

Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 11, Number 7

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Global Warming?

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About Our Cover



Global warming is a frequent topic of concern these days. But is it really occurring? Are the polar ice caps melting? Is the world in danger of widespread catastrophe? Can man even predict such sweeping climate change?
(PictureQuest)

Forerunner Magazine

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The Elements of Motivation

Part Three: Hope

These articles were originally precipitated by a major doctrinal change in the Worldwide Church of God in the early 1990s. Those in authority at the time adopted the concept generally described as “once saved, always saved,” the notion that, once one accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, salvation is assured. This idea is true only if it is understood as having two major conditions attached.

The first is that those who accept Christ’s blood for the remission of sins remain faithful in their commitment to Him. This faithfulness is loyalty to conditions, terms, persons, or agreements. The faith that saves is a living faith, meaning it is active, dynamic. Living faith works and produces within the person having it. This gives rise to the second condition for this idea to be true: Those who accept Christ as Savior must be growing, changing, and overcoming.

The doctrinal concept without these conditions makes salvation into nothing more than the acceptance or mental agreement with the proposition that Jesus is Savior. It totally fails to address the reason or purpose for salvation. God has a purpose in what He is doing, a great overriding purpose, a cause, for His calling, leading us to repentance, and granting us conversion by means of His gift of the Holy Spirit.

God’s cause is His new creation. Notice II Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Galatians 6:15 adds a similar thought: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.” The apostle Paul is saying that the things that are truly important about salvation pertain to God’s new creation of His image in us. He is creating sons and daughters in His image! We cannot afford to let this great, glorious, hope-filled truth wander far from our minds.

In I Corinthians 15:42-49, Paul writes of our glorious transformation already underway:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have born the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

Did Paul Believe in Works?

The image Paul speaks of is not merely that we will be composed of spirit even as Christ is, but that our very nature and character be like His. If God desired that we merely be spirit, He could have made us like angels. Angels, however, are not God; they are angels. God is doing a work in us through which we will become like Him, not like angels.

His purpose requires that we cooperate. Though our part is very small by comparison to what He is doing, it is nonetheless vital. Notice how Paul draws this beautiful section of I Corinthians to a conclusion by drawing our attention to what it will take on our part to make God’s purpose work: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:57-58).

“Victory” is from the same Greek root as the word translated “overcomes” so many times in Revelation 2 and 3. Overcoming is being victorious over the pull of human nature against God in the self, Satan, and this world that tries to keep us from entering God’s Kingdom.

Paul also exhorts us to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord.” His work is creating. Then, by using the words “your labor,” the apostle draws our attention to our responsibilities. Our labor is whatever energies and sacrifices it takes to yield to the Lord so He can do His work. Scripture refers to God several times as the Potter, and we are the clay He is shaping. The difference between us and earthy clay is that the clay God is working is alive—having a mind and will of its own, it can choose to resist or yield.

Following initial repentance, finding the motivation to use our faith to yield to Him in labor, not just agreeing mentally, is perhaps most important of all. Real living faith motivates conduct in agreement with God’s purpose. Clearly, God’s purpose is that we grow or change to become as much like Him in this life as time allows. Paul’s encouraging exhortation in II Timothy 2:15, 19-21 helps in this regard:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. . . . Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Paul implies that the vessels (people) in God’s house (Family or Temple) are not all of the same quality. But if we work and apply ourselves to purge and purify what is defiling and dishonoring, we can become a vessel of honor (I John 3:3). We all begin as vessels of dishonor. Even after the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us, we sin, thus dishonoring both Him and our character. From this dishonor we must be continually cleansed.

Philippians 2:12-13 makes it clear Paul believed in works. “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” God lays the responsibility upon us to work in partnership with Him as He works with and in us. The purpose of this work is not to earn salvation, but to allow God to do His creative labors

in us and test us. He wants us to be prepared for His Kingdom, and at the same time, He wants us to glorify Him through the witness of our lives.

Fear, Vision, and Hope

In the first two articles, we examined two motivators. First, the fear of God is a deep, heartfelt continuing respect for Him. Respect means “to hold in high regard.” Our reverence moves us to defer to His instruction in each area of life when making a choice. Second, vision or foresight comes as a result of the revelation of God. It is both a companion and producer of wisdom, prudence, judgment, and discretion. These virtues enable us to see cause and effect more clearly than our limited human experience normally would allow, and the resulting vision preserves life, protects us from harm, and helps us to achieve goals.

This article will examine hope that, like the other motivators, derives from the relationship with and the revelation of God. In many biblical contexts, hope is so closely related to faith that they seem almost the same. In fact, the verb form of *hope* is sometimes translated as “trust.” Even though they share some similarities, there are differences.

I Corinthians 13:13 is probably the best known biblical verse on hope: “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Here, Paul lists hope as one of the “big three” virtues of Christianity. Whereas faith is the foundation on which the other two stand, and love is the object because it enables us to communicate, interact properly, and unite, hope is the quality that motivates, providing energy by keeping us in anticipation of greater and better things to come.

Hope, as used in Scripture, is not difficult to define. It appears as both a noun and verb, and conveys the absolute certainty of future good. I Corinthians 13:13 lists it with those things that remain, abide, or continue. In other words, even in the Kingdom of God, we will always be eagerly looking forward to some blessing or accomplishment as age upon age unfolds before us. This will occur because God’s revelation never ends, as He Himself is an inexhaustible resource.

Ephesians 2:12 adds another dimension to Christian hope. “. . . that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” Our hope is uniquely Christian because no other religion, no other way of life, can give its adherents a *certain* hope. Why? First, even though other religions may be moral in their teachings, they speak only from man’s experiences. Second, their god is not living the life of God. Third, they have no expectation of the Messiah and all it implies.

The Bible leaves no doubt that our hope is a direct result of God's calling: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4). Paul clearly links our hope with our calling, which is God's summons into His presence so that we may have a relationship with Him. In the context of the first paragraph of Ephesians 4, the implication is that this hope is a factor that unites us into one body. Our calling is an end to pessimism, negativity, and despair and the beginning of a confident, bright, and optimistic life filled with endless possibilities because this unique hope gives positive expectancy to life here and now and beyond the grave as well.

All men have hope occasionally, and some frequently seem hopeful. Many peoples' hope changes as often as the weather. The frequent fluctuations of the stock market indices often indicate investors' up-and-down confidence and hope about the future. Yet, our hope can be taken to higher level altogether because Christians can have *continuous* hope. Our hope is not a "mere flash in the pan."

God Is Our Hope

It must be this way if it is to be of any value. Our unique hope is of such value and importance that Paul rates it right along with faith and love. Notice two important factors he links to hope in Ephesians 2:12. First, in the time before God called the Ephesian Gentiles into a relationship with Him, they were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise."

The commonwealth of Israel could be either the nation or the church because under the Old Covenant ancient Israel established a relationship with God, received a small measure of His promises, and possessed the hope of the Messiah. However, the primary meaning here is the church; those who have made the New Covenant with God are the Israel of God and a holy nation (Galatians 6:16; I Peter 2:9). The New Covenant contains God's confirmed promises—confirmed in the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, Christ Jesus.

Being part of ancient Israel under the Old Covenant did not give a person access to many promises that would have given him reason to hope. The Old Covenant promised no forgiveness of sin, no access to God, no promise of the Holy Spirit, and no promise of eternal and everlasting life, all of which we have. We have continuing, never-ending hopes because the New Covenant ensures a continuous relationship. Our relationship necessarily involves the other part of Ephesians 2:12: Before our calling, we were also without God in the world. Our hope is not merely in the fact that we have made a covenant, but more importantly, with whom we made it.

The same apostle writes of the Gentiles' hope from a somewhat different perspective in Romans 15:4, 12-13:

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. . . . Isaiah says, "There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope." Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As before, the apostle reveals that our hope derives from our calling through the New Covenant and finds its ultimate source in God. Yet, God is more than the source of our hope: He *is* our hope. In verse 12, Isaiah refers to Him as the object of our hope. In Haggai 2:7, He is called "the Desire of All Nations," and in Romans 15:13, Paul calls Him "the God of hope," that is, hope's source.

Without God, we and this world have no hope except the normal desires common to the unconverted, things like filling our bellies, getting a good sleep, satisfying our eyes and ears, experiencing thrills and excitement, and accumulating money, power, and possessions. None of these is intrinsically evil, but God wants our hopes to be exceedingly higher. Verse 13 supplies a major condition to having this high quality of hope and thus the motivation it provides—believing. Remember, faith undergirds all the elements of motivation, and thus they clarify why living faith produces growth of fruit.

I Peter 1:3, 21 carries this thought another step to show that we can abound in hope because we believe in the faithfulness of God, who gives us reason to hope:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, . . . through Him [you] believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

The strength of our hope therefore rises or falls on how dependable we perceive our expectation to be. The reasons we believe our expectation to be dependable are thus decisive to whether we will be motivated.

Ours is a living hope because Jesus Christ and the Father are alive. They exert sovereign control, and They cannot lie. Because our hope is revealed, grounded, sustained, and directed by God, we can know that all things work together for good for those who are the called and love God (Romans 8:28). Our hope, then, should not be ephemeral wishes or dreams based on wishy-washy sentimentality, but the solid realities of

God and His Word. Our hope flows from an inexhaustible Source, and therefore no trial should ever quench our optimism for future good. Hope is our response to His work in us expressed in trust, patience, endurance, and eagerness to continue.

More Reasons to Hope

The Bible presents us quite a number of glorious things both to hope for and to stir up hope. Acts 23:6 states the Christian's most commonly known hope: "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!'"

When I was a boy, the local volunteer fire company held an annual street fair to raise money. They usually raffled off a fire-engine red Buick Roadmaster for the adults and a similar fire-engine red Schwinn Roadmaster bicycle with cream-colored trim for the children. The bicycle had a horn built into the crossbar, a light mounted on the front fender, knee-action spring mounted on the front wheel fork, and of all things, a battery-operated radio mounted on the handle bars!

That bicycle was the end of the rainbow for me! But because the family had no money for such extravagant things, I had no hope at all of ever having one unless I won it. My only recourse was to buy a raffle ticket and hope to win it. Raffle tickets usually were a dime or quarter, so I would scrape together my pennies each year, buy a ticket, and hope. I never did win it, but that desire motivated me to do the only thing I could do to get what I hoped for.

This is essentially what Paul is saying in Acts 23:6. He was on trial because his hope of resurrection from the dead motivated him to do the things that put him on trial. Anticipation of good, the expectation of advantage of all he held dear, motivated him to be willing to suffer to achieve them.

II Corinthians 3:11-12 points to the change of administrations from the Old Covenant to the New as a strong basis for hope: "For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech." Unlike my extremely slim hope of winning a bicycle that hung on one raffle ticket among thousands, the potential of the administration of the Spirit is boundless, filling them—Paul's and his companions—with great hope that motivated them to be very bold in speaking.

Romans 5:1-5 casts hope in a similar light but for a different reason:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us.

"Hope" appears three times in these verses, and it is tied to justification and the doors that open to us. In verse 2, hope motivates us to rejoice that we can look forward in positive expectation of God's glory! What an awesome opening that is to us! It is not the glory of a perfect human or even of angels, but of God! This is so hard for us to imagine because it almost sounds blasphemous. Is it any wonder that Christians can be optimistic about life in the face of all the evil we are aware of? The goal is so great that it is worth more than all the burden of being human, dealing with our sins and the repercussions of others' sins.

Our hope does not disappoint or bring us to shame because it is based in the reality of God and His promises. The common hopes of man may or may not come to pass because they are fragile and frail at best and in many cases utterly false. Yet, the believer's hope is no fantasy because it is firmly anchored in the person and promises of the Creator God.

As mentioned earlier, the activity of God among us produces hope. This is drawn in part from verses 3-4, where Paul says that trials, borne while God is part of our lives, produces perseverance, character, and hope. Because of this hope a person is never embarrassed through failure because God, who is our hope, never fails. God loves us, and He communicates His love to us through His instruction, fellowship, and discipline. Through these, we come to know Him and His faithfulness. As our admiration for Him grows, these things motivate us to purify ourselves to be like Him (I John 3:1-2).

Paul compares the hope of salvation to a soldier's helmet:

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. . . .
(Ephesians 6:17)

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (I Thessalonians 5:8)

The helmet protects the head, the part of the body most vital to quality of life. It is the thinking part where choices and judgments are made, where attitudes reside and surge forth in conduct. It is the part

(continued on page 14)

God’s Way of Give at the Feast of Tabernacles

It is hard to believe that we are now well into the countdown to the Feast of Tabernacles. There are only a few weeks to go! Here are some scriptures to get us into its spirit:

And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. (Deuteronomy 14:26)

Yet, is the Feast of Tabernacles just a time for physical feasting? Is it a time merely to *get* all of those things that “your soul lusteth after” (KJV)? No! The Feast of Tabernacles is clearly a time of giving!

You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress; and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will

bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice. . . . [A]ll your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses . . . at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you. (Deuteronomy 16:13-17)

God commands His children to give—to family members, employees, God’s ministers, strangers, orphans, widows, and God’s church.

How can we give at the Feast of Tabernacles? How can we live God’s “way of give” at the Feast? Perhaps it has been a tight year, and as it is, we barely have enough to manage our Feast expenses. How can we give then?

This article will suggest some ways in which we can give in preparation for and at the Feast of Tabernacles—and most of them will not cost us a cent.

General Principles

Prepare to rejoice and learn to fear God!

In addition to what we have al-

ready noted, these are the main reasons why we attend the Feast:

And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. (Leviticus 23:40)

And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. (Deuteronomy 14:23)

Yes, God wants us to learn to fear Him in the proper ways, but God does not want His children to be cringing, faithless, fearful cowards (Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:40; Revelation 21:8). Be excited! Get excited! Prepare to rejoice and to enjoy the Feast.

Do not be critical!

Please do not negatively criticize the Feast location just because it may not, in your opinion, have all the facilities of your hometown or other great Feast sites you have been to.

*“Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.”
—Deuteronomy 16:17*

Be patient. Take it for what it is and make the very best of it.

Participate in church activities!

There will be more than enough for you to do during the eight days of the Feast. Without overdoing it, take part in as many church functions as possible: choir, special music, picnics, tours, group meals, volunteering, etc. You will enjoy the Feast much more if you do.

Lend a hand!

Let all things be done decently and in order. (I Corinthians 14:40)

This verse applies to so many areas of living God’s way of give at the Feast. Proper organization is necessary, and willing volunteers are always needed. Even if you think you cannot help in a certain capacity for the whole eight days, if you are in good health, please still sign up. Schedules can be drawn up, and “many hands make light work.”

Share!

As mentioned above, avoid the temptation to spend the eight days of the Feast in the spirit of the “way of get.” Share the blessings God has given you with others, especially those less fortunate than yourself. Keep a special lookout for fatherless children, widows, and widowers!

Pray!

Be sure to put aside time every single day before and during the Feast to talk to God. Pray in detail for those you know who are sick, for those who are troubled, and for those who are unable to attend the Feast. Pray for God’s inspiration on the sermons and sermonettes, for the attention and receptive minds of fellow Feast-goers, and for His blessing that all of the technical matters will function without any problems.

Staying home?

It is, of course, preferable to go to the location where we believe that God, through His ministers, has placed

His name. However, because of circumstances beyond our control, this is not possible for every member. Still, even if you must stay home for the Feast, God wants you to rejoice and to learn to fear His name. God has made the Feast a very special time, so if you are staying home, set the eight days aside and keep them as well as you possibly can. Make a point of having some special activities and treats, according to your budget and health restrictions, and, if possible, spend time with others who also cannot attend.

Services

Attend every service!

Plan your travel arrangements so that you can be present from the opening night to the afternoon service of the Last Great Day. Try to leave a little margin for unexpected emergencies. Do not miss a service because you want to take the kids to Six Flags for a full day. The purpose of God’s commanded feasts is not to visit theme parks.

Adhere to quarantine laws when sick!

Among the descendants of the Israelites, quarantine has been an effective way of isolating and stopping the spread of contagious sickness and disease for millennia. Today, however, this valuable principle of health has been abandoned. God lovingly gives the principles of quarantining the sick in Leviticus 13, where He uses examples of leprosy to represent any contagious disease. Any man, woman, or child who is sick should not attend church services or fellowship with other brethren so as not to infect others and cause them to miss Services. This is an important way to give, sacrifice, and show love toward others.

Listen!

Be attentive. We attend the Feast to learn to fear God, and He inspires eight full days of special teaching. The messages are diverse and inter-

esting. Listen to all the announcements, as well—even the ones that may not concern you directly. You may, for instance, need to give the details of Family Day to a mother who missed the announcements because she had to take her baby out of the meeting hall.

Sit near the front where distractions are less likely. Besides, it is better to leave the rear seats for special-needs brethren and for parents with young children. If and when interruptions do take place, strive to ignore them and concentrate on the messages.

Do not disturb others!

Try not to be the one who initiates or permits any disturbance to the other brethren. Those of us with children may have the toughest time with this. Preparation is the key! Get your books and your children’s’ activities ready well before services, not during the first hymn or during the first few minutes of the sermonette. This is very distracting for the songleader or the sermonette speaker. At the other end of the service, please wait until the speaker finishes before putting your things away.

Sing!

A whole article could be devoted to this subject. God commands us to sing praises to Him. Hearty hymn singing is spiritually good for us as well as enjoyable to the Father and Jesus Christ. Think about the words of the song, sing to God with gusto, and do not be ashamed of doing so!

Keep the meeting hall tidy!

Make sure that you pick up any papers and other trash left on the floor or seats. Apart from being your duty, this will be helpful to the ushers and to the hall’s cleaning staff.

Children

Teach children to stay quiet during services!

Many brethren do not have the opportunity to enjoy formal Sabbath

services throughout the year, spending most Sabbaths at home. So, when the Feast comes around, many church children are unprepared for the quiet behavior that is necessary for peaceful and orderly services. In the few weeks left between now and the Feast, parents should make a point of training their little ones to sit quietly for extended periods, especially on the Sabbaths while listening to the telephone transmission.

Take young children to the restroom before services!

Please do not let them go in and out of the meeting room repeatedly once services have started. This is distracting and annoying for other members near you and your family.

Prepare activities to occupy your children during services!

Please get these activities ready before services so no unnecessary and disturbing commotion occurs once services begin.

Bring quiet toys and activities!

Please do not bring rattles or squeaky toys. Those around you who are trying to listen to the sermon will certainly not appreciate it if you do.

Try to time babies' naptime for services!

Of course, this is not always easy to plan, but you will save yourself a lot of going in and out of services if you can manage it.

Use the mothers' room!

If your child cries or makes noise, please take him out right away. Do not try to tough it out in the hope that he will soon quiet down and fall asleep. Do not be embarrassed. Please think about the other members who are trying to listen to the message.

Discipline your children, if necessary!

But please do it in a private place! Hotel restrooms are not private. Al-

though it may take you out of services for a longer period than you would prefer, take your child back to your room to administer discipline.

Do not let your children wander!

This is especially important for the safety of younger children, but applies to teens as well. Your children belong in the meeting hall with you or another responsible adult. This rule is proper for our respect and worship toward God, for the church's good example toward the public, and for the comfort and peace of mind of church members.

Do not let your children sit unsupervised at services!

The two-hour period of church services is not an appropriate time for them to fellowship and giggle. They have lots of time for those activities before and after services. Such behavior is annoying and distracting to other members. If you have another person's child sitting with you, it is your responsibility to make sure that they behave properly and quietly.

Teen activities should be chaperoned!

We love our teens and are pleased that they still enjoy attending the Feast with us, despite all that has happened in the church. We trust them, but it is proper for responsible adults to supervise their group activities.

Manners and Example

Be considerate to everyone!

At the Feast, God puts us in circumstances that are different from what we are used to in our everyday lives. It may be difficult to stay in a little hotel room if you are used to living in a big house. Nevertheless, please be considerate at all times and in all places: when traveling, at services, in your hotel room, in restaurants, and at church activities.

Keep the noise down!

You might be able to burn the midnight oil and still be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at six the next morning. If so, please be quiet and considerate to those in the rooms above, below, and on all sides of your room. It is not at all pleasant to be kept awake into the wee hours of the morning by a group talking and laughing loudly in an adjacent room.

Look after your hotel room!

Most of us live in homes much larger than our Feast accommodation, making our eight or nine days in a hotel room feel somewhat cramped. Please remember the hotel's housekeeping and maintenance staffs—and the good name of God and the church—by keeping your room clean and tidy. Spend a few minutes tidying your room and bathroom before leaving for services each morning. The housekeeping staff will thank you for it.

Be friendly and polite!

Through the apostle James (James 2:1-6), God commands us not to be respecters of persons. So, do not be friendly and polite *just* to church members, but also to everyone you encounter at the Feast: the airline staff, the restaurant waitresses, the hotel staff, and the taxi driver. Smile!

. . . Even if you are tired!

Our schedule may cause us to cram as much into the eight days as we possibly can. This, plus different than usual food and lodging arrangements, can lead to lack of sleep, tiredness, and irritability, yet these are no excuse for impolite behavior. Please guard against the impulse to be grumpy with others despite how you feel.

Say "Please" and "Thank you"!

The magic words! In my travels throughout the year, I am dismayed at the lack of common courtesy dis-

(continued on page 16)

A Cool Ap of Global W

We have all heard the stories. Over the next century, mean temperatures all over the world will rise as much as six degrees Celsius, causing massive environmental damage. The planet's polar ice caps will melt, and billions of gallons of the now-liquid water will raise global sea levels, inundating coastlines—in some places for miles.

This is only the beginning of the planet's problems. Ecologically valuable estuaries—even now in delicate balance—will be wiped out, and thousands, if not millions, of species of plants and animals will become extinct. Coastal forests will die with their roots under saltwater, disturbing the earth's ability to recycle carbon dioxide into oxygen, thus leaving more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and priming the cycle of planetary heating. Some have even theorized that the massive flow of water from the poles toward the equator could put stress on the earth's tectonics—increasing earthquakes and volcanoes—and perhaps shift the earth's axis several degrees.

Of course, if these things occur, humanity will certainly suffer. Tropical diseases will spread more easily. Arable land will decrease—either becoming desert or seabed—straining the nations' ability to feed earth's billions. Decreased ozone in the upper atmosphere will boost the risk of terrible skin cancers, while increased heat will make life miserable as desertification occurs. Weather patterns will change dramatically, resulting in unprecedented numbers and intensity of natural disasters. This is a future none of us want to live into.

But is any of it true?

Warming? Cooling?

It was only thirty years ago that the concern among environmental types was global *cooling*. A “New Ice Age” was predicted to fall upon us within the next century, and woolly mammoths would make a comeback. Drastic government intervention would be needed to stave off this threat to all life on the planet. Billions of people would starve due to shrinking arable lands. Shorelines would recede, destroying pristine estuaries and other wetlands.

Alas, this histrionic movement melted under overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary. Therefore, environmentalists decided to use this proof to their advantage and did a one-eighty. Since science showed that the trend in mean temperatures was upward (ever so slightly), they figured they could reach the same ends by promoting global *warming*.

And they have nearly pulled it off.

The environmental movement has never been about truth or facts—some would go so far as to say that it has never even been about the environment! Environmentalism has always focused on political results: restrictions on free enterprise (business and industry), government oversight and regulation [one-third of federal laws published since 1970—mostly Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations—concern the environment¹], massive funding of environmental causes and studies, and implementation of liberal social policies (like animal rights, diversity,

multiculturalism, etc.). As a result, coupled with a “the end justifies the means” mentality, the “science” that undergirds the global warming myth is junk.

With all we hear in the news to the contrary, this sounds like an overstatement. An objective look at the cold, hard facts of global climate change, however, shows it to be true.

That the Bush administration flip-flopped on the matter in early June confirms that this is really not a scientific issue but a political one. The presentation to the United Nations of an EPA report on climate—in which human activity is partially blamed for rising temperatures—seems to have been an administration trial balloon to see if Bush's base would back him on the issue. The clear answer was, “No way!”

Since environmentalists call it *global* warming, it is not just an American political issue. Truly, it gets far better play abroad than here. The 1997 UN Kyoto Treaty on Climate Control is supported by a majority of nations, while the U.S.—notwithstanding a last-minute end-around attempt by former President Bill Clinton to implement its protocols without Senate ratification—refuses to sign on.

Beyond the fact that the climate projection models that undergird the agreement are questionable, the American refusal is based on its heavy-handed treatment of U.S. industry and commerce, as well as its exemption of worse polluting nations like China and India. At least this administration is unwilling to sacrifice America's prosperity and productivity on the environmentalist altar.

praisal /warming

The Facts

While a few scientists speak of global warming as a fact, many more—especially those who are directly involved in climate science—say the data do not support it. To date, 19,700 scientists, including 2,660 physicists, geophysicists, climatologists, meteorologists, oceanographers, and environmental scientists, have signed a petition sponsored by the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine that discounts global warming. Its accompanying report concludes:

There are no experimental data to support the hypothesis that increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are causing or can be expected to cause catastrophic changes in global temperatures or weather. To the contrary, during the 20 years with the highest carbon dioxide levels, atmospheric temperatures have decreased.²

A competing, pro-global-warming petition circulated by the Union of Concerned Scientists in 1997 garnered only 1,559 signatures of scientists.

In May, a team of international scientists met in Washington, DC, to expose the absence of real proof that global warming exists. These scientists challenged the UN-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projections—that the earth would warm up between 1.4 and 5.8 degrees Celsius in the next century—on several fronts.

First, Hartwig Volz, a German geophysicist, dismissed the projections

as “fairy tales.” S. Fred Singer, an atmospheric physicist from the University of Virginia, added that the IPCC assumes “extreme scenarios of population growth and fossil fuel consumption” in its projections. In other words, the IPCC inflates its numbers to get the results it wants.

Second, Dr. Ulrich Berner, a German geologist, cited global temperature variations in the past as evidence that human activity is unrelated to climate change. A study of surface temperatures in the Sargasso Sea over the past 3,000 years (determined by isotope ratios of marine organism remains in sediment), showed an average temperature of 23°C. The present average temperature is *below* the 3,000-year average by a few tenths of a degree.³ The earth is still “recovering” from what is known as the “Little Ice Age” that occurred about 300 years ago.

Dr. Berner also explained that extensive analysis of carbon dioxide concentrations show that elevated CO₂ levels do not necessarily lead to climate change. He said, “There are numerous temperature changes which are not mimicked by the CO₂ concentration.” In fact, according to MIT meteorologist Richard S. Lindzen, worldwide CO₂ concentrations over the past century have increased from 0.028% to 0.036%, an insignificant percentage.⁴

Third, temperature readings from the last sixty years show “no appreciable warming since 1940,” said Singer. “This would indicate that the human effects on climate must be quite small.” He suggested that the primary influence on climate change



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Global Warming?

According to the IPCC, the average global surface temperature has risen by 0.6°C in the last 140 years. Scientists say the Earth is warming faster than it has in the last thousand years, but it may be cooling. The present temperature in some areas is several tenths of a degree below the 3,000-year average.

is—of all things!—the sun. The sun has been shown to go through long-term changes in activity, varying the amount of radiation aimed at the earth and causing the mean temperature to rise or fall. These shifts have a far greater effect on climate than greenhouse gases.⁵

Patrick J. Michaels, a professor of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia and a senior fellow in environmental studies at the Cato Institute, estimates that even if nations enacted every point of the Kyoto treaty, the world's average temperature would not decrease by a half degree over the next fifty years.⁶ Without it, the earth has warmed only about one degree over the past hundred years, and most of that increase took place before 1940.⁷

Arctic and Antarctic

Earth's polar ice caps have been the subject of intense study in proving or disproving global warming. Shrinking or thinning of the ice caps would seem to be signs of higher temperatures and indicate that environmentalists' alarms of impending catastrophe are valid. However, scientific data are currently invalidating these claims.

The West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) is of particular concern to environmentalists, as they estimate that if it collapses, sea levels could rise by as much as five meters. As late as June 2002, two U.S. scientists reported in the journal *Science* that the floating fringes of the WAIS are melting faster than previously suggested because the surrounding sea-

water is warming.⁸ However, their findings have drawn criticism because they used satellite radar interferometry rather than on-location samples.

Other research, however, has found that the WAIS is actually thickening, not thinning. A January 2002 article in *Science* found evidence that not only is the "retreat" of the WAIS coming to an end, but the ice sheet is actually growing by 26.8 gigatons each year.⁹ This concurs with studies that say Antarctica is cooling, not warming. One University of Illinois at Chicago study found that temperatures had cooled as much as 0.7°C per decade between 1986 and 2000.¹⁰

Another environmental scare is that the Arctic ice is thinning—to the point that by 2100, there could be open water there during the summers. Upward sonar readings from submarines taken between the 1960s and 1990s seem to show that the ice pack has thinned about 40%. However, new research by Dr. Greg Holloway of the Institute of Ocean Sciences in Sidney, British Columbia, suggests that the ice is still there—just piled up in areas where researchers have not surveyed! He holds that most of the ice has shifted from the central Arctic into Canadian waters where U.S. submarines were not allowed to go in the 1990s. In addition, the ice over the North Pole has begun to thicken.¹¹

If nothing else, a person should come away from conflicting reports like these with a healthy appreciation for the complexity of climate science. Just because the earth seems to be doing something that may give cause for concern does not mean it will not balance itself either in another place or in a short time.

Biblical Perspective

God uses weather, climate, and natural disasters as means to bless or curse people for obedience or disobedience to His law (for example, Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28; Amos 7:6-13). Satan, as "the god of this age" (II Corinthians 4:4; see Ephesians 2:2), uses "a great wind" to kill Job's children (Job 1:19). Similarly, God causes "a strong east wind" to divide the Red Sea so that His people can escape the Egyptians (Exodus 14:21).

Of the seven trumpet plagues in Revelation, the first three could be called "ecological disasters," as could a few of the seven last plagues (Revelation 8:7-11; 16:1-21). Ultimately, the whole earth will be remade as a fitting abode for God the Father (Revelation 21:1-4). From a biblical perspective, then, the minimal fluctuations of temperature readings in various parts of the earth are petty in comparison with what is to come.

This is not to say we should not be concerned about pollution and man's poor stewardship of earth's resources. We certainly have a responsibility to dress and keep what God has given us (Genesis 2:15). Ultimately, God warns those who would harm the earth that He will avenge the earth for man's abuses (Revelation 11:18). However, our concern for our environment should be based on truth, pure motives, and respect for God's creation, not on selfish, political aims.

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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Part Two

In last month's article, we were introduced to two immoral women, Miss Babylon, representative of this world's culture apart from God, and Miss Heresy, symbolic of false religion. These two lie in wait for the simple and gullible, to appeal to their desires and to lead them astray.

However, we also saw that in Proverbs 7 God has given us a formula for avoiding their deceptions and traps. God instructs us to keep His words and commandments to the point of treasuring them—because they will save our lives, particularly spiritually! We are to make His law the apple of our eye and cherish it.

Miss Heresy will try her best to sneak around the laws of God, whether by replacing them with traditions and human ordinances, or by doing away with it completely, saying it is no longer necessary now that we “believe.” Miss Babylon also hates God's law because it “cramps her style.”

If we obey God's instructions, we will be rejected by this world and culture for being “strange.” We will be so unlike the rest of the world that we will soon be set apart from it. We will certainly need God's help to remain separate once this occurs!

Beyond Knowledge

Proverbs 7 continues: “Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’ and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words” (verses 4-5).

Besides following the codified laws and instructions of God, we are also told to take it to the next level, looking beyond the phrases beginning with “thou shalt” or “thus saith the Lord.” We must go beyond just basic knowledge. Anybody can take a checklist of dos and don'ts and see if a specific situation applies in a literal or legalistic manner. God tells us to *understand* the command for the principle behind it, so we can apply it widely beyond a specific incident.

Understanding the principle, then, allows us to be *wise*. The basic definition of *wisdom* is “the right application” or “the right action” based on what we understand. This is echoed in Psalm 111:10, “The fear of the LORD is the

beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who *do* His commandments.”

To be protected from these strange women, we need to have an understanding of godly principles and then act accordingly. To gain this wisdom and understanding, we must fear and obey God. To put it briefly, we need to have a good relationship with God. If we have the right relationship, we will begin to see things as He does; the things that are “strange” to Him will also become “strange” to us.

Solomon adds:

For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house. In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. (Proverbs 7:6-9)

He describes this young man as *simple* in the bad sense of the word—he is *foolish*, inconsiderate, unthinking. He is “open” to all impressions of evil. He lounges near the house of ill repute, not necessarily because he *plans* to sin, but he does not seem all that opposed to it either! He is hanging out at a certain time and place, open to whatever might happen—no definite plans, just waiting to see how it goes. He lacks the understanding to discern the evil that is present, as well as the wisdom and courage to resist the flatteries and temptations of the seductress. In contrast, though unstated, the pure in heart—those who understand the dangers—would be at home, occupied with things that are more wholesome.

In applying this to ourselves and our efforts to forsake Babylon and steer clear of false doctrines and teachers, we can see that our individual application of verses 1-5—keeping God's commandments and making wise decisions—will help to determine whether or not we are foolish and lacking judgment. If we highly esteem God's instruction, in the letter and the spirit of the law, and if we fear God and keep His commandments, we will have the wisdom and understanding that this young man lacks.

A common saying runs, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” This young man may not have intended to get into trouble. He may not have *planned* to do anything wrong,

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Strange Women

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that holds knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and memories of life's experiences, that determines the kind of life we lead. It is that part where Satan aims most of his fiery darts.

In this metaphor, hope is not an offensive weapon but a defense; it is a motivator to protect us from losing sight of the glorious end of God's purpose. Why? The only thing that can really defeat and destroy us is for us to give up. Jesus says in His Olivet prophecy, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). Hope's fruit is not just an optimistic and positive outlook but also the drive to persevere, to endure come what may, to propel one forward. Only the hopeful will do this. The hopeless will give up.

So powerful is hope's action that Paul says in Romans 8:24-25 that we are saved by it! "For we are saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance." This in no way conflicts with his declaration in Ephesians 2:8 that we are "saved by grace through faith," because both faith and hope are necessary for salvation. Faith primarily operates in the present as visible evidence of things hoped for but not yet seen. Hope, though it is also operating in the present, primarily does so with reference to the future. Paul then says that, if a person has hope, he is motivated to wait patiently for what he hopes to see. The hopeful are motivated to endure whatever it takes to receive what they hope for.

Reason for High Hopes

Hebrews 6:9-20 expands considerably on the foundation of our hope and its function:

But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all

dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters to Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

It has been said that the quality of a person's hope is the measure of any man. Abraham's hope is the illustration here. By this estimation, he was a great man because one cannot possibly hope in anything greater! In Romans 4:18, Paul says of Abraham, "... who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations." His hope was so strong that, in spite of having no physical reason to hope for descendants through Sarah because she was beyond childbearing years, he nonetheless hoped to the end. When Isaac was born, his hope was vindicated because he had placed his hope in God.

The writer's hope for the Hebrews is for the better things that accompany salvation. Better than what? The context of the chapter shows he feared they were falling away. He desires them to have the full assurance of hope to the end or, put another way, the full development of hope. Why? So that they will overcome the lassitude he detects in them and begin carrying out their Christian responsibilities.

He wanted them to be diligent and in earnest about their responsibilities to God in heaven all the way to the end—to be fully, spiritually, enthusiastically energized in going about their Father's business. They were on the verge of aimlessly drifting away. No longer were they thinking much about the hope that once burned in their minds and drove them on. Other interests and concerns had pushed the thrilling excitement of our great hope aside in mundane pursuits. Our minds must be systematically refreshed with study and meditation on our hope, or we will fall into the same spiritual torpor the Hebrews did. A movement, ideal, or visionary dream that does not inspire hope will not grip the hearts of people to give themselves in sacrifice and accomplishment.

The Hebrews were going through a hardship that is never fully explained. Whatever it was, through it they had regressed from a higher spiritual level. Oftentimes, we can do little but endure our hardships patiently. We simply cannot change much in this world, and it does us well to accept what we cannot change with hopeful resignation (Ecclesiastes 7:13-14). Patient endurance is in itself a worthy work because it is at least an exercise of self-control.

High Hopes

A number of years ago, Frank Sinatra and others made popular recordings of a song titled "High Hopes":

Next time you're found with your c-hin on the ground,

There's a lot to be learned so look around.

Just what makes that little old ant

Think he'll move that rubber tree plant?

Anyone knows an ant can't

Move a rubber tree plant.

But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes,

He's got high-apple-pie-in-the-sky hopes.

So any time you're getting low,

'Stead of letting go,

Just remember that ant.

Oops, there goes another rubber tree plant.

When troubles call and your back's to the wall,

There's a lot to be learned, that wall could fall.

Once there was a silly old ram,

Thought he'd punch a hole in a dam.

No one could make that ram scam!

He kept buttin' that dam!

But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes,

He's got high-apple-pie-in-the-sky hopes.

So any time you're feeling bad,

'Stead of feeling sad,

Just remember that ram.

Oops, there goes a billion kilowatt dam!

So keep your high hopes, keep your high hopes.

Keep your high-apple-pie-in-the-sky hopes.

A problem's just a toy balloon.

They'll be bursting soon.

They're just bound to go "pop"!

Oops, there goes another problem, kerplop!

The song illustrates in a melodic way that hope motivates one to overcome even huge obstacles to get a job done.

In America, government officials are sworn into their positions, promising to uphold the office and the laws of the land. We become dismayed because over time so many of them break their vows. Governments promise that their money is good; banks, that their customers' savings are safe, stockbrokers, that their counsel is sound; and insurance companies, that their policyholders will receive their due. These assurances fail all too often in bankruptcy or fraud. After enduring a number of these failures or observing others experience them, we become skeptical, perhaps even cynical.

Our hope, however, is in a Being and a government whose promises are absolutely faithful because it is impossible for Him to lie. Our hopes do not lie in our courage, intelligence, or even the finest of human qualities but in God's promises. He assures us in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

The danger the Hebrews faced is unknown, but whether or not we consciously recognize it, we, like the Hebrews, are in danger. We may not be in a physical danger—threatened by religious martyrdom, imprisonment, disease or great loss of income—but we face spiritual dangers. With its manifold temptations and distractions, the world is constantly pressing in on us to turn us out of the way. Our human nature inclines us not to see things from God's perspective. Our pride seduces us. Our passions, temper, and other weaknesses trip us up, causing failure and despair. What does a person do when he realizes he is in danger? Does he not make for safety as quickly as he can?

That is precisely the advice of Hebrews 6:18: "... by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us." The author may have had the Israelite cities of refuge in mind as he wrote this (Numbers 35). They were places of

safety for those who killed another accidentally. Yet, the killer's only hope was to get to a city of refuge before the avenger of blood got to him! The refuge for those in the Hebrews' spiritual condition involves hope. The Greek word translated "set before" pictures hope lying before us like some inviting treat for us to take.

These people were in danger of falling away through their lethargic, lukewarm, careless, and lazy reaction to life and what it dealt them, yet they possessed the greatest hope a human could possibly entertain! As time passed, it had blurred in their minds almost to non-existence. They were forgetting it!

The author then describes hope as an anchor for our lives. Even as an anchor keeps a ship from drifting onto the rocks, hope keeps us from idly drifting to our spiritual destruction. Hope keeps us safe. It is a major stabilizing force for the whole of life because it has hold of something that does not move

despite the tempests around us. Our hope is anchored in Jesus Christ, who as High Priest has entered in our behalf into the heavenly Holy of Holies beyond the veil. Though His blood justifies us, His life saves us. Because He lives, intercedes for us, and watches over our lives to bring us into the Father's Kingdom, we have hope.

Hope motivates, and its primary function is to enable us to endure. We know that our wonderful goal is sure because our hope is in God, who is absolute and all-powerful. If we are to be saved, the means to fulfill this must come from God. The relationship established through God's calling, Christ's sacrifice, and our making of the New Covenant with Him provides that means. Now we must do all we can to fulfill our part of the relationship.

In Christian love,



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played by so many travelers of all ages. It seems to be the accepted norm to treat hotel, airline, restaurant, and store staff as if they were slaves:

- “I’ll have the steak dinner!”
- “Get me a magazine!”
- “Two more drinks over here!”
- “Give me one of those!”

At a hotel restaurant in Mexico City, some years ago, I witnessed the ultimate in bad manners when a man bellowed uncontrollably at a Mexican waitress who spoke very little English, “Bread! I want bread!” This is not the accepted standard for God’s people! God commands His people to treat even slaves and servants with common decency and respect! Service industry employees are not our slaves. They are not lesser human beings because we are paying them to do a job for us.

Be polite. Get into the habit of saying “Please” and “Thank you,” and teach your children to do the same. There are few things worse than hearing a child speaking to an adult waitress as though she was a lower life form. If your child omits these magic words, give him the look. If he still does not get the point, do not hesitate to remind them verbally.

Learn to tip appropriately!

The practice of tipping is a commonly accepted, North American standard. Although you may not agree with it and feel that prices are already high enough, it is common courtesy to tip. Little of the cost of a meal goes to the waitress. Most waiters and housekeepers do not earn very high wages, and they depend on tips to supply a decent income. For good restaurant food and service, the standard tip is 15%. Add more at your discretion for better-than-average food and service. A dollar per day is the norm for hotel housekeeping staff.

Health and Safety

Eat or drink in moderation!

God commands His people to enjoy good food and drink at the Feast (Deuteronomy 14:26), things that we may not be able to afford during the rest of the year. The Creator of good food and drink enjoyed this part of His creation during His years as a man, but as our example, He never overdid it, even though accused of doing so (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). Gluttony and drunkenness are clearly forbidden throughout God’s Word (Deuteronomy 21:20; Proverbs 23:21).

If you eat and drink in modest quantities, you will feel much better for it, you will feel more alert in church services, and your example to the community as a representative of God’s church will be enhanced.

Early to bed and early to rise...

“...makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.” This practice will certainly help the development of spiritual health, wealth, and wisdom. A great benefit of the Feast is the opportunity to fellowship with our friends, old and new, but with only eight days to do it, we can overdo it. We attend the Feast to learn to fear God. We learn much better after a good night’s sleep. In addition, if we fellowship late into the night in our rooms, it may disturb our neighbors.

Exercise!

If we are not diligent, we can be very sedentary during the eight days of the Feast. A week and a day of sitting in services, sitting in restaurants, and sitting in hotel rooms will make us feel sluggish and irritable. Try to participate in as many church-organized picnics, tours, and other activities as possible. If you meet some new friends and want to spend time getting to know them, suggest a walk or a visit to a nearby attraction. Walk and talk!

Drive safely!

We hear daily about the results

of unsafe driving. Speed kills, so please slow down—even if your flight was late, even if your car broke down, even if it means missing the opening night service. Better to miss one service than to spend the Feast in a hospital bed—or worse!

Supervise young children at all times!

God has not yet set up His Kingdom on earth, and until He does, this is still Satan’s world. Although every effort has been made to choose a Feast site that is comparatively safe, no place on earth is 100% safe. There are wicked people everywhere. We do not need to be paranoid, but neither should we invite trouble. People are not the only dangers—keep a close watch on young children around automobiles, water, and electricity. Your Feast environment may not be as safe from these hazards as your home is.

Finances

Save your Festival Tithe!

It may be a little late to give advice on this point for this year’s Feast, but perhaps we can keep it in mind for future years. God wants all of us to attend His Feast at the place where He places His name, if we are physically able. For most of us, Feast attendance would be impossible if we did not save our second tithe according to God’s command:

You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to

carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires. . . , and you shall rejoice, you and your household. (Deuteronomy 14:22-26)

We should also teach our children the habit of saving their second tithe, so that, when they grow to adulthood,

the practice will not be a surprise to them. Give them two jars or cans and mark them "1T" and "2T." Teach them to calculate ten percent of their allowances and "wages" for special jobs, to deposit those tithes in the appropriate containers, and to enjoy watching the amounts grow as the Feast draws near.

You might also like to teach your children to prepare their holy day offerings well in advance. A child's offering loses its meaning if the parent just gives him a dollar to put in the basket at the last minute.

For adults and older children, it is wise to calculate how much second tithe funds you expect to have avail-

able, to prepare a Feast budget, and then to stick to it. In the past, some have committed the "mistake" (sin) of "borrowing" (stealing) second tithe for non-Feast-related purposes, thereby shorting themselves for God's Feast. God wants His Feast to be a blessing to His children, not the cause of additional financial burdens upon us.

Let us all prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles, so that we can rejoice and learn to fear the great God. By preparing to live God's way of give at the Feast, we will be preparing to live God's way of give for eternity!

—John Plunkett

Strange Women

(continued from page 13)

but his approach is not aligned with I Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication." Paul says, "Turn around and run the other way!" The young man's approach is not one of foreseeing the dangers and avoiding them (Proverbs 22:3; 27:12), and thus he is called *simple* and *devoid of understanding*.

In the same way, if our approach is not one of striving to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, avoiding false teachers and doctrines, in essence, we are planning to fail!

Tactics of Strange Women

The story of the foolish young man continues:

And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious, her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner. (Proverbs 7:9-12)

The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* says this about verse 11:

"Stubborn [*rebellious*, NKJV]." The same word as is applied to Israel represented as an untamed and refractory heifer (Hos 4:16). Having cast off the wholesome yoke of religious and social restraints, she is ready for every sin. Instead of the soft and gentle voice of feminine modesty, she is "loud," and full of words flowing from assurance. A modest

woman shrinks from undue publicity, and is a "keeper at home" (Titus 2:5), and industrious (Prov 31:10-31); but she "wanders about from house to house" (1 Tim 5:13); disliking home labor, she resorts to places of amusement, the dance, etc.

Adam Clarke's Commentary adds:

. . . she is never at rest, always agitated; busily employed to gain her end, and this is to go into the path of error. [She turns aside,] preferring any way to the right way. And, therefore, it is added, her feet abide not in her house; she gads abroad; and this disposition probably first led her to this vice.

It is significant to note how universal and unchanging these descriptions are. Proverbs, written roughly 3000 years ago, still paints a vivid picture in our minds, making it easy to imagine these events. The attitude and approach of the actors are not strange depictions to us, even within the context of our modern world. A common thread and an identical attitude spans the millennia. This pattern is readily identified as Satanic, for the Devil tries to lure us away from the truth with false religion and the culture of Babylon in the same way a prostitute lures young men.

The description of seduction in Proverbs 7:13-21 includes several indicators of the tactics and approaches that Satan has used for thousands of years to lure people away:

So she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she said to him: "I have peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, colored

coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home on the appointed day.” With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him.

First, notice how she appeals to the senses. This woman has prepared the perfect environment for her seductions, and everything about her approach is meant to be attractive to his sight, smell, and touch, even his emotions. In fact, the only thing she does not try to use on him is real logic. But the atmosphere here is just perfect for what she is intending.

In the same way, this world entices us with everything that is attractive to our carnal human nature. A simple definition of “Babylon” is a system dedicated to living life apart from God. It emphasizes

- gaining material wealth—so we can live independent of God’s providential care.
- gaining power and influence—so we can exert control rather than having someone control us.
- physical pleasure—on pleasing the self, rather than serving others.
- fashion, self-image, and being noticed—so that we can attract attention, rather than *pay* attention to others in encouragement or other forms of service.

Babylon tries to entice us with all these things, but without any real thought about the consequences or showing the other side of the coin.

James 4:4 sounds a clear warning against Miss Babylon:

You are like an unfaithful wife who loves her husband’s enemies. Don’t you realize that making friends with God’s enemies—the evil pleasures of this world—makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy the evil pleasure of the unsaved world, you cannot also be a friend of God. (*The Living Bible*)

Miss Heresy

Up to this point, we have not focused on false religion, but it is a very real danger. We sometimes do not recognize that our enemy, Babylon, comes in the form of its daughters—that of Catholic or Protestant doctrine—but we should have proved these things wrong early in our conversion. A common theme of the New Testament is its warnings against false teachers, doctrines, and brethren; heresies; human wisdom; intellectual vanity; and general deception. These warnings are for our benefit! The threat

and allure of Babylon might be more visible to us, but the peril of being deceived by a false religion is still very real. Satan’s first interaction with mankind was a deception, and he still operates by this pattern.

Miss Heresy calls to us in the same way that Miss Babylon appeals to us. Religious deception often speaks to our emotions with “feel-good” messages that absolve the listener of personal responsibility, painting a picture that many find irresistible—like the one the strange woman of Proverbs 7 painted for the young man. They cause us to doubt by eroding our convictions and replacing them with uncertainties.

Just like the seducer who says, “Everything will be okay. We won’t get caught,” false doctrines and teachers often focus on the wrong principle. Even though it may even be a true principle, by slanting it or applying it in the wrong way, they can twist our understanding and damage our faith. False teachers and doctrines also appeal to our vanity. The foolish young man succumbed through flatteries—she puffed up his ego and self-image until he would follow her anywhere.

Paul explains it in II Corinthians 11:3-4:

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 this reason, God commands us to “test all things; hold fast what is good” (I Thessalonians 5:21). This is why for decades we heard, “Don’t believe me—believe your Bible!” and why God has given us His Word: so we can see if the things we hear meet the standard He has given to us.

Finally, we should notice the conclusion and moral of the story in Proverbs 7:

Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would take his life. Now therefore, listen to me, my children; pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to [Miss Babylon’s] ways, do not stray into [Miss Heresy’s] paths; for [Miss Babylon] has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by [Miss Heresy] were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death. (verses 22-27)

God puts before us life and death, blessing and cursing, and tells us, almost pleads with us, to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19). He wants to recognize us, and He wants us to recognize Him, and this means following ways that are not *strange* to Him.

—David C. Grabbe

BIBLE STUDY: PARABLE OF THE CLOTH AND WINESKINS

The Pharisees fasted often, regularly twice a week, besides the great national days of fasting. They also fasted while in mourning. This was the established custom of the land. As a result, John the Baptist's disciples—who fasted frequently like the Pharisees—wanted to know why Jesus, in contrast, did not require His disciples to fast.

Christ replies to them with three illustrations, all of which make the same point: that in everything our beliefs and actions should be correct and appropriate to God's way of life. The parable found in Matthew 9:14-17 (also Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39) expresses the importance of our commitment to the pure doctrines of Jesus Christ.



1. Why did Christ's disciples not fast like the Pharisees? Matthew 9:14-15; Luke 18:9-14; Acts 13:1-3; 14:23.

COMMENT: Jesus' first illustration comes from marriage customs of the time. The bridegroom's friends would not think of fasting while he was with them. For them, it was a time of festivity and rejoicing—mourning was not appropriate. When the bridegroom left them, their festivities would end, and the proper time for fasting and sorrow would begin.

While Christ, the Bridegroom, was with His disciples, it was a time for joy. Expressing grief by fasting would have been inappropriate at that time. In addition, since Jesus was with them, they had no need to draw closer to Him through fasting. After Christ died, the disciples fasted when appropriate.

2. What do the cloth and old garment represent? Matthew 9:16; II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:8-9.

COMMENT: Jesus' second illustration derives from a well-known fact: No one with a reasonable amount of experience in mending clothes would waste a piece of new cloth to repair an old garment. If new cloth is used to patch an old garment, and the patch becomes wet, it shrinks as it dries and puts strain on the old garment. The tear becomes worse than it was.

Jesus is showing that His "new" doctrines do not match the old rites of the Pharisees, which required a lot of fasting. If His "new" doctrines were attached to their old ones, it would distort the truth. Christ is preaching against syncretism, the mixing of beliefs. We must completely replace the old human way of life with the new godly way of life. Because God's "new" way is righteous and spiritually strong, it cannot be combined with the "old" wicked and weak human way of life. They are incompatible.

3. What do the new wine and old wineskins represent? Matthew 9:17; Joshua 9:3-5.

COMMENT: Jesus' third illustration derives from wine bottling. In those times, "bottles" were made of animal skins—sheep, goat, or ox—and, after being properly

prepared, filled with wine or water. These skins came in various sizes—an ox-skin held as much as 60 gallons. Horses and camels could carry glass or ceramic bottles or wooden kegs only with difficulty, but two skins tied together and laid across a beast's back could be carried a long distance. After a time, an animal skin became brittle and ruptured easily. New wine put into an old skin would ferment, expand, and burst them open. New skins, however, were strong enough to stretch without bursting.

Christ's illustration suggests that there is a wise and proper way to do things. It was not fitting to mix His doctrines with the old and corrupt doctrines of the Pharisees. To take God's truth and try to press it into some other form would change it into a lie, making the truth of God useless.

4. How do these three illustrations relate? Matthew 24:4-5, 24; Romans 6:5-6; 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:14; 5:6-11; I Timothy 6:3-5; Hebrews 13:9.

COMMENT: The new wine represents the inner aspects of a Christian life, and the new cloth pictures outward conduct and conversation. A person's behavior reflects his commitment, seen in the illustration of attaching new cloth to old clothing. The old clothing—our sinful, selfish life—cannot be mended but must be replaced. The new cloth is a righteous life. The Pharisees' ritual fasting was an old garment for which a new piece of cloth was useless.

It is untenable to attach Christ's doctrine to the old corrupt doctrines of this world's religions. The righteous system Christ came to establish cannot be forced into an old system. To attempt to force His teachings into the ways of Judaism, Protestantism, Catholicism, or any other of this world's religions causes confusion. Christ is warning against syncretism of beliefs; it simply does not work.

Our Savior teaches that life cannot be a mixture of two opposite principles. We cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). We cannot trust in our own works for salvation in Christ, nor follow the world and God. His new way must completely replace our old worldly ways so that we walk in newness of life.