

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

September 1999

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.” (Colossians 1:2-4) We are having a camp meeting in southern Illinois (New Burnside) on September 15-19. Camp meeting is a time when Christians get together from all over the country to fellowship and study together. You are invited to come. For more information call (618) 996-2525 and ask for Crystal.

The Love that Overcomes the Mark of the Beast

by Colin A. Gyles

God's Sustaining Grace

God loves us more than anyone is capable of imagining. When God saw that you and I would cling to the destructive moral disease of sin and perish with it, He sacrificed His only Son, Jesus who willingly degraded Himself so as to enable us to cut loose from the bewitching influence of sin.

Sin is rebellion against the authority of God. When we disobey what God says, we automatically become mutineers in the universe which is governed and harmoniously coordinated by God. In addition, we choose to disconnect ourselves from the source which keeps us alive because in Him “We live, and move, and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) Even though we rebel against Him and in so doing express our desire to be cut off from His sustaining grace, He still continues to faithfully sustain us. What a merciful God! One may ask, what are the reasons for such unrelenting goodness? There are at least two reasons. First, such is the very nature of God's character. He is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” (Exodus 34:6) Second, He knows that we are ignorant and do not fully understand the implications of our decision when we choose to reject Him, so He continues to sustain us while He

tries to help us understand so that we can repent. His arms are wide open, ready to forgive us and reinstate us as though we had never rebelled. Through the grace of Christ, He also makes available the power to keep us from repeating and continuing the process of rebellion.

Limited Probationary Time

A limited period of time is given to each individual to cast his/her lot. Based on the choices that we make during our probationary life-span, an assessment (judgment) will be made by Christ as to whether our decision is to continue in rebellion and cut ourselves off from God's sustenance or to submit to His laws and authority which govern the universe and accept His sustaining grace. God has given us the free-

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

SATAN'S DEADLIEST LIE page 9
by David Clayton

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS page 11

SIDE BY SIDE page 12

dom to choose and He respects our choice. He will not impose Himself on any of us beyond our wish, and keep sustaining us throughout eternity, when we consciously make up our minds to reject Him, His authority and His power, by which our lives are sustained.

It is not only for the individual that a limited probationary period is given, but also for the entire human race in this present world order. The Bible indicates that the time will come when the wheat and the tares will have come to full maturity (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43), when there will be a sharp distinction between those who love God and those who are rebellious. Those who love God will submit to His righteous and perfect laws which govern the universe while those who are rebellious, if allowed, will continually destabilize the universe until the cancer of their rebellion overruns and destroys it.

Second Coming Of Christ

When all will have fully matured in either submission to God or rebellion against Him, Jesus will return to the earth as promised (Acts 1:11). This time, not as a babe, but “the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels: and then He shall reward every man according to his works.” (Matthew 16: 27)

In describing this event which marks the end of this present world order, the Bible portrays Christ as riding out of heaven seated on a white horse (Revelation 19:11) “and the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses” (Revelation 19:14) “and He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Revelation 19:16)

In this scenario is also described the rebellious ones and how they are affected by Christ’s second coming. A characteristic feature that is common to those rebellious ones who are yet alive at that time is that they have the mark of the beast and are in company with the beast himself.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse. (Revelation 19:19-21)

The mark of the beast will be a significant distinguishing feature between the righteous and the rebellious immediately before the climax, and is also evident in the description that is given of those who will be righteous at that time. They are described as those who gain the victory over the beast, his image and over his mark.

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. (Revelation 15:2, 3)

The Mark Of The Beast

God is a reasonable, intelligent and rational Being who does not just arbitrarily hold a distaste for some mysterious secret number or mark and punish unsuspecting people who do not even know that they possess this mysterious curse, as some persons think. The mark of the beast embodies a principle which inherently contravenes the laws of God which govern the universe, otherwise it would not be sin.

The warning that God issues against receiving the mark of the beast is the sternest in the entire Bible, but along with that warning He states unambiguously the distinguishing characteristic between those who receive the mark and those who do not. His words are as follows:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation;... Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:9, 10, 12)

Those who do not receive the mark of the beast are distinguished by the fact that they keep the commandments of God. Hence, the mark of the beast is a breach of at least one of God’s commandments. James 2:10 states that “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. This point should be noted carefully because it gives a very significant clue as to what is the mark of the beast. It involves breaking at least one of God’s commandments.

Forced Conformity

A second characteristic of the mark of the beast is that it is a mark of conformity. This is evident from what the Bible says about the beast, the mark and the way in which the world will be affected by them. Speaking of the beast, the Bible says:

And all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?... All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life. (Revelation 13:3, 4, 8)

The Bible further indicates that a super power in the world will apply coercive measures in an attempt to force the entire world to worship the beast and receive his mark. With reference to that super power, the Bible says it shall:

...cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:15-17)

Characteristics of the Mark

We have two (2) very specific characteristics of the mark of the beast that will enable us to identify this mark against which God utters such stern warning. We will list these characteristics for emphasis.

- 1. The reception of the mark of the beast is an act which involves breaking at least one of God's commandments (this means that reception of the mark in the forehead or the hand relates to an act that individuals perform based on either intellectual assent and persuasion (forehead) or the expediency and convenience of circumstances (hand).
- 2. The mark of the beast is an institution that involves popular conformity world-wide. (Eventually, coercive measures will be employed in an attempt to force the entire world to conform to it.)

The Commandment Involved

In order to identify what is the mark of the beast, we will first identify the particular commandment of God that is breached by the acceptance of that mark. There is really only one commandment given by God

that is breached in a manner that exactly fits both of the above specifications. It is a commandment that is generally considered not necessary to be kept, even though there is no statement in the Bible that says it should no longer be kept. Also, it is one that is widely disregarded by many simply because it does not suit their circumstances and convenience to keep it. Interestingly, this same commandment is the only one that has in its place an observance to which the world popularly conforms, and considers it a sacred duty, without any specific statement in the Bible that says it is necessary to so conform.

This commandment is the fourth of the Ten Commandments, which requires the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. It is appreciated that many persons conscientiously believe it is not necessary to keep this commandment and they have their reasons. It is also appreciated that many persons conscientiously observe Sunday, the first day of the week, as a religious duty and they also have their reasons. Each person is entitled to believe and practice whatever he/she is persuaded of, and this discussion does not in any way negate that. However, pertaining to the subject that is now being considered, we can establish a few facts that the average reasonable person will acknowledge:

- 1. There is no statement anywhere in the Bible that says the seventh-day Sabbath should no longer be observed.
- 2. Jesus and all the apostles kept the seventh-day Sabbath.
- 3. There is no statement anywhere in the Bible that says the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, is a sacred duty.
- 4. Whether or not one considers them applicable in the present dispensation, there are numerous specific statements in the Bible that say the seventh-day Sabbath should be kept.

The facts listed above are mentioned for this reason: We have established that the mark of the beast involves the popular setting aside of at least one of God's commandments and we see that the commandment which requires the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is the only one that is almost universally set aside (for whatever reasons). It is only reasonable for us to make a careful assessment as to whether the setting aside of this commandment is in

harmony with God's divine plan, and if it is not, then conformity to this popular practice certainly conforms to the Biblical description of the mark of the beast.

The Historical Transition

A brief look at the historical transition from Sabbath to Sunday observance will help in our assessment of the matter.

We begin by looking at the custom of Jesus and the early church. Jesus consistently kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16, 31). The followers of Jesus, even after His death, kept the Sabbath and did so in acknowledgment of the commandment (Luke 23:54, 56). The ladies who prepared spices for anointing the body of Jesus came on the first day of the week to do that which they considered inappropriate to do on the Sabbath (Luke 23: 54, 56; 24:1). The members of the early church, including the apostle Paul, kept the Sabbath (Acts 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). Looking into the future to the time when Jerusalem would be destroyed, Jesus told his disciples to pray that their flight would not be on the Sabbath day (Matthew 24:20). From these facts it is obvious that the church of Christ kept the Sabbath and considered it a Christian duty to do so as late as 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Obviously, the change occurred subsequently. Even those persons who practice Sunday observance, generally admit this. So then, since there was no Biblical authority for the discontinuance of Sabbath observance, on whose authority was Sunday observance instituted to replace it? Historically, two authoritative decrees have been identified: the first by the Roman emperor Constantine on March 7, 321 A.D. and the second by a church council held at Laodicea 364 A.D.

Emperor Constantine

Concerning the first decree. Constantine was a devout worshiper of the pagan sun god. Some persons claim that he was converted to Christianity. While he might have outwardly professed the Christian faith, the very words of the decree indicate that his devotion to the sun remained. He said "On the venerable Day of the Sun let all workshops be closed." (*History of the Christian Church*, by Philip Schaff, 5th edition; Volume 3, page 380)

He described the day as "the venerable Day of the Sun." The word "venerable" is defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary as "Entitled to veneration on ac-

count of character, age, association, etc." The word "veneration" is defined as "deep respect, reverence."

Constantine revered the "Day of the Sun." His reverence for the day had nothing to do with Christ, otherwise he would have said "the venerable day of the resurrection." He revered the day because it was the day of the sun. Hence, he attempted to force others to do the same by issuing this decree.

Council of Laodicea

How did the decree of Constantine affect Christians? For Sabbath keepers, it would obviously have created much inconvenience. Did they love God enough to endure the inconvenience without allowing it to affect their commitment to keeping the Sabbath as their predecessors did in obedience to the commandment? The edict of the Council of Laodicea forty-three years later tells the story. Most preferred to take the easy way out—just give in and go along. But this is not all; they went a step further to attempt to force the commandment-keeping ones to cease keeping the commandment. Wouldn't God be angry about this? Does it remind you of the mark of the beast? Here is the edict they issued:

Christians shall not Judaize [keep the Sabbath] and be idle on Saturday but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day [Sunday] they shall especially honor, and being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ. (*A History of the Councils of the Church*, Charles J. Hefele, Volume 2, page 316)

This edict also betrays a tinge of anti-Semitism. The keeping of God's commandment which requires observance of the seventh-day Sabbath was described as "Judaizing." This also indicates that the spirit behind the edict was one of expediency and conformity because the noble emperor who had decreed in favor of the "venerable Day of the Sun," had, on occasions, publicly expressed anti-Semitic sentiments. An example of this can be seen in the reason Emperor Constantine gave for urging that the Passover be fixed on Sunday. He said:

Let us, then, have nothing in common with the most hostile rabble of the Jews. (Boyle's *Historical View of the Council of Nice*, page 52, 1842 edition)

The Underlying Authority

So the authority behind the replacement of the Bible Sabbath with Sunday observance is the pagan,

sun-worshipping, anti-Semitic Roman emperor, Constantine. In expression of his devotion to the sun and his hostility towards the Jews Constantine issued a decree to force his subjects to honor Sunday. The professed Christians of the day who were shown great favor by the emperor chose instead to take the easy road of conformity. Those who only outwardly professed Christianity obeyed man rather than God. They were not willing to accept the risk of persecution for the approbation of God. But worse yet, they went on to attempt to force the commandment-keeping ones to do the same. The mere fact that it was found necessary to issue an edict threatening Sabbath-keepers with excommunication is evidence that there was a significant number of Christians who kept the Sabbath and who did not desire to disobey God's commandments.

The subsequent history of Sunday observance is one of conformity and face-saving excuses. The Sabbath keepers were forced into obscurity because they were treated with hostility both by civil authorities and by the religious establishment. As a result, individuals were born into a tradition where Sunday observance was the norm. When confronted with the fact that there is no Biblical authority for the practice of Sunday observance and that no command was given in the Bible for discontinuance of Sabbath keeping, the response has been the construction of excuses to justify the tradition.

Theories Advanced

It is one thing for excuses to be constructed in order to justify the tradition. Worse yet is the fact that the ideas upon which some of the excuses rest have had a significant effect in eroding righteousness and respect for God. We will mention briefly a few of the ideas that have been advanced.

- 1. God's Law is done away with.

Why would anyone want to think that the laws and principles governing God's kingdom are changeable, even though it has been declared in the Bible that God is unchanging? Normally, individuals would not have entertained such a thought, but in this case it provides an excuse for disregarding the Sabbath commandment. This is the only reason why such an idea is promulgated.

Is it any wonder that the world is becoming increasingly lawless? If individuals can so glibly declare the law of God null and void simply because they wish to disregard one of the principles contained therein,

why should anyone expect that human laws would be any better respected?

- 2. The church can overrule the commands given in the Bible.

One church group has gone as far as to declare their authority superior to the Word of God as recorded in the Bible on account of the widespread acceptance of Sunday observance in place of the Bible Sabbath. Consider their words:

Sunday is our mark of authority.... The church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact. (*The Catholic Record*, London, Ontario, September 1, 1923.)

According to the above assertion, those who claim to be the church have the ultimate authority in matters that define Christianity and its principles. Is it any wonder that many persons feel that Christianity is a mere human contrivance that is used to advance either individual or institutional ambitions?

- 3. The Biblical account of creation is not literally true.

This idea virtually dismisses the reality of a personal God to whom human beings owe their existence. It reinforces the idea that man is just a mere primate with little difference from the apes. It is convenient for such an idea to be advanced, because the reality of a literal seven-day creation week gives the Sabbath perpetual relevance and meaning, since the Sabbath was given as a memorial of creation (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11).

Results of Conformity

The ideas mentioned above are not the only ones that have been advanced in order to justify the tradition of Sunday observance. These have been highlighted in order to give an idea of the extent to which individuals and groups go in order to justify a practice which has no Biblical authority to support it and which involves an outright disregard for one of God's commandments. Such is the result of compromise and conformity. How much more consistent with the principles and spirit of Christianity would be the resulting concepts conveyed to the world if those who professed the faith of Jesus had the courage to defend the honor of God by obeying Him when the rest of the world bows down to expediency and convenience.

This is the Mark

With this great weight of evidence, can anyone doubt that Sunday observance will be the mark of the beast? Sunday observance perfectly fits the Biblical description. It is the only institution that involves an almost universal disregard for a commandment of God and an enforcement of that disregard. Currently in many countries there are laws that limit the performance of secular activities on Sunday and, even now, calls are being made by prominent world officials for further legislation favoring Sunday observance. An example of such calls is that made by Pope John Paul II in a recent encyclical "Centesimus Annus," released May 1991. The call was reported by *Church and State* magazine as follows:

(Pope Leo XIII) affirms the need for Sunday rest so that people may turn their thoughts to heavenly things and to the worship which they owe to almighty God," said John Paul II. "No one can take away this human right, which is based on a commandment. In this regard," the Pope continued, "one may ask whether existing laws and the practice of industrialized societies effectively ensure in our own day the exercise of this basic right to Sunday rest." (*Church and State*, August 1991)

In July of last year John Paul II released his apostolic letter, "Dies Domini," calling for a renewed sanctity of Sunday.

The Bible predicts that the mark of the beast will be enforced world wide and that those who do not conform with the enforcement will be subjected to economic sanctions (they will not be able to "buy or sell") and eventually will be declared worthy of death.

For those who are not convinced that Sunday observance will be the mark of the beast that the Bible warns about, a challenge is given: Identify one other institution, mark or observance that fits the Biblical specifications.

It should be noted that it is not being suggested that persons who, whether conscientiously or otherwise, worship on Sunday now have the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast will be the final test that humanity will face, which will distinguish among the living between those who serve God and those who do not. There will be a worldwide enforcement of Sunday observance and those who keep the seventh day Sabbath holy unto the Lord will not be able to buy or sell and eventually will receive the death penalty for their fidelity to God. Obedience to God in keeping the sev-

enth-day Sabbath will then place one in breach of what will be an unjust law of the state.

God will not allow the world to enter blindly into this crisis without a warning. Accordingly, a symbolic angel is pictured announcing to the world:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:9-12)

Every individual will be brought face to face with the issue in which he/she must choose between the laws of men and the law of God. Those who then choose to disobey God's commandment, when the issues are thus plainly set before them, receive the mark of the beast. They thus seal their fate for eternal damnation.

The door of mercy is still open. Therefore, it behooves everyone whose life is now not in keeping with God's holy law to order their steps aright. "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Hebrews 4:7)

Based on the facts of the situation involving the mark of the beast one can hardly fail to see why God would be particularly angry about it. Individuals are free to disregard the commandments of God if they so choose (they will have the responsibility to give an account of their actions in God's judgment), but when they undertake to force others to do the same, God's anger is kindled.

God's view of the situation would hardly have been different had the commandment in question been any of the others. However, a brief look at the seventh-day Sabbath and what it represents, will indicate that a disregard for this particular institution carries with it inherently a disrespect for God beyond that which would be otherwise evident.

Creator's Sign

According to the Biblical record, after creating the world in six days, having furnished it with all manner of living things (including human beings), and having provided everything that was necessary for the suste-

nance, happiness, and beauty of life, “God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31) With this the divine record states: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” (Genesis 2:1)

Having declared a perfect work “finished” at the end of the sixth day, the Creator proceeded to create a seventh day. On this seventh day he rested, “and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” (Genesis 2:3)

The reason why God created this additional day is quite evident from the words that He spoke from Mount Sinai and afterward wrote with His own finger on tables of stone. He spoke thus:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.... the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8, 10, 11)

He has declared the seventh day to be “the sabbath of the Lord thy God” and has invited human beings to keep the day holy in honor of the fact that He created the world in six days.

Intended Recognition

Like a master artist who adds his signature to his completed masterpiece, the Creator, having completed His work of creation in six days and having declared it to be “very good,” added His “signature,” as an indicator and a perpetual reminder that it was He who made it all. To the human race He then gave this token and said: “Hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.” (Ezekiel 20:20)

That this seventh-day Sabbath is not arbitrarily any one day in seven is evident from the experience of the Israelites as given in Exodus chapter sixteen. God provided manna from heaven for them six days every week for forty years. On the sixth day a double portion was provided, some of which was to be kept over until the following day which was the Sabbath, since none was provided on the seventh day. Hence, on the seventh-day Sabbath, a specific day every week, a day that God Himself had determined independent of their thoughts or wishes, no manna fell from heaven.

The weekly cycle with that specific seventh day Sabbath continued with Israel during the wilderness

days when they ate manna, and after, even to this very day. God would so have it that in His divine providence the Jewish people are preserved with the same custom of Sabbath keeping that no one may be in doubt as to which day God blessed and sanctified in honor of the fact that He is the God who created the world and is the only One deserving of our worship.

Notice that the purpose for which the Sabbath was given is not merely so human beings might rest lest they be wearied by the labors of their daily occupation. Indeed, the natural mind knows of the need of rest, and will of itself, make provision for physical rest to be obtained. What the natural mind will not, however, prompt the individual to do, is to spend quality time with God so that His righteous character might be molded in him by means of a continued, progressive, and positive relationship. Hence, the Sabbath command reminds the human being to keep the *Sabbath day* holy.

Keeping the day holy is altogether a spiritual experience which involves spending quality time with God. The result of this experience on a regular basis will obviously be a transformation in one’s life which will see the continual elimination of sinful habits and the formation of a righteous character. Accordingly, the Lord commanded:

Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. (Ezekiel 20:12)

To sanctify means to make holy. Hence, keeping the Sabbath holy has an integral function in the process by which holiness is accomplished in one’s life.

The seventh day of the week is chosen as the Sabbath because of the esteem in which that day is held by God Himself; that esteem being centered in the fact that God rested on that day after His work of creating the world in six days, and the fact that He blessed and sanctified it. Such an esteem is entirely independent from and infinitely greater than any esteem with which any human being can hold anything—be it another day or whatever one might choose to esteem. Oh that human beings might esteem that which is esteemed by God, the Creator, the One by whom all things consist.

Significance of the Sign

As long as the Sabbath remains and the reason for its existence is understood, human beings will always be reminded that the world was created and is being

sustained by an Almighty and Omniscient God who, alone, is entitled to and deserves reverence and worship.

Human beings can lose sight of the fact that there is a Creator and Sustainer in whom we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28) and consequently lose sight of His claims over our lives only if the Sabbath and the meaning of it is obscured or obliterated. Therefore, as the gods of human tradition and the pseudo-science of organic evolution (among others) rival the God of heaven for human obeisance and recognition, it should not be surprising to discover that there has been a well-calculated and orchestrated scheme to remove the Sabbath from human attention and consequently to diminish human recognition of the Creator and the fact of creation.

In place of the seventh-day Sabbath—the sign of loyalty to the God of heaven, this scheme seeks to inject the day of the sun—the mark of allegiance to another god and of deference to human tradition.

The Love Which Overcomes

How can any reasonable person who claims to love God consider it appropriate to disregard the seventh-day Sabbath? Embodied in the Sabbath institution is the very essence of love and respect for God. The mark of the beast embodies the very opposite. The mark of the beast is a mark of conformity to human tradition in preference to God's commandments. Where do your loyalties lie? Are they wrapped up in love for tradition and personal popularity? Do you have the love which overcomes the mark of the beast?

The love which overcomes the mark of the beast is this: a love for God that will constrain you to obey Him even when to do so might result in personal inconvenience; when to do so might place you in the company of the unpopular and peculiar minority; when to do so might result in the loss of even your life.

For the true child of God death is only a temporary sleep because He who has the power over death has promised to raise him up at the last day, and when resurrected, it will not be to face the prospect of dying again but to live forever.

Certainly, there are more than adequate reasons to love God. Firstly, He created us. By Him our lives are presently sustained. He has made, for us, the ultimate sacrifice in giving His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die so as to redeem us to the life which we forfeited when we chose to rebel against Him. And still, in addition,

He mercifully gives us a glimpse into the future so that we might be adequately warned against and guided from yet another deceptive scheme of the devil, which will lead virtually the entire world to eternal destruction. Oh, what manner of love the Father has given unto us! Should not we, in turn, love Him?

After all that has been said, it stands true upon the authority of the Word of God as recorded in the Bible, that the mark of the beast will be enforced worldwide. Notwithstanding the fact that some will be “beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands” (Revelation 20:4), it stands eternally sure upon the promise of God that “them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, [will] stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they [will] sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” (Revelation 15:2, 3)

To you, dear friend, the challenge is given: Will you be among that number? Do you have the love which overcomes the mark of the beast?

To enable us to develop that love for God we are pointed to Calvary. See the Son of God expiring on the cross; His life being crushed out by the sins which He bore—your sins and mine. See the Father bowed with grief and inexpressible anguish, watching His only begotten Son suffer misery, rejection and torment at the hands of those whom He was dying to save. May this scene be forever etched on our minds, and the reality sink deep into our consciousness that “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9)

If we would have the love which overcomes the mark of the beast, we must gaze long and thoughtfully at Calvary. At Calvary we see God's love in the sacrifice the Father and Son made for you and me. It is only conviction strengthened every day, by beholding Calvary, that can elicit from us such a response of love for God that will constrain us to say, and truly mean:

Take the world but give me Jesus.
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also.
Death before dishonor to our Maker and King.

(Brother Colin A. Gyles writes from his home in Kingston, Jamaica. You may write to Brother Gyles at: PO Box 542, Kingston 10, Jamaica, West Indies.)

Satan's Deadliest Lie

by David Clayton

God's enemy and our enemy, the Devil, has been trying to rob us of one of the greatest blessings which we can experience in this life. Our God and heavenly Father has given us blessings which are so wonderful that we can hardly find the words to explain them.

The first great blessing is that our Father loves us so much that He gave His Son to die for our sins. It was His own Son that He gave; His only begotten Son. One who was begotten from the very substance of the Father Himself. The Father and His Son were together for myriads and myriads of years. They were very close to one another, and the Father loved the Son with a very great love (See Proverbs 8:22-31). Yet, God loved fallen humanity so much that instead of condemning humanity to the everlasting death they deserved, He made a covenant with His only begotten Son, the Son of His bosom, the One whom He loved from the days of eternity, to die for us (Romans 8:32). This truly did happen. It was for us that the God of heaven gave His true Son to die.

The second great blessing which the Father has given us, is that He Himself, and His Son, Jesus, have come to live with us. Please think about what I just said. God HIMSELF, the almighty One lives in everyone who is a genuine Christian!! I do not mean that His angels are with us (although they are). I do not mean that His power is with us (although it is). What I mean is that He Himself, the great God, and His Son, live with us, and in us, if we are His. Do you ask HOW this is possible? I do not know how. I know that God does not live in us in His bodily

form, but nevertheless, His presence is here. His power, His life, He Himself is here, even though I cannot see Him. This is what He promises in His word:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23—See also 1 Corinthians 6:17, 19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Acts 17:27, 28.)

Can you see how great these two blessings are which God has given to us?

✚ He has given His own, only begotten Son to die for us so that we can be saved from the penalty of everlasting death. How wonderful it is that such a person could love us so much. Surely we ought to love and serve Him in return!

✚ He Himself and His blessed Son will live with us if we choose to give our lives to Him. He will be our best Friend, our close, constant Companion. We can be the friends of the Almighty God. He Himself, personally, will be with us always and forever.

There is no greater blessing in all of Christian experience. I myself have found out that fellowship with God and His Son is the highest joy that I can have in this life. Can you imagine? God, the Almighty One, is my personal Friend!! When I talk with Him, I know He is in charge of my life. I forget my problems because I know that He takes care of them all.

This is what eternal life means. To know and to have personal fel-

lowship with God (who is the Father) and with His Son, Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus Himself said:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3)

The Teaching of Antichrist

Therefore, any false teaching which takes these blessings from me must be one of Satan's most dangerous false doctrines. Yet there is a very popular teaching among Christian churches which destroys these two great blessings. This false teaching says that:

- ✚ Jesus was not really the true, begotten Son of God.
- ✚ The true Son of God did not really die.
- ✚ Jesus and His Father, our God, are not personally present with us, but have sent another person instead.

You can see that this is a very deadly false doctrine. Yet most Christians have accepted this teaching. Maybe even you have accepted this teaching. This doctrine says that Jesus was not truly begotten of the Father in eternity past. It teaches that Christ and God are the same age, that they are equal in power and authority. I ask you, how then could Jesus be the Son of God? Can a son be the same age as his father? This doctrine denies that Jesus is, and always was, the Son of God. The Bible says of this doctrine:

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? **He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.**” (1 John 2:22)

By now you may have realized that I am talking about the doctrine of the Trinity. This is the false doctrine which denies that Jesus is the true, be-

gotten Son of God. According to this teaching, Jesus was not really the Son of God, but was actually one of three Beings who are all God. This doctrine teaches that He was only the Son of God by name, but not in the sense that He was begotten from God. If this were true, then Jesus could not really have died on the cross, because God cannot die, and according to this teaching, Jesus was completely equal with God!! They say that only the body died, but the spirit was still alive and safe with the Father. If this were true, then what did God suffer when Jesus died? Did only a human body die on Calvary. Could a human body pay for the sins of the world?

As long as you believe this doctrine, you will never be able to realize what God has done for you when He gave His only begotten Son to die for your sins. You will never understand how much He loves you. How can we love and serve Him properly if we don't appreciate how much He loves us?

The second deadly danger of the Trinity doctrine is that it pushes God and Jesus far away from us. Jesus has made the following promises:

- ✦ *...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5)*
- ✦ *...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20)*
- ✦ *...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (John 14:23)*
- ✦ *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (John 14:18)*
- ✦ *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you.... (John 14:28)*
- ✦ *...truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)*

He promises that He and His Father PERSONALLY will be with us. But according to the doctrine of the Trinity, it is not Jesus Himself and the Father Himself who are with us, but it is another person called *The Holy Spirit*. This is the second false teaching of the Trinity doctrine.

Who Is The Holy Spirit?

The truth is that there are only two divine Beings, not three. The two beings are God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, His Son. (Please see 1 Corinthians. 8:6; 1 John 1:3; Revelation 5:13; 7:10; etc.) It is true that there is a Holy Spirit, but the question is, "Who, or what is the Holy Spirit?" The Holy Spirit is not a third being, separate from God and Jesus. The Holy Spirit is actually the *spiritual presence* of the Father and the Son, but not in their bodily form.

The Bible teaches that there is only ONE Lord (Ephesians 4:5).

The Bible teaches that there is only ONE Spirit (Ephesians 4:4).

Who is the one Lord and the one Spirit? Here is the answer from 2 Corinthians 3:17.

"Now the [one] Lord is that [one] Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Look at how the same truth is brought out in the following texts:

- ✦ "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also At that day ye shall know that **I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.**" (John 14:19, 20)
- ✦ "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17:23)

Do you see? It is the Father in Jesus, and Jesus in us. They are with us in spirit form, not in bodily form.

This is why the presence of them with us is called the Holy Spirit.

Satan wants to take two precious things from you. One is the knowledge of the love of God and His Son. That love which was so wonderfully demonstrated when God gave His Son to die for men (1 John 4:9). The other is the knowledge of the indwelling presence of God and His Son. Without these, what are we left with? Nothing. We are orphans, lost people seeking to find a way to be saved; trying to face life, but helpless and lost.

Thank God for the gospel of His Son! Thank God for a full and perfect salvation. What a joy to know that I have been redeemed, not with gold or silver, but by the precious life-blood of the only begotten Son of the great God of the universe. I am somebody. I am worth something. How wonderful to know that my friends and constant companions are this same God and His Son! This gives me courage and confidence. This makes me know that I am safe, even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. This makes me know that there is nothing too hard for me to face. God lives with me and in me. I have an abiding Friend who will never let me down.

My dear friend, I invite you now, to abandon this false doctrine of the Trinity. Accept the truth about God and His Son. Give your life to them forever and determine that from now on you will serve them and walk with them until the day when we shall meet them face to face.

(Brother David Clayton writes from his home in Manchester, Jamaica. You may write to David at PO Box 23, Knockpatrick, Manchester, Jamaica, West Indies. David Clayton's e-mail address is: david000@cwjamaica.com.)



Letters from our Readers



We appreciate and encourage your comments and suggestions. The following are a few letters that we have received from readers of *Present Truth*.

“The Article ‘A Time to Choose’ in *Present Truth* is great, would you kindly send me some of those in booklet form, enclosed please find \$15.00. I enjoy your articles. Keep up the good work.”

Minnesota

“I would like these back issues on these titles of *Present Truth*. I really enjoyed reading them and sharing these articles with my family and friends because *Present Truth* is straight forward. Here are the titles of the back issues I would like to have.

- 1) What the Bible says About Hell
- 2) The Reward of the Wicked
- 3) The Plan of Redemption
- 4) The Truth About God
- 5) How Many Gods are There?
- 6) The Importance of Knowing the Truth About God
- 7) Righteousness by Faith

“I have learned a lot about the Bible since I have been reading and studying *Present Truth*. Thank you very much.”

West Virginia

(If you ever need extra copies of any back issues of *Present Truth* please let us know. *Editor*)

“Just wanted to send my new address. I’ve missed a couple of months of the *Present Truth* newsletter. My new address is _____. I would really appreciate you putting my new address on your mailing list. I’ve really enjoyed reading your material, and look forward to receiving it again soon. Thanks again.”

Alabama

“Please remove us from your mailing list. Thank you for the newsletters you sent but difficult to make time to read literature.”

California

“Please send me 100 of the gospel tracts so I can hand them out at work and put in break rooms and restrooms. Thank you.”

Indiana

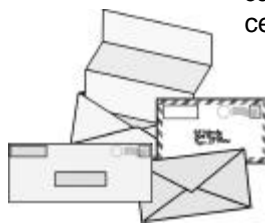
“Thanks again for the omissions list [concerning Bible translations]. I pray that all is well with the Smyrna Gospel Ministries. My request at present is to know if there is a list of omissions for the Old Testa-

ment in print, and if it’s possible for me to obtain that list. The list sent has certainly made a difference in my study and comprehension of Scriptures and I thank God for the enlightenment.

“I also would like to have your price list for the Interlinear Greek Textus Receptus. Enclosed is a small gift towards your ministries. I believe with my heart you will make good use of it. Thank you in advance of this request. May God continue to bless you and your organization in printing His word.”

Maryland

(We do not carry the Interlinear Bible. However we can get it for a reduced price if anyone would like to receive one. *Editor*)



“I’m enclosing a list of people who are very much in need of the *Present Truth* newsletter. Would you please at least send them the current August 1999 issue. Thanks.”

Wisconsin

“Could I request a copy of a past mailing called ‘Choosing a Bible.’ It is for our pastor here at _____ Nazarene church. My original copy has already been given away to help a family. Thanks through Jesus the Christ.”

Indiana

“Would you please send me 5 or 6 free copies of your book ‘America in Prophecy?’ Enclosed is a check in the amount of \$10 to cover postage and handling. Thank you.”

Missouri

“I recently attended a Promise Keepers conference in Tennessee and I picked up one of your pamphlets. Unfortunately I did not read it until I arrived back home in _____, Alabama 3 or 4 days later.

“I read the pamphlet and what’s scary is you can see the world going to a one world order. Look at the United Nations, a one world military. The United States being the world police force. The United States being the World police force 20 or 10 years ago would not be bad then. America used to be a Christian Nation but we are so far from God now if America doesn’t have a spiritual revival soon God will remove his hand from America and then who knows what will happen.... I am excited about receiving my free copy of America in Prophecy. Thank you for my free

copy. I can hardly wait to get it and start reading. Thank you.

Alabama

“I would like to get a free copy of the book ‘America in Prophecy.’ I am a Christian and am very interested in knowing how America fits into Bible Prophecy and how to distinguish between the World church and the True church of Christ in these latter days.”

Mississippi

“Enjoy your *Present Truth* newsletter each month. Keep up the good work.”

Alabama

“I have read a copy of the *Present Truth* and am very impressed with this message on the Trinity. Please place me on the mailing list for your magazine as soon as possible. I wonder if I could receive the back issues for 1999. Thank you.”

Canada

“I’m a reader of your *Present Truth* mail letter. I really enjoy the work of God from the States. Once again, well done and keep it up in the Lord’s work. God bless all of you.”

West Malaysia

(Please send us a letter and let us know your thoughts about this monthly newsletter.

Editor)

Side by Side

On the table side by side the Holy Bible and T.V. Guide. One is well worn and cherished with pride. Not the Bible, the T.V. Guide. One is used daily to help folks decide. No, not the Bible, the T.V. Guide. Its pages are turned, what shall they see. Oh, what does it matter, turn on the T.V. So they open the book in which they confide. No, not the Bible, the T.V. Guide.

The Word of God is seldom read. Maybe a verse as they fall into bed. Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be. Not from reading the Bible, but from watching T.V.

So then back to the table side by side, lie the Holy Bible and T.V. Guide. No time for prayer, no time for the Word, The plan of Salvation is seldom heard. But forgiveness of sin, so full and free, is found in the Bible, not on T.V.

Author Unknown

Present Truth is published monthly by *Smyrna Gospel Ministries*. It is sent free upon request. Duplication of these papers is not only permitted but strongly encouraged.

Editor: Lynnford Beachy, HC 64 Box 128-B, Welch, WV 24801, phone: (304) 732-9204, e-mail: berean@smyrna.org.

Associate Editor: Doug Goslin, PO Box 78, Kirkland, Arizona 86332, phone: (520) 442-9867, e-mail: DGoslin@aol.com.

Present Truth

HC 64 Box 128-B
Welch, West Virginia 24801
U.S.A.

**Bulk Rate
U. S. Postage
PAID
Welch WV
Permit No. 35**

Address Service Requested