

THE SABBATH SCOOP

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... And the TRUTH Shall Make You FREE

What is the freedom that true Christians experience?

by Gregory Dullum

On July 4, Americans celebrate their NATIONAL freedom. Christians also have a FREEDOM to celebrate.

Once, Jesus met with some Jews and many believed on Him. He told them that if they BELIEVED *and obeyed*, they would experience FREEDOM.

“As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’ ” (John 8:30-32). The TRUTH will make us FREE ... *but free from what?*

Declaration of Independence

In the Declaration of Independence, the American colonists set forth FROM WHAT they were *being declared free*:

“WHEN IN THE COURSE OF HUMAN EVENTS, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect



NAPS photo

Fireworks behind the U.S. Capitol dome are used to celebrate Independence Day in America.

their safety and happiness.

“Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience has shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

“But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these

states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world” (*The Revolutionary Years*, Mortimer J. Adler, editor, 1976, p. 182).

The colonists wanted to be freed from “a long train of abuses and usurpations” which the King of England perpetrated on them through “a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny.”

If we Christians had a Declaration of Independence declaring our freedom, what would it say? From what would we be made free?

Free from the Death Penalty

“The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). And “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

So where does that leave *all of mankind*? It leaves us as *condemned* prisoners, awaiting the DEATH PENALTY, like prisoners who are on death row. Our *eternal death* is just as sure as those prisoners’ deaths await them in the electric chair, by lethal injection, or some other means of execution.

Christ paid the penalty for our sins. He died in our stead. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree’)” (Gal. 3:13).

We are NOT FREE to go on sinning. Christ’s sacrifice paid the penalty for our PAST sins; it doesn’t pay the penalty for future sins (Rom. 3:25). Each time we sin, we must repent again.

Free from Penalties of Sin

The wages of sin is death, true enough. But sin produces *more* than death. *Living God’s way* RESULTS in every good

FREEDOM

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Freedom

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thing. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He wants us to experience the ABUNDANCE of life!

The Father blesses us tremendously. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" (James 1:17-18). God wants *every good thing* for us.

If we live in sin, that sin *produces* BAD RESULTS that *hurt us*. We become SLAVES to our passions. Jesus said, "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). What kind of taskmaster do we serve when we are slaves to sin?

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in times past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21).

These sins produce HURTFUL results.

Adultery produces guilt and feelings of betrayal in a marriage and often leads to divorce, which shatters the family and usually scars children.

Fornication damages future marriage relationships and can spread sexually transmitted diseases, some of which have no cure and lead to death.

Sorcery can bring misery when people get involved with demons and the evil spirit world.

Know Your Bible

by Charles Nenninger

1. What does a Christian have that others don't?
2. What tribe could shoot a bow and arrow well both right- and left-handed?
3. Did the wise men visit Jesus in a stable or in a house?
4. What city did Jesus choose to live in when He was old enough to live on his own?
5. What is another word for "redemption?"

(Answers on page 5)



Photo by Greg Dullum

It was in this room that the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

Contentions are the opposite of PEACE. It means to ARGUE *all the time*.

Jealousies hurt relationships.

Heresies destroy a church and break apart families.

Committing murder leads to a life behind bars or the death penalty. That's besides the hurt murder inflicts on victims, and victims' families and friends.

Drunkenness leads to guilt feelings, hangovers, headaches, liver damage, and a chance to get arrested for DWI or to kill someone while driving drunk.

Living in sin does not produce happy results! By knowing the TRUTH and *living God's way*, we are FREE from all these tragic results of living in sin.

While many in the world are under the HEAVY BURDEN of WORKING seven days a week, *never taking a rest*, we are FREE from work on the seventh day (Ex. 20:8-10). We are free to fellowship with God's people, to worship God and study and get our minds off our day-to-day worries for a whole day each week (Lev. 23:3, Isa. 58:13).

And while many work so hard they don't bother to take vacations and go anywhere, we are free to travel around the world on an all-expense-paid "vacation" called the Feast of Tabernacles! God gives us back one of his tithes that pays our way for a free vacation. And we MUST take it every year (Deut. 14:22-26).

Free from Lies

By believing the TRUTH, we are freed

from *believing lies*.

We are not under the burden of believing in an eternal hell fire. The popular belief of hell can really torment people. They fear for both themselves and for their loved ones.

We are free from the lie of evolution that teaches that life has NO PURPOSE. How FUTILE life would be *without a purpose!* It's why so much of this world is suffering; many people are not trying to please God. They seek only to please themselves (Rom.

FREEDOM

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The SABBATH SCOOP

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Test Your Bible Knowledge

A small feature every month is our “Memory Scripture” on page 5. Do you remember these scriptures?

Each month, we feature a Memory Scripture on page 5 of *The Sabbath Scoop*. This month, we review some of these scriptures. Write the number for the correct answer on the line before each scripture. Match as many as you can before checking your answers with your Bible.

Chapters to Remember

_____ Virtuous Woman

God

_____ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared Him.

_____ For with God nothing will be impossible.

_____ “I and My Father are one.”

_____ It is impossible for God to lie.

_____ A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.

The Bible

_____ For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.

_____ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

_____ For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Human Nature

_____ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in times past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Pride & Humility

_____ Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

1. Gen. 2:24	14. John 1:18	27. Eph. 6:1
2. Lev. 18:22	15. John 10:30	28. Eph. 6:2-3
3. Ps. 68:5	16. John 14:15	29. Eph. 6:12
4. Prov. 16:18	17. Acts 14:22	30. Philipp. 2:3
5. Proverbs 31	18. 1 Cor. 5:8	31. Philipp. 3:20
6. Eccles. 12:1	19. 1 Cor. 10:12	32. Col. 3:23
7. Isa. 28:10	20. 1 Cor. 13:1	33. 1 Thes. 5:21
8. Mat. 5:5	21. 2 Cor. 9:7	34. 2 Thes. 3:10
9. Mat. 5:9	22. Gal. 5:19-21	35. 1 Tim. 5:8
10. Mat. 5:48	23. Gal. 5:22-23	36. 2 Tim. 3:16
11. Mat. 7:12	24. Gal. 6:9	37. Heb. 4:12
12. Mat. 25:21	25. Eph. 5:22	38. Heb. 6:18
13. Luke 1:37	26. Eph. 5:25	

_____ Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

_____ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Christian Living

_____ Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them.”

_____ Test all things; hold fast what is good.

_____ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

_____ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

_____ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

_____ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

_____ Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets.

_____ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.

_____ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not lose heart.

_____ For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The Commandments

_____ If you love Me, keep My com-

mandments.

Feasts and Holy Days

_____ 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.

Tithing & Finances

_____ So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

_____ For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

_____ But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Trials

_____ “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

Love, Sex, Marriage & Family

_____ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

_____ You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.

_____ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

_____ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.

_____ Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

_____ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

_____ “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

Death & Afterlife

_____ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

_____ His lord said to him, “well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”

Why So Much Wine at a N.T. Wedding?

Why did Jesus turn 120 to 180 gallons of water into wine at a wedding after the other wine had run out?

Was Jesus promoting drunkenness?

by Gregory Dullum

Times have changed since the days Christ walked the earth. Because customs change with the times, it is sometimes hard to understand certain events in the life of Christ. Take the following story for example.

Jesus Turns Water into Wine

“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.’”

“His mother said to the servants, ‘Whatever He says to you, do it.’”

“Now there were set there six waterpots of stone ... containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the waterpots with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. And then He said to them, ‘Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.’ And they took it.

“When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from, (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bride-

groom. And he said to him, ‘Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior; but you have kept the good wine until now’” (John 2:1-10).

If this wedding had taken place today, in America, there would have been no need for so much wine! Certainly Christ did not advocate drunkenness when he created 120-180 gallons of wine for the wedding!

Many statements are made about marriage in the Bible. We, in the church, are to be Christ’s bride in the near future. So we ought to know how a wedding was conducted in the times of Christ.

Let’s go back to the New Testament times and attend the wedding of the imaginary Joseph and Sarah.

Bridegroom Prepares

While Joseph and his 30 companions (Judges 14:11) dress in colorful priest-like dress (Isa. 61:10) for the wedding ceremony, Joseph explains the events that led up to this eventful evening.

“It is our custom,” he begins, “to believe that marriage is more than the uniting of a man and wife, but also the uniting of the two families. Sarah’s family is giving of the very best they possess: their daughter. She is their own flesh and blood. So to put things on an equal footing, my family must give something to Sarah’s family. My father gave a very valuable jewel. Some families don’t have jewels to give, so they give a bridal sum, or *mohar* as we call it, of all their property. This is not just a material compensation, but is a mental balancing for what the bride’s family gives” (*Hebrew Marriage* by David R. Mace, 1953, p. 172).

“The giving of the jewel to Sarah’s family made our espousal valid,” Joseph continued.

We asked him how long his espousal had been. “Two and a half months,” Joseph replied. “Of course, they don’t all last the same amount of time. One guy I knew, Samuel Ben Gaza, had his espousal last three years. But that’s very unusual. Usually, it lasts two or three months.”

We asked Joseph what purpose the espousal period served. He looked up from latching his ceremonial boots and smiled. “During the espousal period, the bride lives with her parents and proves her fidelity to her future husband,” he said.

We asked him how he happened to choose the fourth day of the week to be married. The coming weekend is a long weekend, because Caesar’s birthday is next Monday. We asked Joseph why he didn’t wait until the weekend. “Because,” he explained “By our traditions, a virgin marries on the fourth day, and a widow on the fifth” (*The Knot Tied* by William Tegg, 1970, p. 53).

Bride Prepares

We thanked him for giving us his time to talk to him, and decided to let him finish dressing in peace. We walked through the narrow streets of Jerusalem to the house of the bride. We were led to her dressing chamber, and found Sarah seated on a little stool with a fluffy, red velvet cushion. She sat before mirrors, and gathered around her were maidens, who were disposing her hair in ringlets. While preparing the bride, these maidens sang light, happy songs of rejoicing and gladness. The notes seemed to flow from their golden throats, and as we listened, we, too, were caught up in the spirit of this wonderful occasion (Tegg, pp. 52-53).

When they had finished her hair, they decked her in her wedding attire and put her veil in place. The dress was beautiful. It was white with inwrought gold (Ps. 45:13) and covered with jewels (Isa. 49:18). It is no wonder we read of the new Jerusalem “descending out of heaven from God, all arrayed like a bride beautified and adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2, *Amplified*).

The Bridegroom Comes

“Blessed be he who comes!” the bride’s maids exclaim. We walked over to the window and peered down on the street below. Under a canopy, and surrounded by his companions, or the children of the bridechamber, as Christ referred to them (Mat. 9:15) is the bridegroom.

They entered, and were led to the inner court. Sarah gathered her bride’s maids around her, and left the dressing chamber. We followed her down the marble stairs, past the potted ferns, to the inner court.

The Wedding Ceremony

We joined the other guests who were watching the ceremony. We asked the man next to us if the wedding ceremony is al-

Smile Awhile

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

The minister just had all of his remaining teeth pulled and his new dentures were being made.

The first Sunday, he only preached 10 minutes.

The second Sunday, he preached only 20 minutes.

But, on the third Sunday, he preached 1 hour 25 minutes.

When asked about this by some of the congregation, he responded this way:

“The first Sunday, my gums were so sore it hurt to talk. The second Sunday, my dentures were hurting a lot. The third Sunday, I accidentally grabbed my wife’s dentures ... and I couldn’t stop talking!”

ways held in the court. He said not always. It depended upon the family. Some held theirs in an upper room of a private house.

We looked toward the front of the room to see Joseph and Sarah standing under the canopy. We noticed, in addition to the colorful attire we had seen them dress in, they also wore crowns, which were exchanged several times during the ceremony.

A rabbi entered through a side door and stood before the betrothed pair. The man next to us, sensing that this was the first wedding of this kind that we had attended, explained that a rabbi was not always present. Sometimes an elder invoked the benediction. Then the rabbi gave the cup of wine to Joseph and Sarah, who pledged one another. Joseph then drained the cup and dashed it on the floor. He crushed the remains under his heel.

Next, the marriage contract was read, and attested to by every person present drinking a cup of wine. Then the friends of the couple walked around the canopy singing psalms and throwing rice. We noticed that the guests, too, wore special apparel for the wedding (Tegg, pp. 52-53). This reminded us of the parable told by Jesus:

“So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man which had not a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then saith the king unto his servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 22:10-13 *KJV*).

Joseph’s and Sarah’s wedding ceremony was concluded by the rabbi invoking the seven blessings, drinking the loving cup, and passing it around the room (*A Short History of Marriage* by Ethyl L. Urlin, 1969, p. 108).

The Wedding Procession

The sun had gone down by this time. (The feast is called a supper in Rev. 19:9, and the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25 indicates the ceremony took place in the late evening.) Everyone made ready for the next step of the wedding ceremony: the procession to the place of the wedding feast, usually held in the house of the bridegroom. Musicians tuned their instruments, and torch-bearers prepared their torches.

The torches were wooden poles with saucer-like tops. In the saucer was an oil-soaked cloth which burned. The torch bearers filled pouches with oil to replen-

ish their supply when it ran low.

This first century torch light parade was a spectacular sight to behold. Preceded by 30 torches, and surrounded by music, dancing, and singing (Ps. 45:15, Luke 7:32 *Amplified*), the newlyweds traveled to the bridegroom’s house under the canopy. We were informed that the very rich sometimes used a carriage, rather than a canopy for this part of the ceremony.

On the way to the wedding feast, money was thrown to the members of the crowd to remind them they had been present at the wedding. We caught a piece and put it in our pocket.

The Wedding Feast

Once the procession had reached the house of the bridegroom, we all sat down to a feast which lasted seven days.

It was quite different from the two-hour wedding receptions we had been used to. Now we understood why so much wine was needed at the wedding in Cana.

During the feast, riddles were told (Judges 14:12). (“How do you drive a publican crazy?” asked Joseph of his wife and guests. When no one could answer, Joseph replied, “Put him in a round room and tell him his tax is in the corner.” The room filled with laughter.)

On the fifth day of the feast, there were horse races. Mark, the son of Abram, and governor (manager or king) of the feast came in first place every time. (He was the only one with a horse.)

Throughout the feast, love songs were sung. We particularly liked the arrangements for Psalm 45 and Song of Solomon.

Consummation

As the feast drew to a close, a bridal chamber was prepared for the newlyweds. Here, the consummation of the marriage took place. The bridegroom removed the veil of the bride, and shouted for joy (John 3:29).

Conclusion

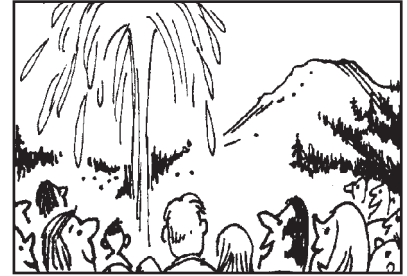
Now that the entire ceremony was over, and the guests departed back to their homes, we came back to the 21st century with all of the events of the past seven days whirling through our heads, and sat down to record the events to share with others.

Know Your Bible Answers

- 1) The holy spirit. 2) The Benjamites.
- 3) A house. 4) Capernaum. 5) Salvation.

Fun Fact

of creation, history, holidays & the Bible



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

The first national park was Yellowstone National Park. It was authorized by an act of Congress in 1872.

Witerature

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

Wild Men, Wild Alaska by Rocky McElveen, Thomas Nelson, 2006, pp. 45-46.

Emotions & Wits

“I was a tired and bloody mess, having dealt with two caribou on the side of the mountain. I was parched rotten for a drink of water. But when I reached for the water jug, I was astounded to find that the five gallons I had left in camp were all gone. *Rhett must have taken a bath in it!* I thought. He didn’t seem to be concerned either. He saw me looking longfully at the five-gallon can and ruefully at the creek far below.

“‘Rocky,’ he said, ‘we need some water, son. I need it to cut my scotch!’ I nearly hit him. I tried vainly to smile and managed to say with some effort, ‘I’ll be glad to fetch that water, Rhett.’ ...

“Someone once said, ‘When emotions climb high, wits run low.’ A quarter mile down, I realized a part of me was gone. My emotions had dulled my wits, and I had forgotten my rifle. ... A guide may forget to eat, forget what day it is, forget Valentine’s Day, forget he is married, but he *never* forgets his gun.”

Ps. 37:8, Prov. 14:16-17, Eccles. 7:9

Memory Scripture

The Creation Chapter.

—Genesis 1



Photo by Gregory Dullum

Independence Hall in Philadelphia is where the Founding Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence.

Freedom

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1:22-25).

We are free from the LIE that God's law is done away. We know God's law is eternal and is holy, right and good (Rom. 7:12).

We have a guide to life. It's the Bible—God's Word. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). With God's spirit in our minds, we are free to believe the truth that is revealed in the Bible (John 16:13).

The world has NO GUIDE to its path. The world believes the lie that God's law is done away, so the people wander aimlessly, not knowing right from wrong.

Instead of believing the fairy tales of becoming ghosts or angels when we die, or the lie that this life is all there is, we know the truth about our destiny. Our belief that we will become God's children and co-heirs with Christ frees us from the day-to-day burdens of this life (Rom. 8:16-17). We can better bear our daily sufferings because we know that a TRULY GREAT future awaits us (v. 18).

We are comforted by the TRUTH that God is working out as purpose in our lives. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

What a great freedom! Because we know the truth, we are FREE! Free from the death penalty sin brings upon us, free from other penalties sin exacts on us physically, and free from believing lies. Let's rejoice in the liberty we have in Christ!

END-TIME EVENTS

RECENT WORLD EVENTS & THEIR PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

Food-Borne Illnesses Cause Sickness, Death

Two recent cases of food-borne illnesses have made the news.

"California health officials say about 100 people statewide have contracted norovirus in the past week after eating raw oysters from British Columbia, Canada. ...

"Canada has reported more than 170 cases of gastrointestinal illness linked to consumption of raw oysters. ...

"Norovirus is contagious and causes inflammation of the stomach and intestines. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea and fever" ("Oysters sicken Californians," *Southeast Missourian*, May 3, 2018, p. 10A).

(These people could have avoided getting sick if they had obeyed God's food laws and not eaten oysters. The only seafood which God created to be eaten are fish that have both fins and scales—Deut. 14:9-10).

The second case of food poisoning could not be so easily avoided. It involves E. coli infecting romaine lettuce.

"The first death has been reported in a national food poisoning outbreak linked to romaine lettuce.

"The death was reported in California ...

"The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its numbers on the outbreak Wednesday [May 3], revealing 121 people had gotten sick in 25 states. At least 52 people have been hospitalized, including 14 with kidney failure, which is an unusually high number of hospitalizations.

"Health officials have tied the E. coli outbreak to romaine lettuce grown in Yuma, Arizona, which provides most of the romaine sold in the U.S. during the winter. ...

"Most E. coli bacteria are not harmful, but some produce toxins causing severe illnesses. People who get sick from toxin-producing E. coli come down with symptoms about three to four days after swallowing the germ, with many suffering bloody diarrhea, severe stomach cramps and vomiting.

"Most people recover within a week, but some illnesses can last longer and

be more severe" ("First death reported in romaine lettuce E. coli outbreak," Associated Press, *Southeast Missourian*, May 3, 2018, p. 10A).

When asked by his disciples, "what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus Christ gave a reply that included, "And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" (Mat. 24:3, 7).

The American Heritage Dictionary defines a pestilence as a "usually fatal epidemic disease."

Other prophecies refer to diseases at the end time. In Revelation 6, John saw four horsemen riding in a vision of the end time. The white horse represented false Christs, the red horse pictured wars, the black horse pictured famine and the pale horse represented death-dealing diseases (vv. 1-8).

Ezekiel prophesied that pestilence would be part of national punishment on a disobedient Israel at the end time: "One third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; And I will scatter another third to the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them" (Ezek. 5:12).

We can expect to see more and more disease epidemics as we near the time of Christ's return.

Earthquake Hits Japan

"Residents in western Japan were cleaning up debris Monday evening [June 18] after a powerful earthquake hit the area around Osaka, the country's second-largest city, killing four people and injuring hundreds while knocking over walls and setting off fires.

"The magnitude 6.1 earthquake damaged buildings and left many homes without water or gas. The quake also grounded flights in and out of Osaka and paralyzed traffic and commuter trains most of the day" ("Strong quake in Japan kills 4," Associated Press, *Southeast Missourian*, June 19, 2018, p. 8A).

One of the signs that Jesus Christ gave to signal his return and the end of the age is "earthquakes in various places" (Mat. 24:3, 7).