vatican-try to force a settlement contrary to the wishes of the million-strong Northern majority?

Just where events in this troubled part of the European Union are leading is still subject to much speculation!

The Irish situation has snapped at Britain's heels for centuries. But until now a secure and lasting solution has proved to be beyond the grasp of every involved politician. The volatile mix of social, racial and religious dissension seems beyond solution. This year's euphoric claims of peace are a delicate fruit that has not yet reached maturity!

All sound-minded persons desire an equitable and permanent solution. Yet sectarian interests may ensure that further bloodshed is always just around the corner.

The IRA (Irish Republican Army) and its various off-shoots claim to be committed to a "democratic" united Ireland. But smooth talk conceals the goal of the subjection of the North as but the initial step towards a totalitarian state ruled by the IRA thugs and their front men. The aim is to grab as much power and control by whatever means they can devise under the guise of nationalist self-determination.

The Roman Catholic man-in-the-street sees the island as holy, and his by God-given right. He can't rest until the Church is supreme throughout. A view which has the tacit support of the Catholic hierarchy. And the Northern Protestant majority maintain racial and religious roots "across the water" in mainland Britain. Their presence in Ireland, and their roots, stretch back a recorded fifteen centuries in some parts. They will struggle tooth and nail to retain these links.

Neither will budge from their entrenched positions.

The IRA remains an organization of fanatical terrorists, which-even post-ceasefire-seeks to control the nationalist areas by violent intimidation and exclusion. It is claimed that they are still acquiring arms. And to date have not relinquished any of an estimated two hundred tons of arms and explosives! Also, the island's Catholic majority will accept no alternative to one nation under Rome.

And the average Northern Protestant genuinely fears for his religious and personal liberty in an overwhelmingly Catholic Ireland with its, to them, alien culture. Recent events in the South have reinforced the notion that Rome still rules Dublin! They see that, since Partition in the 1920s, nine-tenths of Protestants have left the Irish Republic. This is viewed as a harbinger for Northern Protestants in a united Ireland. And they argue that there has been no credible condemnation of terrorists by the Catholic hierarchy. Yet Protestants, too, have their "iron shield" secreted in the back streets of the Shankill.

And so-impasse!

Let's examine a couple of the factors underlying this seemingly endless tragedy.

Divine Right

Consider first the territorial aspects. Has Ireland been God-given to anyone? To any race, any persuasion of Christian belief, to godless communism or to autocratic thuggery? Or the entire island to the Roman Catholics? There isn't any such "deed," of course! The argument that it is "one island" doesn't mean it must be one nation-as can be seen elsewhere in the world. Other nations live cheek by jowl quite amicably. Luxembourg is one twenty-sixth the size! And Ireland can hardly claim to be overcrowded!

As in any nation the territorial rights lie largely in the heart. And in Ireland-North and South-those rights are a burning issue fueled by religious instruction, ethnic, and social pressures from the cradle to the grave.

But there's an issue wider than any conviction of the human heart-no matter how fervent that conviction.

That added dimension is God!

Nations battle out their petty jealousies, their territorial ambitions, their greed, their revenge. They lose a million men as if playing a board-game. Billions of dollars of material and national infrastructure is destroyed to quench the desire of a power-mad dictator or to guard superpower interests. Or, as in Ireland, evil men and women- often hiding behind the skirts of religion, or some hypocritical notion of justice-intimidate individual "soft targets" (in reality, men and women with moms and dads and children) to achieve their territorial ambitions and nourish their lust for power. In man's world,

territory is gained, usually, by force of arms. Small nations survive by sufferance. Power is supreme.

But only to a point.

For it is in God's sovereign authority to distribute power on earth as He sees fit. Wrote the prophet Isaiah: "All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to him as less than nothing, and vanity" (Isaiah 40:17). If God determines to maintain the status quo, then no government, no band of terrorists, no popular uprising can alter the balance of power. Or if He desires change to accomplish His purposes, no power on earth can forestall Him!

Such is man's insignificance in contrast to the power and majesty of the Creator God!

Can We Learn From History?

The lessons of history are most instructive. But, sadly, these lessons are generally ignored in power politics.

Take, for example, the mighty ruler of ancient Babylon, King Nebuchad-nezzar. God toppled this powerful monarch from his position of eminence, "to the intent that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will, and sets up over it the basest of men" (Daniel 4:17).

Indeed, in vision this same potentate saw the destruction, by divine fiat, of the European Union we see developing before our eyes! (Request our free booklets, Europe and America in Prophecy and The United States of Europe-When?)

The apostle Paul took up the theme of God's sovereignty in addressing some philosophers in Athens. "God," he said, "has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). Catholic Ireland didn't exist when Paul penned these words! The Roman Church dominates in the Republic of Ireland in the South, and Protestantism in the North only until God allows change!

Have the men of violence in Ireland (and their "velvet glove"

representatives!)-Catholic or Protestant-yet learned this vital lesson of humility? Learned that God rules among men? That all who seek to govern will be held responsible for every decision, every action-even beyond the grave, in the Day of Judgment? And have the peace-seekers on both sides of the border absorbed this lesson?

On Whose Side?

Now consider the individual Christian of whatever creed. Is there a specific Bible promise that his particular faith will dominate the territory in which he lives? Can he in

faith pray that his God will respond positively to his prayer for a united Roman Ireland? Or a Protestant Ulster? Where, in the Bible, is that promise? Who does God support? Is this a proper matter, indeed, with which to petition God? Despite the rantings of demagogues?

Throughout the Christian centuries, political power has ebbed and flowed in favor of a variety of Christian persuasions. And of none.

Never, indeed, has there been "a Christian nation." No nation has ever been ruled over by a converted government guiding a converted nation! Not the Holy Roman Empire, not Spain, not the United Kingdom or the United States. And certainly not Ireland. The hidden corruption in that nation matches any western democracy!

The Christians of the first centuries wielded no political clout! They were dominated by a fierce, heartless, and oppressive military machine-the Roman Empire. Yet the earliest Christian writings urged the brethren to submit to the ruling powers! Notice again the words of that "militant" apostle, Paul: "Obey the government, for God is the one who has put it there. There is no government anywhere that God has not placed in power. So those who refuse to obey the laws of the land, are refusing to obey God, and punishment will follow" (Romans 13:1). And if the constituted authority fails in its exercise of justice, punishment will still follow-either in this life, or in the resurrection.

And Peter, the so-called "Prince of Apostles," and claimed by the Church of Rome as its foundation, adds: "For the Lord's sake obey every law of your government....It is God's will that your good lives should silence those who condemn the Gospel" (1 Peter 2:13-15).

Where does that place Ireland's men of violence-whether from the Falls or the Shankill? It's clear they totally lack a healthy fear of an all-powerful Creator God and His Holy Word! And where does that put those who-in Ireland or around the world-willingly support their evil ways? Any sympathy generated on either side on religious grounds is patently a callow attempt to manipulate either faction.

On whatever side of the religious divide lie these men of violence, they are clearly outside the pale of biblical Christian faith!

The Kingdom of God

But what is the source of this "territorial imperative"? How can the acquisition of territory be associated with the kind of Kingdom envisioned by Jesus Christ?

Much Christian thinking on the Kingdom of God is far removed from the teaching of Jesus and the apostles! It's a fundamental flaw to imagine that Jesus ever gave His church temporal authority over the kingdoms of this world, that the church has a right to dominate the world by force. Where a church has exercised authoritarian or covert (as is

alleged recently in the Republic of Ireland) control over government it has not been by divine mandate.

Let's briefly examine the teaching of Jesus on these questions. At the heart of the matter is His response to the interrogation of the Roman Procurator, Pilate, Jesus said: "My Kingdom is not of this world: if my Kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews" (John 18:36).

It was not the purpose of Jesus at that time to set up an earthly Kingdom! And many years after Jesus had returned to heaven, the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). Are you flesh and blood? Then there's no way you, even though now "saved," can at this time inherit a part in God's Kingdom!

(You are invited to write for a free copy of our 28-page booklet, What Is the Kingdom of God? Also, write for Is the Kingdom of God Here-Now? They clearly explain what the Kingdom of God is not-and what it is.)

Mandate For Peace

Christians, then, belong to a Kingdom that is not of this world. Territorially it is yet future. Spiritually its influence is powerful and pervasive in the daily lives of its citizens. The church expands like leaven-the slow, gradual, peaceful spread of its divine essence through generations and through centuries. It has, despite the bloody history of so-called Christianity, no mandate for achieving its aims by violent means (II Corinthians 10:4).

Rather, the church built by Jesus Christ is commissioned to wield the power of the Holy Spirit of God. And that power bears the kind of fruit so sorely needed in the troubled island of Ireland. The apostle Paul explains: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22). Against such virtue there is no law!

Every truly converted Christian has these virtues-at least in embryo-at the core of his being. What if each and every Ulster Protestant were willing to express these fruits "under the heel" of a Catholic dominated united Ireland? What if each Irish Catholic were to daily live by them in the far from repressive regime of Northern Ireland? What if they lived side-by-side as tolerant neighbors? Indeed, if these virtues are not in evidence, can the citizens of Ireland claim true conversion?

And what if their spiritual and temporal leaders were to set this kind of example?

That would be real Christianity!

There can be no lasting peace in Ireland until its citizens and friends abroad bow the knee to the kind of Christianity taught by Jesus Christ. True Christianity finds expression at this time through the fruits of the Spirit in the lives of individual Christians.

The lesson of two thousand years of Christian distortion is that carnal men will continue to cling to their power games. The real gospel of Jesus Christ will continue to be ignored. And, as long as the present population mix continues, a permanent solution to "the Irish question" will remain an idealist's dream.

A form of peace may from time to time blow over the face of this fair island. But for the two nations the long-term outlook is none too secure. Men have woven a tangled web of political and religious intrigue that has produced a tattered and ugly tapestry.

United Ireland Coming

Ahead, for the world, lies a time of unprecedented disturbance. United by an irresistible religious force, the Scriptures prophesy a one-world government. That force will enmesh- by deception and by duress- the entirety of mankind in the worship of Satan. Centered in Europe, but with its power-base in Jerusalem, it will dominate the world.

Ireland will not escape! Indeed, because it is already slavishly devoted to the papacy and to the Virgin Mary, her people will enthusiastically embrace the new world religion. Given the Vatican's total involvement in the coming new world religion, the enforced unity in Ireland is inevitable. All who reject the "new" religion will be ruthlessly expelled or exterminated as during the Middle Ages. Ireland will, then, be "united"!

Together with the bulk of mankind-those who "bore the mark of the beast and worshipped its image" (Revelation 16:2)-they will be subject to the "seven last plagues" that engulf rebellious mankind just after the return of Jesus Christ. Few will live through those dark days to enter into the newly established Kingdom of God.

Hope Ahead

But there is hope. Jesus firmly stated, "I will come again." It is His imminent return as King of kings that will initiate a lasting solution for troubled Ireland and her people. He calls on His people to pray "Your Kingdom come." Everyone who bears the name of Christ is called upon to willingly submit to the government under which he or she lives, while expressing faith and love in a practical way to all-whether "church or chapel."

It's unlikely that before His coming there will be perfect harmony between the two communities in Ireland. But you as an individual can act with courage to express the mind of Christ in your daily life. If you profess Him as Lord-as do so many in Ireland-He will, in the Judgment, ask how you (and not your Catholic or Protestant neighbor) lived out your profession of faith. Happily, the undoubted talents of the Irish-free from the taint of apostasy-will eventually find place in God's plan for mankind. For in Ezekiel 48 is a geographical description of Palestine restored fully to Israel under Jesus Christ.

(For a survey of events prophesied for the years ahead, you are invited to write for our free brochure, *Could Christ Return Tonight?*)

The historical evidence points to the Irish people as descendants, largely, of the Israelite tribe of Dan. They were anciently notorious for their idolatry-idolatry deeply engraved in their heart to this day! Dan was also known for their restless wandering (Deuteronomy 33:22), and of course they are today of influence in many nations.

The future of Ireland in these latter days is also discussed in Genesis 49: "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that his rider falls backward. I wait for your salvation, O Lord" (verses 16-18).

Dan to this day is a distinct nation, as says the prophecy. Around the world the Irish are deeply involved in the judiciary. And for centuries they have lain in the path of the British, snapping at her heels, causing her to dismount from her rule over the island. There is no indication this will be resolved!

Indeed when it comes to the time of the end there is a notable prophetic omission concerning Dan. Following the coming tribulation visited on the modern descendants of ancient Israel, and as the heavens literally crash around us, God sends a powerful angelic being to "seal"-symbolic of conversion as a result of his ministry-144,000 of the sons of Israel (Revelation 7:1-8). But no Danite is among them!

Anciently, the tribe of Dan was one of the four leading tribes ("the Camp of Dan"-Numbers 2:25-31) of Israel.

Dan shall indeed "wait for his salvation."

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Japan

Supergiant of the Orient

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by Garner Ted Armstrong

TOKYO, February, 1995.

As I arrived in Tokyo's Narita airport once again, this time accompanied by the Business Manager of the Church of God, International, Mr. Benny Sharp, I learned that Mikhail Gorbachev had also just arrived, hosted by a private international environmental group called "Green Cross Internation-al."

Mr. Gorbachev is here to urge "a green civilization," according to the Tokyo Times English language edition. Well he might. The Japanese, like a massive fire ant mound of hurrying, scurrying, frenetically busy creatures, have burgeoned into one of the true world superpowers in the past few decades. In doing so, they have found themselves choked with eye-smarting, lung-burning smog, intolerable traffic jams, polluted rivers and streams, massive waste problems, and face considerable international outrage for their killing of whales and dolphins, long-line fishing, and overfishing in the Pacific and around the world.

Japan is viewed by many as an environmental gangster. Who has not seen video tape of "Greenpeace" attempts to board Japanese whalers, or to stop the bloody slaughter of thousands of dolphins along the coasts of Hokkaido? Another of the first things to greet my eyes was the debate in the Japanese Diet about sending Japanese troops to the Golan Heights as part of a U.N. peacekeeping force! If the spectre of armed Japanese troops appearing in the Mideast serves to startle many Americans, think what such events portray to Indonesians, Australians, Filipinos, Koreans, Taiwanese, and Chinese. There are many who say Japan will revert to a military government within another decade.

Since the late 1950s, I shouted to audiences of thousands, and continually said on my television broadcasts, as well as having written in the pages of our publications, that a new amendment to the German and Japanese Constitu-tions would eventually open the way for participation by both countries in foreign wars-all nicely under the aegis of the United Nations, at first.

As it turns out, a major constitutional battle was not necessary. In both cases, a mere "reinterpretation" of the existing constitutions was sufficient. Now, both the Wehrmacht and the Japanese "SDF" (Self-Defense Forces -soon to be renamed) may participate globally.

This growing trend toward military participation in global "peacekeeping" is not the result of an insidious plot by secret agencies of either government. It is the natural outgrowth of the inability of the United States to continue to finance the lions' share of peacekeeping efforts, and the continual strident cry by American politicians for the Germans and Japanese to "contribute their fair share." Those words will come back to haunt us.

Resurgent Japan

Modern Japan is a throbbing, pulsating, busy, industrious nation of hard-working people who have risen from the ashes and radioactive rubble of Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki to become a true supergiant of industry and finance.

There are no empty buildings here in Tokyo, save those just now under construction. There are no abandoned, boarded-up, derelict rows of old red brick apartments; no rubble-strewn vacant lots, as in so many sagging American cities. From the rooftops of high-rise buildings (where one encounters parking lots, tennis courts, restaurants-not one inch is wasted) to vast, multi-storied underground shopping malls throughout Tokyo and other cities, one encounters the inescapable fact of the comparatively small size of this country, heavily burdened by a vibrant, and rapidly-growing, population.

In order to understand how the Japanese have risen to enjoy the world's highest standard of living; how they have become the financial capital of the world; how and why their growing military might is only the beginning, one must understand what led to Pearl Harbor, and the war between Japan and the United States that broke out on December 7, 1941.

Conflicting Geopolitical Interests

The geopoliticians of the pre-World War II era understood correctly that geography is a major influence of international relations.

The United States, separated by thousands of miles of oceans from Europe and Asia, was destined by geographical realities to become a major maritime power. Japan, across the Pacific, was a growing maritime power, a "bicycle economy," leaping headlong from ancient feudalism into a modern industrial nation.

With the acquisition of the Philippines resulting from the Spanish-American War, the U.S. joined the Dutch, British, and Chinese as major competitors of the Japanese in Southeast Asia. As Japan expanded, she sought ever larger sources of raw materials to

satisfy the needs of her people. Tin, iron, rubber, aluminum, cobalt, copper, molybdenum, nickel, cement, potash, and oil-especially oil-were desperately needed in quantity.

As Japan sought to capture more sources of supply, she naturally found herself blocked by the British in Hong Kong, Burma, Singapore, and Brunei, not to mention Crown Colonies in New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Solomons, and Australia.

The "Dutch East Indies," as Indonesia was then named, represented vast resources, including substantial oil deposits. The Philippines, dominated by the U.S., with large military installations such as the naval base at Cavite, Corregedor, and many airfields, sat directly athwart any hoped-for Japanese advance to the south.

The French had colonized "Indochina," which possessed large rubber plantations, along with many other raw materials.

Once Japan joined Germany and Italy to form the infamous "axis" powers, and had invaded China, it was inevitable that the Dutch, British, and Americans would seek to stop any further Japanese advances in the region.

It was the American trade embargo against Japan, and the freezing of Japanese assets in U.S. banks which precipitated the Japanese attack against Pearl Harbor. They had no intention of invading the Hawaiian Islands, but only intended the destruction of as much of the U.S. Pacific Fleet as possible, to give them time to move south, gobbling up vital resources.

World War II, for all the incredible waste of human life, resources, and money, solved nothing. Inevitably, as Japan grew stronger, she once again became expansionist. This time, however, it was Japanese businessmen, not Japanese naval aviators, who launched the attacks.

As one of the world's most vibrant giants of commerce and industry, Japan is now poised on the brink of becoming, once again, one of the largest military powers in the world. As the authors of the sensational book, *The Coming War With Japan*, George Friedman and Meredith Lebard (St. Martin's Press, 1991) point out, it is geopolitically inevitable that U.S. interests and Japanese interests collide.

In fact, numerous collisions have already occurred, and are continuing to occur as I write.

In 1987, the U.S. imposed 100 percent tariffs on Japanese electronic products in retaliation for perceived unfair trade practices. In the last few years, the U.S. has found itself in increasing conflict with large and important Asian powers: Japan, in an ongoing series of harsh wars of words over trade; China, in U.S. charges that the Chinese government is not doing enough to stop high-tech piracy of CDs and computer software; and North Korea, in sabre-rattling over the North's suspected nuclear weapons program.

In late February, it was announced that the U.S. and China had averted a major trade war by only minutes, when the Chinese government finally satisfied the U.S. that they were taking suitable steps to prevent massive piracy of American high-tech goods.

But the recent spate of disagreements between the U.S. and China pale into insignificance alongside the decades-long trade disputes between the U.S. and Japan.

From the World's Leading Creditor to the World's Largest Debtor

Soon after World War II, General Douglas MacArthur warned that the Japanese penchant for hard work would eventually propel Japan forward against an America whose citizens were "consumed with the desire for less work and more luxury."

Even today, the average Japanese worker puts in two hundred hours more per year on the job than his American counterpart. As a natural consequence of this national work ethic, the average Japanese saves enough to take care of himself and his family in his old age. Thus, the social welfare programs that eat up such a huge portion of the American tax base are virtually nonexistent in Japan. It was only very recently that Japanese businesses considered Saturday as a day off; that workers did not work six days a week.

Short-sighted, ignorant American politicians seem intent on clubbing Japan over the head ("Japan bashing" is repeatedly mentioned in the Japanese press, and by authors of sensational books about the U.S. and Japanese rivalries) to force its citizens to work less, save less, consume more, and eventually adopt all the horrible American social ills that threaten to destroy the very fabric of American society.

The Japanese people are hardly interested in adopting such disastrous policies. As a race, they are contemptuous of those who refuse to be educated; who drop out of school, give birth to a number of illegitimate children, and then expect the government to take care of them. Literacy in Japan is virtually 100 percent. Average number of years in formal schooling is twelve. Japanese children grow up expecting to work, and all their education is in preparation for a lifetime of work. Hence, far larger numbers of Japanese students opt for science and engineering, mathematics, languages, and the like than their American counterparts.

Over 82 percent of the Japanese population has been born since 1959. This new Japan has no special reason to love America, in spite of adoption of many Western customs. Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and "the bomb" are deeply ingrained in Japanese consciousness. Their humiliating defeat in World War II is not conducive to a national guilt complex, nor does it mean they automatically feel subservient to America.

Here in Japan, there is a growing wave of anti-Americanism. Many Japanese deeply resent the adoption of Western clothing, foods, music, and life-styles by younger Japanese. How well I remember, more than a decade ago, being met face to face with this growing groundswell of anti-Americanism. Some aides and I were told, repeatedly,

"Japanese only," when we assayed to enter several different Japanese restaurants. One example of American inability to understand the Japanese is in the dispute over Japanese government subsidies for rice. Nothing illustrates the obvious more than taking a drive along the western limits of Tokyo, where long lines of modern high-rise apartments and office buildings flank the immediate and startling transition from huge, throbbing city to the quiet of water-soaked, ancient rice paddies.

Think about it.

Until a part of the Japanese economic bubble burst in the late 1980s when real estate prices came tumbling down, Tokyo real estate was the highest priced on earth. There is a story about how the Australians decided to sell off part of the compound that originally housed their embassy in Tokyo, and house their personnel in a modern high-rise. So incredibly pricy was the excess land they sold that they paid off the Australian national debt with the proceeds!

So how can huge, twenty-story, high-rise buildings stand directly across the street from rice paddies? Obviously, there is no way on the good green earth rice, as a cash crop, could yield even a fraction of the cost of one suite of offices on the twelfth floor of such buildings.

The answer?

Rice holds a very ancient, and mystical, place in Japanese thought; in Japanese art, literature, and history. It is the staff of life, and is at the most ancient roots of Japanese history and religion. Millions of farm boys who grew up on those rice paddies went off to war in the 1940s, many of them never to return. Rice-growing is not thought of as some menial, unwanted necessity, but as one of the most noble of endeavors.

Hence, very large government subsidies for Japanese rice farmers.

Not understanding this (or not caring if they do), the American Rice-Growing and Miller's Association has repeatedly lobbied against these Japanese farm subsidies, resenting the fact that Japanese rice growers can earn several times as much money for their rice as American rice growers are paid for the very small amounts of rice exported to Japan.

It is another example of East meets West; how most Westerners fail to understand the workings of the Japanese mind.

Today, modern Japan looms as a true supergiant of industry, economic strength, and, as the next few years will prove, towering military strength.

All ten of the largest banks in the world are Japanese. One of the leading securities firms in Japan, Nomura, is twenty times larger than Merrill-Lynch. Eight out of ten of the skyscrapers making up Los Angeles' skyline are Japanese owned. The Japanese own

major American landmarks in New York, Chicago, Dallas, and Houston; many other large American cities. Golf resorts, luxury hotels, from dozens of them in the Hawaiian Islands to many, many more from California to Florida, are owned by the Japanese.

Only a forty-minute drive to the north of my home near Tyler, Texas, is a newly rebuilt golf resort called "Garden Valley," flanking Interstate 20. It is Japanese owned. So incredibly expensive are memberships in Japanese golf clubs, that Japanese businessmen and their wives can fly from Japan to Dallas, drive to Garden Valley, spend a week playing golf, then return to Japan for less money than they would spend at a Japanese golf resort. Average green fees run something like \$350.00 in Japan, where a simple logo T-shirt in the airport coast \$100.00. Now, U.S. dollars are the "funny money" of Japanese and European tourists. A few years ago, such a couple would have paid 127 yen to buy one U.S. dollar. Today, they pay barely over 90 yen to buy one U.S. dollar. Similar comparisons could be made by those who purchase dollars with Swiss francs or German marks.

Japanese businesses are towering monoliths of gigantic economic proportions. A few cases in point:

One Japanese communications company, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, is worth more than IBM, AT&T, General Motors, and General Electric combined. More than one million Americans now work for Japanese companies in the United States. The entire American labor force must work one month of each year to offset the amount owed on the interest we must pay the Japanese on our debt.

Will Sanctions Ever Be Imposed Against the United States?

Americans are well accustomed to the United States swinging its weight around in the world. From the end of World War II, with Americans occupying a defeated Germany and reigning supreme as the world's only nuclear power, the United States was able to impose its will upon dozens of lesser nations. Even to the present moment, notwithstanding the enormous debt burden of the United States, we continually hear of U.S. foreign policy involving imposing "sanctions" or even outright trade embargoes against nations perceived to be guilty of anything from a violation of human rights to waging repugnant wars to pirating U.S. CDs and computer software.

Thus, when we heard of the United States imposing sanctions upon warring Bosnians, sanctions against a North Korea suspected of launching a nuclear arms program, massive sanctions against Iran and Iraq, and threatened sanctions and/or outright embargoes against China for piracy, it was business as usual.

The United States, for the past several decades, has been able to "discipline" third-world nations perceived as delinquent in their debt payments, or in other ways incurring U.S. displeasure.

But as the world has moved more toward globalism in world trade; as nations have become more and more interdependent; as GATT, WTO moves toward a "level playing field" in global markets, the United States may find itself beginning to feel the same kind of pain it has inflicted upon other lesser nations in the past.

The gradual strengthening of the Japanese yen and the weakening of the U.S. dollar will eventually exact a fearsome toll.

"The combination of continued U.S. trade deficits, wider use of the yen as an international currency, and growing American government budget deficits is likely to reinforce a structurally strong yen and weak dollar" (Yen! by Daniel Burstein, page 56).

Only a few years ago, during the Bush Administration, the yen had hovered around 127 to the dollar. Today it is somewhere around 97 to one! While a weaker dollar has helped Americans become more competitive with foreign traders and investors, one cannot expect this situation to continue indefinitely without retaliation. Burstein writes: "At some point soon the Japanese suppliers of America's desperately needed capital transfusions will insist on being paid back in yen, just as American banks today insist on being repaid in U.S. dollars when they lend money to foreign countries whose own currencies are unstable" (Yen! page 56).

The following quote is an absolute chilling scenario: "American workers will be forced to work harder, produce more, and live less well in order to obtain the yen needed to pay off foreign debts" (Yen! page 56, emphasis mine). Burstein continues: "Inflicting that pain on Americans is already a conscious goal of an increasingly influential section of the Japanese business community."

Declares Takashi Hosomi, former chairman of the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan: "The basic rule for debtor nations is to pay their borrowings back in real terms and feel the pain of accumulating debts irresponsibly...in that dangerous debtor's prison of tomorrow, an emboldened Japan will hold America's feet to the fire to get paid what it is owed and to reap the rewards of its investments. American politicians will no longer think about 'punishing' Japan for offenses to our standards of fair trade. Instead they will have their work cut out for them to avoid being 'punished' themselves by Japanese bankers imposing international monetary fund-style austerity measures on us just as American bankers now do in the third world.

"Some Japanese experts are already predicting such an outcome. 'The United States will have to follow a set of austerity measures similar, in some sense, to those imposed by the IMF on the debt-ridden countries,' forecast a Nomura research institute report.

"If such a scenario unfolds, a broad spectrum of Americans will learn very quickly what it means that Japan is now the world's most powerful creditor nation and the United States its biggest debtor" (Yen! page 57).

In our cover story of Twentieth Century WATCH, for February, 1992, which featured a squadron of Japanese-built F-15 Fighter-bombers with the rising sun on their wings, I mentioned a joke that was then making the rounds in Tokyo. The jokes went: "How will Japan win the next war?" Answer: "We'll get together with the Germans again, but we'll leave the Italians out of it."

I concluded: "If you and I continue to see the obtuse, short-sighted, uninformed American attitude of 'Japan bashing,' blaming Japan, not ourselves, our industrialists, our unions, our government and our workers for our incredible economic plight; if we see our citizens electing officials who seek protectionism, then look out!

"Protectionism...would mean instant retaliation by the Japanese, who would simply disappear as the heaviest purchaser of U.S. debt. Then, the American economy would collapse into another 'great depression.' Such a collapse would pull other economies down with it-eventually that of Japan, as well! "Then would come massive upheavals; violent overthrow of moderate, democratic governments; a turn toward dictatorships, kings, and emperors. Once again, martial law; militarism, the stamp of hundreds of thousands of booted feet; the roar of aircraft; the rumble of parading battle tanks would be heard from Berlin to Tokyo.

"The people of the Philippines, Australia, and the entire Pacific Rim would hear the thunder, and wonder. America would be facing, once again, from the same kinds of mistakes she made in the 1930s, a gigantic military power across the Pacific, in a bizarre repetition of events which led directly to World War II!"

Watch Japan!

Editor's note: As we go to press, the U.S. dollar has plummeted to an all-time post-World War II low against a strengthening yen, creating shockwaves throughout the world's financial markets.

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The Real Reasons Christ Came To This Earth

In the previous two installments, we looked at several reasons why Christ did not come to this earth, as well as several reasons why He did. This month, in the third and final part of this series, we will continue looking at the real reasons for Christ's first coming.

by Garner Ted Armstrong

Jesus Christ Came To Build His Church

The English word church is mostly misunderstood, misapplied, and distorted from the Greek original. To most people a "church" is a building. Or, it is a "denomination," such as the "Catholic Church," or the "Baptist Church," or the "Methodist Church."

To many, it means a religious organization of one name or another. Most people would say: "We're going to go to church today," meaning, go to the building, probably with its traditional steeple, stained-glass windows, bell tower, pews, and altar.

But the Greek word connoted none of the above.

Instead, the word ekklesia meant, simply, "assembly," or "group."

Jesus Christ is the One Who called, taught, commissioned, and formed His disciples together into a group, or assembly of men, who would then be responsible for proclaiming the good news of His kingdom to the world. As a result of their powerful witness, some few people among the masses would respond to the calling of God, and would repent of their sins, ask for baptism, and begin to live a new and different way of life. They would become "new creatures in Christ" (II Corinthians 5:17).

To care for these newly-begotten children of God, Christ established His ekklesia, His "group" of disciples, giving to them a two-part COMMISSION! Read what He said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

He prophesied: "And this gospel [advance good news!] of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end [the end of civilization as we know it; the end of an age, and the dawning of a new age-the Kingdom of God on earth] come" (Matthew 24:14). Christ never relinquished the Headship of the church! He promised He would be continually present with it, leading, guiding, correcting, inspiring. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Notice how Paul wrote that God had placed Christ "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church [the "assembly" of called-out individuals]. Which is His body [in metaphor], the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:21-23).

Christ, Who was the Creator (John 1), "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead: that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:15-18).

Today, some mortal, puny, temporal men claim to be the "head of the church"! In one rather well-known case, the person who has the "preeminence" is called "Holy Father" (a blasphemous title; see Matthew 23:9), and is worshiped, claiming "infallibility."

But Jesus Christ alone is to be worshiped, and only God is our "Father" in a spiritual sense.

For further understanding about the church, about Christ as the Rock upon which the church is founded, and about Peter's role in the church of the first century, write or call for our free booklet *Where Is the True Church?* and the surprising article, "Did Peter Have The Primacy?"

Christ called, trained, then commissioned His disciples, who became a part of the foundation of the church: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners [Paul told the Gentiles], but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone; In Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: In Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 1:19-22).

Yet, millions of professing Christians suppose the "Old Testament is done away," and pay no attention to the prophets of the Bible.

But your God and your Savior insists they are part of the foundational building blocks of the true church!

Why did Jesus call His "group" of disciples, and ordain them, sending ("apostle" merely means "one sent," or "a messenger") them into all the world?

He told them the primary purpose for their calling was to preach the good news of His coming world-ruling government, His Kingdom, to the nations of the world! Their first commission was evangelism, and their second commission was to "feed the flock" of converted people who would repent at their preaching.

That remains the function of God's church today!

Christ Came To Set An Example

Jesus Christ kept His Father's commandments. He lived an absolutely perfect, sin-free life, filled with God's Holy Spirit without measure from birth (John 3:34).

He told His disciples: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10). John wrote of Him: "He that saith, 'I know Him,' and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk [live], even as He walked [lived]" (I John 2:4-6).

This is one of the many Bible definitions of a Christian: "Live as Christ lived"-follow His example.

Paul wrote: "Be ye followers of me [Greek: "imitators"], even as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1).

The example of Christ included His many sufferings, rejections, and persecutions. He promised His disciples: "If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you," and predicted, "Yea, the time cometh that they who kill you will think they do God a service."

Following the example of Christ clearly meant more than living a good life. It meant suffering, if God so willed, the consequences of living that life-the rage, hatred, rejection, and persecution from others.

Peter wrote: "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:19-21).

Such conduct goes far beyond that of most professing Christians today.

The world of "churchianity" is filled with backbiting, accusing, persecuting, name-calling, labeling, blame-placing, rumor-mongering, and scurrilous attacks by various groups and individuals against other individuals or religious groups. Many little groups are organized for the very purpose of doing nothing but muckraking, scandalizing, accusing, maligning, persecuting.

Many "professing Christians," like so many Yorkshire hogs at the slop trough, cannot wait to get their hands on the latest gossip, rumors, scandals, and vicious attacks against this or that group. They feed on scandal the way hogs feed on slop, thus continually feeling scandalized and outraged at others. In this way, they bask in the self-deceived comfort of pointing the finger away from self, at others.

Like practitioners of Islam, engaging in Jihad, or "Holy War" against their enemies, many professing Christians feel it is their "holy" duty to attack others.

All such activity is satanic, and not remotely influenced or guided by the Holy Spirit. It is antithetical to the life, teachings, and example of Jesus Christ.

At the final Passover, Jesus Christ washed His disciples' feet. After doing so, He seated Himself, and said: "Ye call Me 'Master' [Teacher] and Lord, and so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than His Lord; neither He that is sent greater than He that sent Him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:13-17).

Millions of professing Christians completely ignore God's annual Sabbaths; His Holy Days, such as the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Tabernacles. They suppose all such observances were somehow "done away." But Christ did not perform such rites to "do away" with them, but to set us an example that we should DO them.

When would the disciples have been obedient to His commands to wash one another's feet? They did not do so right then, for Christ had already washed them.

Their first opportunity would have been exactly one year later at the Passover (Lord's Supper)!

That they continued this practice is proved in your Bible. Year after year, God's people continued to observe the Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan, just as Jesus Christ had. It took centuries for the apostate, great false church (Revelation 17:1-6) to stamp out this practice, often by force of arms. Those who continued to follow Christ's example were labeled "Fourteenthers," because of their tenacity in sticking to the "faith once delivered," and observing the Lord's Supper exactly when Christ observed it. The Latin label for them was "Quartodecimans."

Paul, writing to Gentile Christians in the late 50s, AD, over twenty years after the resurrection of Christ, was still teaching Gentile Christians-not "Jews"-to keep the Lord's Supper!

He wrote: "For I received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, 'Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.' After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, 'This cup is the New Testament [the New Covenant, or New Will] in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it [and it was a memorial occasion, done once each year, on the anniversary of the event], in remembrance of Me. For as often [once each year] as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come'" (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

Christ has not come yet. Therefore, the observance of the rites of the "Lord's Supper," instituted by Jesus Christ at the last Passover, are still binding upon God's people-those who profess Christ-today! For a thorough understanding of this vital subject, write or call immediately for our free booklet, The Passover-Is It For Christians?

Millions "profess" Jesus. Millions say they "believe on Him." But they will NOT OBEY Him. They will NOT DO WHAT HE SAID.

He cried out: "Why call ye Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Christ set us an example, that we are to follow in His steps. Are you one who follows His example?

Jesus Christ Came To Qualify As Your High Priest

Jesus Christ came to become our High Priest, making daily intercession for us with God. Notice how clearly this is set forth:

"For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for God in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but that he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:1-4).

Here, Paul explains the function of a priest, showing how the priests under the Aaronic line were selected by God to serve as intermediaries for those who came to offer "gifts and sacrifices." He fully explains how such men were, themselves, afflicted with human weaknesses ("compassed with infirmity"), and so could empathize with those who came to them. Now, notice the context of this entire passage, and its central Figure: "So also

Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest; but He that said unto Him, 'Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee.' As He saith also in another place, 'Thou [Christ!] art a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. Who [Christ!] in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared: Though He were a Son [Christ!], yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:6-8).

Jesus Christ was ordained a High Priest "after the order of Melchisedec," or according to the rank, or designated time of service, of Melchisedec. Who was Melchisedec? He was the One of the Divine Family in heaven who appeared to Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20); the One who was to "empty Himself" (Philippians 2:5-8); Who was to be made flesh (John 1:1-14), and to "tabernacle" among humankind. To Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He was "Yahweh," or "Jehovah," or "I AM." Today, to you and me, He is "Jesus Christ," or Jesus, Who is the Christ, or the Messiah, the Anointed One. He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father in heaven as your daily High Priest.

Again, contrasting the human priesthood of Aaron and the Levites with the spiritual, eternal Priesthood of Melchisedec, Paul writes: "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another Priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal [physical] commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For He testifieth, 'Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec'" (Hebrews 7:14-17).

A human priest could empathize with worshipers and supplicants to some degree, and was "compassed with infirmity,"

But Jesus Christ can actually feel our infirmities, for He suffered through them, was "tempted in every point" as we are!

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace [undeserved, unearned pardon!] to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The ministry of Christ's true church is not a priesthood. NEVER is it necessary to obtain absolution, or a feeling of forgiveness and relief of spiritual burdens by "confession" of our sins to some other human being! Jesus Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God, waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool (Acts 2:33-36). He is alive (Revelation 1:18), and is right beside His Father.

He acts as the "counsel for the defense" before God when we go to the throne of grace to confess our sins and faults, and ask for forgiveness. Satan, on the other hand, is like the

"prosecuting attorney," who is called "the accuser of the brethren," who "accuses them before God, day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

When we pray to God our Father "in the name" of Jesus Christ, we establish a private, deeply personal conduit, like our own special "frequency," or wave length, to God.

To fully understand and appreciate Christ's function as our High Priest, write or call for a free sermon tape, "Jesus, Our Friend."

Millions of professing Christians suppose they must divulge every secret sin to a human priest. Others, equally deceived, believe they must confess sins to a human minister, thus allowing that man to be placed between them and Jesus Christ.

But there is no human being on earth who is qualified to stand between you and Jesus Christ!

You never need ask "permission" to go to Christ.

You never need worry about being in the "good graces" of some man or woman in order to be in the good graces of Christ. There is not a single human being on earth, in any nation, that has any say-so whatsoever concerning your personal spiritual life-your confession-your prayers!

There is no more intense, personal, deeply private relationship possible than that between you and your Savior; your soon-coming King, and your daily High Priest, Jesus Christ!

Christ Came to Offer Himself A Sacrifice For the Sins of the World

The favorite scripture of millions is only partially understood: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Many repeat this scripture endlessly, like a spiritual talisman. Some venture to plaster the name and numbers on T-shirts, hats, jackets; on billboards, bumper stickers, and rocks along the highway. Some paint it on cloth, then position themselves so cameras at major sports events like golf tournaments or football games will photograph it, thus believing they are somehow helping to "spread the gospel."

But this passage is not to be cheapened by being paraded about, or worn on clothing. It is one of the most beautiful, and profound, scriptures in the Bible.

First, it obviously identifies the Father of Jesus Christ, using the Greek word Theos, translated "God."

Jesus continually spoke of His Father in heaven. He said: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:37,38).

Calling Himself the "living bread" that came down from heaven, He spoke in metaphor of the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, as well as the daily Christian life of allowing Christ to dwell in human hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me [in metaphor] even he shall live by Me" (John 6:57).

Christ said the Father directed His every work; that the Father "dwelt" in Him; that none could come to Jesus Christ except the Father drew him. Notice the profound import of John 3:16. "Theos so loved the world, meaning sinning, lost human beings, that He gave His only begotten Son." The Greek Theos is the same as the Hebrew Elohim. For a full understanding of the nature of the Divine Sovereign, write or call for our free booklet, *God Is Not A Trinity*.

Now, notice the rest of the verse: "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but [as an opposite, contrasted to "perishing"] should have everlasting life."

Yet, millions assume this beautiful verse is wrong. They cling to their superstitions, which come down to us from Plato and Socrates and other pagan philosophers-that of the "immortality of the soul."

To countless professing Christians, the verse implies, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not live forever in hell, but live forever in heaven!" But the Bible says perish. The same word would be used of canned fruit that "perished," or of "perishable" foods, like fruits and vegetables.

If you read of an airliner crash wherein over one hundred people perished, you know they died. In some cases, only tiny fragments, of what moments before had been living human beings, are left.

Here, two opposites are presented. To reject Christ means we perish, cease to exist, go to the grave, die. To believe in Jesus Christ, to obey God, and to believe what Jesus said results in eternal life, the opposite of "perishing."

The greatness of God's love toward His creatures is illustrated by the ultimate gift He could give us: the death of His own Beloved Son. Paul wrote: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

By repenting with broken hearts, then being baptized (which is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, as well as a symbol of the death of our old, sinful

selves, then the resurrection of the "new man," or the "new creature in Christ") and by receiving the begetting of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 5:32), we become the children of God.

We repent of sin, which is the breaking of God's laws. Baptism symbolizes the claim over our lives by the penalty for sin, which is death (Romans 6:23). But God substitutes the death of Christ, who died to pay the penalty for sin, in our stead.

"Therefore we are buried [in water, temporarily, in baptism] with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk [live] in newness of life. For if we have been planted together [as in a grave] in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man [the old self, with its carnal attitudes and sin] is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ [in symbol], we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:4-11).

Study this entire chapter (Romans 6). It is the "baptism" chapter, and filled with profound meaning. By repenting and being baptized, we are "justified" with God; we have had all past guilt removed. Justification means forgiveness of sins that are past, not a present, and continual "condition" of the Christian.

Having been forgiven for breaking God's laws, we now, through the power of the Holy Spirit (for we could never accomplish it on our own), live a life of obedience to God and His laws.

As Paul wrote: "But now being made free from sin [by forgiveness], and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life [two diametric opposites!] through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:22,23).

As in John 3:16, here are two complete opposites. The one, death, or "perishing," and the other, eternal life.

Paul also wrote: "Christ died to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (I Timothy 1:15).

Millions know Christ "died to save sinners," yet do not know what sin is (I John 3:4), and do not have the faintest idea that, once forgiven for sin, which is the breaking of God's Ten Command-ments, they should begin living a life of obedience to God's Ten Command-ments. Of course, the millions have no special quarrel with God's laws against stealing, murdering, dishonoring one's parents, or lying-it is the Fourth Commandment they absolutely hate. For a full understanding of God's Ten Commandments, of how the

whole world would change if a nation obeyed even one of them, write for our free booklet, The Ten Commandments.

Jesus Christ died. He said so! "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [hades, the grave] and of death" (Revelation 1:18). Many major church denominations deny this. They insist Christ did not die; that only His body died, but that He descended into hell, preaching to demons! They completely misinterpret the scriptures of I Peter 3:19,20; II Peter 2:4,5; and Jude 6.

In those scriptures, it is clear that the One Who became Christ witnessed against the "angels that sinned" during the flood. The word hell is from the Greek tartaroo, used only once in all the Bible, which means a condition or place of restraint. The Bible shows Satan and his demons were cast down from heaven; that the demons are bound to this earth. When the flood waters prevailed on earth, and all humanity had been destroyed save eight people in the ark, the One Who became Christ, the Logos of the Divine Family in heaven witnessed against them of the coming destruction of the earth by fire (II Peter 3:10-12).

Instead, major denominations set aside Christ's own words, deny He was truly dead, and claim He was preaching to "lost souls" in "hell" during the three days and three nights in the tomb!

But unless Jesus Christ died, unless He was truly dead and buried, you and I have no Savior! The wages of sin is death, not eternal life in some other state of being (Romans 6:23).

But Jesus' death was not the only part of His sacrifice. His sacrifice did not consist of the twenty-four hours or so of beatings, scorn and ridicule, and final agony on the stake.

The prophecies said of Christ: "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness [He was not outstanding, humanly; was not a striking-looking, or handsome, man]; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2).

Again, millions are completely ignorant of this important prophecy about Christ. They suppose He was an outstandingly handsome man; a striking, attractive, comely person. They believe they could easily spot Him in a crowd of a hundred thousand, for He would be dressed in a white robe, with a shepherd's crook and a little lamb in His arms; light brown hair, softly cascading over His shoulders; small, neat mustache and full, pointed beard; high forehead, with neat, chiseled nose, intense, deep-set eyes of brown, with a distant, contemplative stare.

Go to any Bible book store, and look at the favorite "pictures" of Christ, and you will see what I mean. But no artist ever painted Christ, and no photographs existed then. Your Bible says He was an ordinary-looking Jew of His time; shows how He escaped out of crowds when they were trying to kill Him!

Time and time again this happened! In the temple in Jerusalem, at Nazareth in the synagogue-they tried to kill Him. But the Bible says that "He, passing through their midst, went His way."

A deaf man would not notice Christ, because there would be nothing physically attractive or outstanding about Him. A blind man would be startled, intrigued, amazed-for He would hear the power and authority in His voice (Matthew 7:29; Luke 4:36).

Jesus Christ's sacrifice lasted for a lifetime! Notice: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (Isaiah 53:3).

Have you ever experienced rejection by someone you love? Divorce is perhaps the cruellest form of rejection; that, and estrangement among close family members. It is mentally and emotionally traumatic, anguishing.

Have you felt despised, hated, by others? Jesus Christ was despised and rejected as a young man by His own brothers and sisters. He said "a prophet hath no honor in His own country, and among His own kin."

Jesus Christ did not live a life of ebullient happiness; of gaiety, fun, and frolic. No, He was a "man of sorrows," and "acquainted with grief." Could He laugh at the antics of a balky mule, or some human situation? Very probably so. But there were tears of sorrow more often than tears of joy in Jesus' eyes. If you have never read my book, *The Real Jesus*, please write or call (903) 825-2525, for a free copy. Also, for a sermon I believe you will find informative and moving, ask for a tape entitled "Christ's Lonely Sacrifice."

Perhaps millions can repeat the religious-sounding cliché, "He died to save sinners," but few know the real breadth and depth of Christ's lifetime of sacrifice.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities [sins]: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed [notice I Corinthians 11:27-30 in this regard]. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Eternal hath laid upon Him the iniquity [lawlessness; sin] of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:4-7). This entire chapter demands careful study and contemplation. Few professing Christians have ever read it.

Jesus Christ Came To Die, Then To Be Resurrected

Christ foretold His own death, burial, and resurrection. He said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the

prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's [great fish's] belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39,40).

He told His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.' But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee" (Mark 14:27,28).

Near the end of His ministry, when the terrible ordeal of beating and death lay just ahead of Him, Jesus cried out to His Father, who answered, probably by the voice of an archangel (for no man has ever heard the voice of God [John 5:37]): "Father, glorify Thy Name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, 'An angel spake to Him.' Jesus answered and said, 'This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world [Satan] be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [on the stake], will draw all men unto Me.' This He said, signifying what death He should die" (John 12:28-33). Literally millions of professing Christians in the major denominations flatly reject the ONLY SIGN Jesus Christ left as a perpetual witness that He was truly the Savior of the world-the "sign of the prophet Jonas." Clearly, Jesus said He would be exactly three days AND THREE NIGHTS in the tomb. Count up, on your fingers, or on a piece of scrap paper, the beliefs of millions in the big churches. They believe Christ died on "Good Friday" (what was "good" about it?). Friday sunset to Saturday sunset is one day and one night. Saturday sunset to Sunday sunset is two days and two nights. Sunday sunset to Monday sunset is three days and three nights.

Was Jesus then not raised from the dead until Monday sunset? No, He was not put to death on a Friday, but on a Wednesday late afternoon! Because of hundreds of years of professing Christian "tradition," millions of people will flatly reject the truth of their Bibles, and cling, instead, exactly as Christ said the Pharisees did, to their "traditions." Good Friday to Easter at sunrise is the "tradition" of nominal "Christianity." Here, we will publish excerpts from the Companion Bible, by Dr. Bullinger, published by Zondervan, for your careful study. The finest details of the final days of Christ on this earth are contained in the gospels. Bullinger wrote: "I. That the first day of each of the three feasts, Pass-over, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, was 'a holy convocation', a 'sabbath' on which no servile work was to be done. See Lev. 23.7,24,35. Cp. Ex. 12.16.

"That sabbath' and the 'high day' of John 19:31 was the 'holy convocation', the first day of the feast [i.e., the Feast of Unleavened Bread], which quite overshadowed the ordinary weekly sabbath.... "This great sabbath, having been mistaken from the earliest times for the weekly sabbath, has led to all the confusion.

"II. This has naturally caused the further difficulty as to the Lord's statement that 'even as Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights' (Matt. 12.40). Now, while it is quite correct to speak according to Hebrew idiom of 'three days' or 'three years', while they are

only parts of three days or three years, yet that idiom does not apply in a case like this, where 'three nights' are mentioned in addition to 'three days'....

"III. We have therefore the following facts furnished for our sure guidance:

"1. The 'high day' of John 19.31 was the first day of the feast.

"2. The 'first day of the feast' was on the 15th day of Nisan.

"3. The 15th day of Nisan, commenced at sunset on what we should call the 14th.

"4. 'Six days before the passover' (John 12.1) takes us back to the 9th day of Nisan.

"5. 'After two days is the passover' (Matt. 26.2. Mark 14.1) takes us to the 13th day of Nisan.

"6. 'The first day of the week'... (Matt. 28.1, &c.), was from our Saturday sunset to our Sunday sunset. This fixes the days of the week, just as the above fix the days of the month, for:

"7. Reckoning back from this, 'three days and three nights' (Matt. 12.40), we arrive at the day of the burial, which must have been before sunset, on the 14th of Nisan; i.e. before our Wednesday sunset.

"Therefore Wednesday, Nisan 14th (commencing on the Tuesday at sunset), was 'the preparation day', on which the crucifixion took place: for all four Gospels definitely say that this was the day on which the Lord was buried (before our Wednesday sunset), 'because it was the preparation [day]' the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, 'for that sabbath was a high day', and, therefore, not the ordinary seventh day, or weekly sabbath. See John 19.31" (Appendix 156, p. 179,180).

John's statement about the "High Day" Sabbath proves that the Sabbath following the death of Christ was our Thursday, the "First Day of Unleavened Bread." The "preparation day," or Friday, followed. The women then "rested on the Sabbath," according to the commandment, and went to the tomb "very early, while it was yet dark, as it began to dawn TOWARD the first day of the week" (Matthew 28:1). But the tomb was empty. Jesus was not there. The angels told them "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said" (Matthew 28:6).

And He said He would have been exactly three twelve-hour days and three twelve-hour nights in the tomb! The angelic statement is past tense; He had already been risen from the dead many hours, for He had risen from the tomb exactly seventy-two hours after being laid in the tomb, just before sunset the previous Wednesday afternoon.

Study the information from the Companion Bible appendix carefully, checking every scripture in your own Bible.

In order to cling to false, musty tradition, churchmen in the seminaries teach eager, young, would-be clergymen that Jesus' statement about being exactly three days and three nights in the tomb was a "Jewish idiom." They say it meant only part of three days and three nights.

Look at the facts. Friday sunset to Saturday sunset is one day and one night. Saturday sunset to Sunday, early pre-dawn darkness, when the tomb was already empty, is but part of one night!

Therefore, the traditions of 'churchianity' claim that Jesus was only in the grave for one full day of daylight, and one full night of darkness, plus another partial nighttime period! That's two nights and only one day! Jesus Christ Himself, speaking only of the daylight hours of the twenty-four hour day, said: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? (John 11:9). The night also has twelve hours. God's Word says: "And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day [Hebrew: yom], and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning [both the nighttime and the daylight hours] were the first day" (Genesis 1:4,5).

A "Jewish idiom"?

But Jesus said plainly: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly..." (Matthew 12:40). When Jesus said "as Jonas," and said "three days and three nights," He obviously meant three days and three nights exactly as you and I count time today-exactly as Christ Himself counted time.

Any attempt to twist and distort what Jesus plainly said becomes obvious, on its face, as a carnal-minded, God-defying, Christ-rejecting desire on the part of false teachers to cling to their cherished traditions, such as "Good Friday" and "Easter," rather than believe and accept the plain statements of their Lord and Savior.

Christ said to the posturing religious traditionalists of His day: "Well hath Isaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men'...and He said unto them, 'Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition'" (Mark 7:6-9).

Tradition is a powerful influence on millions of professing Christians. Nostalgia, warm, cozy family memories; getting up in the pitch blackness of a pre-dawn "Easter" ("Ishtar," meaning the pagan Babylonian goddess of sex and fertility-hence the rabbits, eggs, and the like), dressing up in gay spring colors; little white patent-leather shoes, frilly green, yellow and white dresses and bonnets; millions remember going to a church, or an outdoor sports stadium, or a mountain top, for an "Easter sunrise" service. Little do they suspect they are committing an absolute disgusting abomination in the sight of God!

God showed Ezekiel the filthy abominations committed by idolatrous Israel and Judah. After showing him their houses of worship, decorated with the signs of the Zodiac

(Ezekiel 8:10-12), He said: "Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And He brought me into the inner court of the Eternal's House [the temple], and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Eternal, between the porch and the altar [they were outdoors-so they could see the sun], were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Eternal, and the faces toward the EAST; and they worshipped the sun toward the east" (Ezekiel 8:16).

The sun is in the east at its rising. This was a sunrise service, performed by evil, perverted, false "priests" right in the door of the temple of God in Jerusalem. Read what God proposes to do about it in the ensuing chapter; how the pagan abominations will be ex-punged from His people. For a fuller understanding of "Easter" and the real truth about the Passover, write for our free booklets, Should Christians Observe Easter? and The Passover-Is It For Christians?

Whether traditionalists want to believe it or not, Jesus Christ, your Savior, was resurrected from the tomb late on a Sabbath afternoon. He appeared to the women in the garden, and later, on the road to Emmaus. When they would have grasped Him, He told them: "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father" (John 20:17).

Yet, later, He appeared to them inside a closed room, demanding that "doubting Thomas" touch Him, placing his finger into the big wounds on His hands, his hand into His side (John 20:19-31).

Christ had, in the meantime, ascended to His Father, and returned. For over a month, He continually buttressed their faith by appearing to them here and there. They were, at first, unwilling witnesses! He chided them: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses [in the Torah, or the first five books of the Bible] He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

The pagan doctrine of the "immortality of the soul" absolutely nullifies the necessity of Christ's resurrection! If God were running a "soul factory" here below; if, when each person dies, his or her "soul" goes to "heaven," or to "hell," and if Christ's shed blood atones for our sins, and if by His death we are "saved," then why did He have to be resurrected? God's Word says: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

Christ's shed blood "reconciles" us, brings us back to God in a sinless condition. When we repent and accept His atoning sacrifice in our stead, we are then brought into a sinless, forgiven, redeemed condition before God. But we must then live a life of overcoming (Revelation 2:26; 3:21). To do this, we must quit sinning, meaning quit breaking God's Ten Commandments! We cannot do this on our own strength.

It is "Christ in us," through the Holy Spirit, that helps us obey God. When we stumble, as we often do (I John 1:8; 2:1-4), Christ is in heaven at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for us.

He is our living Savior, actively intervening, guiding, directing, passing on our supplications to His Father! He is our living High Priest, our best Friend, our closest Confidante, the One to whom we can confess our innermost problems, fears, faults and sins.

We are "brought back" before God, into a fresh start, a new beginning, by His death, but we are saved by His life!

Now, you know why Jesus Christ did not come to this earth the first time, and you know many of the major reasons why He did! May God help you to open your mind and heart, and understand!

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The Truth About Capital Punishment

The Bible is used and abused in the debate about capital punishment. Some think the Bible can be applied on both sides of any issue. They apparently believe the Bible is not consistent, not authoritative on any subject. What can you believe? What does the Bible really say about capital punishment?

by William H. Ellis

Both factions addressing the issue of capital punishment purport to use the Bible to prove the validity of their arguments. But, both can't be right or the Bible would be seen to contradict itself.

Some cite "eye for an eye-life for a life" justice to execute criminals. By contrast, those who support abolition of the death penalty shout, "Thou shalt not kill!" They assert it is far better to let murderers go free than to execute a single innocent person.

In fact, members of each faction slant, twist, and distort Holy Scripture in a futile attempt to bend God's Word to their own point of view. They are not seeking God's revelation of His will, they are seeking their own ways. In the face of rising crime rates, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the states to resume executions some nineteen years ago, in 1976. Since then, more than 250 convicted criminals have been put to death under laws requiring capital punishment.

Writing for The New York Times, liberal Tom Kuntz opined concerning executions: "Will all this killing do any good? Will it deter crime? Is it cost effective? Or are we simply talking about retribution here-real Old Testament stuff?" (December 4, 1994).

Those who support the abolition of the death penalty portray the God of the Old Testament as a vengeful, hanging Judge Who delighted in the punishment and the execution of sinners. They claim His Old Testament laws which demand "life for a life" justice are primitive. Death penalties, they imagine, are archaic anachronisms, a vestige of man's evolutionary brutality, totally out of date in this modern world.

Is God Consistent?

Is that the sort of God you worship?

That is not the God your Bible describes. Through His Word, the Bible, Almighty God reveals Himself as eternally consistent in dispensing judgment. It is human beings who are not! (Read Hebrews 13:8 and Malachi 3:6.)

As a result of preconceived ideas about capital punishment, many political pundits, as well as religious leaders, condemn God's laws as recorded in the Old Testament as "unjust"- "a yoke of bondage." Many church leaders won't turn to the Bible to find what God has to say about any modern social problems. The Bible is summarily rejected.

If the leaders of the flock have no sense of direction, what can we expect? Has God changed since Old Testament times? What does He say about capital punishment today?

Jesus-Innocent Victim

Jesus Christ was the innocent victim of capital punishment.

His execution by Roman soldiers was an ugly, brutal, degrading application of the death penalty. Neither the beating of Rodney King nor the beating of Reginald Denny in Los Angeles can be compared to the fury of the vicious beating given to Jesus Christ before He was finally nailed to the stake and left to die an agonizingly slow death.

Jesus didn't die peacefully by being put to sleep from a lethal injection while lying on a crisp white sheet draped over a hospital gurney. He gradually bled to death from injuries deliberately inflicted by a number of powerful men over many hours of violent physical abuse.

Yet, Jesus Christ was innocent of any crime!

Jesus died and rose from the dead.

Death Penalty Under the Old Covenant

Let's examine the law of God regarding the death penalty in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, and discover what God really has to say about capital punishment.

In the Old Testament we find laws dealing with the death penalty. The ancient Israelites had the authority to execute the guilty. How does that law affect Christians today?

The law which contained the death penalty for capital crimes was aptly termed the "ministration of death" by the apostle Paul (II Corinthians 3:7). Notice Paul's attitude toward the Old Testament death penalty law: "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory, which was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?"

The administration of the death penalty under the Old Covenant was glorious! Let's discover why!

Based On Ten Commandments

The administration of the death penalty is founded on the Ten Commandments. It is not a primitive law conceived by Moses for a community of nomadic shepherds. It is the direct revelation of Almighty God.

In Exodus 20:1-20, God spoke the Ten Commandments directly to ancient Israel. But they were terrified! They asked Moses to represent them before God (verses 18-21). Notice carefully that God continued to instruct Moses, giving him all the laws upon

which the Old Covenant was to be based. God's instructions continued right through the Book of Exodus without interruption from Exodus 20:21 to Exodus 24:2.

The covenant was agreed to by the people and ratified by sacrifices and a ceremonial dinner with the elders of Israel on Mt. Sinai with God Himself (Exodus 24:9-11).

Notice what God said:

"I will give thee tables of stone (the Ten Commandments), and a law, and commandments which I have written that thou mayest teach them" (Exodus 24:12).

God gave them not only the Ten Commandments, but all of the laws, including the law of capital punishment requiring the death penalty. Although God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23,32), these laws exacted the death penalty for violation of God's commands (Exodus 21:12-27). Even under the Old Covenant, the wages of sin was DEATH! (Romans 6:23.)

These were the laws which were so GLORIOUS that Moses' face shown with a "glory" spoken of by Paul (Deuteronomy 10:4 and Deuteronomy 27:1-4 compared with II Corinthians 3:7).

How Death Penalty Administered

The administration of the death penalty under God's law was not a matter of primitive personal or collective vengeance—a vendetta. There were definite codified, legal procedures, a system of judges, evidence collected and evaluated, and witnesses presented before any penalty was levied.

Exodus 21:22,23 shows that decisions which demanded a "life for a life" were in the hands of judges, men chosen from among their fellows for their integrity. These men were given a measure of God's Holy Spirit to aid them in judgment (Exodus 18:19-27). The judges were cautioned in cases of doubt to gather plenty of evidence before rendering a decision which might invoke the death penalty (Deuteronomy 19:15-21).

But, when the matter was no longer in doubt, the punishment was set by God's law, and it was swift; no further appeals were permitted. "Thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life" (verse 21).

Who had the responsibility to demand the death penalty for breaking the "glorious" code of justice God gave ancient Israel? God Himself!

God worked through the government He established in the hands of His judges (II Chronicles 19:6). He was the One ultimately responsible for the execution of the criminal (Deuteronomy 19:17).

Is the Death Penalty a Deterrent?

Modern society likes to get in God's face when they disagree with His revealed Word!

One argument used against the death penalty is that execution has no "deterrent value"-it doesn't stop crime.

Although most modern law enforcement officers have consistently and vehemently disagreed with that notion, the bleeding heart abolitionists remain adamant.

Few will admit that one clear deterrent is that the executed criminal will never be paroled, will never again commit any crime, because he is dead. Fewer still will acknowledge the fact that there is no statistical way to measure deterrence, since crimes which aren't committed can't be counted.

Yet, abolitionists believe they know better than God! They refuse to acknowledge His authority.

God Almighty created human life. He knows its full value. Yet, He established the law of capital punishment and the death penalty. Why?

Perhaps God's Word should be read again as proof positive that capital punishment is a deterrent to crime:

"So shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you" (Deuteronomy 19:19-20).

The Whole Law

As those who believe the Bible, we must never forget that capital punishment and the death penalty were only a part of a complete code of laws, closely knit together, designed by God for a purpose. Unless the whole of God's law is practiced by a community, even its best features may become ineffective.

Notice how God referred to the entire code of law that He considered as a whole:

"Behold," God inspired Moses to write in Deuteronomy 4:5-8, "I have taught you statutes and judgments even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whither you go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them: For this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all of these statutes and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as this law which I set before you this day?"

No nation on earth has yet fulfilled the potential God Almighty wrote into His laws. No nation has ever achieved the pinnacle of national greatness made possible by keeping His law!

Modern nations either reject capital punishment and the death penalty completely or take the teeth out of the law through endless rounds of expensive court battles and appeals which last for years.

Richard F. Dieter, director of the Death Penalty Information Center is quoted in The New York Times (December 4, 1994):

"Complex pre-trial motions, lengthy jury selections, and expenses for expert witnesses are all likely to add to the costs in death penalty cases."

In the same biased article, under a chart headed "The Price of a Death Penalty Sentence," Times writer Anne Cronin notes: "In North Carolina, an indigent defendant in a capital trial has the right to two lawyers instead of one. More expert witnesses are required. More legal briefs are filed. After conviction, there are nine steps in the appeals process, and some can be repeated."

There is no "swift justice" in modern courts. One need only look at the examples of the trials of the Menendez brothers and of O.J. Simpson in California. There is no confidence in the integrity of elected or appointed judges who sit on the bench. There is no law of the land which can compare to the law God gave all peoples and nations (not just ancient Israel) who can read and apply Holy Scripture to their lives.

Why doesn't capital punishment deter in modern society? Because the whole of God's law is not kept.

Why Israel Failed

Ancient Israel was a theocracy as long as it submitted to God's law and His government. God ruled Israel as its King.

But your Old Testament is a sad chronicle of the repeated failure of Israel to keep God's glorious laws. Without deterrence, the result was decadence, immorality, the destruction of the family, escalating crimes of brutality, constant warfare, and finally the national captivity which inevitably followed.

It is the same path the nations of modern Israel are rushing down headlong today.

Where did ancient Israel go wrong? Why did the nation fail, given such a glorious law?

After giving Israel His law, God lamented to Moses in Deuteronomy 5:29:

"O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and their children forever!"

After the people of ancient Israel had sinned, God pleaded with them to receive a new circumcision-a circumcision of the heart-which would grant them repentance from their rebellion (Deuteronomy 10:16). But Israel remained stubborn.

The law that was so glorious was, in fact, wasted on a people who would not obey it (Jeremiah 17:9). And because of that fault of disobedience in the people, the Old Covenant was unable to bring the blessings it promised for obedience.

The Glory of the Law

Was the administration of the death penalty done away with when ancient Israel was no longer a nation?

No! The death penalty remains.

Romans 6:23 plainly reminds New Testament Christians: "The wages of sin is death!"

The law which condemned the criminal to death under the Old Covenant is still binding today. The law which demands a sinner pay with his life is so inexorable that not even Jesus Christ was an exception to it. When Jesus was made sin for us, He was required to suffer the wages of sin-the death penalty-for us.

Our sins-our crimes against God's law-required the sentence of the death penalty for each of us. Jesus paid our death penalty debt for us.

Jesus did not do away with the law of the death penalty. The law of the death penalty did away with Jesus' perfect and sinless human life in our place.

That is what grace is!

Grace is the undeserved pardon from the death penalty we earned by our criminal behavior-our sins against God's law.

The Bible is not inconsistent about the death penalty. It simply doesn't support the views of this world's politicians and bleeding heart activists who reject God's Word and His law.

Even though Jesus Christ, Himself, was completely innocent, His death for our capital crimes, our sins against God's law, is eloquent testimony to the value and the glory God places on the laws of capital punishment.

Christ and Government Change

A Christian is a person who follows Christ, acts as Christ did, who has Jesus Christ living His life within him.

Notice what the apostle Paul wrote: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). He admonished: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

What was Christ's mind, His attitude, regarding the laws of capital punishment where He was living?

Jesus lived in a land under two governments, neither of which was the government of God's Kingdom. But both had laws of capital punishment. The Jews had their own laws, their own police force, their own courts (John 18:31), and limited powers to execute criminals convicted of crimes (John 19:4-7; Acts 7:57,58). Over the provincial authorities was the power of the Roman Empire.

The Roman occupation government of Palestine was centered in the hands of Procurator Pontius Pilate. He had authority to administer the death penalty. Notice how he questioned Jesus:

"Speakest thou not unto me: Knowest thou that I have the power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" (John 19:10).

Jesus was executed under laws which demanded the death penalty, even though His trial was illegal and He was pronounced innocent by Pilate, the judge (John 19:4).

Jesus was well aware that capital punishment was practiced by the governments under which He lived. What was His stand with regard to the death penalty? What did He tell Pilate that is a guide for Christians, if Christ is actually living within them?

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36).

This is not God's world! Mankind has rejected God's rule and rejected His government. Satan is the god of this world (read II Corinthians 4:4 and Revelation 12:9).

Jesus Christ was the Representative of another government. He was its Messenger, and He qualified to be its King! He told Pilate:

"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born and for this cause came I into this world" (John 18:37).

His pronouncement was a political declaration. It defines simply a Christian's relationship to the administration of the governments under which he or she may live.

Jesus did not teach active participation in the governments of this world. He did not seek political office or attempt to overthrow the government of the country in which He lived. Nor did He form committees, political action groups, or coalitions to influence government administrations in a particular direction.

While He called his disciples and servants out of this world, He also commanded them to be active in preaching the good news of God's coming government to all the world as a witness (Matthew 24:14).

A Christian's Responsibility

Even today, Christians live in the nations of this world as though they are foreigners, here as law-abiding guests of the country where they reside. They live as "ambassadors" of another government, the soon-coming, world-ruling Kingdom of God (II Corinthians 5:17-20).

A representative of another government does not mingle in the politics of the country to which he has been sent, but remains aloof from its internal strife. He does not lobby its government for social reforms, does not seek to effect political changes.

Instead, a Christian represents God's Kingdom as its servant, living a good example as a guest in the country where he has been stationed, paying taxes and obeying its laws (Mark 12:14-17). A Christian is always looking "for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God" and lives in this world as though it were a "strange country" (Hebrews 11:9-11). The apostle Paul wrote Christians ought to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil be afraid; for he beareth not the SWORD in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to EXECUTE wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:1-4). God Himself has allowed the administrations (ministries) of worldly governments to make laws, including death penalty laws, in their attempts to maintain the rapidly crumbling society and fragile civilization around us. If we disobey man's law, we can expect the full measure of punishment that law allows, including the sword and execution for capital crimes.

Death Penalty in the Future

Jesus Christ was executed for the sins each of us commit. His death commuted our Sentence of death.

He rose from the dead and will soon return to this earth to establish His Kingdom. That is the message He brought-the Good News that God's Kingdom will be set up on this earth. The message of God's world-ruling government is the very essence of the gospel.

Notice what your Bible reveals about Christ's return:

"And I saw heaven opened," John writes in vision in Revelation 19:11, "and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war!"

John reveals that this is a vision of the Word of God (verse 13), Who had been made flesh (John 1:1-14)-the resurrected Christ. He will return as the King of kings and the Lord of lords (verse 16), to rule this earth.

After the rebellious armies of mankind are subdued by Jesus Christ, this world will be ruled by the government of Almighty God. Notice the description of that coming time of peace and prosperity in Isaiah 2:2-4: "He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of God from Jerusalem."

In the coming millennial utopia, God's government will bring what man's governments can't achieve. All nations will experience the blessings of obedience. The law of God will be as plentiful as the waters which cover the ocean's beds (Isaiah 11:9).

When this earth is ruled by the theocracy of God's government, no longer will little children be immolated by napalm in warfare, or gunned down in the streets of cities in random violence. No longer will homes be broken by divorce-the sins of fathers and mothers. No longer will immorality be a breeding ground for wild teenagers. No longer will the sins of parents penalize their children.

"In those days they shall no more say, the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity" (Jeremiah 31:29,30).

The principle of capital punishment and the execution of criminals will be practiced under God's coming government. The fact is repeated often in Ezekiel 18, read the entire chapter and note especially verses 4 and 20.

Criminal Rehabilitation-Repentance

In God's government, mercy will be extended to the sinner-the criminal-who is willing to repent (verses 20-23). God has no pleasure "at all" in executing people when they can turn from their criminal behavior and live! Within God's government the possibility of commuting the death penalty and of rehabilitation of the criminal depends on individual repentance.

Still, today, even as in ancient Israel, people condemn God's righteous and glorious law as "unequal" (Ezekiel 18:29). And God answers them:

"O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" What does God expect?

"Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die?...Turn yourselves and live!" (Ezekiel 18:30-32).

The New Covenant

Israel of old failed to keep God's law and refused to repent. The first step for them-as it is for us-was to turn from breaking God's law and begin keeping it. They didn't. They rejected God's law, which would have brought the utopia they dreamed of in the promised land and with it the admiration of nations around the world.

The failure of the Old Covenant was not a failing of God or His law. It was the failure of the people to keep their part of the covenant-their failure to keep God's law. They continued to break the law (Jeremiah 31:31,32). Notice, now, the promise of the New Covenant:

"This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and WRITE IT IN THEIR HEARTS" (verse 33).

Under the New Covenant, when individuals repent they will receive that circumcision of the heart which ancient Israel rejected and Paul revealed is performed by God's Holy Spirit (Romans 2:28,29).

The indwelling power of God's Spirit can make it possible for God's law to be written in the minds and hearts of human beings. It can enable mankind to individually overcome sin!

Under the New Covenant administration of the Spirit, the laws of capital punishment and the death penalty will be rendered unnecessary. There is no need to punish crimes when no crimes are committed. God's indwelling Spirit helps repentant people obey God's laws, not break them.

As Christians now and in the future obey God's laws, overcoming sin in their lives by the power of His Spirit, there will be no need for punishment for lawbreaking.

As the apostle Paul wrote, the administration of the law which did away with the sinner (by execution) was glorious. But the administration of God's Spirit which does away with

the record of sin and suspends the death sentence is more glorious! Read again and really understand what Paul wrote in II Corinthians 3:7!

God Consistent on Death Penalty

The good news of God's coming Kingdom brings with it the good news that under God's government mankind will begin to be able to obey God's law! Christians today have already submitted to His glorious law, and are already under the new administration of the Spirit. They are participating in the New Covenant, having God's law written in their hearts and minds after repentance. They are obeying God's law in their everyday lives and overcoming sin by the power of God's Spirit.

In the future the theocracy of God's Kingdom will be set up on this earth and all nations will come under its authority. It will teach and practice the laws of capital punishment and enforce the death penalty upon law breakers until human sin is done away with forever.

The Bible speaks consistently from Genesis to Revelation.

(If you have not already received our free booklet, Capital Punishment-A Christian Dilemma, write for your copy today!)

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