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Articles

Two SHOCKING Answers by Jonathan Gray (New Zealand)

Today you are getting two SHOCKING answers to two outrageous questions...

SO HOW OLD IS IT?

This whole thing started when Fred (my neighbour) plopped down on my porch. And he asked me, "Did you see that TV program that said the Amazon jungle was several million years old?"

"Yes," I responded. "But, Fred, what if it's only 3,000 years old?"

"You're having me on," he laughed. "Why, everyone knows..."

No, I'm not kidding.

Were you aware that huge stone cities, very ancient, with paved streets and tall pyramids choked with forest, have been sighted in the Amazon jungle by several explorers in recent years?

These mysterious cities were built when the climate in the Amazon basin was more temperate and the rivers drained a fertile area, but BEFORE the jungle took over.

(By the way, that's the very climatic situation one might expect in the aftermath of a global Flood.)

Did you know that when cities were first built in South America, the whole Amazon basin was a shallow inland sea? And some Brazilian scientists say they have evidence that this Amazon Sea existed AS RECENTLY AS 1200 BC?

BEFORE THE JUNGLE GREW

In those early days, when South America was still free of jungle, the human race had already settled and built a civilization.

Perhaps you have no idea how wonderful and elaborate these cities were. The citizens wall-papered their houses with thin sheets of beaten gold.

The cities were built by people with fine features. They used gold coinage and operated fleets. Their buildings were of shining white stone. Their cities boasted magnificent plazas, paved streets, ornamented temples, round-topped pyramids, mansions, and fountains.

They erected lighthouses and used lenses and reflectors, the elements of the telescope.

And the cities were walled - not against savages, but the mighty gulf, or sea, of the Maranon (the Amazon Sea).

Some of their ruins have been seen, so this is not fantasy. Many of their alphabetic letters are identical with those of the Phoenicians and Greeks, 3,000 and 4,000 years ago.

According to native traditions, they used a light source akin to our electric bulb.

"EXPERTS" IN DENIAL

Recently a scientific "expert" wrote that the Amazon jungle has been there for millions of years, that only primitives have lived there.

Traditional "experts", I fear me, often constitute near tragedy.

Little of what is known has found its way into textbooks. Our sacred theory of evolution is at risk if this information gets out.

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The truth is: Overwhelming evidence exists that South America was well known in antiquity.

Before the jungle took over, it was resplendent with great cities. Mighty empires spanned the continent. They knew how to write. And global communication in the distant past equaled that of modern times.

It is abundantly clear that history needs to be rewritten.

CITIES DESTROYED - SURVIVORS DEGRADE

This raises THE SECOND QUESTION: why do primitive tribes worldwide have NO traditions of having evolved UP from a sub-human past, but rather that they DE-volved from superior ancestors?

Here is the truth. After the cities were destroyed by earthquakes, volcanism or war, the survivors degenerated into a primitive lifestyle.

Before long, the green forest covered the whole landscape.

Many ancient traditions survive of an advanced culture which flourished thousands of years ago to the north and west of the Brazilian highlands.

Their descendants are now scattered as primitive tribes throughout the jungle.

PRIMITIVE DESCENDANTS RETAIN LEGACY

Again, traditional "experts" tell us that writing was unknown in South America.

Wrong again!

Books of wonderfully executed paintings and hieroglyphics have been found among naked Panos savages of the deep Peruvian forests near the gorge of the Ucayle, in the Amazon headwaters, in the eighteenth century. The Indians explained that the books, handed down, contained a history of events in the days of their ancestors.

The pages of fine cotton, in external appearance resembling modern quarto leaves, were bound with a cover, glued together and fastened by agave threads.

One of these ancient books was acquired by Fray Narcissus Gilbar and sent to Lima to be inspected by P. Cisneros, compiler of a periodical called El Mercurio Peruano. A number of people inspected it.

Every page was covered in paintings and organized lines of hieroglyphic style characters.

So here we have modern savages, living in a primitive state, but with a heritage passed down from superior ancestors.

Evolution? No, de-volution. That's the pattern, worldwide.

Oh boy, I'm in for it now!

Can We Prove that Christ Could or Could Not Sin?
by Rhoda Foust (Lehigh Acres, Florida)

To begin with, can we agree that God made statements and promises and swore to those promises? Did these promises include Christ's sinless sacrifice and resurrection? If we can agree to these things, then the only argument is whether we do or do not believe God's words one hundred percent. To reach a conclusion we will look at and study some pertinent scriptures, asking the question, "Could God, in the flesh, have sinned? The symbol ^ will indicate my emphasis on a word or words.

Acts 15:18 ^Known^ unto God are all his works ^from the beginning^ of the world.

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Note: Everything God planned was already known. In other words, He knew how His plan would turn out, from the very beginning of creation. He (The Word) knew He would come into the world, in the flesh, and be the "savior" of mankind.

Luke 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David ^aSavior[^], which is Christ the Lord.

Mat.1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he ^{shall} save his people from their sins.[^]

Heb.13:22 "... he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the [son] of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. 13:23 Of this man's seed hath God according to [his] promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus:

Ps.107:19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, [and] he saveth them out of their distresses. 107:20 ^{He} sent his word[^], and healed them, and delivered [them] from their destructions.

Isa. 43:3 For I [am] the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, ^{thy} Savior[^]:"

Isa. 43:11 I, [even] I, [am] the LORD; and beside me [there is] no savior.

Act. 2:23 Him, being delivered by the ^{determinate} counsel and foreknowledge of God[^], ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 2:24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because ^{it} was not possible[^] that he should be holden of it.

Note: We might ask, why was it not possible? As the next scriptures show, because the ^{determinate} counsel and foreknowledge of God[^] PROMISED it would happen this exact way.

Ps.16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Gen. 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Note: The Faith chapter (Heb. 11) illustrates those people who received the promises, and the sufferings they endured, ^{believing} God, that they would receive the ^{fulfillment} and rewards of those promises.

Heb.11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they with us should not be made perfect.

Heb.11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of [them], and embraced [them], and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Note: Did Abram think The Word could or would sin? He had faith, was fully persuaded, that God's promises would never be jeopardized by the possibility of God deciding, "to sin?."

Rom.4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 4:22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Heb.6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because ^{he} could swear by no greater, he sware by himself[^], 6:14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Note: He obtained the promise, not the FULFILLMENT of the promise.

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These people have not yet received the fulfillment of those promises. God's plan is a progressive process. Christ's resurrection was a crucial step (fulfillment) in that process. These people of faith BELIEVED God's word to be IMMUTABLE. To strengthen his promises as being absolutely sure, He "swore" by Himself.

Heb.11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of [them], and embraced [them], and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Note: If Jesus had the choice to sin, all of these promises would have hinged on his decision "to sin, or not to sin"! This would have been "THE GREATEST GAMBLE" of all time. Had Jesus chosen to sin the whole plan of God would have been defeated and proved that God's word was NOT IMMUTABLE.

1 COR.15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith [is] vain; ye are yet in your sins. 15:18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

Heb. 6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation [is] to them an end of all strife. 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the ^immutability of his counsel, ^confirmed^ [it] by an oath^: 6:18 That by two ^immutable^ things, in which [it was] ^impossible for God to lie^, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 6:19 Which [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, ^both sure and steadfast^, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Tit.1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

Note: Can we accept the statements, "...impossible for God to lie"? If we accept this, we also have to believe the "immutability of his (God's) council, that it was "absolutely SURE" His promises would be kept. How then could we even entertain the assumption that God (in the flesh) could have sinned? If, as Paul states, it is impossible for God to lie, is it not also impossible for God to sin? Jesus ^was^ God, even if he was ^in the likeness^ of man.

Is not God's character the most important thing to consider, along with faith in that character? How can anyone have faith in a God that gave himself the choice "to sin, or not to sin", which--if he had sinned--would have condemned every human being to eternal death?

Heb.11:6 But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] ^he is a rewarder^ of them that diligently seek him.

Note: How could God (the Word) expect us to believe Him so strongly, if he had given himself permission to sin? Instead, He sent the message of hope to mankind, down through the ages.

Acts 3:24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 3:25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 3:26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called [to be] an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 1:2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) 1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; 1:4 And declared [to be] the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Note: God says He is not hiding anything. If the Word could have sinned, would He not have told us? He claims to speak "right" things, not "this may or may not work out" kind of promises.

Isa.45:19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

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Note: God himself says He does NOT speak in vain, and that He is a JUST God. Would a just God give Himself the option to sin, knowing mankind's eternity would depend on his choice?

Isa.45:21 ".... and [there is] no God else beside me; a ^just God^ and a Saviour; [there is] none beside me. 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I [am] God, and [there is] none else. 45:23 I have ^sworn by myself^, the word is gone out of my mouth [in] righteousness, and shall not return, ..."

Note: We must believe, have faith, that we are not offending God, even in physical things such as eating. How much more important is it to believe that God's promises were IMMUTABLE? Are we to believe God's promises depended on whether Jesus decided to sin, or not to sin?

Rom.14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because [he eateth] not of faith: for ^whatsoever [is] not of faith is sin^.

Rom.5:9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. 5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

Note: Someone is bound to quote 1 Cor.13:8 as proof that we cannot rely on prophecy...that it can fail. God's promises have never failed. There have been times when God, out of mercy, has changed his mind about intended punishments, if there's repentance involved. Such was the case of Nineveh. Jonah 4:20 and 3:10 demonstrates this principal.

Note: Any and all other arguable ideas, theory, doctrines of men, even "difficult scriptures" cannot negate God's promises and prophecies. Would you not agree, to teach that you cannot believe God one hundred percent is nothing short of heresy? To teach something that damages ones faith, and is not biblically sound, is a dangerous affront to God the Father and God the Son.

Prov. 30:5 Every word of God [is] pure: he [is] a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 30:6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Living Life Today
by John Jewell (London, England)

Poet John Masefield wrote “All I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by.”

Oh, if only mankind as a whole could find such satisfaction and happiness so simply stated. Today, however, in nation after nation of the western world, there can be few who find any satisfaction with their life and/or lot. At this point why not carry out the simple test of asking ones-self the question “am I honestly really satisfied and happy with my life in today's world” or what's life all about anyway!” Many people in the western world can get some physical satisfaction by having an adequate income. An income which covers their physical needs and many, if not most, of their wants and desires. Even so there will probably still be a need which may not be physical, but will often be a spiritual or nonphysical need; with each one most likely getting in the way of the other.

However, most people's needs, whatever they are, still have to be met. Obviously, there are exceptions when faced with a natural disaster such as suffered by Christchurch in New Zealand which is still suffering the effects of the unusually powerful earthquakes which wrecked most of the city and many homes further away. Australia is still feeling the effects of the severe flooding which hit the nation some time ago.

Outside the western world, mankind's needs are all too real and fundamental and are brought upon the people so often by corrupt governments. Governments which are also totally incompetent. Dreadful suffering continues to be inflicted upon the people of Haiti. You will probably recall the powerful earthquake which hit the island some two or three years ago. The reports, which came out from western journalists who managed to get into the nation quickly, in order to tell the rest of the world what had happened, triggered an outpouring of sympathy and very large sums of money in order to provide immediate help. And then helping in rehousing the people in something a little more adequate and permanent.

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Britain and the US were well to the fore in helping. However, to this day many, if not most, of those who suffered have still not been rehoused. A recent television program showed how many are still living in the ruins and rubble of structures wrecked by the earthquake. Barely any roads have been repaired. One wonders what has happened to the funds that were made available so readily.

Becoming aware of the problem and of the desperate needs of the people, some charities in Britain and the United States as well as other nations of Europe, have, to their credit, set up organizations to help ease the problem of emergency housing. My wife and I visited one such charity, Habitat for Humanity, recently which had set up, in a local park, a display of the rough shelters that, at best, are all that is available to meet the immediate and desperate needs of those of the third world who are homeless or have become homeless and probably have families to take care of. Added to which it is most likely there is little or no work and what there is will pay very little. These rough structures, they can hardly be called shelters, are put together from whatever scraps of wood, cardboard and/or plastic the individual can find. He might be lucky to find a scrap of metal. But whatever he can put together will very likely have to do for a family with several children who, with their parents, have to share the same small, barely covered space. Seeing the examples of such structures that Habitat had put together brought it home to the visitor what so many hundreds of thousands of people have to suffer in today's world; with little, if any, help from their own governments.

Habitat for Humanity specializes in providing immediate shelter to as many as possible of the almost one billion people living in the world's cities in what has to be described as very temporary shelter. This gives a respite during which it is hoped that more permanent housing can be provided. They say that the UN's statistics show that getting near to a half of those living in what we call the developing world are living in slums and desperately need better shelter.

This exhibition helped to focus the attention on how widespread, and serious the problem is, and how little is being done by the appropriate governments to ameliorate it. The charity has even developed what it calls the Habitat for Humanity Home. Housing tends to be regarded by too many in today's world as a milch cow! As a means of getting rich quickly by holding the threat of eviction over the heads of the tenants; thus removing any security from them. Habitat in their literature quoted the UN again when saying how in the developing world there are almost a billion people living without secure tenure, thus bringing in an insecurity to not only the immediate area, but the nation as well. **A nation is the sum of its occupants, its citizens.** If there is any lack of security amongst the population there will be, of necessity a lack of security for the nation. It is no surprise then to find that the bible, the word of God, covers these subjects very well and succinctly. Basic principles are given in the scriptures, and in some cases developed more widely with good examples given so that there is no possibility of anyone misunderstanding.

First of all, it addresses the basics. In Isaiah chapter 11 verse 9 it makes it clear that in the future world, the world that is to be established at the return of Jesus Christ, the law governing the lives of the inhabitants will be the law of God. He says quite clearly and definitely in a broad statement that “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” He repeats this same point in Jeremiah 31: verse 34 that everyone, without exception, is going to know God. And, whether people like it or not, they are going to be taught the law of God and required to keep it. Man, whoever he is, whatever nationality, whatever wealth he has, whatever position in society he has, he is going to be required to know, understand, and keep God's law.

Verse 35 makes it even clearer as to whom is speaking and can and will make it happen! He's the one who had and has, the power to arrange it so that the sun gives mankind light and power by day and then the softer light of the moon and stars for mankind to be able to move around at night. And also use the same stars and their pattern to be also able to travel at night.

Within the scriptures in both the Old and the New Testaments there are clear instructions as to how to conduct ourselves as human beings, as citizens, as employers, employees, fathers, mothers and even children – one scripture says that children are to honor their parents. Not very much of that happening in today's world! Either taught, learned, or put into practice! The bible in Isaiah 3:12 again refers to today's world when it reads that children will be oppressors of God's people. Who can deny that the statement in Isaiah is certainly true of today's America and Britain?

We have been speaking of houses and have looked briefly at some of the problems concerning their occupation and their possession. In Isaiah 5:8 God spells out some basic requirements for house construction in today's world. He says that those who build houses in terraces, in long lines or in apartment blocks and then join these all up into vast areas will run

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into trouble. And we certainly do! City after city, town after town, nowhere, as He made clear, would be free from them and the severe problems they bring. We have ignored the clear scripture, the clear instruction with its strong warning as to the result! What did He say? He said that so much would be built like this that there would be virtually no land left on which to build even one house standing on its own and not connected to another. We have indeed reached that position. And we are now paying a penalty for doing this. There is now no easy answer for the British housing problem. Instead of town and countryside it will be urban and less urban!

Yet in Proverbs chapter 19 verse 14 tells us that houses and finances should be the inheritance a man is able to leave to his children. **An earlier verse says that a good man will leave an inheritance to his grandchildren.** In other words, the whole system of housing, construction, financing, and ownership is wrong. The problems that exist bear witness to the truth of the bible when it makes the point. But it's too late! We are already paying the price as the bible said we would. Yet, if we, including our governments had obeyed God how different life would have been. An example is given us of King Solomon. There is a phrase which one may still hear on occasion – it refers to the wisdom of Solomon. It speaks of the respect the citizens of Israel had for him. For, as the bible says "... they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment." The bible record tells us that the nations of Judah and Israel lived safely all the days of Solomon. That is for the 40 years he was actually on the throne.

Those nations were well blessed by virtue of living under the government of Solomon. But here was a leader of the people – one who had been brought up to understand God's laws, His ways and to come to judgments and decisions by consulting the laws of God first and also talking to God in prayer. As the bible clearly says in the Psalms and specifically Psalm 111, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments. And, yes, Solomon did talk to God, part of one of his prayers has been preserved for us. It is in 1 Kings chapter 3, verse 9 – this is how it goes: "... Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

Under Solomon, today's nations would not need international charities such as Habitat for Humanity. It's going to take the return of Jesus Christ, the son of God, before real, lasting changes are made to our nation and to the world in general. We can be absolutely assured that those changes are going to be made.

A Blast from the Past

God's Government

by Arlan Weight (Bismarck, North Dakota)

Continued From Issue #12

God's Government-Like a Temple Structure

Jesus said he "would build his church" (Mat. 16:18) and the church is likened unto a temple building of which He is the chief cornerstone. It's a spiritual temple and each person in that structure is likened to one stone fitted and built into it. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." (1 Pet. 2:5)

Think of the Temple Solomon built. (1 Kings 4:7) "And the house when it was in building was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building." Can you imagine that? Every stone was perfectly cut in the field. Can you fathom the plans needed for that? There were big stones, small stones, stones requiring great strength, stones of beauty and stones not so beautiful but necessary... not one left out. But all of them... every last one of them perfectly fitted before it was placed in the temple structure at the job site. This took master planning on a scale unheard of even in modern architecture.

If man is not able to do something like this in modern times with all the known technology, how was it even possible to do back then? The only answer is that God was the master planner of that building. He drew up the plans! He designed every stone... its height, width, length, strength requirement, beauty, and every other aspect. It simply was not possible for a man or group of men. Notice how the planning was done. "Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and the treasuries thereof, and the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlors thereof, and the place of the mercy seat, and the pattern of all that he had by the spirit..." (1 Chron. 28:11-12)

God also designed the placement of the stones and the order and timing for their placement. Think about that as well. Foundation stones, structural stones requiring strength have to be laid or placed first. Then the stones that add luster or beauty come later. But how much care and preparation was necessary to select the raw material for each? Where does

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one look? For that matter, how much effort does it take to hone and polish stones of beauty and do so perfectly where no extra customary work is required at the job site!

Can we begin to see the analogy? God, the master planner, developed the plans for Solomon's Temple, plans so perfect that every stone fit without any extra work at the job site. So also, is God now chipping away, honing, and polishing the spiritual stones that will make up the temple that he returns to, when Jesus returns to this earth.

God is the one who is deciding where the placement of each stone should be. Notice Matthew 21:42. "Jesus saith unto them, did ye never read in the scriptures, "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: This is the lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" Jesus is quoting this from Psalms 118:22-23. The word corner in Psalms comes from the Hebrew word 'pinnah' which means bulwark, corner, stay, tower, or chief man.

Again, notice this is God's doing. He is the master planner. He is the one who decides the placement of the stone. In this case he's referring to the 'chief' stone, which is Christ. (Mat. 16:18) But how about all the other stones? **Now** if the builders didn't recognize the material required for the chief stone, do they recognize the material or position of any of the other stones?

Jesus was the 'chief' stone. Why? Because of his humbleness and service to mankind. This again is the most difficult for human beings to come to grips with. Man simply can't seem to grasp the issue of leadership based on service. Jesus came to this earth and demonstrated how we ought to serve. The leaders of his day rejected him. He simply didn't look like someone who could possibly be somebody of importance.

How about the leaders God chose in the Old Testament? Were they recognized as God's servants? How were they received? "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." (Matt. 23:35 and 2 Chron. 24:20-21) Far from recognizing them as God's chosen, these men whom God handpicked were treated as enemies and often abused, mistreated, and killed. It's quite obvious they didn't recognize them.

How about after the time of Christ? Did the leaders begin to change and take special note of things and be careful not to fall under the same condemnation? Not at all. Look at the case of Stephen.

Shortly after the Day of Pentecost the original Apostles were commissioned to go to the world with the gospel message, but they recognized there were other needs besides. There were physical needs many had who could not support themselves. So, they (the Apostles) appointed some to oversee this business. What was this business? Acts 17:1 says, "widows were neglected in the daily ministrations." The JFB Commentary says, 'the daily ministrations, the daily distribution of alms or of food, probably the latter.' Acts 17:2 says 'serve tables'. So, it apparently didn't have much to do with preaching the gospel but was it important and what was the criteria for these overseers?

"Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom..." These men were appointed to a hierarchical position of service and the main element of their qualifications was that they possess God's Spirit.

So, Stephen was one of those selected. Now the disciples, now Apostles, recognized these because they had recently been imbued with God's Spirit also. So, Stephen went about doing all manner of good. "It says he was 'full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.' (Acts 6:8) But what about the other leaders? Did they recognize God's criteria for leadership? No, they certainly didn't. Instead, they killed him. (Acts 17:58) Even Paul didn't recognize Stephen and God's selection. It wasn't until after his conversion that he finally had his eyes opened.

So did the persecution end then? Of course not. History books are filled with horrible atrocities perpetrated against God's anointed from that time until now. Again, the main reason is that man does not recognize the qualifications for leadership the same as God does. Churches down through the ages have had their leaders. Individual people who were visibly known by the general populace for their position and job. They appeared in a hierarchical order and were generally accepted. But were they really leaders according to God's standard? Did they really exercise God's spirit? Maybe sometimes they did. Many times, it's obvious they didn't.

The Church Today

Controversy is going back and forth today about God's form of government. Some claim it has to be one-man rule from the top down. Others claim it has to be by a council of elders. But think again... based on the biblical definition... the way Christ describes his leadership... is it either of these? Both types are from a standpoint of power, but God says His government is not going to be by "power or might, but by His Spirit". (Zech. 4:6)

Most larger churches, including Churches of God, seem to function with a power structure, a visible hierarchy of individuals in charge on down to the lowest. Which brings up the question. Are some people to be esteemed higher than others? What's the highest rank you would think? What's the lowest? Again, when we start talking like this, it's not God's government we're discussing.

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Sure, God is in charge, but God first of all governs by his Spirit. God's form of hierarchy is based on service and is conducted by the gifts given to various individuals for that service. Notice 1 Corinthians 12. The entire chapter is talking about various gifts for serving, and not that one is better than the other or that one person should be 'lording' it over another. All the gifts of service given by God, are necessary, but they have different functions.

Notice Ephesians 4:11. "And he gave some, apostles and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers." ...Is this by order of importance? No. Rather it's like a body. If you're an eye, you can't claim more importance than a hand. "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God both tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of Miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? (1 Cor. 12:21-24, 28-30)

What is this telling us? Is it to show a government power structure with a hierarchical level of authority? No. Rather all these gifts are not for "being lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock." (1 Pet. 5:3) The word 'lords' comes from the Greek word 'kataknrieuo'. One of its meanings is 'exercise dominion over' (Young's Concordance). So, isn't the real essence of 1 Corinthians 12 telling us the gifts are to be used for service and not for authority in the sense of having dominion over others?

So, what's the purpose? (1 Cor. 12:25) "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry (service) for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure and stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13) "That **there should** be no **schism in** the body: but that the members should have the same care one for another". Even if one had all of the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 it wouldn't mean a thing, if you didn't have one ingredient and that is love. Paul then goes on to define what love is in 1 Corinthians 13.

As we look around and observe the 'Churches of God', as well as all churches, many, if not most have a structure like other governments in the world. Because of their hierarchical structure, and human nature, the tendency is to 'lord' positions of authority over others. Pride and vanity are deeply entrenched in the human psyche and placing people in 'offices' of authority, without a comparable amount of the Godly elements spoken of earlier, can lead to abuse of the power.

This is not to say God has not given His Spirit to individuals, for indeed he has. However, we must wonder, when we see all the factions and various groups, each going their own way and refusing to associate and shunning one another, "how dwells the love of God in them?" (1 John 3:17) Again, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matt. 7:16)

When king Saul was 'little in his own eyes, God named him to lead Israel'. (1 Sam. 15:17) It's when he began to get puffed up that he went astray. This is not just king Saul. This is the human tendency in all of us. In contrast though look again at Moses. Because he was 'meek', God continued to use him right up to the end. Was it not this fruit of God's spirit that made all the difference?

Within all 'Church of God' groups it is quite likely God is working with certain individuals to develop the fruits of His Spirit and is fashioning them for service in His government. But to say any one of the church groups represents God's government on earth today is inaccurate from the Biblical definition Christ gave.

Summary

The purpose for the church, and the gifts that various people within the church have, is to prepare the saints for a future time when Christ will return to this earth. Then is when God's government will be restored. God's hierarchical standard will determine where each person will be placed in that government to serve humanity. It will be based on the fruits of God's Spirit. How much faith, how much long-suffering, how much love, etc., did that person develop over their life span?

The position that an individual will have, will be determined by the level of service they are capable of. Their hierarchical order will be determined by how much they grew by what they were given (Luke 19:12-26). Positions of service in God's government started to be filled by individuals as far back as Abel. The selection of the stones of God's Temple were being prepared even back then and have been in the preparation to this day.

When Christ returns, he will "suddenly come to his temple" (Mal. 3:1) and take over the reins of government. Just like as with Solomon's temple there was no need for further work on the stones at the job site, so also will it be with God's spiritual temple. The individual stones will have been perfectly shaped, fitted, and polished for the job. It's at that time when all the stones that have been quarried and fitted shall be placed. It is then when God's government will take over

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all other governments.

When Christ returns the world will be on the brink of self-annihilation. When he comes into view the world will not recognize him and try to fight him. Just as they didn't recognize him the first time, just as the world has not recognized those he has sent in the past, they will think he is an alien from outer space.

He will have to use 'power and might' in order to save man from total destruction. Even this is an act of love for his creation. But after that... after the dust settles God's government will start. Man's hierarchical form will end, and God's will start. The earth will rejoice! Notice Isa. 14:7. 'The whole earth is at rest and is quiet: They break forth into singing' ...It's then that the 'meek' shall inherit the earth. (Matt. 5:5) It's then that the reins of government shall be in the hands of those He has prepared ...His first fruits. The highest level is God, the Father. He is servant of all. Next is His Son, Jesus Christ and then next "it will be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." (Matt. 20:23)

Finally, God's government truly is quite the opposite from that which we see today, not only in civil governments but in churches as well. But His time is not yet. Jesus said, 'My kingdom' (My government) 'is not of this world (age)' (John 18:36) ...yet it is coming... 'and the government shall be upon his shoulder'. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

True, when He does rein, He will put down all who exalt themselves and abuse power. But mankind has been and is deceived as to just how he will do it. Again, man thinks he knows, but it's only because he (mankind) has never known anything else but governments that 'lord' it over others. God's government does not do that. God's government and those in it will demonstrate how government should function, and how to live life to achieve true happiness.

Sure, he will correct, by withholding rain (Zech. 14:18-19), is a long way from dropping bombs. God will have and will use his power. There's no doubt about that, but it will always be for the good of those who oppose it. Eventually everyone will know of His true nature and will want to live that way. (Jer. 31:34) God will demonstrate it to all. How? By proper government in the hands of his servants-his first fruits, those he is working with right now, developing character traits of his spirit.

Notice how it will happen. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isa. 40:11) And this way of life will continue to grow and grow... "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." (Isa. 9:7)

Why will God's government succeed where man's has failed. Because it will be administered "Not by **might** nor by **power** but by my **spirit** saith the Lord of Hosts." (Zech. 4:6)

(This article has been updated and re-printed from “The Church of God Messenger” July/August 2001—Issue No. 4.)

Iron Sharpening Iron

What is that Oil?

by Darwin Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

What is the lesson or lessons to be gleaned from the parable of the “Ten Virgins” Mathew 25? Is it that we know and understand what the oil represents? Does it represent God's Holy Spirit or perhaps “truth”? A list of some things that the “five who were (are) wise” could be: having a good measure of God's Holy Spirit; having a good measure of Biblical truth; seeking God's righteousness, not your own; doing God's righteousness; overcoming (and just what is it, we are to overcome)? Do you know? I am sure there are many more things one can add to this list.

How about the five virgins who were (are) foolish? For starters, the list above, except that just the opposite of each item on the list, e.g., your own brand of “truth”; your own righteousness? Maybe you have this attitude because of “your truth”: Isa.65:5 “Which say, stand by thyself, come not near to me; **for I am holier than thou**. These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day”. (Could this be where we got the six-foot social distancing from?) Maybe this could be the foolish virgin's problem: Gal. 5:15: **But if ye bite and devour one another**, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Maybe they could be guilty of this; **2Ti 2:14 ¶** Of these things put *them* in remembrance, **charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit**, *but* to the subverting of the hearers.

As to what the oil represents in Mathew 25, from my studies, I believe that it does represent by analogy God's holy spirit. An analogy is not intended to be literal but analogous to-a literal object, in this case, something you can buy, whereas to make a point that indeed you cannot in the **foolish** virgin's case, cannot buy this “oil” (literally). After all they said to the foolish, “not so, for there may be not enough for us also”. The analogy of oil and the wise virgin's response makes it clear; one cannot buy God's spirit. They are also aware they can neither sell His Spirit nor even give It to someone else. So, they said, “not so”.

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If one interprets the idea that the oil represents "truth", then if I were to go and "buy" truth at the local hardware store, I will have a hard time to find and buy a quart full of truth, whereas I could easily find and buy a quart of oil to burn in my lamp, even today, as 2,000 years ago when this parable was recorded. In this analogy the lamp is the virgin's minds to be filled with oil. Yet one does not literally put real oil in one's mind.

One cannot buy truth and put it in a lamp and burn it, but oil you can. In the analogy in this parable, one must stay with what the words mean to imply as in **buy**, just as in **oil to burn**, as something that one can literally do or buy. One cannot go to a store and buy truth. At least I have not found any of that on any store shelf, let alone put it in a lamp, lite and burn it.

The ultimate reality is, one cannot study God's Word and search out the truths that Christ said He would lead us into all truth, without God's Holy Spirit. Let us not strive "about words to no profit"! let your lamps (your mind) be filled with oil (God's Spirt) and He will lead your mind into all truth. First in order you need God's Spirit, then comes understanding truth as one studies. Truth cannot come before God's Spirit or without His Spirit.

One should be careful to not be caught up with "new truth" every time you read an article but "search the scriptures whether these things be so". **Eph 4:14** That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and **carried about with every wind of doctrine**, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Not saying anyone is trying to deceive every time you hear a different twist on a given subject, but a different twist could take away the importance in staying true to the intent of what God wants us to understand more fully. Disputing over words takes away and ends up, brethren "biting and devouring one another", all to no profit.

If one wants to believe that "truth" is the appropriate object instead of oil, then brothers and sisters by all means believe, but let me believe what I have found to be "the truth". I have no intentions of demanding of anyone what they should believe, but I am also with God on this one, I too cannot stand the ones with "the holier than thou attitude".

The Worldwide Church of God had many truths corrected from mainstream churches false teachings for almost two millennia. There were errors, but we also need to be careful not to fall for "every wind of doctrine".

Response to: The Parable of the Ten Virgins by William P. Goff

German Jews and Russian Jews

by Ray Daly (Lincoln, North Dakota)

Thanks for printing my article on the "Edomite/Israeli Jews" of today. I want to add a thought or two, to the migrations of these Jews, in the 1800's. For, at the same time, there was another migration of "Jews" out of Germany. These being termed the "German Jews", as opposed to the Edomite "Russian Jews". Some 600,000 of them came to America from the late 1850's to the 1870's. Prior to the Russian Jews. These German Jews were almost certainly Israelites, that had been taken captive in the 720's BC by the Assyrians and settled in their land. Note that an early "Queen" of England married a "prince of Germany". Likely one of those Ephraimite's that Assyria had taken.

As to the German Jews that settled in America, vs. the Russian/Edomite Jews. The author of a book called "The Rest of Us", written at the behest of the Russian Jews, described the two classes as follows. The German Jews: "Taller, slimmer, with lighter skin, hair and eyes". The Russian Jews: "Shorter, heavier, with darker skin, hair and eyes". The latter, it should be remembered, were sons of Esau's "black Canaanite wives".

Response to: A Short History of the Edomites by Ray Daly

Holy Days 2021

Pentecost - May 17, 2021

Trumpets - September 7, 2021

Atonement - September 16, 2021

Tabernacles - September 21 to 27, 2021

Last Great Day - September 28, 2021