

Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 4, Number 2

February 1995

A Personal Letter from John W. Ritenbaugh:

DAMNABLE HERESIES

Today, the largest body of the true church of God is rapidly being swept away by damnable heresies from the faith once delivered. Christians are warned of destructive and blasphemous doctrines being brought into the church in II Peter 2:1-3:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive [*damnable*, KJV] heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

It is instructive for us to study these verses more closely because they show us in a general way that traitors will come from within the church and subvert many to following their carnal ways.

Peter uses the word “but” to provide a contrast with the preceding section about the “sure word of prophecy” (II Peter 1:19, KJV). These traitors to the faith are not led by the Holy Spirit as were those God inspired to write the prophecies (verse 21). The apostle immediately warns that these “false teachers” will come from within the church, or as Peter writes, “among you.” The implication is that “forewarned is forearmed”! Therefore, be on guard!

In II Peter 2:2, “destructive” or “pernicious” (KJV) is more accurately translated “lascivious.” *Lascivious* means “to excite to lust or lewdness.” These heresies will seem to provide something we carnally consider very desirable for our well-being. But all the while the liberties (verse 19) they promise in their false teachings will be so destructive that they only serve to deny Jesus Christ (verse 1).

We find in verse 3 that the false teachers are themselves driven by covetousness. They desire to get something for themselves—power over people, possibly the perception of being a scholar, maybe popularity or money. With that motivation, they prove they are not led by the Holy Spirit.

Why are false teachings so deserving of condemnation? False teaching perverts the direction and outcome of our lives, unless we reject or repent of it, if we had once accepted it. On the other hand, possessing *true* doctrines and beliefs is of exceeding importance because what a person believes determines his attitude and conduct. Right thoughts precede right actions. Our beliefs express themselves in social relations, daily work and home life.

Alarming as II Peter 2:1-3 is, Peter neither tells us what heresy is in general, nor indicates what the future heresies will be. Besides these, he does not identify the *real* source of heresy either.

Heresy is the translation of the Greek *hairesis*—meaning literally “choice” or “selection”—which has an

In this issue :

PERSONAL:

DAMNABLE HERESIES	1
WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE?	3

WAS JESUS CHRIST BORN UNDER THE LAW? ...	5
FAITHFUL THOMAS!	11
BIBLE STUDY: CLEAN AND UNCLEAR MEATS	12

interesting secular as well as biblical history. Until its biblical use, it had no evil connotation. Even in the Bible, it is mostly used to refer to a party or a philosophy with which a person had chosen to identify or ally himself. Thus, *haireisis* is frequently translated “sect.” In Acts, Luke applies it to the Sadducees (5:17) and the Pharisees (15:5; 26:5). Outsiders also used *haireisis* in Acts 24:5, 14 and 28:22 to identify the Christian church.

However, when Paul and Peter’s writings began circulating, *haireisis* meant a destructive element within the church that creates division through consciously formed opinions and ideas in disagreement with the orthodox teachings of the apostles. Paul condemns it in Galatians 5:20 as one of “the works of the flesh.” Sometimes it is translated “factions” or “party spirit,” but regardless of its translation, Paul says that people who practice such things **will not inherit the Kingdom of God** (verse 21)!

In the ordinary course of secular life, heresy was of little consequence; one person’s opinion or choice about most things in life is just as good as another’s. A person can be given any number of alternatives, any one of which he may be perfectly free to believe. However, in Christianity we are dealing with revelation, with God-given truth, with absolutes. When God’s truth comes to men, we either have to accept or reject it. Thus, a heretic is a man who believes what **he wishes** to believe instead of accepting the truth of God that he *ought* to believe.

The Real Source of Heresy

From the Bible’s point of view, a heresy is a lie. No matter how attractively it may be wrapped or how appealing it may be to our vanity, it is a deviation from the truth of God that promotes or actually produces schism—

division—in the church.

Lies and division within the church make it very easy to identify the real source of heresy. In John 8:44 Jesus says of the Devil, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” John adds in Revelation 12:9, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.”

Satan introduced heresy into human life through Adam and Eve when he induced them to sin by telling them, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). They believed this perversion of God’s truth, and upon sinning, the destructive course began. By being cast from the Garden of Eden, they were almost immediately separated from God. They did not live and prosper as Satan’s cruel perversion led them to believe. Instead, the Devil exploited them through their innocence and desires, and through sin they became his slaves. Hundreds of years later, they died just as God said they would.

The Devil’s attempts to deceive through false teaching have never stopped. Jesus warned in Mark 13:22 that, as we approach the end, it will be especially intensive; “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” He warns that, if it is possible for us to be deceived, we will be deceived by false doctrines.

The source of false doctrine is demonic. Paul writes in I Timothy 4:1-2:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking

lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron. Paul is writing of men who listen to, consider, follow and then teach doctrines twisted from their biblical base (II Peter 3:16).

He adds in II Corinthians 11:13-15 that, though the false doctrine comes through a man, the real source is Satan. The man is just a servant:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”

As far back as Leviticus 17:7, God warned through Moses that, when the Israelites sacrificed before an idol, they were really sacrificing to demons. The apostle Paul picked up on

Please see page 6

Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

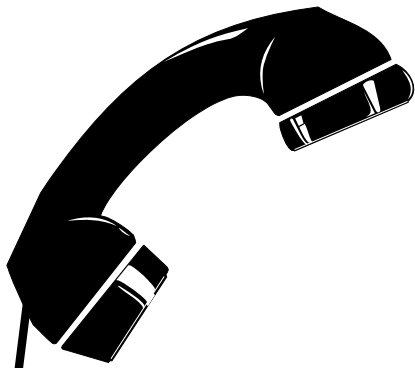
February 1995

Volume 4, Number 2

<p>Editor-in-Chief <i>John W. Ritenbaugh</i></p> <p>Managing Editor <i>Richard T. Ritenbaugh</i></p> <p>Copy Editor <i>Andy Benedetto</i></p> <p>Contributing Writers <i>J. Dan Anderson, John F. Bulharowski, Martin G. Collins, James A. Davey, Michael R. Ford, Helmut J. Fraund, Earl L. Henn, Darryl Henson, A. L. Legg, John O. Reid, Mark Schindler, Ervin W. Sollars, Kenneth W. Spencer, Harold A. Way, Charles F. Whitaker</i></p>	<p>Forerunner is published monthly as a free educational and religious service in the public interest. Unsolicited articles, illustrations and photographs will not be returned, and if used, become the property of the Church of the Great God. This publication is made possible through the freewill tithes and offerings of its subscribers and members of the Church of the Great God. All U.S. and Canadian donations are tax-deductible.</p> <p style="font-size: small;">© Copyright 1995 Church of the Great God All Rights Reserved</p>
--	---

CHURCH OF THE GREAT GOD

<p>In the UNITED STATES: PO Box 471846 Charlotte, NC 28247-1846 (800) 878-8220 / (704) 544-2100</p>	<p>In CANADA: Box 4 Indian River, ON K0L 2B0 (705) 295-6671</p>
--	--



What's Going On Up There?

You dial the emergency number and transmit your message. But you receive no audible response from the other end of the phone line—not even the annoying, recorded voice of an answering machine. Is there anybody at the other end? Is anyone listening?

After having dispatched hundreds, thousands, maybe even tens of thousands of seemingly unanswered prayers towards heaven, have you ever seriously asked, “What is going on up there?”

You should, you know.

It is neither wrong nor presumptuous to want a satisfactory answer to this question. In fact, it is very important to know. And simply because many do not know what God is doing, they consequently have no idea what is really being worked out here on earth among all humanity and in their own lives. Why do so many not know what is happening at the other end of their prayer line? Do we know?

Could we be so excessively concerned about our own perplexing troubles that we have not really cared what God might be up to, as long as we get what *we* want? In other words, the culprit for our ignorance of God's purpose may be our self-centeredness!

Each of us needs to be encouraged to do whatever is necessary to gain a better understanding of what God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ are doing at the other end of our line of communication to heaven. We need this encouragement so that all our

efforts at communicating will not prove to be in vain. And as we improve our prayers, our personal knowledge and worship of a sometimes neglected God—One we do not *truly* know very well—will also improve.

A Look from a New Angle

Forget yourself, your responsibilities, your needs, your possessions and all your pains and worries for a while. Once you have rid yourself for a moment of all personal thoughts and desires, you can begin to see things from the perspective of the One at the other end of the line. Yes, for a change, forget “I,” “me,” “my” and “mine” and take an objective look at our great Benefactor and how we have treated Him.

Notice the pain that has been inflicted on God: the disappointment of broken promises, the shame of His children's sins, the hurt of spurned parental kindness, the wounds from scorning prodigal sons and even the adversarial accusations. Think of all the unrequited love He has given. God receives that kind of treatment day after day, year after year.

But also notice the great success stories that could possibly be written. One by one you see the prodigal sons reflecting upon their self-imposed fate in the murky waters of the swines' trough. You see them suddenly remembering their Father's offer and beseeching heaven with outstretched arms. And at last the Father extends a welcome, invisible hand to each one in just the way that the particular rescue operation demands.

The other end of the line is a very busy place! How silly we were! All along we imagined that *our* end was the real business end, but as we grow

spiritually and really begin to know God, we gradually see the great amount of initiative and work originating from the other end. That is where the real action is.

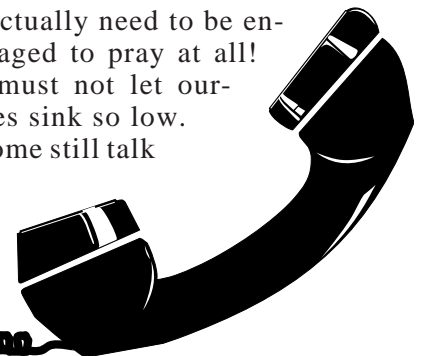
The truth is that we merely respond. We finally quit resisting and happily acquiesce, joining in with the mission that is always in progress at God's throne. In fact, we begin to see that our Father's “all-systems-go” effort is gaining momentum as time is moving toward the final countdown in the launch of the long-awaited Millennium.

To continue the analogy, He has already selected and trained the pilots and navigators, but He is preparing additional officers and crew members. It will be a good crew, the best ever assembled, more than able to accomplish their mission. They will function harmoniously like a well-oiled machine. God closely monitors their progress as they make their individual preparatory voyages and listens to their words as they communicate with Him daily. And in this the Father is very pleased.

A Behind-the-Scenes God?

Although we talk to God so often, we do not really know Him very well yet. As a result, prayer becomes a chore at times, a repetitive, hopeful, wishful, doubtful plea. We may even begin to think of it as just a useless, spiritual exercise. Sometimes we actually need to be encouraged to pray at all! We must not let ourselves sink so low.

Some still talk



to Him mostly because they have been told that praying is part of the formula to being saved. But salvation requires a Savior. When a drowning man wants to be rescued, someone must be at the other end of the rope to reel in the life preserver. The One fishing us out of the water, doing most of the work, is Christ our Savior.

But with all due respect to our highly esteemed Elder Brother and Judge, Jesus Christ is only an agent in our salvation. Certainly, He is a whole-hearted and indispensable one, filled with pity and love and affection for each of us as He pulls us out of our messes. Yet, even He looks to another for guidance and authority (John 5:19).

Ultimately we *must* turn our attention to the One whom we consider “behind the scenes,” the very One who commissioned our Savior. We cannot avoid the One to whom Christ instructed us to direct our requests, “our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). Never, never leave Him out of the picture—not for a minute!

We all know how easy it is to neglect the Father and His commandments—how our carnal minds rebel against doing those things that are pleasing in His sight (Romans 8:7). We have all practiced living by “the old man” in our past (Ephesians 4:22).

In this human-centered society, we grew up emulating carnal men and their ungodly, inconsistent examples. We grew up conscious of *my* family, *my* home, *my* job, *my* health, *my* looks, *my* things, *my* happiness.

Even after our calling, our focus is often self-centered. For quite a few years, in many cases, we focus on what we call “Christian living”: *our* repentance, *our* growth, *our* conversion, *our* justification, *our* sanctification, *our* future glorification, *our* faith, *our* love, *our* fears, *our* hopes, *our* dreams and even *our* church. This kind of “Christian living” is very egocentric!

Survival, self-preservation, is one of our natural drives. When God offers us salvation, we do not instantly stop valuing our survival. But until we really change our hearts, we look at most of the effort involved in our salvation as a necessary *evil* that we have to perform, like it or not. We see

it as an unpleasant duty, as the price *we* must pay for salvation. Human nature desperately tries to avoid conversion, so it can continue to indulge in the attractions of the world. It wants to do what it thinks is best for itself at any given time. Our nature would have us survive on our own terms.

We also have a natural tendency to concentrate on what we are being saved *from*. Romans 6:23 says if we continue along the path of sin, we can expect death, and we naturally want to avoid death! So, carnally, our first reaction is to oblige grudgingly and try to do the minimum required to get us saved, while continuing life on *our* terms.

Herbert W. Armstrong, however, explained many times that we must repent of what we *are*—our egocentric outlook on life—not just of the wrongs we have *done* in the past. God wants us to live life on *His* terms, and He gives us a way of life that will prepare us for His purpose for us. To understand what we are being saved *for*, we need to focus on the One who offers salvation to us. We need to find out

- why He is saving us.
- why He does not want us to continue our lives on our terms.
- what His plans for us are.
- what He wants us to do to ensure our future with Him.

Benefits of Knowing God

We cannot stop looking until we are sure of these things! As Psalm 34:8-10 teaches:

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.

“Taste and see” that His plans for us are very, very desirable! We will realize the reasons why we must do things a certain way and why our priorities have to be just so. The right kind of Christian living will make sense from that moment on. We will finally comprehend why Jesus said, “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).

Understanding the Father’s plans will dispel the Protestant or Catholic bias of an austere Christianity and a cruel and vengeful God. We will perceive that passages in Scripture we may have once thought hard-hearted and mean—like the Flood or Sodom and Gomorrah—really illustrate God’s mercy. We will discern that God must act in certain ways to work out His purpose for all of mankind.

Before coming to this understanding, we find overcoming unattractive because we do not grasp the Father’s goals, plans, purposes for us. We are still chasing our self-determined goals. We make a half-hearted effort at Christian living just to “get” saved from sure death.

But once we understand that living the way Christ set as an example for us (II Peter 2:21) *is* and *shall be* the way of the future, once we know our place in God’s plan, we will find ourselves making an *enthusiastic* effort to imitate the life of Jesus of Nazareth. We will know that the way He lived as a human being reflects the way He and His Father live now.

We must remember that this leap in comprehension begins when we really come to know the One at the other end of our prayers. What is He like? What is He doing? Where is He headed? What does He want with us? How can we please Him?

Prayer is two-way communication. Are we gladly *receiving* His message in return? He responds, not only in direct answers to our requests, but also in the pages of the Bible—in laws, prophecy, instruction, doctrine, encouragement, rebuke and many other ways.

In the past, in our self-centeredness, many of us have focused on only the part of the message that promises to save us from pain and death. As we grow, we cannot neglect the more important part of God’s message: what He has set out to accomplish and why He is doing it. In reality, that is the *true* message—the *true* gospel—of salvation!

Becoming Fully Operational

Satan the Devil has done everything in his power to hide that part of the message from us. He neither be-

Please see page 10

Was Jesus Christ Born Under the Law?

Was our Savior bound by the Old Testament law of rituals and sacrifices when He lived on earth? If not, why not? Does it really matter?

One of the central themes of the New Testament is that a Christian is a follower, a disciple, of Jesus Christ, who lives His life over again in our flesh by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Paul proclaims,

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

The life of Jesus Christ was a perfect example for us to follow in all respects. In this regard Peter writes, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:21). We are to think like Him (Philippians 2:5), imitate Him (I Corinthians 11:1) and follow His example in every detail of our lives (I John 2:6).

However, to walk in the footsteps of Christ is not popular. It is also difficult. It requires self-denial and leading a life quite different from those around us. Unfortunately, this invites persecution. Jesus said, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

Bound to Keep the Old Law?

Since the founding of the church of God, many subtle arguments have been advanced to convince people that they do not *really* have to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ in order to be a true Christian. One of these crafty arguments centers around the birth and early life of Jesus.

Some have taught that He was born

"under the law." The crux of this teaching is that Jesus lived under Old Covenant rules and regulations and that He was bound to keep the "whole law" with all of its rituals and ceremonies. In the Old Testament, God commanded His people to adhere to an exhaustive set of rules governing the offering of sacrifices, various

tant for a Christian to understand. Indeed, this false teaching is a cornerstone upon which many types of heresy have been built.

Why? The reason is clear. The New Testament states that Christians are not required to offer physical sacrifices or practice the various rituals that were obligatory under the Old Testament dispensation (Hebrews 9:9-10; 10:18, I Corinthians 7:19). The teaching that Jesus Christ was born "under the law" and *had* to keep these physical oblations subtly implies that we do not have to follow Christ in all respects. After all, if Christ had to keep these ordinances and we do not, then maybe there are a lot of other things we do not have to do that Christ did. If this is so, we do not have to "go all the way" in following Christ's example or "walk as He walked" (I John 2:6).

However, Jesus Christ said that His disciples follow Him: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). Indeed, the essence of true Christianity is living the life of Christ over again in our flesh and conforming to His perfect example in all things. Thus, it is *very* important that we have a clear understanding of whether or not Jesus Christ was indeed born "under the law."

First of all, what does it mean to be "under the law"? The apostle Paul says that we are "not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14). "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4, KJV), and every human being who has ever lived—except Jesus

washings and ablutions and physical requirements such as circumcision. These regulations were designed to keep Israel in mind of the need for a Savior and to set them apart as a separate nation to protect them from the influence of Gentile nations (Galatians 3:23-24).

But was Jesus Christ bound by these laws? Did He keep the Old Testament ritual law along with its ceremonies, washings and oblations? This question, which ostensibly appears to be heavily theological and of little practical importance, is vitally impor-



Please see page 9

DAMNABLE HERESIES

continued from page 2

this, using it to express his concern over the behavior of some in the Corinthian church:

But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. (I Corinthians 10:20-21)

To use Paul's analogy, our spiritual diet must not be a mixture of true and false doctrines. In this area of life,

We *must* acknowledge the source of the false teaching—Satan, his demons and his false ministers—to truly appreciate the seriousness of heresy.

a mixture produces nothing good (James 3:11-12). We must make every effort to separate the true food from the false if we are to grow and qualify for the Kingdom of God. This is a responsibility that falls on each of us—we *cannot leave it to others!* We *must* acknowledge the source of the false teaching—Satan, his demons and his false ministers—to truly appreciate the seriousness of heresy.

Like Peter, Paul warns about heresies within the church: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Timothy 4:1). The Greek word *planos*, translated as "deceiving" (NKJV) or "seducing" (KJV), is the same word from which we derive the English word "planet." It conveys the idea of wandering. To the astronomers of ancient Greece, the planets appeared to wander in a heaven populated by other, relatively fixed lights. Thus, evil spirits induce people to wander from the true path of God's Word. These are the principalities and powers against which we wrestle (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Heresy is not always easily detected because Satan usually camouflages the lie with a large measure of truth. He is a master of deceit. Because the world is so ignorant of God, Satan can tell them virtually anything, and they will believe it. But with us he generally does not directly challenge or obviously and blatantly misquote Scripture. His confrontation with Jesus in Matthew 4 is a classic example. He subtly twists the intent of a scripture to bend it into a wrong application or understanding. At other times, he will appeal to our vanity to get us to react to his suggestions without thinking.

The Bible gives only a few specific doctrines with which seducing spirits, heresy or false ministers are directly associated. However, do not be fooled that so

few doctrines are directly mentioned with the word "heresy" attached. No doctrine is sacrosanct to demons. They will attack the people of God in *any* spiritual area. The Bible makes it very clear that demons are our major, major enemies, and deception that leads us into sin is their game!

Heresy and Apostasy

Some think that, when someone accepts heresy, he will "leave the church." That may occur on some occasions, but this confuses *haireisis* with *apostasias*. In II Thessalonians 2:3, *apostasias* is translated "falling away" in both the KJV and NKJV, giving the impression that it refers to leaving an organization. But *apostasias* means "to depart from truth"! One can remain in an organization and be departing from truth all along.

This is vitally important to us living at the end time! Notice what Paul writes in II Thessalonians 2:9-12 about this:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the **love of the truth**, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who **did not believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Loving the truth so intensely that it motivates us to pursue it carefully and diligently—so much that we make it an operative part of our everyday life—will prove to be the difference between being saved and perishing in the next few years. Each of us will have to be concerned enough about the spiritual teaching we receive to search the Scriptures prayerfully and diligently to verify it (Acts 17:11). Proving all things (I Thessalonians 5:21, KJV) is so much better than lazily accepting the word of someone who *appears* to be trustworthy.

The Bible plainly indicates the thrust and purpose of Satan's heresies. The first and clearest example is shown in the account of his seduction of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-5). His opening parry (verse 1) cast doubt on the veracity of what God had directly told them: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Genesis 2:17). When he detected they were wavering, he countered by skewering them with a bald-faced lie (Genesis 3:4).

The key is *getting a person to doubt*. It removes conviction and replaces it with uncertainty. Doubt stifles courage and promotes fear. By sinning, Adam and Eve immediately showed their faithlessness to God.

Paul writes in II Corinthians 11:3, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." *Simplicity* means single, without ulterior motive, pure, sincere and unambiguous. *Vincent's Word Studies* (vol. 3, p. 346), defines it as "single-hearted loyalty." It is the opposite of deceit, guile, error and wandering.

Some things in God's Word are difficult to understand (II Peter 3:16), but the Bible nowhere tries to produce doubt, confusion or division by any means (I Timothy 6:3-5; II Timothy 2:14). Even Balaam knew that "God is not a man, that He should lie" (Numbers 23:19)! Jesus says, "[God's] word is truth" (John 17:17). The doctrines of God follow a logical and true sequence, locking together like a picture puzzle to comprise the true gospel.

Another factor in most heresy is that it offers something appealing to human appetites or vanity. Notice the heady appeal in the heresy Satan taught Adam and Eve:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." (Genesis 3:6)

Their imagination and desires built upon Satan's subtle suggestion that God was not being totally honest. If they followed the serpent's teaching, they could possess the benefits God was withholding.

We find these same basic elements in Satan's temptation of Jesus. But here the Devil also challenges Jesus to put God's Word to the test to get something for Himself (Matthew 4:5-7; Luke 4:9-12). Satan is saying, "You say You believe that God cannot lie, that He will indeed do what He says. Go ahead—test Him!" Never mind that Satan twisted the spirit of Psalm 91:11-12 into what amounts to tempting God through an evil motivation.

Satan's Plan of Attack

These examples clearly show the *modus operandi* of the father of lies (John 8:44). Because he is leading, guiding and inspiring his ministers, they will be using the same basic approaches, even though they appear as angels of light. Satan hates God's law because it is the way of righteousness (Psalm 119:172). This is why the carnal mind of man is not subject to the law of God (Romans 8:7). Through his ministers' false teaching, Satan will make every effort to deceive people to break God's laws.

From what has occurred within the church of God, we can see how Satan has attacked and continues to attack through heresy.

First, he inspires a steady stream of small changes called "adjustments," "clarifications" or "refinements" to revealed and established doctrines. Several of these may slip by without notice, but the overall effect will be to begin to cast doubt on what was previously believed. Careful and disciplined submission to God will begin to slacken as people become uncertain about what is right. For a member who is becoming aware of the threatening nature of the "refinements," this is a critical juncture. He may either opt to scrutinize the changes more closely or to ignore them.

At this point Satan's ministers may "adjust" a fairly important doctrine to test the reaction of the membership. The doctrine may not be critical to salvation, but may nonetheless shed important light on the process.

Second, he inspires his ministers to make a "refinement" to the overall message of Jesus Christ and the

apostles. In altering the focus of the teaching from what the Master plainly said is the message He brought from God, Satan redirects the church toward a teaching essential to salvation but not the overall goal.

Third, he moves to obscure the nature of God. This, combined with altering God's purpose, will cast a member into deep confusion about how he is supposed to conduct his life. In the Bible's first chapter, God clearly states that He created us in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), and the New Testament makes clear we are being transformed into the very image of Christ (Romans 8:29; II Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:21). But the "new" teaching changes what are the Father and Son like, and thus changes how a Christian conducts his life.

No wonder God was so angry when Israel, just after leaving Egypt, made a golden calf! "These be your gods, O Israel," they proclaimed (Exodus 32:4). The Israelites redefined the nature of God according to their own imagination! Because they felt more comfortable with a god with the nature of a calf, they rejected Genesis 1:26 in favor of a form more acceptable to the masses.

Fourth, if people are still accepting the heresies, Satan begins teaching that we no longer need to keep some of God's laws. This is especially effective if the laws chosen are ones that *seem* to give members more immediate control over their time, money and destiny. On the surface, at least, such teachings give people more freedom to make choices and appeal to their devotion to God.

Most will accept these major changes, if they are announced under the right conditions:

- When they are made at the end of an extremely long, rapid-fire sermon.
- When members are practically brain dead from

Through his ministers' false teaching, Satan will make every effort to deceive people to break God's laws.

too much information at one time.

- When members cannot follow the argument closely in their Bibles because of the dim light and rapid delivery.
- When the argument is camouflaged by much that is indeed true, leading the people into an agreeing attitude.

In the cold light of reality, these changes would make God look bad. Some members would question why these doctrines had never been adequately explained before. Others would wonder why God had not been powerful enough or cared enough to institute them before. Instead, they would reason, He had allowed His end-time church to suffer for generations without these wonderful teachings. But Satan lays the blame on the shoulders of the former administration which was not nearly as "scholarly" or "understanding" as the present one.

First-Century Heresy

This is exactly what happened in the first century! Notice what Paul says in II Corinthians 11:1-4, 13:

Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it. . . . For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

What had happened? Paul had to deal with the Corinthian congregation because they had fallen under the sway of false apostles! These false ministers had convinced many of the brethren that they knew more and better than the apostle through whom they had heard, believed, learned and been converted to the gospel. They were in the process of throwing aside what they had learned from Paul in favor of what they were hearing from these new “apostles.”

Paul was not the only apostle who had to confront this problem. John writes this toward the end of the first century:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (I John 1:1-5)

Notice his frequent use of “we” and “our.” What is John doing? He was establishing his authority for what he was teaching! He is saying that what he writes in this epistle he received firsthand from Christ! During his day, false teachers were contacting Christian congregations claiming that John was a one-hundred-year-old fuddy-duddy who was “out of touch” with reality. What they were teaching was the truth, they said. John later labeled these people as antichrists (I John 2:18). His first epistle is an exhortation to reestablish their faith in the original beliefs and doctrines by and into which they had been converted.

Finally, Jude makes it abundantly clear what was happening within the first-century church:

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it neces-

sary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 3-4)

The lesson is written in the Book, recorded for our admonition. Is it being repeated, now, in our time? I think there is only one answer to that.

The Dangers of Heresy Today

A major part of the church of God is losing its uniqueness. It is blending back into the world from which it was once separated. It is no longer capable of making a witness to the world because there is nothing different for the world to hear in its message and observe in its conduct. Our distinctiveness lies in the fact that ***we really do believe God, love Him and show it by keeping His commandments***—including the Sabbaths. We also show our distinctiveness in that ***we really do love each other*** in a warm, family relationship.

The apostatizing portion of the church is putting itself in very grave danger. Notice God’s warning in Revelation 13:16-17:

[The false prophet] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

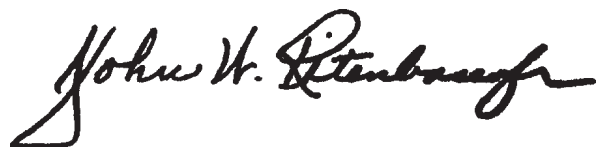
Later, He adds:

“And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:11-12)

The mark of the Beast identifies those who are devoted to the Beast. They have given their lives in worship and obedience to him, and have received his mark. The Beast will be the leader of the new world order now forming. And ironically—tragically—members of God’s church are now being led back to that world and away from keeping His commandments.

Our responsibility remains clear, however. God’s Word identifies the distinctive difference between those who worship Him and those who worship the Beast. ***Those who worship God keep His commandments***. We must do everything in our power to keep from sinking into the same spiritual vortex that has already swallowed so many. Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good! Keep God’s Ten Commandments—all of them!

In Christian love,



Born Under the Law?

continued from page 5

Christ—has sinned (Romans 3:23). Once the knowledge of the law comes, there is no excuse, and the law condemns all who break it to eternal death. Paul personifies the law as the instrument that points the finger of condemnation at each of us: “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died” (Romans 7:9). Therefore, to be “under the law” means to be “under the condemnation of the law.”

This brings us to the pivotal question: Was Jesus Christ born under the law and thus bound to keep all of the Old Covenant rules and regulations?

The scripture most often quoted to support this contention is Galatians 4:4: “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” From this verse, some attempt to show that Jesus Christ was under the law from His birth. They conclude that Christ was duty bound from His birth to do many things that we do not have to do.

However, we need to examine this scripture carefully and understand what it really means. It contains a very deep and poorly understood meaning which is obscured by the interpretation given to this verse by modern translators. The word translated “born” in this scripture is from the Greek word *ginomai*, which can have many different shades of meaning depending upon the context. It primarily means “to cause to be” or “to come into being.” The King James Version translates it: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, **made** of a woman, **made** under the law.”

Jesus Christ *was* physically born through the normal process of human birth to the virgin Mary. But God did not inspire Paul to use the Greek word for “born,” *gennaō*, in Galatians 4:4 because He wanted to focus on the *miraculous conception* of Christ and the overwhelming significance of Jesus’ sacrifice.

God emphasizes His Son’s humanity in this verse. Like all other men,

Jesus was born of a woman; He was flesh and blood. Hebrews 10:5 verifies this: “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a *body* You have prepared for Me.’”

Another point of note is that the original Greek text does not read “the law,” but simply “law.” The definite article is missing! Paul is speaking of law in general, not specifically the law of God. The apostle thus means that, when Jesus became a man, He was subject to the same terms, forces and conditions that any other man is. It simply becomes another reference to His humanity like Hebrews 2:10-18.

Yet, even without these points, the verse does not support the idea that Jesus was bound by the Old Covenant because He was born into it. The deeper meaning of Galatians 4:4 is that Jesus Christ *came into being* through the divine miracle in which God the Father caused Mary to conceive by the Holy Spirit. Also, by another miracle, God the Father caused Jesus to be placed under the law *at the time of His crucifixion*. Note the King James’ rendering of Galatians 3:13: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being **made** [*ginomai*] a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

Jesus Christ was never under the law except at the time of His crucifixion when God the Father laid the entire burden of the sins of the world upon His head (II Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:4-12). He led a perfect life. Therefore, the Old Covenant rules and regulations did not apply to Him because they were designed to remind the people of Israel of their sins and their need for a Savior (Galatians 3:19).

In like manner, a Christian who has repented and received forgiveness of sin through the blood of Christ does not have to keep the Old Testament ceremonial laws either. When one repents from sin, has faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and is baptized, he receives complete and total forgiveness of any and all sins that he ever committed. After coming up out of the watery grave of baptism, he stands before God perfect and sinless

just as Jesus Christ was perfect and sinless throughout His entire life. After receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, the newly converted Christian is to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4), following the perfect example of Jesus Christ in all things.

The example that Jesus set for us was perfect in every respect. He even went out of His way to permit Himself to be baptized (Matthew 3:13-15). He did not need to be baptized because He had never sinned, but He did it to set an example for us to follow because *we need* to be baptized. We are to follow every aspect of His life.

Objections Refuted

Some try to convince others that Jesus was born under the law by pointing out the scriptures that show His parents performing Old Covenant rituals. This includes His circumcision and giving the commanded offering after His birth (Luke 2:21-24). However, note that these were things that were done by *Joseph and Mary*, not by Christ Himself. Jesus was only eight days old at the time of His circumcision and was not even aware of what was going on.

Others point out that Jesus kept the Feast of the Dedication (John 10:22-23). This festival was a Jewish national festival and is not one of God’s commanded festivals—under any covenant! Even in this, He set us a perfect example by showing us that it is not wrong to observe national holidays that do not do service to paganism.

The major thrust of all of these arguments is to try to convince others that it is really not necessary to follow Christ in all respects. This teaching is not new. Many attempts were made to seduce the early church of God into error, and convincing the called of God that it was not necessary to walk in the footsteps of Christ was a major means of leading people astray.

The apostle John, who wrote his epistles near the end of the first century, had to warn true Christians constantly about this heresy. “These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you” (I John 2:26). I John 4:1 is another warning: “Be-

loved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

What were these false prophets teaching? The end of the first century witnessed many heretical teachings. One of these heresies, Gnosticism, taught that Jesus Christ was not really a flesh-and-blood human being but a spirit that was manifested as a human being. This was undoubtedly one of the things John was alluding to when he wrote,

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. (1 John 4:2-3)

However, there is also a deeper meaning to these words that John was inspired to write. The Holy Spirit inspired John to use the Greek perfect participle for the words “has come” in the above verses. The perfect tense implies not only the historical fact of Jesus Christ having been born as a flesh-and-blood human being but also the present continuance of this fact. John is saying that Jesus Christ is still human in the sense that He is living His life over again in human beings who submit to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The message of this scripture is simply this: A teacher is of God if he teaches that Jesus Christ is coming—living His life over again in the flesh of every true Christian—and that a Christian must follow Him wherever He leads and emulate Him in every way. But a teacher who teaches that one does not have to follow Christ and that it is not necessary for Christ

to live in the flesh of His disciples is not of God. John says that this false teaching stems from the spirit of antichrist (verse 3).

As in the days of the apostle John, modern-day Christians must beware of the same false teachings and of the subtle arguments that some present to draw true Christians away from the truth of God. No, Jesus Christ was not *born* under the law. He did not keep the ceremonial law, but He did keep the spiritual law of God. He did not do anything that we are not supposed to do. Conversely, everything that He did we must do. He set a perfect example for us to follow in all respects.

The true Christian knows that, despite the many confusing, conflicting teachings in this world and the subtle arguments of would-be deceivers, *one will never go wrong following the example of Jesus Christ.*

—Earl L. Henn

What's Going On Up There?

continued from page 4

believes in it nor wants it to succeed. Once the Father calls us, our adversary does all he can to occupy our time with self-serving distractions to keep us from discovering the message! He hides the fact that we are privileged to become holy. He obscures the reasons why the Father has so much concern for humanity in general and for the church in particular. The Devil will even encourage a fascination with the Messenger to feed our selfish survival drive. He will do *anything* to deflect us from the true gospel message.

We must strive to “listen” to our Father, to “see” Him with our understanding, as Jesus did. We can begin by reading every word that Jesus says about His Father, recorded primarily in the book of John. Then we should pray and meditate long and deeply about the meaning of those words, for they were intended to reveal His Father to us (John 1:18).

Our end of the prayer line cannot be fully operational if we are not in harmony with our Father. His Son, Jesus Christ, set us an example of

how to become fully operational. Ever aware of His Father’s wishes, Jesus never faltered because He never lost His focus. He understood and truly believed in the message His Father had given Him to announce to us.

Thus, He had an excellent understanding of what goes on at the Father’s throne. He unconditionally believed and trusted His Father, which is why He could say, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30), that is, of one heart and mind. To paraphrase, He says, “His desires and beliefs are My desires and beliefs. We are in perfect agreement.” He was in such accord with His Father that He says, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Jesus, setting the example, believed that Someone more important is listening “at the other end.” His Father was so important to Him that He would do nothing without His Father’s approval: “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30). Furthermore, He did not *want* to do anything of consequence without a deep conviction that His action harmonized with His Father’s will!

Jesus was ever vigilant to keep His

will in total agreement with what His Father had revealed to Him. He prayed often (Matthew 14:23; 26:36; Luke 3:21; 6:12). Jesus made sure that His own will was always submitted to His Father’s will (Matthew 6:10; 26:39, 42; John 6:38). By the conduct of His life, He preached that two cannot walk together unless they agree (Amos 3:3), and one must be the leader (John 14:28).

Can we say, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father”? Or, “I and my Father are one”? That is what God wants of us, and that is why we are to imitate His Son—another way of saying that He is to live or abide in us (John 15:1-10). If He is in us, we will be in harmony with our Father also and will be making a great witness to the world (John 17:20-23).

As Winston S. Churchill, Prime Minister of England during World War II, said before a joint session of the United States’ Congress:

I will say that he must indeed have a blind soul who cannot see that some great purpose and design is being worked out here below, of which we have the honor to be the faithful servants.

Do you know what is going on at the other end of the line?

—Helmut J. Fraund

Poor Thomas! Down through the centuries, theologians have labeled this apostle as “Doubting Thomas.” This is not the way a true Christian and apostle of Jesus Christ would want to be remembered! Yet, because of one incident recorded in John 20:24-29, this incomplete picture has over-shadowed his admirable character traits from which we can glean a valuable example.

Altogether, the New Testament mentions Thomas in eight passages, of which four are lists of the apostles (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). If we had only the record of the first three gospels, Thomas would be just a name to us, a disciple and apostle without personality. But the apostle John, filling in some of the details the synoptists left out, includes more intimate details we need to learn and understand from Thomas’ life with Christ.

The name *Thomas* comes from the Aramaic word *te’oma* which means “twin.” John uses the Greek equivalent, *didymus*, three times (John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2). It is uncertain whose twin Thomas was, or even if it was one of the other disciples, as some have speculated. He is linked with Matthew in Matthew 10:3 and with Philip in Acts 1:13. However, this may indicate a personal friendship, similar interests or joint responsibilities with them.

The New Testament gives few concrete facts about his life. It is certain that Thomas was a Jew, and probably a Galilean (Acts 1:11), but we know absolutely nothing about his family, place of residence or occupation.

What do we know about Thomas? He was present at the raising of Lazarus where he showed his loyalty to Christ (John 11:16). During Jesus’ last Passover, he asked the way to God the Father (John 14:5). He was absent when Jesus first appeared to the disciples after the resurrection (John 20:24), and when he was told of it, he was skeptical (John 20:25). Later, Christ appeared in his presence at least twice (John 20:26-29; 21:1-2). Finally, we know he lived with the other apostles in Jerusalem before the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:13-14). After this, Thomas disappears from the biblical record.

Faithful Thomas!

Three Admirable Traits

But, in the way of spiritual example, there is much more to Thomas. In John’s account, he exhibited three positive traits which should be an integral part of every Christian’s character.

First, *when Thomas saw what he ought to do, nothing kept him back.* When Lazarus became ill, Jesus expressed his intention of returning to Judea. Thomas urged the disciples to accompany Him even though they might die doing so: “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). Thomas backed his statement by action. In contrast, Simon Peter’s boast lacked commitment when he said, “Lord, I am ready to go with you, both to prison and to death” (Luke 22:33). These proved to be mere words, as Peter denied Christ three times (verses 54-62).

Second, *when Thomas saw what he ought to do, he urgently wanted to know how to do it.* At his last Passover service with Jesus Christ, not afraid to show his ignorance, he asked, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Thomas’ question reveals him to be a seeker of truth and understanding. His naturally cautious temperament did not close his mind to further knowledge.

Third, *when Thomas saw what he had to believe, he urgently wanted to prove it, and when he did, he had no doubts.* Why Thomas was not present when the other disciples saw Christ appear is a mystery (John 20:24-29). Some commentators suggest he may have retired to some quiet spot to mourn Christ’s death. Even after hearing the accounts of Christ’s appearances to the others and to Mary Magdalene, he refused to believe that it had happened. He replied, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side,

I will not believe” (verse 25).

Scripture is silent about the reason for his doubt. Maybe he thought his friends were only trying to cheer him up. Maybe he remembered them being wrong before on the Sea of Galilee when they had mistaken Christ for a spirit (Matthew 14:26).

All he wanted was the same evidence they had received. The other disciples had not believed until they had seen the resurrected Christ either (Mark 16:11-13; Luke 24:11-12). The news Thomas heard seemed too good to be true. But he did not reject what he heard; he simply wanted to test or prove all things (I Thessalonians 5:21).

Total Commitment

The story of Thomas shows that the disciples were not a group of blind followers who were ready to believe anything. They, especially Thomas, insisted on proof and evidence. Thomas’ doubt was the kind that a person who wants to believe shows. His search for the truth prompted him to question the other apostles until he attained a personal conviction regarding the resurrection.

This is not the ideal, for faith is built upon evidence that is not seen (Hebrews 11:1). All that Thomas heard Christ say regarding His death and resurrection should have been sufficient without the aid of sight (John 20:29). It would have been better to distrust his senses than to discredit Christ’s words. Nevertheless, once convinced of Christ’s resurrection, his faith was stirring.

When the resurrected Christ appeared to him eight days later, Thomas’ immediate reaction was wonderful: “And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and My God!’” (John 20:28). Because of Thomas’ positive character traits, God was able to open his mind and work with him. His faith was instant and

strong.

We should be encouraged by Christ's reply in verse 29: "Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'" Because we have believed and obeyed without physical proof, Almighty God pronounces a special blessing upon us.

Using the three positive character traits of Thomas will enable us to come to the same deep, heart-felt realization that he reached. At that point he committed himself to the service of his great Master, and tradition says that he preached in Parthia and northwestern India where he was martyred in His service.

We, too, as His modern-day dis-

ciples, must internalize this personal commitment to our Elder Brother and High Priest. Like Thomas, we must realize who we serve, and cry out in faith, "My Lord and my God!"

—Martin G. Collins

Photo and Illustration Credits:

Corel Corporation (p. 3); Richard T. Ritenbaugh (p. 5).

BIBLE STUDY: CLEAN AND UNCLEAR MEATS

The biblical command of clean and unclean meats is often assailed as an "Old Covenant law." Detractors claim it is no longer required of Christians, having been "done away" like the Old Covenant. This contention, however, ignores the plain meaning of passages in both the Old and New Testaments. This law is still in force today!

The law of clean and unclean represents several dozen other laws, such as the laws of quarantine and sexual behavior, that guard against physical and spiritual impurity. These relate directly to our desire for and practice of "holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).



1. What principle undergirds the law of clean and unclean? Leviticus 11:44-47; Deuteronomy 14:2-3.

COMMENT: Both *sanctification* and *holiness* imply being "different" or "set apart" for a special purpose. God instituted His law of clean and unclean to show the difference between His people and the nations around them. Paul calls the church "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). I Peter 1:13-16 shows very clearly that Christians, spiritual Israelites, now have a responsibility to be holy as God is.

2. Are Christians commanded to cleanse themselves of defilements of the flesh? II Corinthians 6:16-7:1.

COMMENT: As the spiritual temple of God, as God's sons and daughters, we have a duty to make ourselves as "clean," "pure" or "holy" as possible. This "perfecting holiness" includes all areas of life, not just the spiritual. Paul makes an unmistakable distinction between flesh and spirit (II Corinthians 7:1) only two verses after he paraphrases Isaiah 52:11: "Do not touch what is unclean."

3. Was the law of clean and unclean known before the Old Covenant? Genesis 7:1-3.

COMMENT: Since it was in force in Noah's time, and possibly in Abel's lifetime (Genesis 4:4), it was not made obsolete with the passing of the Old Covenant. This is a vital principle to remember regarding the Old and New Covenants: *What did not originate with the Old Covenant did not die with it.*

4. How do we know what foods are clean or unclean? Leviticus 11:1-47; Deuteronomy 14:3-21.

COMMENT: God lists those foods we can or cannot eat, and for those He does not list, He states how we may identify whether they are clean or unclean.

5. Did Christ do away with this law? Mark 7:1-23.

COMMENT: This long section dealing with defilement begins with a question from the Pharisees about eating with unwashed hands (verse 7). Christ's answer never

strays from this point; He is addressing *ritual washings that the Jews added* (verses 7-9), not unclean meats. Verse 19, however, is often cited as proof that Jesus declared all foods clean. Yet He is speaking about the human digestive system! He says that whether one washes his hands or not, the digestive tract handles, or "purifies," all food the same way. He then moves to the more serious issue of a man's conduct, which is what truly defiles him.

6. Did Peter's vision signify that God nullified this law? Acts 10:9-16, 28, 34-35; 11:1-18.

COMMENT: Three times Peter refused to eat the unclean animals shown to him within the great sheet, and God did not rebuke him. The meaning of the vision is clearly defined in verse 28: "But God has shown me that I should not call *any man* common or unclean." Nowhere in the ensuing dispute (Acts 11:1-18) is any mention made of clean or unclean foods.

7. Did Paul allow the eating of unclean meats? I Corinthians 8:1-13.

COMMENT: Notice here again that no mention is made of clean or unclean. Paul is speaking of clean meats offered to idols, for some of the pagan deities were offered bullocks, sheep, goats, chickens, doves and other clean animals, the remainder of which would be offered for sale in the market. His main subject is not clean and unclean, but being sensitive to a brother's conscience.

8. Will the law of clean and unclean be in force in God's Kingdom? Ezekiel 44:23; Revelation 21:27.

COMMENT: In the Millennium the priesthood will teach the difference between clean and unclean! And after the thousand years, no abominable thing, nothing that defiles will mar the New Jerusalem! All of its citizens will be holy. This is the wonderful destiny that we are preparing for, and part of making ourselves ready is following the law of clean and unclean meats.