

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

May 2002

"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:3, 4) The West Virginia camp meeting will be held here, between Welch and Pineville, from July 2-6. For those needing a motel, you can contact Woody's Motel in Pineville at (304) 732-6540 or The Cow Shed Motel in Pineville at (304) 732-7000. There are also rooms, cabins, camp sites and RV hookups at Twin Falls State Park, about half an hour away from the camp meeting. You can contact Twin Falls at (304) 294-4000. We are planning to have a healthful cooking seminar, as well as a seminar on the truth about God. Please contact us for more information. There will also be a camp meeting in Cañon City, Colorado, from June 6-15. For more information contact Richard Stratton at (719) 269-1438.

Galatians 3:10-12

by Alonso T. Jones

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Galatians 3:13)

The curse of the law, all the curse that ever was or ever can be, is simply because of sin. This is powerfully illustrated in Zechariah 5:1-4. The prophet beheld a *"flying roll; the length thereof... twenty cubits and the breadth thereof ten cubits."* Then the Lord said to him, *"This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth."* That is, this roll represents all the curse that is upon the face of the whole earth.

And what is the cause of this curse over the face of the whole earth? Here it is, *"For every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it, and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it."* That is, this roll is the law of God and one commandment is cited from each table, showing that both tables of the law are included in the roll. Everyone that stealeth—everyone that transgresseth the law in the things of the second table—shall be cut off as on this side of the law according to it, and everyone that sweareth—everyone that transgresseth in the

things of the first table of the law—shall be cut off as on that side of the law according to it.

Thus the heavenly recorders do not need to write out a statement of each particular sin of every man, but simply to indicate on the roll that pertains to each man the particular commandment which is violated in each transgression. That such a roll of the law does go with every man wherever he goes and even abides in his house is plain from the next words: *"I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts and it shall enter into the house of the thief and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name and it shall remain in the midst of his house."* And unless a remedy shall be found, there that roll of the law will remain until the curse shall consume that man, and his house *"with the timber thereof and the stones thereof"*; that is, until the curse shall devour the earth in that great day when the

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Questions and Answers page 3

by Lynnford Beachy

Letters from our Readers page 11

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Part 4 ... page 15

by George McDaniel

very elements shall melt with fervent heat. For *“the strength of sin”* and the curse *“is the law.”* (1 Corinthians 15:56)

But thanks be to God, *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”* All the weight of the curse came upon Him, for *“the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”* (Isaiah 53:6) He was made *“to be sin for us, who knew no sin.”* (2 Corinthians 5:21) And whosoever received Him, receives freedom from all sin and freedom from the curse because free from all sin.


So entirely did Christ bear all the curse, that, whereas, when man sinned, the curse came upon the ground, and brought forth thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:17, 18), the Lord Jesus, in redeeming all things from the curse, wore the crown of thorns and so redeemed both man and the earth from the curse. Bless His name. The work is done. *“He hath redeemed us from the curse.”* Thank the Lord. He was made a curse for us, because He did hang upon the tree.

And since this is all an accomplished thing, freedom from the curse by the cross of Jesus Christ is the free gift of God to every soul on the earth. And when a man receives this free gift of redemption from all the curse, that roll still goes with him; yet, thank the Lord, not carrying a curse any more, but bearing witness to *“the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.”* (Romans 3:21, 22) For the very object of his redeeming us from the curse is *“that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.”* That blessing of Abraham is the righteousness of God, which, as we have already found in these studies, can come only from God as the free gift of God, received by faith.

And *“as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse”*; (Galatians 3:10) and as *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,”* then He has also redeemed us from the works of the law, which, being only our own works, are only sin, and has, by the grace of God, bestowed upon us the works of God, which, being the works of faith, which is the gift of God, is only righteousness, as it is written: *“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.”* (John 6:29) This is rest indeed—heavenly rest—the rest of God. And *“he that entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”* (Hebrews 4:10)

Thus *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law”* and from the curse of our own works that the

blessing of Abraham, which is the righteousness and the works of God, *“might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.”* And all this in order *“that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith.”* (Galatians 3:14) And *“there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* And *“what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”* (Romans 8:1-4)

Thanks be unto God for the unspeakable gift of His own righteousness in place of our sins and of His own works of faith in place of our works of the law, which has been brought to us in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who *“hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”* 

(This article was first printed in the December 19, 1899, issue of *The Review and Herald*. It is also found on pages 124-126 of the book *Lessons on Faith* by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. I italicized Bible verses, capitalized some pronouns and added some verse references that were left out in the original.

Editor)

A Call for Prayer

I would like to appeal to my brothers and sisters to lift up Sister Arlene Noyes in prayer at this time. She has been diagnosed with terminal cancer and is not expected by doctors to live long. While we do not know if this is the Father's will, we know that He is merciful, gracious, and easily entreated.

Sister Noyes has truly been a bright jewel for Christ and a true mother of Israel. Her steadfast desire to follow Christ cannot be challenged. Please remember Arlene and her family at this time as they face the challenges ahead.

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.” (Malachi 3:16)

Lynnford Beachy



Questions and Answers

by Lynnford Beachy



Question: Should we tithe today?

“Could you help me study from the Scriptures if gifts that we receive should be tithed?” *Tennessee*

Answer:

This is an excellent question, one which we have not yet touched on in this newsletter. In order to have a good understanding of this we must first find out whether we should return tithes at all.

The first record in the Bible of anyone paying tithes is found in the book of Genesis. *“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.”* (Genesis 14:18-20) God had blessed Abraham with many earthly possessions and He felt compelled to give God a tenth. The Hebrew word that was translated “tithe” literally means “a tenth.” A tithe of \$100 is \$10.

Later, Abraham’s grandson followed the same example. Jacob said to God, *“And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”* (Genesis 28:22)

Jacob recognized that all the possessions he had or ever would acquire, ultimately came from God, and he promised to return to God a tenth of all his increase. This alone would answer your question regarding gifts being tithed because all that we have we have received from God, whether it was given as a gift from someone or we worked for it. David acknowledged this fact when he prayed to

God, *“Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”* (1 Chronicles 29:14) Even the strength we have to work to supply the necessities of life for our families was given to us by God. *“Thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.”* (Deuteronomy 8:18)

The next time we read about tithes in the Bible is in the book of Leviticus. It reads, *“And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’s: it is holy unto the LORD. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.”* (Leviticus 27:30-33)

According to these texts the tithe is to be returned to God for all the increase, whether it be of the land or of livestock, which were the primary sources of income in those days.

The next time we read about tithes in the Bible is found in Numbers, chapter 18. Notice what it says here:

“And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.... But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe. And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress. Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD’s heave offering to Aaron the priest. Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted

A Note of Correction

On page 5 of the March 2002 issue of *Present Truth* I wrote, “The ‘law of Moses’ is the first five books of the Bible, called the Torah by the Jews.” The word “Torah” should have been “Pentateuch.” I realized the mistake a few hours after we mailed them out and I felt terrible. I am very sorry for the mistake.

Lynnford Beachy

unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress. And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation." (Numbers 18:21, 24-31)

The descendants of Jacob's son, Levi, were chosen by God to do the service of the tabernacle. God designed that the sole income for the Levites was to come from the tithes of the children of Israel. There were many duties that were required relating to the service of the tabernacle, besides the work of the priests. Most of the Levites were not priests, but they were involved in doing the work relating to the service of the sanctuary. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. Yet all Levites were to live off the tithe as their sole income.

Some people get confused on this issue when they read Deuteronomy chapters 12 and 14 where tithe is mentioned. The confusion comes in where it says,

"Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And **thou shalt eat** before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, **the tithe of thy corn**, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.... At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and **the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow**, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest." (Deuteronomy 14:22, 23, 28, 29)

Again we read, "*When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled.*" (Deuteronomy 26:12)

The Bible is saying here that all the people are to take their tithe, every third year, to a chosen place and have a big feast and invite the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow to partake in the feast of the tithe. Some people have concluded from this that the tithe was designed to help the poor and be consumed in a feast rather than to be given solely to those who work in the service of the Lord. However, to come to this conclusion you would have to overlook the fact that after the Israelites gave a tenth (tithe) to the Levites there were still nine tenths left over. To assume that the tenth that is to go for a feast and to feed the poor is the same tenth that was to be given to the Levites is certainly stretching things.

Let me give another example. When the Israelites stubbornly clamored for a king to rule over them Samuel warned them what would be the result. He cautioned, "**He will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.**" (1 Samuel 8:15-17) The same Hebrew word that was translated "tenth" in these verses was translated "tithe" in Deuteronomy 14:22. If anyone would conclude that since the king was going to take a tenth the Israelites would not have to return a tithe to the Lord, we could easily see the error of such a conclusion. Let us be just as reasonable when we read Deuteronomy chapters 12 and 14. The tithe that was to be used for feeding the poor was not the same tithe that was to be given to the Levites, and it was distinguished from it by pointing out that the tithe for the poor was to be given every third year. The third year tithe would be like an offering we would donate to help feed the poor, while the tithe for the Levites would be like the tithe we give to the church to support the ministers and their families.

God says, "*Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.*" (Deuteronomy 12:19) In the days of Nehemiah the Levites had been forsaken. Nehemiah wrote, "*And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries.*" (Nehemiah 13:10-12)

God is displeased when His people neglect to return a tithe for the support of the ministry. God said, "*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*" (Malachi 3:8-10) It is a serious thing to rob God, yet God says that is what we do if we neglect to return tithes and give offerings. God promises that if we do this He will open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings beyond what we can receive.

Tithe does not belong to us. God has intrusted it into our hands, yet if we neglect to return it to God, we have robbed Him, and He will hold us accountable. Offerings,

on the other hand, are to be given willingly. When Moses was about to build the temple, God told Him, *“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.”* (Exodus 25:2) After David gathered the material for a permanent temple He exclaimed, *“Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”* (1 Chronicles 29:14) David acknowledged that God owns, not only the tithes and offerings, but all things.

Paul wrote, *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:7) This is speaking of free will offerings. When we return tithe to God we are not giving anything, but rather returning to God what belongs to Him. When we give beyond the tithe, then we are giving offerings to the Lord.

There are some who believe that tithing ended at the time of Christ, and that Christians are not obligated to pay tithes. Is this what the Bible says? Jesus said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”* (Matthew 23:23) According to Jesus we should not leave paying tithe undone.

When Jesus sent forth workers into the ministry He said, *“Carry neither purse, nor scrip... And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire.”* (Luke 10:4, 7) Jesus intended from the beginning for the ministry of the gospel to be supported by tithes and offerings. He could miraculously withhold 10% of our income, but instead, He allows us to have a part in this as a way to eradicate selfishness and keep before our minds the fact that God owns all things. Paul wrote,

“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we

should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath **the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.**” (1 Corinthians 9:7-14)

Peter and the other apostles said, *“We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”* (Acts 6:4) The apostles could not have done this if they had to continually support themselves and their families without the support of tithes and offerings.

A good method of returning tithe is to support a local minister who is serving the local community by preaching the true gospel, with any excess going to support ministers in need. To knowingly support falsehood with your tithe money is not pleasing to God. Some people may be in an area where there is no minister to serve them, yet they are not exempt from returning the tithe to God. They can send their tithe to a minister who is preaching the true gospel and pray that the Lord will call a minister to work in their local community.

After examining the Bible I have found that tithe is to be used to support ministers and their families, while offerings are to be used for erecting buildings, feeding the poor, producing literature, etc.

The work of the ministry has always been supported by the tithes and offerings of God’s people. If God had intended for it to be otherwise, He would have told us. Tithing is still required by God. The tithe is to be returned on our increase, whether it be in our garden, at our job, or a gift from others.

I hope this helps to answer your question.

Question: What about image worship?

“Please explain the Scripture where God asked Moses to put up a figure of a serpent in the desert for the people to see and get cured. The Catholics here are distributing a tract about idols, where they are stating that God ordered Moses to do idols, and he refers to the cherubims in the ark of the covenant. What they said, and tried to debate, is that it is okay to have idols, and they base this on the serpent idol. They are making this tract, and stating that when they have their idols and saints it is okay for them to have them in their houses and buildings, and to look at them for healing.”

Peru

Answer:

Let us first review the background to the brazen serpent.

The Israelites had been complaining about God’s dealings with them, and even made untrue statements about what God had done. We read, *“And the people spake*

against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.” (Numbers 21:5) God had performed miracles for the Israelites to provide them with food and water, yet they claimed that God did not provide these things. In God’s mercy He had protected the Israelites from the poisonous serpents all around them, but because of their stubbornness, murmuring and disbelief, God removed His protection and many people were bitten by the serpents and died.

We read, “*And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.*” (Numbers 21:6, 7)

The Lord heard their repentance and He provided a remedy, yet He wanted to demonstrate the genuineness of their repentance by giving them a way to exercise their faith.

“*And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*” (Numbers 21:8, 9) Some Israelites stubbornly refused to look on the brass serpent, thinking that just looking at it could not possibly heal them, and they died. Others felt their condition was so terrible that they could not possibly be helped, they would not look at the brass serpent, and they also died. Yet many trusted God’s Word, looked upon the brass serpent and were immediately healed.

To many people the serpent was a sign of the curse of sin. Through the symbol of the serpent God was able to show that His Son would be made a curse for us so that we could be healed from our disease of sin. The likeness of a serpent that Moses lifted up represented Christ when He would be delivered up for our sins. All who will look to Christ in faith, trusting in His Word, will be healed. Jesus said, “*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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 3:14-16)

Whatever the sin, whatever wickedness you have committed, look to Christ in faith, and He will heal you, for He has promised.

Some mistakenly conclude that the story of Moses lifting up the brass serpent, along with the fact that golden angels were placed on the ark of the covenant, give us permission to fashion idols and bow down to them. Yet this is expressly forbidden in the Ten Commandments. God said, “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: **Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:** for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*” (Exodus 20:4-6) God did not change His mind about idols. The commandment forbids bowing down to or serving idols. If the idol is a representation of a dead person, such as Peter, James, John, Mary, etc., then it is even more of an abomination in God’s sight, because He has forbidden communication with dead people. “*There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.*” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12) In the *Young’s Literal Translation*, the word “necromancer” was replaced with “one seeking unto the dead.”

All communication with dead people is strictly forbidden by God. King Saul died because he had tried to do this. “*Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it.*” (1 Chronicles 10:13) Those who communicate with dead people are really communicating with demons disguised as dead people, for “*the dead know not anything.*” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) For more information on this subject, please contact us and request the tract entitled, “What the Bible Says About Hell.”

The likeness of a serpent that Moses raised on a pole for people to look upon and be healed was not to be bowed down to or served, nor were the angels on the ark to be bowed down to or served. These are examples of likenesses being made by God’s people, at His direction, but they were not to be worshipped or revered. The likeness of the serpent was only used once by God’s people, for a particular purpose, and it was not designed to be used again. Many years later, when Hezekiah became king of

Judah, “He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and **brake in pieces the brasen serpent** that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it *Nehushtan*.” (2 Kings 18:4)

The forming of statues of dead people and bowing down before them, kissing their feet, or any other such forms of worship, are forbidden by the second commandment. The leading church in this world that practices these things is aware of this fact and, therefore, they have deleted the second commandment from their list of commandments and split the tenth commandment into two to retain the number ten. If the Roman Catholic practice of bowing down to images of dead saints was not a violation of the second commandment, they would not have deleted it from their representation of the Ten Commandments. You can find the Catholic version of the Ten Commandments in many places, to verify this fact. Many of the representations of the Ten Commandments that are being displayed in courthouses and schools, are the Catholic

version with the deleted second commandment and the tenth split into two.

On page 39 of the book, *Handbook for Today's Catholic*, the Ten Commandments are listed as shown in the left portion of the box below.

In the Bible (including the Catholic Bible) the Ten Commandments are listed as shown in the right portion of the box below.

For more information about the attempt by the Roman Catholic Church to change God's law, contact us and request the tract entitled “The Law of God.”

I hope this helps to answer your questions.

Question: Could you please clarify on the judgment?

“I just finished reading, ‘The Big Picture,’ in the July 2001 issue of *Present Truth*, and I found it very well explained except for one point which I have to disagree on or either I misunderstand. That is: I believe the saints will also have to be allowed and given the time, to question why God allowed, all the righteous people to enter

Catholic Version of the Ten Commandments

1. You shall honor no other god but me.
2. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

The Bible Version of the Ten Commandments

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
4. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

heaven, even though they would not be part of the 'investigative judgement for the righteous that takes place before the second coming of Christ.'

"I believe we would question how someone was converted that we have known in our lives as a murderer, stealer, etc. I believe this would also be very important to ensure that everyone can see that God is just and righteous in all He does. Could you please explain this somewhere in *Present Truth* so that other readers can also gain a better understanding of this issue." *Tennessee*

Answer:

You brought up a good point here. For those readers who have not read the article entitled, "The Big Picture," in the July 2001 issue of *Present Truth*, I encourage you to read it. If you do not have a copy, please contact us and we will send you one. If you have not read this article, this answer may not make much sense to you.

As I mentioned in the article, the righteous will not need to be present during the investigative judgment of the righteous that takes place before the second coming of Christ. (See Revelation chapters 4-6 and Daniel 7:9-13.) This is true because their input would not be valuable at this time since they are still living in a sinful human nature, and any input or analysis they could offer would be of no value because their judgment would be impaired by the weaknesses of the flesh. *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* (Isaiah 64:6)

However, these things will not be true of us after the second coming of Christ when we shall have *"put on incorruption."* (1 Corinthians 15:53) You may very well be right that during the millennium, while *"the saints shall judge the world"* (1 Corinthians 6:2), they will also have the opportunity to review God's decisions regarding who has been permitted entrance into God's kingdom. This could not include a review of the sins of the righteous, for God has promised that if we confess our sins He will forgive us and not mention them to us again. *"None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him."* (Ezekiel 33:16)

I hope this helps to clarify the issue.

Question: How is Jesus the first and the last?

"Why does Jesus say, 'I am the first and the last,' in Revelation 1:17, if He is the Son of God the Father? He also said, 'and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me,' while He was speaking to the Father in John 17:8." *Tennessee*

Answer:

This is an excellent question. Let us read the verse. Jesus said, *"Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."* (Revelation 1:17, 18) There are some who claim that this text indicates that Christ has always existed, and always will exist, and that therefore He was not truly the "begotten Son" of God in a literal sense. However, to try to fit that theory into this verse we would have to make it contradict all the plain Bible testimony that reveals that Christ is truly the Son of God by being begotten of His Father. Yet, there is nothing in this verse that necessitates that the speaker was not begotten in a literal sense.

There are a number of other possible interpretations of this verse. Jesus said that He is "the first and the last," but He did not clarify what He was referring to.

Christ could have been referring to Himself as the first and the last literal begotten Son of God. He could have been referring to Himself as the first and the last One to die for another's sins. He could have been referring to Himself as the first and the last to be resurrected after experiencing the second death. The fact is, we are not told precisely what Jesus was referring to when He called Himself "the first and the last," but the above interpretations are definite possibilities. It is true that God the Father applied this term to Himself in the Old Testament, yet, just as other terms apply to the Father differently from the Son, this term also has a different application for the Father than for His Son.

The word "Saviour" is applied most often to the Son of God, but at times it applies to the Father. *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."* (1 Timothy 2:3; See also 1 Timothy 1:1; Luke 1:47; Titus 1:3; 3:4; Jude 25) It is evident that the term "Saviour" is used in a different sense when applied to the Father than when it applies to the Son. God is our Saviour because He sent His Son to die for us. Christ is our Saviour because He died for our sins. (See 1 John 4:14; 2 Peter 1:11, etc.)

When seeking to find a proper interpretation of a Bible verse, we must take into consideration all the other verses on that subject, and come to a conclusion that is in harmony with the entire Bible. Christ is "the first and the last," yet He was begotten of His Father according to the Scriptures. These two truths must harmonize with each other.

I hope this helps to answer your question.

Question: When will the rapture take place?

"When will the rapture take place—before the tribulation or after?" *West Virginia*

Answer:

This is an excellent question. Recently there has been much thought on this issue due to the “Left Behind” series of videos, books, and cassettes that are found in many Bible book stores. There is even a song on the radio about this with a line that says, “You’ve been left behind.” Each of these media are designed to portray the idea that, just before the tribulation, Christ will return secretly to rescue His people from the hard times ahead. The idea that all the Christians will one day mysteriously disappear, while the wicked are left on the earth, is called the “secret rapture,” and is based on a misunderstanding of what Jesus said in Matthew chapter twenty-four. Jesus prophesied, “*Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*” (Matthew 24:40, 41) Many assume from these verses that Jesus was saying that there will be a day when the righteous will be taken to heaven and the wicked will be left here on the earth. However, look at the verses again, and you will see that Jesus did not say who would be taken, nor did He say where they would be taken.

In order to assume that the righteous are taken to heaven while the wicked are left to go through the tribulation, one would have to ignore the immediate context of Christ’s words. Let us look at the context to get an understanding of what Jesus was talking about. Jesus said,

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” (Matthew 24:37-41)

Jesus used the story of Noah and the flood as a parallel to what would happen at the second coming of Christ. In Noah’s day the world was deeply involved in their worldly lives, oblivious to what was about to happen. They were like the wicked will be just before the second coming of Christ who say, “*Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*” (2 Peter 3:4) Jesus said that when the flood came it took them all away. Who did the flood take away, was it the righteous or the wicked. Certainly! The flood took away the wicked in death. The only ones left were the eight righteous people on the ark. In the story of Noah’s ark, the wicked were taken in death, and the righteous were left

alive. Immediately after telling this story Jesus said, “*so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*” (Matthew 24:39-41)

The questions that must be asked are: who will be taken? who will be left? and where will the ones who will be taken go? From the immediate context all these questions have an obvious answer. At Christ’s second coming the wicked will be taken in death, and the righteous will be left standing alive. This scene is described in Revelation chapter six. Here we read, “*And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*” (Revelation 6:15-17) Only the righteous will be able to stand when Christ comes. They will be the ones left.

Paul wrote, “*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17) The ones who are left alive will be caught up to be with Christ.

Paul said that the man of sin will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ’s coming, which will also be true of all the wicked. “*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Luke’s account of Christ’s conversation, where He said, “*one shall be taken, and the other left,*” leaves us in no doubt regarding what Jesus was talking about. Jesus said, “*I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*” (Luke 17:34-37)

The disciples who heard Christ’s words wanted a clarification of what Christ was talking about, so they asked Him, “Where, Lord?” Were they asking “where will they be taken?” or “where will they be left?” The answer is obvious, they could not be asking where will they be left,

because Jesus had plainly told them that the one in a bed will be left in the bed, the one at the grinding mill will be left at the grinding mill, the one in the field will be left in the field. The disciples wanted to know where the ones taken would go. Jesus answered, *"Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."* (Luke 17:37) Here Christ is saying that the ones taken will be taken in death, and their dead bodies will attract flesh-eating birds. We read about this in Revelation: *"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great."* (Revelation 19:17, 18)

After examining the evidence, we can see that Christ was not talking about a secret rapture when He said, *"one shall be taken, and the other left."* In fact, if Christ had been referring to such a teaching He would have contradicted His own words that He spoke a few minutes earlier. He said that the Christians would be here during the tribulation. He said, *"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. **Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.** And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."* (Matthew 24:6-10, 13) I doubt anyone could have convinced a Christian in the World Trade Center on 9-11 that they would be secretly raptured before things got really bad. Nor would the true Christians during the Dark Ages, who were tortured to death, have believed such fables.

Jesus said, *"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."* (Matthew 24:20-22) It would be pointless for Jesus to admonish us to pray that our flight be not in the winter or on the Sabbath day if we were to be raptured before the tribulation.

Jesus continued, *"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; **believe it not.** For there shall*

*arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; **believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.** For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."* (Matthew 24:23-28)

Jesus said specifically that if anyone tells you that Christ has come secretly we are not to believe it. He said that His coming would be as the lightening, filling the entire sky so that every eye shall see Him. *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."* (Revelation 1:7) *"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."* (Mark 13:26)

Jesus specifically warned us that there would arise false prophets who would seek to deceive His people on this very subject, and we can see His prophecy fulfilled today. Many false prophets are proclaiming that Christ will come secretly for His people, but Jesus told us when He would come for His people. He said, *"Immediately **after the tribulation** of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see **the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven** with power and great glory. And **he shall send his angels** with a great sound of a trumpet, **and they shall gather together his elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."* (Matthew 24:29-31)

There should be no doubt in our minds regarding this issue. Christ has made it plain. He said, *"Behold, I have told you before."* God's people who are alive on the earth when the tribulation begins will go through the tribulation. Some will be killed. Some of the wicked will be converted during this time. At the end of the tribulation the seven last plagues will be poured out on the wicked (Revelation 16) while the righteous will be protected from these plagues. Immediately following the plagues Christ will come very visibly and the wicked will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. The graves of the righteous will be opened and they will rise to meet the Lord. Then the righteous will be caught up to be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

I hope this helps to answer your question.





Letters from our Readers



(Each month we receive letters that help us to know how God's work is progressing throughout the world. Because we think you are interested in this work as well, we are printing some of them for you. If you do not wish your letter to be printed, please let us know when you write. *Editor*)

The Work in Africa

(Many of these letters from Africa include requests. Thanks to the kindness of our Lord, and the generosity of His people some of these needs have been met. However, there are many that we are unable to meet due to lack of funds. If the Lord impresses you to help meet any of these needs, please contact us and we will give you the necessary information. Thank you! *Editor*)

"It is a pleasure to write you this letter today. We always consider it an honor and a privilege to join together with fellow believers throughout the world in advancing the uncompromised true gospel of Jesus Christ as we were commanded by our Lord to do.

"It encouraged us greatly to come across some of your cassettes played during our recent conference held in _____. These tapes played inculcated the good news and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ into some of our fellow believers here so much that, after the convention, they approached me to make request for some of these cassettes to be used in this ministry. As such, we wish to write to your ministry to help send some of your cassettes and Bibles and video cassettes. We also use this same opportunity to beg you if you can also send one tape recorder with compact discs to be used when we go for outreach. Financial constraints induced us to put these burdens on you, but it is the work of the Lord.

"You are to go into all the world and preach the good news to everyone everywhere. (Mark 16:15)

"Our prayers go up for you. We hope to hear from you as early as possible." *Ghana*

"It is true that I stopped writing to you for some time now, nevertheless I have been following your work with keen interest. I have to confess that I took offense in the disappointment in your scheduled missionary visit to Nigeria, canceled last August 2001. Please forgive. The truths in your message always keep me alert and inspired. Keep up your good work. The Holy Spirit will surely accomplish it in the fullness of time.

"The report of the work in Africa is encouraging and we are praying unceasingly that the truth might have its free course... We support your teaching in the Truth about God, the Trinity and the person of Jesus Christ as the Be-

gotten Son of God. The work of the Holy Spirit, the state of the dead and the rest of your teachings.

"Someone once asked, 'How does one eat an elephant?' This might seem like a strange question, but the answer is 'one bite at a time.' However, when applied to Smyrna Gospel Ministries, it becomes more realistic. I am sure many see their ministries as an elephant, which looks like an impossible task. For instance, think about Africa, India, Brazil, etc., who never heard of the Three Angels' Messages. The one God and His Son, Jesus. How do we reach them? One person at a time. In Galatians 6:9 we are exhorted: 'And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.'" *Nigeria*

"I am glad that finally I have found your address after a very long search. I hope you are doing fine in spreading the good news of our Lord Jesus.

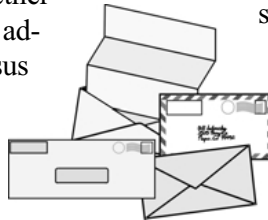
"I have read a few of your publications but because of them being scarce, they have left me thirsting and hungering for more. I am a person who likes to research, especially in these last days when we have a lot of different ideas promoted by the Christian world." *Zambia*

"As the good news continues to spread because of the truth that it bears with it, our focus of attention is directed to the people known as _____, one of the tribes that lives on the Kenya/Tanzania borders. However, the vast majority live in Tanzania where most of them are herders who graze animals. One of their men had brought an orphaned child to the orphanage when he found the camp meeting going on. He spent one week learning about the truth of the gospel. He went back home and shared with his congregation about the Sabbath and the truth about the doctrine of the trinity and the position of the Father and the Son.

"[He] and his congregation have become Sabbath keepers and hence invited us to hold a seminar and crusade in this small town in the borders of Kenya/Tanzania...

"There will be people from Kenya and Uganda and the audience anticipated is over four thousand. My heart and tears goes for these people who need Jesus as the only hope. We are asking for your prayers and monetary support...

"The hope of many hearts are being restored. The dawn hour has come for the needy and the poor to receive the truth about the gospel and truth shall set them free. If our request finds your favour, then we should receive the funds before month end. Also post for us literature to be distributed. This should be posted as soon as possible to enable them to reach here in time.



“May the Lord bless you all as you find support for this worthy course for Jesus and humanity.” *Kenya*

“I don’t have means to duplicate videos and audio tapes over here. Also I don’t have money to photocopy your *Present Truth* newsletter. Many people wanted your newsletters and videos and audio tapes. We therefore ask you to help us by looking for brothers and sisters in America who can help us in this matter. We are looking forward to hearing from you soon. May God bless you and the work there... We want to translate your *Present Truth* newsletter from English to French for Congo DRC.”

Zambia

“Sorry for the delay in replying to [your e-mails] for I was away in _____ to meet our brothers and sisters there, since we have started true ways of life and Sabbath there. God has done wonders there and the church is really growing just like the _____ one.

“Now about my problem of lacking basic needs. The church members do realize that God requires them to support their pastor, but our church is just still growing and still in infant stage. There is also abject poverty amongst the church members as almost 50% of Kenya’s population live below poverty line. So what the members contribute monthly cannot cover my salary as well as other church needs.

“I have communicated to you my thoughts regarding trinity, the condition of the dead and eternal torment by airmail, posted today... Please kindly put my name in your mailing list for the magazine. We do pray God will do miracles on the letter and some good Samaritan will positively respond...

“I want to thank you for your words of encouragement contained in your letter. I determined to spread the truth in Kenya. Thank you.” *Kenya*

“Peace of our soon coming Savior be unto you all. I am now in _____ for a missionary trip invited by a devoted Sunday pastor, as I informed you earlier. On my way yesterday, I met brother _____ with this letter which I am sending you and the ministry to be considered from _____ ... They need us to visit them...

“Now here in _____ God has done a miracle to us and we ask you to pray for us that we can reach our goal. The pastor who has invited us has other pastors under him. All are Sunday keepers. This brother is a devoted man of God and established in Scriptures. He even managed to pass our message to his co-workers in _____ by sending them our tracts and booklets. So after their study, the leader in _____ crossed to _____ for more enlightenment. This is why I was invited. Now we are arranging to visit some pastors here and other places beyond, after which we shall arrange to visit this group in _____ too. But all this ar-

rangements and trips need assistance, as you know very well. We are depending on your grace since then, so help us that one day we may get a strong church which can help us as servants of the Lord.

“I am requesting US100 for transport to reach these souls which are thirsty and hungry for the Present Truth.”

Uganda

(I pray that your dependence would grow more and more to be upon God and His grace and less upon men. *Editor*)

“I have some video tapes, spiritual ones, to watch I use my neighbor’s video machine. Therefore, please send me the video tapes. I need them very much for our spiritual growth. I ask you, with the mercies of God, to pray with me for the provision of my own video machine. I believe God is faithful. He can meet this need in time. When we were praying for you the Spirit of the LORD moved us deeply to invite you to this country of ours to teach us deeper dimensions of the Kingdom of God. What do you say?”

Malawi

“I have read the materials you sent to me and I believe that there is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. But when I talk to some Christians that there is nothing like a trinity, that it originated from pagans, they do not agree with me. They quote Matthew 28:19 and other texts to support their explanation. What do you say? I am expecting my package as you promised.”

Nigeria

(Please refer to the “Questions and Answers” section of the April 2002 issue of *Present Truth* for the answer to this question. *Editor*)

“I would like to apologize for delaying to reply to your letter. This was because of some pressure that would keep out of town to distribute literature, some time trying to translate the literature to local language.

“Above all, I wish to extend my thanks for all you are doing to support the gospel in Africa. Frankly, you are doing a great job. I pray that the Lord may tremendously bless you. Extend my [greetings] to all who are throwing all they can to support us.

“I also wanted to let you know that we are planning a crusade to be conducted in _____. I wish to invite you to join us in prayer that the Lord may be equal to the task.

“In addition, I wanted to give you my physical address so that you may include me in the list of those you send newsletters to.”

Zimbabwe

“I have sought to start an orphanage to help the community, for indeed many families are in a problem due to calamities, abrupt death, etc. Can you get us a donor or a sponsor to help us carry on such a project, for I am really convinced that to go with the gospel only, without thinking of needy people, it will not work well. So if you will

answer me, I will break down the costs of starting such a project. Now we are molding bricks ourselves.” *Uganda*

“Thank you for your prayers and your support for the work of God in Congo. The work there is moving forward with success. Many people again accepted the message. More souls are convicted and understanding the most important truth about God and other studies... Praise be to God!! I distributed many books, tracts, booklets, magazines and newsletters, etc. Many people received our literature with hugs, joy and smiles.” *Zambia*

Letters from Prisoners

“Enclosed you’ll find the next set of completed lessons. I’ve used these in studying with ‘newcomers’... We sit down and go over each question together. The harvest here within these prison fences is large. It’s truly amazing to see the Holy Spirit’s work in the hearts of men. What a privilege it is to be able to labor for Jesus!” *Oregon*

“I am writing about one of your tracts I’ve read, even though it was only half. It was concerning the Sabbath. I would greatly appreciate any Bible facts that you’d be able to send. This tract was called ‘One Hundred Bible Facts on the Sabbath Question.’ I’m currently locked up in a jail and I’m trying to understand the Bible better.” *Florida*

Literature

“Appreciate your *Present Truth* paper. The April issue I received had several pages missing. Could you please send pages 7,8,13,14.” *North Carolina*

(We are very sorry for the inconvenience. At times our printing work does not go as smoothly as it could and some mistakes slip through. We are more than happy to send replacement copies upon request. *Editor*)

“I talked to you on the phone about your tracts and how much I enjoyed them. You agreed to send me 20 of each one and I will enjoy passing them out. Enclosed is a check to cover any cost or extra tracts. Keep up the great work for our Lord. Thank you very much.” *South Carolina*

“I have read your tract entitled ‘The Millennium,’ and I have learned a lot from it, so please send me the tract entitled, ‘What the Bible Says About Hell.’” *Ghana*

“I wanted to commend you for some of your statements in the April 2002 *Present Truth*. Thank you for speaking the truth concerning the false doctrine of the secret rapture (p. 11). I must agree with your observations about the consequences of teaching such a doctrine, upon professing Christians. Your conclusion on the matter I also agree with whole heartedly; that there will be NO second chances and when Christ comes He will come for judgment ONLY. (Hebrews 9:28)

“Thank you as well for your article and testimony concerning the Love of God (pp. 1-5). I cannot help but be moved in my spirit when I consider the great love of the Father and the Son to us, adopted sons. That He loved me and gave Himself for me leaves me speechless and overwhelmed with the enormity of His love and the base depravity, undeservedness of my sinful soul. May He continue to keep us faithful. I must, however, write to you upon some points that I believe are very unscriptural... [A few points were listed.]” *Maryland*

“I greatly appreciate your article, ‘Bible Answers on the Law and the Sabbath’... I also appreciate your answer to someone in California about being condemned from birth because of maybe being of the tribe of Dan. I certainly believe you are correct. We had feelings that maybe we are poor and still in debt because we are doing something wrong (not knowing what), so your answer to that person on this issue was encouraging to us. Maybe we can change our feelings. We certainly want to be more thankful for all that God has given us.” *Tennessee*

“I have finished the translation of the ‘The Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity.’ In this moment I’m looking again in Portuguese, and in a short time I will send it to you.” *Brazil*

“While reading your April presentation of the *Present Truth*, you mentioned some pamphlets to send for: ‘The Millennium’ and ‘The Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity.’ Would you please send me these pamphlets.” *California*

“Hello, I would like to receive Bible studies and the book on last day events.” *Peru*

“I thank you and your staff for everything. Since I have been involved with the Bible Study I feel more and more closer to God than it ever seem [possible].” *Ohio*

“Thank you for the new tape, ‘Spirit of Antichrist.’ Excellent as always. Please continue to mail all new tapes. Would you please send me the new tract, ‘The Millennium’ as in this month’s *Present Truth*.” *Colorado*

The Internet

“I was recently given this website by a fellow member of my church that, along with me, shares the same views. That is, the closer to truth we become, then all the more closer to God we shall be. And in a world of uncomfatableness all around, knowing the truth brings me comfort and joy. If your newsletter can bring me more of that in a biblical and Christian manner, then I would greatly appreciate to be added to your mailing list and look forward to receiving it. May we all stand on the foundation of the Bible in these days and look to our Lord and Saviour for

thanks, and give praise in fervent prayer that we may not be deceived in our quest for the truth.” *Florida*

“Please remove me from your monthly mailing list for the *Present Truth*. I am now able to view it via the Internet. Thank you.” *Indiana*

“I was wondering if I am allowed to print off your tracts, literature, books, etc. from your website.” *E-mail*
(Yes! Duplication of our literature is not only permitted, but strongly encouraged. We appreciate it if all the contact information is kept on the literature when it is duplicated so that people can contact us if necessary. *Editor*)

The Trinity

“Hi, I just found the studies on the trinity on the CG7D message board. They are sure needed. Thanks, A fellow West Virginian near Wheeling, so long for now.” *West Virginia*

(I am not sure which message board is being referred to here. Some of our brethren have posted some of our studies from our website on message boards so others can read them. We appreciate seeing the message go out, and you have permission to post these studies providing there is contact information given as well, so people can contact us for more information. *Editor*)

“I am writing to you this morning because yesterday night we come together to decide how will we begin the work [of spreading the gospel message].

“We decided to first begin with a study group about the Bible, the true God’s Word, and we plan to build a series of studies about many subjects, passing through the real God (it will be about the trinity’s lies).” *Brazil*

“We are facing a problem with the leaders of the _____ church. The pastor has forbid the members we invited to the meetings to go there to learn. And one of our brothers is being kept in observation by the _____.

“Well, we are prepared to make our first printing [of literature] and it will be ‘The Truth About God.’ After it, we are to be printing also ‘The Holy Spirit.’ we will send to you the translation. We are to send news for you each week because our group is increasing and there are many interested in what we are teaching.

“Pray for us. We are to face serious difficulties with the _____ church because of our faith. God bless you and your work.” *Brazil*

Miscellaneous

“The weekend meetings in Tennessee were such a blessing to us both. We are so happy to have finally met with you face to face. And, if the Lord wills, we will see you again at the West Virginia meetings.” *Arkansas*

“Sometime ago in your newsletter there was a prayer request for a Michael Sibanda [February 2002], wrongly accused and on death row. I took this on as a regular prayer subject, and wrote to him in care of his mother. I received the enclosed reply in late March. You may wish to share their responses.” *North Carolina*

(Thank you for sharing these things. I believe the readers of *Present Truth* will enjoy these letters. *Editor*)

Michael’s mother wrote,

“Dear Brother _____,

“I was very much encouraged as soon as I read a letter from you. How helpful were your words to us. I do believe that God has sons and daughters in this world; I thought I was lonely with none to care for me, but now I know God has many children in this earth. Thank you very much for the letter. It was very nice of you to write to my son. I am Michael’s mummy; I heard all what you said to Michael. We will tell you if they will inform us, when that matter takes place. We are still waiting for them to let us know what is taking place about the appeal. It is still silent. We don’t know which is which. Here is Michael’s letter. I am sorry I delayed to post it. I was having no stamp.

“We are praying for you also. As soon as I received your letter I prayed. I am still praying. Please pray, or continue praying, for Michael. I do believe that our heavenly Father does impossible to possible. He is more powerful than the devil.” *Melody Tshabalala/Zimbabwe*

Michael Sibanda wrote,

“Dear Brother _____,

“It is very exciting to know that there are many people who are praying for me and encouraging enough to know some of them by names. I felt the yoke of burden being uplifted from me as I read your letter. Thank you very much for your words of encouragement.

“What makes me exceedingly happy is that Moses said in Deuteronomy 38:30; Joshua 28:10, ‘One man who believes in God can chase a thousand but two will put ten thousand to flight.’ Mighty as the prayer of one individual can be, it cannot be compared with the result possible when two or more persons pray in agreement; there is strength in unity. When the members of the body of Christ pray together in absolute agreement, their prayers become irresistible and will cause even mountains to move before them.

“I pray my letter won’t stop you from marching on around the city of Jericho until walls fall down. Thank you very much for assuring me any kind of help possible. For the time being, I need more of your prayers.”

Michael Sibanda/Zimbabwe

(If you would like to write to Michael or his mother you may write them at 1031 Emaganwimi, P. O. Nkulumane, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. *Editor*)

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made (Part 4)

by George McDaniel

(This is the fourth in a series of health articles that are designed to help you gain a deeper appreciation for God's amazing handiwork of the human body and a better understanding of how it works and how it can be better maintained by simple methods. George McDaniel is my father-in-law, and has been a registered nurse for many years, which, along with much research, has taught him many useful health principles. I pray that you are being blessed by these articles. *Editor*)

In 2 Kings chapter 5, an incident is recorded that has an important lesson for us, relating to every aspect of our lives. We see detailed here the experience of Naaman, who was a very important Syrian leader. He was actually the general in command of the Syrian army. Naaman was a valiant man, but he had leprosy. This was equivalent to a sentence of death, because no cure was known; quite similar to many kinds of cancer today. He learned from an Israelite slave girl that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure him. The king of Syria sent him to the king of Israel with a valuable reward and a letter that said, *"I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may recover him of his leprosy."* (2 Kings 5:6)

The king of Israel was very distressed at hearing this. He tore his clothes, which was a sign at that time of great grief, and said: *"Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeks a quarrel against me."* (2 Kings 5:7)

The king of Israel may not have been wrong in his evaluation of this situation. Healing someone of leprosy was not thought possible. The king of Syria could have been either seeking a fight with the king of Israel, or else playing a huge practical joke at his expense. I don't believe the king of Syria really thought there was any possibility of Naaman being cured.

When Elisha, the prophet, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent word to the king to send Naaman to him *"and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."* (2 Kings 5:8)

So Naaman came with all his retinue and stood at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha didn't even come out to see the great man. He sent a message by his servant, telling him to go wash in the Jordan River seven times and he would be healed. This made Naaman very angry. He went away and said, *"Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me and call on the name of*

the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper. (v. 11, margin) *Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."* (2 Kings 5:11, 12)

It appears, from these words of Naaman, that there must have been "faith healers" in Syria much as there are today and using the same techniques. He may even have gone to one, without success. Many today are seeking shortcuts to physical healing that don't involve obedience to God's commands.

His servants reasoned with him with these words, *"If the prophet had bid you do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it? How much rather then, when he says to you, wash, and be clean?"* (2 Kings 5:13)

Naaman appears to be a man who could be reasoned with. He calmed down, saw the logic of his servants, and went to the Jordan and dipped under seven times, and it is recorded that his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Read the account in 2 Kings 5. Learn what happened to Gehazi, Elisha's servant, when he yielded to the temptation to obtain riches to which he had no right.

As we review this story, certain things stand out. Naaman did not have much faith that he could be healed. He was desperate and grasping at any straw he could find that offered the slightest hope. The king of Israel, probably Joram, son of Ahab, didn't have any faith in God to heal. He didn't even suggest that Naaman go to Elisha; Elisha had to send a message. The one with the strong faith was the little slave girl. God honored her faith by healing Naaman. However, Naaman had to respond by obeying the command from God through Elisha. His obedience shows he did have some faith.

This story also shows how much influence one person with strong, unshakable faith, can have. Think about this young girl, taken away from home and family, made to serve foreigners who hated her race and her God, and yet she was concerned about the one who was her master and wanted to share something about the true God with him. There also must have been something very positive about her character that showed in her day-to-day life or her words would not

have been believed, but rather ridiculed. That's something to think about and meditate on.

Do we want good health, physically and spiritually? Then we have to learn God's commands (or laws or desires) in this regard and obey.

In the December, 2000, issue, the editor wrote an article on health in which he introduced the acronym NEW START. These letters help us to remember eight basic principles for good health. They stand for Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunlight, Temperance, Air, Rest, and Trust in God. None of these works independently of the others. They all work together to produce the desired effect of good health. The one named last is the most important one of all. Anyone who practices the first seven will have improved health of the body, but even more essential is a connection with the Eternal One and the development of spiritual health. Good physical health is a great help in developing spiritual health. Everything is interrelated. As we continue with this series, and take up these eight rules for good health one by one, I am going to try to show how they all work together. I am going to try to present general principles that can be applied to specific conditions

without getting too much involved in specific details, except by way of illustration.

One final thought: There is a function of the human spirit that, as far as I know, is not possessed by lower animals, which can help us in our search for truth. That is the will. We have to *decide* that when we find truth in any area, if we are sure that it is God's desire for us, we will obey. Even if no one else around us sees it as we see it, and even if they oppose and ridicule us, we have to decide *in advance* that we will follow where God leads. The power of the human will, when yielded to the will of God, is limitless. We just need to put it to the test and see what God can accomplish in and through us to His glory. ✍

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