

End Time Issues.....

CHRISTIAN RESOURCE – MINISTERS, TEACHERS, BIBLE STUDENTS

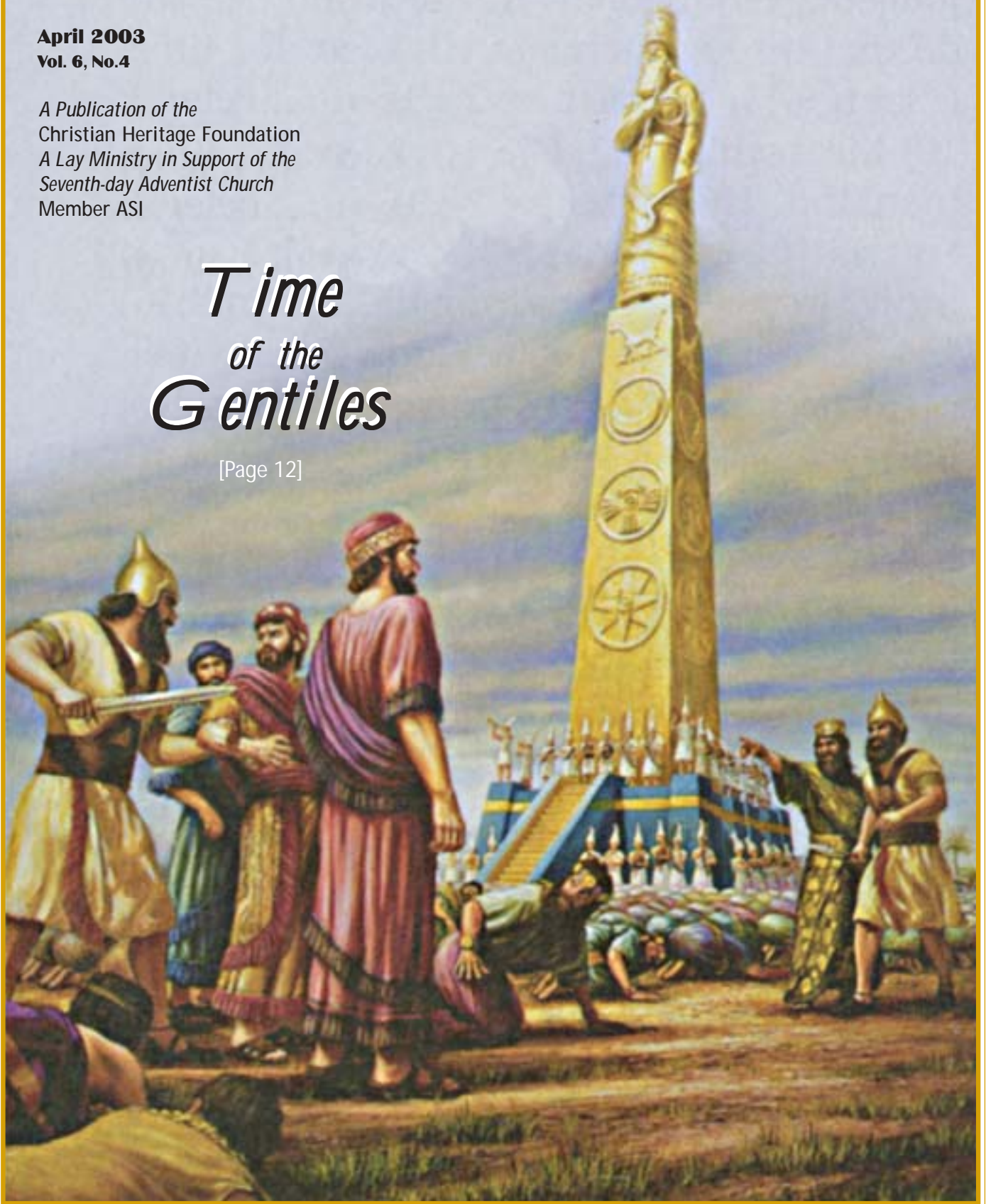
April 2003

Vol. 6, No.4

*A Publication of the
Christian Heritage Foundation
A Lay Ministry in Support of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Member ASI*

Time of the Gentiles

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EndTime Issues... e-Magazine

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EndTime Issues... is published ten times per year by the Christian Heritage Foundation, registered in Nevada July 26, 2001. *EndTime Issues...* is produced as a lay ministry to Christians with focused interest to the times in which we are living. This full-color e-magazine can be downloaded as a pdf file from the website or as individual black and white articles. Support comes from donations made to the Christian Heritage Foundation. For simple black and white hard copies, if you don't have access to the internet, an annual tax deductible donation (no tithe please) of \$25.00 within the United States is suggested to cover the annual costs (for non-U.S. contact us for suggestion).

Manuscripts are welcomed for consideration. They should relate to something that has recently been happening, to a clearer understanding of prophecy or have a deep spiritual end-time concern, be simply written and well documented with a focused interest to Christians. Length should be limited to 10 double-spaced pages. The ongoing appeal: "Issues of concern to the final generation."

Letters to the editor: We welcome your letters of encouragement, deepening insight on relevant topics and plain feedback relative to *EndTime Issues...* Please keep your communiques brief. Your letters will be the property of Christian Heritage Foundation. Personal answers normally cannot be made. Selected letters may be published in subsequent issues of *EndTime Issues...*

Supporting This Work

As the demands for the services of this ministry increase, so does the need for support. This work started with great *sacrifice* and *faith*. It continues under those same banners.

We need your support in prayers and funds. If our financial basis was broadened, it would open the doors for a greater number to hear and see these special truths for this time.

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THEREIN THE TRUTH LIES

Casting a vastly different picture than reality, Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, on April 5, 2003, denied reports that U.S. Army and Marine forces had taken the capital or the Baghdad airport. Over the airwaves he “assured” the Iraqi people that the Republican Guard was in control. Then he offered to take reporters to the airport to prove it.¹

Whether al-Sahaf was sorely deceived by his intelligence, in fatal denial or made outrageous statements to deceive isn’t clear. The city already knew that the government’s claims of *truth* were lies. Yet, for some, especially in the military, those words were an impetus to fight on.

Contemporary culture is showered daily with false advertising claims, spoof stories, perfidious political accusations, media bias and cheating scandals. Dishonesty drives the markets of persuasion. Conspiracy theories entertain the curious.

In a world filled with unwelcomed news, it has become fashionable to deny truth, revise “history,” and project blame on someone else. It is a sign of decreasing tolerance to reality at a time political correctness is legislating tolerance. Truth has become marginalized and a commodity to be manipulated.

“We are entering an era in which the news media and the general public’s adeptness at detecting and dissecting spin in public discourse is matched only by the messengers’ ability to spin with even greater speed and dexterity. The result, predictably, is confusion,. Put simply, it’s hard – and getting harder – to know whom to believe.”²

Many claim it is easier to infer falsehood from despots because one assumes a lie from them more than to know truth in a free world. In the United States over the past decade, Enron’s balance sheet, the dot com miracles and Clinton’s syntax were *truths* that lied.

Whether the source be an elected official, a corporate head or a parson behind the pulpit, skepticism has invaded the mind of most. When truth is presented, one questions how much was parsed to convince or please. Often news comes with the dubious thought, “What are they holding back.”

George Orwell once noted: “At a time of universal deceit – telling the truth is a revolutionary act.” As frustration rises with leaders trying to convince what really “is” and to attract loyalty, many are leaning on the entertainment industry, sensational media or churches as comfort “centers” for security. However, sensory experiences build dangerous barriers to reality. When feelings are appealed to, denial rises. This trend is sadly capitalized on by many church personalities.

Truth is only enriched as its luster is sought after, which necessitates earnest striving to obtain. Entertainment and informality are alibis for those who dodge truth. These are the guises for leaders who never mined the shaft of real understanding.

The Catholic doctrine (also adopted by Protestants under the situational ethics ruse) of *mental reservation* is being exercised in a religion of compromise and denial. Honesty and canard equally compete for the *common good*. The eternal security in what God demands is being neglected through appeals for peace, unity and tolerance.

The gospel message is *truth* in all its glorious fullness. It is to be presented so well, it convicts and convinces. The cultural skeptic must sense an appeal that will transcend emotionalism. Jesus is *the way, the truth and the life*. John 14:6. We have been commissioned to represent *all* He stands for. It demands effort, commitment and unswerving willingness to change. That is a supernatural task. Therein lies our challenge. We must obtain supernatural help. That is now the Christian’s greatest need – to be Spirit led. To represent Him requires a personal commitment to know and to be. Therein lies *truth*.

Editor, *EndTime Issues...* magazine, April 2003.

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VATICAN – HOLY SEE

CHURCH OR STATE

For nearly 700 years the papacy ruled as a church-state power until 1870 when the new government of the state of Italy (formally established in 1861) seized the “papal states,” which included Rome. Pope Pius IX went into self-imposed *imprisonment* within a few buildings in central Rome. This wiped out the *church-state* hierarchy of the Catholic Church but not the Catholic Church. Vatican I was called during this period and some of the most sinister decisions regarding the church, its power and future plans were developed, including the concept of papal infallibility.

To prevent remonstrance against the newly formed government, Italy passed a law entitled “Law of Papal Guarantees on May 13, 1871. It granted the pope sovereign honors and full freedom to exercise his spiritual authority, the right to receive and send ambassadors, with some minor territorial usage rights in Italy – plus a salary. Pope Pius IX refused to acknowledge this document. Immediately, the relationship between the Italian government and the Roman Catholic Church began to deteriorate. By May 1873 the Italian chamber of deputies invoked an 1866 law, taking over all religious orders, Catholic schools and hospitals throughout the country. That is when a serious blow came to the papacy.

It was during this period of *civic isolationism* that Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) came into power. He developed an official position on religious liberties and church-state relations, which demanded that states must not only care for religion but must “recognize the true religion professed by the Catholic church.” He was powerless to enact this and other dictums that evolved during this time. It wouldn't be until Vatican II that they would implement this

groundwork, which included “plans” to first coerce America and later the world.

On February 11, 1929, the Lateran Treaty and Concordant between the Vatican and the kingdom of Italy was signed, which established the autonomy of the Holy See as a *church-state*. On June 3, 1985, the Vatican and Italy ratified a *new church-state* treaty known as a “concordat,” which *replaced* the Lateran Pact of 1929. Though reported as a downgrade of Catholic power and papal influence, it actually gave greater international flexibility. To that point the original treaty declared Roman Catholicism as the state church of Italy. By separating from this, along with other legal stances, the Vatican – Holy See stands more independent without legal ties to Italy. This now opens the door for it to become a full-fledged member of the United Nations (U.N.) with

the question of religious issues lessened. Also, Rome ceased to be declared in the concordats as a “Holy City.”

The Holy See has been registered as a “Non-member State Permanent Observer” of the U.N. All other world religions serve as NGO's or non-governmental organizations. Because of the rarely-used designation granted to the Holy See, it has privileges of a state like no other church has. It can speak and vote at

all U.N. conferences. No other religion has this *elevated* status. Because U.N. conferences operate on a consensus, the ability to disagree with the major consensus gives it significant power. It is most intriguing that the General Assembly never took a vote on the presence of the Holy See at the U.N.¹

The Vatican is not registered with the United Nations as a state but as the Holy See. By definition



U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan meet with Cardinals Sodano and Etcheagaay at the Vatican 2/18/03.

Inside the Vatican, March 2003

the Holy See is a non-territorial religious entity. It is not a state but the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

Switzerland had been in a Permanent Observer status, but in February of 2002 they became a full fledged U.N. member. The Vatican is now the only Permanent Observer "organization" not yet admitted as a full member of the U.N.

The Vatican is situated on 108 acres and is a true sovereign state with citizenry, courts, police force, postal service and ambassadors. It is seen as a separate "nation." Yet, its U.N. ties are totally religious.

People look to the Vatican, not because of its vast military, economy or potential for commerce; they come in the hope to have contact with one of the most charismatic individuals in the world – the pope. He has enormous stature on the world scene.

"Critics contend that on some issues he is too theologically conservative for the times, but the steady parade of world leaders has made it plain that he is a man to be reckoned with.

"There are few experiences, even for a world leader, as daunting as being escorted through the elaborate halls of the Apostolic Palace. Along the way, thousands of years of history and power make their impression, even before the leader lays his eyes on the pope.

"A world leader is received by the pope in the private library. Here they will exchange gifts and read statements typical of any state visit. But the Holy See is a religious state, and that means there are variations on normal diplomatic protocol."²

"The Roman Catholic Church first officially participated at the United Nations when the Vatican City was invited to United Nations conferences because of its membership in the Universal Postal Union and the International Telecommunication Union. In 1957, through an exchange of letters, the Holy See and the Secretary-General of the United Nations agreed to refer to the Papal delegation at the United Nations as the "Holy See." Finally, on

March 21, 1964, Pope Paul VI established the first Holy See 'permanent observer' mission at the United Nations. As a result, the Holy See is regarded as a 'non-member state' permanent observer...

"The status of a permanent observer places restrictions upon an entity's role at the United Nations, and these limitations generally vary according to the type of permanent observer status. There are no provisions in either the United Nations Charter or the Rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council ('ECOSOC') that specifically refer to the participation of non-United Nations members in ECOSOC meetings. However, non-member state observers have been invited to participate in meet-

ings discussing matters of concern to those states. Since the Holy See is a permanent observer, it cannot cast a vote in the General Assembly of the United Nations. *But* permanent observers have sometimes participated, on an ad hoc basis, in General Assembly discussions and decisions. The Holy See has participated in the General Assembly on several occasions. Pope Paul VI addressed that

body on October 4, 1965, and Pope John Paul II did so on October 2, 1978. The Permanent Observer for the Holy See addressed the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament."³

In a legal sense the Holy See is a religious body represented at the U.N. Examination of its entry into the U.N. shows it achieved its exclusive position without meeting the proper criterion on member votes. It is quietly trying to achieve full status as a Non-member but not as the Holy See but as the Vatican, the official state! If it achieves this status and remains as a Holy See Permanent Observer, then it will be an achievement like no other in world politics, power or deceptive maneuverings has ever attained.

As all this moves forward, "The Roman Catholic Church is uniquely positioned to influence international policy-making. It speaks on issues of concern for its religious following to numerous nations around the world. At the international level, the



Pope John Paul II signs apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae.*
Inside the Vatican, March 2003

Roman Catholic Church uses its distinctive position at the United Nations to affect a wide range of global issues, including international economic development, women's status, population, and family planning....

"The Holy See's status at the UN entitles it to many of the same privileges enjoyed by governments. Yet, the Holy See lacks traditional citizenry of its own. The Holy See speaks at the UN not as a nation-state addressing the pressing concerns of its citizens, but as a religion seeking to exert its version of morality on Catholics and non-Catholics alike. All of the other religions of the world are entitled only to the limited privileges of non-governmental organizations within the UN. The Roman Catholic Church therefore enjoys a unique degree of international political leverage typically reserved for governments....

"The Holy See serves as 'the supreme organ of government of the [Catholic] Church,' with the Pope designated as its head in the Code of Canon Law. It is, by definition, a non-territorial religious entity. The Holy See consists of the Pope, the College of Cardinals, and the Roman Curia – the departments and ministries that assist the Pope in the government of the Church. The Pope possesses supreme authority within the Church, and no one may appeal his decisions or decrees. The Pope's authority rests on moral and spiritual principles and is not enforced by civil penalties.

"Widely regarded as a 'vassal' territory of the Holy See, the Vatican City exists solely to provide a base for the central administration of the Roman Catholic Church. Only 0.44 square kilometers in size, the Vatican City is the smallest area in the world that claims statehood.⁴

"... the Vatican is constantly interfering in American politics without any threat of congressional investigation. And such intervention occurs not only in the United States but across the world.

"Since the Vatican's intervention is almost as top secret as the CIA's, the following little-known episodes, with one exception, are provided by Catholic writers....

"It is obvious from such intervention in foreign and domestic policy and in its opposition to both contraceptives and abortion, that the Vatican views itself as the fulfiller of a theocratic world state, with the authority to tell legislators in democratic nations

what they must or must not legislate.

"If someone argues that the church is merely engaged in moral instruction, it is essential to note the distinction between a civil state and a church. In the United States, the Constitution requires the government to 'promote the general welfare;' not just the welfare of those approved by the Vatican. Moreover, the Vatican is not just a church; it is also a state ruled by the same people who rule the church....

"It also means that the Vatican claims representation in the United Nations and functions like a nation-state in international gatherings at the same time that it functions like a church. Yet, American politicians would never investigate the Vatican's numerous attempts to influence or control American foreign or domestic policy because, like a chameleon, it would claim it was merely functioning as a church, not as a state. In fact, it is already so powerful that anyone who tried to investigate it would find such an endeavor a political liability.

"All this is evidence why political ecumenism is a real danger. Progressive Catholics and non-Catholics must examine every proposal by Catholic bishops and Catholic politicians with unusual scrutiny as to whether they will move us ever closer to a theocratic state – quite like the state advocated by such Protestant right-wing groups as the Christian Coalition, Promise Keepers, Focus on the Family and James Kennedy's Coral Ridge Ministries. There is some evidence that they may already be in bed together."⁵

Quietly and imperceptibly the influences of the Roman Catholic Church increases. It has, since 1985, positioned itself in such a way it can play its church or state influence at will. Through social issues it is manipulating governments. Politicians are increasingly sympathetic to its demands because nearly everywhere they have Catholic constituents. The stage is being set for the assumption of power, which the Bible says will come. It will be supported by the U.S. government in unprecedented control to finally achieve a theocratic end one could easily call a tyranny.

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UPSURGE IN UNITY DIALOGUE

On January 24, 2002, Assisi, Italy, the largest gathering of ecumenical leaders in the world occurred under the Vatican's invitation. This is what religious columnist David Waters for the Memphis, TN *Commercial Appeal* reported:

"The Assisi Decalogue for Peace

"What if leaders of the world's major religions got together one day and denounced all religious violence? What if they unanimously agreed to make this a plain, clear and bold statement to the world?

"Violence and terrorism are opposed to all true religious spirit and we condemn all recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion.' It could change the world. At the very least, it would be big news, wouldn't it? Apparently not.

"More than 200 leaders of the world's dozen major religions did get together January 24 in Assisi, Italy. Maybe you missed the story about it the next day. Most newspapers didn't carry it. And it was hidden inside many of those that did. There was a lot of other news that day. The Enron hearings opened in Washington. John Walker Lindh made his first court appearance.

"It's no wonder the largest meeting of world religious leaders in history couldn't even make the front page. Pope John Paul II and a number of cardinals were at the meeting. So was Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of all Orthodox Christians. So were a dozen Jewish rabbis, including some from Israel. So were 30 Muslim imams from Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan. So were dozens of ministers representing Baptists, Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Disciples of Christ, Mennonites, Quakers, Moravians, The Salvation Army and the World Council of Churches. So were dozens of monks, gurus and others

representing Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Zoroastrians and native African religions. They ignored the personal and political risk of attending such a high-profile gathering.

"They convened and talked and prayed. They unanimously agreed to condemn 'every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion.' They also said, 'No religious goal can possibly justify the use of violence by man against man.' And that, 'Whoever uses religion to foment violence contradicts religion's deepest and truest inspiration.' They called their statement the Assisi Decalogue for Peace. It consists of 10 mutual commitments to work for peace and justice in the world, including this one: "We commit ourselves to stand at the side of those who suffer poverty and abandonment, speaking out for those who have no voice, and to work effectively to change these situations.' On March 4, the Pope sent a copy to all of the world's heads of state.

"Maybe you missed the story. It didn't even make the newspapers the next day, hidden inside or not. There was a lot of other news that day. Seven American soldiers were killed in Afghanistan.

"Israeli troops killed 17 people in the West Bank. Mike Tyson got a license to box. What if leaders of the world's major religions got together one day and denounced all religious violence – and no one cared?"¹

This is the letter and agreement to the heads of states and governments of the world that Pope John Paul II sent:

"LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II TO ALL THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD. THE DECALOGUE OF ASSISI FOR PEACE.

To Their Excellencies Heads of State or Government

"A month ago, the Day of Prayer for Peace in the world took place in Assisi. Today my thoughts turn spontaneously to those responsible for the social and political life of the countries that were represented there by the religious authorities of many nations.

"The inspired reflections of these men and women, representatives of different religious confessions, their sincere desire to work for peace, and their common quest for the true progress of the whole human family, found a sublime and yet concrete form in the 'Decalogue' proclaimed at the end of this exceptional day.

"I have the honour of presenting to Your

Excellency the text of this common agreement, convinced that these ten propositions can inspire the political and social action of your government.

"I observed that those who took part in the Assisi Meeting were more than ever motivated by a common conviction: humanity must choose between love and hatred. All of them, feeling that they belong to one and the same human family, were able to express their aspiration through these ten points, convinced that if hatred destroys, love, on the contrary, builds up.

"I hope that the spirit and commitment of Assisi will lead all people of goodwill to seek truth, justice, freedom and love, so that every human person may enjoy his inalienable rights and every people, peace. For her part, the Catholic Church, who trusts and hopes in "the God of love and peace" (II Cor 13,11), will continue to work for loyal dialogue, reciprocal forgiveness and mutual harmony to clear the way for people in this third millennium.

"With gratitude to Your Excellency, for the attention you will be kind enough to give my Message, I take the present opportunity offered to assure you of my prayerful best wishes.

"From the Vatican, 24 February 2002."

"Decalogue of Assisi for Peace

"1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.

"2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

"3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.

"4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.

"5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.

"6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.

"7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.

"8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we are desirous to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.

"9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.

"10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice."²

On January 29, 2003, Pasadena, California, the National Council of Churches met in a passionate conclave to organize the *Christian Churches Together – USA* to begin to fulfill this appeal. Their first goal is to grow "closer together in Christ." Their objective is to draw American Christian churches together – Protestant and Catholic – as never before. Their statement of unity principles follows areas of common ground one might anticipate. However, several decisions were made affirming the need to:

- Promote the *common good* of society (a Catholic doctrine used to pressure politicians and governments)
- Speak to society with a common voice (this strong focus would draw on *public promotion* in areas of unity)

- Decisions would be made by consensus (often a technique that can make a group decision vulnerable to the “loud’ and the “powerful”)

Unexpected participants are working together on this, including the Salvation Army, Roman Catholic Church, World Vision, World Wide Church of God, Mennonite USA and Evangelicals for Social Action.²

The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, convened between April 7-9 in Doha, Qatar, a Christian-Muslim initiative. They discussed the role of the Scriptures between the two groups. Reports are pending.³

A restless drive is seen all over the religious world to *unite behind something*. The meetings are convened, documents signed and new sessions scheduled in search of that one issue, that one

pivotal theme, that one cardinal decision that satisfies their unanswered longing for a global rallying call. Unsatisfied craving to be “together” drives the ecumenical movement onward. That issue awaits the right timing, the needed catalyst, the moment that appears all destiny hangs upon. The world seems to be waiting for a directive voice. It will come. When it does, it will mark the start of final events. The tarrying time will then be no more. Habakkuk 2:2-3.

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¹*Decalogue from the Vatican – The Assisi Decalogue for Peace*, www.wahiduddin.net/decalogue.htm

²http://www.nccusa.org/about/about_ncc.htm

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Midnight Call, April 2003

http://www.nccusa.org/about/about_ncc.htm



HEALTH QUEST

SARS – A Pestilence

“It is war with an unknown enemy.” said Sydney Chung Sheung-chee, President of the Hong Kong Society of Surgeons and Dean of Medicine at the Chinese University.

Starting in Guangdong province in southern China, it has spread now throughout the world. It is known that:

1. The organism is highly contagious
2. Facial masks and gowns help to block its spread.
3. Cold-like symptoms quickly move to pneumonia, which is severe (may require intensive care).
4. 3-4% of individuals die.
5. Healthcare workers are at high risk in getting it.
6. It is a virus called *coronavirus*, similar to those causing the common cold.

At first China blocked the World Health Organization inspectors from entering Guangdong province.¹ They reversed this position, and a full investigation is under way.²

This emerging epidemic is having cultural impact. Tourism and business travel have been severely curtailed. Many physicians in the most infected areas are fearful of returning home. Hotels have become quarantine areas. Guests that check into hotels are asked to provide detailed information about contacts and travel. Public places are wiping phones, furniture and elevator buttons hourly with clorox. In restaurants the staff are wearing masks and latex gloves. The airline industry is feeling the decrease in reservations and cancellations.

Compared to other historical outbreaks, SARS is not that severe. Yet, it is fraught with the *unknown*, and that is driving the precautionary measures. Currently, travel restrictions have gone out to

Singapore, Hanoi, Taiwan, Macau and Toronto. Quarantine and isolation camps are being used in some places.

Are we seeing an overreaction to this new disease? No. Because of travel, half way around the world is just next door. Those that are dying are not just the very old, infirmed or very young. Many are what appear to be healthy individuals. As WHO inspectors probe the effects inside China, they are finding much more serious complications than initially reported.

The economy of many nations is being effected. Franq Gong, President, Bank of America, Hong Kong, said a September 11 for the economy is on the way.¹

Signs – Symptoms

Cold-like symptoms
 Chills
 Coughing
 High fever
 Difficulty breathing
 Aching all over

Is this a pestilence? – like Jesus talked about as a sign of the end? Yes – a pestilence is some form of disease that spreads quickly throughout the community. It is virulent (easily passed) and has devastating results. Bible prophecy will likely be filled with many kinds of pestilences. AIDS certainly is in this category. SARS has joined this list.

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¹newsmax.com 3/25/03

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³AP Wire 4/4/03



Why Jesus is Coming Soon

~ Reason Five ~

A Prediction about to Happen

In her voluminous material related to the coming of Jesus, E. G. White penned significant details related to the *sequence* of end-time events.¹ She opened up remarkable insights into understanding prophetic truths, especially in Daniel and Revelation. Much space was given to warnings related to any delay in preparation for that “great day.” Helpful outlines in what to expect and how to deal with last day trials were provided in such compilations as *Last Day Events*, *Maranatha* and *The Great Controversy*.

In the last volume of the Conflict of the Ages series, *Prophets and Kings*, she made a very unusual statement. That book was first published in 1915 with the first copyright of 1917. These words were penned sometime after 1910 as near as can be ascertained. This is what she said:

“The trying experiences that came to God’s people in the days of Esther were not peculiar to that age alone. The revelator, looking down the ages to the close of time, has declared, ‘The dragon was

wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.’ Revelation 12:17. *Some who today are living on the earth will see these words fulfilled.* The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church, will in the future lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great conflict.”²

This is not a major Biblical sign, nor does Ellen White make a great issue of this. It was penned only once not long before she passed away. Approximately 93 years has gone by since then. The delay cannot be much longer.

Reference:

¹ White, Ellen G.; *Sequence of EndTime Events* [Christian Heritage Foundation, Granite Falls, WA; 2003 (R)].

²*Op cite, Prophets and Kings*, p. 605.



Prophecy Unfolds



Franklin S.
Fowler Jr. M.D.

TIME OF THE GENTILES

LUKE 21:24

BY FRANKLIN S. FOWLER JR., M.D.

There were many allusions to the end of time or end of the world in Jesus' discourses. Notable was His response to the private query of Peter, James, John and Andrew on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21). There Jesus tied together major issues that referenced Daniel 8-12, the fall of literal Jerusalem and signs that would follow patterns outlined in the book of Revelation.

One message that Jesus added to Luke 21, not found in the other records, was this verse:

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke 21:24.

Why did Luke feel inspired to insert this and not the others? When would the "times of the Gentiles" be fulfilled? What follows that time? How does it influence our eschatologic view of Jesus' end-time message?

Background

Luke was a Gentile convert and spent much time with Paul. He was, therefore, involved in the expanding work of evangelizing the Gentile world. This was recorded in fascinating detail in his writing of the book of Acts. A physician, a man interested in detail, a Gentile and one with great compassion for the salvation of all, he recorded this verse, quoting the words of Jesus, that something would terminate – at a fulfillment – for the Gentiles.

Another interesting issue is the word itself interpreted in many translations as "Gentiles." The Greek root word in this verse is *ethnos*. Originally, it was used for people held together by a common bond. Later, it became a derogatory word for "common" people, and associated with this was the concept of "foreigners." The form used in verse 24 is *ethne*, which refers to the Gentiles or Gentile nations (Matthew 4:15; 20:25; Acts 4:25, 7:7, 13:19; Romans 5; Galatians 3:8; Revelation 10:11, 14:8, 15:3). In many places it is simply translated "nations."

From a Jewish perspective, Luke appears to be presenting this, "... the Gentile world had no external existence. The great turning-point will be the messianic age. Then the nations who have made Israel their subjects (especially Rome!) will be destroyed by the Messiah and finish up in hell."¹

In this context and in a still broader misunderstanding of the very Messianic mission by the disciples, came the end-time discourse of Jesus.

“With the overthrow of Jerusalem the disciples associated the events of Christ’s personal coming in temporal glory to take the throne of universal empire, to punish the impenitent Jews, and to break from off the nation the Roman yoke. The Lord had told them that he would come the second time. Hence at the mention of judgments upon Jerusalem, their minds revert to that coming, and as they are gathered about the Saviour upon the Mount of Olives, they ask, ‘When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? [MATT. 24:3.]”²

There was to be a Messianic age when all would be restored. Jesus carefully wove together the fabric of a dual prophecy. There would be an end to the oppressive Gentile rule. But its greater fulfillment would come at a final time in earth’s history.

The Setting and Context

Jesus follows a very tightly defined order of end-time signs. Though beyond the scope of this article to review the details, He divided the end-time issues into three divisions: Before the Time of Trouble, Little Time of Trouble and Signs of the final end. This is how these were developed:

Answering the Questions			
	<u>Matthew 24</u>	<u>Mark 13</u>	<u>Luke 21</u>
Before Time of Trouble	(beginning of sorrows) Kingdom against kingdom Famines Pestilence Earthquakes	(beginning of sorrows) Kingdom against kingdom Famines Trouble Earthquakes	(-0-) Kingdom against kingdom Famines Pestilence, signs in heavens Earthquakes, fearful sights
During Little Time of Trouble	(endure to end – saved) Persecution Hated of all nations Betrayed False prophets Love of many waxes cold	(endure to end – saved) Persecution Testify before kings/rulers Betrayed Hated of all men	(-0-) Persecution Prison, before kings/rulers Betrayed Martyrdom
Sign of the End	End comes when Gospel to all world	(-0-) Gospel first published	(-0-)

Then Jesus introduced *special* end-time material with Danielic ties. This is how He outlined that:

Special End-time Information

	<u>Matthew 24:15</u>	<u>Mark 13:14</u>	<u>Luke 21:20</u>
Evil Power Harm	When see abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel	When see abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel	When see Jerusalem compassed by armies – know desolation near
	Then	Then	Then
Flee	Flee to mountains Woe if with child breast feeding	Flee to mountains Woe if with child breast feeding	Flee to mountains Woe – child breastfeeding
	Then	In These Days	These Days of Vengeance
Time of Trouble	Great tribulation	Affliction – worse since creation	Fall by sword Dispersed to all nations
	Warning	Warning	Jerusalem
Period in Question	False christs	False christs	Trodden down by Gentiles till time of Gentiles fulfilled
	Immediately After Tribulation	After Tribulation	After time of Gentiles
Celestial Signs	Celestial signs	Celestial signs	Celestial signs
	Then	Then	Then
Second Coming	Christ coming	Christ coming	Christ coming

Several observations come to the fore in these tables and in their Danielic ties. First, the *abomination* that leads to *desolation* in Matthew and Mark parallels the encompassing of Jerusalem with the Roman armies when they set up idols to their gods. The Old Testament ties are found in Daniel 8-9 and 11-12. The Hebrew word for abominations is *shiqquwts* and relates to idolatrous standards. This directly relates to the setting up of a moral code that is contrary to God's laws. When that occurs, it is time to flee. The way Jesus presented this material, a defined order was given in the specific context of the two divisions noted. In the special information area, these were the sequenced points:

- Abomination – idolatrous standards
- Escape
- Time of trouble (includes Little and Great)
- False christs – time of Gentile fulfilled
- Celestial signs
- Second coming

This parallel analysis would suggest that the Gentile issue came to an end just before the celestial signs (noted also under the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-14). Following this is the return of Jesus – also alluded to in Revelation 6:16. It can be assumed that the word "fulfilled" *completes* a prophecy. The time of the Gentile is during a period of trouble and persecution of God's people, *and* it involves the *trodding down* of Jerusalem. When this prophecy is fulfilled (*pleroo* – to expire), the trodding down of God's people by the Gentile will have ceased.

Common Threads

What comes to an end or is fulfilled is actually implied in verse 24 – the “trodding down” of Jerusalem. This intimates that if the meaning of Jerusalem can be understood *and* the trodding down grasped, this *insert verse* by Luke could be comprehended.

First, looking at Jerusalem we note that early on it was a Canaanite city called Salem. Then in early Jewish history it was called Zion, Jerusalem and the City of David (II Samuel 5:6; I Kings 8:1; I Chronicles 11:4, 5:7). Approximately 690 B.C., preceding the Babylonian captivity, it began to have a spiritual and religious meaning: Holy City (Isaiah 48:2, 52:1), then a “holy mountain” “for all people” (Isaiah 56:7). Jeremiah noted a prophetic hope it would be a place where Gentiles would come (Jeremiah 3:17) and drew eschatologic expectations from Jerusalem (Jeremiah 31:38). We find even in Isaiah an expectation that Jerusalem would be persecuted (Isaiah 40) and then someday it would repent (Zechariah 8:15), personifying its name.

As time went on, the word Jerusalem became synonymous for God’s people. In the great covenant restoration prayer of Daniel 9, he noted:

“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people [are become] a reproach to all [that are] about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.” Daniel 9:16-19.

This personification of Jerusalem is carried forward into the New Testament imagery, finally culminating in Jerusalem being the bride of Jesus. The intimation is that the time of the Gentiles will end when God’s people cease being trodden down.

The “trodding down” is *pateo*, suggesting crushing, trampling down, persecuting, even despising God’s laws. There are strong ties to the book of Daniel in these phrases:

1. In Daniel 8:10 the little horn (it’s second rise) casts down God’s people and stomps (*ramac*) on them. *Ramac* contextually reveals persecution of God’s people by the papacy.
2. In Daniel 8:13, Gabriel, in a recapitulation of the thought in verse 10, uses a different word – *mirmac* – meaning persecution.
3. In Daniel 12:7 the persecution and *scattering* of God’s people (*naphats*) will be *ended* at the deliverance of God’s people, ending a 3-1/2 year period.

Though a detailed study of Daniel 8-12 cannot be done here, the Hebrew appointed time, *mowed* or *moed* ends at *eth qets* or *es qes* (Daniel 8:19). The trodding under of God’s people, persecution, appointed time, end of time and deliverance of God’s people all finish at the *moed*, *mowed*s and half *moed* (12:7).

Our contextual setting can be expanded by noting that exegetic ties tell us that the time of the Gentiles will be finished when the persecution of God’s people is completed – even more specifically, at the end of a 3-1/2 year period.

The Temple Court

In the great interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, this message is given:

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty [and] two months.” Revelation 11:1-2.

The outer court was for the Gentiles. They are measured later and symbolize those who are wicked. It is intriguing that they will tread (*patco*) under foot (*persecute*) the holy city (God’s people) for – and here it is again – 42 months or 3-1/2 years.

These help develop a link between Luke 21, Daniel 8-12 and Revelation 11. The same contextual language is drawn upon. The time of the Gentiles is a final period of persecution for God's people and *ends* with the time period *at* the deliverance of God's people. The persecution ends because something is completed with God's people.

The Modern Jerusalem Issue

Jesus personified Jerusalem as His holy people:

"The voice that speaks to the impenitent today is the voice of Him who in heart anguish exclaimed as He beheld the city of His love: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.' Luke 13:34, 35, R.V. In Jerusalem, Jesus beheld a symbol of the world that had rejected and despised His grace. He was weeping, O stubborn heart, for you! Even when Jesus' tears were shed upon the mount, Jerusalem might yet have repented, and escaped her doom."³ [Jerusalem = His people]

"As Christ on the mount overlooked the doomed city, his tender sympathetic tears flowed, and he uttered the yearning cry of a broken heart because of rejected love. He looked upon Jerusalem with suffering tenderness,..."⁴

Many people aren't aware that there is a difference between the Old and New Jerusalem. The new section was built on the outside of the small old section. It was established as a city in 1860. In the Six-day War in 1967, Israel gained control of Jerusalem. An Israeli flag was hoisted atop the Dome of the Rock where the ancient Jewish temple stood in Jesus' day. General Moshe Dayan, Defense Minister at that time, who was the architect of Israel's victory, ordered the flag removed. He returned the Dome of the Rock and parts of Old Jerusalem to the Muslims to appease one billion Muslims.

Old Jerusalem is 1/2 x 1/2 mile in size. The Vatican wants control of that part of Jerusalem. Currently, though under Jewish authority, it is occupied by Jews, Muslims, Armenians and Christians. The Dome of the Rock considered holy to both Jews and Muslims, has a mosque on it. Millions of Christians believe that a new temple will be built on that rock, which is, they feel, where the antichrist will appear at the end.

The challenge to Christians is how the Biblical prophetic messages are interpreted. *Literalism* taints apocalyptic views, directing its proponents in a never-ending search for events to fit the passage. Good hermeneutic research is set aside with contextual exegesis of words and phrases. E. G. White looked forward to this issue when she said:

"I also saw that Old Jerusalem never would be built up; and that Satan was doing his utmost to lead the minds of the children of the Lord into these things now, in the gathering time, to keep them from throwing their whole interest into the present work of the Lord, and to cause them to neglect the necessary preparation for the day of the Lord."⁵

Iniquity being full is a pivotal understanding.

In Genesis 15:13-16, Abraham was told he wouldn't settle in the promised land until the fourth generation. Why? The iniquity of the Amorites would then be complete. Amazing mercy and longsuffering is displayed by God in this simple illustration to maintain the freedom of will until all hope is past. The *time of the Amorites* did finally come (Deuteronomy 9:3-4).

We can draw a distinct parallel from the Amorites to the Gentiles – all non-Jews or those not having a relationship with Jesus.

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this [is] my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Romans 11:25-27.

Fullness here is *pleroma* and means the *vessel* is full, the number is complete eschatologically. When the time of the Gentiles is complete, it will be time to see the salvation of God's people, spiritual Israel.

"With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps an account with all nations. While His mercy is tendered with calls to repentance, this account will remain open; but when the figures reach a certain amount which God has fixed, the ministry of His wrath commences. The account is closed. Divine patience ceases. There is no more pleading of mercy in their behalf....

"The crisis is fast approaching. The rapidly swelling figures show that the time for God's visitation has about come. Although loath to punish, nevertheless He will punish, and that speedily. Those who walk in the light will see signs of the approaching peril; but they are not to sit in quiet, unconcerned expectancy of the ruin, comforting themselves with the belief that God will shelter His people in the day of visitation. Far from it. They should realize that it is their duty to labor diligently to save others, looking with strong faith to God for help. 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'"⁶

The time of the Gentiles is the end of probation for the world. It brings to an end persecution of God's people, judgment on those rejecting His grace, and ushers in the kingdom of glory for His people. It is final end time, which finishes a climaxing 3-1/2 year period of covenant probation. There is nothing contextually to encourage a literal Jerusalem motif. It must be noted that when this "time is fulfilled" there are celestial signs that immediately precede the coming of Jesus.

References

¹ *Op cite*, Brown, Colin, editor, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, p. 607 (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI), 1986 pp. 792-793.

² *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 25-26.

³ *Mount of Blessings*, p. 151.

⁴ *The Signs of the Times*, 2/21/1878.

⁵ *Early Writings*, p. 75.

⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 208-209.



LIBERTY

IN THE

BALANCE

Saudi Arabia Let Off The Hook Over Persecution – Again Patrick Goodenough The State Department has once again chosen not to add Saudi Arabia to its list of the world’s worst religious persecutors, despite recommendations from an expert panel, the strong views of campaigners – and its own assessment that religious freedom “does not exist” in the kingdom.

Appeals Court Sticks by ‘Under God’ Ruling in Pledge Kevin Eckstrom (RNS). The federal appeals court that last June struck down the Pledge of Allegiance because it contains the words “under God” refused Friday (Feb. 28) to reconsider its ruling. The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals defended last year’s decision and said it will not be swayed by public opinion in favor of the pledge. The court, however, stepped back from its original ruling that invalidated the 1954 law that inserted the words “under God” into the pledge. In the new ruling, the court focused only on the requirement to force school children to recite the pledge; the pledge’s constitutionality remains intact. Attorney General John Ashcroft promised to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, which legal scholars said is likely to hear the case. Members of Congress, most religious groups, and the vast majority of American citizens quickly condemned the ruling last year. The ruling was also criticized by other members of the 9th Circuit, including Judge Diarmuid O’Scannlain, who wanted to rehear the case. “We should have reheard the case ... because it was wrong, very wrong — wrong because reciting the Pledge of Allegiance

is simply not ‘a religious act,’ wrong as a matter of Supreme Court precedent properly understood and wrong as a matter of common sense.”

Indian Christians Alarmed by Passage of Religious Conversion Law, T.C. Malhotra. The parliament of India’s Gujarat state on Wednesday passed a controversial bill purportedly to protect religious freedom but that requires anyone wanting to convert from one faith to another to get prior permission from a district magistrate.

VHP Seeks Constitutional Hindu State in India (Compass). Spurred by a call to amend the constitution and declare India a “Hindu nation,” fundamentalists have stepped up attacks against Christians. “I think we stand for Hindutva (nationalist Hinduism) and not for government,” said World Hindu Council (VHP) general secretary, Dr. Praveen Togadia, as he pressed for the amendment. “We have decided to go for Ram (a Hindu god) rather than Raj (the government).” Reports from rural areas indicate Hindu organizations have been forcing Christian believers to reconvert to Hinduism. A gang of suspected Hindu activists also assaulted Father A. Anthony, 49, a Catholic priest in Chintalapudi, in February and robbed him at gunpoint of 100,000 rupees (\$2,100). Several months ago, Anthony had received an extortion demand from unidentified persons. Finally, inter-religious tension worsened when the federal government unveiled a portrait of Veer Savarkar, the father of fundamentalist Hinduism, in the Central Hall of Parliament in New Delhi.

Islamic Court Opens For Business in Indonesia

(Compass). Indonesia's first Islamic court opened in the troubled northwest province of Aceh on March 3 as thousands celebrated. The Aceh legislature recently instituted sharia, the Islamic legal system based on the teachings of the Quran. The new court can implement punishment for Muslims who propagate beliefs other than Islam, fail to attend Friday prayers three times in a row, or sell food, cigarettes or drinks in daylight hours during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Officials said the court would

eventually handle murder, adultery and theft cases. Led by two decorated elephants, about 5,000 people in the city of Banda Aceh marched, sang Muslim songs and chanted prayers to mark the inauguration of the court, which coincided with Islamic New Year celebrations. The government of Indonesia has tried to maintain religious neutrality. However, the country's estimated population of 220 million is 80 percent Muslim, making it the world's most populous Muslim nation.

CALAMITY BULLETIN

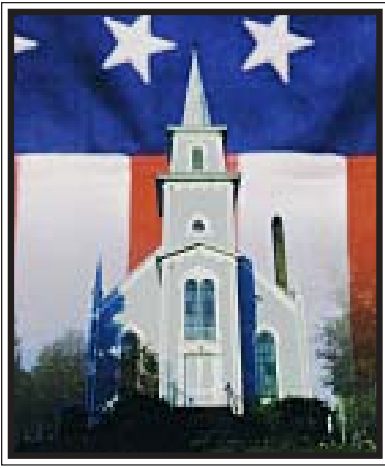
(March 2003 Calamities – with damage)

CALAMITY WATCH TOTALS – MARCH 2003

	<u>March</u>	<u>Yr to Date</u>	<u>Avg./Mo.</u>
Deaths	657	13,650	4,550
Homes destroyed	43,863	755,561	251,854
Resume' March:	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Homes Destroyed</u>	
Cyclone	2	250	
Tornadoes	10		
Hail	30	38,127	
Landslides	325	476	
Floods	22	2,510	
Earthquakes	268	2,500	
	<hr/>	<hr/>	
	657	43,863	

March Extremes:

Nova Scotia – Worst storm in history.



Focus on the *Sabbath*

[This section is devoted to news, articles, laws, sermons and political events that draw attention to the Sabbath. We are especially interested in how the Christian world views a weekly “rest day.” This is to help our readers have insight into what others think regarding the fourth commandment – a pivotal prophetic end-time issue.]

What is the Christian Sabbath?

PART II

by Peter Ditzel (Protestant Bible Expositor)

The God’s Rest View

As we have seen, the Bible does not allow for bringing a Sabbath day—whether the seventh day or the first—into the New Covenant. The Lord’s Day view, too, is flawed because it invents from vague, unconvincing evidence a day that it says Christians ought to keep.

But we have not yet examined all of the evidence. I have reserved the following Scriptures to be studied under this heading because, rather than just showing a lack of evidence to support the forgoing views, they are positive evidence that God has not instituted any day that He intends Christians must keep. The evidence in these Bible passages is so compelling that even if we ignored everything else in this article, these Scriptures alone prove that there is no Sabbath Day or Lord’s Day for Christians to keep.

Romans 14: Paul begins this chapter by saying that we are to receive into the church those who are weak in the faith, but not to let this cause disputing. In verse 2, he points out that one person may believe he can eat all things, and another, who is weak in faith, may believe he can only eat vegetables. So he clearly delineates here that, in the matter of food, believing you can eat only vegetables is an indication of a weak faith. Nevertheless, neither of these two—the one who is strong in faith or the one who is weak—should despise or condemn the other for his difference (verses 3–4).

Now notice verses 5–6: “One man esteemeth one

day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.” One person believes he needs to observe a day; another person does not observe a day. Each position is okay. God accepts both of these people, and we should not judge, or condemn, either person for his or her stand on the keeping of days (verses 7–13).

From this information, is it possible to determine Paul’s—and even God’s—view on the keeping of days? Yes, it is. If Paul believes that it is all right to keep a day and all right to keep no days, then he must believe that there is no particular day that must be kept. If God accepts the person who observes a day and the person who observes no days, He must not have a day in mind that He believes people must keep. If God accepts the person who keeps no days, He will not condemn or even chasten that person for Sabbath breaking or for not observing Sunday as the Lord’s Day.

This conclusion is so obvious, the implication of Romans 14 is so clear, that the way Sabbath and Lord’s Day keepers try to get around it is by saying Romans 14 does not apply to the Sabbath or Lord’s Day. But the Scriptures do not allow such an interpretation.

One of the most well known promoters of the seventh-day Sabbath, Samuele Bacchiocchi, on pages 365–366 of his classic work on the subject, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, says that Paul is not addressing anything to do with Mosaic law, but only asceticism. But Bacchiocchi's argument falls flat.

There is nothing in the context to pinpoint that Paul is addressing only asceticism. Paul, himself, identifies that what he is addressing in Romans 14 are "doubtful disputations" (verse 1). These might concern asceticism, pagan practices, or the law. In fact, examining the context of chapter 14, we see that Paul specifically addresses the Mosaic law in chapter 13. He says that love is the fulfilling of the law and lists some points of the law (Romans 13:8–10); he says that we should cast off the works of darkness and not make provision for the flesh (13:11–14). He then immediately (the chapter breaks in the Bible were added centuries later) says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Romans 14:1). Contrary to what Bacchiocchi asserts, Romans 14 is written in the context of how we fulfill the law.

Richard P. Belcher and Richard P. Belcher, Jr., in their book *A Layman's Guide to the Sabbath Question*, summarize the position of those who hold the Sunday-Sabbath view toward Romans 14:5: "If one interprets this passage to refer to the Christian Sabbath and contends that even this day can be set aside, this is obviously an erroneous interpretation. If no day has any special significance, including the Lord's day, then the apostle John in Revelation 1:10 is either misleading, or is in conflict with Paul, or John is cast in the role of the weaker brother" (pages 67–68). John and Paul are not in conflict. This argument assumes Revelation 1:10 is a reference to Sunday and sees Romans 14:5 in that biased light. Since, however, no line of reasoning in the Belchers' book, nor any presented by anyone else I have ever read (and I have been studying this subject for years) presents compelling evidence that Revelation 1:10 is a reference to Sunday, this argument is really saying nothing. Those who hold this position are telling us to believe that Romans 14 does not refer to the weekly Sabbath (they say it refers to the annual Jewish holy days) without presenting any real evidence.

Let's face it. Paul makes no exception. He says it is perfectly acceptable to esteem every day alike, which is the same as esteeming no day in particular.

He gives no hint whatsoever that either the seventh-day or the first day are exceptions to what he is saying.

Since Paul, in Romans 14, allows the keeping of days if one desires to do so, does this mean that Paul believed it was okay to keep a day, such as a Sabbath or a Lord's Day, thinking that in doing so one is earning merit with God? What if one keeps the day believing it is required and that not keeping it will bring chastisement from God? Paul addresses this aspect of the question in Galatians and Colossians.

Galatians: Anyone studying this subject should read Paul's entire epistle to the Galatians. I will pick out a few verses. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (1:6–9). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (2:16). "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (2:21).

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (3:10–14). Paul is saying here that if we try to attain righteousness by the law, we come under a curse. For example, anyone who thinks he can earn merit with God by keeping a Sabbath comes under the obligation to keep the entire law perfectly. As no one can do this (Romans 3:20–23), the attempt only condemns.

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (3:19). The law was given to Israel to expose their sinfulness only until Christ ("the seed") came. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (3:24–25). The law shows us our sinfulness and drives us to Christ. Paul teaches that the law was added only until our justification by faith in Christ. After that, we are no longer under the law.

"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (4:3). Notice that Paul uses "we." He is saying that both he, a Jew, and the Galatians, who had been pagans, "were in bondage under the elements of the world." "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (4:9). The Galatians had been pagans. They were now turning to the law. Yet Paul says they were returning to the "weak and beggarly elements." As shocking as it may sound, Paul places the Old Testament law in the same category as pagan rules and regulations.

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of [or for] you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (4:10–11). There are those who say the issue in Galatians is only circumcision. This verse shows that it is not true. The Galatians were turning to the keeping of "days and months and seasons and years" (4:10—New King James Version), such as the Sabbath, new moons, feasts, and sabbatical years. Paul says he was afraid for them for their doing this indicated that his labors in preaching the Gospel of grace to them might have been in vain.

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" (4:21) What law? Some pagan law? No. The Law of Moses is meant. "For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar [Hagar]. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem

which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (4:22–31). Paul's teaching is clearly that we, as Christians, are not under the Old Covenant's laws, which lead to bondage. We are to be free under the New Covenant.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (5:1). "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (5:4). If we try to be justified by the law, we come under its bondage. We fall from the doctrine of grace, no longer believing in justification by faith alone in Christ alone.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (5:13–15). "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (6:2). The real way to keep the law is to love one another. "Biting" one another, such as accusing of sin those who do not keep the day you keep, is the real sin.

Colossians 2:16–17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." Paul's triplet of holyday, new moon, and sabbaths can only be a reference to the holy days, new moons, and Sabbaths of the Old Testament. Clearly, Paul is not addressing Gentile asceticism. Nor can the supposition of Gordon Clark (normally one of the better Bible commentators) concerning verse 16 in his Colossians commentary be taken seriously: "The conclusion is therefore that Paul does not abrogate the Lord's Day [by this, Clark means the

Sunday Sabbath], but that he forbids the celebration of saints' days, Easter, and Christmas." Nowhere does the Bible equate holydays, new moons, and Sabbaths with saints' days, Easter, and Christmas.

Why does Paul use the plural by saying "sabbath days," or Sabbaths? Eighteenth-century theologian John Gill answers in his commentary on Colossians: "The 'sabbaths' were also shadows of future things; the grand sabbatical year, or the fiftieth year sabbath, or jubilee, in which liberty was proclaimed throughout the land, a general release of debts, and restoration of inheritances, prefigured the liberty we have by Christ from sin, Satan, and the law, the payment of all our debts by Christ, and the right we have through him to the heavenly and incorruptible inheritance. The seventh year sabbath, in which there was no tilling of the land, no ploughing, sowing, nor reaping, was an emblem of salvation through Christ by free grace, and not by the works of men; and the seventh day sabbath was a type of that spiritual rest we have in Christ now, and of that eternal rest we shall have with him in heaven hereafter: now these were but shadows, not real things; or did not contain the truth and substance of the things themselves, of which they were shadows; and though they were representations of divine and spiritual things, yet dark ones, they had not so much as the very image of the things; they were but shadows, and like them fleeting and passing away, and now are gone."

So, Paul is saying that regulations concerning dietary laws and observing festivals, new moons, and all Sabbaths are shadows that are passed, but the substance (body) is Christ's. Gill explains: "but the body [is] of Christ: or, as the Syriac version reads it, 'the body is Christ'; that is, the body, or sum and substance of these shadows, is Christ; he gave rise unto them, he existed before them, as the body is before the shadow; not only as God, as the Son of God, but as Mediator, whom these shadows regarded as such, and as such he cast them; and he is the end of them, the fulfilling end of them; they have all their accomplishment in him: and he is the body of spiritual and heavenly things; the substantial things and doctrines of the Gospel are all of Christ, they all come by him; all the truths, blessings, and promises of grace; are from him and by him, and he himself the sum of them all."

Therefore, we whose sufficiency is in Christ, who know that no law keeping can add to the salvation

Jesus has bought for us, who know that the eating of certain foods and the keeping of certain days can only be indistinct and temporary shadows, should not allow anyone to judge or condemn us for exercising our freedom from dietary regulations and the keeping of days. Such things prefigured Jesus Christ, our separation through Him from sin, and our rest in Him. Now that the true substance of what these things pictured has come, the shadows have passed away. It is simply not possible for there to any longer be a need to keep days. This shows that even those who say they know they are not adding to their salvation by keeping a day but keep it to please God do err. Why should God be pleased with our keeping a shadow when the reality has come?

As we have seen, in Romans 14, Paul allows weak brethren to continue to keep days while they remain weak in faith (specifically, weak in their understanding of the concepts he teaches in Galatians and in Colossians 2). Of course, other Scriptures admonish us to not remain weak, but grow strong through knowledge (Ephesians 5:17; 2 Peter 1:2–8; 3:18). But in Galatians, Paul adamantly teaches against the false gospel that works such as circumcision (Galatians 5:2) and the keeping of days (Galatians 4:10–11) are necessary on top of the completed work of Christ. Any message that says or implies that Christ's work is not enough is a false gospel. In Colossians 2, Paul tells Christians not to allow anyone to pass judgment or condemn them for their understanding that observing dietary rules and certain days are merely the "rudiments [this is the same Greek word translated "elements" in Galatians 4:3 and 9] of the world" (Colossians 2:8, and 20).

From this information, we can draw additional conclusions. Paul tells the Colossians not to allow themselves to be judged concerning days, and in Romans 14, he says it is wrong for Christians to judge others concerning days. Therefore, those Christians who charge others with breaking the Sabbath (whether seventh day or Sunday) or not keeping the Lord's Day are violating the instructions of the Holy Spirit as written by Paul. Similarly, since we have seen that no day need be kept, those who accuse others of sinning when they do not keep a day are acting contrary to Scripture.

Now notice some quotes from people who do this. Herbert W. Armstrong, a proponent of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, wrote on page 56 of his book, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*, "To work

on the Sabbath, to defile it by your own pleasure-seeking, doing business, etc., is a major sin, punishable by eternal death! (Romans 6:23)." By saying this, Armstrong assumes that the Sabbath must still be kept today and that those who do not keep it are sinning and will earn the wages of eternal death. But as we have seen, the Sabbath does not need to be kept today. It is also significant that Armstrong's reference to Romans 6:23 is obviously only to its first half. He totally ignores the second half of the verse, and thereby ignores the heart of the Gospel. In its entirety, Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Living Church of God, headed by Roderick C. Meredith, on a page of its web site titled "Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?", says, "Did you know that your willingness to keep holy the *true* Sabbath day, which God made holy, *directly affects* whether or not you will be granted eternal life in the Kingdom of God? Did you know that keeping the true Sabbath is—and always has been—a special 'test' commandment in God's sight?" (<http://www.lcg.org/files/booklets/dcs/default.htm>). God did, in Exodus 16, use the Sabbath to prove, or test, the children of Israel's willingness to obey His law (see verse 4). But the Sabbath day is not given to the New Testament church.

The Church of God, International, in its "Sunday-Saturday Which?" web article, states: "If any Christian-professing person denies that this SAME great Creator Being who wrote the Ten Commandments in stone, and who CREATED the Sabbath day, is not living His same, consistent, law-abiding life within that Christian person, he is NOT 'Christian' at all—but of the spirit of 'antichrist'!... The evidence that we are converted is Christ within us; the Holy Spirit of God motivating, leading, guiding and inspiring us. If Christ is in you—He will be keeping His holy Sabbath day today—tomorrow—and forever!" (<http://www.cgi.org/booklets/sabbath.htm>). This article implies that if you are not keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, you are not a Christian and you are of the spirit of antichrist. But, as we have seen in Romans 14, Paul says that the keeping or not keeping of days is not a criterion of who should be received into the church, and we are not to judge one another concerning the keeping of days (Romans 14:13). By the way, the Gospel includes the fact that Jesus Christ kept and

fulfilled the law for us and His righteousness is legally imputed to us. According to the above quote, Christ is obligated to have to continue keeping the law in us. Apparently, the Church of God, International thinks that Jesus lied when He cried out on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Church of God, International's message is a false gospel; it is heresy.

Seventh day keepers are not alone in accusing others of sinning for not keeping a certain day. J. C. Ryle (1816–1900) writes concerning Sunday, "There are two kinds of Sabbath desecration which require to be noticed. One is that more private kind of which thousands are continually guilty, and which can only be checked by awakening men's consciences. The other is that more public kind, which can only be remedied by the pressure of public opinion, and the strong arm of the law" (<http://www.apuritansmind.com/TheLordsDay/JCRyleSabbath.htm>).

Charles Hodge (1797–1878), in his *Systematic Theology* (vol. 3, p. 347), writes, "We are bound, therefore, to insist upon the maintenance and faithful execution of the laws enacted for the protection of the Christian Sabbath. Christianity does not teach that men can be made religious by law; nor does it demand that men should be required by the civil authority to profess any particular form of religious doctrine, or to attend upon religious services; but it does enjoin that men should abstain from all unnecessary worldly avocations on the Lord's Day" (<http://www.apuritansmind.com/TheLordsDay/CharlesHodge4thCommandment.htm>).

A Puritan minister, Samuel Slater, warns, "To profane sabbaths is a very great and notorious piece of profaneness. Sins willfully and out of choice committed upon a sabbath are sins in grain, scarlet and crimson sins. To mind worldly affairs, to sit brooding upon worldly thoughts, to follow the trades and callings of the world, to open shops, and buy and sell, upon a sabbath-day, are God-provoking sins, acts of profaneness. These are lawful upon other days, in which God hath given you leave 'nay, more, he hath made it your duty, to labour and do all that you have to do of this nature; but they are very sinful upon the Sabbath" (<http://www.apuritansmind.com/TheLordsDay/SamuelSlaterSuppressingProfaneness.htm>).

Nor are such statements to be found only in the

writings of past centuries. Notice this from the Sunday-Sabbath keeping Protestant Reformed Churches: "...it cannot be denied that desecration of the Sabbath is in our day an evil that is assuming alarming proportions, and that the danger is more than imaginary that the Christian pilgrim, as he lives and travels through this strange land, will defile his garments and adopt the habits of the world in this respect" (http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_36.html). And, "Great issues are at stake in the Sabbath-question. And, alas, it is a question today, not merely in a society that, having once showed some influence upon it from Christianity by 'closing up shop' on Sunday, now works and plays on the Lord's Day as on any other day, but also among Reformed Christians. It is serious enough that the Sabbath is desecrated in practice—the poor attendance at the second worship service (where a second service is still held) and the extent to which professing Christians "skip church" altogether are witness enough to this widespread Sabbath-desecration. More serious still is the growing 'solution' to the problem that consists of denying that there is any Sabbath Day at all!... Although the apostasy from the truth of the Sabbath receives little attention, we consider it to be one of the most serious departures in our day; and we consider our call to return to the old paths of our fathers, or to continue in those ways, as the case may be, to be urgent" (http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_39.html).

The Reformers: Interestingly, while Reformed and Presbyterian churches trace their origins to the sixteenth-century Reformer John Calvin (1509–1564), Calvin believed the Sabbath to be past and the keeping of days to be superstitious. He advocated only a "practical Sabbath." By this, he meant that one day should be set aside each week for church services, and that early Christians (not the Bible) had decided this should be Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection.

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Henry Beveridge, trans.), Chapter 8:31, 33, Calvin wrote, "Hence, as the Apostle elsewhere says, 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ,' (Col. 2: 16, 17:)" meaning by body the whole essence of the truth, as is well explained in that passage. This is not contented with

one day, but requires the whole course of our lives, until being completely dead to ourselves, we are filled with the life of God. Christians, therefore, should have nothing to do with a superstitious observance of days.... Paul informs us that Christians are not to be judged in respect of its [the Sabbath's] observance, because it is a shadow of something to come, (Col. 2: 16;) and, accordingly, he expresses a fear lest his labour among the Galatians should prove in vain, because they still observed days (Gal. 4: 10, 11.) And he tells the Romans that it is superstitious to make one day differ from another (Rom. 14: 5:)" (<http://www.smartlink.net/~douglas/calvin/bk2ch08.html#thirtyone.htm>).

Calvin "regarded the external observance of the Sabbath rest as a Jewish ceremonial ordinance and no longer binding on Christians." He said of Sabbatarians that they "surpass the Jews three times over in a crass and carnal Sabbatarian superstition" (both quotes from Winton Solberg, *Redeem the Time— The Puritan Sabbath in Early America*, p.19). Calvin saw Sunday, not as a day to be kept, but as an issue of church order; it was a convenient time for the church to meet. According to Solberg, "in Calvin's Geneva, citizens were free to amuse themselves after Sunday worship, and they did so with military drill and bowling. Calvin himself bowled on Sunday and was buried on a Lord's Day afternoon" (*Redeem the Time*, p. 19).

Martin Luther, in his Larger Catechism, writes in his exposition of the Ten Commandments,

But to grasp a Christian meaning for the simple as to what God requires in this [the Sabbath] commandment, note that we keep holy days not for the sake of intelligent and learned Christians (for they have no need of it [holy days]), but first of all for bodily causes and necessities, which nature teaches and requires; for the common people, man-servants and maid-servants, who have been attending to their work and trade the whole week, that for a day they may retire in order to rest and be refreshed.

Secondly, and most especially, that on such day of rest (since we can get no other opportunity) freedom and time be taken to attend divine service, so that we come together to hear and treat of God's and then to praise God, to sing and pray.

However, this, I say, is not so restricted to any time, as with the Jews, that it must be just on this or that day; for in itself no one day is better than

another; but this should indeed be done daily; however, since the masses cannot give such attendance, there must be at least one day in the week set apart. But since from of old Sunday [the Lord's Day] has been appointed for this purpose, we also should continue the same, in order that everything be done in harmonious order, and no one create disorder by unnecessary innovation.

So, Luther also held a practical view. He believed that a day should be set aside so that laboring people can rest and so people can have the time away from work to attend church. Notice also that Luther put no special significance on Sunday. He did not say that the Bible required that we keep Sunday, only that it was a day appointed, apparently by the church, from antiquity. Luther said that if Sunday were ever observed as holy for the day's sake or were put on a Jewish foundation, "then I order you to walk on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that shall remove this encroachment on Christian Liberty" (from Solberg, *Redeem the Time*, p.17). Luther's and Calvin's treatment of days and their practical approach to Sunday put them very close to the God's Rest view.

The Christian's True Rest: While it is interesting to see what the Reformers said, our guide to doctrine and practice must be the Bible. We have seen in this article that the Scriptures that seventh-day Sabbath keepers, Sunday-Sabbath keepers, and Lord's Day keepers point to as supporting their views, do not, in fact, support those views. The Sabbath of the Old Covenant was specific to that covenant and the people to whom that covenant was given, the children of Israel (the Jews). The New Testament neither commands nor implies that Christians keep a particular day or any day at all. From the biblical information given in this article, we have seen that we are not to judge others concerning whether or not they keep a day. We have also seen that we are not to allow ourselves to be judged concerning the keeping of days. And we have seen that Paul calls such observations shadows, weak and beggarly elements, and rudiments of the world. From this information, we must conclude there are no days that Christians must keep.

To say that Christians must either keep a particular day or risk their salvation is legalism. To say that God holds the world responsible for keeping a day because it is a creation ordinance is to add a

yoke to the world's burden that the Scriptures do not support. To say that Christians are required to keep a particular day or risk God's chastisement is adding to the Word of God, as nothing in the Bible says or implies this. To correct someone for "breaking the Sabbath"—such as scolding a child for kicking a ball on the "Sabbath" or bringing church discipline against a man for trying to support his family by working on the "Sabbath"—is adding to the Word of God, is being blind to the commands God has really given Christians (1 John 3:23; 4:21), and is risking offending people away from God. All of this judging over days is unscriptural and uncharitable.

Word of His Grace Ministries takes the Scriptural position that God does not command, imply, or expect Christians to keep a day. If someone wants to keep a day, that is fine as long as he or she does not do so out of legalism, is not judging others, and is not adding to the Scriptures.

We understand that it would be difficult or impossible for most Christians today to meet daily. For practical reasons, a convenient day should be set aside for worship services. In most cases, the most convenient day is Sunday because it is the day that more people have off from work. But if another day is more convenient for a church, then it should meet on that day. Perhaps some churches can worship together two or three times a week. We should simply know that, while God says we should not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25), God has not specified the day on which to assemble.

In Matthew 12:1–8, Mark 2:23–28, and Luke 6:1–5, we find Jesus and His disciples walking through the grainfields one Sabbath. Being hungry, the disciples plucked a few heads of grain to eat. The Pharisees saw in this an opportunity to criticize Jesus for allowing His disciples to do what was unlawful on the Sabbath.

Jesus answered them by recalling the example of David, who did that "which was not lawful" (Matthew 12:4), but was innocent because mercy took precedence (Matthew 12:5–7). "Then Jesus said to them, 'The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath'" (Luke 6:5). If Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, should not we who have Jesus as our Lord keep the Sabbath?

Yes, if this is what Jesus told us to do. But Jesus did not tell His followers to keep a Sabbath day.

Even in the above verses, Jesus, although speaking while the Pharisees still sat in Moses' seat and were to be obeyed (Matthew 23:2–3), told the Pharisees that there were things that were far more important than obedience to the letter of the law. In fact, one might really be breaking the law by keeping the letter in one point while ignoring a weightier matter, such as mercy, that should take precedent.

In Mark and Luke, this incident in the grain field is preceded by Jesus' teaching that new wine must be put in new wineskins, not old. What Jesus brought—justification by faith alone—was so new and radical a concept that the legal ordinances familiar to the Pharisees could not confine it. This truth encompasses the Sabbath. The real rest of God cannot be confined to a physical rest on one day of the week. In Matthew, the incident in the grain field is preceded by Jesus' call, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30). Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath, released us from the Sabbath's legal obligation and opened the way for us to enter God's rest through faith.

How? The Sabbath command in the Old Testament was an enforced rest. But this rest was, as Paul explained concerning the observing of all Sabbaths, only a shadow or type of the reality to come (Colossians 2:16–17). Jesus was the reality or antitype (verse 17). Jesus Christ was as much the fulfillment of the Sabbath as he was the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices by becoming the perfect sacrifice, or of the other laws by keeping them perfectly.

But how was Jesus a fulfillment of a rest? As we just read, Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.... and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30). *Anapausis*, the Greek word for "rest" in these verses (Matthew 11:28 contains the verb form, *Anapau*), is, according to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, p. 529, "the constant word in the Sept [uagint] for the Sabbath 'rest'." As Christians, we are to find our Sabbath rest in Jesus. Because Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly for us, we must stop all attempts to work for our salvation. We must, instead, rest in Jesus. By doing so, we enter God's

true rest.

Hebrews 3 and 4: These chapters of Hebrews are often used to justify the keeping of a Sabbath day. In fact, as we will see, this was very far from the writer's intent.

Although it is not known who wrote Hebrews, it is obvious from the topics covered that the letter was addressed to Jewish Christians. In fact, the letter contains so much concerning the Old Covenant, the priesthood, and the temple, that it might have been directed specifically at converts to Christianity from the priesthood (see Acts 6:7). The writer specifically wants to emphasize the supremacy of Jesus Christ over the prophets, angels, Moses, and the Aaronic priesthood; the strength of grace over the weakness of the law; and the substitution of the New Covenant for the Old Covenant.

Hebrews 3 starts by pointing out the superiority of Jesus Christ over Moses. With this comparison in view, the writer then (beginning in verse 7) brings out a parallel between the Israelites entering the land of Canaan and Christians entering God's true rest. The Israelites hardened their hearts and "could not enter in because of unbelief" (verse 19). Verse 12 warns, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

The warning is repeated in Hebrews 4:1, with the additional information that we still have a promise of entering God's rest: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Verse 2 explains that the Gospel did not profit the Israelites because they did not have faith. "For we," verse 3 continues, "which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." The King James Version poorly translates the latter part of this verse. It is a quote of Psalm 95:11, which says, "Unto whom I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." Other versions, such as the New King James Version, properly translate the latter part of Hebrews 4:3 as, "'So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." In other words, although God rested at Creation thereby showing that His rest was already a reality, He swore that the Israelites would not enter that rest because of their unbelief. But we who believe, the first part of the verse says,

do enter that rest. Verse 4 simply points out God's rest in Genesis 2:2.

Verses 5–9 are the pivotal verses. Verse 5 again quotes Psalm 95:11; the Israelites did not enter God's rest. Therefore, points out verse 6, since it remains that some must enter God's rest, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter, then God designated another day [meaning time, not a 24 hour day] by saying through David (in Psalm 95:7–8), "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." In other words, since the children of Israel under Moses refused to enter God's rest, typified by their refusal to enter the land of Canaan, God is calling others into His rest, as can be seen in the words of David many years after Moses.

Now it might be argued that the next generation of Israelites did, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, eventually enter the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. But Hebrews 4:8 explains that, by the physical entering into the land, they still did not enter God's true rest: "For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." Bible commentators and modern Bible versions agree that "Jesus" in the King James Version of this verse is really a reference to Joshua (the names are the same in Greek). So, God speaks of another time for people to enter His rest. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (verse 9).

It should be pointed out that, with the exception of verse 9, the word "rest" in these verses has been translated from the Greek word *katapausis*. This word means a causing to cease. In Greek literature, it is used when someone stops and puts down his work. The word, as it is used in these verses that we have examined, is defined right in Hebrews 4, in verse 10: For he that is entered into his rest [*katapausis*], he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." So, the writer of Hebrews is using *katapausis* to mean to cease from one's own works, as God did from His.

The children of Israel did not cease from their own works because they did not have the faith to trust God. But we who have faith can cease from our own works, thereby entering God's rest. But we must learn from the Israelites' example of faithlessness. If we do not cease from our own works, we show a lack of faith, and cannot enter God's rest.

In Hebrews 4:9, we read, "There remaineth

therefore a rest to the people of God." Many writers have said that this means Christians are to continue keeping the Sabbath day (either seventh-day or Sunday, depending on the writer). But, in fact, the keeping of a day according to the Law of Moses is completely contrary to the message the writer of Hebrews was trying to convey.

The Greek word translated "rest" in verse 9 is *sabbatismos*. It is found nowhere else in the Bible. This word does not emphasize the day of the Sabbath, but the celebration rest associated with the Sabbath. In a comment concerning this word, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, on page 529, says, "Here the sabbath-keeping is the perpetual sabbath 'rest' to be enjoyed uninterruptedly by believers in their fellowship with the Father and the Son, in contrast to the weekly Sabbath under the Law. Because this sabbath 'rest' is the 'rest' of God Himself, [Hebrews] 4:10, its full fruition is yet future, though believers now enter into it." This is not the seventh-day Sabbath. It is the **true rest** that was only **typified** by the seventh-day Sabbath, which was only a shadow of the reality.

Of Hebrews 4:9–10, *Unger's New Bible Handbook* (p. 588) states:

These verses refer to the rest called sabbath-keeping (*sabbatismos*, "a state of rest from labor"), [Verse] 9. It involves the believer's resting completely in a perfect work of redemption ([verses] 3–4) as God rested from a perfect work of creation, [verse] 10. This rest of redemption reposes wholly in the work of the cross, and ceases from all self-effort, human merit or legalistic claim as a means either of salvation or sanctification, [verse] 10 (cf. Eph 2:8-10). It projects the victory of faith in conquest over spiritual enemies (the world, the flesh and the devil).

There is another problem with trying to make Hebrews 4:9 mean that there remains a Sabbath day to be kept. Whatever remains in Hebrews 4:9 for us to enter is what Joshua, in Hebrews 4:8, failed to lead the people into. If what remains to be entered is the keeping of a Sabbath day, then the rest that Joshua failed to lead the people into was the Sabbath day. This, of course, is nonsense. Joshua failed to lead the people into God's true rest because the people did not have faith. The Sabbath day can have nothing to do with this. Joshua's not leading

the children of Israel into God's true rest cannot be a reason why we should therefore keep the Sabbath day. Forcing Hebrews 4:9 to be a reference to the Sabbath day makes a hash of the Scriptures.

It is an interesting fact that Hebrews 4:9 is the first place in all literature in which the word *sabbatismos* is found. It is quite possible that the writer of Hebrews invented the word. Why? Why did he use, possibly even create, *sabbatismos* instead of using *katapausis*? Apparently, the writer wanted to not only express that we can through faith enter God's rest, or cease from works, but he wanted to also say that when we enter that rest, it is the true celebration and delight that the Sabbath rest foreshadowed (notice in Isaiah 58:13 that God wanted the Jews to delight in the Sabbath).

Continuing in Hebrews 4:10–11, we read: "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

If the writer of Hebrews wanted Christians to keep a Sabbath day, he could have clearly said so. But as we have seen, this was not his intention. His intention was to explain that we enter God's rest (of which the seventh-day Sabbath and the land of Canaan were only types) through faith, and we can fail to enter through lack of faith. To continue to rely upon the law by keeping a Sabbath day and to fear retribution if one were to fail to do so are symptomatic of a lack of faith.

The writer of Hebrews was concerned that the Jewish Christians to whom he was writing were

wavering in their faith and again taking up their works from which they should have ceased. These verses explain that those who have entered God's rest (those who are in Jesus Christ) must cease from their own works just as God did from His at the end of the Creation week.

So, what is the answer to the question posed in the title of this article? What is the Christian Sabbath? Remember that the Bible says that the Sabbaths were only shadows, but Jesus Christ is the body or substance (Colossians 2:16–17). Jesus Christ, then, is the real Christian Sabbath. Because He was sinless and His righteousness is imputed to us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15), and because He died for our sins (Matthew 26:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:9–10), we have our rest in Him. He is God's rest that we enter by faith.

We at Word of His Grace Ministries hold the God's Rest view of the Sabbath. We believe it is the only view that is consistent with the Scriptures. We recognize that individuals may be permitted to keep days, but their doing so is as much a sign of weakness as is holding to religious dietary restrictions. It is the duty of the church to help people out of such weakness by teaching sound Scriptural doctrine. Therefore, it is sad that many churches, beginning about the seventeenth century, started misapplying Scripture to teach that certain days must be kept.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Galatians 5:1.