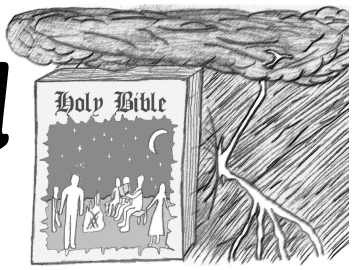
Shelter in the Word



He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty
You are my refuge and shield: I have put my hope in your Word. ***—Psalm 91:1; 119:114***

Vol. 3, No. 6 Helping you become self-sufficient in the Word—for a lasting relationship with the Almighty **Nov/Dec 2000**

Why Does God Permit Suffering?

By John Eastman

The other day a relative told me a story about a person who left his infant daughter in a car seat in the back of his car for an entire hot summer day, and to everyone's despair, the child died of heat exhaustion. The father was so stressed with concerns about his job that he simply forgot to drop the child off at a day-care, and instead he went directly to work, parking the car in an enormous corporate parking lot. The temperature in the car rose to 150 degrees, and yet no one noticed the small body struggling for its life.

My relative just kept saying over and over again, "Why didn't God cause that baby to cry and someone to hear it and rescue it?" When you think of it, the question is one of the toughest posed by mankind to their God. I was challenged to find the answer, knowing that God's nature is pure love and I knew the answer could only give God glory.

This article will show the real source of suffering and will glorify God by revealing His plan of spiritual creation of mankind. God's true intention is to bless mankind to live in great joy and happiness for eternity. It's very difficult for mankind to look at the physical life as being **a small speck of time in eternity**. I would like to give God thanks for what I have learned while studying the scriptures for this article. Now I am better able to accept why God allows suffering in this life. My hope is that the reader will also begin to see the depth of God's love for us and come to understand that the suffering we sometimes experience has a purpose greater than what is evident at first glance.

We need to first understand how God's mind works. God does not and will not dwell with evil:

> Isa 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

God's desire is to dwell for all eternity with mankind as his spiritual children, but He will only do this if we develop His holy righteous character. (1Jn 3:2, Rev 21:3). A long time ago God was greatly dis-

Helpful One-Page Article at End

Unexpected deaths of younger people are a particularly difficult type of suffering. Relatives and friends wonder, "Is it all over?" A single-sheet article entitled *All Who Die Shall Live Again!* Please fold and give it to anyone you know whom it might help. Most office stores or small print shops can make copies of it on attractive colored paper for a small cost.

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appointed because Lucifer and one third of the angels were lost to sin (Ezk 28:15, Rev 12:4) These beings will one day have to be permanently destroyed by God (Rev. 20:10, 2Pet. 2:17, Ezk 28:19). God did not want a reoccurrence of what happened to Satan and the demons to happen to humanity.

God's Plan for Mankind

So God made mankind mortal and gave him free choice. As mortal beings we could experience the blessings of obedience and the sorrows of disobedience—our own and others. God wanted us to understand the result of sin, "the wages of sin is death" (1Jn 3:4). What does all of this have to do with suffering? **It is really very simple, God wants us to choose His way over evil.**

Adam and Eve listened to Satan and followed his way. In order for mankind to become God's spiritual children, mankind must learn that Satan's way of deciding good and evil for oneself does not work. And, in order for a spiritual transition to occur for mankind, God's righteousness must be created within us. God promises us the hope of this spiritual creation when He speaks of us being born again the second time through Jesus Christ, the second Adam, as God's spiritual and righteous children (1Cor 15:21-22).

It deeply hurts God to see man suffer during this process of spiritual creation. In order to save mankind and make the spiritual transition a success, God must allow us to go through the suffering that sin brings, whether it is suffering due to our own sin or the sin of others, so we learn to reject sin and develop godly righteousness. Let there be no doubt, that all sin is a spiritual cancer that changes us into evil beings and destroys us. Mankind must clearly see that any other way of life contrary to God's way does not work. The only way for God to develop this understanding in a human is to allow him to try every possible way of living and reap the consequences, generally without God's intervention.

From the beginning of creation and throughout this time of "man's rule", God is letting man choose between good and evil (the two trees of Genesis 1-2). God in His wisdom and love allowed mankind to rule over himself—to try every conceivable way to live his own life and see the results of it. God knew that if He didn't allow mankind to experience the results of sin, then one day mankind would question if there was a better way of life from God's way of love and righteousness. God wants mankind to see the consequences of sin and to hate it.

In Rev 21:1, God speaks of a new heaven and new earth because the first heaven and the first earth will pass away. God will rule instead of men and there will be no more suffering, no more tears, no more pain.

At man's beginning he chose his own way when he chose to eat from the Tree of Good and Evil. God said man could eat of all the other trees in the garden, including the Tree of Life, which represented obedience to God and receiving the spirit of God to strengthen us and help us to live a righteous life without sin through Jesus Christ. By choosing the Tree of Good and Evil (when God had forbidden it), man was telling God to leave him alone, that he wanted to choose his own way of life and his own government. Man could have chosen to eat from the Tree of Life, which was offered freely and is a type of God's spirit. But, man rejected this type of spiritual wisdom and chose Satan's way of deciding for oneself what is good and evil. Because of this, the ground was cursed, thorns and thistles grew and the creation has never been the same since.

A Bright Future In Spite of Sin

Rom 8:18 I consider that our pres-

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ent sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope

21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

When will the "sons of God" be revealed—this "expectation for which the creation is waiting?

Rev 20:1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.

2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years

During this millennium, or 1,000 year period of God's kingdom, God will remove Satan and all his forces from the Earth and set up God's righteous rule. At this time God's way will be understood by the entire Earth.

Isa 11:9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

This is the time that God will intervene and bless those who choose to go His way, rather than deciding for themselves. Mankind will learn the blessings of obedience and remember the results of sin. God will turn the dessert into green valleys with springs and rivers of water, the animals will be tame, the blind will see, the lame will walk, and even the aged will be without pain. The whole Earth will be full of great joy because of obedience and living God's way. People will not be under such stress that they leave their babies in cars (as in the opening paragraph). God and his angels will protect people from "freak accidents". All of this will be the result of living God's way. Mankind will see the fruits of obedience and remember the suffering caused by sin.

We All Need God Now

A lot of people don't think about God being involved with their personal lives until they enter a situation that seems out of control and very serious. Usually it is at this time in their lives, when they start to wonder if there really is a God and if He cares about them. Often they express worry and confusion about God's motives in the whole situation, and without really saying it, they are forming thoughts that question God's love for them.

When we accuse God for our sufferings, we are not recognizing the cause of sufferings, which is sin (1Jn 3:4). God only wants his children, all of us, to choose the way of righteousness that leads to spiritual salvation and an eternity of joy and happiness. In fact, God loves mankind so much that he has promised to save us from destroying ourselves (Matt 24:22) and to intervene with forgiveness, love, and mercy for those who repent from the way of sin.

If God had intervened during the time allotted to man, and stopped the suffering, then mankind would not be able to truthfully see the results of sin, which is suffering and death. Mankind would have assumed his own way "was not bad at all" and would have no incentive to ever change and yield to God's way. If mankind did not learn the wages of sin, which yields great physical suffering, death, and loss of salvation (1Jn 3:4), man would become so evil, like Satan, that God would have no choice but to destroy His creation. God is very clear in the Bible that He will not tolerate nor dwell with evil (Rev 21:3.). In fact,

God will destroy all evil one day and start the course of righteousness for all eternity.

In all Christian's lives there may be sufferings, trials, and tribulations even though they have rejected Satan's way and accepted God's way of life (John 16:32-33). The reason for this is that God is forming his righteous character in them so they can become the children of God for all eternity. In this process of spiritual creation, they will experience fiery trials (1Pet 1:7) and have many tribulations. God will help Christians along this journey of rejecting sin and their sorrow will turn to joy (John 16:21).

> Heb 12:1 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (NKJV).

> Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent (NKJV).

We can experience a kind of peace in understanding why God temporarily permits suffering and trials in this world, in order for us to come to hate sin and develop His holy righteous character. Just as a goldsmith melts gold in extreme heat for the purpose of removing any foreign materials in it, God must melt us down in this type of process so all the evil can be removed from us and we will only have God's pure righteousness.

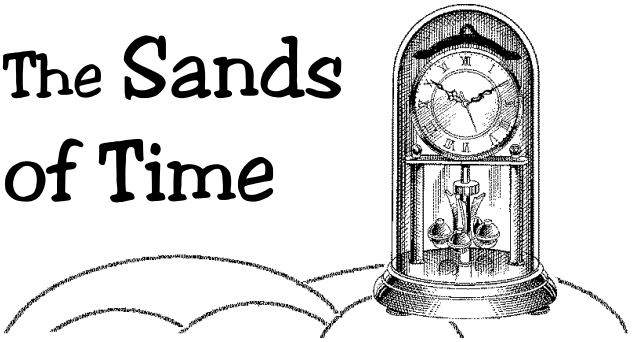
> Rev 3:18 counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire....

> Dan 11:35 Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

God does not want to see His children suffer in this physical life, but the only way He can dwell with us in the future as sons and daughters of God is to rid us of our sins. What is foremost on God's mind is to see us develop His righteous character and become His spiritual children for all eternity. As the apostle Paul stated:

> Rom 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 🕮

The Sands of Time



By Lois Gordon

Look in the mirror, do it now,
Who is it that you see?
Where did you come from in the past?
What will your future be?

If you should live three score and ten,
Or, maybe even more,
What is the purpose of it all?
Is someone keeping score?

Does someone know, does someone care
If you succeed or not
In doing things that matter most
While this life is your lot?

Yes! Many know, and many care
Loved ones, and all around,
Even future souls to whom
Your virtue is passed down.

The One who gave the spark of life,
The saints and angels, too,
Will all rejoice if you've done well,
They'll shout and cheer for you!

Our Lord looks down in tender love,
And guides with shepherd's rod,
And offers grace that we may be
The family of God!

Just think, the God who made the earth
And all the stars above,
Wants us to share His awesome life,
And everlasting love!

So when the sands of time have shown
Three score and ten, or more,
May you then hear the words,
"Well done,
You've made a super score!" 🕮

The Poison Darts of Fear

by Tommy Willis

When we allow fear to enter our minds it works just like a poison. And in certain cases fear can destroy us if not dealt with. God gave us a good example of dealing with our fears through King David:

> Pslm 34:4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.

The best thing you can do is take the fear to God and talk to Him about it—letting Him lead you to come out of the fear. David had fears like we all do—but he took positive action to do something about the fear, and as he sought out God in prayer. He was delivered from **all** his fears! That's a wonderful example for us all.

Don't let the fear of setback stop you from trying. Don't give up your dreams and settle for what many feel is a dull routine that saps their existence. Don't let the fear keep you from reaching for your dreams. As God delivers you from your fears He will teach you to embrace life and not run from it.

He will teach you to relax in His peace amidst the chaos of the times. The rat race won't pull you down because you won't be a part of it. He will teach you to step out of the squirrel cage and into a fuller life.

We have worry and fear because we don't trust that God will take care of us. We go through "mental gymnastics," saying, "What if this happens." "Or what if that happens." And we make ourselves miserable.

All this takes place because we don't know God. Take a simple example of someone who has told you they will start picking you up at 6 p.m. for a night class you are taking. When they don't show up time after time; you certainly won't get to trust that person as being reliable. But a friend you have confidence in starts to pick you up for the class, and time after time they have been reliable. You get to know that friend and that he will be on time and that you can depend on him because you know him. It's the same with God; as we get to know Him we will learn that He can be depended on, and that He will not fail us. Our problem with much of our fear is we don't know God.

Boldly Seeking God's Help

> Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (NKJV).

Do you have needs and fears? All of us have our real problems; and here is the way that God set up for us to get the help we need.

But like a hamster on a treadmill, too often we squander our time with fear and worry. This stops us from living life fully. I once heard a minister say, "Worry is a down payment on sin, and sin is death, therefore I don't worry." I knew this man, and he functioned with more peace than anyone I have ever known. So the statement carried a lot of weight coming from him; I believe he was close to God, and these words have stayed with me many years after he passed on.

For many years I would pass a problem over and over in my mind until I was miserable. It wasn't until I learned the lesson of Philippians 4:6-7, which tells us not to worry about anything, but instead to take it to God in thankful prayer, and the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Then I began to have more peace in my life, the peace that passes understanding—like this scripture talks about.

Sometimes when I began to worry and have fear now—I have found that happens only when I'm not praying as I should and not staying as close to God as I should. And if I take it to God in prayer, the fear clears up. It is dangerous for us not to stay close to God, so my prayers are that I would not drift like this anymore. **It is very important that we stay close to our Father and Jesus Christ.**

Fear Reduces Our Effectiveness

The poison darts of fear can hinder us from using our physical and spiritual gifts. Paul had to encourage Timothy in this area. Dedicated servants of God are by no means immune:

2Tim 1:6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Some trials can be severe; and God tells us to hold fast and not to fear.

Rev 2:10 **Fear <u>none</u>** of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be you faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

"Suffering!" That very word makes us uncomfortable. But God tells us that there is no reason to fear the suffering. He tells us this because He has everything under control. God will not let us be tempted above what we are able to endure. We can depend on His promise to pull us through all problems. He knows just the kind of trial each child needs; so if He allows it to come upon us then He sees we need it; let us learn to rely on His provision—to learn to trust Him with very fiber of our being.

The next time fear tries to enter your heart—think of these wonderful scriptures and learn to apply them. God has given us a way to deal with the fear, let us go to Him and seek His grace to deal with the poison darts of fear. 🕮

THE WORST KIND OF FEAR

The worst kind of fear is usually when we have done something imperfectly—maybe even very sinfully—and we are afraid of the consequences. It is easy to be afraid of going to God about these events because we fear that we may justly deserve some kind of punishment. We might even know of a biblical example of someone who did what we did and received a punishment from God for it. We might even still be involved in the process. Some examples:

1. I am behind on payments for my house, car or other important items and fear it will be taken away.
2. I have not properly taken care of a valuable item and we are afraid that I may lose or ruin it—or of what friends may think when they see it.
3. I have not eaten and exercised the way that I know I should and I am afraid that I will be sick because of it.
4. I have not raised my children in the manner that I should and am afraid of what they might say or do around others, afraid that government "Child Protective Services" might take them away, or afraid that they might want nothing to do with me when they are older.
5. I have not treated my spouse, relatives or close friends the way I should and I am afraid that they might abandon me.

These kinds of situations are often a **mixture** of our own sins and sins of others. We often do not believe we deserve the worst that could happen (losing our home, spouse or children), but we often fear to completely trust God for protection and deliverance because we are partly at fault.

The solution to this is a combination of repentance and trust in God, even if a just or unjust punishment comes upon us. When the nation of Judah had disobeyed God for many years, He caused their nation to be conquered by the Babylonians (Jer 42). Some of the people wanted to flee to Egypt where they thought they could escape their punishment, but God told them to stay under the King of Babylon and that He would protect them in that environment. It takes faith for us to know that God will still be with us even though we are going through unpleasant circumstances, but that faith is available to us. Paul said:

Phil 4:11 For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

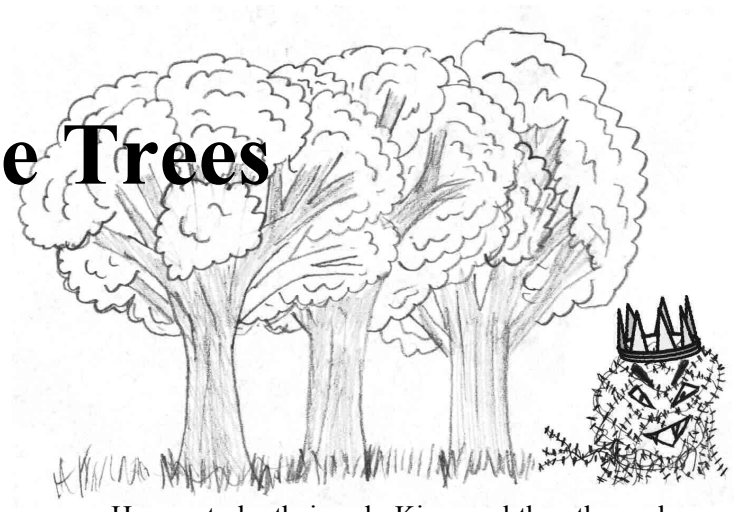
We need to seek repentance and the strength of Christ to overcome our problems. But at the same time we need to realize that any correction He sends is only good for us, and He will not desert us in it. We can be glad and thank Him for it:

Heb 12:6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives (NKJV).

— Norman Edwards 🕮

Brambles & Olive Trees

by Lenny Cacchio



Judges 9:8 "Once the trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!'

9 "But the olive tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my fatness with which God and men are honored, and go to wave over the trees?'

10 "Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come, reign over us!'

11 "But the fig tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to wave over the trees?'

12 "Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come, reign over us!'

13 "But the vine said to them, 'Shall I leave my new wine, which cheers God and men, and go to wave over the trees?'

14 "Finally all the trees said to the bramble, 'You come, reign over us!'

15 And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you are anointing me as king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, may fire come out from the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon'" (NAS).

That little parable told by Jotham son of Gideon should remind us of our responsibilities on the one hand and on the other warn us against craving to be ruled.

The people of Israel had experienced the wise and brave leadership of Gideon, but at his death they seemed to be incapable of living without someone around to tell them what to do. Just like the trees in the parable, they seemed to go from one honorable candidate to another offering to place themselves under rulership, but all the honorable ones refused. So the big, mighty trees submitted to the rule of the basest bramble. By doing so, they gave up their dignity, for to take refuge in the shade of the bramble, one must stoop to the bramble's level. "But if not," the bramble said, "may fire come out from the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon." Their rulership would be one based on coercion.

Israel was born a free nation. They had escaped from slavery, and it was God's intent that they remain so. He was to be their only King, and they themselves were to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). But the history as recorded in the book of Judges shows the sorry result of a people who had freedom without character, for time and time again their freedom led to license, which led to moral laxity, which led to social disorder. Eventually the nation found itself in bondage to its enemies, or calling for a strong man to restore order. Freedom has its costs, and they seemed unwilling or unable to pay the price.

Just this week we saw the spectacle of a God-fearing man being raked over the coals by certain Senators and the Establishment press because of a simple but profound statement: "No king but Jesus," words that the Attorney General nominee had used in a speech. If the Senators had understood their history, they would have known that Mr. Ashcroft was quoting a popular saying during the days of the American War for Independence. It was a declaration of free men, proclaiming that they recognized the sovereignty of no man, but rather of God alone. Because they recognized the sovereignty of God, the American experiment avoided the Jacobin terror that engulfed another revolution a few years later in France, a reign of terror that that would visit the 20th Century in Moscow, in Berlin, in Cambodia, and in Beijing. Without God all things are permissible, and that is a horrible curse to put on a nation.

The lesson of Jotham's parable is twofold. If good men are too content with their own lives to provide leadership, then the bramble will fill the vacuum. Good men are enjoined to do their civic duty.

But more than that, it is uncomely for the majestic trees of the forest to beg someone to rule over them. That is the road to serfdom.

As the American Republic goes through the renewal of a new president, a renewal which the framers of the Constitution mandate every four years, let us reflect on the freedoms we have lost because of our desire for security. To quote Benjamin Franklin: "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." 🕮

How Does God View The USA?

Four Relevant Items

with commentary by Norman Edwards

God has always dealt with both individuals and nations based upon the way they treat each other. He rewards those who do good and punishes those who do evil—all according to His own time table:

> Gen 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of **the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.**
>
> 6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.
>
> 7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them."

This is one of the most dramatic Bible examples. The books of Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are also full of stories of ancient Israel—how they stopped obeying God only to be punished for it.

Even nations that did not have the laws of God were judged for being evil. Jonah was told to prophesy disaster upon Nineveh "because its wickedness has come up before me". (Jonah 1:1). The nation was spared because the king told the people to fast, repent and "give up their evil ways and their violence" (Jonah 3:8). The book of Daniel records God's dealings with the kings and entire nation of Babylon.

While the primary message of the New Testament is a spiritual one about individual relationships with God, He has not stopped dealing with nations. Both Matthew 24 and much of the book of Revelation are prophecies about the punishments for nations that do not follow God. He has made His spirit and eternal life available to many, but he is still the judge of those who have not even so much as heard the name of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul put fear into the Roman governor Felix by speaking about a "judgment to come".

What does God expect out of nations and their leaders today? He does not command nations to "be converted", "join the church" or "come to Jesus"—those are things that individual believers must do. But there are many scriptures where nations and leaders are commanded to be honest and just in their dealings with their people. Most of the 59th chapter of Isaiah is about this issue. Please read it with the other following verses. They are followed by four press items that may not have been front-page news, but are things that God notices.

> Isa 59:4 No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil.
>
> Isa 59:14 So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter.
>
> 15 Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.
>
> Ezk 7:23 "Prepare chains, because the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of violence.
>
> 24 I will bring the most wicked of the nations to take possession of their houses; I will put an end to the pride of the mighty, and their sanctuaries will be desecrated.
>
> Ezk 45:9 "'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have gone far enough, O princes of Israel! Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing my people, declares the Sovereign LORD.
>
> 10 You are to use accurate scales, an accurate ephah {a dry measure.} and an accurate bath. {a liquid measure.}
>
> Prov 21:3 To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

1 For the Record

from the Claremont Institute, www.claremont.org

Here are a few interesting statistics from our breakdown map of counties won by George Bush and

Albert Gore (http://www.federalist.com/e2000.html) as compiled by law professor Joseph Olson. The last item is, perhaps, the most telling.

Counties won by Bush: **2,434**
Counties won by Gore: **677**

Population of counties won by Bush: **143 million**
Population of counties won by Gore: **127 million**

Square miles of country won by Bush: **2,427,000**
Square miles of country won by Gore: **580,000**

States won by Bush: **29**
States won by Gore: **19**

Average Murder per 100,000 residents in counties won by Bush: **0.1**
Average Murder per 100,000 residents in counties won by Gore: **13.2**

The Federalist's crack staff of researchers found one more interesting fact that might help explain these disparate murder rates. Gun ownership in the counties won by Mr. Bush is much higher than in the counties won by Mr. Gore!

So much for the anti-gun strategy!

It has been said that the Democratic and Republican Parties are the "fast and slow paths to secular socialism". They certainly have more similarities than differences if one compares their "platforms" to those of the Constitution Party which has far more radical (though I believe much more biblical) proposals. As an example, the Democrats and Republicans will talk about varying tax cuts, where the Constitution party proposes to eliminate the IRS and use constitutionally supported trade tariffs and taxes collected by the 50 states. Nevertheless, most voting Americans feel that they must vote for one of the main two who have a chance of getting elected—some will even say that they vote for "the lesser of two evils".

Even though there may not be a lot of difference between Democrat and Republican proposals, the above statistics show there **is a great difference in the people who voted for the parties.** In general, rural people voted for Bush, city people—who accept a county murder rate 130 times greater—voted for Gore. God does not judge people based upon their party loyalty (if any), but upon their works (1Pet 1:17). This great difference between the characteristics of the voters shows that the USA is neither completely evil nor righteous. There is still time to teach righteousness. There is time to repent. *— Norman Edwards*

2 The Looting Of America

How over 200 Civil Asset Forfeiture laws enable police to confiscate your home, bank accounts & business without trial.

By Jarret Wollstein www.escapeartist.com 12-30-00

"A police dog scratched at your luggage, so we're confiscating your life savings and you'll never get it back." Police stopped 49-year-old Ethel Hylton at Houston's Hobby Airport and told her she was under arrest because a drug dog had scratched at her luggage. Agents searched her bags and strip-searched her, but they found no drugs. They did find $39,110 in cash, money she had received from an insurance settlement and her life savings; accumulated through over 20 years of work as a hotel housekeeper and hospital janitor. Ethel Hylton completely documented where she got the money and was never charged with a crime. But the police kept her money anyway. Nearly four years later, she is still trying to get her money back.

Ethel Hylton is just one of a large and growing list of Americans—now numbering in the hundreds of thousands—who have been victimized by civil asset forfeiture. Under civil asset forfeiture, everything you own can be legally taken away even if you are never convicted of a crime.

Suspicion of offenses which, if proven in court, might result in a $200 fine or probation, are being used to justify seizure of tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of property. Totally innocent Americans are losing their cars, homes and businesses, based on the claims of anonymous informants that illegal transactions took place on their property. Once property is seized, it is virtually impossible to get it back.

Property is now being seized in every state and from every social group. Seizures include pocket money confiscated from public-housing residents in Florida; cars taken away from men suspected of soliciting prostitutes in Oregon; and homes taken away from ordinary, middle class Americans whose teenage children are accused of selling a few joints of marijuana. No person and no property is immune from seizure. You could be the next victim. Here are some examples:

In Washington, D.C. police stop black men on the streets in poor areas of the city, and "routinely confiscate small amounts of cash and jewelry". Most confiscated property is not even recorded by police departments. "Resident Ben Davis calls it 'robbery with a badge'." [USA Today, 5/18/92]

In Iowa, "a woman accused of shoplifting a $25 sweater had her $18,000 car—specially equipped for

her handicapped daughter—seized as the 'getaway vehicle'." [USA Today, 5/18/92]

Detroit drug police raided a grocery store, but failed to find any drugs. After drug dogs reacted to three $1.00 bills in the cash register, the police seized $4,384 from cash registers and the store safe. According to the Pittsburgh Press, over 92% of all cash in circulation in the U.S. now shows some drug residue.

In Monmouth, New Jersey, Dr. David Disbrow was accused of practicing psychiatry without a license. His crime was providing counseling services from a spare bedroom in his mother's house. Counseling does not require a license in New Jersey. That didn't stop police from seizing virtually everything of value from his mother's home, totaling over $60,000. The forfeiture squad confiscated furniture, carpets, paintings, and even personal photographs.

Kathy and Mark Schrama were arrested just before Christmas 1990 at their home in New Jersey. Kathy was charged with taking $500 worth of UPS packages from neighbors' porches. Mark was charged with receiving stolen goods. If found guilty, they might have paid a small fine and received probation. The day after their arrest, their house, cars and furniture were seized. Based upon mere accusation, $150,000 in property was confiscated, without trial or indictment. Police even took their clothing, eyeglasses, and Christmas presents for their 10-year-old son. The incentive for government agencies to expand forfeiture is enormous. Agencies can easily seize property and they usually keep what they take. According to the Pittsburgh Press, 80% of seizure victims are never even charged with a crime. Law enforcement agencies often keep the best seized cars, watches and TVs for their "departments", and sell the rest.

How extensive are seizures in America today? The Washington Post has reported that the U.S. Marshals Service alone had an inventory of over $1.4 billion in seized assets, including over 30,000 cars, boats, homes and businesses. Federal and state agencies seizing property now include the FBI, the DEA, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Coast Guard, the IRS, local police, highway patrol, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, FDA, and the Bureau of Land Management. Asset forfeiture is a growth industry. Seizures have increased from $27 million in 1986, to over $644 million in 1991 to over $2 billion today.

Civil asset forfeiture defines a new standard of justice in America; or more precisely, a new standard of injustice. Under civil seizure, property, not an individual is charged with an offense. Even if you are a totally innocent owner, the government can still confiscate your "guilty" property.

If government agents seize your property under civil asset forfeiture, you can forget about being innocent until proven guilty, due process of law, the right to an attorney, or even the right to trial. All of those rights only exist if you are charged with a criminal offense; that is, with an offense which could result in your imprisonment. If you (or your property) are accused of a civil offense (offenses which could not result in your imprisonment), **the Supreme Court has ruled that you have no presumption of innocence, no right to an attorney, and no protection from double jeopardy.**

Seizure occurs when government takes away your property. Forfeiture is when legal title is permanently transferred to the state. To get seized property returned, you have to fight the full resources of your state or federal government; sometimes both! You have to prove your property's "innocence" by documenting how you earned every cent used to pay for it. You have to prove that neither you nor any of your family members ever committed an illegal act involving the property.

To get a trial, you have to post a non-refundable "bond" of 10% of the value of your property. You have to pay attorney fees—ranging from $5,000 to over $100,000—out of your own pocket. Money you pay your attorney is also subject to seizure (either before or after the trial) if the government alleges that those funds were "tainted". And you may be forced to go through trial after trial, because under civil seizure the Constitutional protection against "double jeopardy" doesn't apply. Once your property is seized, expect to spend years fighting government agencies and expect to be impoverished by legal fees—with no guarantee of winning—while the government keeps your car, home and bank account.

In fact, in a recent Supreme Court decision (Bennis v. Michigan), the Court said explicitly that innocent owners can be deprived of their property if it's used to facilitate a crime, even without the owner's knowledge or consent. That means you can now lose your home or business because of the action of employees, relatives, or guests, over whom you have absolutely no control.

Police and prosecutors have incentive to confiscate as much as possible.

Not only do police and prosecutors have the power to seize anything you own on the slightest pretext, they also have the incentive. The dirty little secret of the forfeiture racket is that police, prosecutors and judges can benefit personally by stealing your property.

Brenda Grantland—America's leading asset forfeiture defense attorney—gives these examples of government greed in her book ***Your House Is Under Arrest***:

Suffolk County, NY. District Attorney James M. Catterton drives around in a BMW 735I that was seized from an alleged drug dealer. He spent $3,412 from the forfeiture fund for mechanical and body work, including $75 for pin-striping.

Warren County, NJ. The assistant chief prosecutor drives a confiscated yellow Corvette.

Little Compton, RI. The seven member police force received $3.8 million from the federal forfeiture fund, and spent it on such things as a new 23-foot boat with trailer, and new Pontiac Firebirds. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. The head of one Los Angeles police forfeiture squad claims his group personally pocketed over $60 million in seized property.

Why do our courts tolerate these outrageous legalized thefts? Because they get their cut. It's completely legal for confiscated property to be used by police, prosecutors and judges, so long as it's for official business. In 1996, a federal district court even ruled that police can personally receive 25% of the value of any confiscated home, car, or business.

Some police will kill you for your property

In Malibu, California, park police tried repeatedly to buy the home and land of 61-year-old, retired rancher Don Scott, which was next to national parkland. Scott refused. On the morning of October 2, 1992, a task force of 26 LA county sheriffs, DEA agents and other cops broke into Scott's living room. When he heard his wife, Frances, scream, he came out of his upstairs bedroom with a gun over his head. Police yelled at him to lower his gun. He did, and they shot him dead.

Police claimed to be searching for marijuana which they never found. Ventura County DA Michael Bradbury concluded that the raid was "motivated at least in part, by a desire to seize and forfeit the ranch for the government... [The] search warrant became Donald Scott's death warrant."

About the author... Jarret B. Wollstein works as an independent writer and direct-mail marketing specialist. He is a founder and director of the International Society for Individual Liberty (ISIL), an international human-rights and free-market networking organization with members in over eighty countries. His ISIL issue papers have sold over two million copies and have been translated into six languages.

Mr. Wollstein is the author of 300 articles and audio-tapes and four books, including Society Without Coercion (1969) and The Rage of lslam (1992). He is currently completing his fifth book-The Clinton Health Care Disaster. He is also a former editor of the Individualist magazine and the Financial Privacy Report.

Mr. Wollstein's essay appeared as a two-part series in the January and February 1994 issues of Freedom Daily, published by The Future of Freedom Foundation—For more information on Forfeiture in the USA, view the Forfeiture Endangers American Rights (FEAR) website: http://www.fear.org -

Micah 2:1 Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.

2 They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.

With rising crime, many in the USA were in favor of laws that would "get tough on criminals". What they ended up passing were laws that gave incredible power to "law enforcement" agencies. In some cases, the laws have been used to actually reduce crime, but in other cases they have created a whole new breed of criminals—"government seizers". I have read dozens of articles on this subject and the Internet has many hundreds. I have seen airports signs warning travelers that large amounts of cash can be confiscated. Why is not more being done to help victims? Because, beside losing nearly all of their wealth which they would need to fight the seizure, they also frequently lose nearly all of their friends who believe "the state must be right". Also, those who would oppose unjust seizures are afraid of having their own property seized.

When people give unlimited power to "the state" to solve their problems, they are putting them in place of God—much like ancient Israel when they wanted a human king instead of God (1 Samuel chapters 8 and 12). God's formula for cutting down on crime involved not a massive powerful police force, but local judges and officers appointed by the people (Deut 16:18), people who are willing to be witnesses and do their part in the justice system (Deut 17:1-7), quick justice (Eccl 8:11), severe punishment for those who lie in court (Deut 19:16-19). The Bible mentions other points, but implementing these four would do far more than giving police the power to decide who is a criminal and take whatever they want without any judicial process. Even if today, there were only good men with this power, who knows what manner of evil men will seek those powerful positions in the future. —N. Edwards

3 Temple University Junior Dragged to Psych Ward After Dispute Over Blasphemous Play

By Ed Vitagliano,: January 08, 2000
News Editor for the AFA Journal, a monthly publication of the American Family Association.

Was it their intent to terrorize an outspoken Christian or did their people overreact on their own?

(AgapePress) Officials at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, allegedly had student Michael A. Marcavage involuntarily committed to a state mental hospital after he initiated a Christian response to a blasphemous play performed on campus. Marcavage is being represented by the American Family Association's Center for Law & Policy (CLP) in a lawsuit.

Marcavage was a junior at the university in the fall of 1999, when he discovered that the Temple University Theater Department would be performing the play Corpus Christi on campus. Corpus Christi inflamed Christians around the country, and especially in New York City, when it was first performed on Broadway in 1998. The play depicts Jesus as a homosexual who has sex with his disciples, and was crucified for being "king of the queers."

According to his prepared statement, Marcavage immediately complained to the dean of the School of Communications and Theater, as well as to the president of the university, informing them of the nature of the play. In addition, Marcavage said that he posted fliers "so that all Christians on campus would be aware of this horrible play."

Marcavage met on a number of occasions with Vice President of Campus Safety William Bergman and Director of Campus Safety Carl Bittenbender. After Bergman repeatedly expressed his concern that protests outside the theater might lead to a confrontation between different factions of the student body, Marcavage said he agreed not to promote a protest.

Instead, he selected a different approach to Corpus Christi's blasphemous message. He asked for and received permission from Bergman to stage a Christian outreach to the student community at Temple.

According to Marcavage, Bergman promised that a stage would be provided to facilitate the outreach. The same day, however, Bittenbender called Marcavage to inform him that a stage now might be out of the question. The junior was asked to meet with Bittenbender and Bergman at the vice president's office the next morning.

At the meeting Bergman said that a stage would be too expensive to provide. When Marcavage offered to pay for the stage, Bergman refused to give further explanation for the decision. Upset, Marcavage excused himself, went to the bathroom, locked the door and prayed about what he should do next.

Marcavage said the next thing he knew, Bergman was pounding on the door, demanding that the student come out and continue the discussion. Marcavage said he opened the door and "told him that I believed our conversation was over."

The junior said Bergman physically forced him back into the office and "pushed me into a chair and held me with his arm." When Marcavage said he wanted to leave, Bergman allegedly refused to allow it. Attempting to rise, he said the vice president tripped him to the floor, and then Bergman and Bittenbender manhandled him to the couch, where they held him down.

Marcavage said moments later, a Temple University police officer arrived and handcuffed the junior. Eventually Marcavage was taken by police car to the Emergency Crisis Center at Temple University Hospital.

At the crisis center, Bittenbender allegedly signed a statement making some stunning allegations: that Marcavage was "severely mentally disabled;" represented a "clear and present danger to others;" that the junior had "inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily harm on another" within the past 30 days; and that Marcavage "has attempted suicide" and there was a "reasonable probability of suicide unless treatment was afforded" by the emergency crisis center. Bittenbender's statement concluded that Marcavage was "in need of involuntary examination and treatment."

According to documents provided by Marcavage, however, the junior was examined at the crisis center by Dr. Jose Villaluz, who noted in his written report that Marcavage was "not in need of involuntary treatment" and ordered the student's release—three hours after first arriving.

Subsequent to the junior's being handcuffed—but prior to being placed in the squad car—Marcavage had also apparently been observed by Dr. Denise Walton, a Temple University staff psychologist. In a separate document, Dr. Walton said she also had seen no overt sign that the student was about to harm himself or others.

An attempt to file a police report at the Temple University police station concerning his ordeal was rebuffed. Marcavage said police at first refused to file a charge against Bergman because the vice president was "our boss." Then Bittenbender entered the room, and told Marcavage that no report would be filed, because no crime had been committed. His only recourse was to file a report with the Philadelphia Police Department.

After subsequent attempts to complain through university channels failed, Marcavage sought help from the CLP.

CLP Senior Trial Attorney Brian Fahling, who is handling the case, said, "This kid is as solid as a rock. Besides being a college student on the Dean's

List, Michael was a White House intern with security clearance, is founder and president of a ministry called Protect the Children, president of his own business, and a volunteer who has worked with Campus Crusade for Christ and gone oversees with Feed the Children," Fahling said. "This is a good Christian kid who wanted to stand up for Jesus, and instead was handcuffed and dragged to a mental hospital as if he'd been seeing pink elephants."

The CLP lawsuit targets Temple University, as well as Bergman and Bittenbender, charging the defendants with depriving Marcavage of his civil and constitutional rights. Criminal charges related to the incident have also been lodged. Read more on the CLP lawsuit against Temple University for "Gestapo Tactics" from AgapePress.

ACTION NEEDED

Contact Temple University President David Adamany and politely ask him if it is Temple University's intent to terrorize outspoken Christians? In Mr. Marcavage's case, ask him if it was the University's intent to terrorize him or did people overreact on their own?

Mr. David Adamany, President, Temple University, 1801 North Broad Street ,Philadelphia, PA 19122, Phone: 215-204-7000

You may also wish to contact Temple University Security with those same questions: William Bergman, Vice President of Campus Safety; Carl Bittenbender, Director of Campus Safety; Contact Michael Marcavage and let him know that you appreciate his brave stand for Jesus Christ. AFA encourages you to pray for Michael and let him know that he is in your prayers.

Most Christians will applaud Peter, Paul and the other disciples for standing up and suffering mistreatment for Christ at the hands of the civil governments and religious authorities. They might even say, "if I have been alive during Paul's time, I would have supported him at his trial, not run away like the other believers" (2Tim 4:16). But what about supporting those persecuted for standing up for Christ today? Can we do nothing and safely assume that they are "in trouble" because they did something wrong? Is that what the first century believers said about Paul? —N. Edwards

4 Court Rules Christian Clubs Allowed in California Schools

by Jason Pierce, CNS Editorial Assistant

A California appeals court has unanimously decided that public schools in the state cannot prohibit Christian Bible clubs from using school facilities for their after-school activities.

The appellate court Wednesday voted 3-0 to reverse a lower court ruling that allowed Mission Viejo High School to ban a Christian athletes club from the campus. The ruling overturns a 30-year practice of banning Bible groups from school grounds.

"This is a momentous day for every California high school student," said John Mendoza, an attorney with the Pacific Justice Institute who argued the case before the appeals court. "This decision overturns three decades of laws which enabled the wholesale discrimination against Christian students."

The case dates back to 1997 when Justin Van Schoick, a student at Mission Viejo High School, brought a lawsuit against the Saddleback Valley Unified School District. The lawsuit followed a Board of Education vote that prohibited Bible clubs from meeting on campus. The decision also required that the club not be officially recognized as a school organization.

After a lower court verdict upheld the school district's ban on Bible clubs, Mendoza filed an appeal and argued that the lower court's ruling violated the First Amendment and the Equal Access Act, which prohibits public high schools from discriminating against religious clubs.

Mendoza described the court's decision as "monumental" and said Christian groups will now have the same access and treatment as other clubs on campus.

Brad Dacus, president of the Pacific Justice Institute, said the decision makes it difficult for schools to discriminate against religious groups. "This is without question a major victory," Dacus said. "This decision makes it clear that school districts will be given no latitude in discriminating against religious clubs."

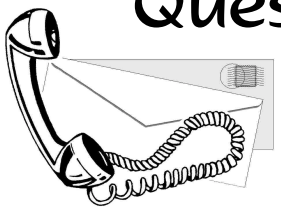
The religious freedom we have today is largely the result of some Christians who came to the USA to separate from a state monarchy and state church. How ironic that Christianity can be the victim of religious discrimination. This writer has attempted to rent public meeting rooms for Christian worship services and has been declined, even though other religious groups could use them simply by calling their meeting a "cultural event".

Nevertheless, because of the hard work of a few people, it will be much easier for California students to teach others about God and the Bible. This is a welcome change when some schools forbid students to privately pray on school grounds.

In many countries, all believers can do is pray for the leaders. But in the USA and some other countries, **the people** still are the **highest level of government**. No one can do it all. The Bible does not clearly say what God expects from each one of us, but we can ask Him to show us. — N. Edwards 🕮

Questions & Comments

from Our Readers



Dec 10, 2000

Through this election debacle I've been telling my friends that I thought God was trying to tell us something. Exactly 40 years ago we had another similar situation. The book of Judges shows many judgments from God coming at 40 year intervals, or multiples of 40 years.

Spiritually speaking, I am slow to catch on, but the answer came to me just now as I was praying. Very simple.

We need God!

The glue that put this country together, more than any other, and will hold it together as a great nation, is faith in the God of Israel, the One revealed in our Holy Bible.

When it comes to the common good, far overshadowing the significance of the roles played by any man or party leading the nation, is the degree to which we all are following the God who made this nation possible—the freedom-giving God who led Israel out of Egypt by mighty miracles and who spoke from Sinai:

"I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: ..." (Ex 20:2-3, Tanakh). Those are the words with which He introduced His ten commandments.

The words inscribed on the liberty bell: "proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof" (Lev 25:10, KJV) are the LORD's sentiments: His values shaped such greatness as this country may ever have had or will have in times to come.

The election debacle is simply a gentle reminder from the Almighty who gave us freedom that we need Him! A gentle reminder that His favor, far overshadowing any other factor, is what the people of our country need in order to live the good life!

Without His favor, it won't make any difference who is in office in this nation: things will **not** go well for us! This election debacle and that tragic attack on one of our warships; should it not remind us: **"Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain."** (Pslm 127:1, NIV). Without Him we are lost! Money, lawyers, fancy armaments—all in vain!

best regards,

— Jeffrey A. Caldwell

Dear Jeffrey,

Some may find your approach overly simple, but I think it is the basic message that God would have for the nation as a whole. Many people spend a lot of time studying and teaching about the exact form of worship, rituals, doctrines, etc. that God wants for all of us. But when the apostle Paul spoke to the Greek philosophers of his day, he did not give them a long complex message of things they needed to do and doctrines they needed to accept. His message started from where they were and was simple:

> Acts 17:23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.
>
> 24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.
>
> 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.
>
> 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.
>
> 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.
>
> 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'
>
> 29 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone-- an image made by man's design and skill.
>
> 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.
>
> 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

—Norman Edwards

January 21, 2001

[This following is a copy of a letter sent to George Bush by Robert Durand about his inaugural address.]

Angel Riding in the Whirlwind

Dear President Bush,

Congratulations on your inauguration as the 43rd president of these United States of America. It was a

splendid and inspiring day! You and your wife Laura shone brightly, as lights in the darkness, into the cold, rainy, and gloomy weather.

You dealt gracefully with your predecessor's flurry of upstaging acts, as America and much of the world looked on. You looked and acted presidential. You exuded confidence, trust, and-best of all-hope for the future of our nation. You closed your inaugural address by proclaiming, for those who had the ears to hear, and re-printed here for those who have the eyes to read, that:

> "We are not this story's author, who fills time and eternity with His purpose. Yet His purpose is achieved in our duty; and our duty is fulfilled in service to one another. Never tiring, never yielding, never finishing, we renew that purpose today: to make our country more just and generous; to affirm the dignity of our lives and every life. This work continues. This story goes on. And an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm. 'God' bless you, and 'God' bless our country."

By the time you finished your excellent speech, your supporters were no doubt proudly gushing over your well-spoken words. Most, if not all, of your opponents had carefully taken notes on your promises. The liberal and secular media were already writing their stories for publication or preparing rebuttals for on-air analysis.

But how many ears actually heard your reference to **an angel riding in the whirlwind?** And if they did hear, how many understood this seemingly-veiled allusion? Like many allusions and metaphors and parables in the Holy Bible, your **"angel in the whirlwind" has important and timely implications** carrying rich and multi-layered meanings for those who study those words**.**

You first introduced this angel to your vast audience shortly before you closed your speech with these words, credited to Virginia statesman John Page in a letter to Thomas Jefferson after the Declaration of Independence was signed:

> "We know the Race is not to the Swift nor the Battle to the Strong. **Do you not think an Angel rides in the Whirlwind and directs this Storm?**"

A quick search in a concordance of Biblical words reveals that the first sentence in Page's quotation comes directly from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. In proper context, this verse reads: "I have seen something else under the sun: **The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong,** nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all" (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

This book of Scripture is generally attributed to the writings of the wise King Solomon, and is generally considered to be intended as a philosophy of life. The implication of this particular verse is that "God" is in charge of our fortunes, in spite of all we try to do.

But what about those words, "whirlwind" and "storm?" Another search of the Biblical concordance results in the discovery of a little-known prophet, Nahum, whose name means "comfort," and who reminds the reader that: "'The Lord' is slow to anger and great in power; 'the Lord' **will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm**, and the clouds are the dust of his feet" (Nahum 1:3).

The New International Version Study Bible interpretation of this verse is that "God" is in control of history, and He will not allow evil to persist forever. So far, so good, President Bush, **but just who is this angel who you say is riding the whirlwind and directing the storm?**

You don't give the listener or reader any additional clues, but this writer would like to suggest that this angel might well be the same one whom "God" designated to Moses as he was leading the nation of Israel out of Egypt to the promised land: "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says" (Exodus 23:20-21).

We know from the dictionary that "angel" means a messenger who can be either human or divine. *The New International Version Study Bible* reference to this verse says, "Sometimes 'God' spoke through a messenger. Some think this angel ...refers to the mystical cloud and fire (whirlwind) which led Israel through the wilderness."

This little Bible study of your Inaugural Speech conclusion has certainly given us plenty of food for thought, Mr. President. And it should certainly provide material for scholars and historians to ponder in future years. More importantly, the citizens of these United States should all sleep easier, with the knowledge that you have yielded our nation's grand story of courage and its simple dream of dignity to our life story's author, who does indeed fill time and eternity with His purpose.

And so, this story goes on, and an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm.

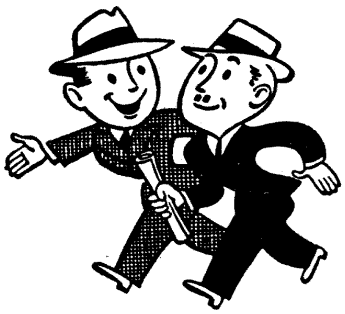
May 'God' bless you, Mr. President, and may 'God' bless our country.

Robert Durand

Dear Robert,

The USA Constitution does not prevent the President from telling the nation to look to God, it says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". He cannot promote or prohibit a specific "establishment"—denomination or religious group above others. Mr. Bush's actions over the next years will show if he intends to lead the nation in a return to God, or if he is simply quoting the Bible to retain the support of religious people. — Norman Edwards 🕮

Counsel and Decisions



by Tommy Willis

It is not a sin to be ignorant; but what can destroy us is if we stay ignorant; God says:

> Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...

So it can be a sin to remain ignorant; we must seek out the wisdom and knowledge of God. Otherwise we can be destroyed for refusing the knowledge of God.

God tells us many times in the book of Proverbs to seek counsel and that in many counselors there is safety (Pr 11:14, 24:6).

We need to seek wise counsel. But many people feel intimidated by intelligent people, or those that know more than they do. But not to seek counsel for this reason is to let your vanities get in the way. This need not be so. We should have the humility to seek to learn from those with more insight than ourselves. When God tells us to seek counsel about our problems—common sense should tell us that we must seek out those that know more than we do about the matters we are inquiring about. Over the years when I sought out counsel I was well aware that the people I was trying to learn from knew much more than I did about the matters I was inquiring about.

Certainly we need to make prayer the first order of importance in the decisions we make.

But we also need to put feet on our prayers; and this may mean that we need to seek counsel from others while praying about the matter.

Seeking counsel does not mean having your decisions made for you. But you are to take the counsel—pray, sort it out, reason and think—then make your own decision. You need to do it this way, because if you are not careful you will wind up making someone else's decision and not your own. You will think it is your own, but it will only be an extension of another person. The counselor is not to make the decision for you, but merely direct you. You are to make your own decision after you have weighed out matters, because the counsel you are getting could be bad counsel. And the only way you will know for sure is if you are praying and seeking God to have His Spirit guide you.

We often suffer from information overload; and the mass of information can distract us from making wise decisions. We can also be distracted by the wrong kind of information. Too many seek information but lack wisdom. Many are merely sifters of information and not seekers of wisdom. But wisdom will help us make proper decisions.

> Prov 2:10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. 11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

Certainly this will help us make the proper decisions we need to make as we learn to seek out the wisdom and knowledge needed.

Never let your emotions dictate your decisions. If a certain matter has you very emotional—take some time to back off from it; pray and think; get in a calm state of mind. This may take hours or even days if the matter is really chaotic. We need to learn to do it this way, otherwise our impulsive reactions can cause us to have to live with the consequences of a bad decision; and sometimes it can be quite costly. Rash decisions can cause us a lifetime of pain.

After we seek counsel we usually will have to learn to wait in patience afterwards.

> Pslm 27:14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

But we often choose immediate gratification, not wanting to go through the pain of having to wait. We often seek to relieve that pain by making a decision; but letting our emotions dictate the decision can bring on having to live with consequences of a bad decision. So it's best to go slow, and learn to make no decision without much prayer. And that may mean waiting much longer that we anticipated.

We often strike out to blame others when our decisions cause us pain. But we will have to learn to take responsibility for our actions. We can take counsel from others—but all counsel must be weighed out

and proved out as God tells us to do (1Thes 5:21). Then we will learn to face the problem and take responsibility for our own actions.

We can get on an emotional roller coaster and lose all objectivity. But for the best decisions we need to stay as level headed as possible.

When you receive counsel from others, learn to sift it wisely. Some of the counsel you may have to let go, and the rest hold fast. As we learn to do as God tells us and prove out all matters, then we will stay on safe ground.

Pray and ask God to direct you as you seek counsel from others.

Learn to ask the right questions; this is an important part of seeking counsel.

Get all the available facts; you cannot rely on conjecture because this will bring chaos in many of your decisions. You must look at all the available facts.

> Jms 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.
>
> 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.
>
> 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;
>
> 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

Learn to do as Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us—seek God and <u>not</u> rely on your own understanding.

Learn to go to God and pray about every matter; the more you learn to rely on Him the more you will be directed and stay on safe ground. And remember, God may have you seek counsel from others in the process; scriptures are clear about this also. As we learn to follow these Biblical principles God will lead us by His Spirit into the decisions we need to make. This is true victory in decision making. 🕮

Diversity

by Tommy Willis

God did not intend that we be carbon copies of one another. In **1 Corinthians 12: 4-31** we see diversity of gifts. We are not to live our lives in a carefully controlled environment that doesn't allow diversity. Much of the time the Church organizations did not allow the full freedom of functioning for each individual. Thus the growth of the congregation was often stifled.

All too often we want to make people in our family or Church into people just like ourselves. But this is where we err greatly; we need to learn to see the beauty of diversity.

We also need to learn <u>mutual respect</u> that allows one another to function.

Take the functioning of a restaurant: if everyone hired was a waiter—then the restaurant could not function; it needs to have chefs and cashiers, and other members that will allow it to do the complete work of a restaurant. It is the same with the Body of Christ (1Cor 12). If we come to see and respect this diversity, then it will help make unity in the Body.

We often seek out people like ourselves, and look to be complimented through duplicity. But it will aid our growth if we learn to work with the diversity of each individual; it will complement the Body of Christ.

The twelve disciples were men who had different make up and characteristics. But Christ knew that if they would learn to work together that this would be a plus. He taught them to use this diversity to work at a common goal.

If we study the lives of John, Paul, James, or Peter—we will see the diversity and the different characteristic of each man; this shows up not only in the Gospels, but in each of their letters also. The scriptures tell us that without Christ we can do nothing—**Jn 15:5**; but this does not mean that our spirit is to do nothing. The way that God has decided to do the work of the New Creation—our spirit and <u>diverse characteristic</u> has to function and do the work also; it is <u>a part</u> of the work of the New Creation.

Because of the way God works here there is much responsibility; God's Spirit works with our spirit (Rom 8:16). Each person's different characteristic goes out with the Holy Spirit; the

special character of the believer being used also goes out to others.

Both spirits go forth to do the work! This puts much responsibility on man in the work of God. If our spirit is troubled then the Spirit of God is hindered from being released through us. Although Christ's death must do its work to eliminate many things—it has never been shown that the human factor is annihilated; no, we are to function and be a part of the New Creation in Christ.

The more we see this reality the more we will appreciate diversity among the members of the Body of Christ. This will make for unity in the Body. This is what Paul tried to teach the people in his letters. There is much room for diversity; here we see the beauty of individuality in the plan of God's New Creation.

The conformity of the world often works against us properly using our individual gifts and abilities. But we must learn to come out of this, for God tells us to come out of the world's mentality:

> Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

As we break out of the shell of conformity our minds will soar beyond what the institutionalized mentality can imagine.

We need to learn of our individual gifts and abilities in Christ; how can we function properly otherwise? Many try to function in areas that God has not called them to do—this often happens with many in minister's positions, they have taken it on themselves to do this task when God didn't place them there. Many have stood before the pulpits with a lot of charisma and fleshly talent, and it has damaged the Church. To function properly we must have a sound estimation of the faith and abilities that we have in Christ, not those gifts that are of the natural plane; God only accepts what is of Christ in doing His work; it must be of the Spiritual realm.

The more we come to see the beauty of the way God set the process up—then the less we will want to be a "clone" of another's gifts and abilities. We will see the blessing of our own individuality in Christ. And no matter how "gifted" we feel another brother or sister is, we will be content with the abilities that God gave us as a unique person. And we will then learn to function in the areas that God has trained us, and not try to get into areas that we are not competent with. This will keep us out of a lot of trouble as we learn to find our place and fill it.

God says in **1 Corinthians 12:22-25** that the parts of the Body we seem to think lack honor are given more honor, that all will have the same love for one another. God has a way to bring down the proud heart that thinks its gifts make it so much better than all the others around it. God's plan is to work where love and humility is created in us that we learn to have the same care for one another. **As we learn to see this diversity and respect God's plan of individuality as these scriptures show, then it will make for unity in the Body.** 🕮

Share Your Shelter

Our Savior never argued or tried to force someone to believe in Him. We should not do that either. But if *Shelter in the Word* has helped you, you can share it with others who might be interested in it or helped by it. One of these methods might work for you.

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Correction to July/August Issue

On page 3 of the July/August issue, the big paragraph in the middle of the right column, the second sentence should say "an Egyptian wife, Azenath, **daughter of Potipherah**, which means "he whom the Ra gave".