Naboth’s Vineyard

The Parable of the Vineyard

Gateway of the New Year

The Safe Bridge

Builders or Wreckers

What’s All the Hype About Antioxidants?

NEW this ISSUE

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The Vineyard of the Lord
Recently I read a book by Philip Yancey called *Disappointment With God* with a subtitle, “Three Questions No One Asks Aloud.” Mr. Yancey speaks of a young man who he came in contact with who was losing his Christian experience because what he expected of God was not happening.

The first question was, Is God unfair? The young man, Richard, “had tried to follow God, but his life fell apart anyway. He could not reconcile his miseries with the biblical promises of rewards and happiness. And what about the people who openly deny God yet prosper anyway?”

The second question was, Is God silent? “Three times, as he faced crucial choices in his education, career, and romance, Richard begged God for clear direction. Each time he thought he had God’s will figured out, only to have that choice lead to failure.”

The third question was, Is God hidden? “This question above all else obsessed Richard. It seemed to him that God should prove Himself at a minimum.”

The author took some 255 pages of his book to approach these questions.

I do not intend to try to summarize the author’s thinking in this matter, but I do have some reflections of my own in regard to these questions. I’m not sure that any of these questions can be fully answered easily.

Of course the story of Job gives us some answers—in that story, we are able to look into the controversy between God and Satan on a level that we don’t see in any other part of the Bible. The faith of Job is what we all need when crisis comes.

Throughout the Old Testament, God made Himself apparent. He opened the pathway through the sea for the children of Israel to cross out of danger from the Egyptian army. He led the Israelites by a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire by night. The people observed Moses ascending Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from God amid flashes of lightning and other evidences of God’s presence and grandeur. And yet, making Himself that apparent to the people did not keep them from dancing around the golden calf as well as desiring to return to Egypt. He revealed Himself through other miracles, yet this did not seem to increase the faith of the majority of the people.

In the New Testament Jesus performed many miracles, including raising people from the dead, feeding the 5,000, and healing ten lepers, only one of whom returned to thank Him. Yet the majority of the people did not keep them from going against those requirements. The majority of the Israelites failed miserably even though God had told them exactly what to do. God’s Ten Commandments are very clear, yet the 4th is not followed by the majority of Christians today. The others are also violated by many.

God has given the benefit to us of those who have gone before us to help us avoid many of the pitfalls that abound in the world. He has given prophet after prophet to help people know what He requires, but most prophets are rejected in their own day, including our modern day prophet, Ellen White.

We, as Seventh day Adventists, have counsel on courtship and marriage, on proper diet, on growing closer to Jesus through Bible study, and every other area of our lives. The question is, how many really follow the information when it is available, or search out the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy to find the information we need? No, God is not at fault!

What more could He have done in His vineyard? God has always provided the information as well as the evidence to believe that He really is. But man has bypassed it in the majority of cases.

Jesus said in John 13:19, “Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.” And for a second witness, He said in John 14:29, “And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.” He has given prophecy, that when we see its fulfillment, we can know that there is a God in heaven.

May the Lord strengthen your faith as you read about His vineyard in this month’s magazine.
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Come with me, my Christian reader, and let us examine together one of those ancient objects rescued by the inspired writers from oblivion, and undimmed by the dust of many ages. Let us not handle it with superstitious reverence as a relic, but make use of it to raise our minds from the absorbing cares and pleasures of the present, to holy musings on the past. May the Spirit of Wisdom and Truth assist us in our meditations, and increase our deep reverence for those sacred Scriptures in which these objects of interest are preserved.

The widow’s cruse

Who, on first glancing at this homely piece of earthen-ware, an oil-cruse, with nothing to distinguish it from thousands used in the dwellings of the poor, would connect it with a miracle? Yet day after day, for the space of years, was it mysteriously supplied, while the prophet Elijah, the widow and her son, were fed on the store never failing. We know not whether the oil within multiplied itself like the bread in the hands of the Lord’s disciples, or whether an angel, pleased to be employed on such a mission of mercy, each night replenished an empty cruse. How the miracle was wrought matters not to us; the widow who had obeyed the word of the man of God, who had been willing to share her little with him, found that little increased to an inexhaustible supply. What hallowed meals must have been those partaken of in the cottage at Sarepta, where Elijah was the guest, and where every morsel of the food on the board was a pledge of the peculiar favour of God!

The widow’s faith, like ours, may have known times of wavering and weakness.

The widow of Sarepta was evidently a woman of faith, and we believe that her grace was renewed day by day, like the oil in her cruse. Yet it is not impossible that her faith, like that of the Israelites when they were fed by manna from Heaven, like our own amid a thousand proofs of the watchful providence of God, may have known times of wavering and weakness. The widow would but have resembled others, if at some time she had looked with anxious fear even at this cruse so constantly supplied, and had thought, “How small it is, how unable to contain more than the wants of a day! It is true that I have never yet found it empty, but what if it should fail at last! The heavens are still like brass, and the earth like iron; no rain has fallen—or is it likely to fall; others wealthier far than me are perishing around me! If this oil and meal should fail, whither could I turn, to whom could I go? I should see my only son wasting with hunger before my eyes! Oh, how fearful would be the fate before us if the oil in this cruse should fail!”

Have we not His promise?
We can at once see the unbelief, ingratitude, and folly of such fears, if ever the widow entertained them; but are not such fears common guests within our own bosoms? What had the widow’s hopes to rest on? Experience and a promise. And have we not the same? Have we not experienced that God can and will help us; that He has brought us through past troubles; that He has known how to fill the cruse in time of need, though He may not cause it to overflow, nor give more than sufficient for the wants of the day? And have we not His promise, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take care for the things of itself.” We are slow to trust God’s providence and love. We would have visible stores laid up for the future; we are not content with the cruse. While we torture ourselves with the thought, “What if at last it should fail?” We need the Saviour’s reproof, “Ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?”

**It is more difficult for us, in our artificial state of society, to exercise the simplicity of faith.**

“Give us this day our daily bread.” There is a lesson conveyed in these words of the prayer put by our Lord Himself into the mouths of His servants. We ask—not for luxuries—but bread; we ask not for stores, but for this day’s supply. It is more difficult for us, in our artificial state of society, to exercise the simplicity of faith as expressed in this prayer, than it was for the first disciples. We multiply our wants, and are discouraged if they be not abundantly supplied. It is no common attainment to be able from the heart to say with the apostle, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

We are oppressed with fears for the future.

It is not only for the supply of our earthly need that we should look with calm trust to God. There are those who have never known what it is to want anything that money can buy, who yet require to reflect on the widow’s cruse in order to strengthen their faith. We are oppressed with fears for the future: “If that trouble come upon me, how shall I meet it? Will not grace fail under such a temptation? Why are thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him. Hath He not said, As thy days, so shall thy strength be? May we not come to Him boldly, for grace to help us in time of need? We are indeed but weak and frail, earthly vessels that have had but little; but the blessing of God, if vouchsafed to us, will make us even as the cruse at Sarepta—grace will secretly be supplied, by means of which the world knows nothing.

**The supply in the cruse will be exchanged for measureless joy.**

And let us remember that the famine time will not last for ever; the day draws near when there will be a sound of abundance of rain. “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it.” Grace and peace will not then be meted out, as it were drop by drop, but flow as the river, and as the waves of the sea; the supply in the cruse will be exchanged for measureless joy, the handful of meal for the banquet prepared in the mansions of bliss!
It was for the purpose of bringing the best gifts of Heaven to all the peoples of earth that God called Abraham out from his idolatrous kindred and bade him dwell in the land of Canaan. “I will make of thee a great nation,” He said, “and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.” Genesis 12:2. It was a high honor to which Abraham was called—that of being the father of the people who for centuries were to be the guardians and preservers of the truth of God to the world, the people through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed in the advent of the promised Messiah.

THEIR MINDS WERE DARKENED BY IDOLATRY

Men had well-nigh lost the knowledge of the true God. Their minds were darkened by idolatry. For the divine statutes, which are “holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12), men were endeavoring to substitute laws in harmony with the purposes of their own cruel, selfish hearts. Yet God in His mercy did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man.

A VOICE WAS TO BE HEARD APPEALING TO ALL

God’s law must be exalted, His authority maintained; and to the house of Israel was given this great and noble work. God separated them from the world, that He might commit to them a sacred trust. He made them the depositaries of His law, and He purposed through them to preserve among men the knowledge of Himself. Thus the light of heaven was to shine out to a world enshrouded in darkness, and a voice was to be heard appealing to all peoples to turn from idolatry to serve the living God.

THEY WERE TO EXALT HIS NAME

“He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the depths.” Psalms 105:26, 27; 106:9. He rescued them from their servile state, that He might bring them to a good land, a land which in His providence He had prepared for
them as a refuge from their enemies. He would bring them to Himself and encircle them in His everlasting arms; and in return for His goodness and mercy they were to exalt His name and make it glorious in the earth.

**MIRACULOUSLY PRESERVED FROM THE PERILS OF WILDERNESS WANDERING**

“The Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.” Deuteronomy 32:9-12. Thus He brought the Israelites unto Himself, that they might dwell as under the shadow of the Most High. Miraculously preserved from the perils of the wilderness wandering, they were finally established in the Land of Promise as a favored nation.

**ISAIAH’S PARABLE**

By means of a parable, Isaiah has told with touching pathos the story of Israel’s call and training to stand in the world as Jehovah’s representatives, fruitful in every good work:

“Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching His vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine press therein: and He looked that it should bring forth grapes.” Isaiah 5:1, 2.

**OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S EVERLASTING PRINCIPLES WAS TO BE THEIR PROTECTION**

Through the chosen nation, God had purposed to bring blessing to all mankind. “The vineyard of the Lord of hosts,” the prophet declared, “is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.” Isaiah 5:7.

To this people were committed the oracles of God. They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices. And as the tower in the vineyard, God placed in the midst of the land His holy temple.

**THE LORD THY GOD HATH CHOOSEN THEE TO BE A SPECIAL PEOPLE**

Christ was their instructor. As He had been with them in the wilderness, so He was still to be their teacher and guide. In the tabernacle and the temple His glory dwelt in the holy Shekinah above the mercy seat. In their behalf He constantly manifested the riches of His love and patience.

Through Moses the purpose of God was set before them and the terms of their prosperity made plain. “Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God,” he said; “the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.”

**THOU SHOULDEST KEEP ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS**

“Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His voice: and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all His commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken.” Deuteronomy 7:6; 26:17-19.
CHRIST WAS TO BE UPLIFTED BEFORE THE NATIONS
The children of Israel were to occupy all the territory which God appointed them. Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God were to be dispossessed. But it was God’s purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders until their kingdom should embrace the world.

BUT ANCIENT ISRAEL DID NOT FULFILL GOD’S PURPOSE
But ancient Israel did not fulfill God’s purpose. The Lord declared, “I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?” “Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself.” “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For . . . He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1; Isaiah 5:3-7.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD WAS MISREPRESENTED TO THE GENTILE WORLD
The Lord had through Moses set before His people the result of unfaithfulness. By refusing to keep His covenant, they would cut themselves off from the life of God, and His blessing could not come upon them. At times these warnings were heeded, and rich blessings were bestowed upon the Jewish nation and through them upon surrounding peoples. But more often in their history they forgot God and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. They robbed Him of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example. They desired to appropriate to themselves the fruits of the vineyard over which they had been made stewards. Their covetousness and greed caused them to be despised even by the heathen. Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom.

GOD PLEADED WITH THEM THROUGH MERCIES GIVEN AND MERCIES WITHDRAWN
With a father’s heart, God bore with His people. He pleaded with them by mercies given and mercies withdrawn. Patiently He set their sins before them and in forbearance waited for their acknowledgment. Prophets and messengers were sent to urge His claim upon the husbandmen; but, instead of being welcomed, these men of discernment and spiritual power were treated as enemies. The husbandmen persecuted and killed them. God sent still other messengers, but they received the same treatment as the first, only that the husbandmen showed still more determined hatred.

THE KEEPERS OF THE VINEYARD ADDED TO THEIR OWN GuLT BY REFUSING TO BE OBEDIENT
The withdrawal of divine favor during the period of the
Exile led many to repentance, yet after their return to the Land of Promise the Jewish people repeated the mistakes of former generations and brought themselves into political conflict with surrounding nations. The prophets whom God sent to correct the prevailing evils were received with the same suspicion and scorn that had been accorded the messengers of earlier times; and thus, from century to century, the keepers of the vineyard added to their guilt.

THE HUSBANDMAN REMOVED THE STOCK OF THE VINE FROM THEIR SIGHT

The goodly vine planted by the divine Husbandman upon the hills of Palestine was despised by the men of Israel and was finally cast over the vineyard wall; they bruised it and trampled it under their feet and hoped that they had destroyed it forever. The Husbandman removed the vine and concealed it from their sight. Again He planted it, but on the other side of the wall and in such a manner that the stock was no longer visible. The branches hung over the wall, and grafts might be joined to it; but the stem itself was placed beyond the power of men to reach or harm.

COUNSEL TO THE KEEPERS OF HIS VINEYARD TODAY...

Of special value to God's church on earth today--the keepers of His vineyard--are the messages of counsel and admonition given through the prophets who have made plain His eternal purpose in behalf of mankind. In the teachings of the prophets, His love for the lost race and His plan for their salvation are clearly revealed. The story of Israel's call, of their successes and failures, of their restoration to divine favor, of their rejection of the Master of the vineyard, and of the carrying out of the plan of the ages by a goodly remnant to whom are to be fulfilled all the covenant promises--this has been the theme of God's messengers to His church throughout the centuries that have passed. And today God's message to His church--to those who are occupying His vineyard as faithful husbandmen--is none other than that spoken through the prophet of old:

“Sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Isaiah 27: 2, 3.

“HE SHALL CAUSE THEM THAT COME OF JACOB TO TAKE ROOT”

Let Israel hope in God. The Master of the vineyard is even now gathering from among men of all nations and peoples the precious fruits for which He has long been waiting. Soon He will come unto His own; and in that glad day His eternal purpose for the house of Israel will finally be fulfilled. “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” Verse 6.

Editor's Note: The above article was taken from the introduction to Prophets and Kings by Ellen G. White, pages 15-22.

Ellen G. White, 1827–1915, received the spiritual gift of prophecy, and the fruits of her life and work accord with the biblical tests of a true messenger of God. To this day, her counsels are an incalculable blessing to God's people around the world.
NABOTH’S VINEYARD

By Clark Floyd

Israel is a name that seems to take on different meanings at different times throughout the Bible. It was originally given to Jacob at the time he wrestled with the angel. It was given to him because he was one who struggled with God and with man and overcame—a very positive name. Later, as it became the national name of Jacob’s heirs, it often reflected poorly on the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Israel Ceased Being a Theocracy

As time went on, because of the desires of the people to be like the nations around them, Israel eventually went from a theocracy to a kingdom with Saul as the first king, followed by David and then Solomon. This was about a thousand years before Christ. After the death of Solomon, Israel split into two nations—Judah on the south, made up mostly of Judah and Benjamin and some of the Levites, with its capital at Jerusalem, and Israel on the North, made up of the remaining tribes, with its capital at Samaria.

Judah had some faithful kings over the time of their existence, but Israel never had a faithful king after the split, even though God worked with them in many ways to encourage them to come to Him—“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” Isaiah 5:4.

Ahab, a Most Evil King

One of the unfaithful kings of Israel was Ahab. The Bible says of him, “Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him…. he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.” 1 Kings 16:30 & 31. Ahab reigned for twenty-two years over Israel in Samaria.

God worked with Ahab in many ways. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” II Peter 3:9. He first worked through the prophet Elijah, bringing a 3½ year drought upon Israel.

Ahab Denied the Power of the True God

On Mount Carmel, the prophets of Baal were given the opportunity to end that drought by their “religious machinations”, but after their failure it was ended only by the prayers of Elijah. Thus Ahab was given personal evidence of the power of the true God in nature, and the total lack of power of Baal. Ahab was not convicted.

Later, Israel, under Ahab, was attacked by the Syrians under Benhadad, in a large force. “And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.” 1 Kings 20:13. And it was so—yet Ahab was not converted.

The Syrians came again the following year with a greater force. “The children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country….the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footman in one day.” 1 Kings 20:27 & 29. Again the victory, because of God, went to Israel. Ahab was not converted.

Ahab Coveted Naboth’s Family Vineyard

In one of the next scenes in the Bible we find Ahab as he came into his house “heavy and displeased…and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.” 1 Kings 21:4.

This is a king who witnessed the miracles of God on Mount Carmel. He has had two recent victories over the Syrians, that could have only come through the power of God. He has all the advantages that accrue to a king, including two palaces, one in Samaria and one in Jezreel. What possibly could be wrong?

He has set his eye upon the family vineyard of Naboth, one of his subjects. The vineyard is adjacent to Ahab’s palace in Jezreel, and would be a great convenience for Ahab. Ahab has offered a fair price for the vineyard either in the form of money or in trade for one of Ahab’s other vineyards, but Naboth has said, “The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my father unto thee.” 1 Kings 21:3.

God Had Said, “The land shall not be sold.”

Now, why do you suppose Naboth, has couched his refusal to sell or trade his vineyard in these particular words—“the Lord forbid it me”. God has said in Leviticus 25:23, “The land shall not be
sold forever: for the land is mine.” And in Numbers 36:7, we read, “So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.” God did forbid the alienation of the land, and Naboth has chosen to obey God rather than man.

**Naboth is Falsely Accused, and Stoned. Ahab Takes Possession of the Vineyard.**

Jezebel now enters the picture. “Why is thy Spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?” Ahab speaks of Naboth’s refusal to give up his vineyard. And Jezebel answers: Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” 1 Kings 21:7.

Jezebel is a person of action. False accusers are brought forward to say that Naboth has not only blasphemed God, but has also blasphemed the King. Naboth is taken outside the city and stoned. 1 Kings 21:13 & 14. Apparently, his sons are also killed: “Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the Lord.” II Kings 9:26.

Ahab joins into this action by accepting it. “When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.” 1 Kings 21:16.

**The Mounting Sins of Ahab**

Ahab’s sins are mounting. He has built places of worship for Baal; he has sought to kill the prophets of God through Jezebel; he has coveted the property of his neighbor, he has accepted the killing of Naboth and his sons through the plot of his wicked wife, and he is now ready to take possession of the ill gained vineyard of Naboth. He has not gained contentment.

**Warnings From Solomon**

Solomon proved that neither material wealth nor worldly honors can bring contentment to the heart. He had it all and found it to be nothing but “vanity and vexation of spirit”. Christ said, “Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a Man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.” Luke 12:15.

Coveting is being dissatisfied with the portion God has given me and lusting after something which belongs to my neighbor. Inordinate desires always lead to vexation unfitting us to enjoy what is ours.

**Warnings From Elijah**

Ahab has almost filled up his cup of iniquity. God calls upon Elijah to visit Ahab in Naboth’s vineyard and deliver a special message: “Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed and also taken possession? And thou shall speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine…. and of Jezebel also spake the Lord saying, the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.” 1 Kings 21:19 & 23.

“So Ahab slept with his fathers.” And finally, “it came to pass, when Ahab heard these words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.” 1 Kings 21:27.

“And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbled himself before me? Because he humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son’s days will I bring the evil upon his house.” 1 Kings 21:28 & 29.

But in 1 Kings 22, we find that Ahab has not really had a continuing experience with the Lord. Ahab ends up dying in a battle with the Syrians. His final epitaph reads: “So the king died and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.” 1 Kings 22:37.

**Editor’s note:** Jezebel, an unprincipled woman, so full of limitless ambition and lust of power, is both an historical person and the symbol of the Roman Catholic church that existed initially in the Thyatira period of the 7 churches of Revelation. Jezebel was not a Jewess, but a heathen princess, and Romanism is not a product of Christianity, but of paganism. She reigned in power as Israel’s queen, Ahab being merely her tool. Kings are the puppets of Rome. She set up an idolatrous priesthood. She slew the Lord’s servants. She employed dishonest and fiendish methods to obtain her ends. She will meet with a terrible end.

Naboth was a type of Christ. He possessed a vineyard. His vineyard was desired by one who had no respect for God’s Law. So was Christ’s vineyard (Matthew 21:38). Each was tempted to disobey God’s Law and part with his inheritance. Each refused to heed the voice of the tempter. Each was falsely accused by those who sought his death. Each was charged with blaspheming God and the King. Each was put to death by violent hands. Each was slain outside the city. The murderers of each will be destroyed by Divine judgment.

The above thoughts were taken from various sources.
Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the parables of the vineyard. The Holy Spirit felt it important enough to have three of the four Gospel writers write it down. And in all three accounts, the reason that Jesus told the parable was in response to the scribes and Pharisees questioning His authority. You see, Jesus had earlier entered the temple and cleansed it and healed all the people who came to Him. This was very unsettling to the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew, in chapter 21:15 says that they were “sore displeased”.

**WHOSE CHURCH IS IT?**

All three Gospels also include the fact that after Jesus told them these things… not only were they “sore displeased”, they wanted to get their hands on Him. Ultimately of course, with the help of Judas, they did get their hands on Him. Jesus died, because He told His people the truth. Actually, it might be better said that Jesus died because He told the leaders of His church the truth. The parable of the vineyard was referring to the leaders. “And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.” Matthew 21:45. You see, for some reason, church leadership has always had a hard time hearing the truth.

Somehow, the devil, very often, is able to convince them that God’s church is their church. It is theirs, so they can do and act any way they want. To the point, that if Jesus Christ were to come and correct them, history (and Jesus Himself) has indicated that they would kill Him. Not a very promising outlook, is it? But God is famous throughout the Bible, for not sugar-coating the truth.

**CHOOSING THEIR COURSE**

Bible history is replete with stories of how man, including God’s leaders, have gone bad and chosen the wrong course. However, the Bible is also full of stories of a few good men and women, here and there, who have chosen the right, in spite of what everyone else does. And these men and women were not always bastions of holiness either. But ultimately, they chose to do the right instead of the wrong. This is what is so encouraging to me.

When Jesus Christ was here, most all of the leadership rejected Him and voted to have Him killed. Not all of them… but most. But the people, the rank and file, the workers… they loved Jesus. They wanted Him. They looked for Him. They listened to Him. They wanted to be healed by Jesus - both physically and spiritually. They knew things weren't right in the church. They knew the scribes and Pharisees acted holier than they were. They knew the leaders were going the wrong way.

But they didn’t know what to do about it. They didn’t know how to change things. They didn’t go to the schools the scribes and Pharisees did. They didn’t have any “authority.” Remember… that was the question the church leadership had for Jesus. “And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By
what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” Matthew 21:23.

I cannot convey how important this is. They were so lost, so deluded, so blind, that they asked God Himself where He got His authority to do what He did. “Who do You think You are, doing these things?” “Where do you get off teaching and preaching to people?” “Where did You get Your medical degree to heal people?” “Let us see Your college transcripts.”

**IT WILL HAPPEN TO US**

Can you imagine Jesus Christ being asked these questions? And guess what? Jesus said it will happen again… to us! “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” Luke 23:31.

Jesus said this referring to the women that were wailing because of the way Jesus was being treated as He was being led to Golgotha. He said not to cry for Him, but for themselves and their children. And then He quoted that verse.

Here is what Sister White said about it… “As Christ told them the things He must suffer at the hands of wicked men, He said, “If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” [Luke 23:31]. If they do these wicked acts to your divine Lord, what will they do to those that bear the testimony that He came from God, that He was God in human flesh?” 12 MR 393.

**THE ISSUE OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT**

In that day, to state that Jesus was the Son of God was paramount to blasphemy. What do you suppose is getting ready to happen when we state that Sunday is not the Lord’s day, but that Saturday is the true Sabbath?

Coming back to the theme about the church leaders denying their Lord by refusing to admit that He was the Son of God… What do you suppose we will get in trouble for today? The big issue back in Jesus’ day was that He was the Son of God, come in the flesh. What will be the big issue in these last days?

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Rev. 12:17. The “remnant”, or last part of the seed of the woman, has angered the dragon - because why? Because they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. The commandments of God… and specifically the fourth commandment to keep the Sabbath day.

**THE MARK OF THE BEAST OR THE SEAL OF GOD**

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God’s law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.” GC 605.

But I would also like to address, just for a moment, the “testimony of Jesus.” Your “testimony” is what you say… about God, about yourself and your relationship to God. What did Jesus say about Himself and His relationship to His Father? “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” John 8:29. This was Jesus Christ’s testimony - “I do the things that please my Father.”

**DOES THIS PLEASE GOD?**

The Bible says that the people of the last days will have the testimony of Jesus as well. Do you suppose that we will also say that our heavenly Father is with us, and we always do the things that please Him? I believe so.

If you will look back at our church history, God had
given us specific instruction as to how we should conduct and operate our schools. Are we pleasing Him in that regard?

We have been given specific instruction as to how we should operate and maintain health institutions. Are we pleasing Him in that regard?

We have very specific counsel about getting God’s word, from His last day prophet, to the church and the world. Is God pleased in that regard?

Look at almost any aspect of how we are doing what we are doing as a church. Can you honestly say that you think God is happy about it, because we are always pleasing Him?

WHAT IS OUR TESTIMONY?

Then what is our testimony…. really? We know, from God’s own word, that those who are truly His people, will have His testimony. How will these two, seemingly opposite testimonies, come together?

I have thought about this for many years. One way is to simply deny reality and state that we are the church and the church will go through. We can quote various verses that prove that the church may seem about to fall but that it will not, etc., etc. But we must be extremely careful here... Isn’t that what the Jews did? Didn’t they quote verses stating that they were God’s people and that they were the chosen ones? And the outrageous thing about that, was that it was true! They were God’s people! They were the chosen ones!

But because their testimony ended up being, “We killed the Son of God” rather than “We do always those things that please Him”, they were rejected.

What about you, dear reader? What is your testimony? Do “we” always please our heavenly Father? Are we reaching, preaching, teaching all those around us and the rest of the world? Are we following God’s plan for education, for health work, for evangelism? Never mind the church or its leaders… that is their problem. What are WE doing?

We all know that we cannot be saved corporately, or as a church body. We are saved individually. What will our own personal testimony be?

WHO ACTUALLY DOES THE FATHER’S WILL?

Let’s read again... “And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.” Matt. 21:45. Please note that Matthew said that the chief priests and Pharisees heard Jesus’ “parables” – plural - as in more than one. Do you remember what the other one was that He gave about the vineyard?

There were two. When they questioned Jesus’ authority for going around and healing people, preaching to people, teaching people, they wanted to know by what authority He did these things. Jesus then went on to address their question by telling them two different stories.

The first one was a parable about two sons who were told to go to work in their father’s vineyard. “But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.” Matt. 21:28-30. Short parable, short point, short concept.

One said, “No,” and later went. The other said, “Yes,” but really didn’t go. This is extremely important here. The point of the story here was to go and do as the father had asked. The
The Lord, for whatever reason, later on, he decided that that was not the right course for him, and he repented, or in other words, turned around, and came back and did his father's will. His “testimony” was that he at first did not please his father, but after he repented, he did do his father's will and pleased him.

Now... what did the second son do? He said he would go. He said he would do his father's will. He said he would please him. What was his testimony? It was a lie. His testimony was deceit. He lied about what he was going to do. Oh, he might have actually planned on it. He might have had good intentions. He might have gone to school for it. He might even have gotten his degree in obedience. But what did he really end up doing? Not going. Not obeying. Not pleasing his father.

Then Jesus, after He told the scribes and leaders and Pharisees this parable, asked them who it was that they felt actually did the will of their father? Jesus would not even answer it Himself. They would be the ones to state the truth for Him. And they did. “Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first...” Matt. 21:31.

THE TRUTH IS ALWAYS THE TRUTH

I want to stop there, just for a moment.

The truth is always the truth, no matter what we do or what we say about it. Whether we eat right or don't eat right, proper diet is still proper diet. Whether we tithe or don't tithe, the truth about tithing is still the truth. Whether we follow the health counsel, or don't follow it, the health counsel is still the truth. Same way with true education. If we follow God's plan for true education or not, the truth is still the truth.

We never help ourselves, even if we are not following the truth, to deny the truth's reality. It is always better to admit the truth and admit that we are not following it, than to deny the truth, and say we are following it. Even the hardened, sin-gripped scribes and Pharisees admitted that in this parable, the one who actually did the will of the father was the first son.

Remember too, that after Jesus told these two parables, they began to realize that He was referring to them as being the son who said he went, but didn’t, and in the other parable, they were the wicked servants who killed the messengers, and finally the householder’s own son.

Jesus wants us all to believe and accept the truth

Also, don’t forget how Jesus said that they will do it to you if you tell them the truth.

Jesus wanted the people, all the people... including the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees to believe and accept the truth... but most would not.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Matt. 23:37.

It broke the heart of the Son of God that His people, as a group or denomination, would not allow Him to rule over them; would not do His will. But, Praise God, there were a few who chose Him; who chose to follow His directions; who did go to work in His vineyard. Even if they didn’t start out that way, they repented and ultimately did have the testimony that, “they did those things always that pleased their Father.”

But it was individuals – doing, following, obeying and testifying. Individuals chose to work in the vineyard of the Lord. One here; another one there; two in this area; maybe four in that area. Individually following God and His will. Individually having the testimony that they pleased their Father by doing what He wanted them to do. They did not please their parents. They did not please their spouses. They did not please their church pastors or leaders... They pleased God!
**Our Own Obedience Will Bring Conviction to Those Around Us**

We need not condemn anyone who is not doing our Father’s will. Believe me, if we will obey our Father, that will be more than enough condemnation. We don’t need to complain, or fight or accuse... just obey.

Don’t wait for the church to do right... YOU do right. Don’t wait for the church to evangelize... YOU evangelize. Don’t wait for the church to spend the tithe and offerings right... YOU choose to put the money where it will do the right thing... Don’t take charge of the church... Take charge of YOU. Don’t look at others, and what they are doing or not doing... Look at yourself.

This, I believe, is one of the most important verses in the Bible for us today... “Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.” John 21:21-22.

**Our Job Is to Follow the Plain Truth**

Jesus had just told Peter what was going to happen to him. Peter then looked at John and wanted to know what would happen to him. It’s not our business to worry about what others will do, or are doing. Our business, as Jesus said it, is to follow Him. We cannot wait until everyone gets on board before we follow. That didn’t work very well for the people in Noah’s day, did it? Our job is to go to work in the vineyard, whether or not our brother does. Our job is to follow the true plan for education, even if no one else does. We must follow the true plan for health, even if no one else does. We must preach the truth, even if we are the only ones doing it.

We cannot follow what everyone else does. Don’t we know where everyone else is going!!! Jesus’ own words to the scribes and Pharisees were these - “…Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” Matt. 21:31.

**The Pure in Heart Are the Ones Who Will See God**

Now, I’m sure you realize that the publicans and harlots that Jesus is referring to here are those who were like the first son, who at the beginning, went the wrong way, did the wrong thing and disobeyed, but repented. Remember whom Jesus said will see God?

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Matt. 5:8.

Church members won’t see God. Conference presidents won’t see God. Tithe payers won’t see God. Vegans won’t see God. Jesus said it would be the pure in heart who will see Him. We cannot be pure in heart corporately, or denominationally, but individually. It is way too late to worry about all the things in this world and/or the church that upset us, or frustrate us, or anger us.

Do you really think the world is going to get better? Do you actually think that the denomination is going to get right and follow the counsel? “We are not saved as a sect; no denominational name has any virtue to bring us into favor with God. We are saved individually as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.” RH, Feb. 10, 1891.

**Let Us Be about Our Father’s Business**

There is precious little time to get right with our Lord. The Master has called us to work in His vineyard. There are souls to be warned, educated, inspired, and saved. If you have said, “No, I will not go,” by your attitude, your money, your time... It’s not too late to repent! “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Eze. 33:11.

Our heavenly Father wants us working in His vineyard... this earth. Let’s forget about what everyone else is doing, including our brothers and sisters who say they are working, but aren’t. Let’s let our testimony be, “We do always those things that please our Father.”

Joe Olson serves as the executive director and chairman of the board of Hope International. He also travels as an international speaker.
Gateway of the New Year

By Adlai Albert Esteb

Another New Year’s gate now opens wide,
Inviting us to come and look inside
And turn our eyes from hist’ry that is dead,
To prophecies and dreams that lie ahead.
The future is before us, and, like clay,
Gives us the chance to mold it as we may.

We stand upon the threshold of a door
That closes now on all that’s gone before.
’Tis irretrievable, and angels keep
The record till its harvest we shall reap.
Since yesterday is buried with the past,
We can’t recall it, for the die is cast.

The past is static; nothing we do now
Can change the record or new life endow.
The future is dynamic; that’s our clue,
To transform it by everything we do.
So plan your resolutions; make them great,
As Christ now leads you through this New Year’s Gate.
THE SAFE BRIDGE

A CHRISTIAN SIMILITUDE
FROM THE BIBLE LOOKING GLASS, 1814 EDITION

By John Barber

The only safe bridge over which the traveler can pass from this world to the “better country” rests on the rock of Divine Truth. This foundation will stand though storms and floods may beat against it. The traveler lays hold of, and is supported by, the iron-stranded rope of the Divine Promises, and by means of the righteousness of Christ, a firm foundation is laid, a bridge is formed, over which the traveler can pass from this world to the new heavens and the new earth. He may, perhaps, through ignorance, have some misgivings as to its safety, during the tempests and darkness by which he is sometimes surrounded; he may be fearful of being blown off; or by some misstep be precipitated into the depths below. Should the tempest arise, he need not fear, if he will but lay hold of the Divine Promises, and he may rest assured that they will not fail, though whatever else may seem to pass away.

THE WAY OF SAFETY

It will be perceived, that to cross the bridge it is necessary to get upon the elevated road—the highway of holiness. This is the way of safety. “No lion shall be there,” and “the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.” Holiness consists in obedience to the divine commands—in loving God supremely—in loving our neighbor as ourselves. It is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creation, whereby a man is taken from wandering in the filth and mire of sin, washed and cleansed by the blood of Christ, and his feet placed on firm foundations, on that way which leads to everlasting life and felicity.

A WAY OF HOLINESS

As the great Lord of all has ordained that those who inhabit this world, at an appointed time must leave it, he wishes to conduct all the creatures he has made to a place of eternal happiness. This he has proclaimed to them in his Word; he has also cast up a way of holiness, “by which the ransomed of the Lord can return to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads.” And
for these he has prepared a kingdom from the foundation of the world. But he will not force them into it; he leaves them in the hands of their own counsel. He saith, “Behold I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; choose life that you may live.” He cries aloud, Walk ye on the path of holiness, and whenever the appointed time arrives for you to cross over the gulf of death to the unseen world, lay hold of the Divine Promises, place your feet on that bridge which rests on Divine Truth, and is sustained by the righteousness of Christ.

**The Pillar and Ground of Faith**

The Lord our righteousness is a term which expresses a vital truth of Christianity, and, in a certain sense, sustains or supports its whole frame. It may be stated that the Christian Church stands or falls with it. It is the pillar and ground of that faith of which alone cometh salvation. The righteousness of Christ is defined by a celebrated writer as twofold, divine and human. His divine righteousness belongs to his divine nature, as equal with the Father “over all, God blessed forever.” His human righteousness belongs to him in his human nature, and is a transcript of divine purity, justice, mercy, and truth. It includes love, reverence, and resignation to his Father; humility, meekness, gentleness; love to lost mankind, and every other holy and heavenly temper. It also includes all his outward acts which were exactly right in every circumstance. The whole and every part of his obedience was complete. He “fulfilled all righteousness.”

**It is Safest to Trust in the Merits of Christ**

But the obedience and righteousness of Christ implied more than this; it was not only doing, but suffering—suffering the whole will of God from the time he came into the world till “he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;” yea, till he made full atonement for them, “bowed his head and gave up the ghost.” A measure of his truth is impressed upon the hearts of all Christians of every name, when about to pass into the other world. It was this that even impressed the mind of the celebrated Bellarmine, when asked, as he was about to die, “Unto which of the saints wilt thou turn?” He cried out, “Fidere merits Christi intissimum!” (It is safest to trust in the merits of Christ.)

**WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY THE GRACE OF GOD**

Says an ancient and celebrated writer, “Christ, by his obedience, procured righteousness for us.” And again: “All such expressions as these, That we are justified by the grace of God, that Christ is our righteousness, that righteousness was procured for us by the death and resurrection of Christ, import the same thing; namely that the righteousness of Christ, both his active and passive righteousness, is the meritorious cause of our justification, and has procured for us, at God's hand, that upon believing, we should be accounted righteous by him.”

**BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED**

All true Christians are saved in consequence of what Christ hath done for them, and not for the sake of their own righteousness of works, as it is declared, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us.” “By grace are ye saved, through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast.” We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is by Jesus Christ. When all the world was not able to pay any part of our ransom, it pleased him, without any of our deserving, to prepare for us Christ’s body and blood, whereby our ransom might be paid, and his justice satisfied. Jesus Christ, therefore, is now the righteousness of all them that truly believe in him.

**WE MUST BE DELIVERED FROM TRUSTING ANYTHING**

**But Christ**

We must first cut off all our dependence upon ourselves before we can truly depend upon Christ. We must cast away all confidence in our own righteousness or we can not have a true confidence in his. Till we are delivered from trusting in any thing that we do, we can not thoroughly trust in what he has done or suffered. The righteousness of Christ is the only foundation which will surely bear us into heaven. They to whom the righteousness of Christ is available are those who are made righteous by the Spirit of Christ, and are renewed in the image of God, “after the likeness wherein they were created—in righteousness and true holiness.”

**The Imitation Bridge – False Confidence**

The great enemy of God and mankind, to lure the human race to destruction, builds up a structure connected with the pathway of sin somewhat similar in appearance to the safe bridge. The righteousness of Christ being one of the supports of the safe bridge, an imitation has been got up, called by that name, which might be more properly called false confidence.

**Are You on the Safe Bridge?**

Some even turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, making Christ's righteousness a cloak for their wickedness. When reproved of their sins, they may answer, perhaps, “I pretend to no righteousness of my own—Christ is my righteousness.” Or, if charged with injustice, licentiousness, etc., will answer, “I am in myself unjust, impure, etc.; but I am in Christ righteous, pure, and clean.” Let all such dreamers be assured that they who “commit sin are of the devil,” notwithstanding all their exalted faith and opinions. Such characters, not being on the highway to holiness, can never pass on to the safe bridge which conducts to eternal safety and happiness.
I watched them tearing a building down—
   A gang of men in a busy town.
With a “Ho, heave ho!” and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the sidewall fell.

I asked the foreman, “Are these men skilled
And the kind you would hire if you were to build?”
He laughed and said, “Why, no indeed,
   Just common laborers are all I need;
They can easily wreck in a day or two
What builders have taken years to do.”

So I said to myself as I went on my way
What part in the game of life do I play?
Am I a builder who builds with care,
   Thoughtfully measuring with rule and square?
Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,
   Patiently doing the best I can?
Or am I a wrecker—who walks the town—
Content with the labor of tearing down?

Editor’s note: Oh how careful we need to be about carrying stories of any brother or sister in the faith without contacting that brother or sister first to see if what was said was true, and even then is it in God’s providence to spread it abroad.? – “Were Christ to come today, would He not find many of the families who profess to be Christians cherishing the spirit of criticism and unkindness? The members of such families are unready to unite with the family above.” AH 440.
Spiritual Seek & Search

See next months issue of Our Firm Foundation for answers to this months Spiritual Seek & Search
Christian Crossword

See next month’s issue of Our Firm Foundation for answers to this month’s Christian Crossword

Across
1. Ellen White was born in
3. Any lack of conformity to the law of God
4. Prophet from Tekoa
5. A person seen in heaven in Ellen White’s vision
6. He came under the wall of Babylon
9. Ellen White’s description of heaven convinced him she was a prophet
11. Ellen White’s song writing nephew
15. J.N. Andrews sent in 1874 as foreign missionary to
17. A priest that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem
18. Ellen White’s mother’s name
19. Ellen White’s father’s name
21. He left potatoes in ground expecting soon return of the Lord
22. The encouraging pastor in Ellen Harmon’s early years
23. Began colporteur work in Indies in 1889
24. Exclamation of Christ on the cross
26. James White’s illness in 1865

Down
2. In 1850 EGW moved from Oswego, NY to
3. Satan posed as a
4. Wicked king of Israel with a wicked wife
7. First introduced our pioneers to the Sabbath
8. First Sabbath-keeping Adventist minister in North America
10. Garden
12. Father of Miriam
13. Missionary ship built in 1890 for South Pacific
14. Kingdoms in Scripture are often described as
16. The church of Ellen White’s parents
18. Father of Jezebel
20. God’s people overcome by the blood of the
23. Boat
25. Isaiah’s father
I’m sure you’ve heard about antioxidants before, right? But do you really understand what they are and why they are so important? Before you can understand what anti-oxidants are, you need to understand what oxidants are (or what the process of oxidation is), and why they are so harmful. The prefix “anti” means against, in opposition to, or corrective in nature, so the whole point of anti-oxidants is fighting oxidation and/or correcting the damage caused by it. So what is so bad about oxidation?

**OXIDATION IS A CONTINUAL PROCESS**

Oxidation occurs at the very cellular level in our bodies, and explaining it will likely induce flashbacks of that high school chemistry class that bored you to tears, but it’s a lesson worth learning. Stay with me here, it’s actually pretty interesting.

First of all, oxidation is unavoidable. Oxidation is the interaction between oxygen molecules and all the different substances they may contact, whether it is metal or living tissue. Since oxygen is all around us, and we need it to survive, we experience oxidation continually.

**A MINI CHEMISTRY LESSON**

To give you a mental picture, think of iron. When oxygen comes into contact with iron, the oxygen creates a slow burning process, which results in the brittle brown substance we call rust. Another example is fresh fruit. With an apple, the skin usually provides a barrier against oxidation. Once the skin has been broken, however, the individual molecules come in direct contact with air and the oxygen molecules start burning them. The result is a form of rust we see as brownish spots or blemishes. The secret of preventing oxidation caused by oxygen is to provide a layer of protection (like the skin that was there) between the exposed material and the air, such as a quick spray of an anti-oxidant, like lemon juice, on the exposed fruit. Are you with me so far?

**FREE RADICALS CAUSE OXIDATION**

So how does oxygen cause oxidation? When the cells in our body use oxygen (so basically every second of every day), they naturally produce by-products called free radicals. As long as we breathe oxygen there will be the creation of free radicals in our body, and the free radicals are actually what cause the oxidative damage (or oxidation) to occur. (Cells reacting with oxygen is just one of the ways that free radicals are created.)

**CONTROLLED QUANTITIES OF FREE RADICALS ARE HELPFUL**

Now, free radicals in small and controlled quantities are okay, and are actually helpful in everyday metabolism. They take part in normal reactions in the body. For instance, sometimes the body’s immune system cells purposely create free radicals in order to neutralize viruses and bacteria by damaging them. The problems start when the production of these free radicals increases and they get out of control – and they begin to damage healthy cells.

**SIMPLE SCIENCE**

Now we’re getting to the science behind this process at the very molecular level (don’t worry, it’s actually pretty simple). Basically, the problem is this: atoms are composed of protons, neutrons, and electrons, which always occur in pairs. When oxygen molecules are involved in various chemical reactions that naturally occur every day (like breathing), they lose an electron, creating an imbalanced atom with a single electron.

**FREE RADICAL FRED**

That atom, having lost an electron, is now “unstable” and is known as a free radical. We’ll call him “Free-Radical Fred”. Fred is missing an electron and is acting crazy (like he’s lost one of his electron marbles). He’s now on a mission to find another electron in order to stabilize himself. The problem here is, there are no electrons lying around waiting to be useful; they are all already paired with their own atoms (owners). So if Fred wants to re-stabilize, he’ll...
have to **steal** an electron from one of his neighboring stable atoms (“stable” meaning it has a perfectly healthy **pair** of electrons).

**FRED STEALS ELECTRONS**

So crazy, “unstable” Free Radical Fred is lurking around, looking for one of his neighbor atoms to steal from. He finds a healthy, stable atom and snatches one of its electrons! Not only is the victim of this theft now an imbalanced atom (also known as a **free radical**), but it has also been seriously damaged in the process! This **new** free radical cell must then **steal** an electron from one of its neighbors in order to re-stabilize itself, and on and on until enough atoms are injured that it finally results in the damage of a healthy cell.

**THE EFFECTS OF CELL-STEALING**

The cells then go into shock, a sort of frenzied, dangerous chain reaction of stealing, stealing, and more stealing, as they are each trying to repair themselves. This rampage continues, destroying collagen, breaking down cell walls and impairing normal cell function. This frenzied chain reaction is known as **free radical damage**, or oxidation. Now, even if the atoms become stable again by stealing an electron, they are not as healthy as they were before. They have been damaged in the process.

**FREE RADICALS CAUSE MANY CHRONIC AND DEGENERATIVE DISEASES**

Since these **free radicals** are damaging cells and tissues throughout the body, you can see why an excess of them has been **scientifically proven** to be a major cause of many chronic and degenerative diseases, such as heart disease, macular degeneration, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, many types of cancer, and the acceleration of aging (more wrinkles, skin discoloration, fatigue, etc.).

**FREE RADICAL SCAVENGERS**

Damage from these free radicals is **instantaneous** and will continue until the free radicals are **neutralized** (stabilized). But how do you stop a chain reaction like this once it’s started? That’s where **antioxidants** come into play.

God created antioxidants with an **extraordinary** gift! Antioxidants are able to voluntarily **give up** one of their electrons to a free radical molecule, in order to stabilize it. But the **amazing** part is that anti-oxidants can do this **without** hurting themselves. They are able to stay “stable” even after they have lost an electron! It is nature’s way of keeping the oxidation process in check.

Antioxidants actually roam the body, finding free radicals and neutralizing them in order to help **repair** past damage and **prevent** future damage, which earned them the name “**free radical scavengers**”. The only way to combat free radicals is to neutralize them with antioxidants.

**GENEROUS LEMON JUICE!**

So what does this mean for us? Remember the lemon juice I talked about before protecting the apple? The way that works is that the lemon juice (which is an antioxidant), stands in the way of the oxygen wanting to take an electron from the healthy apple cell. The lemon juice offers its **own** electron in its place, leaving the apple cell alone, un-oxidized, and its original healthy color! Don’t you want antioxidants standing in your place giving up their electrons so your cells stay healthy?

**BASICALLY, LIFE CAUSES FREE RADICALS!**

I explained how cells reacting with oxygen create free radicals. But oxygen is only one of many ways free radicals are produced. Being exposed to environmental pollution, cigarette smoke, alcohol, pesticides, chemicals, radiation, toxins in our food, stress, an improper diet, not to mention all the toxic chemicals we are inadvertently exposed to in our daily lives (even in our furniture and carpet) all cause oxidation and create free radicals. So basically, most of what we come into contact with each day, in one way or another, causes free radicals.

In an ideal world with no pollution, perfect diet, and no stress, the level of free radical activity would be ‘normal’ and they would not be a serious problem and we would live to a very ripe old age, just like in the old days – but that’s much more difficult now.

**REDUCING FREE RADICAL DAMAGE**

So since you have to live in this polluted world, instead of worrying about all the damage you can’t control, let’s talk about how you can at least reduce some of the free radical damage. If you want less damage to occur, there are basically three things you can do:
1. **Reduce** the amount of toxins you are exposed to.
2. **Increase** the elimination of toxins that you are exposed to.
3. **Increase** the amount of antioxidants you’re taking in. The more antioxidants you take in, the less damage you’ll incur.

If you do these three things, you will look younger, feel better, and be less likely to develop chronic illnesses like cancer. But how do you do this?

**Reduce the amount of toxins you’re exposed to.** Now some of these things are relatively easy, some are more difficult, and some may be impossible for you at this point. Here are some ways you can reduce exposure to toxins:

a. Reduce the amount of processed foods you are eating: crackers, pasta mixes (think hamburger helper, macaroni & cheese, etc.), cookies, chips -- pretty much all “junk food”.

b. Grow your own produce, or try to choose **organic** produce from a trusted organic farmer whenever you can.

c. Quit smoking (and stop hanging around with people when they are smoking – second hand smoke causes damage too!).

d. Quit drinking alcohol.

e. Quit drinking caffeinated beverages (also, beverages that were once caffeinated and then have been decaffeinated have been said to be as bad or worse than the caffeinated ones, because a portion of the harmful chemicals that they use to extract the caffeine is left on the product and you end up drinking that instead!).

f. If you are able, move into the country where you can breathe fresh country air and you are not as exposed to smog, radiation, etc.

g. In your house: If you’re redecorating, remodeling, or if you can afford to, try replacing carpeting with tile, wood, cork, bamboo, or another alternative natural flooring (these do not give off toxic fumes like carpet does).

h. In your house: If you’re redecorating, remodeling, or if you can afford to, purchase furniture made without toxic chemicals. Your couch may look harmless, but unless you know exactly how it was manufactured, there’s a good chance that it’s emitting harmful chemicals into the air in your home. The most commonly emitted substances are VOCs, or volatile organic compounds, which actually sound as scary as they are — they’ve been connected to cancer and birth defects — and can be found in substances like flame retardants, finishes, adhesives and foam cushions.

**Increase the elimination of toxins that are causing the free radical damage.** This can be accomplished through cleansing the body. Colon cleansing can help to quickly and efficiently remove toxic waste buildup that has been accumulating for years. Liver detoxification and support are also very valuable, as the liver is most famously known as “the filter of the body”. You wouldn’t want to run your car with a clogged filter, so don’t run your body on a clogged filter! (I’ll give you my suggestions for cleansing at the end of the article.)

**Increase the amount of antioxidants you’re taking in.** There are two ways you can increase the amount of antioxidants you’re consuming, either through your diet, or through supplementation.

1. Eating more fresh fruits and vegetables will help provide you with healthy levels of antioxidants and will help to stop free radical damage that can lead to serious diseases.

**HIGHEST ANTIOXIDANTS FOOD SOURCES**

**Fruits:** Berries (cherry, blackberry, strawberry, raspberry, blueberry, bilberry [wild blueberry], black currant, cranberry, goji berry), lemons, pomegranates, grapes, apples, oranges, plums, pineapples, kiwis, tomatoes, and grapefruits.

**Vegetables:** Kale, spinach, garlic, asparagus, artichokes, onions, bell peppers, russet potatoes, broccoli, squash, celery, cucumber, red cabbage, parsley, Brussels sprouts, ginger, and red beets.

**Dry Fruits:** Apricots, prunes, and dates.

**Legumes:** Red beans, kidney beans, pinto beans, and soybeans.

**Nuts and Seeds:** Pecans, walnuts, hazelnuts, and sunflower seeds.
Cereals: Barley, millet, oats, and corn. Keep in mind that a diverse diet is optimal. Just because blueberries are particularly high in antioxidants, you don’t want to go on an “all blueberry diet”, because even though it may have the unique set of antioxidants that are attributed to blueberries, it may not have many of the antioxidants that you would find in other plants such as spinach or beans.

2. Taking natural supplements rich in antioxidants will help boost your body’s disease-fighting-and-preventing powers. While a plant-based diet is always the best source of antioxidants, supplementing is still a good idea just to make sure you’re getting enough. If you are increasing the amount of fresh foods in your diet, you can still take a high quality supplement to make sure your body has all the free-radical scavengers it can get.

ACCEPT GOD’S FREE GIFTS!
Unfortunately, many people are not able to get all the nutrition they need from their diets. Whether it is because of the cost, their location, the lack of produce in season, their personal tastes, or a plethora of other reasons, many people are severely deficient in nutrients, including antioxidants. Cancer and heart disease rates are skyrocketing, chronic fatigue syndrome and arthritis are at an all time high, and the commercials on TV are constantly recommending new drugs for new diseases that keep emerging. We are becoming one of the sickest nations on earth, and we don’t need to be! God has created these powerful little nutrients called antioxidants that are abundant in the foods He has created for our well-being. If we would just simply take the gifts He has offered us, we can be spared from many of the illnesses that surround us.

Our products that help cleanse the body and reduce the amount of oxidative damage that occurs are: Chlorophyll Liquid, Colon Clear, and Liver Support.

Our products that are especially rich in antioxidants are: Super CoQ10, E-Complex, C-Blast, Fruitilicious, Living Green Energy, Flaxseed Oil, and Chlorophyll Liquid.
As always, if you have questions about this article, these supplements, or any other health question, please call us. We offer FREE health counseling with trained professionals who can help you with a personalized health plan. Call us today, at 309-343-5853.

Stay tuned next month to test YOUR antioxidant-fighting ability with our “Personal Antioxidant Assessment”. You may be very surprised by the results!

We offer FREE health counseling with trained professionals who can help you with a personalized health plan. Call us today, at 309-343-5853.
Why should I worry about my liver?

The liver is absolutely critical to a person’s well being. A person’s nutritional level is not only determined by what he or she eats, but by what the liver processes. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to detect early warning symptoms specific to liver metabolic imbalances since it is quite a “forgiving” organ that can withstand a myriad of abuse before finally giving up the fight. It is quite difficult to diagnose when the liver is not in order, and frequently one is unaware of it because the liver is the single organ that doesn’t hurt when something is wrong with it. People can suffer for a long time from a liver ailment without knowing of it.

LIVER SUPPORT

What does my liver do?

The liver:

• Processes all food and (most) drugs we ingest
• Stores iron reserves, as well as vitamins and minerals
• Makes bile to help digest food
• Detoxifies poisonous chemicals, including alcohol and drugs
• Stores energy by stockpiling sugar until needed
• Manufactures new proteins
• Makes clotting factors for the blood
• Removes poisons from the body that we accumulate from the air, exhaust, smoke, and chemicals we breathe

What are the benefits of using Hope’s Liver Support?

• Protects the liver from damage caused by viruses and toxins
• Detoxifies the liver from harmful environmental toxins and pollutants
• Improves overall health and function of the liver
• Cleanses, purifies, and detoxifies the liver, blood, and the entire body
• Strengthens and improves regeneration of the liver
• Relieves stress on the liver and helps rid the body of toxins
• Facilitates rapid liver regeneration

The special formula in our Liver Support is designed to help strengthen, protect, support, purify, and regenerate the liver while helping to improve overall general health. Some of the potent ingredients in our formula include Milk Thistle, Aloe Vera, Artichoke, Ginger Root, Reishi Mushroom, Schizandra Berry, Blessed Thistle, Licorice Root, Dong Quai, and over 20 other powerful liver-supporting ingredients.

FACTS:

The liver is the body’s primary antipollution organ, in charge of removing potential toxins from the bloodstream; it filters more than a liter of blood per minute.

If you want to improve your digestion, look to supporting your liver. It’s responsible for metabolizing fats, carbohydrates, proteins, and many vitamins, most notably those that are fat soluble, like A and D.

Among the liver’s other critical functions are regulating blood sugar levels, deactivating hormones so their levels aren’t too high, and producing bile, a critical liquid that breaks down fats and carries away waste products.

As if all this doesn’t keep your liver busy enough, it also supplies the immune system with antibodies and produces blood-clotting factors while also helping to oxygenate the body.

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1. The Trumpet.com, December 1, 2009—'Germany Reaffirms Sunday Law' by Ron Fraser

"Coincident with the enacting of the Lisbon Treaty/EU Constitution on December 1, Germany’s Constitutional Court has ruled that the nation’s capital must, akin to the rest of the country, abide by the law institutionalizing Sunday as a day ‘of rest from work and of spiritual improvement.’ Since the war, Berlin had enacted its own legislation allowing 10 shopping Sundays per year. That local ruling is now quashed. Effective from Jan. 1, 2010, Berlin must fall into line with the law institutionalizing Sunday as a day of rest and religious contemplation as contained in Germany’s Basic Law. The actual law establishing Sunday as Germany’s weekly day of worship is enshrined in an appendix to the Basic Law under the heading, ‘Extracts from the German Constitution of Aug 11, 1919.’ There we find, under the subhead ‘Religion and Religious Societies,’ Article 139, which reads: ‘Sundays and holidays recognized by the state shall remain protected by law as days of rest from work and of spiritual improvement.’

End Time Perspective #1: “This earth has almost reached the place where God will permit the destroyer to work his will upon it. The substitution of the laws of men for the law of God, the exaltation, by merely human authority, of Sunday in place of the Bible Sabbath, is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal, God will reveal Himself. He will arise in His majesty to shake terribly the earth. He will come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity, and the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.”--Testimonies, vol. 7, p. 141.

End Time Perspective #2: “To defy the Sunday laws will but strengthen in their persecution the religious zealots who are seeking to enforce them. Give them no occasion to call you law-breakers. If they are left to rein up men who fear neither God nor man, the reining up will soon lose its novelty for them, and they will see that it is not consistent nor convenient for them to be strict in regard to the observance of Sunday. Keep right on with your missionary work, with your Bibles in your hands, and the enemy will see that he has worsted his own cause. One does not receive the mark of the beast because he shows that he realizes the wisdom of keeping the peace by refraining from work that gives offense, doing at the same time a work of the highest importance.”--Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 232.

2. From the Lighthouse—original blog articles, November, 2009—'Manhattan Declaration: Perhaps Millions being Led Toward the New Age/New Spirituality'

"On November 20th, a document called the Manhattan Declaration was released at an event at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. The Document has received wide media coverage, and as of this writing about ¼ million people have signed the document, with a current average of about 10 people a minute adding their names (around 14,400 a day)."
One of the four drafters of the Declaration is Chuck Colson who also co-authored a document in the 90s called Evangelicals and Catholics Together. This document is similar in nature in that it identifies both Catholicism and Evangelicalism as part of the Christian church and asks members of both groups to unite in areas they have in common. With this new document, the emphasis is on morality, gay versus traditional marriage, abortion, stem cell research, assisted suicide, etc. According to Christianity Today, both prominent Evangelical leaders and Catholic leaders are main signatories. Given the fact that a large number of the main 149 signatories have directly or indirectly promoted advocates of the New Age/New Spirituality, it is not difficult to see that the Manhattan Declaration may provide an appealing and subtle avenue into the New Spirituality for a vast number of signers, many of whom might not otherwise have had exposure to it given the conservative tendencies of most of the signers.

End Time Perspective: “The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.” - The Great Controversy, p. 588.


“For a country that censors reports on the scope of its HIV/AIDS crisis and until 2001 deemed homosexuality a mental illness, China’s announcement on World AIDS Day that it would open its first state-sanctioned gay bar came as a shock—especially after officials divulged that $18,000 in public funds would be used to create a lounge that would offer free condoms and lectures on safe sex. The bar in Yunnan province—a region that contains nearly a quarter of China’s reported HIV and AIDS cases—was set to open Dec. 1, but the launch has been delayed following an outcry over the cost to taxpayers.

**End Time Perspective #1:** “As men multiplied upon the earth after the flood, they again forgot God, and corrupted their ways before him. Intemperance in every form increased, until almost the whole world was given up to its sway. Entire cities have been swept from the face of the earth because of the debasing crimes and revolting iniquity that made them a blot upon the fair field of God’s created works. The gratification of unnatural appetite led to the sins that caused the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.” CTBH 43.

**End Time Perspective #2:** “Very many in every age and station of life are without principle or conscience; and with their idle, spendthrift habits they are rushing into vice and are corrupting society, until our world is becoming a second Sodom. If the appetites and passions were under the control of reason and religion, society would present a widely different aspect. God never designed that the present woeful condition of things should exist; it has been brought about through the gross violation of nature’s laws.” CTBH 45.

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WHICH WAY?

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereto: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matt. 7:13, 14.

“Before you are two ways--the broad road of self-indulgence and the narrow path of self-sacrifice. Into the broad road you can take selfishness, pride, love of the world; but those who walk in the narrow way must lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset. Which road have you chosen--the road which leads to everlasting death, or the road which leads to glory and immortality?” OHC 8.

“There never was a more solemn time in the history of the world than the time in which we are now living. Our eternal interests are at stake, and we should arouse to the importance of making our calling and election sure. We dare not risk our eternal interests on mere probabilities. We must be in earnest. What we are, what we are doing, what is to be our course of action in the future, are all questions of untold moment, and we cannot afford to be listless, indifferent, unconcerned. It becomes each one of us to inquire, ‘What is eternity to me?’ Are our feet in the path that leads to heaven, or in the broad road that leads to perdition? ...” OHC 8.

THE CLOSER, THE SAFER

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. James 4:8.

“Draw nigh to God.’ How? By secret, earnest examination of your own heart, by childlike, heartfelt, humble dependence upon God, making known all your weakness to Jesus, and by confessing your sins.” OHC 96.

“We cannot draw nigh to God and behold His loveliness and compassion without realizing our defects and being filled with a desire to rise higher. ‘And he will draw nigh to you.’ The Lord will draw nigh to him who confesses to his brethren the wrongs he has done them, and then comes to God in humility and contrition.” OHC 96.

“He who feels his own danger is on the watch lest he shall grieve the Holy Spirit and then draw away from God because he knows that He is not pleased with his course of action. How much better and safer it is to draw nigh to God, that the pure light shining from His Word may heal the wounds that sin has made in the soul. The closer we are to God, the safer we are, for Satan hates and fears the presence of God.” OHC 96.

“If we draw nigh to God, individually, then don’t you see what the result will be? Can’t you see that we will draw nigh to one another? We cannot draw nigh to God, and come to the same cross, without our hearts being blended together in perfect unity, answering the prayer of Christ that they may be one as He is one with the Father. And therefore we should seek in spirit, in understanding, in faith, that we may be one, that God may be glorified in us as He is glorified in the Son; and that God shall love us as He loves the Son.” OHC 96.

A BANK THAT NEVER FAILS

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matt. 6:20, 21.

“Here is portrayed the value of eternal riches, in contrast with the treasures of earth. If the purpose and aim of your life is to lay up treasure in heaven, you will be lifted above the base, sordid, demoralizing influence of an inordinate desire to obtain wealth in this life. Laying up treasure in heaven will give nobility to the character; it will strengthen benevolence, encourage mercy; cultivate sympathy, brotherly kindness, and charity. It will unite the soul of man with Christ, by links that can never be broken. You may lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven by being rich in good works--rich in imperishable and spiritual things.” OHC 195.

“Everything that is laid up upon earth may be swept away in a moment; but nothing can disturb the treasure that is laid up in heaven.” OHC 195.
"God is love." These three words of only nine letters contain a revelation of God greater than men or angels will ever be able fully to fathom. In fact, to know more of their meaning, to be constantly learning more of their meaning, will be the work and the wisdom, the pleasure and the poetry, of the redeemed throughout eternity. To comprehend the meaning of these words is to know God and Jesus Christ, and to know these is life eternal. In truth, there is no knowledge outside of them; for in them are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and without is only ignorance and darkness.”

- Excerpt from the book: *God is Love* by G.E. Fifield

Available at the Hope International Bookstore for $10.99 plus shipping/handling