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JANUARY 2007

THE WATER OF LIFE

by DAVE HUNT

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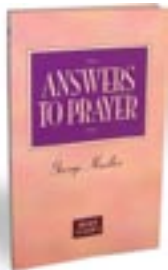
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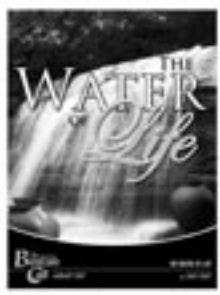
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ABOUT THE COVER: As spirits made in God's image, yet living in physical bodies and surrounded with the spiritually stifling materialism of a world that has rejected God, we desperately need the nurture of God's Word. Instead of the spirit, however, we are nurturing the carnal man ("And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal...ye are yet carnal..." - 1 Cor 3:1-3) and hardly know we are thirsting and starving. Sadly, these days in popular Christian literature, more froth than substance masquerades as drink for thirsty souls.... Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (Jn 7:37,38). What He meant and to what extent each of us has experienced the fullness of which He spoke must be carefully weighed. John explained, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (Jn 7:39). Thus, to drink of Christ means to believe on Him, and the water He gives is the Holy Spirit comforting and empowering within. We clearly understand that Jesus was speaking spiritually, not physically, to the woman at the well: "Whosoever drinketh of this [well] water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn 4:13-15).

—"What Have We Done to the Cross?" Dave Hunt, Sept. '99

THE BEREAN CALL

"[The Bereans] . . . searched the scriptures daily, [to see] whether those things were so."—Acts 17:11

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— VOL. XXII NO. 1 —

JANUARY 2007

Water of Life

Dave Hunt

As God's unique creation, we live in physical bodies in a material universe that will pass away, "for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). God desires to reveal to us the world of the eternal, the world unseen by physical eyes. While still earthbound, we are to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" and to set our "affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:1,2).

But how can God convey spiritual truth to fleshly minded earth dwellers who, because of sin, are separated from Him and know nothing and desire nothing except the material world? He must, with physical terms familiar to us, bring us to a clear understanding of and earnest desire for spiritual truth and reality. He communicates through words, often with figurative language.

The physical realm has been consistently used by God from the very beginning (starting with a tree in the Garden of Eden) to convey spiritual truth. Paul shows us how to interpret God's object lessons:

For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written....If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things...? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. (1 Cor 9:9-14)

In His parables, Christ spoke of trees and fruit, grapevines and grapes, shepherds and sheep, sowers, seeds and bread, wind and weather, birth and death, fire and torment, etc. But there is no more powerful picture in all of Scripture than that of water and thirst. There is no life without water. The need for water to sustain life is signaled by thirst, which can be tormenting and soon fatal if not satisfied.

The seemingly unlikely Samaritan woman (why would He go out of His way to meet her!) whom Christ, by His arrangement, encountered at the well, was obviously very thirsty for a fulfillment that she couldn't find. Like most of mankind, she did not understand that her thirst was

spiritual and that nothing physical could satisfy it. But our Lord knew her heart.

He talked to her about water and thirst: "Whosoever drinketh of this [well] water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (Jn 4:13,14). There was an authority about this stranger that made her believe what He said. She thought He was referring to a special water that would permanently end her bodily thirst: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

In fact, He was going to expose a life of disappointments and regrets: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither."

"I have no husband," was her evasive reply.

Christ's response must have shocked and cut her to the heart: "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband...."

"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet!" was her dumbfounded reply. How did He know the intimate details of her life?

The conversation that followed exposed her spiritual thirst. Christ revealed to her that He was the Messiah she awaited. That revelation gripped her heart. She believed on Him and ran into the city to tell the amazing news that the Messiah stood at that moment at Jacob's well. In her haste to testify for the One who had revealed and satisfied her spiritual thirst, she "left her waterpot" (4:28) and its unsatisfying contents.

When the Bible says that in our natural state inherited from Adam we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), one knows instinctively that the reference is not to physical death. We receive physical life at our birth into this world, but tragically, we are born into the spiritual death we inherited from Adam. Responsible adults have until their physical death to receive spiritual life by being born again into God's family by His Holy Spirit through the gospel. If not, they will remain spiritually dead in the torment of eternal separation from God.

Christ gives a hint in physical language (through the story of the rich man in hell) of the unbearable spiritual thirst created by that separation: "I am tormented in this flame," the sinner exclaims (Lk 16:24). The torment of that eternal separation was endured for each of us by our Lord on the Cross as He suffered the agonies of hell. He cried, "I thirst....My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?!" The spiritual torment

of the damned is even more excruciating than physical pain could ever be.

Most of earth's inhabitants do not realize that they are nonphysical beings, dead to God by birth but temporarily occupying physical bodies. Desperately thirsty for spiritual life, which can be received only from God on His terms, they seek unsuccessfully to satisfy that thirst with earth-bound possessions and pleasures. After Paul turned from rejection of Christ to faith in Him, he rejoiced in what only the Christian can know: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). It is the inward man that lives by the spiritual food and drink that God's Word offers.

Nor do most people realize that their physical death will not end the existence of the soul and spirit that had inhabited their body. Death ends the opportunity that life has provided for us to surrender to God willingly, for: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27).

Materialism's passionate lust for popularity, pleasure, wealth, and power is what drives the West, from Wall Street to corporate board rooms to academics to athletics. The advertising world and Hollywood play on that lust with tantalizing enticements aimed at youth to make each new generation more the children of Satan than their parents before them. Over and over, God's unchanging Word is proven true: "For all that is in the world [is] the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:15-17).

Satan deceives billions of souls with false religions that seem to offer an escape from fleshly lusts but in truth only lead their followers into hell. Muslims turn their backs upon Western materialism and are willing to die in jihad—except for those who come to the West while pretending to remain true to Islam; and excepting, of course, the despotic, wealthy, self-indulgent rulers of Muslim countries who never offer themselves or their children as jihad martyrs. But what do suicide bombers hope will be their reward? A "paradise" that offers everything they condemn in the West: unlimited sex, abundance of every delicacy that fleshly appetites could desire, rivers running with wine (forbidden to Muslims in this life), and superhuman capacity to indulge in the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" non-stop.

Other millions have been caught in the delusion of Hinduism's Eastern mysticism, which seems to reject worldly lusts but is founded upon the same ultimate selfish pride that captured Eve's heart: the desire to become a god. Gurus from the East became wealthy by selling godhood through self-realization to millions in the West, religion packaged as yoga and Eastern meditation—a deception now sweeping through the church as well. Yet, as we document in *Yoga and the Body of Christ* (see offering list), the gurus were themselves the victims of the very "lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes" from which they promised their followers an escape. These "god-men" proved again the truth of Scripture: "While they promise them [their followers] liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption" (2 Pt 2:19).

These agents of Satan promise fulfillment of the passion inherited from Eve of becoming one's own god and gaining every fleshly desire. The New Age Movement, promising its own godhood of mind power to achieve every selfish ambition, and picking up where the hippy revolution left off, repackaged Eastern mysticism as "Human Potential," trapping millions more with "the pride of life." It stirred a brief flurry of interest in the "spiritual" dimension and left in its wake shattered souls closed to God. Their mantra remains, "I'm spiritual but not religious"—i.e., don't push your religious rules on me.

The latest movement, "the New Atheists," is led by famous evolutionist Richard Dawkins and his understudy, Sam Harris. They declare that belief in God is not only a great delusion but an evil from which the world must be delivered—and they are determined to do it. Their books rank high on *The New York Times* best seller list. They ridicule those who believe in God, using arguments like the following, from Sam Harris:

Of course, people of faith regularly assure one another that God is not responsible for human suffering. But how else can we understand the claim that God is both omniscient and omnipotent...?

If God exists, either He can do nothing to stop the most egregious calamities, or He does not care to. God, therefore, is either impotent or evil. Pious readers will now execute the following pirouette: *God cannot be judged by merely human standards of morality*. But, of course, human standards of morality are precisely what the faithful use to establish God's goodness in the first place....

If He exists, the God of Abraham is not merely unworthy of the immensity of creation; he is unworthy even of man.

There is another possibility, of course... the biblical God is a fiction. (Excerpt from *An Atheist Manifesto*, www.truthdig.com)

Apparently, God is responsible for every child's refusal to eat his peas and neglect of his homework and for every heated lovers' quarrel and selfish action. He ought to make everyone behave like perfect saints? If God had made mankind robots programmed to do whatever He dictated, then He could be blamed for not stopping evil, suffering, and death—but there would also be no love. Every person knows that he has the power of choice, uses it continually, even to the point of being able to shake his fist at God, curse Him, and live in total rebellion of His laws written in every conscience—and is therefore without excuse.

But how could the power to choose that makes it possible for us to love one another account for the suffering of innocent children by disease, starvation, abuse? What about "natural disasters" such as tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, poisonous snakes and insects, animals preying upon and eating one another and man, etc.? Can these be blamed on human rejection of God?

The Bible makes it clear that the entire universe was affected by Adam's sin and joining Satan in his rebellion against God: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now" (Rom 8:22). Deliverance from this curse will come in part during Christ's Millennial reign on earth (Is 11:7; 65:25)—and completely in the new heavens and new earth:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...and there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him...." (Rv 21:1; 22:3)

But how could a loving God be so vengeful as to torment those who reject Christ in the flames of the Lake of Fire forever? This is not God's choice for mankind. He loves us so much that He made His love the essential ingredient of our very existence. Thus, to be in the fullness of His love would be ecstasy; to be finally and without possible recovery separated from Him would be torture. That is why hell will be such torment for the same reason that heaven will be such exquisite pleasure and joy.

The best way to describe this spiritual reality in terms that we can understand is with water and thirst. Water tastes so good because it is essential to our life. Thirst hurts so bad for the same reason. God did not create us to be thirsty but to drink of His love. It is no more reasonable to blame God for our follies, failures, and sorrows than it is to say, "The Devil made me do it."

A school of fish is swimming contentedly in a lake. One of them sees a man sitting in a chair on the shore, holding a fishing pole, and smoking a cigar. "Now that would be

really living!" exclaims the fish. Moved with envy, it leaps out onto the bank. Exhausted, trying desperately to grab a fishing pole and get onto a chair, the "fish-out-of-water" gasps its last.

Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris walk by, leading a group of atheists on a "trashing God" tour. Pointing to the fish, flopping in the dirt and gravel, gills opening and closing in vain desperation, Dawkins declares in triumph, "What kind of a 'god' would create a fish to suffer like that!"

The atheists continue discussing with great enthusiasm how evolution, natural selection, and survival of the fittest (inefficient and cruel to the core) have so marvelously produced creatures like themselves with such wisdom that they can analyze the cosmic forces that spawned them and damn the God they say doesn't exist.

God did not make the fish to "suffer like that." He made the fish to swim in water, its God-given habitat. But the fish was not content with what God had made it and tried to do its own will. Nothing could be more reasonable than for the Creator to be in charge of His universe—but man has rebelled.

Just as God created the fish to swim in water, so He created man to swim eternally in the ocean of His love. He so constituted us that our highest enjoyment—indeed our very life—would be in receiving His love and loving Him in return. But we rejected His love, spat in His face, and defiantly went our own way. God alone knew the endless torment we would suffer as a result of our rebellion, and gave His Son to pay the penalty for every sinner.

Jesus described the "lake of fire" (Rv 20:15), the rebels' final end, as a place of unbearable burning thirst. God did not intend for any human to go there. The Lake of Fire was not made for man but "for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41). From the beginning of the Bible to the end, God continues to plead, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rv 22:17).

Heaven is for those who have accepted the offer to drink continuously of the water of life: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb..." (Rv 22:1). In contrast to the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk 13:28) by those in the Lake of Fire, those in heaven, we are told, "...shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.... For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rv 7:16-17). Let us live in the joy of that promise in the days ahead and bring this good news to all who will hear. TBC

Quotable

A major national poll...by one of America's leading researchers...commissioned by AiG [Answers in Genesis]...as a follow-up to the results of an alarming Barna Research poll of 2002 and a Southern Baptist poll...clearly shows that...many have left the church because they no longer believe the Bible is the absolute Word of God....

Ken Ham, Answers Update, Vol 13:11:2

Seeking after imaginary happiness, creating to ourselves a thousand unnatural needs, amusing our hearts with false hopes and insatiable passions, envying one another, we bring distress of every sort upon ourselves. Let any man...consider how foolish he has been...he will then realize that nothing is so unbecoming in any man as self-exaltation and pride.

William Law, The Power of the Spirit, 145

Q&A

QUESTION: In July you said Christians should not join non-Christians in pro-life activities because they would be "unequally yoked...." Wouldn't that preclude involvement with secular schools, Scouts, 4-H [and] any activity [with] the general public? Yet our Lord told us to let "our lights shine before others," that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16). Should the Israelites have rejected the help of King Cyrus in Ezra because they would have been "unequally yoked"?

RESPONSE: How can we let "our light shine" by joining the ungodly in their moral crusades? Is their light shining too?

School is required by law—abortion protests are not. If you wish, protest abortion with Christians, not with the unsaved. Wouldn't your "light shine" brighter then?

Public gatherings hardly "yoke" you with the crowd. Separation from the world can be carried to an extreme, as Paul warned, "for then must ye needs go out of the world" (1 Cor 5:9,10). As for scouts, 4-H, etc., that is where one's light could really shine so that other members would encounter their peers whom they could look up to but who are "not of the world" (Jn 15:19; 17:14-16) and who testify for Christ.

We are called to "preach the gospel," not to reform society. But if you preach the gospel to unsaved protesters, they will accuse you of disrupting unity.

Cyrus was chosen of God (2 Chr 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-8). Jews would have disobeyed God had they not accepted his assistance.

QUESTION: In a recent sermon, our pastor said, "Free will is not a biblical term." Is that true? Please explain.

RESPONSE: Free will to obey or disobey, love or hate, submit or rebel, is not only biblical but essential to man's relationship to God. He calls us to love, obey, serve, and worship Him and to do so by choice: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Jos 24:15). God would not be glorified in any obedience, worship, or love that did not come willingly from the heart.

Jesus said, "The first and great commandment [is] thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mt 22:37,38). The fact that love comes from the heart, soul, and mind proves that it must be an act of free will. Love must be willingly given and received—or it isn't love. Our Lord said the second command was to love our neighbors as ourselves and "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt 22:40). Thus, without the capacity to love God and fellow humans we cannot obey the Bible.

Your pastor says that free will is "not a biblical term"? But that concept appears 17 times in the Bible! The same meaning is expressed in other words. "Free offerings" is found twice (Ex 36:3; Am 4:5), as is "a voluntary offering" (Lv 7:16). All are to be brought "voluntarily unto the LORD" (Ezk 46:12).

The first offering in Leviticus (a pattern for all) was to be brought by the worshiper "of his own voluntary will" (Lv 1:3,4). The many "freewill" offerings were to be given by the individual "willingly with his heart" (Ex 25:2). Those who gave materials for building the tabernacle were to bring them with "a willing heart" (Ex 35:5).

Christ declared: "If any man will [i.e., wills to] do his [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (Jn 7:17). The Bible ends with an offer it repeats or implies many times. "And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rv 22:17). Scripture could not be clearer on this point. Free will is biblical and essential.

QUESTION: The words, "carnal Christian," sound like an oxymoron. From passages such as Ezekiel 33, Matthew 7:19-23, I can't see "carnal Christians" in heaven. People use 1 Corinthians 3 to prove that all professing Christians will be saved no matter what they do. But John MacArthur in his study Bible says this primarily refers to evangelists and pastors. I think a viable interpretation...is that the work they are doing is... evangelizing and helping the Body of

Christ to grow in his knowledge of Him. If they give a false gospel, the convert will be burnt up because he doesn't have Christ as a foundation. If the builder tries to build up other Christians with false teachings...those teachings will be burnt up...and the builder will not receive a reward. The builder will be saved, but his works will be burnt....I don't think this passage proves that there will be unrewarded carnal Christians in heaven.

RESPONSE: On the contrary, Paul is not referring *only* to "evangelists and pastors," nor does *MacArthur's Study Bible* say so. Three times Paul says "any man" and once "every man." It is the man's works (not his "converts") that are tried by fire (v. 13) and it is the works that are burned, not "converts" to a false gospel.

You believe "carnal Christian" is an "oxymoron"? Paul introduces the idea, beginning with himself (Rom 7:14). Though he calls the Corinthians carnal, yet he also calls them "brethren" and "babes in Christ" (1 Cor 3:1-4).

"Carnal" is a biblical term describing those who are living in "envy, strife, and divisions." Paul accuses them of condoning fornication and of going to law in secular courts against each other. He warns them against prostitutes and various other sins unbecoming of Christians. He even declares that a person could have been so carnal that all of his works will be burned up—yet "he himself shall be saved" (1 Cor 3:15).

I agree that this passage doesn't prove that all professing Christians will be saved no matter what they do. *Professing* is not enough. After making it clear that Christ is the only foundation, Paul refers to those who "build upon this foundation" (1 Cor 3:10-12)—i.e., real Christians.

There won't be any carnal Christians in heaven because "when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 Jn 3:2). But we are not told that carnality will keep anyone out of heaven. If one must live a perfect life in order to get to heaven, no one would make it. Paul wrote most of his epistles to correct error in the church. But he doesn't say that even the most carnal Corinthians are not saved. Paul stands in doubt of the Galatians, not because of carnality but because he questions whether they believed the true gospel (Gal 4:11,19,20).

QUESTION: What is the difference between soul and spirit? Do they both go to the Lord when we die? Please explain.

RESPONSE: Most Christians use the words interchangeably. Scripture makes a distinction. Paul writes, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved

blameless..." (1 Thes 5:23). The Word of God pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb 4:12). Soul and spirit must therefore be two different parts of a human being made in God's image.

"Soul" in the Old Testament is always the Hebrew *nephesh*, a living, breathing creature. In numbering people in the Bible, reference is to so many souls—never to so many spirits. In the New Testament, "soul" is always *psuche*, the Greek equivalent of *nephesh*. "Spirit" is the Hebrew *ruwach*, meaning breath; and the Greek equivalent is *pneuma*. Soul and spirit are difficult to define. Yet every person knows what is meant by "evil spirit," "disembodied spirit," "spirit of man," "Spirit of God," etc.

The expression "my soul" is found 126 times and almost always is very personal, as though it is the center of man's self-consciousness. Through the soul, we recognize and indulge ourselves: "I will say to my soul...thou hast much goods laid up for many years...eat, drink, and be merry" (Lk 12:19).

That the soul goes to heaven is clear: "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (Ps 16:10); "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were [beheaded] for the word of God..." (Rv 6:9; 20:4). The same is true of the spirit. As He died, Jesus said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). Luke writes, "They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59).

In contrast to the soul's self-awareness (1 Cor 2:11,12), the *spirit* has understanding and wisdom. This is where the Spirit of God indwells man and is the center of man's awareness of and communion with God. "Sensual" could be associated with soul but not with spirit. "Soulish" is neither in the Bible nor the dictionary, but if it were, it would have a carnal connotation and nothing to do with God. On the other hand, "spiritual," found 23 times in the Bible, always means heavenly minded, godly, holy—never self-centered.

QUESTION: In November, you expressed displeasure with D. James Kennedy, R.C. Sproul, and others, who teach that Israel "has no special title to land in the Middle East, having been replaced by the church." Unbelieving Israel was always cut off, whether in ancient times, Christ's day, or our own; the kingdom has always been the blessing given to another "nation" (composed of believing Jews and Gentiles)... These saints, make up that holy nation Peter calls the body of Christ. Scripture nowhere affirms that unbelieving Israel... shall receive...a millennial Canaan whose boundaries reach the Euphrates....Jeremiah 23:7-8...relates to the return from

Babylon...not Israel reconstituted in modern history. Moreover, this text includes... a Messianic prophecy that must be contextualized with verses 7 and 8....

RESPONSE: Literally hundreds of scriptures contradict your position. God promised Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their seed everlasting possession of a physical land on this earth with prescribed boundaries (Gn 11:31; 12:1,5,6,7; 13:15; 15:7, 18-21; 17:7,8; 26:3-5; 28:13,14; 35:9-12; 1 Chr 16:15-18, etc.). For example: "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Gn 17:7,8). No such promise of possession of a particular land on this earth was ever given to the church! Israel possessed this land for centuries. How could the church, whose inheritance is in heaven, replace physical Israel on earth?

The Israelites, with few exceptions, were *always* in unbelief: in Egypt, through the desert, in the land—yet God remained faithful and patient. He disciplined but never disowned them. He warned that He would cast them out of the land if they did not repent and turn to Him. He said they would be scattered to every nation, hated, persecuted, and killed like no other people, which they were and are to this day. He promised to bring Israel back into her land in the last days, which He is doing—and that she would never cease to be a nation (Jer 31:35,36). None of this fits the church.

You say that Jeremiah 23:7-8 refers to the return from Babylon. How can "...from all the countries whither I had driven them" mean one country, Babylon? Those living in Israel today have come there from over 100 countries in a literal fulfillment of Jeremiah 23:7-8. God said that in that day, no Jew would be left outside Israel: "I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them [among other nations] any more" (Ezk 39:28; Mt 24:31)—but only a remnant returned from Babylon.

Yes, "unbelieving Israel has no special title to the land." But Israel must return to her land in unbelief because it is there that they come to faith when the Messiah rescues His people in the midst of Armageddon (Zec 14:1-4). Every Jew alive will "look on [Him] whom they have pierced [and] there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David...for sin and for uncleanness" (Zec 12:10-13:1) and "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26). That did not happen at the return from Babylon!

If the church is Israel, then "All the church shall be saved" when Christians look upon the One "they have pierced." Paul was willing to go to hell if that would save Israel, his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3). None of this describes the church!

His "prayer to God for Israel [was], that they might be saved" (Rom 10:1). Those in the church are not yet saved?

You say, "Israel was always cut off...the kingdom has always been the blessing given to another 'nation' (composed of believing Jews and Gentiles)...." Was the Davidic kingdom, therefore, really the church, living for centuries in that land "from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates"? The church never was promised a land, never occupied a land, never was cast out of that land for her sin, never was promised that she would be brought back into it. The church is not Israel!

News Alert.....

The LA Times 12/7/06 [Excerpts]: MANLINESS IS NEXT to GODLINESS: Brad Stine runs onstage in ripped blue jeans, his shirt untucked, his long hair shaggy. He's a stand-up comic by trade, but he's here today as an evangelist, on a mission to build up a new Christian man one profanity at a time. A moment later he adds a fervent: "Thank you, Lord, for our testosterone!"

It's an apt anthem....Stine's daylong revival meeting, which he calls "God-Men," is cruder than most. But it's built around the same theory as the other experimental forums: Traditional church worship is emasculating.

John Eldredge, a seminal writer for the movement, goes further in *Wild At Heart*, his bestselling book. "Christianity, as it currently exists, has done some terrible things to men," he writes. Men "believe that God put them on earth to be a good boy."

Christian radio host Paul Coughlin, author of "No More Christian Nice Guy," takes the stage. "Jesus was a very bad Christian," Coughlin declares. After all, he says, the Son of God trashed a temple and even used profanity, or the New Testament equivalent, when he called Herod "that fox."

The virility crusade is, in part, a response to a stark gender gap. Though churches have tried all sorts of gimmicks to attract men...more than 60% of the adults at a typical worship service are women...according to David Murrow, author of *Why Men Hate Going to Church*.

The most famous men's ministry, Promise Keepers, packed stadiums throughout the 1990s with men who wept and hugged one another as they pledged to be dutiful and pure. Men at Promise Keepers rallies today make the same vows, but...conferences now carry titles such as "Storm the Gates" and "Uprising." This year, the theme is "Unleashed," as in unleashing the warrior within. "It is not about learning how to be a nicer guy," the website declares.

[TBC: This is the gospel according to macho movies, televised wrestling, and the NFL, not according to the Scriptures.]

Dave & T.A.'s Itinerary

Jan 17 (Dave)	Calvary Chapel of Webster Webster NY (585) 265-6080
Jan 18-21 (Dave)	Calvary Chapel Finger Lakes Farmington NY (585) 398-3550
Feb 23, 24 (Dave)	Bible Skeptics Conference Whitby ON (905) 922-2589 www.bibleskeptics.org
Feb 25 (Dave)	Bayview Glen Church Toronto ON (905) 881-5252
Mar 9-11 (Dave)	Westside Bible Church Meridian ID (208) 938-9424
Apr 13-14 (Dave)	S Manitoba Prophecy Conf Winkler MB (204) 325-671
Apr 20-21 (T.A.)	Discerning the Times Bible Conf Saskatoon SK (306) 717-0374
Apr 25- May 9 (Dave)	Various Assemblies of Believers in Albania GEOSTURM01@aol.com

Letters

Dear Friends,

We know the Rapture must be near because of all that's going on. But we're told, according to the Bible, not to worry because these things must come to pass. A lot of churches are becoming...social clubs. Pastors are afraid of stepping on people's toes and just preach what they want to hear. The Bible predicts that also, saying the very clergy will fall away in the end times. We'll keep reading *TBC* and praying for the peace of Jerusalem, which will be when Christ returns. LH (MN)

The Berean Call,

I thank the Lord for your ministry, which changed my life after a colleague gave me your newsletter to read....By then I had been a full and proud charismatic for 10 1/2 years. The very day I read the newsletter I became very uncomfortable. I had never been touched by such truths in my Christian life. All along I had thought that I was having it all. What confirmed my ignorance further was when I read *Seduction of Christianity*. I read it over and over again. I had to go before the Lord and rededicate myself to him. EM (South Africa)

Blessings to you,

This is to say a special thank you for the article on psychology [Oct. '06]. Very helpful to us as many times we feel we stand alone and then we realize there are many

others who would agree with us and it's so encouraging to us. KK (WA)

Dear TBC,

I prayed for you today. Many will not understand, but I for one am glad you came out against the errors of Billy Graham. How can he be so double-minded?... Keep challenging us with the truth in love. EW (CA)

Dear Anon (IN), Letters, TBC, 11/06,

When I read your letter in the November issue I felt compelled to write this answer to you. I was a Catholic until I was 30, I attended a Catholic grade school and two years of seminary in high school. I left because I wanted a family and God has richly blessed me there....In Christian love, I want to say this to you: Catholics do pray to Mary. When you hold the rosary and say, "Hail, Mary..." you are calling out to Mary; you are praying directly to her. When you kneel in front of a statue or picture, or put flowers in front of her statue, or light candles, you are worshipping her image. Who am I to say what God accepts as prayer and what He doesn't? Well certainly I can't; but God has spoken clearly and plainly when *He* said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt *not* make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *anything* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth..." May I say that when I was saying the rosary or was in front of a statue, I was nearly always bowed down.... Dear Anon, God has stated His position on prayer and worship. Briefly and clearly, He is also on record as saying that He changes not....To me, one of the most fearful things a Christian can do is to practice something that is contrary to what God has said. BO (OK)

Dear Tom,

In your book *Showtime for the Sheep?* you touch on a vital point of confusion with Roman Catholic Theology. The false concept that physical suffering in and of itself meets the requirements for justification before a holy God. As you point out, Christ in the garden was not experiencing fear of the physical suffering but of becoming sin for us and facing spiritual death and [the] separation from the Father that would come with it. My [Roman Catholic] uncle [once] said the very thing that Mel Gibson said recently, that Christ merely had to prick his finger. This kind of thinking only comes from a mind that has no concept of the true price our dear Lord had to pay for our sins, and the awfulness of our sin in the sight of a holy God. It was only when the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sin, to the point

that Catholic rituals would not satisfy my guilt, and when I was presented with the Gospel, I came to a point of true repentance, resting on Christ's finished work for me on the cross, and then found true peace and joy, assurance of salvation, and a hope that will not fade away. MW (NY)

Correction

An error was made in the November 2006 *TBC* article in which a statement by John R.W. Stott was mistakenly credited to Hugh Ross. In the process, John Ankerberg, because of his support of some of Ross's ideas, was also accused of believing the same. Dave and the *TBC* editorial staff extend sincere apologies to John Stott, Hugh Ross, and John Ankerberg, as well as to all of our readers, for this error. Please see our website for the letter of apology Dave has written to John Ankerberg (www.theberean.org).

TBC Notes

Snail mail...

Snail mail is a relative term usually indicating the difference between the rate of time it takes for regular mail to be received compared to emails. However, we've been experiencing "snail" mail service during the last two months of 2006 regarding our newsletter, which has frustrated many of our readers. In a number of cases their newsletter arrived three weeks later than usual.

Although we tried to compensate for the increased pressure on the U.S. Postal Service at the end of the year by moving our printing schedule ahead, it was not soon enough. So, we apologize to all those who experienced a delay.

We are working on ways to make sure that those who receive our free newsletter get their copy of *The Berean Call* no later than the second week of each month. Nevertheless, the surest way to get it by or even before the first of the month is to subscribe to our daily email update or check our website (www.theberean.org).

T.A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Millstone Merchandizing

*B*ut whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.... (Matthew 18:6).

Commenting on the murder of JonBenet Ramsey, former child television star Paul Petersen (*The Donna Reed Show*), asked an important question, "Did you feel that sinking awareness in your guts when you first glimpsed the video of six-year-old JonBenet Ramsey? The sudden pain that came when you realized the intent behind her poses? Who taught her the overt sexuality of a practiced exhibitionist? Didn't you ask yourself, 'What was the goal of her pageant pursuits?'...I've found myself wondering if JonBenet ever had a chance to be a little girl. Her face haunts me, that innocent gaze struggling to overcome the mascara, the rouge, the sculpted and sprayed mane, the pouting lips drawn in by a cosmetician. What was being covered up?" (<http://www.minorcon.org/littlegirllost.html>).

Hollywood has a long history of stealing the lives of children. One has only to read the biographies of Jackie Coogan, Judy Garland, and other child stars in order to see the tragedy of a lost childhood. Toy manufacturers have embraced the same amorality in marketing toys to children.

Petersen asked, "Who taught her the overt sexuality of a practiced exhibitionist?" Why, we *did*—that is, an American culture, willfully allowing its youngest members to be victims of those who would steal their childhood, the closest thing this world has to innocence. This is not an overnight development. In 1955, "[vacationing in Switzerland], Ruth Handler happened upon an 11 1/2-inch doll with a blond ponytail, pouty lips and a seductive glance. 'Lilli' was a figure in a bawdy German cartoon, a symbol of illicit sex that was sculpted into a doll form but never intended for children. She was a pornographic caricature, a gag gift for men" (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug02/sund/dreamgirl/chartoy.html>).

Handler bought three of the dolls and gave them to Mattel toy designers. They toned the overt sexuality down slightly and, in 1959, "Barbie" was introduced to U.S. consumers, but not without concerns from parents and educators. "Barbie [was] adorned in a black-and-white striped bathing suit and stiletto heels. Her eyes were painted with black eyeliner and her ears adorned with pearl hoops....Mattel enlisted the help of psychologist Ernst Dichter to ensure consumers that this toy with breasts and an insatiable lust for clothes [was] a teaching tool, a toy that would endow young girls with the skills to attract and catch a man. She immediately met opposition from those who felt [that] as a voluptuous, scantily-clothed emblem of female sexuality, she was yet another example of the objectification of women's bodies" (Ibid). They were right.

Today, Barbie is passé. A line of dolls called "Bratz" (we need not explain the name), filled up stores in America beginning in 2001 and just as quickly were bought up by consumers, with 125 million sold in 2005 alone. One of those purchases was a "Bratz Baby" doll named "Sasha," purchased as a Christmas

present for a four-year-old. After the doll was unwrapped, the little girl "turned the doll over and discovered that beneath the khaki green skirt (and baby bottle attached to a bling chain), Sasha was wearing a thong. That's right. A black mesh one.... Jean Kilbourne, filmmaker, cultural critic and author of *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*, says the Bratz dolls are 'beyond Barbie,' and that is beyond shameful....[I]mprinting an adult version of sexuality on children sets them up for all kinds of problems directly related to the sexual activities that seem to be so common to teenagers. Girls are treated as sex objects, and boys don't even have to pretend there's a relationship." (Campbell, *Hartford Courant*, 1/4/06).

Speaking specifically of false prophets, Peter warned of those who "through covetousness shall...with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Peter 2:3). It is instructive that a psychologist was brought in to convince concerned parents that Barbie was "a teaching tool." It is reasonable to suppose he was well paid.

Some have noted that Bratz look as if "they would be quite at ease on a street corner waiting for their pimp to emerge from a long limousine in a puff of white powder" ("Meet the Bratz," *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 26, 2003). "Other mothers are simply so happy to have their 9-12 year old daughters still playing with dolls that they happily overlook those aspects of the doll" (<http://collectdolls.about.com/od/dollprofiles/p/bratzdolls.htm>).

These parents "happily overlook" an uncomfortable reality. Their children are being merchandised, and that involves the theft of their childhood and the potential destruction of their adulthood. When the tragic involvement of children in war (as in the Sudan) is made known, the world professes to be concerned about children becoming adults before their time. This recognizes that there is a time for children simply to be children. Some have defended Bratz with the foolish notion that their overt (and cheap) sexuality is a sign of independence, a desire to "have fun," as if there were no other way to have fun.

Yet, some recognize the danger. "Perhaps when we surround ourselves with sexualized images of young people we shouldn't be surprised that a segment of the society thinks that it is okay to have sex with children," says Cathy Wing, of Media-Awareness, a non-profit educational organization..." (Joanne Richard, "Selling Sex to Kids," *Toronto Sun*, July 17, 2005).

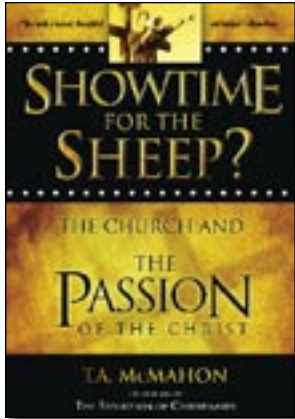
Peter gives further warning about those who view others as merchandise: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Peter 2:19). That is certainly an application for today.

—Edwin Newby

[An upcoming issue of TBC will address some of the dangers associated with boys' toys.]

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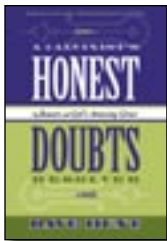
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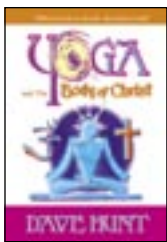
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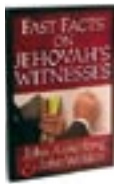


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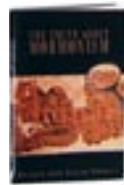


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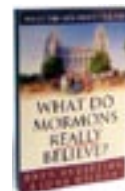


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Product/Resource Total _____

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TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

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