

Does It Really Help to Pray for Others?

Does praying for others really help them? If so, how? How many prayers does it take to get an answer?

By Gregory Dullum

Every so often on Facebook, a friend will go through a difficult trial and will ask for prayers. Under their request will be several responses from their friends such as “I’m praying for you” or “You’re in our prayers” or simply “Prayers.”

It almost seems like prayer requests are another form of collecting “likes” on Facebook. (If someone likes a comment we make, they click on the little thumb’s-up button and Facebook automatically adds their “like” to the “likes” of others who clicked the thumb’s-up button. We can check back later and say, “Wow! My post got 300 “likes,” meaning 300 people saw our post and clicked the “like” button.

Are prayer requests like that? Does God wait until we get a certain number of responses to prayer requests before He answers them? If we’re sick, and we ask people to pray for us, how many people do we need praying for us before God hears and heals us? 10? 50? 100? 300? Most of the people on Facebook who promise to pray are not in the Church of God. Does God hear their prayers?

Praying for others is called intercessory prayer. We are interceding on behalf of someone else. Does intercessory prayer do any good? Can we influence God to help someone else? Or is it just a way to make ourselves feel better because at least we did something. We can tell ourselves, *Well, I prayed for them; I did my part.*

Both the Bible and medical research tell us that intercessory prayer *really does make a difference!* So let’s keep it up! Let’s keep praying for each other!

Let’s look at several examples of intercessory prayer in the Bible to see what we can learn. And then let’s see what a medical doctor has to say about intercessory prayer.

Abraham: Life and Death

Praying for others can be a matter of life and death! When Abraham and Sarah went to live in the land of Gerar, Abraham called Sarah “his sister” and the ruler, Abimelech, took Sarah to be his wife (Gen. 20:1-2).

“But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, ‘Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife’ ” (v. 3). Abimelech complained to God that he didn’t know Sarah was Abraham’s wife (vv. 4-5).

“And God said to him in a dream, ‘Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and *he will pray for you and you shall live.* But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours’ ” (vv. 6-7, emphasis added).

The LIFE of Abimelech depended upon Abraham’s prayers for him. There also was a HEALING involved.

“So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his maidservants. Then they bore children; for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife” (vv. 17-18).

Moses’ Three Prayers

Perhaps the most well-known intercesso-



Photo © COSMI Inc.

A stained glass image of a man praying.

ry prayer was when Moses prayed for the entire nation of Israel after the people sinned by making a golden calf and worshiping it. We have the words that Moses prayed and God’s reaction to them recorded in the Bible, so let’s read what was said.

“ ‘I have seen these people,’ the LORD said to Moses, ‘and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.’

“But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. ‘O LORD,’ he said, ‘why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

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Pray for Others

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Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever." Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened" (Ex. 32:9-14, *New International Version*).

Moses reasoned with God, and God changed His mind. Because of Moses' prayer, the Israelites were saved. There is the possibility that our prayers for someone can change God's mind or stir Him to act on behalf of that other person.

God was *especially angry* with ONE PERSON over the golden calf incident. He was *so angry* at Moses' brother, Aaron, that He *wanted to kill him*. Why didn't God kill Aaron? Because Moses prayed for him: "And the LORD was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time" (Deut. 9:17-20).

Later, Moses had to pray for his sister, Miriam. She and Aaron had spoken against Moses because he had married an Ethiopian woman.

"So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. So Aaron said to Moses, 'Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned. Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!' So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, 'Please heal her, O God, I pray!'

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that she may be received again.' So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey on till Miriam was brought in again" (Num. 12:9-15).

God did not heal Miriam *right away*. It took seven days. Our prayers for others may not be answered right away either.

A Sin Not to Pray

If we don't pray for others, *it can be a sin!* When Israel asked for a king, the people realized their mistake and they asked Samuel to pray for them:

"And all the people said to Samuel, 'Pray for your servants to the LORD your

God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking for a king for ourselves'" (1 Sam. 12:19).

Now pay special attention to Samuel's reply: "Then Samuel said to the people ... 'Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you'" (vv. 20, 23).

Praying for an Enemy

The next prayer we are going to read about is interesting, because a man of God is about to be arrested, and he is asked to pray for the man who wants him arrested! Talk about praying for your enemies (Mat. 5:44)!

"So it came to pass when King Jereboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar saying, 'Arrest him!' Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. ... Then the king answered and said to the man of God, 'Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.' So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as it was before" (1 Kings 13:4, 6).

A Prayer for Many People

We have another example of a leader praying for many of the people in a nation and God listening to that prayer. This time it's King Hezekiah.

"For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.' And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people" (2 Chron. 30:18-20).

Pray for Others First

When Righteous Job was suffering, his friends accused him of doing a lot of horrible things. They reasoned that he would not be suffering if he hadn't done something terrible. But their reasoning was wrong and their accusations were false (Job 42:7). God told Job to pray for his friends who had spoken falsely of him (v. 8).

We know Job was very blessed *at the end of his life* (v. 12). But he was not blessed UNTIL after he prayed for his friends: "And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as

he had before" (v. 10).

A principle that we can take from this example is that if we want God to bless us and answer our requests *for ourselves*, we ought FIRST to *pray for others*.

We also see this principle in the model prayer, where we are told to pray that God forgive us OUR debts *as we forgive our debtors* (Mat. 6:12). We must forgive others *first* BEFORE God forgives us. In a similar manner, we should *pray for others* FIRST *before we pray for ourselves*.

Jesus Prays for Simon Peter

Jesus set an example of praying for others. There was one time when He prayed specifically for Simon Peter: "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren'" (Luke 22:31-32).

Jesus' prayer for Simon *kept him safe from Satan!* He prayed for Peter's FAITH that it should not fail. We often pray for each other's PHYSICAL health. How often do we pray for each other's SPIRITUAL health?

Jesus Prays for Others

There is another example of Jesus praying for the SPIRITUAL *health* and *protection* of his disciples, including us today. Let's read some of Jesus' words as He prayed to God just before his crucifixion.

"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. ... I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them

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IS THERE A DEATH ANGEL?

Who killed the Egyptian firstborns on that first Passover?

By Gregory Dullum

Passover is coming at the end of this month. This festival has its origins in the land of Egypt, where the Israelites were in slavery.

God told the Israelites to kill a Passover lamb and put some of its blood on the two doorposts and lintel of their homes. Those homes so marked would be passed over and the firstborn in those homes would live. Meanwhile, the firstborn outside those walls would die.

Who KILLED the firstborn of the Egyptians on that first Passover?

The term that immediately comes to my mind is the “death angel.” Visually, the images that comes to mind are the scenes from Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Ten Commandments* movie starring Charlton Heston, when a cloud in the night sky begins to look like a claw reaching down to earth, and a green fog flows through the Egyptian streets.

Who does the Bible say actually killed the firstborn of the Egyptians?

- A. The second-born of the Egyptians, on their way up the social ladder.
- B. A green fog.
- C. The death angel.
- D. The LORD.

The LORD Killed the Egyptians

If the choice of “death angel” comes to mind, and you have some type of computer Bible, try searching for that term. When I did this, there were no references! The term “death angel” does not appear in the King James Bible.

Know Your Bible

By Charles Nenninger

1. What did Jesus say you couldn’t get through the eye of a needle?
2. “The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!” Who was it?
3. Who said, “Your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times”?
4. Who said, “The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib”?
5. How many warriors did Gideon end up with when they drank out of a stream?

(Answers on page 4)

Is there really no death angel? And if not, who did kill the firstborn? Let’s go back and read the record.

“Then Moses said, ‘Thus says the LORD: “About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the maidservant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the beasts” ’ ” (Ex. 11:4-5).

God further stated, “For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12:12-13).

Moses gave this explanation for keeping Passover: “It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households” (v. 27).

The actual event is described in verse 29: “And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock” (v. 29).

There is no mention of a “death angel” in these verses! These verses tell us that God caused the death of the firstborn of Egypt. He Himself walked through the land. We must remember, of course, that the LORD of the Old Testament was not the Father, but the Word, who became Christ (John 1:1-3, 14; 1 Cor. 10:1-4).

Did God Have Help?

Did the LORD kill the firstborn Himself? Did He, Himself pass through walls or closed doors and kill all the firstborn sons as they slept? Or did He have help?

Notice Ex. 12:23: “For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.”

The LORD Himself passed through the streets of Egypt! *But He was not alone!* With Him was “the destroyer.”

Who was the “destroyer”? The Hebrew

word is *shachath*, which is word No. 7843 in *Strong’s Concordance*. It means to decay, cause ruin, lit or fig. to batter, cast off, corrupt, destroy, perish, spill, spoil, utterly waste.

Most translations call this being in Exodus 12:23 “the destroyer.” I found several exceptions. The *Knox* and *Moffatt* versions translate this as “destroying angel.” The *Good News Bible* says “angel of death.” The *Contemporary English Version* says, “His angel that brings death.” The *New Century Version* says, “the one who brings death.” The *New World Translation* uses the word “ruination.”

Are there any other references to this “destroyer” in the *King James* or *New King James* versions of the Bible? This is the only reference here in Exodus. But let’s look at another scripture that describes this first Passover.

In Psalm 78, Asaph describes this first Passover. He begins by saying, “When He worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan” in verse 43. After describing some of the plagues God sent on Egypt, Asaph writes, “He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending ANGELS OF DESTRUCTION among them, He made a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, but gave their life over to the plague, and destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt” (vv.49-51, emphasis added).

Was It Satan or His Demons?

The words “angels of destruction” in the *New King James* are translated as “evil angels” in the *King James Version*, “messengers of death” in the *Good News Bible* and “angels of disaster” in the *Jerusalem Bible*.

These terms, especially “evil angels” could refer to Satan or his demons. Did God use Satan or his demons to kill the firstborn? Probably not. The Bible does not specifically say Satan or his demons were used. And we have other examples where God used his righteous angel to kill people. For example, when David sinned, God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it (1 Chron. 21:15). This angel is called “an angel of the LORD.”

Who Is ‘the Destroyer?’

In the *Jerusalem Bible*, there is an interesting footnote to Exodus 12:23, where

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from the evil one. ... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:9, 15, 20).

Was his prayer answered? History tells us that except for Judas, all of the original apostles remained faithful to death, and most were martyred. And the gates of hell have not prevailed against the church. It has survived through the centuries until today. His prayer was even for us today, who believe based upon what we hear and read in the Bible.

Holy Spirit Given Through Prayer

It is through prayer for others that people receive the holy spirit.

"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet [it] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17). God *answered this prayer* for the Samaritans and gave his holy spirit to the ones who had been baptized.

Paul Prays for a Congregation

Paul prayed for the brethren in Colosse. This prayer was not for physical healing but for spiritual strength and growth: "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way:

Smile Awhile

"A merry heart does good, like medicine" (Prov. 17:22). Here is this month's dose:

"What's wrong, Bubba?" asked the pastor.

"I need you to pray for my hearing," said Bubba.

The pastor put his hands on Bubba's ears and prayed. When he was done, he asked, "So, how's your hearing?"

"I don't know," said Bubba. "It isn't until next Tuesday."

bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience" (Col. 1:9-11 *NIV*). We, too, should remember to pray for the spiritual needs of others!

Healing Comes Through Prayer

Prayers for the sick are VERY IMPORTANT for their healing. God inspired James to write, "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops" (James 5:14-18 *NIV*).

It doesn't take 100 prayers or 300 Facebook "likes" to be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of just ONE righteous man (or woman) avails much! And if the prayers of one righteous person avails much, what will the prayers of a whole lot of righteous folk do?

Personal Experiences

I know from personal experience that prayers for others are answered! In February 2017, I had surgery. Thanks to the prayers of many family members and friends, everything went well during surgery and I have recovered quickly and completely. At my two-week and six-week check-ups after the surgery, the surgeon seemed truly surprised and pleased at how well I had healed up.

My wife, Marie, had surgery in November. Thanks to the prayers of family and friends, the surgery went extremely well and her recovery has also been swift and complete. Her doctor, too, seemed to be impressed with how well everything had gone and how well she recovered.

Oftentimes on our weekly church prayer requests, we read comments from people who have been healed or who are getting better and they thank everyone for their prayers and cards. They are greatly

encouraged knowing that so many people care about them and are praying for them.

What If They Don't Know?

Do we get well BECAUSE we KNOW people are praying for us, and *that encourages the body to heal itself*? That can be part of the reason! But what if we don't know people are praying for us? Can those prayers still bring healing?

In his book, *Timeless Healing*, Dr. Herbert Benson writes:

"Some studies indicate that intercessory prayer, that is, praying for someone else, is effective, although further study is needed. However, it is interesting to see that intercessory prayer may have worked in the following study because the patients did not know anyone was praying for their recovery. Thus, if intercessory prayer worked, it could not have been the result of remembered wellness. Almost four hundred patients who had once been hospitalized in a San Francisco coronary care unit were studied for ten months. Half of the patients were assigned someone to pray on their behalf and half were not. The patients who had received intercessory prayer had significantly fewer episodes of congestive heart failure, fewer cardiac arrests, less pneumonia, and required fewer diuretics and antibiotics" (p. 182).

Good results happened even though the patients did not know people were praying for them!

As a side note, the people praying in this study were NOT Church of God people. That means God can hear the prayers of people in the world, if they humbly and faithfully pray to Him! How much more do you think God pays attention to the prayers of his called-out ones in his church?

Conclusion

We have seen example after example from the Bible of intercessory prayer doing A LOT OF GOOD! It saves people from death! It changes God's mind! It heals the sick! It gives spiritual strength and encouragement! It protects people from Satan! It empowers people with the holy spirit! We have seen that it offers encouragement and helps others to heal when they know people are praying for them, and also when they don't know people are praying for them.

Intercessory prayer DOES WORK! So keep it up! *Let's keep praying for each other!*

Remember what James wrote. He tells us in no uncertain terms, "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Know Your Bible Answers

- 1) A camel. 2) The Egyptians. 3) Jacob. 4) The LORD (through Isaiah). 5) 300.

Why Leaven Pictures Sin

By Gregory Dullum

Beginning with sunset on Friday, March 29, God’s people will keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. On God’s sacred calendar, this will be the 15th day of the first month. “And on the fifteenth day of the same month in the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven says you must eat unleavened bread” (Lev. 23:6).

Prior to the beginning of the Feast, we must remove all leaven from our property. “Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters” (Ex. 13:7).

The physical act of removing leaven from our homes represents the spiritual act of removing sin from our lives. The Apostle Paul makes this connection in 1 Cor. 5:6-7: “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Just as we are to examine our homes to find all the leaven and put it out; we are to examine our lives prior to Passover, to

find our sins and put them out of our lives (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

Physical leavening has much in common with spiritual sin. Notice these similarities:

1. We are to put out ALL leaven from our homes (Ex. 13:7). We are to cease from ALL sin (Rom. 6:1-2, 12).

2. A little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6). Once a tiny bit of yeast is introduced into bread dough, the entire loaf is considered leavened. Sin is transgressing God’s law (1 John 3:4). If we transgress just one point, we become guilty of transgressing it all (James 2:10).

A little bit of leaven will grow and spread throughout the entire loaf. If we allow a little sin in our lives, it will lead to more and more sin. We are not to give Satan even a tiny place in our lives (Eph. 4:27). The sinning process starts small and grows worse until it leads to death (James 1:14-15).

3. Leaven causes dough to be “puffed up” with carbon dioxide gas. Sin can cause us to become “puffed up” as well (1 Cor. 4:7, 18-19).

4. Not everything leavened is puffed up. Leaven can be HIDDEN in products, so we must check the ingredients. Not all our sins are obvious to us as we examine ourselves. We must pray for God to reveal to us our SECRET sins (Ps. 90:8).

What Is and Isn’t Leavening?

As we strive to get all leavening out of our homes prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:15, 19), which begins at sundown on March 30, it helps to know what we are looking for. Ingredient lists can be confusing!

Leaven is an ingredient incorporated into bread dough which causes the dough to rise through the release of CO₂ through either a chemical process (such as baking powder or baking soda) or through a metabolic process of fermentation (such as yeast).

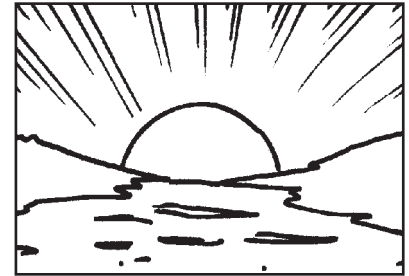
The following ingredients are leaven: **leaven, leavening** (Some processed foods just say “leaven” or “leavening”), **yeast** (including wild yeast in sourdough starter), **crackermeal** (crumbled crackers mixed with the meat in some cans of ravioli), **baking soda** [also listed as **sodium bicarbonate** (saleratus), **potassium bicarbonate** (potash), **ammonium carbonate** (baker’s ammonium) or **ammonium bicarbonate**

(hart-shorn)], and **baking powder**.

Not leavening are: **autolyzed yeast** and **autolyzed yeast extract** (flavoring), **sodium phosphate** (used in cooked chicken) **corn meal** (corn flour in tamales), **torula yeast** (a dead yeast used for its nutritional value or to add flavor), **potassium carbonate** or **sodium carbonate** (found in dried Ramen noodle soups), **brewer’s yeast** (a dead yeast used for nutritional value), **cream of tartar** (an acid often combined with baking soda), **tartrate powder** (a phosphate or sulfate powder usually added with cream of tartar), **alum** (a metallic double salt usually added with cream of tartar), **sorbitan monostearate** (flavor and texture enhancer), **polysorbate 60** (a preservative), **egg whites** (will cause dough to puff up with hot air but does not release carbon dioxide), and **steam or hot air** (such as in popovers or angel food cake—however, some store-bought angel food cakes have other leavening agents).

Fun Fact

of creation, history, holidays & the Bible



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

Some scholars believe the word Easter comes from an early German word—eostarum—which means dawn.

Witerature

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

They Don’t Write Like This Anymore compiled by William H. Taft, Heritage House Publishing, 2009, p. 29.

A Husband’s Crown

“If a youth is wooingly disposed towards any damsel, as he values his happiness, let him follow my advice. Call on the lady when she least expects you and take notice of the appearance of all that is under her control. Observe if the shoe fits neatly—if the gloves are clean and the hair neat—and I would forgive a man for breaking off an engagement if he discovered a greasy novel hid under the cushion of a sofa, or a hole in the garniture of the prettiest foot in the world.

“A woman cannot always be dressed, particularly one in the middle or humble life, when her duty, and it is consequently to be hoped her pleasure, lies in superintending and assisting in all domestic matters; but she may always be neat and well-appalled, and as certainly as a virtuous woman is a crown of glory to her husband, so surely is a slovenly one a crown of thorns.

“*St. Louis Missouri Argus, August 5, 1836*”

Prov. 12:4

Memory Scripture

“Virtuous woman chapter”

—Proverbs 31

Death Angel

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this angel is called “the destroyer.” The footnote reads:

“The destroying angel, 1 Cor. 10:10; Heb. 11:28, is the messenger entrusted with the execution of God’s vengeance. Cf. Gen. 19:1, 2 [Sodom and Gomorrah]; 2 Sam. 24:16; [another account of David numbering Israel] 2 Kings 19:35 [“... the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead”]. In these last two places he is called ‘angel of Yahweh’ but the texts, unlike those quoted in the note to Gen. 16:7, distinguish him from God.”

Sometimes God himself is referred to as an Angel with a capital “A.” This, we understand, was the preincarnate Jesus Christ, manifesting Himself to mankind. We see this in the case of Moses and the burning bush. “And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush” (Ex. 3:2). This word “Angel” with a capital “A” referred to God Himself. But the destroying angel, according to the footnote in the *Jerusalem Bible*, is SEPARATE from God.

There are two references to the destroyer in the New Testament: 1 Cor. 10:10 says the Israelites who murmured in the wilderness were killed by the destroyer (KJV) or destroying angel (*New International Version*). Heb. 11:28 (NIV) calls the angel who killed the firstborn Egyptians “the destroyer of the firstborn.”

Again, who or what was this “destroyer”? It was NOT Satan or his demons and it was NOT God. It was not some mysterious green fog as in the movie, *The Ten Commandments*. It was “the messenger entrusted with the execution of God’s vengeance.” He is most often referred to as “the destroyer.” God told the destroyer where to go and whom to kill. And God prevented the destroyer from entering any home that had Passover blood on the doorposts.

Is it okay to call him a death angel? He usually is called “the destroyer.” Sometimes he is called “the angel of the Lord.” He is called a number of names in different translations. The *Good News Bible* calls him “angel of death” and that’s close enough to “death angel” for me. I see no need to quibble over semantics.

So who killed the firstborn of Egypt? The actual killing was done by one of God’s angels called “the destroyer.” But ultimately, as we saw in the Scriptures we read first, it was God Himself who takes full responsibility for the death of the firstborn. The answer to the quiz is both C & D.



Earthquakes Shake Alaska and Taiwan

“A powerful undersea earthquake sent Alaskans fumbling for suitcases and racing to evacuation centers in the middle of the night after a cell phone alert warned a tsunami could hit communities along the state’s southern coast and parts of British Columbia.

“The monster waves never materialized, but people who fled endured hours of tense waiting at shelters before they were cleared to return home. ...

“The magnitude 7.9 quake in the Gulf of Alaska triggered the jarring alert after midnight Tuesday [Jan. 23]” (“Quake sends Alaskans fleeing feared tsunami” Associated Press, *Southeast Missourian*, Jan. 24, 2018, p. 9A).

Two weeks later, an earthquake hit Taiwan.

“Rescue workers worked Wednesday to free people trapped after a strong earthquake near Taiwan’s east coast caused several buildings to cave in and tilt dangerously. At least six people were killed and 76 could not be contacted following the quake. ...

“The shallow, magnitude 6.4 quake late Tuesday night caused at least four buildings to cave in and shift on their foundations” (“Six dead, 76 missing after strong quake hits Taiwan” by Tai-jing Wu (Associated Press), *Southeast Missourian*, Feb. 8, 2018, p. 7A).

Earthquakes in various places are a sign we are nearing the time of Christ’s return, but this is just “the beginning of sorrows” (Mat. 24:3, 7-8).

Doomsday Clock Set to 2 Minutes to Midnight

“The Doomsday Clock, a potent symbol of scientific concerns about humanity’s possible annihilation, was advanced 30 by seconds on Thursday [Jan. 25], to 2 minutes to midnight, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists announced in Washington.

“The last time the clock was moved so close to midnight was in 1953, during the Cold War.

“ ‘In 2017, world leaders failed to re-

spond effectively to the looming threats of nuclear war and climate change, making the world security situation more dangerous than it was a year ago —and as dangerous as it has been since World War II,’ the bulletin’s science and security board, which oversees the clock, said in a statement.

“It cited the risks from North Korea’s nuclear program; discord between Russia and the United States; tensions in the South China Sea; the buildup of nuclear arsenals of Pakistan and India; and uncertainty over the Iran nuclear deal. ...

“The scientists added: ‘To call the world nuclear situation dire is to understate the danger—and its immediacy.’

The clock was last set at 2 minutes to midnight in 1953, after the Americans and then the Soviets tested thermonuclear weapons for the first time, within six months of each other. ...

“The clock has been adjusted many times since it debuted in 1947. Since 2010 ... the needle has moved ever closer to midnight: 5 minutes in 2012, 3 minutes in 2015, and two and a half minutes last year. ...

“ ‘One of the things about the clock is that it doesn’t change in response to individual events,’ Lawrence M. Krauss, a cosmologist at Arizona State University, and a member of the board, said in a phone interview on Thursday. ‘It’s really hard to compare, in an absolute sense, today to 1953. More important is whether the clock is closer to or farther from midnight’ ” (“Doomsday Clock Is Set at 2 Minutes to Midnight, Closest Since 1950s” by Sewell Chan, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, Jan. 25, 2018, pp. 1-3).

Mankind will NOT become *annihilated* from this planet! *We have Christ’s promise* on that. But we will get close! He warned, “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ... For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been seen since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [alive]; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Mat. 24:6, 21-22).