

# MESSENGER

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FULFILL YOUR DESTINY

October 2019

# WORSHIP

of the

# DEAD?

# MESSENGER

## Magazine

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Throughout the ages, there have been many various festivals and traditions involving worship of the dead – including traditions that have carried through in modern times. What are these today, and what does God think of them? Find out the history and what God's word says about the subject in this issue's featured article, "Worship of the Dead?"

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# PEACE

## *In God's Time*

**F**or 6000 years the pages of the history of mankind have been soaked with blood. The weapons of war continue to grow in destructive power. And the wars themselves continue to exhibit often shocking, wanton violence and depravity. All efforts towards peace engineered by human beings have failed, and will fail. The only real hope for permanent peace among nations is Divine intervention, as long ago prophesied in the pages of the Bible. The good news is, peace will happen, in God's time.

On September 30, 1938 Neville Chamberlain, the Prime-Minister of Great Britain, returned to London from Germany with a piece of paper containing an agreement he had signed with the German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. The agreement allowed Germany to dismember Czechoslovakia, taking over all the vital Czech border fortresses and 16,000 square miles of territory, leaving the country broken not only geographically, but also economically, politically and militarily, and leaving it defenseless.

In exchange for this sell-out of a key ally by Britain and France, Hitler had agreed not to start a war. It would have been a war which Germany almost certainly could not have won at the time had Britain and France stood firm. Chamberlain came back to England not in shame but in triumph, boasting that he had achieved "peace with honor," and that he believed his piece of paper was a guarantee of "peace in our time."

The majority of the British public and many in other parts of the world believed Chamberlain. They believed peace had been achieved. Only a relative few had the perception to see that the alleged "peace" was only a sham. When Winston Churchill stood up in the House of Commons and made the statement, "We have sustained a total, unmitigated defeat," he was met with a storm of protest.

Most people simply did not want to believe that the unconscionable betrayal of Czechoslovakia would not guarantee peace for at least a generation. Within less than a year after the delusional politicians of Britain and France had achieved what they called "peace in our time," Europe was plunged into what is widely believed to be the most destructive war in

history by a German attack on Poland.

Beware when you hear politicians – and religious leaders – talking about peace. It may mean something far different is about to happen.

We are warned about this in Scripture. In ancient Israel and Judah, the false prophets had convinced the nation that the warnings of God's true prophets were false, and that there would be peace, despite their sins, and the judgment God had proclaimed against them by his prophets. "Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, Saying, "You shall have peace," Whereas the sword reaches to the heart' " (Jeremiah 4:10). Not that God deceived the people directly, indeed he had sent prophet after prophet to warn them to repent lest they be punished (Nehemiah 9:26-30). But inasmuch as his instructions and words of warning were rejected, God allowed them to be deceived by false prophets – by their political and spiritual leaders (Jeremiah 8:8-11).

Today's world is in chaos. There is a profound lack of genuine peace in today's world, even for many on a personal level. Millions upon millions even in affluent societies lack a basic peace of mind. Vast numbers of people are unsettled, discontent, harboring fear and anxiety. People by the millions in many of our cities are afraid to go out at night, holing up in their homes and apartments behind barred gates and doors.

Several wars are being fought at this very moment in various places around the world. Terror attacks in many parts of the world are commonplace. The world is becoming more volatile and unstable it seems with every passing day – like a powder keg waiting for something to ignite it into a cauldron of violence and destruction.

Yet, in spite of all man's bungling, half-hearted efforts to make peace while preparing for war, peace is coming, following worldwide calamities that will bring an end to this age. One day, in the perhaps not too far distant future, the world will be at peace.

In this article I will discuss peace, the source of peace, the cause of peace and how you can have peace – even in the midst of a world filled with trouble, calamity, and anything but peace.

What is peace, anyway? My dictionary has

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several definitions. Peace is a state of mental or physical tranquility; the absence of war; public order, or freedom from riot or violence; it's a state of reconciliation; freedom from mental anxiety. The Bible speaks frequently of peace, and the Hebrew word for peace used in the Bible has a much fuller meaning than dictionaries give to the English word.

The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, implies all the English word implies and more. *Shalom* implies safety, well-being, happiness, friendliness, health, prosperity, and peace of mind.

The peace that God will create in his Kingdom will be total, complete and all-encompassing. It will be not only absence of war, but it will include a positive joy, health, satisfaction, prosperity. It will include complete physical, economic and spiritual well-being.

What is the source of that kind of peace? Your Bible has the answer. One of the names of God, our God, the true God, is the Eternal [God of] Peace (*Yahweh Shalom* – *Yahweh is Peace*) (Judges 6:23-24). He alone is the Source of genuine and lasting peace. If you want peace, fix your eyes on God, because he alone can give you real and permanent peace.

What causes peace? The Bible has a great deal to say about the specific details concerning what causes or creates peace. But they can all be summed up by saying that peace is caused by getting in harmony with that Source of peace which I mentioned earlier – the true and Eternal God. Getting in harmony with God is the primary theme of the Day of Atonement. In fact, as Easton's *Bible Dictionary* points out, the English word atonement means "at-one-ment, i.e., the state of being at one or being reconciled, so that atonement is reconciliation."

The Feast of Atonement is one of the commanded annual festivals of God, and is a holy Sabbath and day of fasting (Leviticus 23:2, 26-32; Acts 27:9). Like all of God's Sabbaths, both the weekly Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths, the Day of Atonement has deep spiritual meaning, as well as prophetic significance (Colossians 2:16-17; see "Were the Commandments 'Nailed to the Cross'?", [cogmessenger.org](http://cogmessenger.org)).

The Feast of Atonement has particular significance with regard to being reconciled to God by forgiveness of sin through repentance and the redemption made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and, in addition, the putting away of Satan at the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Putting Satan away will help pave the way for the whole world to be reconciled to God, to be at peace with God, and with one another.

When we personally are in complete harmony with God we will be at peace. And when the world as a whole is in complete harmony with God the world will be at peace. Let's look at some specific examples of how we can be reconciled to God and how that results in peace.

As the people of Israel, having been delivered from slavery in Egypt, and yet rebellious toward God, wandered in the wilderness, they were led into idolatry through the craftiness of Balaam, a prophet of Mesopotamia, who had been hired by the Moabites and Midianites to bring a curse on Israel (Numbers 25:1-13). *Baal-peor* means "Lord of the Opening," and the worship of this false god involved licentious sex acts. Note Numbers 25:12-13, peace followed on the eradication of evil.

We should not misunderstand. We should not take this example as a license for us to attack or kill others in our place and time for their behavior. Phinehas was a priest, an officer of the nation under God's direct rule, and acting in fulfilling a divine command for which he was responsible. He was not acting on his own authority. If he had not acted in the face of this wanton act of defiance toward God, God himself might have destroyed the whole nation (Numbers 25:11).

The lesson for us in examples like this is that we personally as Christians should not lust after evil things, commit idolatry, or sexual sins, etc. (1 Corinthians 10:1-11).

Notice that Phinehas' act eradicated evil and served as an atonement for the sins of Israel. He was zealous for God. If Phinehas had been complacent and lethargic instead of zealous, he would not have done what he did. Zeal is required for us to rid ourselves of evil. Without the right kind of zeal for God and his way peace is impossible (cf. Malachi 2:4-7).

The Hebrew word translated "atonement" in Numbers 25:13 and many other places is *kaphar*, which means to cover, or figuratively to expiate, or make an atonement. The idea is that atonement is possible when our sins are covered, or removed, from God's sight. When evil is eradicated from our lives as individuals, or from our midst as a Church or a nation reconciliation to God and forgiveness from God is possible. Peace follows when sin is put away and forgiveness granted (Psalm 85:2-3, 8, 10).

"Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; For the future of that man is peace" (Psalm 37:37). The ultimate reward of the "perfect" (KJV – could also be translated undefiled, or blameless) and "upright" (just) is peace. Those who repent and whose sins are cleansed, who then obey God, are rewarded with peace (cf. Psalm 37:27-29). However,

in this world those who are just are often oppressed and persecuted, and peace may not come fully until the resurrection (John 16:33; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10).

The covenant with Phinehas and his descendants was a type of the covenant God offers us. The New Covenant in the Bible is called the Covenant of Peace. That covenant embodies on the one hand the forgiveness of sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and on the other hand righteousness through the writing of God's law in our hearts and minds by God through his Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26; the same covenant). Everything we can do in seeking peace ties in in some way with these two cardinal points of the New Covenant.

What are some specific things you can do to seek peace?

Pray regularly, daily, to the true God, who alone can give us lasting peace (Psalm 55:16-18). When the nation of Judah was facing captivity in a foreign land because of their collective sins, God commanded the Jews to pray for the place where they were being taken captive (Jeremiah 29:7).

As Christians, we ought to pray for the peace of our own country where we are strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). Pray for all men, those in authority, etc. (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6-8).

It's in prayer that we offer or ask to be applied the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cover or atone for our sins. It's through this sacrifice that peace with God is made possible (Hebrews 4:16; 5:1; 10:19-23; 13:20-21). Note that God is called the God of peace in connection with his covenant and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Also, note that God can make us perfect (or complete) in his sight, and as we read earlier, the final reward of the perfect, or blameless, and upright is peace (Psalm 37:37).

Through prayer and Bible study and fasting we can draw near to God (Matthew 11:28-30).

What else can you do to have peace? You can obey God. You won't have lasting peace until you learn to obey God. Israel was promised peace if they would obey (Leviticus 26:3, 6; cf. Proverbs 3:1-2; Psalm 119:165).

Another specific thing we can do to have peace is to make peace – not only with God but with other people (Matthew 5:9). Note that it is the quality of peacemaking which especially stamps the mark of character inherited from God on a person. As we learn to make peace in the proper way we become more like God and reflect his character as sons.

During his earthly ministry, the disciples



of Jesus sometimes exhibited jealousy and covetousness (Mark 9:33-35, 50). Jealousy, envy, the desire to "lord it over others," and similar behaviors destroy peace among brethren, and eventually destroy the brethren. Salt purifies and preserves and is thus used as a symbol of the qualities of character which purify and preserve the individual and society. A vital key to living at peace with others is humility. We must learn to serve one another in humility, and put away envy, pride, and arrogance (Proverbs 13:10).

Being a peacemaker, however, does not mean compromising the truth. Never be willing to compromise the truth for a sham or temporary peace in this world (Jude 1:3; Revelation 13:7-8; 20:4).

Is the world ever going to have peace? No, not as long as human leaders walking contrary to God's way are in charge (Isaiah 59:8). No, the world will not have peace – not until Jesus Christ intervenes and establishes his world ruling government.

But the true God is not now ruling the world. Instead the spirit of God's chief adversary permeates the world's societies. Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Revelation 12:9). Satan does not have peace and does not know peace (Luke 11:24; Job 2:2). Satan is called *Beelzebub* (Matthew 12:24-26). This name *Beelzeboul*, as it is in the original Greek, meaning lord of dung, is a Jewish parody of the name *Beelzebub* (or *Baal-zebub*, lord of flies). The name *Beelzebub* has a dual implication. It was a name for the counterfeit healing god of the ancient world (as flies are known to be a cause of disease, hence the healing god was called "lord of flies"). A more esoteric meaning of this name *Beelzebub* is "the restless lord" who was cast out of heaven. Who, lacking peace, walks to and fro in the earth seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is the chief warmonger of the world. He is the chief instigator of evil and destruction. World peace will not be possible until the enemies of peace are destroyed, beginning with Satan (2 Kings 11:16-21). The coronation of Joash is a historical type of the advent of Jesus Christ as king of kings (Revelation 19:16). When the rightful king was placed on the throne and the usurper removed, the result was "quiet," or peace. And so it shall be at the time of Christ's coming when he shall become King over the whole world, and Satan will be removed (Revelation 20:1-3).

When the present evil rulers – chiefly Satan and his demons – are put away, God's Kingdom shall be established (Zechariah 6:13). Government and religion shall be one and

the aim of both will be peace (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. He shall rule as both king and high priest after the order of Melchizedek (King of Righteousness; cf. Hebrews 7:2, 11-17), ruling from Jerusalem which means the city of peace. His Kingdom shall be fruitful forever, and of his peace, finally, there shall be no end.

## ISAIAH 9:6-7



*"For a child is born to us. A son is given to us; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, on David's throne, and on his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time on, even forever. The zeal of Yahweh of Armies will perform this."*  
(WEB).



**H**eathen cultures and religions in many parts of the world involve some form of worship directed toward dead heroes or ancestors.

Religious observances such as Hallowmas, which begins on the evening of October 31, or Halloween (All Hallows' Eve), preserve to one extent or another, depending on the region, widespread ancient customs and superstitions directly associated with the worship of the dead. As does the "secular" observance of Halloween itself.

**Does God's Word have anything to say about customs involving worship of the dead? Should Christians participate in the Halloween custom?**

The pagan sources of various customs and superstitions reflected in Halloween is commonly acknowledged. "Customs and superstitions gathered through the ages go into the celebration of Halloween, or All Hallows Eve, on October 31, the Christian festival of All Saints. It has its origins, however, in the autumn festivals of earlier times. The ancient Druids had a three-day celebration at the beginning of November. They believed that on the last night of October spirits of the dead roamed abroad, and they lighted bonfires to drive them away" ("Halloween," *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1995, Compton's NewMedia, Inc.). In recounting various ancient customs associated with Halloween, the same source goes on to remark, "Halloween celebrations today reflect many of these early customs." Another source comments, "The pagan observances influenced the Christian festival of All Hallows' Eve, celebrated on the same date" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Halloween," 1998 multi-media edition).

Included in the pagan superstitions and customs associated with Halloween are those practiced by the Celts at the time of their Samhain festival. "Samhain was seen as a liminal time, when spirits or fairies (the aos sí) could more easily come into our world. Many scholars see the aos sí as remnants of the pagan gods and nature spirits." To propitiate the spirits, "offerings of food and drink were left" for them.

People took various measures to ward off evil spirits, which included disguising themselves in some way, as well as lighting bonfires, a practice also linked to various other superstitions involving sun worship and nature worship.

"The souls of the dead were also thought to revisit their homes. People would set a place at the Samhain feast for the souls of dead kinfolk and tell tales of one's forebears." Customs in various places included going from house to house in costumes begging for food, which included offerings for the spirits. (*Wikipedia*, "Samhain").

These ancient customs survive today in cultures all over the world. Note the following

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from Wikipedia:

**Festival of the Dead** or **Feast of Ancestors** is held by many cultures throughout the world in honor or recognition of deceased members of the community, generally occurring after the harvest in August, September, October, or November. In many cultures a single event, *Festival of the Dead*, lasting up to 3 days, was held at the end of October and beginning of November; examples include the Peruvians, the Pacific Islanders, the people of the Tonga Islands, the ancient Persians, the ancient Egyptians, the Japanese, ancient Romans, and the northern nations of Europe. For the Hindus the ritual done for the dead ancestors is called Pitru Paksha. It is based on the Hindu lunar calendar and the period lasts for 15 days. The dates change as per the Hindu lunar calendar.

In Japanese Buddhist custom the festival honoring the departed (deceased) spirits of one's ancestors is known as Bon Festival. In Inca religion the entire month of November is 'Ayamarca', which translates to *Festival of the Dead*. A Mexican holiday is called Day of the Dead. The Chinese and Buddhist festival is called Ghost Festival. In the 21st century, European traditions mark the celebrations of Halloween, All Saints and All Souls' Day. ("Festival of the Dead," en.wikipedia.org).

An example of how the dead are worshiped in modern day Mexico, and among at least some immigrants to the United States of Mexican descent, is found in an article from the *Kansas City Star* newspaper. The article describes how a woman named Maria, who had immigrated to the United States, "...keeps an altar in her grandmothers memory" in her home. The article also recounts how the woman "built a public altar for her grandmother as part of the ...Days of the Dead" activities in the city where she lives in the United States. The altar was adorned with articles which had belonged to the dead grandmother. The article comments, "...across the country people ...are reviving and revitalizing this custom that melds native cultural traditions and beliefs about death and dying with Christian devotion."

In describing how the "Days of the Dead" are observed in Mexico and elsewhere in late October and early November, the article states, "Lavish meals are prepared to 'nourish' the spirits that return to visit loved ones during this time." A celebrant comments, "I think the Day of the Dead is a very good indication of how our Indian relatives basically accepted Catholicism by adapting it and co-opting it into their own beliefs." (*Kansas City Star*, October 28, 2000).

An *Associated Press* article discusses how celebrants sit around bonfires awaiting the return of dead relatives. "Fires are thought to guide the wandering souls back to their families, according to Day of the Dead tradition. In some towns, fires flicker outside almost every doorway" (*Associated Press*, November 8, 2000).

Praying to the "saints," or to Mary, is also a relic of such worship. Some of the customs associated with Christmas, Easter and some other "Christian" holidays likewise can be traced back to ancient origins in systems of idolatry extant in Biblical times that involved worship of the dead.

Many of the great systems of idolatry in the ancient world revolved around the legend of a dead hero god, who was lamented, and eventually resurrected. The cults of Osiris, Tammuz, Baal, Dionysus, Adonis, and others featured such a legend. "A god of many names but of essentially one nature" (*The Golden Bough*, Sir James George Frazer, MacMillan one volume abridged edition, p. 378). In many lands, dead kings were worshiped. For example in Egypt, the living Pharaoh was considered a personification of Horus, and the dead Pharaoh was identified with Osiris (*Ancient Egypt*, J.E. Manchip White, Dover, pp. 8-9). Tombs of the dead Pharaohs customarily included shrines or mortuary temples where priests attended to the worship of the dead rulers (*The Pyramids of Egypt*, I.E.S. Edwards, pp. 32, 95, 154, 161ff.). All such religious customs are prohibited under the law which God spoke from Mount Sinai, "You shall have no other gods before [or besides] Me" (Deuteronomy 5:7). And other similar warnings against idolatry apply as well.

More specifically, God told the Israelites, "You are the children of the Lord your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead" (Deuteronomy 14:1).



This is a prohibition against certain idolatrous customs associated with the worship of Osiris, Baal and similar deities, as referenced above. "...the Egyptians, with shorn heads, annually lamented over a buried idol of Osiris, smiting their breasts, slashing their shoulders, ripping open their old wounds..." (*The Golden Bough*, p. 435). In the text of a Baal epic from Ras Shamra, site of the ancient city of Ugarit on the Syrian coast, El is portrayed as mourning and lamenting for the dead Baal. "Cheeks and chin he rends, His upper arms he scores, His chest as a garden-plot, Even as a valley-bottom his back he lacerates" (*Documents from Old Testament Times*, D. Winton Thomas, ed., Harper Torchbooks, p. 130). The priests of Baal, in their confrontation with Elijah, imitated the same practice (1 Kings 18:28).

On an occasion during Israel's trek through the wilderness, "They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead" (Psalm 106:28). Thus are characterized sacrifices made to Baal (cf. Deuteronomy 4:3). God in his wrath slew 24,000 of them (Numbers 25:9).

God forbade the Israelites from adopting heathen religious customs (Deuteronomy 12:30-32). They were forbidden from offering their produce to the dead (Deuteronomy 26:14), another custom common in the ancient world, and still common today in some cultures. Israel's king Saul died in part for attempting to consult the dead through a medium (1 Chronicles 10:13; compare 1 Samuel 28:7 ff.). God condemns necromancy, which in its Scriptural application includes worshiping or praying to the dead, as well as seeking to communicate with them for divining the future or other purposes (Leviticus 19:26, 28, 31; 20:6-8; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 2 Kings 21:6). The righteous king Josiah purged the land of spiritists, mediums, household gods and idols (2 Kings 23:24). The prophet Isaiah wrote, "And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?" (Isaiah 8:19).

The dead know nothing and are powerless (Psalm 146:3-5; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). Only Jesus, of all humans who have ever lived, has immortality at the present time (1 Timothy 6:16). The saints, which includes all who will be in the first resurrection at Christ's coming, will not be made immortal until that time. "...at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on

immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" (1 Corinthians 15:52-54; see also 1 Corinthians 15:48-51).

"Saints," as the term is used in Scripture, does not refer to deceased individuals who have been "beatified" by a Church, and declared worthy of "veneration," or worship, and are to be prayed to. All those in the true Church are "called to be saints" (Romans 1:7). The word "saints," is translated from the Greek ἅγιος [*hagios*], which means "holy" (cf. 1 Peter 1:15-16, 2:5, 9; 2 Peter 3:11). We are to fear and worship God alone, not any man (Acts 10:25-26; 14:8-17).

As Christians, we are to "flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:1-7, 14, 20-22). We live in a world given over to vain, idolatrous customs and beliefs. Mankind has stubbornly refused to forsake his idolatrous customs (Revelation 9:20-21). We must turn away from empty and vain heathenish customs founded on lies and deception (Zechariah 10:2; Jeremiah 2:5, 8; 10:1-5, 8-16; 1 Peter 4:1-5). We should disassociate ourselves from the empty and vain customs of heathenish religion and superstition. Halloween is one of those customs.

"...be careful that you are not ensnared to follow them after they are destroyed from before you, and that you not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods? I will do likewise.' You shall not do so to Yahweh your God; for every abomination to Yahweh, which he hates, they have done to their gods; for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever thing I command you, that you shall observe to do. You shall not add to it, nor take away from it."

Deuteronomy 12:30-32  
World English Bible



# How Will the World Be Different When Christ Returns?

Rod Reynolds

Part II

**T**he Bible assures us that Jesus Christ will one day return to earth and restore "all things" as has been prophesied by God's prophets "since the world began" (Acts 3:21). He will establish at that time a literal world ruling kingdom, that shall never end (Revelation 11:15). In part one of this series we discussed several ways in which the world will be different from today's world when Jesus Christ establishes the Kingdom of God on earth.

As discussed in that article there will be: (1) An end to oppression. (2) Just government. (3) End to war. (4) Harmony among races and nations.

Now let's continue with a discussion of some other ways in which the world will be different, and far better, than today's world after Jesus Christ returns to establish his kingdom.

## (5) Stable Government

A sufficiently strong and stable government is essential to the well-being of the people of a nation, or other political entity. Yet, human governments are inherently subject to the weaknesses and limitations of human beings.

There are many examples in history of how nations have suffered as a result of weak, corrupt, and unstable governments. Many examples could be cited. One is an article written by William J. (Bill) Federer, well known author and speaker, titled "Why is Mexico's government so unstable?"

"From 1821 to 1857, fifty different governments ruled Mexico. [Meaning that on average there was a new government in just under nine months over a period of 36 years]. Revolts and revolutions in Mexico usually began with class-warfare, where the poor were organized to overthrow the rich, but ended up with the revolutionary leaders themselves grabbing power – and becoming dictators." ("Why is Mexico's government so unstable?" Bill Federer, 2-1-18, WND.com, retrieved 9-25-18).

In 1858 Benito Juarez became President of Mexico, to be replaced by Maximilian I in 1864 with the backing of European powers. With the help of the United States, Maximilian was overthrown in 1867 and executed by Benito Juarez. Lerdo de Tejad succeeded Juarez upon his death, but in 1876 his government was overthrown by a revolt led by Porfirio Diaz. Diaz was in power from 1876 to 1911, when a

revolt was instigated by Francisco Madero. The next decade saw a civil war in which millions died, and the government sought to crush the influence of the Church and suppress dissent.

More revolts and assassinations followed this period.

In 1848, following the Mexican-American war, the United States purchased 525,000 square miles of territory from Mexico, under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. Mr. Federer comments: "Since the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, there developed a stark contrast in the health, safety and economic status of the land north of the border and the land south of the border. This is most obvious when comparing border cities:

- San Diego – Tijuana
- El Paso – Juárez
- Laredo – Nuevo Laredo
- Brownsville – Matamoros
- McAllen – Reynosa

"During the same period of time that Mexico has had several dozen different governments, the United States, other than the period of the Civil War, has had only one. As both sides of the border have similar climate, geography, plants, and in many cases a similar cultural-racial makeup, reasons for the disparity must lie deeper." (*ibid.*)

There are other reasons for disparity between the United States and Mexico in terms of wealth and prosperity, the most significant of which is the blessing of Abraham. But unstable governments do not generally produce the best of possible outcomes for a nation or its peoples. One of the blessings God has given the United States and other Israelitish nations in the past 200 or more years is relatively stable governments.

Most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa since the colonial period have had unstable governments, which is one reason why they are among the poorest countries in the world.

Would you really like to live in a country that has a different government every few months? In the United States, we elect a new House of Representatives every two years. And Senators serve six year terms, a third of which expire each two years. Presidents serve four year terms, and may be re-elected under current law no more than once, for a total of eight years in office.

So although the government in a sense

remains the same, policies even in a democratic republic like the United States may change significantly from one election cycle to another.

How much can you really depend on such a system, in the long term?

Is democracy really the best form of government, as many Americans believe?

"Between 1833 and 1855, the Mexican presidency changed hands at least 36 times, with Antonio López de Santa Anna ruling 11 of those.

"Antonio López de Santa Anna, styling himself after Napoleon, laid aside Mexico's Constitution in 1835, dissolved the Congress, and declared himself dictator. Santa Anna had previously told the U.S. Minister to Mexico, Joel R. Poinsett, 1824: 'I threw up my cap for liberty with great ardor...but very soon found the folly of it. A hundred years to come my people will not be fit for liberty. They do not know what it is, unenlightened as they are. ... A despotism is the proper government for them.'" ("Why Is Mexico's Government so Unstable?").

The United States itself was established as a reaction against what was regarded as a despotic government. Yet, the founders of the American republic were suspicious of democracy, and established the nation as a republic, with limited suffrage (voting rights). Under the Constitution of the United States there was a division of power in the Federal government, enumerated rights were guaranteed to the citizens, and other rights and powers were vested in the states. The founders never intended the United States to be a pure democracy, which is probably one reason it has lasted so long.

However, with changes in how the Senate is chosen, and the expansion of voting rights, the United States has become more democratic, and more susceptible to the inherent weaknesses of democracies. One of the most significant weaknesses of a democracy is the tendency towards mob rule.

Masses can on occasion be easily swayed by clever politicians who know how to appeal to their desires and prejudices. The word "demagogue" is from the Greek words for people and leader. Demagogues can gain popularity by whipping up passions and appealing to the people's emotions in ways that are deceptive and destructive.

Adolph Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany after his party had become



the largest party in the German Reichstag as a result of a democratic election. In Italy, "On ...October 30, in 1922, after a round of elections brought the Fascist party the majority of the vote, Mussolini became Prime Minister of Italy" ("Mussolini Becomes Prime Minister of Italy," by Gary Satanovsky, [www.famousdaily.com](http://www.famousdaily.com); retrieved 9-25-18). So both Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini started out as democratically appointed politicians, after which they abolished democracy in their respective countries and became dictators, and then led their nations into a destructive war.

Another major weakness of democracies is the tendency for politicians to over promise in order to get elected, which leads to over spending and eventual insolvency.

"The sheer nature of western democracies have an inbuilt self destructive component. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the burgeoning welfare and health budgets of western societies, the two sacred cows of western democracies. These ever expanding budgets win votes. All western governments have massive unfunded liabilities, which are unsustainable in the long run" ("The Weaknesses of Democracy," James Hearne, [jameshearne.wordpress.com](http://jameshearne.wordpress.com), 7-18-12; retrieved 9-25-18).

It's been suggested that an enlightened Monarchy or despotism is the best form of government. The trick is finding a truly enlightened monarch, or finding one who can successfully implement policies that serve the best interests of the governed. And even if one is found, there's no guarantee that his style of administration will outlast him.

There are a number of good examples of that in the Bible. Solomon, who was a wise king, although he did some foolish things, wrote: "Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 2: 18-19).

Solomon had acted foolishly in building pagan places of worship in Jerusalem. For his sin he was told his heir would lose the kingdom, except for the tribe of Judah, and as it turned out, the relatively small tribe of Benjamin and most of the tribe of Levi. This occurred after Solomon's death when his son, Rehoboam, made a decision which led to the revolt of ten of the 13 tribes of Israel.

"Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on

us, and we will serve you.' So he said to them, 'Depart for three days, then come back to me.' And the people departed" (1 Kings 12:3-5).

The account continues: "So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had directed, saying, 'Come back to me the third day.' Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him; and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, 'My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!' So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn of events was from the Lord, that He might fulfill His word, which the Lord had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying: 'What share have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now, see to your own house, O David!' So Israel departed to their tents" (1 Kings 12:12-16).

So Rehoboam's foolishness, added to that of Solomon, cost the house of David most of its kingdom.

Hezekiah is an example of an enlightened and righteous king over the kingdom of Judah. **"...he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went"** (2 Kings 18:3-7).

When Hezekiah died, he was succeeded by his son Manasseh, one of the most wicked kings in all the history of Israel and Judah.

"Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. **And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel"** (2 Kings 21:1-2).

.....

"Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spoke by His servants the prophets,

saying, 'Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols), therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become victims of plunder to all their enemies, because they have done evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day.'" (2 Kings 21:9-15).

However, when Jesus Christ establishes his government on the earth, it will not only be a just government, it will be a stable, lasting government. His government will be a hierarchical government, in which Jesus Christ will be ruling as king, and others will be ruling with him under his direction and authority. The authority in the government of God will be aimed at serving the needs of the people ruled by that government, according to the judgment of the all-wise God who created the heavens and the earth.

"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. **His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed"** (Daniel 7:13-14).

.....  
"Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. **His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,** And all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Daniel 7:27, cf. Revelation 11:15).

"Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, And Your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, And the little hills, by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, And will break in pieces the oppressor. **They shall fear You As long as the sun and moon endure, Throughout all generations.** He shall come down like rain upon the grass



before mowing, Like showers that water the earth. In His days the righteous shall flourish, And abundance of peace, Until the moon is no more." (Psalm 72:1-7).

.....  
**"His name shall endure forever;** His name shall continue as long as the sun." (Psalm 72: 17).

"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, And look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment, And those who dwell in it will die in like manner; **But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not be abolished.** Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, You people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, Nor be afraid of their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment, And the worm will eat them like wool; **But My righteousness will be forever, And My salvation from generation to generation.**" (Isaiah 51:6- 8).

**"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;** A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom." (Psalm 45:6).

"I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable. **One generation shall praise Your works to another,** And shall declare Your mighty acts." (Psalm 145: 1-4).

.....  
 "All Your works shall praise You, O Lord, And Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, And talk of Your power, To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. **Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.** The Lord upholds all who fall, And raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look expectantly to You, And You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. The Lord preserves all who love Him, But all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, And all flesh shall bless His holy name **Forever and ever.**" (Psalm 145:10-21).

#### **(6) Predictable and Favorable Weather, and Abundance of Produce for All**

One of the sources of calamity for mankind

throughout recorded history is unfavorable weather. War and inept government are actually frequent causes of famine, as there are several countries in the world today facing famine as a direct result of warfare and dysfunctional governments. However, untold millions have died down through the ages as a result of drought and resultant famine. Many more thousands and millions have died as a result of other weather related calamities, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, etc. Even today, there are ongoing droughts and famines in various parts of the world.

From an article published July, 2017:

"As Yemen, South Sudan and parts of northeast Nigeria are already officially facing famine – in what the UN is calling the worst humanitarian crisis since WWII – neighboring countries also find themselves increasingly at risk.

"Now, neighboring Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia could fall into famine as early as 2018, due to another year of below-average rainfall. The drought has left harvests bare, killed livestock and forced many to leave their nomadic lifestyles and flee to informal communities where water and food aid are available.

"These three countries are now experiencing what's called a Phase 3 food crisis, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS) Network's five-tier scale. According to the FEWS Network, Ethiopia and Somalia are on track to reach Phase 4 acute food insecurity by 2018; by that same year Somalia could reach Phase 5, full-fledged famine." ("These African Countries May Fall Into Famine by 2018," [www.globalcitizen.org](http://www.globalcitizen.org), July 17, 2017).

God promised Israel that if they would obey his commandments: "The Lord will **open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season,** and to bless all the work of your hand" (Deuteronomy 28:12)

These blessings will apply especially to the peoples after Jesus Christ returns, and they begin to practice God's way of life.

"You will also defile the covering of your graven images of silver, And the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; You will say to them, 'Get away!' **Then He will give the rain for your seed With which you sow the ground, And bread of the increase of the earth; It will be fat and plentiful. In that day your cattle will feed In large pastures.**" (Isaiah 30:22-23).

"I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will **cause showers to come down in their season;** there shall be showers of blessing. Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her

increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them." (Ezekiel 34:26-27).

"I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you **need never again bear the reproach of famine** among the nations." (Ezekiel 36:29-30).

"Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, And pity His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, Behold, **I will send you grain and new wine and oil,** And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations." (Joel 2:18-19).

"Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the Lord has done marvelous things! Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength. Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the Lord your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, **And He will cause the rain to come down for you-- The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.** So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame." (Joel 2:21-26).

"By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, And of the far-off seas; Who established the mountains by His strength, Being clothed with power; You who still the noise of the seas, The noise of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples. They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice. **You visit the earth and water it,** You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, For so You have prepared it. You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth. You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance. They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, And the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; The valleys also are covered with grain; They shout for joy, they

also sing." (Psalm 65:5-12).

"The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And **the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose**; It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, The excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. **For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, And the thirsty land springs of water**; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, There shall be grass with reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, Nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35:1-10).

When Jesus Christ establishes his rule, he will put an end to famine. There will be no want from lack of food, no drought will affect those who have learned to obey God, but rather, rain in due season. There will be an abundance of food and all that human beings need to thrive and prosper.

The government and its policies will be stable and predictable, it will rule from one generation to the next forever, to the benefit of mankind. There will be no successful revolutions or rebellions against the government of God. There will be no unpredictable changes in government policy to upset and ruin people's lives. Instead, there will be peace and stability, and blessings for all who submit to the benevolent rule of the Creator God.

These are additional blessings we can look forward to when Jesus Christ reigns at last on the earth.

## REVELATION 22:1-5



"He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will be no curse any more. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

There will be no night, and they need no lamp light or sun light; for the Lord God will illuminate them. They will reign forever and ever" (WEB).



# PROCLAIM LIBERTY

Rod Reynolds

The common condition of mankind down through history has been one of bondage. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century of some 60 million Russians about 50 million were serfs – a form of bondage little better than abject slavery. The word serf comes from a Latin word meaning slave. Add several million who were conscripted into the army and others in prison or other forms of bondage, fewer than ten percent of the Russian population had anything like what we would consider personal freedom. In the whole of Europe during the Middle-Ages less than 10 percent of the population were freemen. “Serfdom is an institution that has always been commonplace for human society” (Wikipedia.org, “Serfdom”).

Millions of people – of various ethnicities – were bought and sold in the international slave trade before Great Britain and the United States led the way in making it illegal in the nineteenth century. Yet, many remained slaves. The American Civil War put an end to legal slavery in the United States. But even today, there are many millions of people in a condition of slavery worldwide. Moreover, virtually the whole world is in a state of spiritual slavery to sin.

Jesus Christ, however, was sent “To proclaim liberty to the captives... To set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18). The day is coming when Jesus Christ will complete this part of his mission, and human slavery will be a thing of the past.

In the last two centuries B.C., the Romans used slaves, “...more widely than ever before and probably with greater brutality. In the mines they are whipped into continuing effort by overseers; in the fields they work in chain gangs; in the public arenas they are forced to engage in terrifying combat as gladiators” (historyworld.net, “HISTORY OF SLAVERY”).

In the Roman Empire well-educated slaves might work at jobs such as teaching and secretarial work. Their lot was infinitely better by comparison to the run-of-the-mill slaves, many of whom spent all their waking hours working in construction, agriculture, and mining. Others worked under the lash in galleys, and or were forced to fight in gladiatorial contests for amusement. City slaves and household slaves fared better, but any slave could be used for sexual exploitation by members of the master’s household. A Roman slave could be whipped or even killed at the pleasure of his master. “This right was often exercised with great cruelty” (tribunesandtriumphs.org, “Roman Slaves”). Marriage among slaves was not recognized, and children of a female slave belonged to the slave’s master.

Slavery was often practiced among the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere prior to modern European colonization. Often the treatment given to slaves was unimaginably brutal. Slaves were not only forced into labor, but not infrequently, especially among the Maya and Aztecs, offered in human sacrifice. 84,000 victims were said to have been sacrificed in just one temple inauguration of the Aztecs in 1487 (“History of slavery,” en.wikipedia.org).

While many among their own populations may have been enslaved to one degree or another, many societies that have practiced slavery tended to enslave people of other tribes, nationalities or religions. Often populations subjugated in war have been enslaved. Tens of thousands of Jews were enslaved, for example, by the Romans as a consequence of the war which concluded with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Josephus, Wars, 3.10.10; 6.9.2; 6.9.3).

The brutal treatment afforded slaves may have a racial component, but not necessarily. Professor Robert Davis, author of *Christian Slaves*,

*Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*, writes, “We cannot think of slavery as something that only white people did to black people” (“WHEN EUROPEANS WERE SLAVES,” researchnews.osu.edu). His study concludes that during the era he writes about it was religion and ethnicity, as much as race, that determined who became slaves.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries Davis estimates that a million or more Europeans were captured by North African slave traders and sold as slaves to Islamic countries. Davis remarks that the living and working conditions of European slaves sold into Africa and the Ottoman Empire were no better than black slaves sold into the Americas. “While African slaves did grueling labor on sugar and cotton plantations in the Americas, European Christian slaves were often worked just as hard and as lethally – in quarries, in heavy construction, and above all rowing the corsair galleys themselves” (“WHEN EUROPEANS WERE SLAVES,” researchnews.osu.edu).

Slaves from much of Europe were sold to the Muslims through regular slave trading networks long before the period written about by Davis. “Before the tenth century the Muslims generally bought Christian Europeans as slaves.... By the tenth century, Slavs became the most numerous imported group.... during the late Middle Ages, until the fall of Granada in the late fifteenth century, most slaves of the... Muslims were Christians from the northern kingdoms...” (William Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade*, p. 69, cited by Michael Hoffman II, “They Were White and They Were Slaves,” p. 3).

Islam has a long history of enslaving conquered populations, slave raiding, as well as purchasing slaves. Women captives were often consigned to brothels or harems. The recorded mortality rate among slaves of Islamic owners was high (“The Role of Islam in African Slavery,” africanhistory.about.com). It’s believed that 2 million persons were enslaved in the Sokoto Caliphate in West Africa in the 1790s (“Slavery,” en.wikipedia.org).

The Coptic Orthodox Church is said to have participated in the slave trade by emasculating young males from Nubia and Abyssinia and selling them as Eunuchs in the Ottoman Empire. Only ten percent who underwent this brutal treatment survived the operation (“Slavery in the Ottoman Empire,” en.wikipedia.org).

The enslavement of the Indians by the Spanish, Portuguese, British, French and others helped decimate American Indian populations in much of the Western Hemisphere. For example, in Brazil, “The Native Americans died in large numbers, both because of slave raiding, mistreatment, and the lack of resistance to European diseases” (“Brazilian Slavery,” histclo.com). The treatment of black African slaves in the Caribbean and South American sugar plantations was often even considerably more brutal than was typical in the United States, during the era in which slavery was officially sanctioned there.

During the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (early 1600s to the nineteenth century) about 12 million Africans (estimates vary) were transported as slaves to the Americas (“Atlantic Slave Trade,” en.wikipedia.org). Slavery was endemic in Africa, as nearly everywhere else in the world, and those conquered in tribal warfare were often enslaved. It became profitable to sell enslaved captives to European slave traders during the Atlantic slave trading era. When the British outlawed the slave trade (but not slavery) in 1807, the King of Bonny (now in Nigeria) complained, “We think this trade must go on. That is

the verdict of our oracle and the priests. They say that your country, however great, can never stop a trade ordained by God himself" (cited in "Atlantic Slave Trade," en.wikipedia.org).

People often think of slavery, especially in the Americas, only in terms of black slaves from Africa. The truth is, both blacks and whites, and peoples of other ethnicities, have been subjected to slavery of various descriptions in virtually every period of history. Not only blacks from Africa, but an untold number of whites, from the British Isles, especially, were sent west into slavery in the Americas during the Atlantic slave trading era.

It's been estimated that 80,000 to 130,000 Irish were sent into slavery in America and the West Indies in roughly just one decade of the seventeenth century, namely, the years 1651-1660 ("England's Irish Slaves", Robert E. West). But it was not just the Irish who were sold as slaves. Scots, Welsh, English and some from mainland Europe were also sent to the west as slaves (cf. "White Slavery, what the Scots already know," Kelly D. Whittaker; *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America*, Don Jordan and Michael Walsh; reviewed by Thomas Jackson at abundanthope.net).

Textbooks have usually given scant attention, if any at all, to the white slave trade. And when it is mentioned, it is often dismissed as a relatively innocuous form of temporary slavery known "indentured servitude." While some sources imply that most of the Europeans who came to America as slaves were "indentured servants" ("Indentured Servant," en.wikipedia.org), this is disputed by others.

In any case, being sent as a slave, indentured or not, from the British Isles to America often meant a lifetime of being enslaved, and not infrequently, a very short lifetime.

Various sources indicate that a large number of whites were sent to the British North American colonies as slaves beginning early in the history of the colonies. "The first slaves imported into the American colonies were 100 White children. They arrived during Easter, 1619, four months before the arrival of a the first shipment of Black slaves. Mainstream histories refer to these laborers as indentured servants, not slaves, because many agreed to work for a set period of time in exchange for land and rights.

"Yet in reality, indenture was enslavement, since slavery applies to any person who is bought and sold, chained and abused, whether for a decade or a lifetime. Many white people died long before their indenture ended or found that no court would back them when their owners failed to deliver on promises. Tens

of thousands of convicts, beggars, homeless children and other undesirable English, Scottish, and Irish lower class were transported to America against their will to the Americas on slave ships ("Irish Slaves - What The History Books Will Never Tell You," radio2hot.wordpress.com).

Another author states, "...in most cases from the 17th and 18th centuries, Irish slaves were nothing more than human cattle" (John Martin, "The Irish Slave Trade - The Forgotten 'White' Slaves," globalresearch.ca).

"Upon arrival in America, White slaves were 'put up for sale by the ship captains or merchants... Families were often separated under these circumstances when wives and offspring were auctioned off to the highest bidder.'" (Foster R. Dulles, *Labor in America: A History*, p. 7, cited in *They Were White and They Were Slaves*, Michael Hoffman II, p. 25).

"White people who were passed over for purchase at the point of entry were taken into the back country by 'soul drivers' who herded them along like cattle to a 'Smithfield market' and then put them up for auction at public fairs. 'Prospective buyers felt their muscles, checked their teeth... like cattle...' (Sharon Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully, Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800*, p. 97). '...indentured servants were sold at auction, sometimes after being stripped naked.' (Roediger, p. 30). 'We were... exposed to sale in public fairs as so many brute beasts' (Ekirch, p. 129).

"Contemporary accounts likened them to livestock auctions. '(They) are brought in here,' a person noted, 'and sold in the same manner as horses or cows in our market or fair.' (William) Green recalled: 'They search us there as the dealers in horses do those animals in this country, by looking at our teeth, viewing our limbs...' (William Green, *Sufferings of William Green*, p. 6 and Ekirch, p. 123).

"'They are frequently hurried in droves, under the custody of severe brutal drivers into the Back Country to be disposed of as servants.' (Jernegan, p. 225)" (*They Were White and They Were Slaves*, Michael Hoffman II, p. 24).

As often in history, in this period it was not only ethnicity or religion, but class, social and economic status, that often made the difference between being free or being made a slave. Sources state that no one really knows how many Irish, Scots, English and other whites were forced into slavery through the policies of the British government during its slave-trading era, as record keeping in such matters was often virtually non-existent. According to various sources there were more whites sold into slavery in the America's in the seventeenth century than

black Africans (cf. "Irish Slavery in America," irisheyesofva.com). The selling of Irish slaves by the British is said to have continued from as early as 1621 into the nineteenth century. It's claimed that in the North American British colonies, "...in 1775 there were as many or more notices for white as black runaways" ("White Slaves," review by Thomas Jackson, abundanthope.net), although this claim is open to question. Yet, there is no doubt that whites continued to be among those enslaved even into the nineteenth century in what had been the British colonies in North America.

Indeed, by far the larger part of mankind were enslaved. "... at the beginning of the nineteenth century an estimated three-quarters of all people alive were trapped in bondage against their will either in some form of slavery or serfdom" (David P. Forsythe, *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*, vol. 1; cited in "History of Slavery," en.wikipedia.org).

In the latter part of the eighteenth century opposition to slavery grew in Britain, influenced greatly by evangelical Christians, including the influential politician, William Wilberforce. In 1807 he published a book, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*. Among the arguments he advanced against the slave trade, he stated, "...if we are not blind to the course of human events, as well as utterly deaf to the plain instructions of Revelation, we must believe that a continued course of wickedness, oppression and cruelty, obstinately maintained in spite of the fullest knowledge and loudest warnings, must infallibly bring down upon us the heaviest judgments of the Almighty" (p. 350).

The same year the British Parliament passed legislation outlawing the slave trade. Wilberforce and others continued to work to abolish slavery itself, and in 1833 Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act. Other nations in Europe were influenced to begin putting an end to legal slavery, as well. While these actions mitigated the evil, slavery has not ended.

As mentioned above, many of those sent from the British Isles to North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were "convicts," people who had been arrested for petty crimes, or political prisoners. After American independence, these undesirables were often shipped off to Australia, and put to work as slaves under appalling conditions (cf. "Convict slavery in Australia," ironbarkresources.com). From 1788 to 1868 approximately 162,000 such convicts were sent to penal colonies in Australia by the British government ("Convicts in Australia," en.wikipedia.org).

"Most of the convicts were thieves who had been convicted in the great cities of



England. Only those sentenced in Ireland were likely to have been convicted of rural crimes. Transportation was an integral part of the English and Irish systems of punishment. It was a way to deal with increased poverty and the severity of the sentences for larceny. Simple larceny, or robbery, could mean transportation for seven years. Compound larceny – stealing goods worth more than a shilling (about \$50 in today's money) – meant death by hanging ("Convicts and the British colonies in Australia," [www.australia.gov.au](http://www.australia.gov.au)).

"Convict labour was used to develop the public facilities of the colonies – roads, causeways, bridges, courthouses and hospitals. Convicts also worked for free settlers and small land holders" (*Ibid.*). "...convicts were often subject to cruelties such as leg-irons and the lash" (*ibid.*). "One convict described the working thus: 'We have to work from 14–18 hours a day, sometimes up to our knees in cold water, 'til we are ready to sink with fatigue... The inhuman driver struck one, John Smith, with a heavy thong.'" (*ibid.*)

"Despite the belief that convict women during the transportation period were all prostitutes, no women were transported for that offence. The majority of women sent to Australia were convicted for what would now be considered minor offences (such as petty theft), most did not receive sentences of more than seven years. Many women were driven to prostitution upon their arrival in Australia as means of survival because they were often required to house themselves or buy clothing and bedding on their own" ("Convict Women in Australia," [en.academic.ru](http://en.academic.ru)).

In Africa and many other places, too, slavery continued even after the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. "The history of slavery and abolition is not confined to the Americas, but also extends to millions of slaves in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. When the Trans-Atlantic slave trade finally came to an end in the 1860s, both slavery and slave trading remained widespread across most of Africa" ("Call for Papers: Slavery, Migration, and Contemporary Bondage in Africa," [www.africa.upenn.edu](http://www.africa.upenn.edu)). The same source points out that slavery continues even now to be a reality in much of Africa. But the evil is certainly not confined to Africa, as we will see.

The brutality endured by the enslaved populations of captive countries, ethnic and social groups, and war prisoners by the Germans and Japanese in World War II was apocalyptic in its nature. Millions died in slave camps or captive territories as a result of a range of cruelties, including forced migration, forced labor, starvation, and deliberate extermination

over a relatively brief period of time.

The Stalinist gulags (prison work camps) in the Soviet Union were nearly, if not altogether, as bad. But victims in the latter case were mostly in their own country at the hands of their own people. It's been estimated that more than 60 million perished in the slave camps of the Soviet gulag.

Given the nature of communist rule in the Soviet Union, China and other countries, one could consider much of the population in those countries as having been enslaved. The brutal murders, imprisonments, forced starvation, and other terroristic actions were designed to keep everyone in line with government policies which abrogated personal liberty to a very large degree, if not altogether, for the great majority of the populations.

Despite the seemingly ubiquitous nature of slavery in the world's history, liberty seems to be an innate desire in human beings. The quest for liberty is what drove many of the early colonists to American shores. The nation was forged and established on ideals of individual liberty; liberty that had been largely denied in places from which the pilgrims had come.

Yet the awful stain of slavery burdened the national conscience even as the nation was being founded on the ideal of liberty. Although the Declaration of Independence had stated that "all men... are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights..., among... [them] liberty," liberty was denied to many Americans by the despicable, vile, unconscionable institution of slavery as then being practiced. Although by the late eighteenth century the majority of slaves in the British North American colonies were of black ancestry, some were American Indians, and as discussed earlier, many whites also continued to be enslaved ("Slavery in the United States," [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org); see other sources noted above as well).

Slavery grossly violated the principle of liberty on which the nation was founded, and should have violated the conscience of every person who had a heart. Sometimes slavery has been romanticized, whitewashed and sanitized in the popular media. Such films as *Gone With the Wind* come to mind.

But the romanticized slavery of popular imagination is nothing like the real slavery experienced by those who were so oppressed. Real slavery was more often than not inexpressibly brutal, oppressive, cruel, and evil in the extreme. And even where there was a relatively benign slave master, slaves were still slaves. They were anything but free.

Some have sought to defend slavery as it was practiced in the United States and elsewhere by appealing to Scripture. But liberty was denied

to many Americans during the slavery era by an institution of chattel slavery that bore little or no resemblance to the well-regulated bondage described in the law of the Old Testament.

While numerous cultures the world over have been guilty of enslaving peoples and treating them with unconscionable brutality and abuse, for a Christian professing nation to do so while expressing in its founding documents the concept of liberty for all was a blatant contradiction to its espoused ideals. The fact that most (but by no means all) slave owners were white and most slaves in the United States, after its establishment as an independent nation, were of black African descent, added a racial component to the problem that only made it more intractable, but no less unjust.

This contradiction was not lost on many Americans. Over time, opposition to slavery grew, especially in Northern states, largely influenced by the Bible. "... a wave of Protestant revivals known as the Second Great Awakening swept the country during the first third of the nineteenth century. In New England, upstate New York, and those portions of the Old Northwest above the 41<sup>st</sup> parallel populated by the descendants of New England Yankees, this evangelical enthusiasm generated a host of moral and cultural reforms. The most dynamic and divisive of them was abolitionism. Heirs of the Puritan notion of collective accountability that made every man his brother's keeper, these Yankee reformers repudiated Calvinist predestination, preached the availability of salvation to anyone who truly sought it, urged converts to abjure sin, and worked for the elimination of sins from society. All people were equal in God's sight; the souls of black folks were as valuable as those of whites; for one of God's children to enslave another was a violation of the Higher Law, even if it was sanctioned by the Constitution" (*Battle Cry of Freedom*, James M. McPherson, p. 8).

Legal slavery in the United States was finally abolished through a bloody civil war in which about 600,000 Americans died. Abraham Lincoln expressed the view that the Civil War was Divine punishment for the sin of slavery. In his second Inaugural Address he spoke of "this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense [of slavery] came."

While some forms of slavery were countenanced under the Old Covenant, the manner in which it was regulated greatly discouraged its practice. For example, among other restrictions, it was forbidden to return an escaped slave to his master (Deuteronomy 23:15-16). Thus, any discontented slave in Israel could simply leave, so far as the law was concerned, and claim his freedom.

The laws limiting and regulating slavery, like other of God's laws, were often ignored among the Israelites and Jews, just as they have been among many professing Christians (Jeremiah 34:13-17; cf. "Slavery and the Jews," *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, ch. 20).

The theme that runs through the Bible from beginning to end is ultimate liberty, freedom from tyranny and every other form of enslavement (Exodus 20:1-2; Isaiah 61:1; Romans 8:19-21; Galatians 4:1-9).

There are some even among professing Christians who seek to justify and defend slavery. To those who seek to defend human slavery I have this response: Perhaps those who are enamored with the idea of others being enslaved will have an opportunity to experience it for themselves.

I suppose you will think it's a grand thing to be taken in the hold of a ship to a far away land, in fear for your life constantly (Deuteronomy 28:47-48, 65-68). To endure forced labor beyond the limit of endurance (Lamentations 5:13). To have your wife raped (Deuteronomy 28:30; Lamentation 5:11). To have your children sold as slaves (Joel 3:3).

Since you think slavery is so wonderful, I'm sure you would shed no tears (Lamentations 3:48-52), nor pray for deliverance (1 Kings 8:46-53).

If you would not desire to be a slave, why would you be content to see others in slavery? (Matthew 7:12). If you cannot have mercy for others, then expect none from God (Jeremiah 34:13-20; Matthew 5:7; 9:13; James 2:13).

The God of the Bible is a God of liberty, who freed the captives (Exodus 20:2), and will free them (Isaiah 49:25-26; 61:1; Jeremiah 23:7-8; 30:10; Luke 4:18; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1; Hebrews 2:15). "... the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

When Jesus Christ intervenes in world affairs, and sets up the Kingdom of God on the earth, he will destroy oppressors off of the face of the earth (Psalm 9:8-9; Psalm 10:12-18; 12:5; 72:4; 103:6; 146:7; Proverbs 3:31-32; 14:31; 22:16, 22-23; 28:16; Ecclesiastes 5:8; Isaiah 14:4; 16:4; 19:20; 33:15; 58:6; Jeremiah 7:6-7; 21:12; 22:3; 30:20; 50:33-34; Ezekiel 18:5-9; 45:8; Amos 4:1-2; Zechariah 7:10; 9:8; Malachi 3:5).

Today, although slavery is said to be "outlawed" in every country (wikipedia.org, "slavery"), human slavery is still endemic in much of the world, including the United States, Israel, and many other nations. Various estimates exist for the number of people enslaved currently worldwide, up to more than 35 million (www.globalslaveryindex.org). But

these estimates probably are low, given the fact that most of the slave trade occurs illegally and is hidden from view. "Due to the illegal nature of human trafficking, its exact extent is unknown" (wikipedia.org, "slavery").

The worst offenders, according to the U.S. State Department, are Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Cuba, North Korea, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and several countries in the Middle East (wikipedia.org, "slavery"). Yet, India is estimated by the Walk Free Foundation to have more than 14 million enslaved. Haiti and a number of African nations rank high on their list of offenders in terms of the percentage of population enslaved (2014 Global Slavery Index). In the Middle East, in areas controlled by Islamist organizations such as ISIS, women and children are sold openly as sex slaves (dailymail.com). The *Daily Mail* reports that middle aged women are sold for around \$40 U.S., and children bring four times as much.

Despite the stain of slavery on the national record of the United States, Great Britain and other nations descended largely from Anglo-Saxon forebears, they have been bastions of liberty for more than 200 years. Liberty of a kind rarely matched in human history.

But the liberty that was instrumental in forming the basis for the remarkable blessings and prosperity our peoples have enjoyed for some 200 years is fast slipping away. We've turned our backs on the Creator who is the author of every blessing, including liberty.

Scripture warns us where our sins will lead if we do not repent. "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the Lord will send against you..." (Deuteronomy 28:47-48). Other Scriptures give more details concerning the slavery that awaits our peoples unless we repent.

After a brief period of punishment, mercifully God will redeem our peoples out of captivity and restore their freedom. The festivals of God, including the weekly Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day, picture in various ways the ultimate liberty not only of physical Israel, but of all peoples and nations who are willing to learn and practice God's way of life. "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land" is one of the themes of these festivals (Leviticus 25:10).

"Now we, brothers, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But as then, he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. However what does the Scripture say? 'Throw out the servant and her son, for the son of the servant will not inherit the son of the free woman. So then, brothers, we are not children of a servant, but of the free woman."

Stand firm therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and don't be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

Galatians 4:28-5:1 | World English Bible



# IN THIS ISSUE

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“Peace in God’s Time” – From ideological clashes to all-out bloodshed, there has been seemingly endless conflict throughout human history. Many of us ask, “What is the solution?” Can peace be found? Thankfully, God has a plan! See what scripture says in this article!

“Worship of the Dead?” – Throughout the ages, there have been many various festivals and traditions involving worship of the dead – including traditions that have carried through in modern times. What are these today, and what does God think of them? Find out the history and what God’s word says about the subject in this article.

“Proclaim Liberty” – For generations dating back to ancient times, nations and tribes have oppressed each other with slavery and captivity, with captives experiencing brutal treatment and horrible conditions. Will these acts continue for all of human existence? Come find the answer in scripture with us in this article!

“How the World Will Be Different When Christ Returns | Part II” – Last issue, we explored some of the wonderful aspects of what the world will become like after Christ’s return. In this article, we continue that exploration, covering subjects such as government, weather, and abundance!

## Looking for Answers?

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