Virtual Christian Magazine
hope and encouragement for the real world

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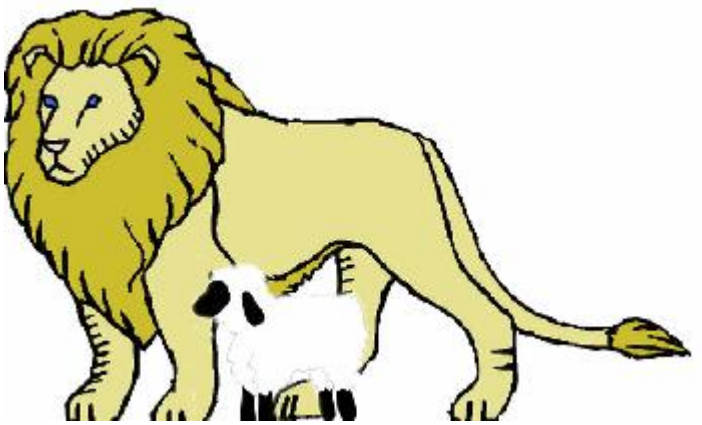

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We are pleased to announce the November/December 2000, ***Good News*** magazine...

AIDS: How a Killer Plague Can Be Stopped

Good News

The AIDS plague will soon become the most deadly killer epidemic of all time, taking more victims than the dreaded

black death of the 1300s. The saddest fact, however, is that neither plague had to happen. The measures that would have prevented so much suffering and saved so many lives have been readily available for thousands of years--in the pages of the Bible.

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Virtual Christian MAGAZINE Editorial

God's Elect

By Tom Damour



Did you get tired of hearing about the election? I did too! What can we learn from the recent American Presidential contest? I'm reminded of the need for God's elect to be granted their offices of authority. "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

Who are these elect? Simply put, they are average men and women God has called over the centuries to prepare for leadership positions in the Government Jesus Christ will establish at the Second Coming (Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:6-7). They were, by and large, average people of their time from divergent cultures and backgrounds (1 Corinthians 1:26-29; Hebrews 11:1-3,9-10,39-40). This patchwork of individuals has given God a rich array of future leaders who have been prepared to lead with Christ. They have been educated in the ways of God during their lifetime, and are ready to go to work upon the return of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 14:1-3). This elect group of people acted as representatives, or ambassadors, of God's Government during their lifetime. But there is more to the story.

Those who are Christians today share the same bright future as those who have lived before us. In this month's issue of VCM you will read about the Millennium, and the promises God has made to his elect concerning this wonderful time of world peace and harmony between nations in an article by Mr. Don Henson entitled, "The Millennium." You will also learn how today's ambassadors of God's future Government should communicate with their King in a meaningful, yet personal manner, in Mr. Gregory Dullum's article, "How to Spice Up Our Prayers." Mr.

Petty's article, "Where Lions Stand Guard," teaches us to guard against the dangers of covetousness. Finally, have you found your prayer life a bit dull? Perhaps you need to pray with more enthusiasm. Mr. Hector Earle has written an article that gives us several things to keep in mind while in prayer. With these wonderful truths in mind, we should be eternally thankful God is looking to, and planning for, the future. He has done this by pre-selecting individuals who are prepared as God's elect to usher in with Christ a bright future full of promise for all humanity. I'm reminded of what the prophet Isaiah spoke concerning the future of God's elect:

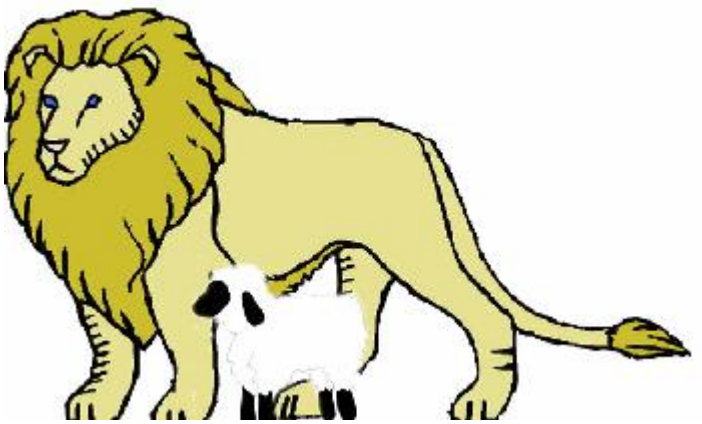
> ...And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they still speak, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," says the Lord (Isaiah 65:22b-25).



Millennium

Learn what God's Elect will do during the Millennium.

By Don Henson



WHAT DOES the word *millennium* bring to mind? Futuristic, science fiction images? Computer glitches? Horrific prophecies of destruction? A utopian fantasy world? The word is derived from two Latin words: *mille*, meaning "thousand" and *annus*, meaning "year." (*annus*). *Millennium* simply means a thousand years. Although the word millennium does not appear in the Bible it does speak specifically of a period of a 1,000 years in which the entire world will finally achieve the elusive ideals of peace, prosperity and purpose.

A world in peril

Shortly before His death, Jesus' disciples asked Him what events would occur before the end of this age and His return to the earth (Matthew 24:3). Jesus warned that the future would bring religious confusion and deception, war, natural disaster, persecution and tribulation, even as the gospel is spread to all the world (verses 4-14).

He went on to point out that immediately before His return the world would be gripped by unparalleled difficulties so severe they would threaten humanity with extinction: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [alive]; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22).

The Millennium begins

The elect are those God has called and trained during their lifetime to rule with Jesus Christ during the Millennium. When Jesus Christ returns to establish the Government of God, and usher in the Millennium, those who have died, as well as those who are yet alive, will rule with Christ (Matthew 24:31, I Corinthians 15:51-52).

The reign of the Messiah

Daniel 7 contains another prophecy of events that culminate in the establishment of God's kingdom. Verses 13 and 14 describe Jesus Christ being given this kingdom: "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

Jesus Christ's return to establish God's Kingdom on earth will fulfill a prophecy recorded long before His human birth: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and *the government will be upon His shoulder*. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. *Of the increase of His government and peace* there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7, emphasis added throughout).

A transformed world of prosperity and peace

The millennium is the first 1,000 years of God's eternal kingdom. The purpose of the millennium is to establish God's government on earth and provide a way for every person, protected from Satan's deception and temptation, to prepare to receive an eternal inheritance in God's Kingdom.

Isaiah was inspired to record many prophecies concerning the millennium. He summarizes how the earth will be transformed after Jesus returns: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Isaiah describes a world completely different from the one in which we live. Jesus Christ will rule over all the earth. People from all nations will seek out God's law and be taught to live according to it. As a result, society will have an entirely new orientation and approach based on Godly values. Man's creativity and resourcefulness will be used for peaceful purposes instead of war and destruction.

A prophecy by Amos also shows how all the earth will benefit under Jesus Christ's rule. The nations will be richly blessed. For example, crops will be so abundant that the preparations for the next growing season will be slowed because the current one has yet to be completed. "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountain shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it'" (Amos 9:13).

Those who are part of the resurrection that takes place when Jesus returns are also described as teachers who will give people guidance and direction in God's way of life: "And though the LORD gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:20-21).

Those faithful Christians who prepare in this life for the kingdom of God will reign with Jesus Christ in the millennium. As kings, priests and teachers, they will have the privilege of assisting Him in governing and teaching mankind the way and the truth of God.

A world filled with purpose

Why will the world be so different during the millennium? God will provide what is sadly lacking in today's world. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD* as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

When people live according to the knowledge of God they will experience peace and prosperity--the result of understanding the true purpose of life and how God intends man to live. It's difficult for us to grasp how negative an influence Satan has on our lives today. We live in a world that lacks the knowledge of God, an understanding of His instructions and the purpose of life. We only try to imagine what the world will be like when it is saturated with God's truth and man is free to pursue the purpose for his existence.

Eternal life offered to all

Society will be based on the law of God, which will be taught to all nations (Isaiah 2:3). People will learn to obey God from their heart, motivated by understanding, love, devotion and appreciation.

As Jesus rules on earth during the millennium, people will have the opportunity to learn more about the plan of God. Everyone will have the opportunity to come to know Jesus as their Savior, realizing they can only enter into eternal life through Him (Acts 4:12). Finally recognizing Jesus as Creator, Savior and King, people will honor, worship and obey Him (Philippians 2:9-12).

How To Spice Up Our Prayers

Learn how to add spice to your prayers!

By Gregory Dullum



DO YOU PRAY every day? Most readers of this article probably do, or at least they make a real attempt to do so. However, praying daily means we run the risk of our prayers becoming repetitious. In other words, our prayers may lack spontaneity and unwittingly become something like a stuck record.

Avoid Repetition

Jesus Christ warned against using vain repetition by saying, "When you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore, do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask him" (Matthew 6:7-8 New King James throughout).

There are several ways to avoid repetition and add spice to our prayer life. First, Jesus instructed us to begin our prayers by addressing God as Father, "Our Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). But to add spice to our prayers, try using other names used in Scripture to identify God. For example, terms such as "Our God," "Eternal," "Yahweh," "Almighty God," "El Shaddai," "Creator," "Designer," "Lawgiver," "Provider," or "Holy, Mighty Majesty" could help us focus on different aspects of God's character and holiness.

Occasionally, we can direct our prayers to Jesus Christ, who sits at the Father's right hand and intercedes for us. Remember, He is our elder brother and Savior, and He wants to hear from us too.

To break from our regular routine of prayer, perhaps we could change how we pray. For example, if we normally pray with our heads bowed, why not look up to heaven instead? Perhaps we could pray with our arms outstretched to God if we find we don't usually do so (1 Timothy 2:8).

JOY

Another way to add spice to our prayer life is to remember the acronym JOY: Jesus first, Others next, Yourself last. You may choose to spend one whole prayer session doing nothing but praising God by reading Psalm 150 on your knees. Perhaps, spend this time thanking God for everything in your life while asking nothing of Him. The point is that there are numerous ways add spice to your prayers.

Selfish Prayers

Remember to avoid praying only about your own needs. This approach will make your prayers bland and unproductive. "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3). The following example is of someone "asking amiss."

Once upon a time there was a family whose son left home for college. The family waited anxiously for the first letter from their son. One week passed, then two, then three. Finally, after four weeks, a letter arrived. The young man's father excitedly opened the envelope to find a note with only six words: "NO FUN. SEND MON. YOUR SON."

A week later, the son received a reply from home. He quickly opened the envelope with great expectation. What did he find? A note that said: "TOO BAD. SO SAD. YOUR DAD."

What's the point of this humorous story? Simply that prayers, if they are to be effective, must not be self-centered; they must be seasoned with the spice of love--love for God and our fellow man.

Wholesome Prayer

Wholesome prayer is the process of learning to reason with God. Reasoning with God is not negotiating with Him, or trying to get Him to do our will. Instead, it is sharing our deepest thoughts in an open and honest manner. In Isaiah 1:18 we read, "Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord." Abraham did, and nearly saved Sodom from extinction (Genesis 18). Moses' prayer saved Israel from annihilation (Exodus 32:7-14). Hezekiah was granted 15 more years of life after reasoning with God concerning his particular situation (2 Kings 20:1-6).

In Psalm 30:8-9, King David prayed, "I cried out to you, O Lord; and to the Lord I made supplication: What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it declare your truth?"

The Bible is filled with examples of people who were bold, yet not self-absorbed in their prayer life. At times, in fact, prayer has saved the lives of thousands of people. In each case their prayers were focused, yet respectful.

Prayer is an extremely important part of our lives, but praying daily can become routine. "Variety is the very spice of life," wrote William Cowper. Let's use these principles of effective prayer to spice up our prayers.



Where Lions Stand Guard

Two lion statues stand guard over the ruins of a once elegant estate. What message do they have for us?

By Gary Petty



THE JEKYLL ISLAND CLUB was the most exclusive group of people in the world. Members included such notables as Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, Vanderbilt, Pulitzer, Macy, and Goodyear.

The small island, just off the coast of Georgia, was covered with lush vegetation, secluded beaches, and abundant wildlife. By 1886 Jekyll Island became the private playground of America's wealthy elite. Cottages consisting of fifteen to twenty-five rooms, including formal dining rooms, lavish parlors, five to twenty bedrooms, and servants' quarters were not uncommon. Jekyll Island also offered many recreational facilities including a golf course, stables, tennis courts, boating, and hunting all for the exclusive use of its members. A gamekeeper was hired to keep the area well stocked. In addition, the Club House, which opened in 1887, provided accommodations for a hundred guests. Its dining room featured fine cuisine and the best wines. A single meal could consist of up to ten courses; and last up to three hours.

For over fifty years this private island was seen as the fulfillment of the American dream. All the money, prestige, and power they could amass was at their fingertips. But something went wrong.

If I Only Could Be Rich

'If only I could be rich,' you say to yourself. The desire for wealth and status begins simply enough. For example, you notice a new car, with all the bells and whistles you have always wanted. Such an automobile would make you the envy of all your friends. You plan strategies on how to get what you want. The desire for more becomes an obsession. Soon you have your dream car. But in time it doesn't seem to satisfy any longer; and the cycle begins all over again. The real problem isn't in having things; but looking to them to bring meaning and fulfillment to your life.

Solomon, king of ancient Israel, had it all: houses, furniture, land, clothes, gold and women. His experiences led him to this conclusion:

> "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver;
> Nor he who loves abundance, with increase.
> This also is vanity.
> When goods increase,
> They increase who eat them;
> So what profit have the owners
> Except to see them with their eyes?
> The sleep of a laboring man is sweet,
> Whether he eats little or much;
> But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.
> There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun:
> Riches kept for their owner to his hurt" (Ecclesiastes 5:10-13).

Real contentment comes not from what you own, or your status in life; but by keeping our focus on the important things. Namely, the realization that what we do with our lives is more important than the accumulation of things (I Timothy 6:6-10).

Beware of Covetousness

Today the beautiful mansions of Jekyll Island serve as monuments to a bygone era. The giants of industry are gone now. Tourists take "cottage" tours and eat lunch in the Club House dining room where once the wealthiest of the world dined. Today the island and all of its estates, belong to the state of Georgia.

Two hand carved stone statues of Corinthian lions stand before the ruins of a once lavish house. They are all that's left of the once grand cottage of Edwin Gould. One day, Mr. Gould's son was killed while hunting. Grief stricken he left Jekyll Island never to return. A new reality came to this part of Jekyll Island that day. Namely, that wealth could not replace a loved one, and happiness is not found in riches.

After years of disrepair the cottage was finally torn down. The only things left standing were two stone lions standing guard over a ruined, ghostly estate. They stand as a mute testament of Christ's warning, "Take heed, beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things, which he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

Next time you find yourself consumed in the race to make money or envious of people who seen to have it all, remember to take time to enjoy what God has given you. Take time to enjoy a

family meal, appreciate nature, and listen to fine music, read a book. Take time to recall those things which money can't buy; and remember, "Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).



Do You Lack Enthusiasm?

The secret of staying young of heart is found in this article. Learn it well.

By Hector M. Earle



RALPH WALDO EMERSON once wrote, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." An enthusiastic attitude enables us to hang in there when the going gets tough. It's the inner drive that whispers, "I can do it!" when others believe it can't be done. It is a common quality that inventors, explorers, and other high achievers have in order to do great things. Barbara Bartocci, in the May 1988 edition of *Catholic Digest* wrote, "Enthusiastic people turn a boring drive into an adventure, extra work into opportunity and strangers into friends."

Stay Young of Heart

Have you ever seen an infant delight at the jingling of a rattle, or a toddler's joy at watching the hopping of a frog? This childlike wonder, fueled by enthusiasm, is the same quality that has separated high achievers from everyone else. Their enthusiasm is not measured by their biological age. Instead, it is enthusiasm for life that is the catalyst for their youthful energy and drive. Pablo Casals thought of music as an elixir that made his life a never-ending adventure well into his nineties. An enthusiastic outlook has helped Bob Delmonteque maintain his intensity and excitement for health and fitness after almost six decades of working out.

It has been said that nobody grows old merely by living a given number of years; people grow old by deserting their ideals. Years wrinkle the skin, but giving up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, doubt, and self-distrust bow the head and turn the spirit back to dust.

Marjorie Greenbie once wrote: "You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair."

Our minds act like a receiver, and as long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, and cheer, you are young at heart (Philippians 4:8-9). However, when our enthusiasm falters, and our thoughts become obscured with doubts and fears, our heart becomes covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism. Then, as Marjorie Greenbie pointed out, you are "as old as your despair."

Avoid Spiritual Wrinkles

It is interesting to note that the word *enthusiasm* derives its meaning from the Greek words "God within." Having God's spirit and attitude within us brings about enthusiasm for the spiritual things like loving God, loving our fellow human beings, and loving what we are called to do (Galatians 5:22-23).

To love what we do is the very essence of enthusiasm. What can be more exhilarating than knowing that we are created in the very image of God, called out of this world to be his instruments and destined to be with him forever in the Kingdom of God? It should put a sparkle in our eyes, a jump in our step, and smooth out the wrinkles from our spirit.

Youthful vigor and enthusiasm is a gift from God to those he has called to rule with Him someday in the Kingdom of God. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). That says it all.

