

# The Sabbath Sentinel

May–June 2008

**BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association**

*Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath"*

# The Sabbath Sentinel

May-June 2008 Volume 60, No. 3 Issue 531

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### Our Cover:

#### Learning to paint from the Master

"...since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made..." Romans 1:20.  
(Maroon Bells, Colorado; Source: iStockPhotos.com)

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# Whatever Happened to Personal Responsibility?

There is a very disturbing trend among Christians. It has been especially noticeable during this “silly season,” that is, during this political election cycle. There is a growing tendency for Christians to seek the same things from government that non-Christians want—for the government to take care of them. I am certainly not referring to all Christians, but the trend in the socialist direction is quite evident. An increasing number of Christians are looking to government, which is to say, politicians, to put food on their tables, bail them out of bad loans, provide them with health care, guarantee their jobs and their education, provide them with child care, and in general cushion their lives so that they can never “fail” or even feel uncomfortable.

My question to these Christians is “Who is your provider: Caesar or God?”

I have no problem with Christians being involved in politics or participating in the political process in general. Government, which can be defined as “force” or “coercion,” needs to be tempered and restrained by Christians whose desire is to live by the will of God. Otherwise, there is no one to demand moral restraints on the actions of politicians and governmental officials who would otherwise impose their will on the people by force. It is as John Adams said: “our form of government can only be practiced by a moral and upright people.” If Christians don’t provide those moral rails, then unscrupulous politicians will surely jump the tracks and use all the power of government at their disposal to impose their will and personal preferences on the people.

We hear a lot about “compassion” in government these days. However, it seems to me that the politicians’ version of compassion amounts to nothing more than taking someone else’s money and providing ourselves with some service that we desire. This wins a lot of votes for the politicians, but isn’t this nothing more than taking money from all of us and shifting it around to a variety of recipients to make them all feel as if they are getting something for free? I dare say that if each of us had to take our withholding tax out of each paycheck and mail it in to the government, we would have a very different attitude about the services we demand from the federal, state, and local governments. As it is, we never see the money, so we don’t think of it as our money. In fact, however, the government has confiscated a part of your paycheck to give it to someone else. Often that money goes to people who, we know, are lazy and are simply looking for someone else to provide them with a living. Governmental compassion (an oxymoron) is nothing more than “your money for my needs.”

I have known Christians who are quite content to let others supply their needs rather than getting up off

their lazy behinds and getting a job. What would happen if we imposed the command given by the apostle Paul, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10)?

There was a time in the U.S. when compassion was measured by the kind and generous actions of individuals and churches. Christians believed that it was their personal responsibility to see to the welfare of others, whether they were Christians or not. People took care of people, and churches took care of larger problems. There was no government aid, no taxpayer funded welfare programs. We did more for each other. Add to that the fact that people were more self-reliant. They valued their independence and freedom and didn’t expect others to come to their rescue whenever they had a problem. They would make do with what they had if at all possible, and only seek to impose their burdens on others when there was no other direction to turn.

Then came the realization among politicians that they could ensure their election by taxing one and giving the money to another. The taxed was convinced by the politician that the world would collapse without some new tax. The recipient of the politician’s “largesse” was convinced that it was only “fair” that the other man’s money should be taken from him in order to make the recipient more comfortable. The dirty little secret is that for every dollar taken by government from one person, only 28 cents enters the pocket of the recipient. The other 72% is swallowed up by an army of bureaucrats and administrative costs. This is not really compassion. It is more like Vinny the loan shark who takes his cut whenever money passes through his hands. You have to deal with him because you owe him, but you are always sorry you got involved with him.

Lest I be misunderstood, I am in no way suggesting that the elderly or the disabled who are receiving government assistance should not receive those checks. Most elderly people have spent their entire working lives paying into the government’s Social Security system, and it is only right that they should receive something back for having a portion of their earnings forcibly extracted from their checks during all those years they worked. And, what’s more, if that money had been handled properly by governmental agencies and politicians, they would have had a sizable nest egg for their retirement years.

My focus is on those Christians who are looking to politicians to “fix” their problem-filled lives. I have a

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# The Prophecy Pit

## Part 3



*by Kenneth Westby*

In Part Two we discussed the question, "What is prophecy?" We also saw how prophecy fits into God's overall plan for mankind—revealing both his nature and his purpose. We examined how the special genre of biblical literature called "Apocalyptic" was used both to conceal and reveal God's plan. In this third and final part of our study of prophecy, we will delve into the use of numbers in prophecy. We will also see whether prophecies are "cut in stone," or are somewhat flexible in their fulfillment. And finally, what is the end of prophecy?

### The Numbers Game

Many of the symbols used in the apocalyptic genre of literature are numbers. Numbers, of course, stand for things. In normal mathematical usage, for instance, a number represents one of a series of symbols of unique meaning in a fixed order that can be derived by counting. Numbers can also carry meanings beyond mathematics. Some of those meanings are culturally attached. When the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation were written with their abundant use of symbolic numbers, beasts and cities, readers in those times so remote from ours had a better grasp of the various symbolic meanings than do we two thousand years removed.

Theirs was an alien culture compared to ours with time-stamped language idioms we must struggle to understand. To ignore the age and cultural differences between our world and that of the biblical prophets is a sure recipe for misinterpreting Scripture. To put one's self into the thought world of prophets who spoke two or three thousand years ago is not a simple task. But unless that difficult task is taken up, the truth of specific prophecies may remain obscure or misunderstood.

Every age and culture has its own idiomatic expressions and symbols which are a mystery to people of other times and cultures. Today, we can speak of an especially good looking woman as a "10" as in the movie by that title. Its meaning is taken for granted and needs not to be explained. People know (at least in Western culture) it is shorthand for a ranking scale of one to ten, ten being the highest. How could a person coming to us from the 17<sup>th</sup> century understand our remark, "she's a ten"? They would know the number ten, but not what we meant by our using

it unless we did some explaining—and afterward they still might be a little confused.

A friend of mine has a boat with its name on the transom reading "XXIV / VII." I was clueless as to what it meant. Usually we name our boats something like "Peggy Sue" or "Gone Fish'in," but this couple tapped into a common and current numerical idiom: 24/7, i.e. twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, meaning "all the time." Now the older married couple were live-a-boards and had chosen this cutesy numerical jargon to convey their boating lifestyle. I don't know why I didn't immediately figure it out on my own, but I didn't. I needed to pause and translate the Roman numerals so my ear could pick up the idiom. Just looking at those big Roman numerals on the back of the boat, would you have correctly guessed what was meant? I guarantee you our friend from the 17<sup>th</sup> century would have been clueless.

Since numbers can have a literal face value and also carry symbolic values, one needs to wade into numbers with great care. In some languages letters of the alphabet also possess numerical values elaborating further the complexity of numerical use. The famous and dreaded number "666" has for centuries been attached to specific (evil?) personalities whose name in Latin, Greek or Hebrew had a numerical value of 666 (see Rev 13:18).

One of the first in a long line of personalities to be associated with "the Beast" was Caesar Nero, the persecutor of Christians. If Nero is written as nrw(n) ksr, then the sum can equal 616 or 666, depending on two possible spellings. Sometimes a little creativity is needed to get a particular name to add up to 666. It is doubtful that a specific person like Nero exhausts

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# Thinking like an Artist

by Brian Knowles

From childhood, I have known that I think differently than most of the people I've met and befriended in life. I didn't really know what to attribute it to until I began meeting others who think like me. Then I knew what it is: I think like an artist. Artists – the type that paint pictures – tend to think both visually and creatively.

Each profession demands a certain type of thinking. Physicists don't think like grammarians, and grammarians don't usually think like horticulturists. Artists tend to think about the aesthetics of things: the way colors work with each other, the way objects relate to each other and the way light affects everything. We think about design, composition, perspective and rendering techniques. When we create a composition on canvas, we ask of it, "What's going on here? What's happening? What's the dynamic?" We want to know, and depict, how the elements of our picture relate to each other. What do we want them to "say" to the viewer?

Artists, like most professions these days, are divided into a myriad of specialties and approaches. My wife, Lorraine, is an artist. Her emphasis is on color. She prefers pastels and hot pinks. She applies this color sensitivity to flower portraits – the only subject she paints. Lorraine has a strong sense of aesthetics. The appearance of everything is important to her. Colors must work well together. One of my nicknames for her is "Mrs. Go-with." When we go shopping, she carries color chips around with her in her purse.

My color sense is different from hers. I like grays, monochromatic approaches, and occasional "color surprise." I prefer earth colors and muted blues, greens and umber tones. My emphasis is more on light than on color. In painting, I prefer a somewhat tonalistic approach. This way of thinking lends itself to landscape and seascape painting, not so much to florals.

## Landscape as a Stage Set

When I paint a landscape, I tend to view it like a theatrical artist would view a stage set. It's like a stage on which something is happening—some drama is being played out. It might be a situation involving predator and prey; or hunter and hunted;

or man and machinery. It could be a weather event, or a geologic happening. The point is something is happening on the stage of my landscape or seascape. Often, I prefer to leave the "set" empty of anything but light and natural elements—trees, mountains, water, clouds. etc. There is a certain glory in the pristine solitude of nature for its own sake. I really don't like to glorify the relationship between predator and prey. I don't care for what man has sometimes done to the earth. Nor do I enjoy man's inhumanity to man, so my paintings never include battle scenes or Goya-like depictions of war, firing squads, tortures, and rapes (*i.e.* the celebrated "Rape of the Sabine Women"). To date, I have never painted to send political messages, except, perhaps, one: the Earth is a beautiful Creation of the greatest Artist of all, so let's keep it that way. Let's celebrate the handiwork of God rather than denigrating it. Let's live in harmony with nature rather than contrary to it.

We've heard the lyrics to the song that says, "All the world is a stage." It is. Daily dramas are unfolding on sections of that stage. God placed actors on different parts of the global landscape, or stage. We read in Genesis: "...the nations spread out over the earth after the flood," (Genesis 10: 32b). Following the Tower of Babel incident, God "scattered them from there all over the earth..." (Genesis 11:9b). Paul adds the idea that God "determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26).

God then handed the human actors upon the vast global landscape an improvisational "script": "...so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him though he is not very far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring,' " (Acts 17:27-28).

## Divine Hide and Seek

God then is the Creator of the stage, the sets, the actors, and the script. All of the players on the stage are his children. They are assigned to improvise in the process of seeking him as he hides, just out of sight, but close by. The whole thing is a "construct" that God has given man to develop his potential, to help him find his Creator. It is an acted-out game of, among other things, hide and seek.

As the human drama unfolds on life's global stage, the players learn lessons as they go. Each situation creates the next improvisation. At birth, we enter life's stage; at death we "exit stage left," having played out our roles as children, adults, parents, grandparents, heroes, villains, workers, hunters, soldiers, religious fanatics, or whatever. At the end of the drama, we may or may not have sought, or found, God. Everything we shall have done will have been done on the basis of choice – action and reaction.

## Under the Sun

In landscape and seascape painting, there is usually only one light source: the sun, or the moon. My favorite Old Testament book, Ecclesiastes, often speaks of things happening "under the sun" (i.e. Eccl. 6:1). The sun lights the divine stage by day, the moon, with its reflected light by night. Both good and evil take place day and night on planet earth. People do evil when they believe they can get away with it. John wrote, in reference to the Messiah as "Light": "...men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil," (John 3:19b).

## The Brisky Analogy

Darkness may hide some evil deeds from other players on the stage, but not from The Director. Nothing is hidden from God. Some years ago, my wife and I owned a delightful golden retriever named "Brisky." He loved to play hide and seek with us. We'd go out into the back yard with him and a tennis ball. We sit down in our deck chairs and one of us would say to the dog, "Wanna play hide and seek?" He'd wag his feathery golden tail enthusiastically and run up to the head of the yard and hide behind our big pine tree. He thought we couldn't see him—you know, like a little boy who puts his hands over his eyes and says, "You can't see me!" The problem with Brisky was that his rear end and tail stuck out at the back, and his nose protruded at the front—and the tail was going a mile a minute.

Then we'd say, "Okay, find the ball!" Brisky would lunge out of his "hiding" place, and come charging down to our end of the yard where the ball was hidden. He'd run around from place to place, looking for the ball, tail still wagging vigorously. When he found it, he would proudly present it to us as if he'd just achieved something worthy of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Then he would head for his tree again to await a repeat performance.

God loves to play hide and seek with his children. The problem is, we children are often reluctant participants in the game. We tend to lose awareness that

such a game is in play. Or, we spend most of our time "hiding" from God while our rear ends are fully exposed.

In the divine game of hide and seek, God sometimes hides from us: "*Truly you are a God that hides himself,*" wrote Isaiah (45:15). Because God is invisible (Col. 1:15), we sometimes mistakenly assume that he's not there. Yet, in the creation God has left us clues and evidences for his existence: "*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse,*" (Romans 1:20). The creation itself gives evidence of intelligent design – that there was indeed a creator. As the Psalmist wrote: "*The heavens declare the glory of God: the skies proclaim the work of his hands,*" (Psalm 19:1).

When I look out upon a landscape, I see the products of an intelligent process. The Creator has provided abundant evidence of his existence in the incredible complexity and interrelatedness of the elements in his creation. All of the carefully designed parts work together in a symphonic harmony.

**When I look out upon a landscape, I see the products of an intelligent process.**

Yet, despite this overwhelming evidence of a Creator, much of the human creation tends to deny that any divine intelligence brought it into being. It would rather believe that it is the end process of a random chain of unguided evolutionary events directed by no one. We mistakenly assume that because God is out of sight, he must not exist. Wrong! When my dog hid behind the tree, I didn't begin to doubt his existence. He'd left me too much evidence of it: his nose and his vigorously wagging tail! God too, though hiding, has left in his creation an abundance of evidence of his existence. We can see his "wagging tail" everywhere – if we're willing to look for it.

God's game of hide and seek has an end in mind: for man to find the hiding One. "*The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God,'*" (Psalm 53:1). In denying the existence of God, we deny that there is any overarching moral authority in the universe. Therefore, we are free to do what we choose on an individual, humanistic, basis: "*They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good*" (Psalm 53:1b).

For man to look upon the land and deny that its invisible creator exists, is to open a door of darkness upon the sunlit scene of divine handiwork. It is to misunderstand the divine game: "*God looks down*

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# The Warrior King and His Captive Bride

by Dr. Daniel Botkin

(2519 words) Psalm 45, which is subtitled "A Song of loves," begins with these words: "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made concerning the king." When the psalmist says that his heart is "inditing," this means that his heart is gushing and overflowing with excitement about the king. The reason for the psalmist's excitement is because this king is no ordinary king, but King Messiah, as the psalm soon reveals.

"Thou art fairer than the children of men," the next verse says, "grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." Both Jews and Christians recognize the king in this psalm as King Messiah. The Jewish Targum renders verse 2 (verse 3 in Jewish Bibles) "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than that of the sons of men" (*Ederheim, Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Appendix IX, p. 718). The New Testament quotes from this psalm and says that it refers to the Son of God. (See Hebrews 1:8f.)

The psalmist says that King Messiah is fairer than the children of men, more beautiful than the sons of Adam. Isaiah, on the other hand, said that "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2). How do we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory prophetic statements? The most likely explanation is that the psalmist is speaking about Messiah's inward spiritual beauty, while Isaiah is speaking about His external appearance. Isaiah is not saying that the Messiah would be ugly or unattractive; he is just saying that there was nothing extraordinary about Yeshua's ex-



Artwork by Daniel Botkin

ternal appearance. Outwardly, physically, He looked like a typical Jew. He had no halo over His head, as Renaissance artists have portrayed Him. He didn't walk around with glazed eyes like a zombie, as some Hollywood films have portrayed Him. He didn't sew a big Hebrew letter "Mem" for *Mashiach* on His robe to identify Himself as the Messiah. Outwardly He looked like a typical first century Palestinian Jew. Yet He had an inward beauty which made Him fairer than the children of men.

The psalmist links Yeshua's beauty to the grace which was poured into His lips. At the synagogue of Nazareth, the people "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Lk. 4:22). They were stunned. "Is not this Joseph's son?" they asked.

Grace was poured into His lips, the psalmist says. The Hebrew word for grace, *chen* (חֵן), is translated "charm" in the Stone Tanach—"charm is poured upon your lips." Charm. That is what drew me to Jesus, the charm of His words. When I read the Gospels for the first time, I was charmed, I was enchanted. I was mesmerized, I was captivated by His gracious words. I felt like the men who said of Yeshua, "Never man spake like this man."

The psalmist's heart was overflowing with excitement about the King, and our hearts should be overflowing with excitement about the King, too. Think of it. The King! That is exactly what the world needs. Not just any king, though. Not even just a good king. The world needs King Messiah, the one and only perfect King.

When Yeshua returns as King, He is not going to govern this world by democracy. When He returns, there will be neither a need nor a place for democracy to exist, because His Kingdom will be a Theocratic Monarchy. Yeshua is going to rule as a Monarch, not like some elected official who can be voted out of office the following term. If you look in a thesaurus, you will find that one synonym for the word *monarch* is the word *dictator*. Americans don't like the idea of dictators, because most dictators are selfish and oppressive and ruthless. But a dictator is just someone who dictates. He gives commands. He tells people what to do, and expects them to do it. In this sense, Yeshua will rule the earth as a dictator.

Sometimes kings have to make war. The psalmist continues this psalm of King Messiah with these words: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee" (vs. 3-5).

The King's intention is to establish truth, meekness, and righteousness in His Kingdom. Unfortunately, not all people are willing to embrace truth, meekness, and righteousness. Therefore the King must deal with the enemies of truth, meekness, and righteousness. He becomes a Warrior King and takes up the sword and arrows to establish His throne.

Of that throne, the psalmist says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre." According to Hebrews 1:8, it is the Son who is being addressed here as "God": "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Here is another Scripture that proves the Deity of the Messiah. We don't have to understand all the "how" details of the Incarnation. We only have to accept the testimony of Scripture, and believe that in some way Yeshua was the Incarnation of God.

"Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity," the psalmist continues, "therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee above thy fellows." King Messiah not only loves, He hates. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity.

Notice also that it was His love of righteousness and His hatred of iniquity that brought the anointing: "therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." The reason Yeshua received a surpassing anointing was because of His surpassing love of righteousness and His surpassing hatred of iniquity. There is an important lesson here for anyone who desires the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Your measure of the Holy Spirit's "oil of glad-

ness" will be determined by the measure of your love for righteousness and your hatred of iniquity. A shallow love of righteousness and a shallow hatred of iniquity will bring a shallow anointing of the Holy Spirit. A deep love of righteousness and a deep hatred of iniquity will bring a deep anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The deeper your love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, the deeper the anointing you will experience. And the deeper the anointing you experience, the more you will send forth the fragrance of the King, whose "garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." This is the fragrance of King Messiah, and this is the fragrance which King Messiah's Bride is to bear.

The Bride is described in verse 9 as "the queen in gold of Ophir." This verse is immediately followed by some instructions that are addressed specifically to the Bride of King Messiah: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him" (vs. 10f).

Notice that these instructions to the Bride are preceded by a four-fold introduction to get her attention: "Hearken. O daughter. Consider. Incline thine ear." The Holy Spirit wants to make sure the Bride is listening before these instructions are given. This should tell us that these instructions are important. The Bride needs to listen closely and consider what she is told to do. The instructions are brief ("forget also thine own people, and thy father's house") but they are important, because obeying these instructions will cause the King to greatly desire thy beauty.

"Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." How are these instructions relevant to us as the Bride of King Messiah? If you are familiar with the Torah, the psalmist's picture of a beautiful bride being told by a victorious warrior to forget her own people and her father's house may remind you of the Torah portion *Kitetse*, "When thou goest forth." The passage begins this way: "When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and Yahweh thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife" (Deut. 21:10-13).

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# What Difference Does God's Law Make?

**Some Christians argue that they are not “under law,” meaning God's laws. But Loren Seibold explains why obeying God's moral laws really is important.**

During a few weeks of each year, my back patio becomes a demonstration lab for one of the most famous laws of science: the law of gravity. Above the deck stand several large black walnut trees that produce thousands of hard, heavy walnuts. For a few weeks in the autumn, you relax on the patio at your peril, unless you're wearing a hard hat! Only the squirrels are delighted.

Walnuts fell from trees for centuries before Isaac Newton formulated the law of gravitation (he used apples). Newton's law doesn't make the walnuts fall; it only explains why they fall. There are, in fact, hundreds of laws of science. You may have learned some of them in school: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Energy cannot be created or destroyed. You can know either the location of a particle or its momentum, but not both.

The laws of science differ from laws made by governments. A friend was driving above the speed limit when she saw the red and blue flashing lights of a patrol car in the car's rearview mirror. She was so startled (it was her first encounter with the law) that by the time the patrolman asked her to roll down the window, she was weeping. He took mercy on her and gave her a warning instead of a ticket.

A person can sometimes get away with breaking the laws of a government. The laws of science, though, aren't negotiable. They are invariable facts of the physical world. You would be very foolish to say, “I've decided not to follow the law of gravity today,” and then step off the edge of the Grand Canyon.

## ***God's Invariable Laws***

God is the Originator of the laws of science, in that He created all that we describe by them. Because the laws of science never fail, they help us understand how the physical world works; we make use of them in order to fly an airplane, heat a house, or even hammer in a nail.

The God who designed the physical operation of the universe also created laws for human behavior. He

designed us in such a way that certain moral choices will always result in certain consequences. These laws, too, are necessary for us to understand how the world works.

The story of God's law begins with a deep, fatal wound in the spiritual fabric of the universe. In the beginning, God had designed human beings to live happily and peacefully—if we would follow His instruction. He gave Adam and Eve one rule: they could go anywhere or eat anything in their garden home, except from one particular tree.

Because God had created them with curiosity and freedom, they became especially interested in that forbidden tree! And with a little help from the devil, they did precisely what God had told them not to do. It soon became apparent to Adam and Eve, and to all who followed them, that one doesn't defy God's rules with impunity. The consequences were terrible and included death, toil, sickness, pain, and sadness.

The breaking of that rule changed something deep and fundamental. Sin became, from that point forward, a sort of universal systemic infection. There was no longer just one point wherein human beings could fail, but many. That's why God gave His people ten laws by which to live. The spiritual history of human beings ever since has been our effort to follow God's perfect, invariable rules, and God's efforts to save us from our inevitable failure.

## ***The Crucial Ten***

A few of these rules are respected by all human legal systems: killing, stealing, abusing our families, and dishonesty are unlawful nearly everywhere. Governments know that a society where people could kill, steal, and lie with impunity would be a very unhappy one. For God's other laws, though, human society is of little help. For example, God tells us to avoid sexual sin, while Western culture is saturated with immorality. “Don't covet what you don't have,” God says, though the world's economic system is based almost entirely upon convincing us to desire more and nicer things.

Some of God's laws are just between you and God. "Honor no other god before Me," God says. "Don't take personal advantage of the power of My name. Remember to keep the seventh-day Sabbath as your day of rest." God asks us to obey these laws, though we have the freedom not to.

Following God's laws, then, is more than just being a good citizen and staying out of court. If you want to capture God's original intention for humankind, you'll have to be intentional and purposeful about doing what God wants you to do, both in public and in private. And when you make that attempt, you'll discover a couple of things.

First, you'll discover that by following God's law, you'll become a happier, better person, in a happier, more peaceful family and community. Just as most cooks find that they have much tastier, more nutritious results when they follow a recipe, so we human beings are happier when we follow God's recipe for living our lives.

The second thing you'll discover, though, is that you can rarely keep God's laws as consistently as you'd like to. Even with God's assistance, we may still find ourselves, as Paul says, doing what we don't want to do, and not doing what we want to do.

## **Help Needed**

To Jesus, the Ten Commandments weren't just rules, but principles. He summed them up in this way: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" (commandments one through four), and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (six through ten). In saying this, Jesus closed the loopholes we might leave for ourselves.

While a person may never worship an idol or kill another (in fact, most of us haven't done either), can anyone honestly say they are always as appreciative to God as they ought to be, or as kind to others as they might be?

Jesus used the sixth commandment as an illustration: "If you hate someone—if you wish you could kill him—you are also breaking this commandment as surely as if you did kill him." Similarly, said Jesus, "If you really want to have sex with someone outside your marriage, you are breaking the seventh commandment as surely as if you had."

This leaves us in a quandary, for it means that even the best behaved and best intentioned of us inevitably follow in the footsteps of Adam and Eve. "All," insisted the apostle Paul, "sin and fall short of God's glory"—if not in deed, then in thought.

Not one of us succeeds in following God's law faultlessly. So while I "know that the law is spiritual," in

my heart I also know that "I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin." No wonder Paul wails, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

He answers his own question with confidence: "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Without Jesus, God's laws would be as certain and unforgiving as the laws of science. Paul said, "The wages of sin is death." Pure and simple—as inexorable as the law of gravity to one suspended over the Grand Canyon. But through the intercession of Jesus, our sins can be forgiven and forgotten, as if they had been cast into the Mariana Trench! (the deepest spot in the worlds' oceans.)

Please don't suppose, however, that because He loves us, God really doesn't care about how we act. I once watched a father try to control his badly spoiled child. "I know he's naughty," the father said, "but I love him too much to punish him."

He wouldn't understand that his love was misplaced until the boy grew into an undisciplined and lawless man. God is a much better Father than that. Sin is still sin, for the law of God is an invariable rule of the moral universe. God asks us to keep trying harder to love Him more completely, and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. But now, through God's gracious gift of Jesus, we may be forgiven when we fall and we can be assisted by the Holy Spirit to do better. So while the wages of sin is still death, now we also have the comfort of knowing that "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

*It fortifies my soul to know  
That, though I perish,  
Truth is so:  
That, howsoe'er I stray and range  
Whate'er I do,  
Thou dost not change.  
I steadier step when I recall  
That, if I slip,  
Thou dost not fall.*

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*Reprinted from **Signs of the Times**, April 2008, p.39. Loren Seibold writes from Worthington, Ohio. Loren is the Senior Pastor of the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church. Loren has served congregations in the Dakotas (SDA) and as Pastor in Palo Alto, California. He was the Vice-president and founding member of the Samaritan Community Counseling Center in Palo Alto, a member of the Central California Conference Executive Board (SDA), member of the dissertation review committee of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, volunteer with Amistad Foundation, member of the Human Rights Committee of the US Veterans Administration. He currently serves as associate editor for **Ministry** magazine.*

# Should God's People Be Assertive?

*By Dr. David L. Antion*

Must God's people sit helplessly by while others take away their rights? How is it that God's servants can go boldly and respectfully to God but fear to speak boldly and respectfully to church leaders? This attitude was even in some churches in Paul's day. 2 Corinthians 11:20: "In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face"(NIV).

Most people are either "nonassertive" or become "aggressive" when they are in disagreement. Either of these is an extreme. The "nonassertive" Christian goes through life without getting their needs met or their rights. The "aggressive Christian" goes through life sometimes getting their needs met but hurting people in the process.

Understanding our rights is the first step to learning Godly Assertiveness. In the "Bill of Assertive Rights" we find that we have the right to "judge our own behavior, thoughts, and emotions and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequences upon" ourselves. We have the right to offer "no reason or excuses for justifying" our behavior.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his/her religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his/her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." (From The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18)

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." (Article 19)

God allowed His servants to "Speak up" to Him. Moses did when God threatened to annihilate Israel and make of Moses' genealogy the nation God would choose. Moses reminded God that the other nations might say that He did this because He couldn't bring them into the land He promised.

## **Examples of Assertiveness**

David spoke up and said, "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house." God is not unjust or unfair that He has to be reminded by man.

But God encourages man to be properly assertive and to use the mind God gave him.

Jesus was assertive enough to resist the temptation to be intimidated by the Pharisees. They told Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but yours eat and drink?" (Luke 5:33) Jesus told them, "You cannot make the sons of the bride chamber (attendants) fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But the days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days."

Peter was assertive enough to ask Jesus if he could walk to Him on the water. "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water" (Matt. 14:38).

But Peter was out of bounds when he rebuked Jesus for showing "his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day."

Peter decided to set Jesus straight. He "rebuked" Jesus (Matt. 16:22). The Greek word is "Epiteimao" and means "charged" and is widely used in the New Testament. In this case Peter is trying to get these thoughts out of Jesus' mind. "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee." But Peter was not assertive. He was aggressive! He was outside of his own rightful place and was intruding into Jesus' rightful place.

Jesus was properly assertive. He set Peter straight. "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence to me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23).

To be assertive, we must know our rights and our boundaries.

## **Other Examples**

When King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden calf, he demanded that all his subjects bow down to it at the sound of the chord played by an orchestra. Three people did not and were noticed and reported. These were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The three men quietly and without disruption just did not bow to the golden image the King had set up.

Notice that they did not openly demonstrate through the streets of Babylon, trying to rally all the other Jews. They did not defy the king openly and

demandingly in front of others. They did not check to see if it would "be all right if we don't bow down before this idol." They merely did not do it!

But, because some were jealous of them, they were reported to the king who was not accustomed to having anyone not do as he commanded. Though the king had no right to make people bow to a god of his making or of his whim, he demanded they do just that. But these men refused respectfully. They did not berate the king. They did not make fun of his idol or insult him for making it. They merely refused to bow down to it.

But when the king said, "And who is the god that can save you out of my hand," they answered that their God could do so. But if He did not choose to they would still not bow down to the king's idol. Again, they did not attack the king or make fun of his idol. They just stayed within their own boundary and tended to the things they had a right to do.

We know the rest of the story. God saved them. They were courageous. They were full of faith. They were determined. They were assertive!

### **The Strength of your own Knowledge**

Assertiveness can just be being willing to speak up appropriately when something seems wrong or illogical. Another type of godly assertive behavior is having the strength of one's knowledge.

For instance, when Peter appeared at the gate of the house of John Mark's mother (Acts 12), they were all praying for him believing him to be in prison. When the servant girl recognized his voice, she got so excited that she left Peter at the door while she went to tell the others.

Instead of receiving the news and believing her, they told her she was "out of her mind" or "beside herself." But, she "insisted" that it was so. Nonassertive people can sometimes be talked out of what they have seen and know to be correct because they don't want to stand alone. To be assertive, one has to be able to stand alone in the conviction of one's knowledge. (It goes without saying that one would want to be open minded to new knowledge and new facts and would or should adjust one's position accordingly.)

The Bible talks about Christians having "boldness" and "confidence" and the apostles who had "freedom of speech" to speak God's truth.

Jesus speaks to the church at Thyatira and says, "But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bondservants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 3:20 NASV).

How can God's people help but tolerate this church condition if they cannot speak up or be assertive? Wrong church government usually ends up holding down appropriate godly assertion. Speaking of Diotrephes, John writes "...neither does he himself receive the Brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church" (3 John 10 NASV).

How can we be assertive in a godly way? Remember there is a difference between being rebellious and expressing an honest question, an honest opinion, or an honest proposal. (The example of Korah should not be cited to shut down an honest disagreement.) But how do you state a question or a disagreement?

### **Respectful Assertion**

Do it respectfully; "I didn't understand something because it just didn't make sense to me...."

Do it honestly: "I honestly don't see your point on..." Or "I think the church would be better off if we did..." Or "I would like to see us do ...."

In the congregation I pastor, a member may speak to any member of the Church Council or to the Pastor to convey his/her thoughts, questions, suggestions, concerns.

### **How to Be Assertive in your Church**

Always be assertive but WITHOUT accusation or imputing of motives!! People who are truly assertive are polite, kind, and respectful. They give the benefit of the doubt regarding another person's motivations.

Remember, be open minded yourself. Ask yourself, "Does it have to be MY WAY?" Are you open for changing your own mind? Or do you just want to state your opinion without any feedback or challenge to your own thoughts or ideas?

Be assertive.

Speak up...forcefully, sincerely, freely, boldly and respectfully and then be a loyal person and work for the best interests of the your congregation. You can't always have things your way. As long as the minister is not telling you what to do in your own personal life — what car to drive, what house to live in, what computer you can have, etc.; then you can work toward the best interests of the congregation even if your own ideas are not heeded by the majority. After all, you shouldn't be a tyrant any more than the minister should.

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*Reprinted from Guardian Ministries, P.O. Box 50734, Pasadena, CA. 91115, (www.davidantion.com). David L. Antion, Ph.D. is a certified Nutrition Consultant. He has studied clinical nutrition for over 40 years. Dr. Antion is also the founder and director of Guardian Ministries, www.guardian-ministries.org.*

# Fix my Kid

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This verse from Proverbs 22:6 is the desire of most of the parents to whom I have ever talked. The question I am usually asked is, “How is it done? How can we train our children to love God and live for Him?”

I'm sorry to say, the majority of Christian parents that I have encountered believe this verse means that we should lecture our children about Jesus and that we should send them to church and Sunday school. “Here's my child, Mr. Bible class teacher/youth leader. Fix my kid and teach him about Jesus.” I have talked to literally hundreds of parents who have tried this and they don't understand why their children have no desire to live for Jesus.

The majority of children raised by Christian parents will not live for Jesus as adults. In fact, research has shown that as many as 70-75 percent of children raised by Christian parents will NOT live for Jesus as adults. How can this be? Either we don't have the Truth of Jesus or we are conveying this Truth improperly. I believe the latter is the case.

Deuteronomy 6:7 indicates how God would have us teach our children to love Him. The previous two verses (6:5-6) are commands that we should love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and that the commandments of God should be in our heart. Then in 6:7 we are told to “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

This verse is a COMMAND for us to teach our children at four specific times: (1) when we sit down as a family, (2) when we are walking together, (3) when we lie down, and (4) when we rise up. Is that what is happening in your home? If you are like most Christians, you are probably doing just the opposite! Think about it.

When your family is sitting at home, what is usually taking place? You are probably watching television/DVDs, playing video games, or eating; or doing all three -- often at the same time. That's right, when we are sitting at home, the television or video games are probably doing most of the teaching, not Mom and Dad. And the worst part, research has shown that these sources of entertainment are also very effective teaching tools that are probably teaching values that are against the commands of God.

How about when we “walk along the road?” In today's society, we usually don't use walking as a means of family transportation. We drive our car. What is usually happening when our family is in the

car? Besides arguing, we are listening to music or watching videos. And what is the teaching that is taking place? For the most part, the entertainment of today is teaching a philosophy that is against biblical values. Another missed opportunity!

How about “when you lie down and when you get up?” In other words, when you go to bed at night and get up in the morning. The majority of us are watching the news, Leno, or Letterman when we go to bed. And when we get up in the morning it's usually the local talk or rock radio station.

Think about it. Even if the television/DVDs, games, and radio programs weren't spewing out philosophies that are against biblical values, God says these are prime opportunities for teaching our children to love him. Are we?

When you are eating, driving, going to bed, and waking up, are you using that time to impress the values of God on your children—or are you allowing the enemy to impress his values? It's your choice.

—Al Menconi

*Reprinted from “Perspectives,” at OneNewsNow.com. Al Menconi is considered a leading expert on the influence of today's entertainment on the Christian family, and has written extensively on the entertainment media and Christian parenting. He founded Al Menconi Ministries in 1982. The ministry website houses one of the world's most extensive collections of video game reviews from a biblical worldview.*

## Feast of Sukkot in Israel, 2008

It is truly one of the most exciting experiences that you will have in your life, to be blessed to spend a feast in Israel and take a pilgrimage in the land. After reading the Holy Scriptures for so many years, to be able to see it all with your own eyes will be a life-changing experience. We are trying to truly encourage representatives from countries all over the world to come and experience this rare blessing, and represent their given nation as **Zech. 14:16** states. After spending the feast in Jerusalem, you will never want to spend it anywhere else. As it states in **Eze. 36:38**, “**Like a holy flock, like the flock of Jerusalem in her appointed feasts, so the wasted cities shall be filled with flocks of men. And they shall know that I am Yahweh.**”

We are living in these times where Yahweh has brought Judah back to the land of Israel after 2500 years of Diaspora. Come and share what Yahweh is doing in His land Israel in these end times.

This would include **14 days and 13 nights** during the feast and the tour, **not including airfare, but including** all touring costs during and after Sukkot with two meals daily. You can download all feast information and applications at [www.coyhwh.com](http://www.coyhwh.com). The price is \$1099 (US) per person based on double room occupancy.

*Botkin: Warrior King, continued from page 8.*

Psalm 45 makes these Torah instructions about a captive bride spiritually relevant and very meaningful. In Psalm 45 Messiah is pictured as a Warrior King who goes forth to war against His enemies. He girds His sword on His thigh, leaves the ivory palaces of heaven, rides in majesty, and subdues His enemies. Among those whom He subdues, He sees a beautiful woman, a body of people who can be redeemed to collectively become His Bride. He has a desire unto her, that He would have her as His Bride. Like the bride in the Torah portion, Messiah's Bride is a Captive Bride. But she is also a *Captivated* Bride. She is captivated by Messiah's charm and beauty and glory. As a matter of fact, it is the charm, beauty, and glory of her Conquerer that has conquered her will and captivated her heart and captured her love.

Notice in the Torah portion that before the captive woman attains the status of the man's bride, she must first go through a process of preparation and purification, a "renunciation of her former heathendom" (*Hertz Commentary, p. 840*). This parallels the spiritual process we need to go through to become part of Messiah's Bride. First, the woman is brought home to the man's house. We first must be brought into the household of faith by believing in Yeshua. Secondly, the woman shaves her head and pares her nails and puts off the raiment of her captivity. This is a picture of how we must strip away those things which were a part of our former life. We have to shed our bad habits and strip away our old identity. Just as the woman was told to put off her raiment of captivity, we are told in the New Testament to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22). "But now you also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Col. 3:8). Thirdly, the woman must remain in the man's house and bewail her father and mother—in other words, as worded in Psalm 45, forget her own people and her father's house. After that, she can become the man's bride.

Those of us who were conquered, captured, and captivated by Yeshua are called to be His Bride, collectively speaking. What does it mean for us to forget our own people and our father's house? For those of us in America, it means to quit being so American in our thinking, especially in regards to spiritual matters. We don't need to be unpatriotic or anti-American, but we do need to "forget our own (American) people" when discerning spiritual truth and trying to understand how our King wants us to live. We need to quit letting worldly American culture influence us.

The typical worldly American's highest priorities are getting money, serving the employer, and keeping the appointed times at the job. Serving the Lord and keep-

ing His appointed times to assemble for worship are very low on the list of the worldly American's priorities, if they are on the list at all. However, the Lord tells us that our highest priority should be to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and trust our Heavenly Father for our physical and economic needs. (See Matthew 6:33.) This is the exact opposite of the typical worldly American's order of priorities. When determining the relative importance of things, we need to forget our own American people, and let the Lord tell us which things matter most.

We also need to forget our own American people when we think about what Yeshua is like. He was not a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Republican. He was a dark-skinned Galilean Jew whose only political interest was the Kingdom of God. He didn't go to church on Sundays, or celebrate Christmas or Easter, or eat pork. Some Christians think, "Yeah, but that's only because he had the misfortune of being born a Jew before the Law was abolished. If He had been born in twentieth-century America, I bet He would have been a Christian and done all those things!" (I think that Christians who think this way secretly wish Jesus had been born someplace in America's Bible belt.)

In order to be the Bride whose beauty the King greatly desires, we have to break free of the influence of the ungodly worldly culture around us. We have to hearken, consider, and incline our ear to the King's command to forget our own people. If there are truly good things and truly good people in your nation and culture, it's okay to be proud of those things and to honor those people. But there is no place in God's Kingdom for any kind of ethnocentrism or national pride that causes you to view others with scorn or contempt.

Those who hearken, consider, incline their ear, and break free from the ungodly influence of the world around them are "all glorious within." They are purified and prepared to be a suitable Bride for King Messiah. Psalm 45 (and this article) ends with these words: "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

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*Editorial: Continued from page 3.*

friend who is a debt counselor who will tell you that many Christians are up to their eyeballs in debt—not because they have been visited by some personal disaster, but because they believe that if they see something they want, they should acquire it as soon as possible by whatever means possible. They have no faith that God might provide what they need. After all, God might say, “No, you don’t need that” or “Not right now. You’ll have to wait for it.” These people don’t save anything for the future. They refuse to look beyond their immediate wants. Evidently these people have never read the biblical proverb: “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:6-8).

My tendency in dealing with such people is to say, “You got yourselves into this mess. You need to work yourselves out of it.” I am more inclined to give my money and time to those who, through no fault of their own, are unable to meet their basic needs.

There are two kinds of poor among us. Some are poor, not because they don’t make enough money or means, but because they are overcome by their own impatience and greed. Others are poor because they are not capable of making enough money to cover their needs. Jesus and the apostles told us repeatedly to “remember the poor.” I believe that these latter poor are the ones that deserve our compassion.

Many Christians have become tired and lax about following the financial and social principles laid out in the Bible. They have stopped studying the Bible with the view of improving their Christian walk or drawing closer to God. The result has been wrecked lives, broken families, and despair. It is not good enough to wait on God to give us an “impression” or an “impulse” that we should do this or that. We get plenty of impulses from our emotions. However, there are some very useful principles contained in the Bible that lead to peace and happiness. The problem for many Christians is that these principles require discipline. It requires no faith to shun the disciplined principles of God’s Word and look to government to make up for our laziness or lack of zeal. It does demand faith to aspire to follow God’s requirements for a rich and wholesome life. As Elijah told the Israelites, “Choose this day whom you shall serve.”

If you have been lax, renew your commitment to follow the precepts of God. Our faith is manifested by our willingness to obey the things that God demands of us. But God is not like the government that demands a dollar from you and only gives you back 28 cents. If you are faithful to Him, He will add increase to your lives and never short-change you. If you don’t know exactly where to start in recommitting yourself to follow God and His Word, then I suggest you start with the book of Proverbs. This book is full of practical wisdom on the things that concern us most: work, leisure, money, relationships, and ethics. God is eager to bless us. We only have to remember that He is “the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

—Kenneth Ryland

## The Faith of a Blind Man

by Donald Mansell

*“And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.” Luke 18:37, 38.*

It happened near Jericho during Jesus’ last journey to Jerusalem. Bartimaeus, the blind man, had evidently heard of Jesus’ power to restore sight. He believed Jesus could heal him but, because he could not see, it was impossible for him to come to Jesus unassisted, and apparently no one offered to conduct him to the Great Healer. Blindness also compelled him to earn his living by begging.

Passover was approaching. Pilgrim bands were wending their way across the Jordan valley toward Jerusalem. As Bartimaeus sat beside the Jericho road with palm outstretched he noticed something different about one particular group of pilgrims. Perhaps it was the unusual volume of voices. More likely it was a snatch of conversation. But whatever it was, Bartimaeus “asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by” (Luke 18:36, 37). Could it really be true?

“Is Jesus of Nazareth passing this way?” asked the blind man with mounting excitement. This might be his last opportunity. “He began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:47).

Some of those in the forefront of the crowd chided Bartimaeus, commanding him to “hold his peace” (Luke 18:39)—the Master had more important things to do than to attend to a blind beggar’s needs. But Bartimaeus would not be repressed, rather “he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:48).

He who sees the sparrow fall heard that cry above the hubbub of voices. Stopping where He was, Jesus “commanded him to be called.” The fickle crowd, changing like a weathervane, now assured the blind man, “Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee” (verse 49).

“What would you have me do to you?” Jesus asks tenderly.

At the sound of these words, Bartimaeus flung aside his tattered cloak, quickly stood, and tremblingly groped his way toward the voice, crying, “Lord, that I may receive my sight” (Luke 18:41).

Jesus said to him, “Receive thy sight” (verse 42); “thy faith hath made thee whole” (Mark 10:52). Instantly the blind man “received his sight, and followed” Jesus, “glorifying God” (Luke 18:43).

We need to be reminded that, no matter how long we may have been Christians, every one of us needs healing from spiritual blindness, which obscures our hidden weaknesses. Today, this morning, even now, Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

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*Donald Mansell, New Every Morning, page 98. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.*

the significance of the riddle. The readers of John's book may likely have associated the Beast with the Roman Empire if they understood "6" as the number of man and a repetition of "6" meaning man organized in opposition to God. There are many other possibilities.

Identifying the Beast (and his mark) has been a thriving cottage industry among prophecy buffs for two thousand years. Is it not merely an example of "newspaper exegesis"—using current news to interpret ancient prophecy? Should we not look carefully for historical events in the first century which might correspond to the apocalyptic visions before jumping to our current newspapers for fulfillments? Was John really describing 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century empires or dictators in chapter 13? What have centuries of "Beast Sightings" by these cottage industries produced of real value? Almost nothing!

The use of numbers in biblical interpretation is partly creative art, partly interesting coherences, and partly objective use of biblical symbols. Much depends on the skill and education of the practitioner. Numerics has become a religious obsession for many religious people; nevertheless, some of their findings are interesting. For instance, the difference between the letter sums of the Hebrew names of Adam and Eve is 26 ( $45-19=26$ ), 26 is the letter sum of YHWH, the name of the One True God. What does this interesting and strange congruity mean? What does it prove? How does knowing it help us to become more like God in mind and character? Well, I don't know, but it is interesting.

Jewish mysticism has developed an elaborate key word guide to numerological meanings of Hebrew words—one guide book by Aleister Crowley, published in 1952, is simply titled "777." Gematria is the study of Hebrew letters in association with numbers and is employed to derive secret or hidden meaning from Scripture. Gematria is a kind of numerology (the study of the occult meanings of numbers and their supposed influence on human life) and is employed by mystical Jewish movements like the Kabbalah and writings such as the Zohar which offer an esoteric interpretation of Hebrew Scriptures and doctrine.

Various forms of Christian mysticism have likewise blossomed over the centuries offering palettes of idiosyncratic prophecies, symbol interpretations, and guide maps. Much of modern New Age religion is, in fact, a blend of "old age" Christian, Jewish, and Pagan mysticism.

One Christian translator employed numerics to aid in producing a new version of the New Testament. The very bright and self-taught Russian immigrant

Ivan Panin produced his New Testament translation subtitled, "As Established by Bible Numerics." He writes of his early 20th century translation, which I've read, that "Bible Numerics have demonstrated that in the Bible not only the books and their words as well as their order, but the very syllables also and letters, are dealt out by measure as well as weight." While he discovered amazing patterns in the Hebrew text of the Psalms and in the Greek text of the New Testament, his work received poor reviews from the scholarly world. His methods were criticized for freely picking alternative reading of manuscripts to find the numerical patterns he was seeking and for claiming that numeric patterns can be found from any text.

Modern manifestations of the search for secret codes to unlock Scripture, and prophecy in particular, come to us in books like *The Bible Code*, the best-selling controversial book by Michael Drosnin published in 1997. He alleges the Bible contains coded messages, also known as Torah codes, which are words, phrases and clusters of words believed to be intentionally sequenced to reveal prophecy. His book predicted the coming of apocalypse in 2006, and proof that Lee Harvey Oswald was destined to assassinate John F. Kennedy. Now, how valuable is that!

No doubt you've been told that in biblical usage the prominent number seven means completeness or perfection; one, denotes unity; two, difference; three, testing; four, forces and creative works; five, divine grace; six, the number of man; eight, new beginning or commencement, and so on. No doubt some of this is probably true and we could elaborate a great deal more, but unfortunately, the Bible did not come to us with an appendix listing symbolic numbers and their various meanings. We have to discover these things by biblical context, usage, and by scholarly research into ancient literature to see how the ancients themselves used them.

The biblical scholar and dispensationalist theologian E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913) did develop a guide to "The Spiritual Significance of Numbers" which is appendix number ten in his famous *The Companion Bible*. He also published another work, *Number in Scripture*, with a more exhaustive treatment of biblical numerics. For those of you who like to play with numbers, Bullinger provides this interesting fact: "The four perfect numbers, 3, 7, 10, and 12, have for their product the remarkable number 2,520. It is the least common multiple of the ten digits governing all numeration; and can, therefore, be divided by each of the nine digits (one through nine), without a remainder. It is the number of chronological perfection ( $7 \times 360$ )."

You recall that the two witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days or 42 months (42months x 30 days

=1,260 days [Revelation 11:2-3]) which is a three and one-half year period. It seems to be a symbol of a broken seven or a limited period of unrestrained wickedness or tribulation. By contrast, 2,520, that unique and remarkable number, is double 1,260 and symbolically pictures an unbroken seven or wholeness, completeness and perfection. I don't think the Bible presents these numbers for precise literal computation, as some have tried to do. Rather, they are symbolic of real events which they represent, albeit in a coded literary form we call apocalyptic.

If you find that of interest, consider that the number 42 mentioned above seems to represent the number of waiting between promise and fulfillment, from bondage to redemption. Matthew in his gospel deliberately goes out of his way to draw our attention to the number 42 arranging his list of Christ's ancestors to add up to it (Matthew 1:17). "Therefore all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to Christ are fourteen generations." Three fourteens ( $2 \times 7 = 14 \times 3 = 42$ ) add up to forty-two. Matthew leaves out several generations to round out his numbers for symbolic significance. This is often how numbers are handled in Scripture, and we must not press them for literal application when that was never intended. He chose to highlight the name of David, which has a numerical value of 14 in Hebrew. David is the central figure in Christ's genealogy, and Christ is presented throughout Scripture as the greater David (cf. Acts 2:25-36). Matthews' arrangement and message would likely have resonated among his readers, even though it has probably been missed by succeeding generations.

Another advantage of the symbol laden apocalyptic genre was its ability to hide specific names behind symbols. The students of Hebrew Scripture could readily understand what was being referred to, for in-



*Isaiah's Lips Anointed with Fire* by Benjamin West (1782, Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery)

stance, in John's use of figurative cities like Sodom to refer to Rome yet without mentioning it. When John wrote Revelation, the church was being persecuted, and Rome was especially sensitive to any hint of subversion or rebellion. The church was in some respects a subversive organization in that it denied the divineness of Caesar and proclaimed a kingdom that would supplant Rome. The church needed the encouragement that the Book of Revelation offered, but its message had to be formatted in such a way that its powerful conclusions would sail over the heads of the pagan Roman overlords. Apocalyptic writing was perfect for that situation.

Even with the best of scholarly tools and decades of archeological discoveries, we still do not have all the information we need about this ancient body of prophetic literature to be dogmatic as to its absolute and original meaning. We have not exhausted all the possibilities so it is wise to avoid dogmatism and rather offer tentative conclusions based on the best current information available. These cautions may not be what the would-be prophecy guru wants to hear, but it is what he needs to know.

### **Prophecy Is Partly Set, Partly Open**

How God can prophesy, bring it about, without interfering in man's free agency? He obviously can do it, but how? God is free and he has made his thinking creatures—men and angels—likewise free. His plan is to ultimately have all his children, made in his image, come to embrace his Way of their own free will. This is a big risk on God's part, but he is up to the challenge.

God knows what he wants to do, for he is a constant and his overall character and plan do not change. Likewise, God's adversary, Satan, also possesses free will, and has in the past exercised it to oppose his Creator. God knows Satan inside and out—he made him. He knows what Satan's foreign policy is, so Satan is also a constant. Both God and

Satan are constants as far as character and policy are concerned. Man, however, is not a constant but is a variable. He too is free and is free to respond to either of the two great ways of living and thinking represented by the two constants, God and Satan, which represent the great choice that man must make. Now God also made man and knows him inside and out.

Considering the two constants which are very predictable (God and Satan), and the variable (man) who can choose to be influenced by either, God can reasonably plot how things will ultimately turn out. He will never take away his covenant of freedom with man, for he wishes man's love to be freely and intelligently given. So God patiently is working toward his goal—eternal fellowship with his sons and daughters in his paradisiacal cosmos.

As I demonstrated in Part One of this series, prophecy is commonly given with an "if" clause. That is, if the people heed the warning of the prophecy, the judgment will not come upon them. If they do not heed, it will overtake them. In that sense, prophecy is not settled or set in stone; it depends on how humans react to God's appeals to repentance and reform. Man is very much in the driver's seat as to which direction and to what end he speeds. The construction of most biblical prophecies was quite general, leaving room for a variety of actions and outcomes on both God's part and man's. This is why we can say prophecy is partly open.

The future is not specifically "fated" to be a certain unalterable way. Much depends on how we react and behave before our God. We saw from the prophecy against Nineveh how this openness worked; the destruction God threatened was obviated because the Ninevites repented.

Prophecy is partly set in the sense that what God has unalterably determined to do he will do. He may take various routes to his destination, but his arrival is sure. He will bring his kingdom to this earth. Nothing will stop it. Our choice is only whether we want to be part of it. Satan will resist it until the end but to no avail. God's promises will all be kept. His word never returns to him void. He will remember his holy ones and call them forth from the dust of the earth to eternal life and glory. He will forget no one and fulfill everything he has planned and promised to do. This is set.

### **The End of Prophecy**

We have completed a most brief survey of various aspects of prophecy. But what most of us want to know is how it all turns out. What will be the outcome of the great contest between good and evil, between light and darkness that our world has endured from Eden until now? At present, as we look about the world scene, it appears that evil has the

upper hand. In fact, looking back in history as far as we can see, that always seems to have been the case.

Is God troubled by this dismal picture? Does he feel defeated in any sense? Not in the least. His plan is moving inexorably forward to its inevitable conclusion—the Kingdom of God. God will come to his earth with shattering quickness and blazing light before which every edifice of evil and opposition will melt. He will undo in a day the evil of thousands of years.

"Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him....The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name" (Zech 14:5, 9).

The apostle Paul said there would come a day when "prophecies, they will cease." God will reign. His dear son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at his side will rule victorious over all creation. We also will be victorious over sin and death and reign with him. What then is the end of the story? How does it all turn out? What is the conclusion of all prophecy? There is a powerful, true, sure and satisfying two-word answer:

God wins!

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## **CDC study finds 25 percent of teen girls infected with STD**

*Jim Brown - OneNewsNow - 3/11/2008*

A newly released study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that at least one in four teenage girls nationwide has a sexually transmitted disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study indicates that more than 3 million teen girls aged 14- to 19-years-old have an STD — the Human Papilloma Virus being the most common infection. The study found the highest prevalence rate was among black girls — nearly half the blacks studied had at least one STD, compared with 20 percent of white and Mexican-American teens. Among sexually active teens, the rate was 40 percent.

Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Women for America (CWA), says bad public policy is to blame for the STD epidemic. "The funding of graphic sex-ed that encourages kids to be sexually active is a serious problem," She maintains. "We also have the FDA's decision to allow the morning after pill to be available without a prescription."

from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God," (Psalm 53:2). God is looking for those who will strive to understand the divine game and participate in it – those whose faith will continue to leap in the direction of the evidence until they find him. The hiding, invisible, God wants to be found!

The Bible is chock full of passages in which God invites man to seek him. God even told Israel that they could still find him in captivity—in the Diaspora—if they would be whole hearted in their seeking (Deuteronomy 4:29). Speaking of Israel, God once said, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land," (II Chronicles 7:14). The hiding God responds to those who aggressively seek him.

Tommy Tenney writes, "God doesn't really care about anything you can 'do' for Him; He only cares about your answer to one question: 'Do you want Me?' " (*The God Chasers*, p. 11). If we truly want God, we will actively, relentlessly, seek him.

The quest for God is not an effort to study his person in a science lab to determine what his "properties" are. It is a quest for relationship, for intimacy. Tevya, in "Fiddler on the Roof," knew God. He had a relationship with him. He talked to him all day long. "Would it spoil some vast eternal plan," he asked, "if I were a wealthy man?" When we have an intimate relationship with God, we too can talk to him like that. He's "Abba" — "Daddy."

When I'm sitting in a shady spot in nature, away from civilization, sketching a scene, I feel closer to God than when I'm driving on a congested, smog-laden, LA freeway. In nature, I feel like a minor scribe of God's creation.

Having written all this, it is important to remember that the relationship God seeks with us is more than a mere game. It is the stuff of life, and it involves a way of life. A great Jewish religious philosopher addressed this when he wrote: "Revelation is not an act of his seeking, but of his being sought after, an act of God's search for man. The prophet did not grope for God. God's search of man, not man's quest for God, was conceived to have been the main event of Israel's history. This is at the core of all Biblical thoughts: God is not a being detached from man to be sought after, but a power that seeks, pursues and calls upon man. The way to God is a way of God. Israel's religion originated in the initiative of God rather than in the efforts of man. It was not an invention of man but a creation of God; not a product of civilization,

but a realm of its own. Man would not have known Him if He had not approached man. God's relation to man precedes man's relation to Him," (*God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* by Abraham Joshua Heschel, p. 198.)

God has sought out man from Eden to eternity. He initiated the game. He gave us the rules (his Torah or "Instruction"). At first He revealed Himself, then, because of sin, He hid Himself. Now he appeals to us to seek repentantly with the promise that if we do, we'll find Him (Matthew 7:7). It was sin that caused God to hide himself, and it is repentance that will cause him to reveal himself. I refer again to II Chronicles 7:14, quoted above.

Upon the broad landscape of the earth, under the sun, a great game is being played out. It is a game of hide and seek. God, as Director, calls upon each of us to play a role in the divine drama. We can choose whether to be a hero or a villain. We are free to select the realm of light, or that of darkness. The script is improvisational – we make it up as we go. What happens on the earth's stage is the product of choices and decisions made by the players. It's a movable feast of moral alternatives. Each action generates a reaction. Domino effects ripple across the landscape, changing everything.

When Japan decided to bomb Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, 2300 Americans died, 19 U.S. ships were sunk or damaged, and the next day the U.S. declared war on Japan. Three days after that, the U.S. declared war on Germany and Italy. It was action and reaction. Japan, Germany and Italy were the aggressors. The driving philosophy behind their murderous acts was Nazism, or Fascism. The evil, and the victim's reaction to it, changed the course of history. The players on life's stage took on new roles and played them out to the end.

In our time, a new and equally virulent evil has appeared: Islamo-Fascism. Like the fascists and Nazis before it, it too attacks the innocent. On the morning of September 11, 2001, Islamic terrorists flew two hijacked airliners, fully loaded with passengers, into the twin towers of the U.S. Trade Center in New York City. A third hijacked plane flew into the Pentagon and a fourth, diverted from its intended course, crashed in a Pennsylvania field. It was another date that will live in infamy. More than 3000 people, innocently going about their business, died for no good reason. Families were shattered. Police and firefighters died in rescue attempts. New York City, one of the "sets" on life's stage, was left with a permanent architectural reminder that every generation of mankind seems consigned to battle some form of evil. Once it was Nazism and Fascism. Then it was communism. Today it is Jihad.

Again the course of history has been changed. The War on Terrorism began in earnest. It will be with us perhaps for generations to come. Either we defeat the Jihadists, or they defeat us. This enemy cannot be appeased, reasoned with, negotiated with, or cajoled into changing the theology or ideology that drives it. It must simply be defeated at every turn. The lead players in the West will have to find the moral courage, the righteous indignation, and the sense of outrage, to vigorously pursue this demonic enemy to the ends of the earth and beyond if necessary. Any perceived weakness on our part will be exploited. Any withdrawal will be viewed as a victory by the Jihadists.

The world's stage has become a global war zone. It features the Jihadists versus everyone else. What's going on under the sun these days is ugly, destructive and Satanic. If the evil is allowed to grow, it will poison the planet. If the milquetoast Left in America can get over its Chamberlain-like need to appease evil, the West could rise in formidable power to defeat this malevolent enemy. No enemy could stand against a truly united, United States. What's that old saying, "United we stand, divided we fall"? And what of Jesus' own words, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The United States is polarized between Right and Left. The Jihadists view this as an advantage for them. They know our internal divisiveness weakens us. What the Left doesn't realize is that it is being played as a "useful idiot" – but when the time comes, the Jihadists will just as enthusiastically murder leftists as well as those on the right.

The same is true for Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's new communist dictator. Right now he's cozying up to Ahmadinejad, Iran's fanatical leader—but only because they both have a common enemy, the United States. This is in keeping with the old adage, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Should the US be defeated by the Jihadists, they would turn on Chavez in a moment—whenever they decide to target South America for the imposition of Shariah law.

All this drama is playing out on life's stage, under God's sun, and God is watching from above. Each war, each retreat or defeat, and each victory, is the result of a decision someone in power – that is, someone in a lead role – has made. God has given us freedom of choice, and life as it unfolds on earth's stage is the sum of our choices – good or bad.

God gave us a beautiful global "set" to act out our improvisational drama. He gave us the freedom to be as creative as we want to be. His *Torah* – Instruction – is available to us if we want to act out our parts in accordance with it. Or, we can choose to ignore it and do what we're doing now – making a

gigantic, global, mess. In his day, around 55 AD, the apostle Paul looked at the world around him and commented:

*"...We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

*"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is upon their lips.' Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.' Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes," (Romans 3:9b – 18).*

Paul cobbled together verses from the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Isaiah to create that picture of the human condition in his day. It is of course full of generalities. Yet, even today it accurately depicts what is going on, on earth's stage, under the sun. Man is his own worst enemy. He is the enabler of Satan who preys on human sin, as he has from the beginning. Darkness feeds upon darkness and grows. No one is wholly righteous. We are all guilty of sins of commission, or omission. Our world is full of lies, liars and false witnesses. Deceit is omnipresent. Violence breeds violence and the world descends into a cauldron of its own blood. The end result is misery, heartache and destruction. It's the script mankind has chosen to act out on the stage of the world. We could have chosen a different Script – one that involved seeking God and learning to live his way, but under the influence of a malevolent dark force, we chose this ugly and destructive script.

That's why my landscapes are devoid of images of man. I don't like what man is doing to fellow man, to the planet, or to the creatures God put under his charge. So long as "ruin and misery" mark man's ways, there's no place for him in my paintings. It also helps me to understand just why God hides Himself. We have besmirched the beautiful "set" God created for man to act out the divine drama. We have elevated bad actors to lead roles and persecuted, marginalized and murdered the few heroes of history. Goodness is on the run, and evil is in hot pursuit. (Evil is as evil does.) When one tyrant bites the dust, a dozen more rise to replace him.

The world has become a vast insane asylum run by its inmates — hardly a subject to be glorified in art.

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*Brian is a professional artist and writer and is a former magazine editor. Brian is also an avid student of the Bible and a frequent contributor to the Association for Christian Development website ([www.godward.org](http://www.godward.org)).*

## It Begins with You

*"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27 NIV).*

Some months ago I wrote an article for this column entitled "The Gift of George Bailey." It was a reference to one of my favorite films, Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life." Capra succeeds in reminding each one of us that we all have a part in God's plan whether we see it or not. The seemingly small things we do daily can have a larger impact than we can imagine, and the world would be a lesser place if we had never been born.

That story of encouragement is a good one to recall from time to time, for it celebrates the optimism and faith that was once the glowing subtext of our culture. Capra could see in his beloved adopted country (he was an Italian immigrant) not only the gold in the streets but the gold in his countrymen's hearts, and his films reflected that set of values that rang in the halls of his experience.

I believe that the gold in our hearts is still there. I see it every day in the simple kindnesses that people shower upon one another, very little of which is seen on the evening news. Without civility and generosity no society can function for long, for people will sink into a vortex of self-indulgence with no regard for those outside their personal, empirical circles.

I see the gold in our hearts by the vast sums of treasure and time that Americans, without compulsion from government, give to private charities and individuals in need—done voluntarily through a desire to ease another's path. I was frustrated and angered when, after that tsunami struck Southeast Asia a few years ago, a UN official publicly scolded the United States for being stingy with aid. While the US government might have contributed less than some other governments, private giving from US citizens, companies, and charitable organizations far surpassed anything done by any other people anywhere. Such contributions were given from the heart and not from a cold bureaucratic calculation, but alas, the UN doesn't count such giving.

Never despise the day of small things, for one small kindness a day multiplied by 300 million citizens can soften the fabric of our society while at the same time strengthen our culture. But for this to work, the initiative must come from us, for by nature government, which can do many good things, cannot provide the caring touch of a flesh-and-blood human being. It must be from us if we are to reform our country.

—Lenny Cacchio

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Lenny Cacchio lives in Lees Summit, Missouri, and is very active in the Truckers' Bible Study in the Kansas City, Missouri, area. The Sabbath Morning Companion is now available as a devotional and journal through the Website of the Church of God, Kansas City ([www.kccog.org/literature.htm](http://www.kccog.org/literature.htm)).

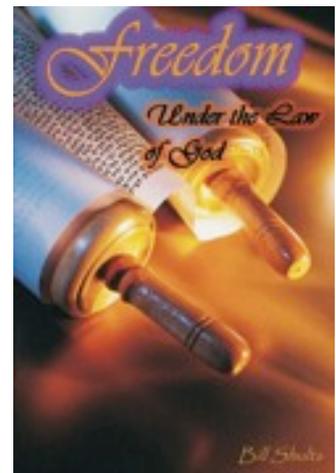
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**"Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples" (Isaiah 8:16 NIV).**

# The Church in the World

March 2008

## Blind Boy Sees the Light

**JAMMU & KASHMIR, INDIA (ANS)** — Ujesh was surrounded by reasons that he should not be blind. He had grown up in a village in Jammu & Kashmir, India, where thousands of pilgrims came to worship a goddess revered in his religion—a goddess believed to provide blessings and contentment. Beyond this, his father, Sojin, was a government doctor with many friends in the profession. When Ujesh lost his sight at the age of 15, many of these doctors did their best to help him, but it was fruitless.

Ujesh had little hope until, one day, a young man told his father about Gospel for Asia missionary Khamal. When Sojin brought Khamal to his home, however, a conflict sprung up.



*Gospel for Asia (GFA) missionaries have seen God restore sight to many blind people in India. Sojin and Ujesh learned about the Lord in a GFA church like this one.*

"We do not want Christian prayer in our home!" Ujesh's mother and siblings shouted. But Sojin had listened to Khamal's message and believed in Jesus. He started faithfully attending Khamal's church services.

Soon, Ujesh joined his father in going to church. But at the beginning, he scoffed at the Christians' service. Still blind, he only went to please his father.

But Sojin's faith in Christ was strong and real. He kept praying and believing, and the Lord miraculously restored Ujesh's eyesight even before the young man believed in Him. The miracle literally opened Ujesh's eyes, and he finally saw that Jesus was the one true God.

Pastor Khamal asks for prayer for Ujesh, who is now enrolled in a GFA Bible college. Pray also that the rest of his family will decide to follow Jesus.

## Algeria

### Christian Sentenced for "Proselytism"

April 10 (Compass Direct News) – An Algerian Christian was handed a two-year suspended sentence for "proselytism" yesterday amid an ongoing government crackdown on 26 of Algeria's 50 Protestant congregations, a church leader said. A court in Tiaret, 150 miles southwest of Algiers, delivered the written verdict yesterday after convicting the Christian on April 2, said Mustapha Krim, president of the Protestant Church of Algeria. Prosecution of "proselytism" violates Article 18 of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms the inherent right to publicly manifest one's faith. The Christian, who requested anonymity, plans to appeal the two-year suspended sentence and a 100,000 (US\$1,540) dinar fine, Krim said. Because it is suspended, the man will not have to serve his jail term unless he commits a repeat offense. According to Krim, authorities brought charges against the man after he reluctantly gave a Bible to an undercover police officer who posed as someone interested in Christianity and insisted that he needed one. Authorities in Algeria have accelerated church closures, with half of the country's Protestant congregations now ordered to cease all activity, Christian support organization Open Doors reported today.

## Jordan

### Ex-Muslim Tried for Converting to Christianity

April 24 (Compass Direct News) – On trial for converting from Islam to Christianity, a Jordanian man may lose legal custody of his children and have his marriage annulled if found guilty of "apostasy." Mohammad Abbad, 40, fled Jordan last month after Muslims violently attacked him and his 10-year-old son in their home and his father sued him on charges of apostasy, or leaving Islam. "I can't win this case as long as I insist that I converted from Islam to Christianity," Abbad wrote from the safety of a nearby country. "The court will annul my marriage, I will be deprived of my kids, I will be with no ID or passport, and my properties will be confiscated," said the father of two, referring to a previous Jordanian apostasy verdict. In a separate November 2004 ruling, an Amman Sharia Court headed by Judge Suleiman Abdullah Abu Yahya convicted a Muslim convert to Christianity of apostasy. Stripped of all his legal rights, the convert and his family fled Jordan to escape the verdict.

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The BSA has been serving you and other Sabbath-keeping believers for over 50 years. We would like to continue for another 50, but we need your help to do so. When you donate to the BSA, you are helping us keep alive the knowledge of God's beautiful Sabbath, and remember, all donations to the BSA are tax-deductible.

## **Estate Planning with the BSA in Mind**

Each of us wants to pass on to the next generation those things that we consider to be most valuable. The legacies we leave behind help our children and grandchildren build on the ground-work we have laid for their lives and success. In planning what to leave behind for others, we hope that you will consider the BSA and its support for God's way of living to be part of your legacy.

"FREE; LORD'S ACCEPTABLE YEAR, 2008.

Causes and continual interruptions delayed His Work, and had to change address. They are being sent beyond His Holy Year, March 9, etc.

The Heavenly Father's Calendar, through Lord Jesus, is complete (John 4:34, 5:26-27, 30, 37). Contains the Work He sent Jesus to earth, Jesus' image and likeness (Genesis 1:26, Isaiah 53:2 described). Old and New Testaments' Ten Commandments (unfinished) will be sent later. Calendars for you and others, how many? Send to:

CHURCH OF GOD (NEW TESTAMENT), AT LARGE  
DON & MAGGIE SODERGREN, Ministers  
PO Box 493  
Kailua-Kona, HI 96745 USA."

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Read Revelation in your Church, Rev. 1:3 says so.  
See [www.revelationaloud.net](http://www.revelationaloud.net).

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## **SEED Ministry**

Searching for a source for doctrinal literature in Russian and Ukrainian languages. Please send information to:

SEED Ministry  
PO Box 10  
Neck City, MO 64849

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## **Advertise in The Sabbath Sentinel**

**Classified ads** (20% discount for second time, 30% thereafter) are available at the rate of \$1.00 per word (including each word and each group of numbers in the address; telephone numbers count as one word) for each issue in which the ad is published.

**Display ads** are available at \$150 per quarter page for each issue the ad is published. Where possible your camera-ready copy will be utilized, or we will design your display ad for you. Send copy for all ads and payment to The Bible Sabbath Association, 802 N.W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA, USA.

**Discounts:** Advertise in the TSS Classified Ads section for more than one issue and receive discounts: \$1.00 per word 1<sup>st</sup> issue, 20% off for 2<sup>nd</sup> issue, and 30% off for subsequent times.

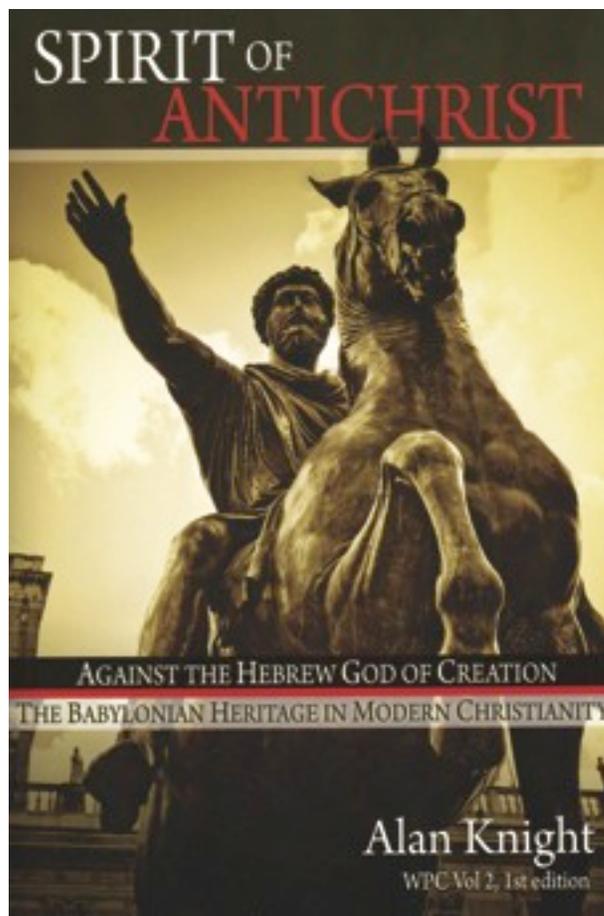
Ad copy without payment will not be accepted for publication. Deadline is two months prior to publication (i.e. if you want your ad to appear in the September/October issue we must receive it before July). BSA reserves the right to reject or edit any ad copy. Publication does not necessarily imply endorsement by the *Bible Sabbath Association* or *The Sabbath Sentinel*.

***Spirit of Antichrist*** is the long awaited sequel to author Alan Knight's very popular ***Primitive Christianity in Crisis***. In Revelation chapter 17 the apostle John presents a view of religious apostasy in his day that he connects with ancient Babylon. Scholars debate whether this should be understood as symbolic or literal. From the groundbreaking research that underlies this book, author and historian, Alan Knight, presents evidence that, in addition to the symbolism, much of it was surprisingly literal. John's description of a harlot "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication," is a reference to an exotic yet literal religious ritual performed in the ancient Near East.

In the process of pursuing these issues, the author solves a number of other biblical riddles, including the historical events behind the mysterious description in Genesis 6 of intermarriage between human women and the "Sons of God." Most surprising of all, the author presents evidence, collected from respected scholars that suggests these religious themes derive from repeated contact between more advanced religious traditions in the ancient world and primitive shaman priests from central Asia.

Finally, this historical background provides a dramatic new understanding of the prophecies of the book of Revelation, including the precise identity and significance of the mysterious eighth king described in chapter 17 as "was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven."

This book is available from the BSA for \$17 (nonmembers add \$3 for S&H). If you would like both ***Spirit of Antichrist*** and ***Primitive Christianity in Crisis***, send \$30 for both volumes (nonmembers add \$4 for S&H).



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## ***The Sabbath Sentinel***

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