

# Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 18, Number 2 September-October 2009



The Modern Face of  
**SLAVERY**

# september/october 2009

volume 18, number 5

## 3

**PERSONAL** from *John W. Ritenbaugh*  
The Ninth Commandment

## 7

**READY ANSWER**  
Courage and the Dog Soldier  
BY MIKE FORD

## 10

**PROPHECY WATCH**  
Slavery and Babylon  
BY MARTIN G. COLLINS

## 15

**WORLDWATCH**  
A Strengthening Germany  
BY RICHARD T. RITENBAUGH

## 16

**BIBLE STUDY**  
The Miracles of Jesus Christ: *Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (Part One)*  
BY MARTIN G. COLLINS

## cover

To most people, slavery is a practice that died with Abraham Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation" in the 1860s, but sadly, that is just not true. Although widespread "legal" slavery has long been outlawed in Western nations, the practice of forced human servitude has only morphed into other forms, among which are abusive child labor and prostitution. The buying and selling of people is alive and well, even in the most civilized nations, a modern sign of the continuing influence of Babylon the Great.

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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 Ninth Commandment

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A primary purpose of going through these last six commandments, which concern our relationships with our fellow human beings, is to show how trust within communities is destroyed when they are broken. Dozens of statistics have been presented to illustrate how overwhelming the breaking of them is—that vast numbers of people just do not care about keeping them because they do not fear God.

To the average person, the personal issues and concerns in normal human life seem exceedingly more important than God and each other. One of the results of this attitude is that most people live with an uncomfortable measure of apprehension of danger. We are wary and somewhat suspicious of our fellow man instead of at peace with him.

Regarding the ninth commandment, few, if any, statistics are kept. One cannot go to a library or onto the Internet and find reams of charts, graphs, and figures compiled by the FBI on lying as one can with stealing. What one does find, though, is that this sin confirms in a thousand different ways that we Israelites have a tremendously difficult time being trustworthy.

The breaking of this commandment seems to be a problem that particularly afflicts Israelites. Indeed, deception seems to be “in the genes.” John 1:46-47 records a remark made by Jesus’ to this fact: “And Nathanael said to [Philip], ‘Can any-

thing good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’” *Without deceit* means “simple, without subtlety, candid and sincere.” Was this a compliment or a mild sarcasm? Jesus may actually have been pleasantly surprised.

All need to pay heed to His comment, in which He is teaching that “a real Israelite is one in whom is no falsehood.” Nathanael represented the way a true Israelite should be, a person without deceit, candid and sincere. Jesus seems to be referring to the post-conversion character of the once-deceitful Jacob, the ancestor of the Israelites, whose name God changed to “Israel.” Before Jacob’s conversion, Isaac had said to Esau, “Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing” (Genesis 27:35), yet afterward, Jacob dealt honestly and fairly with others.

## Falsehood Is a Way of Life

However, lying is such an integral part of the fabric of our lives that we have coined such expressions of mild disbelief as “Is that so?” and “Do you really mean it?” We expect advertisers to exaggerate the quality of their products. We expect politicians to be crooked, to lie, to be evasive,

# personal *The Ninth Commandment*

to use their positions to become wealthy, and to make under-the-table deals with contractors or even crime figures. We expect policemen to be “on the take” and businessmen to give little in return for as high a cost as the traffic will bear.

Indeed, the protestors of the 1960s justified the turmoil on the streets because of their disillusionment with the obvious hypocrisies of leaders becoming wealthy on a prolonged, senseless war. During that same general period, Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson were caught openly lying at news conferences. A web of intrigue and lies brought about President Nixon’s resignation. Even General Motors misrepresented Oldsmobile cars with Chevy engines!

People in government commonly lie “in the national interest,” as the saying goes. Many have testified that Bill and Hillary Clinton spent eight years continuously lying about a wide variety of personal failings, moneymaking deals, and political intrigues they were involved in. The media took the Bush administration to task on its obfuscations regarding the Iraq War.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill served his nation most critically in wartime, during which artful lying, called disinformation, is a common tactic. He once said, “In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.” Do we as a people think that no one is listening?

## True Values Needed

God says in Isaiah 29:13-15:

“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.” Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; they say, “Who sees us?” and “Who knows us?”

This charge against Israel is to a people so insensitive to God and truth that they are blind to dishonesty’s destructive power. On the national scene, we parade slogans such as “In God We Trust” and “One Nation Under God.” Daily in the courts, citizens by the thousands swear on Bibles and then proceed to lie on the witness stand. Millions attend church on Sunday but then conduct business Monday through Saturday in the normal, self-centered, “let’s get as much as we can” fashion.

We Americans grew up in this twisted environment and perhaps never really questioned it—we merely accepted

it as normal. To some degree, it has conditioned our approach to life. In Isaiah 29, God accuses His people of hypocritically playing games with His truth and of not facing up to its standards in daily life. Jesus quotes verse 13 in Matthew 15:8, charging the scribes and Pharisees with being hypocrites. In both cases, the context is strikingly similar. In both, deceived and hypocritical people mishandle God’s revelation. However, after a period of persistent practice, the deception or hypocrisy establishes itself as the way of life!

Notice this vivid contrast in Deuteronomy 32:1-4:

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass. For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.

This description of God is exactly the opposite of that of America’s national character. Our God is a God of truth, meaning He is unswervingly faithful. He is the Rock, implying One who is impervious to change. He is our Foundation, indicating One who provides firm footing in a way of life. He is our Fountain, the Source of a refreshing, productive way of life that He intends His people to use.

However, Deuteronomy 32:5-6 adds,

They have corrupted themselves; they are not His children, because of their blemish; a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus deal with the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?

His people have rejected following His example in order to practice and live by lies that bring only destruction and death.

Notice the contrast to us as shown by Jesus in the New Testament. Revelation 19:11 testifies of Him, “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.” Jesus says of Himself in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” This statement confirms the faithfulness of His nature: He is reliable, trustworthy, and of unwavering integrity.

What does being trustworthy mean in practical application? Who does God show are the most important persons to the overall welfare of the community, state, or nation? It is not the doctors, lawyers, politicians, or businessmen but the preacher and the king because they should teach, administer, exemplify, and provide

the values upon which the community will function. God expects those values to be His.

What does God consistently show in His Word? Notice the context in which these verses appear. In both Deuteronomy and Revelation, a new culture, a new nation, is either being established or about to be established. God is indicating that the preacher has a slight edge in importance.

When God established Israel as a nation, He first appointed and sent the preacher—the prophet Moses. In the New Testament, Christ came first as a rabbi, a preacher to teach the way of God. Upon His resurrection, He became our High Priest, a post that has both religious and administrative functions, and He will return as King to administer God’s Kingdom. This is why God’s Word places so much importance on these two community positions. The preacher should exemplify God’s values and deliver instruction containing them, and the king should live them and administer them to the nation.

Without true values, civilization will soon descend into revolution and anarchy. God’s doctrine is true and faithful. It will produce gently and without corruption, or as Moses puts it in Deuteronomy 32:2, it will “drop as the rain” and “distill as the dew,” whereas a hard-driving rain destroys. Any society or family built on God’s doctrines will prosper and become great.

Not only does Jesus characterize Himself as truth in John 14:6, but He also adds in John 17:17 that “[God’s] word is truth.” In I Corinthians 15:45, 47, Paul refers to Jesus as “the last Adam” or “the second Man,” the beginning of a new order, of an entire race or family of beings just like Him, just as all of mankind is in the image of our first forefather, the first Adam.

## Truth Practiced Is Faithfulness

Many can say, “I have told you the truth.” However, Jesus did not just tell the truth, He embodied it. He put truth into a visible, concrete form so all who so desire can see it. What credibility that gives! A teacher can present a mathematical, grammatical, scientific, or historical truth, and what kind of a person he is does not matter much. However, if a person teaches or administers moral truth, his example—what he is in his character—is all-important. Do people want to be lectured on purity by an adulterer or on honesty by a liar and thief (Romans 2:21-24)?

“Truth” in John 17:17 is the Greek word *aletheia*, which means “reality, the manifested, unconcealed essence of a matter.” Truth is the reality lying at the foundation of a righteous example. It is pure unadulterated reality.

Contrast this with what Jesus says of Satan to the Jews in John 8:44:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Satan is Christ’s diametrical opposite, one hundred percent unmodified deceit. God’s entire plan is based on the premise that the converted know that God is true. If He is not true to His Word or to His own way of life, how can He be trusted? We must live by faith in this true Being and in what He says! Truth forms the basis, the foundation, the reality, for a person’s conversion.

Consider this: There is a personal, living, almighty God whose ways and laws are intrinsically right—they are true. Therefore, a person who has God’s Spirit and is honest, who is willing to speak the truth and acknowledge it when it is shown to him, and who will use it in everyday, practical situations must eventually become like the One he models himself after.

God is making us kings and priests, that is, leaders and teachers of a way of life based on revealed truth. He will not have anyone in His Family who does not embody truth as Jesus did. In other words, we, too, will be truth personified. However, for this to occur we must live it to the best of our abilities now.

## Bearing False Witness

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16) has very far-reaching spiritual applications. *Bear* means “to spread, carry, render, or give.” At first glance, the commandment appears to involve only lying in a court of law, and this might be true if the words in the commandment were to be taken only at face value. Jesus clearly shows that there is a “spirit,” an intent, to God’s laws in addition to the letter that carries their application far beyond mere face-value judgments.

Many scriptures show that the commandment covers lying under *any* circumstance, including hypocrisy and self-deception. That is, it covers any wrongful word or example that would tend to injure. The ninth commandment is in a similar position in man’s relationship to other men as the third commandment is in man’s relationship to God. This commandment directly involves faithfulness and loyalty in our speech and in our witness for God before men.

Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold.” *The Soncino Commentary* remarks that a person’s good reputation, his name, is his most valuable asset. Indeed, the Bible shows that God guards and protects *His* name very jealously. This is because His name represents what He is.

So it is with us. But why do so many lie, sowing the seeds for the destruction of their reputation? It is the desire for the approval of others that leads them to twist a story or to deliberately exaggerate or diminish their parts in it in the retelling.

When we hear a name, images of that person and what he or she is immediately spring to mind. What we are and how others perceive us has everything to do with what we believe and practice. So, is what we believe and practice true? If we want to have a good name (reputation) in the eyes of both God and man, we, too, have to recognize

# personal *The Ninth Commandment*

truth—wherever and whenever it arises in daily life—understand it, and submit to it. This process produces faithfulness.

This is where truth in a person's witness begins. If truth does not form the foundation of a person's life, he is already behind the eight ball to some extent. The urge to lie must be met and overcome. At the base of this problem is a deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9) that continually lays traps to make lying an appealing course to follow. Besides lying before men, some of us keep lying to ourselves, and thus our name before God is not good. Faithlessness is the result. In order to have a good name, we, as God's children, must face up to our vanities and quit deceiving ourselves that God will just have to take us as we are.

We need to stop blaming our failures, problems, and shortcomings on others, which tendency provides us with justifications for what we are and what we do. Within the family, Mom and Dad are frequent targets of this. They are usually guilty to some extent, but God puts the pressure on *us* to change. Change will not occur in this way of life until we face up to the truth that we are responsible for what we are. We also bear much of the responsibility of becoming what we hope to be. Nobody can do this for us.

This is the day-to-day "stuff" on which trustworthiness and righteous reputations are formed. They are built on the witness of what we do before others. God wants our reputation before men to be built, first, on His truth and then on truth in general. Are we honestly doing this as well as we could be?

Solomon writes in Proverbs 13:15, "Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard." When a person consistently has a perception of what is true and lives it, he gains a force of beauty of character. In other words, faithfulness creates favorable impressions that open doors for him.

For example, to whom would we rather loan money, to a person with a record of steady work and payment of debts or to one who cannot keep a job and consistently defaults on his obligations? Which one is more likely to get the loan? A person of good character recognizes his responsibility to truth, understands it, and submits to it. This produces the witness that glorifies God.

If a person will not follow this process, he will not have the good character and the good name to go with it. If he recognizes and understands his problem but does not submit to the truth, he is deceiving himself.

This principle holds true in every area in which a name is built, including marriage, childrearing, and health issues. Many run from the truth about themselves. Hardly anything will destroy a reputation quicker than for others to know an individual is lying to himself about what or how much he eats, his failure to discipline his children properly, or his careless inattention to his spouse. Such faithlessness provides a strong foundation for hypocrisy.

This commandment, then, not only covers bearing false

witness verbally, but also bearing false witness about one's relationship with God by displaying a spotty example of conduct, all the while claiming to be Christian. To make a bad witness in ignorance or weakness is one thing, but to know better and deliberately mislead is another matter altogether.

## Principles Regarding Lying

Why do we lie? Often, it is to cover up our irresponsibility. We fear that something about ourselves we wish to keep hidden will be exposed, so we lie to protect the image we want others to see. We also lie to rise above our feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. We also do it to lower a third party in the eyes of others, which, of course, has the effect of elevating ourselves in our own eyes and, we hope, in the eyes of others.

Proverbs 26:18-19 says, "Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, 'I was only joking.'" These two verses begin a section largely devoted to illustrating the fruits of lying. They might be better translated as, "A man who deceives his neighbor and disguises his deception as a joke is as dangerous as a madman shooting arrows at a crowd. Someone will surely get hurt." Lying is never a joke, and someone always gets hurt, even though it may not be immediately apparent. Lying is sin and sin brings death. Do we believe this in the actual practice of life? Though the lie, when discovered, may cause laughter, a reputation has been stained and trust diminishes.

Proverbs 26:23-25 adds: "Fervent lips with a wicked heart are like earthenware covered with silver dross. He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself; when he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart."

The proverbs from here to the end of the chapter primarily involve hypocrisy. Lying lips create a false sense of security and cunningly hide the reality of a deception that will bring loss and pain. Though his voice sounds gracious, the liar is full of countless wickedness. He is particularly wicked by selling himself as a benefactor while intending to do evil. This is the kind of heart involved in financial scams that promise large profits in return for small investment, as Bernie Madoff's infamous Ponzi scheme did.

Solomon writes in Proverbs 26:26, "Though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly." This verse is directly connected in thought to the previous ones, telling us in no uncertain terms that this sin has an obvious boomerang effect! The liar will fall into the pit he digs for others, and in the process, he will be exposed before others. This is exactly what happened to Mr. Madoff.

Proverbs 26:28 adds, "A lying tongue hates those who

*(continued on page 13)*

# ready answer

*“Be ready always to give an answer . . .”* I Peter 3:15

## Courage and the Dog Soldier

“Watch, stand fast  
in the faith, be brave,  
be strong.”  
—*I Corinthians 16:13*

One night recently, as I sat at my computer and caught up on emails, I was struck by the number and intensity of the threats that face us: swine flu and the unproven vaccine, purported internment camps ready for those who defy the authorities, government bailouts and handouts, creeping socialism, and the annulling of our various freedoms one by one. There are just as many problems on the spiritual side, such as continuing personal and doctrinal disagreements, splintering of church groups, and prayer requests of all sorts. Seeing it all, I wanted to crawl in a bathtub and pull a mattress over my head!

God says through the apostle Paul:

No temptation has come your way that is too hard for flesh and blood to bear. But God can be trusted not to allow you to suffer any temptation beyond your powers of endurance. He will see to it that every temptation has its way out, so that it will be possible for you to bear it. (I Corinthians 10:13; J.B. Phillips’ translation)

God always supplies. He is faithful. God will—at all times—do His part, but what about us? What is our part, small though it may be? We cannot control what the government may or may not do. We cannot control who stays and who goes in our church groups. Outside of ourselves, we actually control very little, so what is our responsibility here?

Later in his epistle, Paul instructs us: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity” (I Corinthians 16:13-14; King James Version). Several generations ago, “quit you like men” was a frequently heard phrase in English-speaking countries. To modern ears, *quit* means “to stop” or “to give up,” but it can also mean “to conduct oneself in a specified way.”

The phrase the King James Version translates as “quit you like

men,” James Moffatt renders as “play the man”; the Revised Standard Version, “be courageous”; and *The Amplified Bible*, “act like men.” Phillips, however, separates verses 13-14 into a paragraph of their own, giving it a sub-heading that says, “A little sermon in a nutshell!” He translates the verse as follows: “Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, live like men, be strong! Let everything that you do be done in love.”

The Greek word translated as “quit you like men” is *andrizomai*, which is used just this one time in the Bible. It is an imperative, a word of command, and it literally means “be men.”

## Be Strong

Now, the women and teens reading this should not bail out at this point because Paul is giving instructions here to Christians in general, not just men, as we see in I Corinthians 1:1-2:

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother. *To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* [Emphasis ours]

Is he talking to just the men here? I think not.

At the end of I Corinthians 16, Paul is closing out his rather long letter and giving his final exhortation. Right after this “little sermon in a nutshell,” he mentions Aquila and Priscilla in verse 19. This husband-and-wife team are mentioned six times in Paul’s letters, always fondly and always together. They are as one. Thus, right after Paul tells us to “be men,” he writes warmly of his good friend, Priscilla.

Lastly, Paul teaches in Galatians 3:28 that there is neither male nor female, but we are all one in Christ Jesus. So if men must “get in touch with their feminine side,” as we are so often told in today’s feminized society, then the ladies in the church should pay attention, along with the men, to how being a man is necessary to our Christian life!

As many know, the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and it was later translated into other languages. The translation into Greek, called the Septuagint, is one of the oldest of these, the earliest parts dating from around 300 BC. The Greek word *andrizomai*, used only once in the Greek New Testament, appears 25 times in the Septuagint. A few verses from the book of Joshua will show how *andrizomai* was translated from the Hebrew into Greek and then again into English, giving us a better understanding of what Paul was saying in I Corinthians 16:13:

Be strong and of good courage. . . . Only be strong and very courageous. . . . Have I not commanded

you? Be strong and of good courage . . . be strong and of good courage.” (Joshua 1:6-7, 9, 18)

Here, *andrizomai* is translated “be . . . of good courage.” A literal interpretation of *andrizomai* would be, as we saw above, “play the man,” “live like men,” “act like men,” or simply “be men”—and that is what Paul is saying: Be men. He is writing to a church living at the same time as he, speaking the same Greek language, and having the same cultural influences, and he could expect his audience to know what he meant. They certainly did.

But we are nearly two millennia removed from those days, which is why the Septuagint is helpful. Paul is telling us to have courage. When Paul says, “Quit ye like men,” it is the same as telling us to be courageous. Commentator Albert Barnes says in his *Notes* that Paul means a man is not “a coward, or timid, or alarmed at enemies, but [is] to be bold and brave.” This applies to all Christians, no matter the age or gender. The idea is summed up in the word “courage.”

## Spartans and Dog Soldiers

Recall that Paul is giving us a command here, an imperative, but it actually goes further. In I Corinthians 16:13, there are *four* imperatives in this one verse, which is itself just six words in the original Greek: 1) watch, 2) stand fast in the faith, 3) be men (courageous), and 4) be strong.

The word *watch* means “to keep awake, be vigilant, be watchful.” For us, that means keeping an eye on the world around us and more importantly, paying attention to our spiritual condition. To *stand fast in the faith* means “to be stationary (anchored), to persevere, to be convicted of our beliefs.” As we saw, to *be men* is “to be courageous,” but not so much in a physical sense as in the convictions of our spiritual life. Finally, to *be strong* implies “to increase in vigor, to be strengthened, to increase in faith.”

These four imperatives can be viewed in military terms, and Paul uses such terms quite often in his epistles. Living in the days of Roman rule, he commonly saw Roman legions in his travels. His audience, also living within the Empire, was quite familiar with soldiers and their duties.

We can imagine a sentry on guard duty, at attention, peering into the night, listening intently for any unusual noise. He has to fight off sleep lest the enemy sneak up on him and kill him, opening the camp to attack. We can realize how this applies to Christian life.

The other imperatives—standing fast in the faith, being strong, and living like men—are also better understood as military imagery. Many are familiar with the story of the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, when Sparta’s King Leonidas and his 300 Spartans, along with 700 Thespians, 400 Thebans, and perhaps a few hundred others, fought to the death against the

million-man army of Persian Emperor Xerxes. King Leonidas and his men knew that they would die; they knew the odds were overwhelmingly against them. But they felt compelled to try to stop the enemy and save their country.

Certainly, this encapsulates these four imperatives!

As stunning as that example is, we should bring it down to a more personal level: to an army of one. Outnumbered as they were, the Spartans and their allies still had other warriors fighting with them on either side, at least until the very end. What if we were absolutely by ourselves?

The Cheyenne Indians of the 1800s, living on the Great Plains of the United States, had six warrior societies. Perhaps the greatest of these was known as the Dog Soldiers. English journalist Henry Stanley, upon viewing them, described the Dog Soldiers as the “Spartans of the plains.” Each one wore a sash around his waist, called a dog rope, with a picket pin at the end. This picket pin was a pointed stake, typically tied to the end of a rope, that could be driven into the ground to tether a horse, which could then graze but not wander off.

In the case of the Dog Soldiers,

the pin was driven into the ground as a mark of resolve in combat. When a Dog Soldier was staked to the ground in order to cover the retreat of his companions, he was required to remain there even if death was the consequence. The Dog Man could pull the pin from the ground only if his companions reached safety or another Dog Soldier released him from his duty. (Richard S. Grimes, “Cheyenne Dog Soldiers,” <http://www.manataka.org/page164.html>).

This is a great example of watching, standing fast, as well as being strong and courageous. Try to imagine being a Dog Soldier. The tribe is under attack by a strong enemy, and the battle has turned against it. Everyone must flee to preserve his life and the lives of his loved ones, but the enemy is pressing the fight, eager to wipe out every man, woman, and child. So, despite being alone against hundreds, perhaps thousands, we turn to face the adversary, uncoil our dog rope, and drive our pin into the ground, prepared at least to delay the enemy so that others can escape. The hope is to slow down the foe for as long as possible, if just for a moment or two.

Realistically, what chance do we have? Maybe it would be best to pull the pin or untie the dog rope and turn and run. But we cannot, for we are Dog Soldiers and had committed to give our lives, if necessary, when we were welcomed into the warrior society. We are convicted of our beliefs.

## Strong *and* Loving

Sound familiar? Are we not in a similar, but spiritual,

fight? Do we not face an adversary that wants to destroy us? Have we not committed ourselves to give our lives, if necessary? Matthew Poole, who published his commentary in 1685, makes a good point when speaking of “quit ye like men”:

. . . you are as soldiers fighting against the world, the flesh, and the devil; do not behave yourselves like children, whom the least opposition will terrify and throw down; but like men, with a spiritual courage and fortitude, becoming such who have so good a Captain, and so good a cause.

The “captain of their salvation” (Hebrews 2:10) is our commanding officer in battle. Our Captain has given us the equipment we need to carry out our duties: these four imperatives. All of them—watching, standing firm in the faith, acting like men, and being strong—can be considered as masculine traits due to the military analogies; but they are not limited to men, nor should they be.

Satan has perverted the minds of today’s world to the point that these traits are regarded negatively. Feminists might concede that men are strong and courageous, in some cases, but **foolishly** so. We are told that women are loving and nurturing and these qualities are to be preferred. So much so that homosexuality is considered normal and a man that truly acts like a man is abnormal—a Neanderthal. It is a mixed-up world indeed.

However, these traits are not mutually exclusive! Notice what Paul says in verse 14: “Let all that you do be done with love.” Verse 13 is not for lumberjacks, and verse 14, for women and sensitive, new-age males! Not at all. As Christians, we are to “be men” *and* do all with love. Is not love showing concern for others? In the analogy of the Dog Soldiers illustrating the Christian fight, are not watching, standing in the faith, exhibiting courage, and being strong—in order to protect their loved ones, their tribe, and their way of life—showing love? Certainly!

The entire book of I Corinthians is, as Henry Halley says, “Mainly about Certain Church Disorders.” Brethren met in their homes and small halls in one of the largest, richest, and most important cities of the Roman Empire. The brethren there were faced with decadence, temptation, and vices of every sort. They experienced corruption on a grand scale. There were factions and competing groups. Sound familiar? Truly, “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

This past year has been a difficult one, and more tough times lie ahead. We know that God will provide. God is faithful (I Corinthians 1:9), and we do not need to worry about *how* He will do it. Instead, we need to take care of our end of the deal: to be ever-vigilant, standing firm in the faith, courageous and strong, doing everything in concern for others. All this is summed up by *andrizomai*: QUIT YE LIKE MEN!

—Mike Ford

# SLAVERY AND BABYLON

*Most people do not recognize that everyone in the world is under some form of slavery.*

We are all slaves to many things in varying degrees. The foundation upon which world culture is based encourages, promotes, and forces us into a life of slavery. Governments thrive on enslaving people. God warned ancient Israel about the suppression of freedom that results from having an all-powerful leader who answers to no one, but still they demanded a king. Notice I Samuel 8:11-20:

“This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.”

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, “No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

The Israelites, then, who were greatly blessed under the judgment of God-appointed judges, rejected their Creator by demanding a human king so they could be like the other, poorer, enslaved nations. Thus, the last true bastion of freedom established by God was rejected. Ever since, all governmental systems have been based on taking freedom from the people and enslaving them to pay for the desires of power and pleasure of their leaders.

## A GLOBAL SYSTEM OF SLAVERY

Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of the LORD’s vengeance; He shall recompense her. Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD’s hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged. (Jeremiah 51:6-7)

Literally, the original Hebrew of the first half of verse 7 means, “A golden cup is Babel in the hand of Yahweh, intoxicating the whole earth.” Jeremiah sees the material splendor of Babylon, but the “wine” that she makes the nations of the earth drink will result in God’s wrath coming down upon them. As God’s hammer, Babylon was strong, and as His cup of gold, she was rich and beautiful—but neither saves her from ruin. Jeremiah therefore admonishes everyone to flee this perverse, world-ruling system.

The global scourge of slavery is the essence of the Babylonian slavery system that the prophet Jeremiah warned about. It exists in its zenith in the last days. Babylon’s perversion, audacity, and pride represent the

height of direct defiance against almighty God. This humanly devised governmental, religious, educational, and economic system controlling the world today originates from Satan's initial rebellion against God. Satan, the Adversary, has done a tremendous job of enslaving the whole world under his system of slavery.

God reveals Babylon and its influence in Revelation 17:1-5:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

This system and the source of its influence is a mystery to the world. Yet, her abominations and spiritual filthiness have kept human beings in a perpetual state of slavery to sin, governments, taxes, war, famine, pestilence, disease, and especially religious confusion.

### **MODERN SLAVERY**

Beginning in the twentieth century, human trafficking, modern slavery, and forced labor have been on a global rise. Earlier, with the demise of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century, the world was told that chattel slavery—outright ownership of slaves—was over in the "civilized" world. However, debt bondage and contract slavery began to take its place with little notice from governments, law enforcement, and international organizations.

In reality, there are more slaves now than at any other time in history. Foremost among the victims of human trafficking are women and girls forced into the commercial sex trade, followed by agricultural slavery and domestic slavery. Individuals and groups at risk are often the result of irregular migration due to extreme poverty, internal conflict, natural disaster, and globalization. Victims are kept enslaved through fear, violence, and fraud.

There are no clear distinctions between different forms of slavery. The same families and groups of people are often the victims of several kinds of modern slavery—for example, bonded labor, forced labor, child labor, or

child prostitution—with extreme poverty as a common, linking factor.

The most widespread type of human trafficking is debt bondage. The most common contemporary form of slavery is bonded labor, which accounts for more than 20 million victims. Human slavery statistics from the Giving Children Hope Organization and Anti-Slavery International, a British-based human rights organization, in addition to other sources, tell the grim story of this horrible injustice against human life.

### ***International Statistics***

- There are at least 27 million slaves worldwide.
- Worldwide at least 1.2 million children are trafficked every year, and at least 800,000 people are trafficked across borders each year.
- Human slaves are cheap. In 1850, the average slave cost \$40,000 in today's dollar. Presently, a slave costs \$90 on average.
- At the extreme fringe, children are kidnapped, held in remote camps, and chained at night to prevent their escape. They are put to work on road-building and stone-quarrying. Such child labor, often hard and hazardous, damages health for life, and deprives children of education and the normal enjoyment of their early years.
- Forcible recruitment of children into military service occurs in many parts of the world. The consequences are devastating. Many have died or been disabled in armed conflict, while others have been interrogated, tortured, beaten, or kept as prisoners of war. An estimated 300,000 child-soldiers, some younger than 10 years old, are involved in over 30 areas of conflict worldwide.
- Some children between 7 and 10 years of age work 12 to 14 hours a day and are paid less than one-third of the adult wage. In addition, 126 million children work in the worst forms of child labor—one in every 12 of the world's 5-17 year olds.
- Child domestic servants not only work long hours for a pittance, but are particularly vulnerable to sexual as well as other physical abuse.
- Worldwide, the multibillion-dollar sex-trade industry involves an estimated two million children—including Cambodia, Thailand, and Costa Rica, where "sex tourism" is big business. The average age of women entering into prostitution is 14. The profits to be made are immense when 12- to 15-year-old children can be purchased for \$800 to \$2,000—and used for five to ten years before they are cast away.

# prophecy watch *Slavery and Babylon*

## *American Statistics*

- The United States is principally a transit and destination country for trafficking in persons. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency estimates that 50,000 people are trafficked into or transited through the country annually as sex slaves, domestics, and garment and agricultural slaves, of which 80% are women and children.
- Research conducted with Free the Slaves found documented cases of slavery in over 90 U.S. cities. States with the greatest concentration of trafficked persons are New York, California, and Florida. Washington, DC, also has a large trafficked population.
- Between 100,000 and 300,000 children in the U.S. are at risk for sex trafficking each year. As many as 2.8 million children live on the streets, a third of whom are lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home. The average age of a person's entry into pornography and prostitution in the U.S. is between 12 and 14.
- Forced marriage is another form of slavery, and at least 200 "matchmaking" organizations operate in the U.S., arranging prospective "brides" for male clients.

These statistics paint a sickening picture of one area of the evil that is prevalent in the last days under the Babylonian system. Most people would deny that they have any involvement or guilt in such slavery, but those who turn a blind eye to the suffering, employers who do not pay employees fair wages, leaders who do nothing to stop the trafficking, those who dabble in pornography, and many others share in the guilt of this slavery and abuse of woman and children.

## **BABYLON'S FALL**

Because of this serious neglect of responsibility, more of this enslavement will come upon the U.S. and other Israelitish countries for their sins against God. He gave these nations His inspired Word in the form of the Bible, so they are without excuse for their wickedness (see Amos 3:2). Revelation 13:10 gives this condemnation in the form of an immutable principle: "He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity."

Physical slavery will end when Mystery Babylon falls, which occurs when Jesus Christ returns to rule with His righteous rod of iron. Prophecy tells us that the ultimate downfall of this world-dominating system involves merchandizing, and slaves are a major part of the commerce

of this system at the end time. Human slaves are included on the list of merchandise sold under the Babylonian system mentioned in Revelation 18:11-13:

And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her [the Babylonian system], for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

The merchants, who gained wealth and perverse pleasures from this world's system of religion and commerce, cry and lament because it satiated their greed for materialistic acquisition and their lust for self-pleasure. As the Babylonian system incorporates every expression of corrupt government, so its prostitution includes every corrupt economic system and idolatry. Even human beings are reduced to cargo, traded as slaves to drive the engines of production, prosperity, and sinful pleasures.

Sadly, the modern descendants of Israel have promoted and become part of this self-serving, perverse world system. Sin inevitably brings its own punishment, and there are always consequences to disobedience. Thus, when today's Israelites go into captivity in the last days, they will have no excuse for their sin and no freedom whatsoever.

Ezekiel 5:11-13 prophesies that two-thirds of them will be killed and one-third scattered because of their sins: A third part is destroyed in war; a second third will die by pestilence, famine, and disease; and the remaining third is scattered to the winds. Israel's history shows that when her people are scattered, the majority of the men, women, and children go into slavery—into captivity. As we saw earlier, "He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity."

The reality of that penalty for corporate sin is beginning to form now. Long ago, God warned the children of Israel about what would happen if they committed idolatry, mistreated one another, and shunned Him.

And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days. . . . (Deuteronomy 4:27-30)

He promises the latter-day remnant of the descendants of Israel that, if they genuinely seek to submit to Him, He will save them from their scattered condition and bondage.

We have all been enticed by this anti-God, anti-Christ system of slavery to some degree or another. God urges us to take action:

And [the angel] cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and

the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.” (Revelation 18:2-5)

God always gives people an opportunity to repent of their ways and forsake the world. His people may live in this world, but they must not live as the world does. So God commands us to flee for our lives from Babylon the Great to avoid being lured into sin by her evil ways and caught in her looming destruction.

—Martin G. Collins

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## personal *The Ninth Commandment*

(continued from page 6)

are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin.” Clearly, lying is an act of hatred. It is so bad that it can bring ruin to those it is used against, and like a boomerang, it will return to destroy those who employ it.

Here is a good maxim to live by: Never believe anything bad about a person unless you know it to be absolutely true; never even tell that absolute truth to another unless it is absolutely necessary; and remember when you do tell it, God is listening.

Galatians 6:7-8 contains an important principle: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” All who believe God must deal with this reality. God cannot be fooled. Neither can God’s law be fooled, just as the law of gravity cannot be fooled. A person cannot treat God or His law with contempt and get away with it. We are accountable to it whether we wish to be or not.

This principle teaches that what a man does to life, life does back to him. It is inescapable. “Do men gather grapes of thornbushes or figs of thistles?” Jesus asks (Matthew 7:16). The hypocrite cannot fool God’s laws, only other people—and himself—for a while. This principle is instructing us not to delude ourselves into thinking that we will somehow escape its power. We must always strive to live the truth, which is a difficult job considering the heart within.

The prophet writes in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The Hebrew word translated *deceitful* can mean in this context “faithless, insincere, hypocritical, underhanded, false, dishonest, treacherous, sneaky, double-dealing, tricky, cunning, and crafty.” They all apply.

The phrase *desperately wicked*, which can also be rendered as “perverse” or “incurable,” implies that the

heart knows better but does it anyhow. It is addicted to deceit or faithlessness! Who can fathom its treachery or corruptness? We know where this came from! “The prince of the power of the air” is largely responsible for this evil proclivity because his spirit dominates life in this world (Ephesians 2:2; II Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9). He was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44), deceiving himself into believing that he could overcome his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-14)!

Solomon says in Proverbs 11:9, “The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.” This proverb comforts Christians by reminding us that we have a hedge about us. It also reminds us that, eventually, truth will out. The flipside of this is that the lies, too, will be exposed and with them the condemnation of the liar. Why is this certain? Because there is a God in heaven overseeing His children’s well-being.

Proverbs 14:8 counsels, “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit.” The wise, prudent person follows truth. He consciously weighs his options and deliberately chooses not to twist the truth. He does not walk on blindly, leaving things to the chance that his deceit will not be discovered. True wisdom is the ability to judge present circumstances with the view of future success. Truth is always ultimately successful.

Conversely, *folly* means “foolishness, senselessness, idiocy, brainlessness, silliness, and irrationality.” Why is a person’s folly senseless? Because the one senselessly deceiving is himself deceived. As we might say, “He is shooting himself in the foot,” not grasping the fact that he, too, will be crushed by his deceit.

Job 31:33 says, “If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom. . . .” Job makes this statement because he has been accused of being a hypocrite, so he is defending his integrity. “Adam” represents mankind in general. Unlike mankind in general—though it is the natural thing to do—Job does not hide

himself from the deceit of his heart, showing both his conversion and his wisdom. Sir Walter Scott wrote, "Oh what tangled webs we weave/ When first we practice to deceive." Job understood that either lying with the tongue or presenting a visible hypocrisy creates problems, not solve them.

James 1:26 adds a startling truth that needs our consideration: "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless." Putting a bridle on our tongue is absolutely essential because a liar is not merely deceived. Each additional lie gets him in deeper and deeper until he loses track and believes his own lies. He tells them or lives them so often that, like an alcoholic, he loses his grip on reality. Each lie adds to the difficulty of changing for the better. If it continues, the person becomes addicted to it as a way of life.

Proverbs 16:6 points us in the right direction: "In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil." If a person is ever going to change, he must confront his fault, since there is no magic bullet! The proverb's advice can be understood this way: By God's mercy and truth and by our recognition and use of truth, iniquity will be purged because we fear God and submit to Him. One commentator renders the last line of the proverb as, "By loyalty and faithfulness one escapes evil." Another translates it as, "By one's loyalty and faithfulness to God's truth one will escape evil." "Evil" implies the second death. Living the truth does not forgive sin, but it does help to purge the mind of its habitual focus on sin.

## He Who Speaks the Truth

David writes in Psalm 15:1-5:

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change; he who does not put out his money to usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

It was surprising to discover two new things in this passage. The first is that while Christians usually choose Psalm 23 as their favorite psalm, Jews often choose Psalm 15. The second is that the Hebrew of the phrase "who shall dwell" does not suggest "living in," but rather "visiting with"—that is, being acceptable to come into God's presence. In other words, the psalm has at least an equally strong present tense application as it does a future one.

It is essential, therefore, for us to consider whether God allows us to visit Him, and thus whether He hears our

prayers. The person who has these qualifications most certainly will be heard. In him is no false way at all, no pretense, no deceit, no gossip, no guile, and no hypocrisy. He has no hollow friendships, nor does He give vain compliments. His heart, hand, and tongue are in unison in believing and doing truth. This is a model for all of us to strive to reach.

Another proverb, Proverbs 25:19, instructs us, "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint." Faithfulness always indicates a person who deals truthfully; he can be trusted. Yet, dealing with unfaithful people is usually painful because one never knows whether they will come through. Thus, our evaluation of ourselves comes down to this question: How can God trust us if we are not striving to be honest *now*?

II Corinthians 4:1-2 sets a standard:

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Paul's proclamation fits right into the description of the acceptable person in Psalm 15. Our responsibility is to manifest truth. We must make honest and diligent use of God's gracious gifts without craftiness. Is our way Christ's way and therefore acceptable to God? Can we say that we have nothing to do with hidden and shameful methods?

Paul is not saying that we act with unscrupulous cleverness, but that we do not adulterate truth in any form at all. By making truth clear, whether in word or deed, we commend ourselves both to human conscience in the sight of God and please Him at the same time. We should be childlike and open, leaving as little room as possible for people to misinterpret our motives, misunderstand our actions, or twist our words out of their real meaning.

Does it make any difference what people think of us? Some take the approach that "I'm going to do what I want to do, and what others think doesn't matter." However, it matters very much to God. If it did not, He would not show such concern in His Word regarding being a good witness for Him. Nor would He warn us about protecting our reputation—or His—because much of our effectiveness in witnessing depends on our being trustworthy.

Keeping this commandment begins with not letting our deceitful heart trick us into doing anything less than what is honest and true in God's sight, regardless of what we think men might discern from what we say or do. To do this, we may have to override strong internal drives to make ourselves look good, but doing what is right is something that must be done to remain pure and glorify God.

In Christian love,



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## A Strengthening Germany

September's general elections in Germany saw the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, remain in power. The CDU formed a conservative coalition with the Free Democratic Party (FDP) led by Guido Westerwelle, but without a doubt, the Chancellor's party will be at the helm, particularly in the area of foreign policy. With amicable German-American relations over the last several decades, it would seem that they would continue to be "steady as she goes" into the foreseeable future. However, the signs are that rough seas are ahead.

Westerwelle, the next Foreign Minister, may indeed want to craft a pro-American foreign policy. His own views fit very nicely with American aims. For instance, the FDP campaigned on staying committed to the Afghan War. Like U.S. President Barack Obama, Westerwelle wants to pressure both Russia and China on human-rights issues and also desires the removal of nuclear warheads from Germany. On the questions of Iran and Israel-Palestine, he supports the current American approach of engagement and dialogue.

However, Germany has its own self-interests that will surely trump any altruistic desire to remain a staunch junior partner of America, no matter how enthusiastic both Germans in general and the government are about Obama himself. Having broken free of its Cold War restraints, Germany is beginning to use its considerable weight in Europe and elsewhere to proclaim that her presence will be felt on the world stage.

Berlin's initial unilateral action has been seen in the energy sector. Most of Germany's energy—in the forms of oil and natural gas—comes from Russia, making its industry reliant on Moscow's whim. During past winters, Russia has used its power to threaten to shut down its westward pipelines as a cudgel to force price concessions on Europe, and Germany does not want to be manipulated again.

One of the new government's policies concerns its aging nuclear power plants. The plan is to extend the life of the current reactors and to begin construction on new ones, thereby reducing the country's dependence on Russian energy. Further, to offset Moscow's displeasure in losing the German market, Berlin wants to invest in Russian ventures and to build oil and gas lines through Germany and/or the nearby Baltic Sea to become a conduit of Russian energy to other European nations. As a bonus, Germany would earn revenue by charging transit fees to recipient countries.

In Europe, Germany is undoubtedly the dominant state in terms of geography, population, and economic strength on the continent—with only France as a distant rival—and it is using its heft to push its objectives in the European Union. In tandem with France, Germany is the main force behind the retry of ratifying the Lisbon Treaty and subsequently the selection of an EU president and foreign minister. Once those things are a *fait accompli*, Berlin's agenda—moderated only by an often-compliant France and a currently weakened Britain—will effectively

be Europe's agenda. With the combined economies of the EU states behind it, Germany's voice will have to be taken seriously in Washington, Moscow, and Beijing.

In addition, Germany recently crossed another boundary line that divorces it from its post-World-War-II passivity. Just this spring, German military forces took part in a two-week offensive in northern Afghanistan, for the first time using heavy weapons and armored vehicles in firefights in an effort to repulse the Taliban from the region. Germany's 4,300 troops are now the third-largest national contingent in Afghanistan, trailing only the U.S. and Britain. It is likely that additional troops, perhaps as many as 2,000, will be sent to the region when the U.S. military's Afghan surge finally takes place.

And it is not just the German government that is becoming more confident. On May 23, 2009, Germans celebrated the Federal Republic's 60th anniversary with an outburst of German pride, waving thousands of black, red, and yellow flags, a practice once frowned upon as too nationalistic—too Nazi or neo-Nazi. In addition, the University of Stuttgart published a study earlier this year, reporting that 75 percent of respondents were proud to be German "despite the country's history," which was twice as many as responded positively to a similar question in 2001. As the older generation and its guilt continue to wane, the German people feel increasingly patriotic and unhampered by the nation's aggressive past.

As an analyst wrote in Stratfor's September 29, 2009, Geopolitical Diary, "The Return of Germany":

Germany is awake. It is thinking for itself. It has its own policy preferences, its own energy preferences and its own security preferences. It already is showing signs of developing autonomy in foreign policy and energy matters, and it is very likely only a matter of time before it starts developing autonomy in security matters.

This isn't your father's (or even your grandfather's) Germany. This is your great-grandfather's Germany.

The church of God has long identified Germany with the Bible's fierce Assyrians—"the rod of My anger" (Isaiah 10:5), sent to punish the idolatrous Israelites for their ungodliness. In verse 7, God remarks on the Assyrian character in a way that seems to fit Germany historically: ". . . it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations." The nations of Europe have long feared German dominance on the continent for just this reason, having seen the horrific destruction caused by two German-instigated World Wars. To be sure, even in this time of peaceful relations among Western nations, there are many Europeans nervously wondering what Berlin will do next.

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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WORLDWATCH

## The Miracles of Jesus Christ

### *Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (Part One)*

Jesus stayed in Gadara only for a few hours, but during that time, He came across two demon-possessed men (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-40). Although Matthew's account mentions two men, and Mark and Luke record only one, no contradiction exists between them. The simple explanation is that one of the men, acting as their spokesman, was more prominent and aggressive, and thus more noticeable than the other. Perhaps Matthew, directing his gospel toward Jews, emphasized their number, knowing the legal weight of two witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15).

Are the Devil and his demons real? The gospels leave no doubt that Jesus believed that the Devil and demons exist and that they have evil influence in and over human beings. Knowing that these powers of darkness are dreadful forces of evil, Jesus spoke of them with a serious intensity and authority. He also did not hesitate to declare openly the evil manifested in people's minds and bodies as coming from the source of evil, Satan the Devil.

Some background on demon possession may be helpful, as the subject has been greatly misunderstood.

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**1. How are demonic powers exercised?**

**COMMENT:** Demons are angelic beings who rebelled with Satan and were expelled from heaven with their master. According to examples in Scripture, the Devil's power is exercised in a three-fold way: 1) directly by himself, 2) by the demons who are subject to him, and 3) through human beings whom he influences and/or possesses. People who have rejected God's authority and love are in subjection to the supernatural power of Satan and his wicked way of life. A person's personality and will is taken over by these deceiving, lawless spirit invaders.

**2. What actually happens in demon possession?**

**COMMENT:** When possessed, the human body and mind are intruded by a spiritual parasite, causing conflict and disharmony. Like hypnosis, demonic possession cannot take place without a willing subject. Satan entered Judas because the man opened up an entranceway for the Devil by betraying the Son of God. Judas first entertained a thought from Satan before Satan himself entered, as the apostle John explains, "The devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot . . ." (John 13:2, 27; see I Samuel 16:14; I Kings 22:21-23).

When a person loses control of himself, Satan can take control and evil spirits have the opportunity to enter suddenly. In addition, immorality often precedes demon possession. When a person gives in to his sensual desires or to hatred and greed, he sets himself up for possible possession, or at the very least, strong demonic influence.

**3. Is there a difference between demon possession and influence?**

**COMMENT:** Most people are at least somewhat demon-influenced through Satan's broadcast of his evil attitudes and are enticed to sin (see Ephesians 2:2; Revelation 12:9). A quick glance at society reveals a perverse influence to pursue wickedness. An evil thought is introduced into the human mind, and human desire is motivated to pursue the yearning: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14-15). Demon influence begins with subtle suggestion and enticement, but it

can later lead to a person's becoming demon possessed, captive to the Devil, and as his slave, sinking into deep degradation.

**4. Do demons take possession of just minds, or bodies too?**

**COMMENT:** Evil spirits can take possession of human bodies. People sometimes invite demons to do so, and they become intimately acquainted, even friendly, with them. They are then called "familiar spirits" (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27). God instructs ancient Israel to put to death anyone who intentionally invites a demon to enter him. Once possession takes effect, sensuality and violence become more evident, as the person finds it difficult to resist the demon's will. Physical, mental, and spiritual disorders increase exponentially during possession, and the confusion, anguish, and mental filth caused by unclean spirits can result in insanity.

**5. Are all mental disorders the result of demonic possession?**

**COMMENT:** Not all disorders are the result of demonic possession (Matthew 4:23, 24; 10:1; 11:5). However, insanity, epilepsy, blindness, fevers, and various mental illnesses are frequent accompaniments and symptoms of demon possession (Matthew 12:22; 9:32; Mark 9:17, 25; Luke 11:14-16). Even so, Scripture does not necessarily identify these disorders with demon possession, though they may have been aggravated by these dark powers.

In the case of the demon-possessed man in Matthew 8, he obviously suffered from some sort of insanity. Demon possession is not just another name for madness, as they are clearly distinguished in Matthew 4:24. The Gadarene demoniac's disease was the result of his own wickedness, and the extreme demonic element added to his madness.

The apostle Paul mentions that the Gentiles sacrificed to demons (I Corinthians 10:20; also Leviticus 17:7; II Chronicles 11:15; Psalm 106:37), and demon possession is still an undoubted fact in many areas of the world. The Devil, as the prince of the power of the air, regulates the present way of life of the world, working in children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2). People yield themselves to his authority, and as a result, they become slaves to this evil power (Romans 6:16).

Part Two will explain Jesus' encounter at Gadara.

—Martin G. Collins