

Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 12, Number 4

May 2003

**Let
No One
Deceive
You**



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The Iraqi Information Minister Muhammed Saeed Al-Sahhaf became the poster child for blatant propaganda during the Iraq campaign. More seriously, Jesus warns us to beware of deceivers in these last days. Is our guard up against deception?
Reuters

Forerunner Magazine

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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.

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The Offerings of Leviticus

Part Three: The Meal Offering

Leviticus 1 gives instruction on the whole burnt offering, which we saw in Part One represents Christ's total devotion to God, revealing in broad strokes the ideal we are to strive for in our relationship with God. The burnt offering has four distinctive characteristics that set it apart from all others. To glean the most from it, it is essential that we remember that these characteristics all describe the same person but from different perspectives, much as the gospel accounts present four views of Christ, or as one would turn a piece of art or craftsmanship to inspect it from different angles. With each little turn, the viewer picks up a new feature that pleases or instructs.

The four distinctive characteristics are:

1. It is a *sweet savor* to God, given not because of sin but out of sincere and heartfelt devotion.
2. It is *offered for acceptance* in the

stead of the offerer. The animal represents the offerer.

3. A *life is given*, representing total devotion in every area of life.
4. It is *completely burned up*, also representing total devotion but from a different angle: that it was truly carried out.

The animal was cut into four distinct parts, each signifying an aspect of Christ's character and life: The head represents His thoughts; the legs, His walk; the innards, His feelings; and the fat, His general vigor and health. Every part was put on the altar and totally consumed by the fire.

The variety of animals sacrificed as burnt offerings identify additional characteristics: The bullock typifies untiring labor in service to others; the lamb, uncomplaining submission even in suffering; the goat, strong-minded leadership; and the turtledove, humility, meekness, and mournful innocence.

Similarities and Differences

Leviticus 2:1 says, "When anyone offers a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it." The first thing to notice is the name given to it. The King James calls it the "meat" offering, which, in the seventeenth century indicated food in general.

Today, because its usage has evolved over the years, *meat* means "flesh." I will use the term "meal" because to us it more accurately describes the main ingredient of this offering—finely ground flour.

The meal offering gives us yet another aspect of the perfect offering of Jesus Christ. As we

consider the meal offering, it will be reinforced that the greatest sacrifice of all is the sacrifice of the self. The meal offering shares with the burnt offering the imagery of a meal being set before God. Even as a meal would not be set before a man consisting only of meat, grains and oil are added to prepare a more complete meal. Tree fruits and garden vegetables were excluded as suitable for offering on the altar.

The offering was not only a gift to God, but there is also a sense of it being the personal property of the offerer, the fruit of his own labor (Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 22:25). The meal offering could be given in three forms:

1. In the form of groats, with the fresh ears roasted by fire, or dried grains coarsely rubbed or crushed (Leviticus 2:14).
2. As finely ground wheat or barley flour. These first two forms were covered or mixed with oil and frankincense (verse 1).
3. In the form of loaves or cakes, made of the fine flour mixed with oil. These could be prepared in an oven (verse 4) or upon a flat iron plate (verses 5-6).

Leviticus 2:9 contains an additional feature important to understanding this offering. “Then the priest shall take from the grain offering a memorial portion, and burn it on the altar. It is an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.” Like the burnt offering, it is a sweet savor to God. Another similarity to the burnt offering is its contrast to the sin offering: The offering’s intent contains no thought of sin. It represents a man in perfect obedience giving God a sacrifice that He accepts as pleasing to Him.

Leviticus 2:1 supplies us with a key difference from the burnt offering: In addition to fine flour, the meal offering also contains oil and frankincense. These ingredients demonstrate that no life is given, unlike the burnt offering. In the burnt offering, a man offers his life to God, while in the meal offering, he offers the fruit of the ground.

God says to Adam in Genesis 1:29, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.” This verse defines what portion of the earth God allotted to man—its produce. Thus, if we combine our knowledge of the burnt offer-

ing, the meal offering, and this verse, we can determine what they symbolize. Life is what God claims as His part of the creation. For example, God commands us not to eat blood (Genesis 9:3-6) because the life “is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:10-14). This implies that life belongs to Him because He gave it, and we are to respect His ownership. We are also to respect the fact that the animal gave its life so we can live.

Within the context of the offerings, life symbolizes what we owe God. In contrast, the grain, oil, and frankincense—the fruit of the earth—symbolize what we owe to man. Both characteristics are our duty. The one is the surrender to God of our life as it is being lived; the other is the fulfillment of our duty to our neighbor.

Matthew 22:36-40 succinctly declares these responsibilities:

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

The burnt offering represents the perfect fulfillment of the first great commandment, and the meal offering corresponds to the second.

Thus, within the context of the meal offering, it is man, represented by the flour, oil, and frankincense, surrendering himself to God so that he may in love give to fellow man what is his due. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13).

Numbers 29:6 adds vital understanding, “. . . besides the burnt offering with its grain offering for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD.” Notice that the word “its” appears twice, conveying that the meal offering belonged to the burnt offering. This demonstrates that the two offerings were offered together. Though the burnt offering may appear to be the “greater” of the two, one is incomplete without the other, even as the two great commandments go together. In each case, the one shows man doing his duty to God, the other, his duty to man.

I John 4:20-21 confirms this:

You shall love
the Lord your God
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
and with all
your mind
—Matthew 22:37

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from

Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

The two must go together. The one without the other is not acceptable to God.

The Materials

Isaiah 28:28 records a practical fact about grain that also affects the spiritual understanding of the meal offering: "Bread flour must be ground; therefore he does not thresh it forever, break it with his cartwheel, or crush it with his horsemen." Grain must be ground or bruised before it can be used as bread or food. John 6:48, 50-51 helps us grasp the major spiritual application:

I am the bread of life. . . . This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.

Bread is the physical staff of life, and Jesus Christ is our spiritual staff of life. Grain is normally ground, usually once, to make bread. The grain of the meal offering, however, was ground many times until it was like talcum powder in consistency.

The symbolism in this is similar to the bullock of the burnt offering—of pressing, wearying, grinding trial. But the difference in this offering is that it represents the effect of such sacrificial service to man. Jesus says in Mark 9:19: "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?" He is almost exasperated, indicating He expected more from His disciples than they were producing.

Matthew 9:18-38 provides us with an example of a typical period in His life, demonstrating that service to man involves considerable self-sacrifice. The Scriptures specifically tell us that He was weary (John 4:6). At other times, Jesus headed for deserted places, but people nonetheless discovered Him and thronged to Him, cutting into any prayer and rest He may have desired. Yet, He set aside His pleasure and attended to them (Mark 6:32-56). He certainly became bone-weary at times, and there was always the possibility of emotional and psychological pain. The very people He served were likely to inflict the pain. As Scripture relates,

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11).

Psalms 69:1-2, 19-20 gives us a small window into His feelings at such times:

Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary with my crying; my throat is dry; my eyes fail while I wait for my God. . . . You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; my adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

The psalmist provides a vivid picture of a person dealing with so many pressing issues at once that he feels as if he were drowning. Undoubtedly, He bore His sacrifices, rejections, and reproaches without complaint to those He was serving (I Peter 2:23). But this does not mean they did not affect His feelings and did not take them to God for comfort and consolation.

Psalms 55:12-14 adds His thoughts during a particularly heartfelt circumstance:

For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has magnified himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng.

This brief insight reveals that the most bitter and difficult reproaches frequently come from those from whom we expect the most.

Psalms 22:14-15 describes a small portion of the most horrific "grinding" Christ endured in His service to man: "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is

O faithless
generation, how
long shall I be
with you?
How long shall I
bear with you?
—Mark 9:19

dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.” Christ was ground in body and spirit. In this case, He was bruised so badly He was barely recognizable as a man (Isaiah 52:14) and was so sapped of strength that He could not bear His cross of crucifixion alone. Another was compelled to bear it for Him because Jesus was already figuratively ground and ready to be put on the altar.

The lesson for us is that service to our fellow man is self-surrender and self-sacrifice. The nearer our service approaches His degree of self-sacrificing service the more we will resemble what happened to Him. We, too, will find ourselves bruised.

Remember that the flour was ground like talcum. This symbolizes that neither His character nor the character of His service contained any inconsistency. Hebrews 13:8 declares, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” In Him is perfect balance. He is firm but not obstinate, gentle but not weak, calm but not indifferent, kind and merciful but able to correct.

By comparison, Peter could step out and walk on water then turn and deny Him.

Another disciple who walked with Christ, John, seems to have had an affectionate nature, but he also wanted to sit at Christ’s right hand in the Kingdom and call fire down from heaven. Paul’s great energy leads him to Macedonia, but God had opened the door to Troas. Paul repents of writing a stern letter to Corinth, but then was moved to regret it.

Such is the unevenness in us. We may show strong faith in one area and be quite weak in another. We may tithe with regularity and give offerings with generosity yet treat the Sabbath with disrespect. Or, we may keep the Sabbath punctiliously but lie when it is convenient to save face. We may be exceedingly careful nothing unclean passes our lips and into our stomach yet judge others severely, blaspheme God by misusing His name, and gossip about a brother. We may be the first to help the needy but practice respect of persons with a sickening regularity. We have a long way to go before we exhibit Christ’s righteous consistency of character.

Jesus Christ is
the same yesterday
today, and forever.
—Hebrews 13:8

The Oil and Power

The next ingredient is oil. Leviticus 2:1-2 says:

When anyone offers a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it. He shall bring it to Aaron’s sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

Oil is a widely understood symbol of the Holy Spirit and thus does not require a detailed explanation, but one scripture will suffice to link the Holy Spirit and oil directly:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed. . . . (Luke 4:18)

“The Spirit of the LORD” and the oil of anointing are directly linked. The oil of anointing

stands as a physical representation of Jesus being given the Spirit to perform these functions for God in His service to man.

Acts 10:38 reveals another aspect of this symbolism: “. . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” Again, reference is made to anointing—an act normally done with oil—with the Holy Spirit, and Peter adds “with power,” a characteristic not included in Luke 4:18.

Though Jesus was bruised in service, He never lacked power. By contrast, we are rarely bruised, broken, or ground in service, but we are usually powerless. The truth is, the greatest zeal and knowledge are useless without God’s Holy Spirit providing the right perspective, attitude, and intention for any service we perform.

A few weeks before Christ’s ascension to the Father, Jesus teaches His disciples on this subject:

Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concern-

(continued on page 15)

The Spirit of the
Lord is upon Me,
because He has
anointed Me to
preach the gospel
to the poor.
—Luke 4:18

Did Angels Marry Human Women?

In the various churches around the world, there are some bizarre teachings, and some strange interpretations of the Scripture. It is true that some passages require more research and explanation than others. God, however, seems to have designed His written Word to be that way:

But the word of the LORD was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little," that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught. (Isaiah 28:13)

We call the verses that require further research and explanation "difficult scriptures." Although what might be a difficult scripture for one Christian may not be difficult for another, some passages tend to trip up most new Bible students. In addition, although most adults in the church of God today cannot be considered to be *new* Bible students, humans are forgetful creatures, and we all tend to need reminders every once in a while. Is this not why God has us repeat the observance of His holy days every year?

In the days and years ahead of us,

some will come against God's people and attack us with charges that we do not understand the Scriptures properly. Many of us have already suffered through one round of this fight. There will also be those who claim that the Bible is worthless and unreliable because certain passages seem to contradict one another.

But we know that the Bible is God's Word! Despite some mistranslations and spurious additions and deletions, it is true and infallible. Herbert Armstrong used to say that the Holy Bible is God's instruction manual for man, His masterpiece of creation. God wants His children to be familiar with His Word and always to be ready to give an answer—when asked, of course! This is the primary purpose of this monthly column.

The day may come when an enemy of God's church will try to trip *you* up by confronting you with one of these "difficult scriptures." You will make a good witness for God if you already know the answer and can give an immediate, thorough explanation.

Kind After Kind

Here is our "difficult scripture":

Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of

the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. (Genesis 6:1-4)

Some maintain that these verses assert that angels married women before the Flood and engendered a race of giants. This idea sounds like the sub-plot of a science fiction story! But can it be the truth?

It is true that verse 2 states that the "sons of God . . . took wives for themselves of all whom they chose." These "sons of God," however, were not angels. The fact is that angels do not marry. Jesus tells us this clearly: "For in the resurrection they [humans] neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30; see Mark 12:25).

*"The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose."
—Genesis 6:2*

Angels cannot cohabit nor reproduce with women. Angels are *spirit* beings:

But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:13-14)

Women are *human* beings. Angels and women, then, are two different *kinds* of being. Kind reproduces after kind, and different species cannot breed.

In his modern, perverted science—“falsely called knowledge” (I Timothy 6:20)—Satan encourages men to experiment with the crossing and mixing of the most unlikely creatures. For example, goats have been genetically altered by the insertion of a spider gene to produce silk products that God never intended in His original design. Also, in recent years a sickening photograph of a mouse with a human ear growing out of its back has made the rounds. Right from the beginning, at the re-creation of the world (Psalm 104:30), God says that this is not to be. He establishes a strict law that each kind must reproduce only after its own kind:

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit *according to its kind*, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed *according to its kind*, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself *according to its kind*. And God saw that it was good. . . . So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, *according to their kind*, and every winged bird *according to its kind*. And God saw that it was good. . . . Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the

living creature *according to its kind*: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each *according to its kind*”; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth *according to its kind*, cattle *according to its kind*, and everything that creeps on the earth *according to its kind*. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:11-12, 21, 24-25)

This rule is also backed up and made clear by the context of our difficult scripture. In Genesis 6:3, God says, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh.” He is speaking of fleshly mankind here, not angels. Although it is true that the children of these couples were “mighty,” like their parents, they were still only human.

Different Meanings

It is true that angels are sometimes called “sons of God”:

- Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (Job 1:6)
- When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:7)

Remember, though, that angels “neither marry, nor are given in marriage.” Secondly, the phrase “sons of God” sometimes refers to Christians, begotten by God’s Spirit but still human:

- But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children [sons, KJV] of God, even to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12)
- For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. . . . For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. (Romans 8:14, 19)

• . . . that you may become blameless and harmless, children [sons, KJV] of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world . . . (Philippians 2:15)

• Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children [sons, KJV] of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children [sons, KJV] of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (I John 3:1-2)

A third meaning refers to mankind in general, because all men are sons of God by creation: “I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men . . .’” (Psalms 82:6-7). Although the King James and New King James versions have “children of the Most High,” many other translations have “sons of the Most High.” Additional verses use similar terminology to refer to humans:

- Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? (Malachi 2:10)
- . . . the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. (Luke 3:38)

Through Adam, then, every human being is a child of God.

Since these “sons of God”—those who are the subjects of our difficult scripture—were obviously not Spirit-begotten Christians, and could not have been angels, it is evident that they were simply human members of mankind in general: Men who had forsaken God and were intermarrying in defiance of His law.

(continued on page 18)

LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU

As Daniel 12:4 predicts, we live in a time of increasing knowledge. Data flows constantly around the globe, facilitated by communications satellites, the Internet, television and radio, newspapers and magazines, telephones, pagers, and a host of other means and methods. This rapid—indeed, almost instantaneous—flow of information makes possible the doubling of man’s knowledge in just a few years rather than the decades it used to take.

Having such a sea of information available at the touch of a key or the click of a mouse makes some people uneasy. They may like being able to get a real-time update of their team’s score or check the current price on a stock, but they hesitate to dive further into what seems to them an overwhelming deluge of facts, figures, and opinions. Though many welcome the constant high tide of information, many people feel swamped by it and frequently need to come up for air lest they drown.

One cause of this modern malady is contradiction. A news report says, for instance, that the American army met only sporadic resistance on the road to Baghdad and were greeted and cheered by most of the Iraqis along the way. Another report announces that U.S. forces were nowhere near their objective and, in fact, an Iraqi victory was certain and imminent.

To most people, the decision over which report correctly conveys reality is relatively easy, yet for some it is a daunting choice. They have a difficult time determining which report to believe for a number of reasons:

1. They may be ambivalent about the sources, considering them to be equals, either in terms of morality or credibility.
2. Being thousands of miles away, they may say to themselves, “How can I know who is telling me the truth? I’m not there to see it for myself.”
3. They may cynically believe that everyone

has an agenda, and thus no one tells the truth.

4. They may be so uninformed in this area that they have no basis for making such a determination.

Additional causes of stress due to information overload are a lack of time to absorb what is taken in; an inability to detect “spin,” “baloney,” or satire; an awareness of increasing instances of “manufactured” news and “doctored” supporting evidence; and a deficient background in history, language, culture, economics, and politics, among others, to provide context.

It is no minor problem, and it has interesting and potentially devastating ramifications for us

**“Take heed that no one
deceives you.”
Matthew 24: 4**

as Christians. We enjoy being able both to obtain and dispense God’s truth so abundantly. Yet, paradoxically, the more information that is available, the more easily people can be deceived.

The First Seal

It is no coincidence that the first warning Jesus gives about “the sign of [His] coming and the end of the age” is, “Take heed that no one deceives you” (Matthew 24:3-4). In fact, warnings about deception are frequent throughout His Olivet Prophecy (verses 4-5, 11, 23-26, 48). The time of the end, it seems, will be one of falsehood and deceit.

In the book of Revelation, this same warning appears as the first seal, also known as the first of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse:

Now I [John] saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” And I looked, and

behold, a white horse. And he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:1-2)

Comparing Jesus' comments in Matthew 24 with these verses in Revelation 6, it becomes apparent that this horseman is not Christ proclaiming the true gospel but a counterfeit spreading the news of a false Messiah. For instance, this horseman carries a bow, but in every case, Christ is pictured with a sword (see Revelation 1:16; 19:15).

**"For many will come in
my name, saying,
I am the Christ, and will
deceive many."
Matthew 24:5**

Jesus interprets this horseman for us in Matthew 24:5: "For many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many."

The apostles frequently caution us to remain on guard against lies. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:6, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." In an obviously end-time passage, he warns:

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means. . . . (II Thessalonians 2:1-3)

He continues later in the chapter:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (verses 9-10)

Peter speaks of "destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed" (II Peter 2:1-2). He later predicts that "scoffers will come in the last days, . . . saying, 'Where is the promise

of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'" (II Peter 3:3-4). The apostle Jude echoes these statements in his epistle (Jude 4, 17-18).

John warns Christians about deception being a hallmark of the Antichrist, signs of which were already popping up in his time:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. . . . I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. . . . These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. . . . Little children, let no one deceive you. (I John 2:18, 21, 26; 3:7)

God paints the time of the end as a period of rampant deceit. His concern is primarily spiritual, since recognizing, knowing, and following the truth is absolutely necessary to our salvation. However, we must also be on guard against secular, political, and cultural deceptions because they can affect our approach and reaction to the truth.

God's Nation?

No example of this is so clearly recognized as is the belief of some devout and patriotic Americans that the United States—"the land of the free and the home of the brave"—is God's country. This idea runs the gamut from the simple belief that the U.S. is a Christian nation to the more "true believer" conviction that it is America's manifest destiny to convert the world to its way of life and usher in a new age of world peace and prosperity. If every nation were like America, the belief goes, the world would enjoy the Kingdom of God on earth—or something close to it.

America, then, becomes God's proxy here below, and all its activities—good, bad, or indifferent—are bathed in a heavenly glow of righteousness and glory. Wars and "police actions" are no longer considered to be "aggressive," "imperialist," or "unwarranted," but instead they are roundly supported as "just," "honorable," and "necessary." Domestic and international policies are presented with religious-sounding phraseology—"crusade," "reformation," "revival," and the like—and with quotations from the Bible and eminent religionists of history. Patriotism evolves from a voluntary and spontaneous feeling of pride in one's country to a Christian responsibility.

In most cases, this situation is more bearable than its secular or immoral counterpart. However, taken to an extreme, such national self-righteousness produces naked intolerance, ostracism, persecution, and murder of those who disagree or merely fail to take part. Historical parallels exist in Cromwellian England and Puritan America, as well as in various Catholic nations under the Inquisition and Protestant nations in the first blush of the Reformation.

This equation of national action and God's will is highly persuasive to those who are already accustomed to look for the hand of God at work in the affairs of men. With the application of well-crafted, inspiring rhetoric and deft spinning of events and outcomes—all nationally broadcast—it is not difficult for the leadership of a nation to sway millions to its righteous cause in a relatively short time. These days, it is easier than ever.

Technological Fakes

Politics is a fertile playground for this sort of manipulation. According to its website, the 1998 movie *Wag The Dog* examines the blurred lines between politics, the media and show business.” It is worth viewing just to see how easily news can be manufactured and events spun to produce a desired effect upon the public. The movie's make-believe, world-class fraud was orchestrated to deflect criticism from a president running for reelection.

Six years ago, scientists invented a procedure that allows them to put words in anyone's mouth.¹ All they need is a relatively small amount of video footage along with its sound track. By isolating phonetic segments in both audio and video, splicing them together, and smoothing the transitional facial movements and sounds, they can make a person say, on camera, just about anything. For instance, if they had a reason to do it, they could show former President Jimmy Carter giving a recent George W. Bush pro-war speech in his own voice!

As of now, this procedure still takes time. There are concerns, though, that with increased computing speeds and refined technologies that such manipulation will soon be done in real-time. Already, there is commercial application of a related technology in which one image is seamlessly integrated into another, usually into a live-action event like a baseball game.² Most television networks can now integrate in-game advertisements anywhere in the action where none exists in reality. Many advertisers have also combined historic footage with modern actors to make them seem contemporaneous.

However, deception does not need to be technology-heavy to be effective. According to British sources, the Bush administration's “disinformation campaign” leading up to the Iraq invasion succeeded in fooling even Israeli intelligence by breaking a fabricated story of the defection of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to the *DEBKAfile* website.³ Within hours, Aziz appeared on television to deny the story, allowing American intelligence to get a fix on this high-level member of Saddam Hussein's regime and track him to the dictator himself.⁴ From this was developed the “target of opportunity” with which the war opened.

Some have postulated that some of the signs and miracles of the False Prophet will be technologically enhanced. Notice Revelation 13:13-15:

He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Technology has certainly progressed to the point that such conjectures are not outside the realm of possibility. However, we know from II

“This is eternal life,
that they may know You,
the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom
You have sent.”

John 17: 3

Thessalonians 2:9 and Revelation 13:2 that Satan the Devil will give supernatural power to both the Beast and the False Prophet to carry out his designs. If these signs are somehow aided by technology, they will only be the more deceptive.

What To Do?

We need to remember that the deceptions of the last days will be difficult to see through. The False Prophet will be allowed to fool almost everyone on earth with his “lying wonders.”

(continued on page 14)

Choosing the NEW MAN

Part Three

We have seen that God initially installs the new man and that it is our responsibility to nourish him. We have also seen that he is manifested in our conduct, that he is reconciled to God and man, that he is circumcised of heart, that he is connected with the New Covenant, and finally, that adopting him is a matter of choice on our part.

But, what or who is the new man?

The best way to answer this is to answer yet another question: When does God create the new man in us? Paul answers the question in Galatians 3:27: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” He again uses the verb *enduo*, “to put on.” Remember, its literal meaning is “to sink into.” We *sink into* Christ when we are baptized. That is when we first clothe ourselves with the new man, or to put it a little bit more accurately, that is when God first establishes him within us.

Paul is clearly describing the new man in Galatians 3:27, and he connects the putting on of Christ with reconciliation. The new man, remember, is by definition reconciled with God and with man. Paul immediately follows his statement that the baptized person has put on Christ (verse 27) with a statement about reconciliation (verse 28): “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Note the similarity of Paul’s terminology and approach with Colossians 3:9-11, where he admonishes us “to put on the new man.” Paul also immediately follows this statement with a discussion of reconciliation: “There is neither Greek nor Jew, . . . slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

Now we can see how Galatians 3:27 answers these two questions:

1. We put on—sink into—the new man when we are baptized.
2. We put on Christ.

This means *Jesus Christ is the new man*.

We saw how the new man conducts himself according to God’s Word, walking according to His law. With this in mind, notice Romans 13:12-14, where Paul tells us how we should walk—we who have put on Christ, the new man: “Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, . . . not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This only emphasizes our conclusion: The new man “is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27)! “The second Man, . . . the Lord from heaven” (I Corinthians 15:47) is the new man!

However, in concluding this, we uncover an interesting paradox.

A Tale of Two Water Buckets

Recall that in Galatians 3:27 Paul says we “put on” Christ at our baptism. If we sink into water, it surrounds us. If we put on a coat, it surrounds us. We are *in* the water or *in* the coat. If we put on Christ, *we are in Christ*.

Yet, in Colossians 1:27, Paul says *Christ is in us*. God reiterates this truth several times in the New Testament.

• **John 17:23:** Christ Himself prays to His Father: “I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one.”

• **Romans 8:10:** Paul tells us, “If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin.”

• **Galatians 2:20:** Paul speaks of himself and all true Christians: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

• **Ephesians 3:17-18:** Referring to the “inner man,” Paul mentions that he prays “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

• **I John 3:24:** John writes: “Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.”

Is this contradictory? Is it impossible? Can Christ be *in* us and we *in* Christ at the same time?

God’s Word—His very *Logos*—answers those questions for us in John 14:20. He tells His disciples that, at His resurrection, they “will know that I am in My Father, and you *in* Me, and I *in* you.” Christ is not describing an impossible situation. He is describing perfect, total **unity**!

To understand this type of unity, a couple of analogies will help.

1. We can say two bricks are united when they are attached one to another with mortar, but this is not the kind of unity of which Christ speaks. Bricks “united” in this way are distinguishable from each other even by a child. True, we could say they are united, but it is better to say they are connected, attached, or adjacent.

2. Christ speaks of a more thoroughgoing unity. Picture water from bucket A being poured into water in bucket B. The waters completely intermingle; one cannot distinguish water from bucket A from that of bucket B after they are mixed.

While no analogy is perfect, these two do serve to point out the sort of unity that exists between God and the true Christian. It is a thorough commingling of minds. Ideally—and none of us is there yet—it should be impossible to distinguish our mind from Christ’s. They should be that much alike! Paul urges us toward the ideal: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

When we put on the new man, we put on Christ. We are in Him and He in us. Our goal should be to nourish that new man by renewing our minds through

submission to Him, until our mind and His are indistinguishable. Now, that is unity!

Patches and Wine

Through all this talk about new versus old and about clothing, two of Christ’s parables may have come to mind.

The Parable of the New Cloth on the Old Garment

(Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36).

“No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old” (Luke 5:36). Mark’s version of the same parable stresses that the “tear is made worse” when the new patch eventually “pulls away from the old” garment (Mark 2:21). Christ’s message is clear: When it comes to doffing the old man and donning the new one, we cannot “mix and match.” Successfully mixing them—combining them—is as impossible as serving two masters. We just cannot do it (Matthew 6:24)! The two men represent intrinsically and irreversibly opposing ways of life.

The Parable of the New Wine in Old Wineskins

(Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39).

Christ makes the same point in Luke 5:37: “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined.” The new wine spills to the ground, lost forever; the old wineskins rupture, becoming useless. Mixing the old and new men produces the same results as putting new wine in old wineskins: Destruction is the end of both.

Therefore, the old man and the new are utterly incompatible. We cannot mix them. God compels us to choose one and eschew the other. Which is the better choice?

The New Man Is Better

The “beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee” (John 2:11) tells us something of God’s creative effort. In Cana, Christ turned water to wine. Mankind had an essential part of this miracle, for, at His command, those at the wedding feast “[f]ill[ed] the waterpots with water” (verse 7). Nevertheless, the miracle was God’s, who works through Christ (John 5:19).

Tasting the new wine, the master of the feast tells the bridegroom, "You have kept the good wine until now" (verse 10). The wine God created—with man's help—is *better* than the wine made by man alone.

The writer of Hebrews is emphatic: The new is better than the old! Comparing the Melchizedek with the Aaronic priesthood, he points out, "Jesus has become a surety of a *better* covenant" (Hebrews 7:22). Christ, he continues in Hebrews 8:6, "has obtained a *more excellent* ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a *better* covenant, which was established on better promises." Those promises are of a "*better . . . country*" (Hebrews 11:16) reached through "a *better* resurrection" (verse 35). Christ warns us never to lose sight of that better country.

Concluding His parable of new wine in old wineskins, Jesus laments what might be human nature's most perverse paradox: "No one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better'" (Luke 5:39). When it comes to *physical* matters, human nature is all too ready to accept the new. However, in *spiritual* matters, like Peter's dog returning to its vomit (II Peter 2:22), it all too readily turns away from the new. Rather than accept the plain truth of the gospel of God's Kingdom upon hearing it preached, all too many return to the false doctrines Satan taught the first man, Adam (I Corinthians 15:45-48). Adam and his family have believed those same old lies ever since. Human nature deceives too many into believing, "The old is better."

Earlier, we saw that the Greek verb *enduo* means "to put on," "to invest with clothing," and "to sink into." Many probably wondered why its most obvious meaning was not included.

Enduo, of course, is a cognate of the English verb "endue." Both mean "to put on" or "to don."

The KJV translators rendered *enduo* as *endue* only once, in Luke 24:49. Christ, about to return to His Father, encourages and instructs His disciples: "I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are *endued* with power from on high." Although we are to "put on" the new man, clothing ourselves with Christ's mind, *it is Christ who clothes us with His Father's own promise, the Holy Spirit.*

With that "power from on high," we are able to recognize—and to overcome—Satan's deceptions. God empowers us with the ability to overcome our reticence to change ourselves. As true Christians, we have tasted the old wine as well as the new and have opted for the new. We have walked the walk of the old man and rejected

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Jesus cautions, "For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See I have told you beforehand" (Matthew 24:24-25).

How do we make sure we are not deceived? Obviously, we need to remain close to God. Jesus says, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). A thorough and deep knowledge of God—both intellectual and experiential—will go far in avoiding the deceptive traps of this age. When we truly understand the nature of God—what He is, how He thinks, what He does, what He purposes—we will know whether a statement or action is truly of God or of the Adversary.

Jesus also tells us, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). This covers two areas: 1) being informed and aware of events, and 2) communicating often with God by His Spirit. Discussing with God the day's events helps us understand His perspective on these matters and brings us into conformity with His will.

Finally, Jesus explains, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). One can best spot a counterfeit by knowing the original. The more we study the truth in God's Word, the easier it is to recognize falsehood. Daily Bible study, minutely examining the riches of Scripture, will give us the education and training to know truth from error (I John 4:1; Isaiah 8:19-20).

We need not despair at the inundation of information we receive every day. God has given us a filter, His Holy Spirit, that enables us to see things through God's eyes and "will guide [us] into all truth" (John 16:13). If we have received the love of the truth and make use of God's Spirit, we will be able to recognize the lying wonders in the days ahead.

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Endnotes

¹ Bregler, Christoph, et al., "Video Rewrite: Driving Visual Speech with Audio," *ACM SIGGRAPH Video Proceedings*, 1997 (<http://graphics.stanford.edu/~bregler/videorewrite/VideoRewrite.pdf>).

² Amato, Ivan, "Lying With Pixels," *Technology Review*, July/August 2000.

³ Standish, M. J. A., *Jane's Intelligence Digest*, p. 4.

⁴ Mcleod, Keith, "War in the Gulf: 7 AM News," March 20, 2003 (<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/page.cfm?objectid=12756678&method=full&siteid=89488>).

(continued from page 6)

ing Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49)

John 17:8, 17 confirms that Jesus gave the disciples the truth:

For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I

came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. . . . Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

At the time of His instruction in Luke 24, they had the truth, but an additional quality had yet to be given. They were to wait in Jerusalem until anointed with the power, “the love of God . . . poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5). By this they could rightly use the truth. II Timothy 1:6-7 reveals that we have that power if we will use it in service as Christ did: “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

In the burnt offering, water is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, signifying cleansing. In the meal offering, the oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit, the power to do good with proper motivation in service to man.

... the love of God
has been poured
out in our hearts by
the Holy Spirit who
was given to us.
—Romans 5:5

Frankincense and Uncomplaining Endurance

The next offering ingredient is frankincense. It should be considered in conjunction with honey, leaven, and salt. Notice Leviticus 2:2, 11, 13:

He shall bring it to Aaron’s sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of the fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. . . . No grain offering which you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the LORD made by fire. . . . And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

Only one of these four ingredients, leaven, has a clear scriptural reference to its qualities. Two of them, frankincense and salt, have veiled references. The Bible refers to honey only as desirable and sweet and that eating too much will make one sick. However, because all of their physical characteristics and uses are well known, there is no problem determining their spiritual symbolism.

Nearly forty times in the Old Testament, God declares how pleasing the aroma of a burnt offering is. This positive imagery of

scent represents God’s satisfaction in experiencing the proper worship of Him. In the meal offering, frankincense contributes to His satisfaction because it always accompanies the burnt offering.

Frankincense has a sweet fragrance, and honey a sweet taste, but the effect of heat—representing the pressure of trials—on them is vastly different. Heat corrupts, breaks down, and eventually destroys honey. This characteristic is probably why God did not permit its use in the sacrifices. However, frankincense does not release its greatest fragrance until heat is applied.

Incense has a long history of use in offerings to God. The priests used it daily on the incense altar, which stood directly in front of the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holies of Holies where God’s throne, the Ark of the Covenant, stood. The incense billowed up in a smoky cloud, filling the rooms with a fragrant odor. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest burned incense in the Holy of Holies itself before the Ark.

Isaiah 6:1, 4 describes the vision Isaiah saw of God’s heavenly dwelling place:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. . . . And the posts of the door were

Let my prayer
be set before
You as incense,
the lifting up of
my hands as the
evening sacrifice.
—Psalm 142:1

shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

The imagery of the smoke of incense and its fragrance, representing the prayers of the saints is well known. For instance, Psalm 141:2 says, "Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Revelation 5:8 confirms this: "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

However, in the context of the meal offering, incense carries additional significance because of its overall meaning of dedication in service to man. Notice Jesus' words in Matthew 13:20-21:

But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation of persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

Incense portrays a person's attitude during his trials endured in service to fellow man. A person might be all sweetness and light until the hardship of service hits him, and he grows bitter and turns aside.

Frequently, a Christian's trials involve people, often those close to him: relatives, business coworkers, or social acquaintances. Nothing is more consistently difficult than interpersonal relationships. Paul writes in Philippians 2:14-15, "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." He tells the Corinthians, "... nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (I Corinthians 10:10). Finally, Peter advises, "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling" (I Peter 4:9). Frankincense represents the pleasant satisfaction God experiences when His children endure without grumbling the hardships of unstinting service, especially to their brethren.

Be hospitable
to one another
without grumbling
—I Peter 4:9

Salt and Faithfulness

Like frankincense and honey, salt and leaven also produce contrasting reactions when used. Salt preserves from corruption, while leaven corrupts and deteriorates what it is inserted into. Unlike frankincense and honey, the Scriptures contain a great deal about these two in their application to the meal offering.

As for your
nativity... you
were not rubbed
with salt...
Ezekiel 16:4

• **II Chronicles 13:5:** Should you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt?

• **Psalm 89:34-37:** My covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that is gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me, it shall be established forever

like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky. Selah.

Here, a covenant of salt suggests an agreement of enduring qualities, even forever. Thus a covenant of salt is one that is very strong, though it may not always be everlasting. Salt is understood to be the preservative, suggesting endurance. When God makes use of this metaphor, He is urging us to be faithful despite how circumstances appear on the surface because His Word is absolutely sure. Like Himself, His Word endures forever.

Salt was required in every sacrifice burned on the altar. Besides its preserving factor, it also has a purifying affect on what it comes in contact with. Ezekiel 16:4 records that newborn babies were rubbed with salt. In addition, Elisha treated a bad water supply in Jericho with salt. Besides purifying, then, it also signifies a new beginning.

Leaven, Corruption and Sin Within

By contrast, Jesus warns us in Luke 12:1 about leaven: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Throughout Matthew 23,

Jesus lists a multitude of Pharisaical sins that could be grouped as legalistic externalism.

In Matthew 16:6, Jesus warns of the leaven of

the Sadducees. The Sadducees' sins are not listed, but elsewhere we find they at least denied the supernatural and the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). Jesus also warns of the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15). Herod was involved in a great deal of lying in his political wheeling and dealing, abusing the power of his office, adultery, and general all-around worldliness.

Paul commands in I Corinthians 5:7-8:

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Thus, in the New Testament leaven signifies wickedness and malice in contrast to sincerity and truth.

All of our offerings to God are mixed with some measure of sin. Has He made allowance for this in His instructions for the offerings? Yes.

No grain offering which you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the LORD made by fire. As for the offering of the firstfruits, you shall offer them to the LORD, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma. (Leviticus 2:11-12)

Leviticus 23:17, 20 clarifies this:

You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD. . . . The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.

This Pentecost offering is a meal offering. The loaves represent Christians accepted before God because of Jesus Christ. However, because the loaves contained leaven, symbolizing the reality of sin in our lives, they are waved before God and accepted but not burned on the altar, recognizing the presence of that sin.

Romans 7:14-20 makes a powerful statement on this:

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

No matter how much oil—the Holy Spirit—is poured out on us, it cannot completely counteract the corrupting effect of the leaven. We can control the flesh sufficiently so sin does not rule us, but sin is ever with us, and as long as we have human nature, that cannot be changed.

The only solution is that we must be changed—totally—and that is in our future, according to I Corinthians 15:50-52:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The meal offering was not wholly burned on the altar, but it was completely consumed between the altar and the priests, who ate the portion that was not put on the altar. This portrays that the meal offering was primarily intended for man. The amount actually offered was only a handful of a larger amount. But even so, Leviticus 2:1 says that the meal offering was "to the LORD."

With this in mind, we should compare what Adam did with what Jesus Christ, the second Adam, did. In the Garden of Eden, God reserved one tree for himself, but Adam not only took what was his, but he also took for himself what was God's. In contrast, Jesus gave God not only God's portion but even the first part of man's portion too.

Beware of the
leaven of the
Pharisees, which
is hypocrisy.
—Luke 12:1

...flesh and blood
cannot inherit
the Kingdom of
God; nor does
corruption inherit
incorruption.
—I Corinthians 15:50

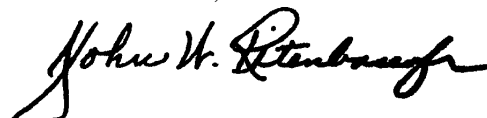
Notice the apostle Paul's attitude in I Thessalonians 2:6: "Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ." The meal offering largely speaks of our attitude in service to man. As Paul says, service is not to be done with gain for the self in mind. Are we seeking God's gifts to gain a position in the church once our good works are recognized? If we labor for man's acceptance, then, if men do not react as we think they should, the fruit will ultimately be discouragement and bitterness. We will become offended and quit.

Through Christ we can learn the correct approach. His service to man was always *an*

offering to the Lord. How men reacted was not His major concern. If men reject us and we become bitter, critical, and accusative, we can know we gave our service in the wrong attitude—because "a good tree cannot bear bad fruit" (Matthew 7:18).

Christ is our example. He never stopped giving because His offerings of service were always to the Lord. They were never to glorify Himself. And in this manner, He fulfilled the second of the two great commandments.

In Christian love,



A good tree cannot
bear bad fruit...
—Matthew 7:18

READY ANSWER ➤

Did Angels Marry Human Women?

(continued from page 8)

Other Giants

We should note one final point. Genesis 6:4 reads, "There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown."

This verse shows that giants and extraordinarily mighty men existed after the sons of God married the daughters of men and implies that they existed beforehand as well. It does *not* state that such huge and powerful men were the result only of these marriages. Giants have existed throughout recorded history, before and after the Flood and down to modern times.

In his discussion of the well-known biblical giant, Goliath (I Samuel 17:4),

Baptist commentator John Gill (1697-1771) writes in his *Exposition of the Entire Bible*:

... taking a cubit after the calculation of Bishop Cumberland to be twenty one inches, and more, and a span to be half a cubit, the height of this man was eleven feet four inches, and somewhat more; which need not seem incredible, since the coffin of Orestea, the son of Agamemnon, is said to be seven cubits long; and Eleazar, a Jew, who because of his size was called the giant, and was presented by Artabanus, king of the Parthians, to Tiberius Caesar, is said by Josephus to be seven cubits high; and one Gabbara of Arabia, in the times of Claudius Caesar, measured nine feet nine inches, as Pliny relates, and who else-

where speaks of a people in Ethiopia, called Syrbotae, who were eight cubits high; the Septuagint version makes Goliath to be only four cubits and a span high, and so Josephus; that is, about eight feet.

John Middleton (1578-1613), who lived near Liverpool, England, was said to have been 9 feet 3 inches tall. Middleton was known as "the Child of Hale," and his huge grave can still be seen in the Hale village churchyard. Giants still walk among us today. Measuring in at almost 7 feet 9 inches, Radhouane Charbib of Tunisia is reputed to be the tallest man alive.

God's holy Word interprets itself. We do not have to believe bizarre, man-made interpretations of these scriptures, even though their meanings may not be initially clear.

—John Plunkett

Choosing the NEW MAN

(continued from page 14)

it in favor of the new man's walk—a way of life that is better than, different from, and totally incompatible with the old ways. Preferring the new, we have changed! We are in the process of making for ourselves a new heart.

In fervent prayer to the God who works with us to form the new man, let us ask for strength to walk steadfastly in that new way, always true to the "better covenant" we have made. Let us ask for endurance, lest, becoming discouraged, we succumb to the deception of Satan and return to the walk of the old man. What a tragedy it would be if we, having tasted the new wine, ever came to believe, "The old is better."

—Charles F. Whitaker

DRUGS

World Bank president James Wolfensohn says opium cultivation has reached record levels in Afghanistan. Officials have calculated that drug production is back up to within 10% of its peak production under the Taliban and that the price of opium had risen from \$100/kg to \$500/kg. It is estimated that three quarters of all European heroin comes from Afghanistan. In addition, drugs are now a bigger earner for the Afghan economy than overseas aid: The drug industry brought in \$1.4 billion last year, compared with \$1.2 billion in international aid.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

- According to researcher Radhika Sarin of the Worldwatch Institute, AIDS in the military has emerged as a new security threat to African countries such as South Africa, Angola, and the Republic of Congo, where more than four in ten soldiers are infected with HIV. Estimates by the U.S. National Intelligence Council suggest that 10-60% of all soldiers in sub-Saharan African nations are infected with HIV. In some South African military units, the infection rate approaches 90%, reports the Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute. This is significantly higher than the HIV incidence in these countries' general adult populations, which runs from 2.8% in Eritrea to 20.1% in South Africa.
- The British National Health Service is experiencing a crisis caused by skyrocketing rates of sexually transmitted diseases. Cases of gonorrhea have risen 86% in the last five years, and those of chlamydia have doubled to nearly 10%. Syphilis is making a return, and the rate of HIV infection rose to its highest level last year.

Incarceration

Britain is now the prison capital of Western Europe, with an average incarceration rate of 139 per 100,000 residents in England and Wales. This rate is higher than that of even Libya and Malaysia. While Britain does not match the total incarceration levels of the U.S., China, and Russia, statistics show that its courts are far more punitive than those of Canada and Australia, and beat all those of its closest neighbors, including courts in France (jailing 85 per 100,000), Germany (96), and Spain (126). According to the British Home Office, an estimated 8.75 million people worldwide are in jail—almost half of them in the U.S. (1.96 million), China (1.4 million), and Russia (900,000).

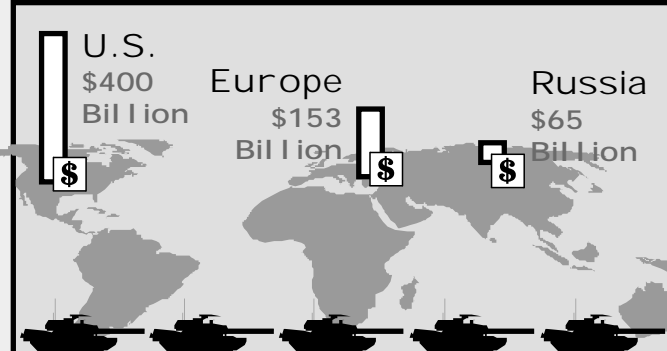
Religion and War

A Gallup poll conducted shortly before the invasion of Iraq shows that churchgoing Americans were more likely to support war against Saddam Hussein than Americans as a whole. Overall, 59% of Americans supported war at the time of the poll. However, the poll found those who attend church at least once a week favor deposing the Iraqi dictator by an almost 2-to-1 margin—63%. Support for war among self-defined evangelicals and members of the "religious right" was predictably even higher. Americans who never attend church or say religion is not important to them are more evenly divided. The overall picture is striking: The most outwardly religious president of modern times leads the world's sole superpower into military conflict, with the backing of the majority—nearly two-thirds—of the nation's "religious" citizens.

U.S. Military Might

The Center for Defense Information reports that the U.S. military budget for the next year is \$400 billion dollars—more than the next 20 countries *combined*. The next biggest spender is Russia, with an annual military budget of \$65 billion. The total combined military budget of the largest European countries is \$153 billion, of which \$88 billion comes from Israelitish nations and the remaining \$65 billion comes from non-Israelitish nations. According to the British American Security Information Council, U.S. military spending accounts for 40% of worldwide military expenditures. Just the *increase* in military spending for *this year* (\$48 billion) is larger than any individual European country's total defense budget. Even though military budgets are only one indicator, these statistics highlight America's disproportionate military strength in the world.

WORLD MILITARY BUDGETS



BIBLE STUDY: THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST

While teaching in the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus presents a parable to the chief priests and elders (Matthew 22:1-14). To make His point, Jesus uses the illustration of a wedding feast given by a king in celebration of his son's marriage. It reveals the blending of mercy and justice in God's character, as well as the Jewish leaders' neglect of God's offers of mercy and the judgment that falls on those who abuse their privileges.

In the Parable of the Marriage Feast, Jesus answers the Pharisees, who were enraged at Him for His blunt rebuke of them in Matthew 21:33-44. Jesus continues His frank teaching to expose their rejection of the gospel, portraying them as ungrateful citizens who would reject their king's invitation. In this Bible Study, we will see how Jesus uncovers what was going on in their minds and in their conduct, as opposed to what they said.



1. What are this parable's significant features? Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 19:7-9; John 3:29.

COMMENT: Clearly, "a certain king" refers to the Father, and the king's son, the bridegroom, is Jesus Christ. The bride is God's church, but it is not a primary issue in this parable, nor is the marriage itself. However, the marriage feast is prominent, illustrating the full benefits of God's truth: fellowship with God, excellence, abundance, and happiness. God offers such a spiritual banquet to "the called." The glorious feast He has spread includes pardon of sin, favor with God, peace of conscience, exceedingly great and precious promises, access to the throne of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. How is the first invitation different from the other two? Matthew 22:1-3; II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:24-32.

COMMENT: God offered ancient Israel a part in His plan of salvation, but they could not keep focused on Him. Through every call addressed to them by the prophets, they slipped and fell in willful ignorance. Those invited by the first invitation would not come. They returned their invitation unopened. They treated it indifferently as if to despise it. So preoccupied with worldly interests, they would not even take the time to open it.

3. How is the second invitation different from the other two? Matthew 22:4-7; 23:34-36; Luke 21:20-24; Proverbs 1:24-26.

COMMENT: This invitation is more precise and urgent than the first. Everything was ready for the marriage celebration, yet the servants sent in this round of invitations were no more successful than the first. The king's kindness was met with contemptuous ridicule; indifference became scorn. The invitees' business interests meant more than their obligations to the king. Some were even murderously hostile, showing their wickedness in their treatment of his servants.

God's servants, the prophets, were ridiculed, attacked, and abused, and since Christ's death, his servants have been just as cruelly treated. The disrespectful refusal of the invitation, leading to the more grievous sin of murder, results in unexpected judgment. The initial

prophetic fulfillment of this can be seen in Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70, when the Roman armies of Titus ("his armies") destroyed the city. God carried out this judgment on a people who utterly rejected both His Son and His servants.

4. How is the third invitation different from the others? Matthew 22:8-10; II Thessalonians 1:3-10.

COMMENT: This invitation reveals divine mercy offered to the Gentiles in addition to the Israelites. The good and bad represent the whole spectrum of moral character. The king's invitation shows no partiality; God can call both the good and the bad out of this world. But will the person repent, change his ways? Human goodness cannot earn an invitation to be called. So the good and bad are only welcome by invitation from God through the blood of Christ.

5. Why is it important for the guests to wear proper wedding garments? Matthew 22:11-14; Isaiah 64:6; Zechariah 3:3-4; Romans 13:14; Revelation 3:4-5; 19:7-9.

COMMENT: The guests do not enter the wedding hall immediately. Those gathered from the highways would be inappropriately clothed, so time is given them to clothe themselves in proper attire provided by the king. The parable suggests that, not only did the man not have on a wedding garment, but he did so intentionally. He decides against clothing himself properly, even though the appropriate clothing is available. His presence at the wedding is a sign of his rebellion against the king's authority and majesty, symbolized by the feast. When the man realizes his sin against the king's order, he is speechless as his judgment is pronounced.

The wedding garment, conspicuous and distinctive, represents a person's righteousness. It symbolizes the habit of sincerity, repentance, humility, and obedience. It replaces the street clothes that stand for the habits of pride, rebellion, and sinfulness. Biblically, beautiful clothing indicates spiritual character developed by submission to God. Paul exhorts Christians to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" like a garment. Clothing, then, represents a Christ-covered life, and as a result, character consistent with God's way of life.