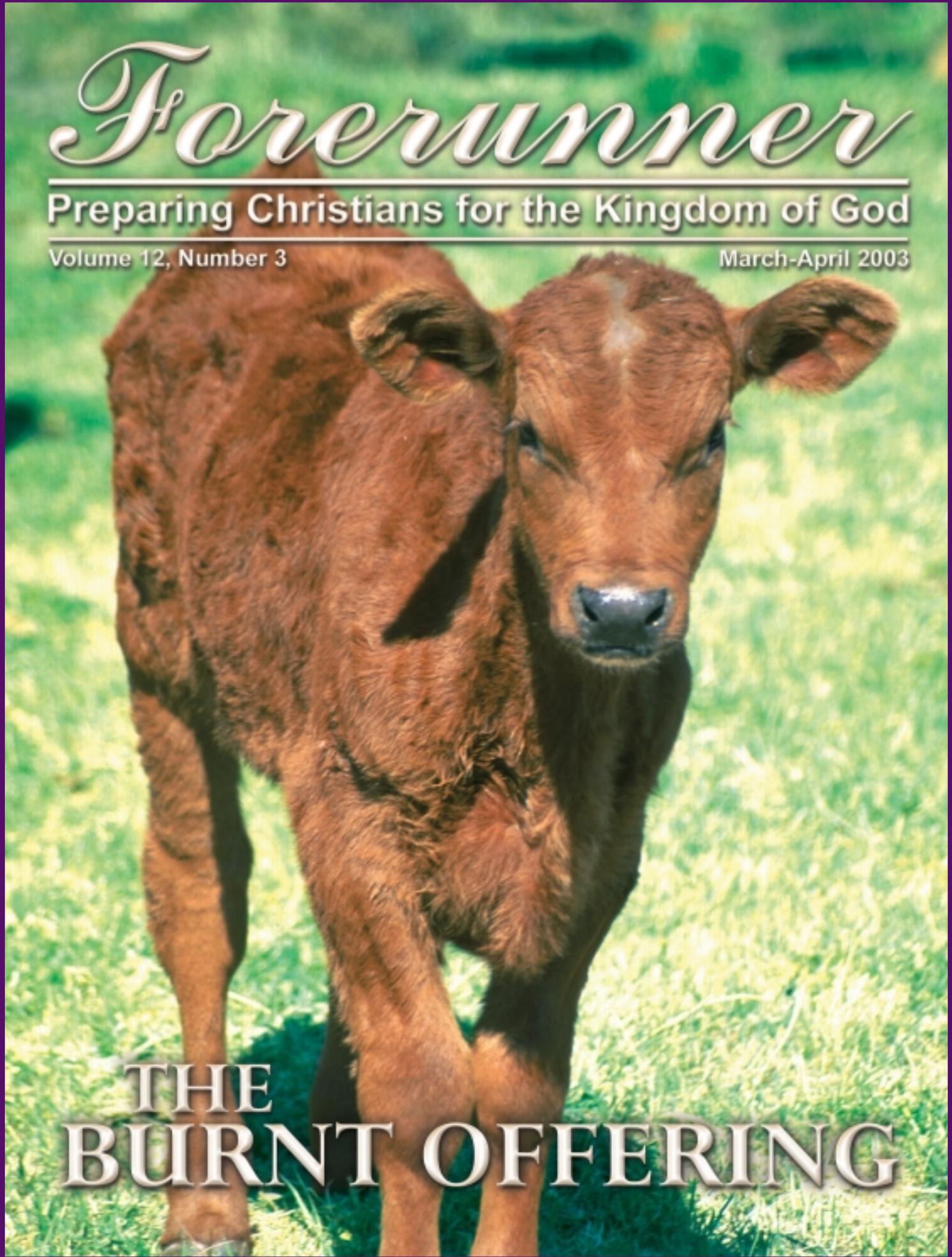


Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 12, Number 3

March-April 2003

A young brown cow stands in a lush green field, looking directly at the camera. The cow's fur is a rich, dark brown, and its eyes are dark and focused. The background is a soft-focus green field, suggesting a rural or farm setting. The lighting is bright, casting a soft shadow of the cow onto the grass to its left.

THE
BURNT OFFERING

March-April 2003 Contents

Volume 12, Number 3

- 3 PERSONAL FROM JOHN W. RITENBAUGH
*The Offerings of Leviticus (Part Two):
The Burnt Offering*
- 7 A READY ANSWER:
What Did Jesus Do?
—Rod Keesee
- 9 PROPHECY WATCH:
The Prophecies of Balaam (Part Two)
—Richard T. Ritenbaugh
- 12 *Choosing the New Man (Part Two)*
—Charles Whitaker
- 19 WORLD WATCH
—David C. Grabbe
- 20 BIBLE STUDY
The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers
—Martin G. Collins

About Our Cover



The Old Testament sacrifices are largely ignored by Christians today, but we do so to our detriment. They are wonderful pictures of Christ and His character and teach us a great deal about what God expects of us as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1).
PictureQuest

Forerunner Magazine

Editor-in-Chief
JOHN W. RITENBAUGH

Managing Editor
RICHARD T. RITENBAUGH

Associate Editor
MARTIN G. COLLINS

Contributing Writers
TED E. BOWLING, JOHN F. BULHAROWSKI, MARK DESOMER, MIKE FORD, RONNY H. GRAHAM,
WILLIAM GRAY, BILL KEESSEE, ROD KEESSEE, WARREN LEE, DAVID F. MAAS,
HOWARD E. MARCHBANKS, BRYAN NELSON, JOHN PLUNKETT, JOHN REID,
MARK SCHINDLER, SHERLY J. TOGANS, JR., CHARLES WHITAKER, BRIAN WULF

News Editor
DAVID C. GRABBE

Graphics and Layout Editor
KRISTEN M. COLLINS

Contact Church of the Great God

PO Box 471846
Charlotte, NC 28247-1846
U.S.A.

Box 30188
Saanich Centre Postal Outlet
Victoria, BC V8X 5E1
CANADA

(800) 878-8220 / (803) 802-7075
(803) 802-7811 fax

<http://www.cgg.org> or <http://www.sabbath.org>
or <http://www.worldwatchdaily.org> or <http://www.bibletools.org>

Forerunner is published ten times a year as a free educational and religious service in the public interest. Articles, illustrations, and photographs will not be returned unless specifically requested, and if used, become the property of the Church of the Great God. Comments, suggestions, requests, and changes of address should be sent to the address listed above.

This free publication is made possible through the voluntary tithes and offerings of its subscribers and members of the Church of the Great God. All American and Canadian donations are tax-deductible.

© Copyright 2003
Church of the Great God
All Rights Reserved
Printed in the U.S.A.

The Offerings of Leviticus

Part Two: The Burnt Offering

As hard as we might find studying the Bible to be, it must be done if we truly desire to know God, and doing so will create a more complete and personal vision of things we must accomplish. Studying is a discipline that requires a great deal of commitment. Commitment is much like a motor that holds a person steadily on course as they pursue their goals. It will cause people to find a way—or make a way—to break from their normal patterns and to change habits that dominate their lives and keep them from success. To have commitment, however, one must have at least the seed or spark of vision to get started.

With commitment, the vision will sharpen and grow—but not without sacrifice. The pursuit of a goal often requires some hindering activities to be put aside or even given up until one achieves the objective. The first article of

this series introduced the sacrifices of Leviticus and their relationship to the salvation process. Sacrifice is what we will face if we attempt to overcome the normal patterns of human nature in the spiritual battle.

Human nature is a formidable obstacle because fighting it goes against our ingrained desire for self-satisfaction; the very thought of sacrifice makes our human nature very uncomfortable. It disturbs our feeling of security in what we have become. We are creatures of habit, which is not all bad as long as our habits conform to God and His purpose. Sacrifice, though, confronts us with the reality that we will have to break the mold and oppose what we have grown to love. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:29, “No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it.” To attain our vision of God’s purpose, we must face the prospect of sacrificing and do it.

Sacrificing Is a Way of Life

The sacrificial offerings of Leviticus are not insignificant, primitive, or barbaric. God carefully devised them as teaching tools to those under the Old Covenant, who looked forward to the full revelation of the object of His law, and to those of us under the New Covenant, who look back on it.

From the beginning, God’s intention was that they be teaching vehicles. They are shadows—and the present tense is used purposely. They are still teaching vehicles. For a shadow to exist,

there must be a reality. The reality is the life and death of Jesus Christ, and we are to strive to follow this Reality as closely as we can, as dear children, as Paul says in Ephesians 5:1-2, becoming, like Christ, a sweet savor to God. The sacrifices of Leviticus mirror His life and death. Even though we do not have to perform them physically, we can glean a wealth of valuable information from them about the manner in which He lived and why He had to die. In doing this, we learn to walk in His steps.

Paul says in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” He makes a parallel comment in I Corinthians 15:31, “I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.” The apostle depicts a parallel between Christ’s course and ours. Christ’s sacrifice was substitutionary. Thus, when He was crucified, and we then accept His death for the forgiveness of our sins, it is as though we were crucified and our sins paid for in full.

However, the parallel does not end there. Sacrifice was a way of life with Jesus Christ, and it is to become our way of life. Every time we obey God’s instruction as part of His purpose rather than unresistingly following the dictates of human nature, we are sacrificing ourselves to God and His purpose as a living sacrifice. Every time we sacrifice our time and energy to serve rather than merely pursue our own interests, we are following the patterns shown in the sacrifices of Leviticus and Jesus Christ’s life. We are to strive to live just as He lived, and thus the daily sacrifice continues.

The reason for this is to help us to grow up into Him:

... till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ. . . . (Ephesians 4:13-15)

From this point, we will be primarily researching into the burnt offering, meal offering, and peace offering. In them, instead of seeing Christ as redeeming us from sin through the sacrifice of His life as the payment for our sins,

we see Him in His work in our behalf as those already redeemed. It is not His sacrificial help in bringing us out of spiritual Egypt but rather His showing us how to live so we avoid falling into that condemnation again and remain in happy fellowship with God. The attitudes and conduct shown in these three offerings prepared Him to be our Redeemer, and if we imitate them in our lives, they will help prepare us for God’s Kingdom.

Even though Christ is the sum total of the offerings, we cannot allow ourselves to be separated from them because they are instruction to us. Systematically, we will see Christ in the sacrifices as the offering, the offerer, and the priest. We cannot conform to every type simply because they do not all apply to us, but we must conform to those that do. Most that apply to us fall in the categories of being the offering and the offerer and much less in being the priest.

Each of the five offerings has similarities and differences. The most common similarities are that in each offering there is an offering, an offerer, and a priest. We see Christ as offerer in His role as a human being, the One who became a man. We see Him as offering in His character and work as the victim. We see Him as priest in His relationship to us today; He is our High Priest.

Each distinction also has meaning. For example, each of the four gospel accounts has many similarities while telling essentially the same story, but they are also distinctly different. Matthew emphasizes Christ as the long-expected Messiah, King of the Kingdom of God, and Deliverer. Mark focuses on Jesus as a man, the tireless worker always serving others. Luke highlights the Son of Man suffering (as in Gethsemane) and needing help. John sees Him as God, a powerful man who performs signs and shows no need for sympathy or help.

The picture should be clear. The gospels give us one story with a variety of themes, a story of one Personality and message told from differing perspectives and angles. Its cumulative effect gives us a much more complete picture. A similar design occurs in the offerings, providing multiple applications.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Galatians 2:20

Complete Devotion to God

Leviticus 1:1-4 says:

Now the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When any one of you brings an offer-

ing to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the

LORD. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.”

This is commonly called the burnt offering, but sometimes the whole burnt offering. The reason “whole” is added is because other offerings are burned on the altar but not the whole animal. *This offering represents Christ, or in parallel, us, being completely, wholeheartedly devoted to God.*

Psalm 40:6-8 prophesies how Christ would live His life in complete devotion and holiness:

Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the Book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.”

John 8:29 confirms from Christ’s own mouth

that He lived up to this prophecy: “And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” His utter devotion to God produced a life of complete holiness. In addition, it also produced something that we ought to value very highly: a supreme confidence, a solid, ever-present assurance of the Father’s constant presence and approval as we go through life. How valuable is that in this uncertain and insecure world?

The burnt offering has four distinctive aspects to it:

1. It is a sweet savor to God. He enjoys this offering. It is not given because of sin but because of devotion.
2. It is offered for acceptance in the stead of the offerer. The animal represents the offerer.
3. A life is given.
4. It is completely burned up.

The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him

John 8:29

A Sweet Savor

Ephesians 5:1-2 allows us to examine briefly the mention of a “sweet savor” or “sweet-smelling aroma” in a New Testament setting: “Therefore be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Living a life activated by loving-kindness in the keeping of God’s commandments, following the example of Jesus Christ, and being tenderhearted to forgive is a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.

Three of the offerings were sweet smelling, and two were not. The sweet-savor offerings were burned on the brazen altar, while the others were burned outside the camp. No sin is seen in the sweet-savor offerings; the individual Israelite gave them completely voluntarily and not because of guilt. They are simply sweet-smelling offerings. Christ does not appear in them as our sin bearer, but, even more, He is shown offering something so pleasing—so satisfying—it is sweet to God. It symbolizes the way He lived His life. Jesus Christ was a living sacrifice long before He became the sacrifice for sin by crucifixion. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” in service, living a sinless life (John 15:13).

Malachi 1:7, 12 explains the symbolism of the sacrifice and the altar: “You offer defiled food

on My altar. But you say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the LORD is contemptible.’ . . . But you profane it, in that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’” The imagery of the sweet-smelling offering centers on food. The altar stands for God’s table. Whatever is put upon the altar to be burned as an offering is considered God’s food. How good food smells as it is cooking! And how pleasurable it is to eat if it is good food! As such, it is symbolically something that pleases God’s taste. If the food is inferior or blemished, as described in these verses, God is greatly displeased, as it shows contempt for Him.

Compare this with Romans 12:1-2, a New Testament account of the type of sacrifice that pleases God:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Sacrificial living in submission to God’s will pleases Him. In this case, God is interested

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.

John 15:13

neither in Christ's death nor ours but how we live life. Worship is our response to God, and real worship is the offering of our everyday life to Him. Loyal devotion given to please God in every labor of life is the most satisfying and acceptable response we can give God. Peter concurs with

Paul, writing in I Peter 2:4-5, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

In Our Stead

Leviticus 1:3-4 states:

If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

God accepts the animal in place of the offerer. The offerer remains alive, and the animal represents him giving or sacrificing himself. In this respect, Christ becomes even more prominent, and we fade into the background, though not entirely.

Every man's acceptance before God depends upon perfect righteousness. An animal cannot sin, so in the imagery sinlessness is symbolically present. However, the sinlessness required for our acceptance goes well beyond this. Paul writes in Romans 3:10, 23: "There is none righteous, no not one; . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Jesus, though, born of a woman (Galatians 4:4), took on flesh and blood as the seed of Abraham (John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14) and lived a perfect life (I Peter 2:22). His sinless life was acceptable to God, and by God's grace, we are accepted because of Christ. Thus, the offering must be without blemish; it must match Christ's sinlessness.

This also helps to explain the word "atonement" in Leviticus 1:4. Normally, we think of it in the sense of a "covering for sin." However, since sin is not contemplated in this offering, this understanding is incorrect here. In this case, *atonement* indicates "making satisfaction." God is satisfied because a requirement is met, not that His offended justice is satisfied.

This fact is important to understanding this offering properly. Notice Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31:

And he shall do with the bull as he did with the bull as a sin offering; thus he shall do with it. So the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them. . . .

And he shall burn all its fat on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of peace offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him. . . . He shall remove all its fat, and fat is removed from the sacrifice of peace offering; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma to the LORD. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.

Clearly, in the sin offering described here, *atonement* is used in the sense of "a covering," and therefore as a means of forgiving sin. By contrast, in the burnt offering sin is nowhere seen because it is not part of what the burnt offering teaches. In it, God is satisfied because the offerer has met His requirement through his life, by the righteous way he lives his life. Thus, the offering shows the offerer accepted.

However, not all sense of covering is lost in the use of "atonement" in Leviticus 1. Here, the essence of covering arises in the fact that the offering covers—is fitting or appropriate—in the sense of meeting all conditions. The conditions involve a life of sincere, wholehearted, and loyal devotion to God.

A vivid contrast to this is exemplified by the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:15-19:

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

(continued on page 16)

There is
none righteous,
no not one;
... for all have
sinned and fallen
short of the
glory of God.
Galatians 4:4

What Did Jesus Do?

In 1896, Charles Sheldon wrote a novel entitled *In His Steps*. It presents an unlikely hero, a tramp dressed in rags, who disrupts the status quo in a Midwestern church service by making a shocking statement after his repeated pleas for help are disregarded by the well-dressed and outwardly reverent townspeople. After the song service, he says, “It seems to me there’s an awful lot of trouble in the world that somehow wouldn’t exist if all the people who sing such songs went and lived them out.” With this gut-wrenching indictment, he dies. The stunned congregation, realizing the hypocrisy in their lives, pledge that for the next year they would ask themselves one question as they related and responded to others: “What Would Jesus Do?”

Most of us have heard about or seen bracelets, bumper stickers, and innumerable other items emblazoned with the initials “WWJD.” This popu-

lar movement came into being after a church youth group in Holland, Michigan, read this novel, pondering among themselves how to affect their generation and their culture, and decided to put these four letters, “WWJD,” or the full question, “What Would Jesus Do?” into daily practice. They started with the basic assumption that, if each person would ask himself these four words before any decision, the world could be changed for the better.

While the premise of asking this question should be important to us, a much more important and fundamental question is probably more relevant to our lives: “What *did* Jesus do?” Both questions obviously relate to how we should conduct our lives, but asking what He did focuses on and teaches the basic principles of how He actually lived His life, without presuming how He might handle many of our “modern” problems not explicitly covered in the pages of the Bible. Obviously, this does not diminish the necessity of applying godly principles of living in our lives and understanding how He might conduct Himself if He were a human today. However, one significant problem that arises with the first question is that too many modern Christians deny many of the things that He actually did that do not fit their traditional beliefs.

To the average church member, the obvious issues would be the denial of God’s Sabbath and holy days and their replacement by Sunday and pagan holidays. Exodus 31:12-17 speaks of these days as a sign between God and His people of a perpetual—that is, unending or eternal—covenant. Since we know that Jesus Christ is the Logos (John 1:1-14), the God of the Old Testament (I Corinthians 10:1-4), and Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28), it seems rather incongruous that those who ask, “What would Jesus do?” would refuse to embrace this basic tenet of His life, but unfortunately, such is the case.

Christ’s Human Experience

Most everyone is familiar with Jesus’ human life. As covered in the gospels, from His birth in Bethlehem to His death on Golgotha, we see a human, though begotten by the Father, living a normal life. Growing up as a carpenter with brothers and sisters (Mark 6:3), He experienced life as we all do, with a few notable exceptions.

Apart from Moses and Elijah, who were also being tested for monumental tasks (Deuteronomy 9:9; I Kings 19:8), Jesus is the only biblical notable who fasted for forty days. We know that His life had to be tested by the ultimate accuser of mankind, Satan (Matthew 4:1, Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4: 1-2). Contrary to normal human response, Jesus denies the need for food, protection, and power, as Satan offers it. In doing so, He uses these significant words that become the foundation for how He would live His human life—and how we, too, should live it:

But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” . . . Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’” . . . Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10)

Here, too, we see how mainstream Christianity fails to embrace the true life of Christ. In reality, most people cannot relate to His walking on water, turning water into wine, or healing people of their diseases. When we fully examine the life of Jesus, we can easily see that simplistically asking “What would Jesus do?” is little more than a feel-good way of seeing only the “good deed” side of Christ and not

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps.”
—I Peter 2:21, ESV

the complete package that reveals who He is, what He teaches, and why He lives as He does.

It is easy to read the simple words of the Sermon on the Mount but fail to see the way of life Jesus teaches and demands of us. Likewise, we read the many parables that He gives as teaching tools but overlook their practical applications, which instruct us in details of Christ's character.

Obviously, unless God opens a person's mind to see the entire process, it is as James 1:23-24 reveals:

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

We might *think* we know what Christ would do, but unless we know what He did, we do not have the proper image by which to compare ourselves and our conduct (II Corinthians 10:12-18; I Corinthians 2:9-16).

Suffering and Trials

Men have suffered trials and death in many of the same ways Christ did. People are horrifically killed, maimed, and executed every day somewhere on earth. In fact, the death that Christ experienced was not all that different even from those of His apostles, as certain historians relate (for example, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, pages 4-5).

Of course, the major difference is that He did nothing to deserve it. Some might argue that many killed in various gruesome ways did not deserve death either, but such people lived lives of sin, and Christ did not. Any sin brings the just reward of death without the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cover it (I Corinthians 15:54-55; Hebrews 9:26-28).

I Peter 2:19-24 provides insight into Christ's suffering and death, as well as the proper approach toward them:

For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God

one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. . . . But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness. . . .

We should consider these words very carefully. They speak of a willingness to suffer wrongs without recourse, even to be willing to follow in Jesus' footsteps in dying for our beliefs. When we ponder these things, we can understand how we should do likewise, but it all stems from what Christ actually did.

If we ask ourselves, "What did Jesus do?" we see Christ as more than willing to "walk the walk." He lived his life with the full realization that one day He would suffer greatly for who He was and what He stood for. He lived His life as an example of how we should live, even to suffering patiently and not retaliating.

Jesus reveals His humanity in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-44) and in the feeling of total desertion or loneliness at the time of His death (Matthew 27:46). Anyone who thinks that it must have been easy for Him to endure the physical, mental, and emotional turmoil and suffering that led up to and accompanied His crucifixion obviously has not thought it completely through. Yet, even in these extreme situations, He shows us by His example what to do when faced with seemingly insurmountable trials.

For us, it is striving to remember that, no matter how bad a situation or circumstance becomes, God is there

to help (Psalms 51), and we know God promises not to give us more than we can handle (I Corinthians 10:13). Unlike the worldly premise of wondering what Christ would do, in the gospels we have an exact representation of what, where, who, when, how, and why in Christ's very life! We have no need to guess. This knowledge should give us great comfort, unlike those who see only the "good deeds" or diminish the actions of God in the flesh through syrupy misrepresentation.

In His Word, Jesus gives us examples that can aid us in overcoming the trials we face, but they also help us to live as He did. It can change the "me only" mentality that hampers so many today. It can teach us how to serve others and give of ourselves in everything we do.

Serving Others

Throughout Christ's life, we see Him serving. Even though He has the same physical attributes and limitations of other men, His service is exhaustive—in stark contrast to His self-centered opposition. Some of His service manifests itself in the words He preaches of His life-giving way. Sometimes, He serves by righting wrongs perpetrated against various people and God. He serves by feeding thousands, and His healings constantly remind us of God's power to help those who needed it.

Perhaps His most impressive example of service occurs in the familiar story of footwashing (John 13:3-17). This scene shows Christ revealing to His disciples a way of even greater service. In what must have been the worst time of His life, He serves them by washing His disciples' feet! In essence, He teaches that not only should we serve mankind during good times but just as much during the most difficult. Knowing how we live as Christians, He gives us instruction encased in His example that helps us face even the worst of trials.

This is not to say that we will not feel the pain of our trials, but it is
(continued on page 15)

The Prophecies

Part Two

The inclusion of four prophecies or oracles attributed to the Mesopotamian soothsayer Balaam has troubled some Bible students through the years. Not only was Balaam a polytheist, he led Israel into sin by suggesting that Moab's women seduce the Israelites into sexual immorality and idolatry, bringing about 24,000 Israelite deaths (Numbers 25:1-9; 31:16). Why would God leave the sayings of such a vile man in His Book?

Part of the reason stems from what Paul writes in Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." With the exception of Jesus Christ, all of those through whom God has spoken have been sinful. For the most part, God has chosen to work through "vessel[s] of honor", that is, men and women who have submitted to Him and lived righteously (Romans 9:21; II Timothy 2:20-21), but on occasion, God has spoken the truth through dishonorable vessels to display His power and bring Him glory (see John 11:49-52).

Another reason is that the incident involving Balaam is more important than most people think. It was the final test of Israel before entering the Promised Land, and they—typically—failed it. Nevertheless, throughout Balaam's oracles, God stresses that He will fulfill His promises to Abraham. Despite the rebellions of

Israel, God will not only make Israel great and prosperous, but He will also complete His plan—even to the coming of the Messiah as King of kings (Revelation 19:11-16). Through this incident, we see in Balaam that even His enemies must yield to God and the outworking of His plan.

Third Prophecy

As we saw in the previous article, Balaam's first two prophecies focus on the soothsayer's inability to curse what God has blessed. Israel is a special people to God, destined for greatness, and God is its King, working out Israel's redemption from Egypt and its subjugation of the peoples in and around the Promised Land. He concludes by saying Israel is like a hungry lion that will not rest until the hunt is over.

Angry that Balaam is blessing rather than cursing Israel, his employer, Balak, takes the diviner to the top of Peor, a high place, and they again offer a bull and a ram on seven altars (Numbers 23:25-30). This time, however, Balaam figures out that God will not communicate with him through any kind of augury, divination, or sorcery, so he merely waits for God to speak, "and the Spirit of God came upon him" (Numbers 24:2-3). After a long preamble, Balaam says:

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel! Like valleys that stretch out, like gardens by the riverside, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters. He shall pour water from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters. His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

God brings him out of Egypt; he has strength like a wild ox; he shall consume the nations, his enemies; he shall break their bones and pierce them with his arrows. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who will rouse him?

Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you. (Numbers 24:5-9)

As in the previous oracles, the third begins with the certainty of Israel's future prosperity and power. "Cedars beside the waters" is a strange illustration because normally, cedar trees do not grow beside rivers. However, it makes the point that God will override even the natural order of things, if need be, to bless Israel. Conversely, aloes grow best in arid places, suggesting that Israel will

of Balaam

have the best of both worlds. Geographers have long noted that, for its size, the land of Israel is one of the most geographically and climatically diverse areas on earth.

In verses 6-7, there are four references to water. Water, of course, is a prime necessity for life, and an abundance of water set the stage for prosperity. A well-watered land ensures abundant crops with enough left over for water's myriad other uses. These verses intensify the assertion of Israel's future abundance—in stark contrast to the semi-arid high plateau upon which Balak and his people lived.

The water imagery shifts in the second clause of verse 7 from the land's abundance to the people's fertility. The thought is that Israel's population would grow so great that its people would expand into other areas, whether by migration, colonization, or conquest. Balak's dream of defeating a weakened Israel, God says through Balaam, is pure fantasy.

Besides that, Israel's king—whether he is God Himself (as in Numbers 23:21) or a human monarch—will be far more powerful than Agag. Some have thought that this is a prophecy of the Amalekite king Saul defeated and Samuel slew (I Samuel 15). However, others believe "Agag" to be a royal name or title among the Amalekites, much like "Pharaoh," "Hadad," and "Abimelech" were to the Egyptians, Syrians, and early Philistines. In effect, Balaam is saying that, by comparison, Israel's kings will come to dominate the rulers of even the strongest nations of the time.

Verses 8-9 reiterate Israel's future military power, but the emphasis is that its power flows from God Himself. God began matters by bringing Israel up from Egypt, and He will continue to provide Israel's strength. Thus, the rhetorical question arises, "Who will rouse him?" If God is backing Israel to the hilt, who can challenge them?

Finally, the oracle ends with a paraphrase of Genesis 12:3: "I will bless those who bless you, and curse him

that curses you." This is a reminder that God made promises to Abraham, and He will fulfill them. As God says in Isaiah 55:11, "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

Fourth Prophecy

Balak, of course, is furious with Balaam for thrice predicting such a rosy future for Israel. The soothsayer reminds him that he warned him from the start that he "could not go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of [his] own will; but what the LORD says, that [he] must speak" (Numbers 24:13). It is difficult to decide which of these two characters is more ludicrous: Balaam, for thinking that God would give in and let him curse Israel—or at least put in a good word for Moab; or Balak, for listening to and putting up with Balaam!

As if trying to mollify his employer, Balaam adds, "Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people *in the latter days*" (verse 14), but his words are hardly comforting to the Moabite king:

I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult. And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly. Out of Jacob one shall have dominion, and destroy the remains of the city. (Numbers 24:17-19)

In this oracle, the time setting jumps forward to the end time and the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings. His words certainly touch on His first coming, but the thrust of the passage is on His royal power to defeat and rule the enemies of Israel. It shows Edom and Moab (and later, Amalek; verse 20) taking the brunt His wrath

at His return (Isaiah 15-16; 34:5-7; Jeremiah 48:1-47; 49:7-22; Lamentations 4:21-22; Ezekiel 25:8-14; 35:1-15; Obadiah 15-21; etc.). These peoples are singled out because of their open hostility toward Israel and represent all nations who oppose God.

The opening words of Numbers 24:17 emphasize the long-range nature of this final prophecy. The coming of the Messiah is "not now" and "not near"; indeed, it would be 1,400 years until His coming as the Son of Man and another 2,000 years or more until His return as King. The symbols of "a Star" and "a Scepter" are both ancient and widespread figures for monarchs, and some scholars feel that at least the star symbol may represent Deity (many ancient monarchs were considered gods or the gods' offspring). In Jesus Christ's case, this would be true.

"While Israel does valiantly" (verse 18) may have a physical-spiritual fulfillment much like Daniel 11:32: "The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." It can also be linked to Zechariah 12:8: "In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them" (see also 9:13; 10:5). Certainly, in the context of judgment on Edom, Obadiah 18 is relevant: "The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau" (see also Amos 9:11-12).

The first part of Numbers 24:19 is a clear reference to Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49:10: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, . . . until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people." The second half of the verse is better in the New International Version: "[He will] destroy the survivors of the city." To which city this verse refers is not known. Some postulate Petra as the

chief city of the Edomites, while others take it generally as any city of Edom. The latter view is preferable, as the thrust of the passage is that this great Ruler will possess and rule over everyone—no one will escape His judgment.

Balaam then gives three short prophecies concerning a few nearby peoples:

Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said:

“Amalek was first among the nations, but shall be last until he perishes.”

Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said:

“Firm is your dwelling place, and your nest is set in the rock; nevertheless Kain shall be burned. How long until Asshur carries you away captive?”

Then he took up his oracle and said:

“Alas! Who shall live when God does this? But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus, and they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber, and so shall Amalek, until he perishes.”

So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way. (Numbers 24:20-25)

How was Amalek “first among the nations”? There is some contention whether it means the most powerful among the surrounding nations or the first of the nations to oppose Israel once they left Egypt (Exodus 17:8-16). Whatever the case, their primacy would be stripped from them, and before long, they would cease forever as a nation.

Another question is the identity of the Kenites. Again, they could be one

of two peoples: a Canaanite tribe, representing all those whom Israel would displace (Genesis 15:19), or the family of Moses’ father-in-law Jethro, a Kenite who was priest of Midian (see Exodus 3:1; Judges 1:16; 4:11). The latter seems to be the better choice, as Balaam’s prediction is actually more positive than it first appears. Verse 22 is better read, “Kain shall not be given up to destruction until Asshur carries it away captive.” Through this oracle, God is blessing the Kenites for their loyalty to Israel, a trait that persisted in at least one of their branches, the Rechabites (I Chronicles 2:55; Jeremiah 35). Part of the Kenite people may have been taken captive in the Assyrian invasion of Israel in 721-718 BC, and the rest of them certainly went into captivity to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar (he inherited the title “King of Asshur” from his father Nabopolassar, who had conquered Assyria in 609 BC).

Last of all, Balaam gives a general oracle that may have Balaam’s own people, Eber, as one of its targets! He says in verse 24, “But ships shall come from the coast of Kittim, and they shall afflict Asshur and shall afflict Eber; so they [literally, *he*] also shall come to destruction” (NAS). *Kittim* is the normal Hebrew word for what we call Cyprus, but it can also stand for other maritime peoples of the Mediterranean, notably the Greeks and later the Romans. Both of these empires marched through the eastern and western Semitic peoples Balaam groups together under the names Asshur and Eber.

This prophecy succinctly shows the succession of empires to come to power and fall like waves of the ocean. Just as Israel, Judah, and the Kenites fell to Assyria and its successor, Babylon, so would these empires fall. Greece and Rome too would also perish after their periods of hegemony, and so it would be until the “Star . . . out of Jacob” puts down all rule and sets up His Kingdom forever (Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14, 26-27).

Meaning to Us

Perhaps the most significant point to emerge from the sequence of Balaam’s oracles is its synopsis of much of God’s plan. It begins with the setting apart of Israel, with allusions to the promises made to Abraham, and God bringing them out of Egypt and bringing them into the Land of Promise. It then moves to God’s blessing of Israel both physically and spiritually, highlighting the greatest blessing of all, Jesus Christ as Savior and King. Finally, it alludes to the destruction of all human opposition and the setting up of God’s Kingdom. What a witness God made through this pagan Mesopotamian sorcerer!

Under inspiration of God’s Spirit, Balaam introduces his last two oracles in an interesting way:

The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, and the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened; the utterance of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes opened wide. (Numbers 24:3-4; see 15-16)

In short, God reveals His plan to those whose minds He opens to His truth (see Daniel 12:9-10; Amos 3:7; I Corinthians 2:9-11; I Peter 1:20-21). Conversely, those whose eyes God has not opened wide are blind to what God is doing (Isaiah 6:9-10; 29:9-14; 42:18-20; Luke 4:18; John 9:39-41; Romans 11:7-10, 25; II Corinthians 3:14-16). We can be glad that God’s Spirit has not just fallen upon us but is in us, guiding us into all truth and revealing God’s mysteries as needed (John 14:17, 26; 16:13-15).

“With eyes opened wide,” we can trust and heed “the prophetic word made more sure . . . as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in [our] hearts” (II Peter 1:19).

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Choosing the NEW MAN

Part Two

The apostle Paul informs us in Romans 6:6 that, when we were submerged in the waters of baptism, “our old man was crucified with [Christ], that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” Once this has occurred, “just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (verse 4).

Every Christian, then, is a *new* man, no longer living the old life of sin and slavish obedience to human nature. Paul says later in the chapter that, “having been set free from sin, [we] became slaves of righteousness” (verse 18). Because the new man is a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17), he is to be renewed in mind (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23; Colossians 3:10) and conduct (Titus 3:5, 8; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:10, 12). Ring out the old, ring in the new, and the new man begins his walk toward perfection (Hebrews 6:1).

Reconciled to God and Man

The four passages discussed below share two important characteristics. Each mentions the new man (or new creation) and touches on the theme of reconciliation, either between God and man or between man and man. We will see that renewal and reconciliation go together like hand and glove. In fact, without renewal real reconciliation cannot take place.

Galatians 6:12-16

Some had taught the Galatian Christians that “Gentile” Christians should become physically circumcised. Paul disagrees. He makes it plain that the real motive of those teaching this doctrine is to “make a good showing of the flesh . . . that they may

not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12; see 5:11; I Corinthians 7:19; Romans 2:28-29). In verse 15, he asserts that “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but the new creation.” Paul reiterates what he says in Galatians 5:6: What is important is a walk of “faith working through love.” Upon those who so walk, the apostle concludes, will be “peace and mercy” (verse 16).

Physical descent—whether one is a Gentile or an Israelite—matters nothing. What matters is whether a person is nurturing the new man, once established by God, through a renewal process which involves walking in His law.

Ephesians 2:10-18

In verse 15, Paul says that God “create[s] in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.” The apostle defines what these “two” are in verse 11: “Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands. . . .” The two, Gentiles and Israelites, share one Spirit in Christ, “who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us” (verse 14). Whether physically Gentile or Israelite, those who have “put on the new man” have one Spirit, God’s Holy Spirit.

Colossians 3:9-11

Where there is the new man, Paul says, “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.” The new man can be physically a Gentile or an Israelite. To God, it really does not matter, nor should it matter among real Christians.

II Corinthians 5:17-20

In verse 18, Paul explains that he, and by implication other Christians, have a “ministry of reconciliation” to serve as “ambassadors for Christ” (verse 20). It is, the apostle continues in verse 20, as if God is “pleading through us” to “be reconciled to God.” Jesus Christ brings this reconciliation about, and the new man is the result: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ” (verses 17-18).

The Circumcised Man

There is an interesting similarity among the first three passages mentioned above. In Galatians 6:12-16; Ephesians 2:10-18; and Colossians 3:9-11, Paul broaches the subject of *circumcision*. He often connects the new man with circumcision because he understands the symbolism behind circumcision, and so should we.

When practiced according to God’s law, the ritual of circumcision pertains to men, that is, males, taking place on the eighth day after parturition. Eight is the number of “new beginnings,” the idea being that seven is the number of perfection, and seven plus one—eight—restarts the cycle. Thus, the eighth day of the week is Sunday, in reality the beginning of the new week. The Last Great Day, which occurs eight days after the Feast of Tabernacles begins, looks forward to the day when God will make all things new. This is the important symbolic message behind physical circumcision: The boy—the man—circumcised on the eighth day is a “new man.”

However, the new man of whom Paul speaks is not new because of physical circumcision. He is new because he has obeyed God’s command to “circumcise the foreskin of [his] heart, and be stiff-necked no longer” (Deuteronomy 10:16, see Jeremiah 4:4). Paul, understanding this, claims that “circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit.” “Heart,” of course, refers to mind. The new man is new because he is “renewed in the spirit of [his] mind” (Ephesians 4:23). By definition, the new man is *spiritually* circumcised—circumcised in his mind.

The New Covenant Man

The new man, with his renewed, circumcised heart (mind) is the individual of whom God speaks through the prophet Ezekiel:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk

in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.
(Ezekiel 36:26)

Ezekiel’s prophecy is of the institution of the New Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:33). The new man is the New Covenant man! What is it, exactly, that makes the new man new? Two things: his new heart and the new spirit within him, God’s Holy Spirit, which enables him to walk in God’s ways. Ezekiel’s reference to “a new heart” parallels Paul’s command for a renewed mind in Ephesians 4:24. Moreover, both Ezekiel and Paul (in Ephesians 5) make use of the *walking* metaphor. Did Paul have Ezekiel 36 in mind when he wrote his letter to the Ephesian church? Probably! The similarities are remarkable.

A Matter of Choice

Notice another interesting similarity in terminology whenever Paul speaks of the new man. Quite consistently, he uses the verb “to put on.” The Greek verb is *enduo*, which means, literally, “to sink into.” By extension, it means “to enter into,” “to get into,” or “to put on” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). New Testament writers often use it when referring to putting on clothes (see Matthew 6:25; 27:31; Mark 1:6; I Thessalonians 5:8; Revelation 1:13; 15:6; etc.).

Paul repeatedly uses the metaphor of putting *on* clothes when he commands us to adopt the Christian way of life. With the same predictability, he speaks of taking clothes *off* to describe the abandonment of this world’s lifestyle. We see it again in Colossians 3:9-10, where he speaks of our “put[ting] off the old man with his deeds” and our “put[ting] on the new man.” He uses the same figure of speech in Ephesians 4:22-24. In Ephesians 6:11-17, the apostle goes a step further when he tells us how to *dress* the new man: “Put on the whole armor of God.”

God’s consistent use of the analogy of donning clothes to describe our adoption of the new man tells us a lot about the choices we must make daily. The logical conclusion of the metaphor is as inescapable as it is meaningful: The clothing we wear is largely a matter of our choice. Unless an adult is in very special circumstances, as in prison or the military, he has wide discretion in the matter of clothing. His is the choice of what to wear and when to wear it. He determines when to take clothes off and when to put them on. More than this, it is a choice he makes *daily*—sometimes many times a day—as he determines what to wear

in different social contexts.

So it is with the Christian walk, the way of life of the new man. Daily, repeatedly each day, we must choose to “put on” the Christian way of life.

That is what Paul is telling us through his splendid clothing analogy: Christianity is a way of life. We must choose to put on that way of life—and to keep it on. Just as we do with a well-worn garment, we must come to feel so at home with the new man—so comfortable with his way of life—that we absolutely refuse to take it off for any reason at all.

In addition, God’s consistent use of the clothing analogy argues against the Protestants’ false doctrine of *eternal security*. “Once saved, always saved” is the cry of some Protestants. Others put it in a slightly different way: “It was all done at the cross.”

What is wrong with this? “Born-again” Protestants, so-called Christians who claim the new man was born in them when they “accepted” Christ, have in fact abdicated virtually all personal responsibility for their salvation! Take their thought to its logical conclusion: When we were *physically* born, from *our* viewpoint, it just happened—we had no say about it at all! It was out of our control. So, the “born-again” Christian believes that he “accepts Christ,” and, presto, he is saved, forever born as a spirit being, a new man. Thus, now, in this life, he has no further responsibility. Christ did it all “at the cross” and must, upon his confession of faith, irrevocably save him.

This false doctrine permits its adherents to evade all responsibility to choose daily to follow Christ. True Christians know, because of the clothing analogy, that they have that ongoing responsibility to “put on the new man.”

In describing the new man, the birth or conception analogy is conspicuous by its absence. However, by its repeated presence, the clothing analogy is equally conspicuous.

A Collaboration

One point is becoming increasingly clear: the partnership that exists between God and us as we develop the new man.

We have seen that God creates the new man and then compels us to choose whether we will adopt him. We demonstrate that we have adopted the new man through our conduct, that is, through what we *do*. The new man grows, matures, as we walk the Christian way of life.

To put it differently, *God and man, working cooperatively, create the new man over the span of a Christian’s life*. In reality, the installation of the new man is not

the unilateral creation of God, but the result of a collaborative effort by God and man.

The Old Testament bears this out through its teachings of circumcision and of the new spirit. First, we will look at circumcision.

Two are necessary to circumcise the foreskin of our heart. In Deuteronomy 10:16, God tells *us* to “circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.” Here, He commands *us* to do the circumcising. Compare this to Deuteronomy 30:6, where God says *He* will perform the circumcision: “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart.” These two passages do not contradict. God cannot create perfect, righteous character—that is the character of the new man—unilaterally. We build that character as we *labor with* God, cooperatively working with him over, generally, an extended period of time. That is what the Latin word *collaborate* means, to “labor with.”

Two are needed to make a new heart. We saw earlier that the new man is the New Covenant man. He is the man to whom God has given a new heart and in whom He has placed a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). Here, God takes the initiative; it is His doing.

Yet, notice the change in terminology in Ezekiel 18:31, the responsibility becomes *ours*! “Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves [*make you*, KJV] a new heart and a new spirit.” In this passage, it is man, not God, who creates the new heart and the new spirit. Ezekiel 18 and Ezekiel 36 do not contradict; by Himself, God cannot create the new man in us. *He needs our cooperation*.

The Hebrew word translated “make” in Ezekiel 18:31 (KJV) is *asah*. God uses it some 2625 times in the Old Testament. The translators render it a number of ways.

- To **make** in the sense of fabricate or build: “God *made* the firmament” (Genesis 1:7); “And you shall *make* holy garments for Aaron” (Exodus 28:2); “I did not *make* an end of them [the children of Israel] in the wilderness” (Ezekiel 20:17). *Asah* does not imply creation out of nothing—the Hebrew word *bara*, used only 60 times in the Old Testament, carries that meaning: “In the beginning God *created*” (Genesis 1:1). God is always the subject of *bara*, but as we can see from the examples, He is not always the subject of *asah*.
- To **execute** in the sense of “to do”: “[Y]ou have established equity, You have *executed* justice and righteousness in Jacob” (Psalms 99:4). “Remove violence and plundering, *execute* justice and righteousness” (Ezekiel 45:9).
- To **keep**: “Remember the Sabbath day, to *keep* it holy” (Exodus 20:8); “Because you . . . have not walked in My statutes, nor *kept* My judgments,

... I ... am against you” (Ezekiel 5:7,8).

- To **prepare**, especially a sacrifice: “And when you *prepare* a young bull as a burnt offering, or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow . . .” (Numbers 15:8; see also verses 5, 6, 12). “For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, . . . what He ha[s] *prepared* for him that wait[s] for [H]im” (Isaiah 64:4, KJV).
- To **work**: “He has filled them with skill to do [KJV work] all manner of *work* of the engraver” (Exodus 35:35); “Then Jonathan said, . . . ‘[I]t may be that the LORD will *work* for us” (I Samuel 14:6); “So we built the wall; . . . for the people had a mind to *work*” (Nehemiah 4:6).
- To **commit**: “But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has *committed*, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die” (Ezekiel 18:21).
- To **do**: “And I gave them My statutes, and showed them My judgments, which, if a man *does*, he shall live by them” (Ezekiel 20:11). “I am the LORD your God: walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and *do* them” (Ezekiel 20:19).

The conclusion is inescapable: *asah*, translated “make” in Ezekiel 18:31 (KJV), is synonymous with *keep*, *do*, *work*, and similar verbs. We “*make [ourselves] a new heart*” by what we do! Specifically, the action God requires of us is *keeping* His law, *doing* His commandments. This is a Christian’s *work*.

By its meaning of “prepare,” *asah* describes both sides of the covenant agreement. It describes what God does for us and what we must do for ourselves if we are to receive the promises of the New Covenant.

God, for His part, has *prepared* unimaginable glory for us, as Isaiah 64:4 makes plain in the KJV (see I Corinthians 2:9). We are to prepare ourselves just as an Israelite prepared an animal sacrifice (see Numbers 15). It is up to us, as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1), to *prepare* ourselves for the marriage of the Lamb by putting on clean clothes—the new man (compare Revelation 19:7-9 with Colossians 3:9-10).

Paul certainly understood the two-sided arrangement: God collaborating with man in the most important endeavor anyone can undertake—the creation and nurturing of the new man. He tells us to “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). But, as it were in the same breath, he reminds us, “It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (verse 13).

[TO BE CONTINUED]

—Charles F. Whitaker

READY ANSWER ►

(continued from page 8)

always beneficial to shift the focus off ourselves and on to others when we are enduring some terrible difficulty. The hobo in *In His Steps* had the apathetic church pegged as people who were not there for the needy, though they certainly had something to offer them. It is a point all of us who are involved in the lives of others should remember. At some point, when our trials seem insurmountable, each of us will need the help of others, and where better to apply this than among God’s people?

This practice and attitude should affect every person in his family life. As parents, we start by serving our children’s needs, and this continues throughout their lives. However, as they mature, we allow them to begin to take a more active role in helping themselves and others and in dealing with life’s difficulties. We do this by discussing God’s way with our children and by living it. We do it by serving the needs of others and involving our children in those activities. We teach them to deal with life by giving of themselves, even when it is not easy or convenient.

The example of the early church in Acts 2:41-47 is a good barometer to determine how well we are doing. This attitude and approach faded over time, but it is a good reminder of just how Christ wants His church to be. They embraced the teaching of the apostles, who themselves had just experienced just how Christ did things. It is an excellent reminder for any of us who occasionally forget what the church is, the body of Christ, and what we must do to help it fulfill its purpose.

It should comfort us to realize that, no matter what we face, Christ faced similar circumstances (Hebrews 4:14-16). Yes, He always had God’s Spirit, but He still managed to go through 33½ years without a wrong thought, word, or action. He lived as a human with all humanity’s inherent frailties, yet lived sinlessly, handling each situation properly.

While we cannot completely discount asking the question, “What would Jesus do?” when faced with modern-day problems, we can be reassured that what Christ did gives us an example in approaching any situation. After all, He did not come to take away the basic principles of life He had already given—for example, the Ten Commandments and other Old Testament laws, which mainstream Christianity disregards. In fact, He simply elevated what was already in place, adding the spiritual dimension to a righteous way of life. He put into action and words the basic premise of the true religion: Follow God and live His way. That is what Jesus did.

—Rod Keese

(continued from page 6)

Obviously, these people are not meeting the conditions of their relationship with God even though they are His children. Their lackadaisical, wishy-washy, self-righteous attitudes and

self-absorbed, self-satisfied lives are totally unacceptable to Him. He casts them from His presence and commands them to change their ways. There is no covering for the conduct of their lives here.

Corban

Leviticus 1:5 adds another distinction: “He shall kill the bull before the LORD.” A life is offered. This distinction is quite significant once we understand that this offering typifies devotion and that this offering does not picture sin or the death of the offerer. In the offerings of Leviticus, a sacrifice is primarily perceived as a gift to God. Jesus uses the word “corban” in Mark 7:11. *Corban* itself means “gift” or “dedicated to God,” and its root means “to bring near.” Recall that the offerer is to lay his hand on the animal before it is killed to signify that the animal represents the offerer giving himself. Therefore, the killing of the animal represents the offerer bringing himself near, making a gift of himself, devoting his entire life to God. It indicates he holds nothing back.

Frequently, we have reservations. We hold back for any number of reasons, but usually they focus on something we hold too dear to give up. By contrast, Philippians 2:5-8 provides us with insight into what Christ sacrificed to devote His life wholly to God’s purpose:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Having set the example of complete devotion to God’s purpose, He wants us to follow it.

Leviticus 1:6-9 takes us another step into the total devotion that pleases God:

And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire. Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar; but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

The imagery of each part of the animal teaches us the following: The head signifies one’s thoughts and judgments; the fat, one’s general health, energy, and strength; the entrails, one’s emotions; and the legs, one’s walk, the actual conduct of one’s life. Again, the burnt offering indicates total surrender to God; nothing is held back; nothing is reserved for the self.

Jesus’ life provides us with ample examples of His dedication. His first recorded words—at age twelve—appear in Luke 2:49, “I must be about My Father’s business.” In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus reveals what He is to accomplish in this work, and in John 4:34, He shows His attitude by saying, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” John 19:30 records His last words as a man, “It is finished.” Through His offering of His entire life, His gift of total devotion, He accomplished what God sent Him to do. Psalm 49:10-20 vividly contrasts how the worldly expend their energies and what they produce and how those wholeheartedly devoted to God work and what they produce.

My food is to
do the will of
Him who sent Me,
and to finish
His work.
—John 19:30

The Burnt Offering’s Varieties

Leviticus 1:2-3, 10, 14 designates the animals that meet God’s requirement for a burnt offering:

When anyone of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock.

If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD. . . . And if his offering is of the flocks—of the sheep or of the goats—as a

burnt sacrifice, he shall bring a male without blemish. . . . And if the burnt sacrifice of his offering to the LORD is of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or young pigeons.

The imagery of the bullock is of patient, untiring, and successful labor in service to others. Proverbs 14:4 confirms this, “Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox.” History shows that oxen will literally work themselves to death. Likewise, we have seen Jesus’ devotion to the death in fulfilling God’s will for Him, and II Corinthians 11 provides a long list of Paul’s labors under frequent duress in fulfilling his calling.

The lamb represents passive, uncomplaining submission even in suffering, of following without reservation. Isaiah 53:7 says of Christ, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth.”

Jeremiah makes a similar statement about an episode in his life: “But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, ‘Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more’” (Jeremiah 11:19). This does not mean he did nothing but that he was innocent of being the cause of the persecution inflicted upon him and that he accepted it without griping as his lot as God’s servant.

In Romans 8:36, this symbolism is directly applied to us, “For [God’s] sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” God expects us to follow the example of our Leader and others who have gone before us. Having this submissive attitude is not for destruction—even though on the surface it may seem that way—but following is necessary for preparation. Hebrews 5:7-10 reminds us that Christ also had to submit to be prepared for His responsibilities as our High Priest. We must consider following uncomplainingly as a necessary part of being a whole burnt offering. It is “not my will, but Yours be done” in practical application.

The turtledove and pigeon represent mourning innocence, powerlessness, meekness, and humility. No labor is symbolized here, nor is uncomplaining submission, but rather harmlessness, a proclivity to make peace, and even sadness. In Matthew 10:16, as Christ prepares to send the apostles out to represent Him, He instructs them:

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Later, the apostle Paul instructs the much-beloved Philippian congregation:

Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. (Philippians 2:14-16)

Isaiah draws on a turtledove’s characteristic to describe Israel’s social situation:

We all growl like bears, and moan sadly like doves; we look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; and as for our iniquities, we know them: In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. (Isaiah 59:11-15)

Overall, the turtledove’s imagery is of humility mixed with sadness caused by the overwhelming accumulation of the effects of sin and repentant sorrow because we have been so much trouble to God. This quality is rewarding, as Psalm 147:3 comforts, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” Psalm 34:17-19 adds, “The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.”

The male goat represents strong-mindedness, singleness of purpose; and leadership rather than following. Interestingly, Scripture does not view the goat in nearly as good a light as a sheep. Perhaps this is so because people who exercise these characteristics are frequently offensive to their brethren and tend to go off in their own direction in their drive to achieve their goals. Unfortunately, a great deal of ego often accompanies leadership and initiative.

Where no oxen are,
the trough is clean,
but much increase
comes by the
strength of an ox.
—Proverbs 14:4

I send you out
as sheep in the
midst of wolves.
Therefore be wise
as serpents and
harmless as doves.
—Matthew 10:16

First, let us look at the good side. Jeremiah 50:8 contains this curious command to those living in Babylon. “Move from the midst of Babylon, go out of the land of the Chaldeans; and be like the rams [margin, *male goats*] before the flocks.” Proverbs 30:29-31 from the *NIV* helps explain. “There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing: a lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing; a strutting

rooster, a he-goat, and a king with his army around him.” The imagery of a he-goat in its positive sense is of leadership. If it is among a flock of sheep, it assumes command. Along with this is a sense of dignity, stately bearing, and undaunted courage—but also a strong inclination toward haughtiness. We see the downside of the goat imagery in Matthew 25:33, 41 where Christ rejects the goats, representing people.

An Intercessor on High

A further comparison of the operations of the offerer and the priest on the offerings reveals further distinctions. In Leviticus 1:5-17, we see that the bullock, sheep, and goat were cut up and washed with water, but the turtledove was not. It was split but not cut into pieces. This focuses mostly on the work of priest who assists in the offering because, even for those who would be quite capable of performing this function, the priest is still required to do it for them.

Regarding the priest washing the parts with water, Ephesians 5:26 immediately comes to mind. Paul teaches that we—the offering as well as the offerer—are washed by the water of God’s Word. However, the emphasis in Leviticus 1:5-17 is primarily on the operations of the priest. We begin to see Christ’s intercessory work in this imagery, indicating that everyone, regardless of his seeming capabilities, needs the outside help of our High Priest.

Notice also the especially wide cost difference between a turtledove and the other animals. This suggests some have more required of them than others, which is confirmed in Luke 12:48: “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

This distinction is drawn even finer when we understand that with the bullock, sheep, and goat, the offerer slays the animal. However, the priest kills the dove. In fact, the priest does everything regarding the dove except bring it for sacrificing. John 10:11, 15, 17-18 explains this more fully:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. . . . As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. . . . Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

For everyone to
whom much is given,
for him much will
be required,
and to whom much
has been committed,
of him they will
ask the more.
—Luke 12:48

This command I have received from My Father.

The priest voluntarily sacrifices Himself. We can understand in the offering of the turtledove that its death is seen as the work of the High Priest and Mediator, thus it emphasizes Christ’s intercessory work for those who are weak. The weak require more help and not as much is required of them. God does not expect more of us than we can deliver.

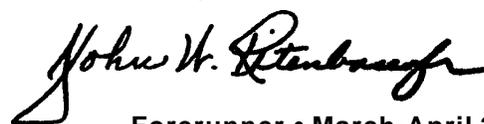
This is explained further in Hebrews 2:16-18:

For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

In the burnt offering, we see Christ as both representative and example. He is representative in the real sense that His offering was *for* us. As I John 4:17 says, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment [right now; see I Peter 4:17]; because as He is, so are we in this world.” We are accepted because of His representative acts on our behalf—in this case, not His death for the forgiveness of sins but His life lived sinlessly.

That totally devoted and sinless life paved the way for His crucifixion and gave God satisfaction. We are thus accepted before God with the same measure of acceptance as if we were Christ. However, at the same time, He is our example, as I John 2:4-6 clearly shows, to the end that we should strive to live with the same total devotion to our Father and His way as Jesus did.

In Christian love,



Forerunner • March-April 2003

Biblical Archaeology

In less than three months, two remarkable archaeological finds have come to light. On October 21, 2002, the *Biblical Archaeology Review* announced the discovery of the burial box or ossuary of Jesus' brother, James. If fully authenticated, the ossuary ranks as the most sensational New Testament artifact found in modern times. Then, on January 13, 2003, Israel's daily *Ha'aretz* reported a tablet inscription from 2,800 years ago that provides evidence for the Jerusalem Temple near the time of its construction.

The tablet may be Israel's most significant find ever. It is a tablet of dark sandstone, the size of a legal pad, inscribed with ten lines in ancient Phoenician script. It tells about Temple repair plans under Judah's King Jehoash (or Joash), echoing the biblical accounts in II Kings 12:5-17 and II Chronicles 24:4-14. Many scholars believe Solomon completed building the Temple in 959 BC, and a tablet from Jehoash's era would have come a mere century and a half later. Electron microscope testing of the surface and carbon dating confirm authenticity and the dating back to Jehoash's time, according to specialists at the Geological Survey of Israel.

Of the two artifacts, the Temple tablet has the more dramatic implications. Most biblical scholars believe in the existence of Jesus and James, but radical "minimalists" raise doubts about the Jerusalem Temple and the existence of King Solomon, who built it. It could also affect the unending religious tensions in the Holy Land that center on the area Muslims call the Haram Sharif, known to Jews and Christians as the Temple Mount. Even though never mentioned in the Koran, it has recently been designated as "Islam's third-holiest site," and Muslim leaders often deny that the Temple ever stood there. The new find could not only undergird the historicity of the Temple, but also give additional credence to the authenticity of the Bible.

Birthrates

The Washington Times reports:

- In developing countries around the world, total fertility is down from six babies per woman in 1960 to 2.9 today.
- American population growth shows no signs of slowing. The resident population of the United States is now nearly 289 million, up from 281 million in April 2000. That implies a growth rate of close to 1% per year, higher than China's (0.7%) and a little below Iran's (1.2%).
- Black, Asian, and American Indian women are having babies at about the replacement rate (2.1 per woman), with non-Hispanic white women a little under it (1.87 in 2001). Hispanics, however, reached a fertility level of 3.16 children per woman in 2001 and now have a higher birthrate than Mexican women. With the Hispanic population growing, the U.S. crossed the replacement-level fertility rate in 2000 for the first time since 1971.
- From 2000 to 2001, the number of white and black babies fell, while the number of Hispanic babies rose 4%. Hispanics bore 21% of all newborns, up from 14% in 1989.
- Projections show that by the year 2100 non-Hispanic whites will make up 40% of the U.S. population (compared with 69% today), blacks and Asians will comprise 12% each, and Hispanics will constitute 33% of the population.

Media Influence

Research conducted at Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts, suggests the behavior of children as young as one year old can be influenced and even manipulated by what they see on television programs and advertisements. "Children as young as 12 months are making decisions based on the emotional reactions of adults around them," said Dr. Donna Mumme,

a Tufts psychologist, who led the research. "It turns out that they can also use emotional information they pick up from television. This means adults might want to think twice before they . . . let an infant see television programs meant for an older person. What is remarkable is that one-year-olds paid attention to televised stimuli and used information presented on television to guide their subsequent interactions."

American Education



High school seniors are studying less but getting better grades than their predecessors, according to a nationwide study by UCLA. The cause: Grade inflation has been increasing due to pressure on teachers from students and parents to help them become more competitive for college. Thirty-three percent of students said they spent six or more hours per week studying or doing homework—the lowest percentage since the survey question was first asked in 1987—46% of whom managed to graduate with an A-average in 2001. Only 17% earned A's in 1968, while 44% did in 2000.

Corel, Broderbund, IMSI

NEWS AND TRENDS Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man is coming. (Matthew 25:13)

BIBLE STUDY: THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED VINEDRESSERS

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record Jesus' Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). Not long before, the scribes, chief priests, and elders had accused Him of taking too much authority upon Himself, but in this parable, they find themselves indicted for high crimes. Having discounted Jesus Christ as the Son of God

with all authority, in this story they—and the people (see Luke 20:9)—learn His identity, who sent Him, and the death He would die at their hands. In earlier parables, He had exposed the religious leaders of His day as spiritually empty impostors, and now, in this more condemnatory parable, He reveals them to be persecutors and murderers as well.



1. What does this parable's symbolism mean? Matthew 21:33 (Mark 12:1; Luke 20:9); Deuteronomy 7:8; Ephesians 2:14.

COMMENT: The Bible often compares Israel to a vine or a collection of vines in a vineyard (Psalm 80:8-15; Isaiah 5:1-7). The vinedressers represent the civil and religious leaders of Israel and Judah whose duty was to guide the nation righteously but who were corrupt in their dealings. The vineyard being leased to them symbolizes their temporary possession and responsibility to care for it. The landowner (God) planted a hedge (the law with all its ordinances) around the vineyard to protect the vineyard from outside attack, keeping Israel separate from other nations for His special purpose. The tower symbolizes God's watchful oversight of the nation.

2. Why do the vinedressers beat, kill, and stone the servants? Matthew 21:34-36 (Mark 12:2-5; Luke 20:10-12); Luke 13:34; Hebrews 11:36-37; I Samuel 8:7; 22:18; I Kings 19:10.

COMMENT: The servants represent the prophets God sent to Israel, and the fruit borne are those who responded to their efforts. The wicked vinedressers "beat" one servant (meaning to flay or whip so that the skin is taken off), denoting the harsh, unjust treatment God's servants received. They kill another, representing the many prophets who died at the hands of Israel's leaders. They stone a third, not necessarily to death, for Mark records, "At him they cast stones and wounded him in the head, and sent him away." God's servants had experienced all these things. The wicked vinedressers' actions show their rejection, not of the servants, but of the landowner, God. For centuries, He had sent the prophets to warn and witness to the Israelites, and they had been persecuted and slain. There was no purpose in continuing to send more prophets to the people, so He sent His Son.

3. Why do the vinedressers want to kill the son? Matthew 21:37-40 (Mark 12:6-8; Luke 20:13-15); John 3:16-17; I John 4:9,14; Romans 8:3, 32; Galatians 4:4.

COMMENT: The vinedressers wanted what the son would receive as heir, but they did not want to follow his example. Mark adds that he was an only son, greatly beloved, amplifying how truly valuable he was. God had one only-begotten and well-beloved Son to send, whom the world should reverence—honor and esteem—just as the Father (John 5:23). The vinedressers thought that, by killing the only

son, they could easily steal the landowner's possessions already entrusted to them.

Jesus foretells His own death at the hands of the Jews just as they had persecuted and slain the prophets for centuries. He then asks the leaders about the proper way to deal with those who killed the servants. He wants them to condemn themselves by their own mouths and realize the justice of their coming punishment. They had the freewill to reverse their direction, but pride caused them to hate Christ all the more.

4. What is the ultimate fate of those who mistreat God's servants? Matthew 21:41-42 (Mark 12:9-11; Luke 20:16-18); Acts 4:11; Romans 9:33; Ephesians 2:20; I Peter 2:7.

COMMENT: Jesus purposes to show the religious leaders the justice of taking away their national privileges and punishing them by destroying their city and nation. Had He stated this at first they would have ignored him, but by using a parable, He forces them to condemn themselves with the truth. However, they still do not grasp the significance of their admission. Jesus expresses the principle by quoting Psalm 118:22-23, making them see that God would do to them what the landowner did to the vinedressers. The cornerstone—Jesus Christ—is the foundation of God's Temple, the church, but the builders rejected it because Jesus did not "fit" their preconceived idea of the Messiah. Even though the Jews rejected Jesus, God overruled them and made Him "the chief cornerstone," an act proven to be God's doing by the resurrection and the subsequent miraculous founding of the church.

5. Who receives the Kingdom of God? Matthew 21:43-46 (Mark 12:12; Luke 20:18-19); Matthew 8:12; 3:12; Acts 28:28; Isaiah 8:14-15; Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45.

COMMENT: The Israelites had been God's chosen people, and He took away this privilege, giving that blessing to a special people—the church—who would bear the fruits of righteousness. Jesus alludes to Himself as the Stone and describes the escalating consequences of opposing Him. Those who oppose Him out of ignorance or weakness will suffer harm, but if they willfully reject Christ, the Stone will crush them into dust and scatter them in the wind. This warning was not lost on the chief priests, scribes, and elders, intensifying their enmity toward Christ and confirming His accurate portrayal of them in the parable. It reveals the authority of Christ as the Son, Heir, and Judge, as well as the unenviable fate of those who reject Him.