

THE SABBATH SCOOP

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SODOM & GOMORRAH

As our society becomes more like Sodom and Gomorrah, will we face divine punishment as well?

By Gregory Dullum
Part 3

God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because they were so evil. The evil had rubbed off on Lot and his family. Lot's sons-in-law did not flee with him. Only Lot, his wife, and his two daughters fled. The daughters left behind their unbelieving husbands. And even though Lot's wife went with him, her mind and thoughts remained in Sodom. She disobeyed God's command and longingly looked back: "But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (Gen. 19:26).

Sodom and Gomorrah were totally destroyed. Their destruction is not just a Bible story to be told and forgotten. These cities are examples for us! If the sins of this world become as bad as they were in Sodom and Gomorrah, why would God spare us if He didn't spare them? Would it be fair for God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and not us if we commit the same sins?

Our Society Is Like Sodom

Our society today has become like Sodom and Gomorrah. Homosexuality has come out of the closet—it's boldly on display! What does God say about people who act like the men of Sodom?

"The look on their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.

"Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him" (Isa. 3:9-11).

It will be well for the righteous, for the righteous shall be removed from this evil society, just as Lot was removed from Sodom. But it will be ill



Photo by Gary Dullum

Sodom and Gomorrah may now be at the bottom of the southern part of the Dead Sea. The lush plain that once surrounded them became desert after God destroyed it all.

for the wicked! Destruction is coming! Divine punishment for this people's sins is coming!

"For both prophet and priest are profane; yes, in My house I have found their wickedness," says the LORD. Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery ways; in the darkness they shall be driven on and fall in them; for I will bring disaster on them, the year of their punishment," says the LORD. "And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria: they prophesied by Baal and caused my people Israel to err. Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah" (Jer. 23:11-14). How well this prophecy describes our society today! Can we *ESCAPE punishment*, if God punished Sodom for *the same sins*?

Jesus said that before He returns this world *will become like Sodom!* "Now when he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does

not come with observation;... And as in the days of Noah so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:20, 26-30).

Sodom Is an Example

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is an example for us! Peter wrote: "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:4-6).

Jude makes a similar comment: "But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth

SODOM & GOMORRAH

Continued on Page 2

Sodom & Gomorrah

Continued from Page 1

as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:5-7).

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). If He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for its sins, He WILL destroy our nation today *if we behave the same way they did!*

Are Sodomites Lost Forever?

Are the people of Sodom and Gomorrah *lost forever*? Were they so evil that God can *never* use them? Or is there hope for them in the White Throne Judgment period (Rev. 20:5, 11-15) when dry bones will be reassembled and the dead will live again as humans (Ezek. 37:2-14), without Satan to influence them (Rev. 20:10)?

Jesus Christ gives us the answer. Notice what He said to his disciples: “And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!” (Mat. 10:14-15).

God will be **MERCIFUL** to the Sodomites in the day of the White Throne Judgment. Jesus told some of the people of his day, “And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you” (Mat. 11:23-24).

God will also be merciful to the sinners *around us today*. He has **NOT** written them off *forever*. Although Rev. 22:15 and 1 Cor. 6:9 tell us homosexuals **WILL NOT** be in the kingdom of God, they will be given a *chance to repent* and **CHANGE**.

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian brethren, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor evil doers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

It’s possible to *repent* and *change!* We, in the church, have repented and changed from our wicked ways. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah will have a chance to learn God’s way of living in the White Throne Judgment period following the mil-

lennium, which follows Christ’s return.

Lessons for Us

What can we learn from the example of Sodom and Gomorrah?

1. We, like Lot, must *live in* the world but we should not *be part of* the world. “And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities’ ” (Rev. 18:4-5).

Like Lot, we should be troubled by the sins we see going on around us but we *should not participate in them*. If tempted to sin, do as Lot did, and seek God’s deliverance from the temptation.

2. Although Lot was “righteous,” *he was still influenced by society around him*. He called the wicked homosexuals who wanted to have sex with his two guests “my brethren,” and he offered his two virgin daughters to them instead. When it came time to flee, Lot lingered until the angels forcefully removed him from Sodom (Gen. 19:5, 7-8, 16-17). It behooves us to **EXAMINE OURSELVES** to see where our *society has rubbed off on us*, and **REPENT**.

3. We have a duty to condemn the sin around us. The homosexuals said of Lot, “This one came in to sojourn, and he keeps acting as a judge” (Gen. 19:9).

While we should not condemn **PEOPLE** (for we don’t know their hearts or at what stage God is working with them), we should be able to discern between good and evil **BEHAVIOR**, and *condemn evil behavior* (Luke 6:37, 12:57, John 7:24, 1 Cor. 6:2-3).

4. We should cry out to God about the evils we see around us. Before God decided to destroy Sodom, He told Abraham, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know” (Gen. 18:20-21).

Who cried out to God about the evils of Sodom? The most likely person was Lot, who was “oppressed” and “tormented” by the evil behavior he saw around him (2 Pet. 2:7-8).

If we want to be saved out of our society before it’s destroyed by God, we should “sigh and cry” to God as Lot did.

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision about this end time in which God told one angel, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over the abominations that

are done within it.” He told other angels, “Go after him through the city and kill, do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark” (Ezek. 9:4-6).

5. Realize that God is a **JUST GOD** and is **NOT** a *respector of persons*. If our nation today commits the same sins as Sodom and Gomorrah, it deserves to be punished as well. Sodom’s major sin was homosexuality, but other evils were committed there as well, including *other* sexual sins, baby killings and profaning God’s name. These *same sins* are prevalent in today’s world!

6. When God destroys a people as punishment for their sins, it **DOESN’T** mean He is *done with them*. They will be given a chance to live his way in the White Throne Judgment period following the millennium, which follows Christ’s return.

7. God will protect his righteous people from destruction. He will provide a place of safety. Just as Lot had to flee before God could destroy Sodom, we must flee before God can destroy our nation.

So let us keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). Let us be the bride of Christ, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that we should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27). If we do, we will be protected from the punishment God will inflict upon this sinful world (Rev. 3:10, Luke 21:36), and we will be in the first resurrection (Rev. 21:4-5). We will be firstfruits in the kingdom of God.

We will reign as spirit beings with Christ (Rev. 21:4, 5:10), and we will work with Him to straighten out the lives of those who sinned so terribly in Sodom and Gomorrah—in those original cities—and in all of the societies that followed their bad example.

The SABBATH SCOOP

228 O’Connell Drive
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701-3332

Editor

Gregory Dullum

Circulation Managers:

Craig Evans • Raleigh Collins

Ed Crook • Gregory Dullum

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You Shall Not Steal

What is stealing? Why do people steal? What are some ways Christians may steal without realizing it?

By Gregory Dullum
Part 12

Stealing is a serious problem in America today. FBI statistics for 2013 (the most recent year available) reveal:

- There were an estimated 8,632,512 property crimes committed. Property crimes include burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson.
- Law enforcement made 1,559,284 arrests for property crimes.
- Burglary victims suffered an estimated \$4.5 billion in property losses, and burglaries of residential properties accounted for 74 percent of the total reported.
- Larceny-thefts accounted for the largest percentage of property crimes reported to law enforcement—69.6 percent.
- The average value of property stolen in larceny-theft was \$1,259.

An estimated 699,594 motor vehicles were stolen; 73.9 percent of which were automobiles. Other types of stolen vehicles included trucks, sport utility vehicles, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters, all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles (www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2014/november/crime-statistics-for-2013-released, pp. 1-2).

All of this heartache and financial loss could have been avoided if everyone kept the eighth commandment, “You shall not steal” (Ex. 20:15).

What Is Stealing?

What exactly is stealing? The dictionary defines it as “to take (the property of another) without right or permission” (“Steal,” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1992, p. 1758).

Inherent in the word “steal” is the fact that people may OWN property and *have a*



Photo by Gregory Dullum

If everyone obeyed the eighth commandment, we would not need locks on our doors and big fat key rings in our pockets. Think about what a different world it would be!

right to their property (called personal property rights). People do NOT have a right to take property that belongs to others without first getting permission.

Why People Steal

Psychologists have come up with several reasons why people steal.

The WikiHow Web site tells us, “Non-kleptomania theft occurs primarily out of 4 main things:

• Greed — this one is pretty straightforward.

• Hatred—wanting the other to be miserable, can also be revenge driven.

• Ignorance—People just pick things up without realizing they belong to someone else.

• Necessity—some people steal food and clothes when starving or in need.

“Sometime[s], however, it is a response to something else—a need to fill a hole in their lives. It can also be an automatic habit, like taking glasses, cutlery from a plane or pub or momentos from a hotel, etc.” (www.wikihow.com/Understand-Why-People-Choose-to-Steal, p. 1).

A *Psychology Today* Web site blog by Sheila Kohler offers this additional insight:

“Have you ever stolen anything? Most of us as small children or even as adults have done so. The child, of course, is usually unaware of the crime until the parent forces him/her to take back the candy or whatever bright object was picked up in the store or the change that was scooped off the mantelpiece and slipped into a pocket.

“As adults we sometimes casually take a box of Kleenex from a hotel room, and some might even purloin a towel or a bathrobe, thinking most probably: ‘I’m paying enough for this hotel room. They could give me a few extra Kleenex for the price.’

“And, of course, people faced by huge hardships are sometimes forced to steal when hungry to save their lives, or when their children are in dire need in wartime or other times and places of dire poverty....

“It is easier to steal from an anonymous, large corporation, than from an individual, easier to steal from someone who seems well-endowed, has so much more....

“But what about someone who has all they need and steals anyway?...

“So [he or] she steals out of a need for excitement, for the thrill of it. One wonders if the large thefts of money in the stock market, insider trading by people who probably already have large amounts of money are motivated by thinking of this kind” (PsychologyToday.com/blog/-dreaming-Freud/201408/why-do-people-steal, pp. 1-2).

Not *everyone* steals! Why does one person take hotel towels and another one doesn’t? Why will one poor person steal and another will not? One hungry person will steal food from a store while another one will choose to go hungry or get food from some other source (begging, going to a food pantry, etc.) Two people may be in identical circumstances and one will steal but the other won’t. What is the difference?

It all seems to boil down to one spiritual problem: PRIDE. The thief is motivated by pride. I DESERVE *this item—you don’t!* I HAVE A RIGHT *to this object, so I’ll take it from you.* YOU HURT ME, *so you deserve to be hurt back.* I AM HUNGRY *so I have a right to your food.* When pride is involved, the needs and desires of the SELF are placed *above* the needs and desires of OTHERS.

YOU SHALL NOT STEAL

Continued on Page 4

Know Your Bible

By Charles Nenninger

1. At what place did Moses strike a rock to get water?
2. What river did the Israelites cross to enter the land of Canaan?
3. Where did Moses lose his permission to enter the land of Canaan?
4. How long did the Israelites live in Egypt?
5. Which two humans were never born?

(Answers on page 5)

You Shall Not Steal

Continued from Page 3

Other Types of Stealing

One does not need to be a burglar, a gun-toting robber in a back alley, a sneaky shoplifter or an unscrupulous hotel customer to steal! There are other ways that stealing can occur in society around us.

“But we also violate the eighth command in *hundreds* of ways through a ‘watered down’ system of morality.

“After discussing some debased scheme by which to cheat a business competitor or customer, executives shrug their shoulders and say, ‘Well, that’s *just business*.’

“Or, after a reception involving false measurement, poor quality or misleading advertising, a businessman will say: ‘What’s the difference? If I don’t do it, someone else will.’

“When cheating the government or falsifying an income tax return, the common American phrase to solve one’s conscience is, ‘Let Uncle Sam sweat this time. The government is taking too much money anyway. So what?’ ...

“The industrialist or merchant who uses false weights and measures or a poor quality of material and workmanship to deceive the public is just as GUILTY of breaking the eighth commandment as a common thief! He is trying to get something more than a legitimate return for his product” (*The Ten Commandments* by Roderick C. Meredith, 1968, p. 115, 117).

A Right to Property

We have already mentioned that the eighth commandment contains within its four words an outstanding principle: individuals *have a right* to their own property, and others should not take that property away from them!

This means that Communism and Socialism, which don’t allow for private ownership of property, are WRONG! They violate God’s commandments!

It’s not wrong for people to voluntarily pool their property for various reasons—but they should not be forced to give up all personal property. In the early days of the church, the brethren in Jerusalem *voluntarily* pooled their property *temporarily* to take care of the needs of so many visitors during the feast of Pentecost and to get the work off to a good start (Acts 4:32, 34-35, 2:5, 8-11. This was done on a voluntary basis (Acts 5:1-4).

Bible-believing people understand the truth about property ownership. Because God is the creator of all, everything belongs to Him (Ex. 9:29, Deut. 10:14, Ps. 24:1, 1 Cor. 10:26, 28).

God shares his great wealth with us (Ps. 75:6-7, Eccles. 5:19, John 3:27, James 1:17). We use the wealth God gives us during our lives, but when we die, we can’t take it with us (Eccles. 2:18, 5:15-16, 1 Tim. 6:7)!

Although everything ultimately belongs to God, He gives us things to use while we live here on earth. The property which we *legitimately* acquire during our lives is considered by God to be ours and should not be illegally taken away from us!

There are two legitimate ways to acquire property.

“According to God’s Word and His Law, there are only *two* right ways in which you can come into possession of anything. The first is by a *free gift* of another person, or from God Himself. The second is by honest labor, which earns something as a legitimate return” (Meredith, p. 116).

The *right to own property* was included in the laws of ancient Israel. For example, it was considered stealing to move a landmark (which marked property lines), thus illegally increasing your property and diminishing your neighbor’s (Deut. 19:14). But the greatest supporter of personal property rights is the eighth commandment: You shall not steal!

Punishment for Stealing

God gave instructions to the ancient Israelites regarding punishment for thieves. The punishment usually involved *restoring what was stolen* and ADDING TO IT!

If a thief stole an ox or a sheep and sold or slaughtered it, he was to restore the animal FIVE FOLD (Ex. 22:1).

If the animal was caught alive in the thief’s possession, he was to repay double (v. 4). Money and other articles that were stolen were to be repaid double (v. 7).

If one person borrowed something from another, and it was stolen while in his possession, the borrower had to repay the owner for the stolen item (v. 12).

Thieves had few rights! If a thief was caught breaking into a home and was killed by the homeowner, the homeowner was not penalized for killing him (Ex. 22:2). If a thief was caught and kept alive, he was to make restitution. If he couldn’t repay, he was to be sold into slavery for his theft (v. 3).

Governments Can Steal

It is wrong for governments to steal. They can steal from other nations or from their own citizens.

Governments steal from other nations by seizing their property in war. “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires

for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:1-2).

Governments steal from their own citizens through *excessive* taxation. Governments have a right to collect taxes from their citizens (Luke 20:22-25, Rom. 13:1, 6-7). But they have a duty not to overtax them. God warned Israel that its king was not to “multiply horses for himself” (an expensive military item) “nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself” (Deut. 17:16, 17). Rulers may have a right to tax their people, but they also have an obligation before God not to overburden their people with excessive taxes.

King Rehoboam lost most of his kingdom because he threatened to increase the burden on the people instead of decreasing it (1 Kings 12:1-20).

Governments also steal when they take away the property of their citizens without just compensation. Queen Jezebel had Naboth murdered because he would not sell his vineyard to her husband, King Ahab (1 Kings 21:2-16). After having Naboth killed, Jezebel took the property and gave it to Ahab. This displeased God, who sent Elijah the prophet to the king with a dire message of impending death for him and his wife (vv. 17-23).

Bosses Can Steal

We have already mentioned how businesses can steal from their customers through unscrupulous business practices and false advertising. It also is possible for bosses to steal from their employees! How? By NOT paying them a fair wage in a timely manner.

“You shall not defraud your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning” (Lev. 19:13). Daily laborers were to be paid at the end of their shifts (Deut. 24:15). Paychecks should be issued on time to employees!

The apostle Paul told Timothy, “The laborer is worthy of his wages” (1 Tim. 5:18). In other words, if you pay workers less than what they are worth, you are stealing from them.

A similar sentiment is expressed by Paul to the Colossians: “Masters, give your servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven” (Col. 4:1).

Christians Can Steal

We have seen how stealing goes on in society around us by corrupt governments, corrupt businesspeople and criminals. But what about us Christians? We know the

commandments. Can we be guilty of stealing? If we are not careful, society can rub off on us, and we can steal without realizing it, or we may justify our actions in our minds, thinking we are not stealing when we are! Here are some examples:

1. We can rob God. God says if we don't faithfully pay our tithes and offerings, we are robbing Him!

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings" (Mal. 3:8-9).

God expects us to pay one tenth (a tithe) of our increase to Him (Lev. 27:30). In ancient Israel, tithes were paid to the Levites for their temple service (Num. 18:21). The Levites then paid tithes from what they received to the high priest (vv. 26-28). In the New Testament, Christians still owe tithes to God (i.e., Christ, who was Melchizedek in the Old Testament), and Christ gives the tithes to the ministry of his church (Heb. 7:4-10, 1 Cor. 9:1-12). This money is used primarily for preaching the gospel—both to the world and to the members.

God also expects us to lay aside a second tithe to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 14:2-26). This money is spent on food, wine, travel, etc. It is NOT the same as the first tithe!

God also expects us to pay a third tithe during the third and sixth years of a seven-year cycle (Deut. 14:28-29). This money is used to help the poor, fatherless, widows, etc.

On God's holy days, He expects us to give offerings above and beyond tithes (Deut. 16:16-17). We are not to give a *specific amount* as we do with a tithe, but an individual should give "as he is able, according to the blessings of the LORD which He has given you."

If we FAIL to set aside these tithes and offerings to do God's work, to keep God's Feast of Tabernacles, and to help God's needy people, we are *stealing from God!*

2. If we CHEAT on our taxes in order to *pay less than we should*, that is stealing. Even though our taxes may be excessive and may be spent on projects for which we don't support, we have an obligation to pay our taxes in full (Luke 20:22-25, Rom. 13:1, 6-7).

3. We can steal affection from our mates and families if we commit adultery. This was mentioned in Part 11 of this series last month.

Paul explained that husbands and wives DESERVE each other's affection. They have a right to it. Withholding that affection is stealing something that belongs to the other (1 Cor. 7:1-4)!

4. It is possible to steal from our mates if we fail to do our duties in other ways. A wife is to submit to her husband (Eph.

5:22, 24). If she fails to do that, she is stealing from his authority, which he has over her (v. 23). Likewise, a husband must love his wife, or he is stealing the affection she deserves (vv. 25, 28, 33).

5. If we fail to give an honest day's work for an honest day's wage, we are stealing from our employer. We should be working hard doing our assigned tasks from the moment we get to work until we go home. We should not claim on our time cards to work 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a one-hour lunch if we actually show up at 8:30, leave at 4:30 and take a two hour lunch!

While at work, we should be working! "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Eccles. 9:10). "Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Eph. 6:5-7).

That means we should be doing our assigned tasks as employees, not wasting time putting on makeup, fixing breakfast, reading and writing personal e-mails, surfing the Internet on personal business, chatting (or texting) on our cell phones (or office phones) with family or friends, playing computer games, etc. When we are at work, we should be working hard, as if our boss were God himself!

"It is also true... that many a working-man ROBBS his employer! He does this by taking his wage and yet withholding his full share of honest labor. And that is STEALING!

"All too often one laboring man tells his fellow, 'Slow down, buddy, you're working too hard. If you keep on working like that, we'll *all* have to work hard around here'" (Meredith, p. 119).

6. Taking office supplies. In addition to stealing time, there is the issue of taking company property for personal use without getting permission. This includes taking pens, paper clips, sticky notes, copy paper, toilet paper, etc. It includes taking soda pop, bottled water or coffee without paying for them if the company expects payment on the honor system. I don't think most companies would complain if employees printed out personal e-mails on company copy paper using company

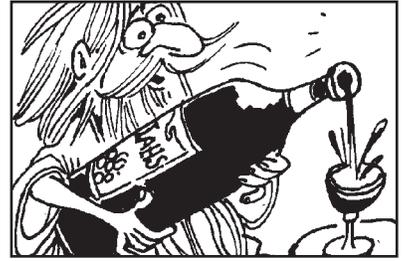
YOU SHALL NOT STEAL

Continued on Page 6

Know Your Bible Answers

1) Kadesh or Meribah. 2) Jordan. 3) Kadesh or Meribah. 4). 430 years. 5) Adam and Eve.

Fun Fact



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

There are two Methuselahs. One was the descendant of Seth, whom the Bible says lived 969 years. (Gen 5:21-27). The other, an oversized wine bottle with a capacity of eight ordinary bottles, used in the French Champagne district.

Witerature

Wit and wisdom to complement the truths of the Holy Bible can be found in secular writings.

Let's Roll! by Lisa Beamer, Tyndale House, 2002, pp. 169-170).

God Knows Our Needs

"At one point in the middle of the day, during a lull in the activity in my room, I was staring blankly into space. I looked across Todd's and my bed, and there was Jan Pittas, one of our more quiet-natured friends, just sitting on the opposite corner of the bed, quietly praying for me, not talking aloud. Not talking at all. I didn't want to talk; I wasn't able to talk, and with her sweet, gentle spirit, Jan knew better than to try to talk to me. But her presence in the room was comforting. *Thank you, God, for sending Jan, I prayed.*

In those days following the crash [of United flight 93 on Sept. 11, 2001, which killed Todd Beamer] this truth became even more real to me: God knows exactly *what* we need... *When* we need it."

Mat. 6:32 Philipp. 4:19

Quotable Quotes

"Winning is not everything—but making the effort to win is."

—Vince Lombardi

Memory Scripture

"But godliness with contentment is great gain."

—1 Tim. 6:6

You Shall Not Steal

Continued from Page 5

toner, or made a *few* personal copies of documents on a company copier—but isn't that technically stealing? If we do this, aren't we taking company property for personal use? Shouldn't we compensate the company in some way if we use its paper, toner and equipment?

7. Most of us will complain if a cashier overcharges us for an item. But do we correct the error if a cashier mistakenly undercharges us for an item? We should be willing to pay the proper amount for an item, not wanting to be overcharged, but not willing to pay LESS than the proper amount either.

A similar example is the uncanceled postage stamp. If a stamp has never been used, it's perfectly proper to pull it from an envelope and use it. However, if we receive a letter in the mail and the stamp was not canceled by the post office, it is STEALING to reuse it. That stamp represents postage paid *to deliver the letter and delivery was made*. If we reuse that stamp, we are *stealing a service* from the post office by not paying for it.

8. In ancient Israel, if something was stolen while it was borrowed, the borrower had to replace it. Likewise, if we borrow something and break it, lose it, or forget to return it, and don't replace it, we are stealing!

9. God allows us to take a piece of fruit from a neighbor's fruit tree or an ear of corn to eat without being guilty of stealing (Deut. 23:25, Luke 6:1).

Why isn't taking an apple off a tree stealing? Because God tells property owners to leave a small amount of their crops for the poor and needy (Lev. 19:10, 23:22, Deut. 24:21). The poor and needy have a right to a snack—but they shouldn't take bags full of fruit or harvest the whole crop! That would be stealing!

Thieves Will Not Be in Kingdom

People who steal will not be in the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10)! It is important to God that this commandment be obeyed!

Thieves can repent and change. Some of the brethren in Corinth had been thieves but they repented and changed (vv. 10-11). Two robbers were crucified beside Jesus (Mat. 27:38). One had a proper attitude toward Christ and was promised an opportunity to live again "in Paradise" (the future kingdom of God).

We must examine ourselves, looking for ways we may be stealing without realizing it! If we are guilty of breaking the eighth commandment, we must stop, repent, and accept Christ's sacrifice for our sin.



Religious Freedom Is being Curtailed

Although guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, religious freedom is being curtailed in this country!

"Schoolchildren in California would be required to be vaccinated unless there is a medical reason not to do so under a sweeping bill approved by the State Assembly on Thursday [June 25]. The measure would end exemptions for personal or religious reasons, routinely requested by parents opposed to vaccines.

"The legislation would make California the largest state by far with such requirements for childhood vaccinations as it joins West Virginia and Mississippi, which have held similar laws for years" ("California Set to Mandate Childhood Vaccines Amid Intense Fight" by Jennifer Medina, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, June 25, 2015, p. 1).

There was a time when the Church of God officially opposed vaccinations as a churchwide policy. We chose to trust God for our protection and healing, and chose not to inject our bodies with vaccines that could have dangerous side effects and could be manufactured from questionable sources, including unclean animal by-products.

Although churchwide policy has softened, there are still parents in our church and in other churches who take religious objection to routine vaccinations. We are seeing their religious beliefs being trampled upon by the government!

We also are seeing a desire by governments to force religious bakers to bake cakes for gay marriages when such marriages are against their beliefs. We may soon see preachers being told they can't preach against the homosexual lifestyle.

This loss of religious freedom may lead to a "famine of the word" that is prophesied to happen (Amos 8:11, John 9:4).

Iran Deal a Mistake

"Furiously denouncing the accord to limit Iran's nuclear program on Tuesday [July 14] as a 'historic mistake,'

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel would not be bound by the agreement and warned of negative repercussions in a region already riven with rivalries and armed conflict.

"Contrary to President Obama's assertion that the agreement will cut off every pathway for Iran to obtain nuclear weapons, Israel's leaders rejected the deal as a dangerous compromise that will exacerbate regional tensions and pave the way over time for Iran to produce multiple bombs—'an entire arsenal with the means to deliver it,' Mr. Netanyahu said.

"Israel views a nuclear-armed Iran as a threat to its survival....

"Mr. Netanyahu told Mr. Obama that the agreement raised the danger that Iran would obtain nuclear weapons either by waiting out the 10 to 15 years of restrictions specified by the accord, or by violating it.

"Referring to the expected lifting of sanctions Mr. Netanyahu said in a televised statement in English: 'In the coming decade, the deal will reward Iran, the terrorist regime in Iran, with hundreds of billions of dollars. This cash bonanza will fuel Iran's terrorism worldwide, its aggression in the region and its efforts to destroy Israel, which are ongoing.'

"Describing Iran as a 'rogue regime,' he noted, 'We will always defend ourselves' " ("Iran Deal Denounced by Netanyahu as 'Historic Mistake' " by Isabel Kershner, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, July 14, 2015, pp. 1-2).

At the time of the end, a "king of the South" will "push at" or "attack" a "king of the North" (Dan. 11:40). Using Jerusalem as ground zero, these two "kings" are likely to be a revived Holy Roman Empire consisting of a European union of "10 kings" (Dan. 2:41-44, Rev. 17:10-14) and a Muslim union of nations across North Africa and the Mideast. The attack on Europe may come in the form of a terrorist attack, or a nuclear attack. Or perhaps Israel will make a treaty with Europe and an attack on Israel by the king of the South will be considered an attack on Europe! Europe will respond to this attack by occupying the holy land with its military (Dan. 11:40-43).