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THE EMPTY CAGE

Love will set you free

POWER FOR A PURPOSE

Why you need the Holy Spirit

THE COMING CASHLESS SOCIETY

There's more to it than
meets the eye

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Personally speaking

Two months ago in this column I quoted Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) as saying, "I know of no one who has done more for humanity than Jesus." Much of the world, Christian and non-Christian alike, would agree. Yet have you ever considered how the world *wouldn't* have been changed for the better if Jesus' disciples hadn't told others what they had seen and heard and learned with Jesus? It could have stopped with them.

Remember, Jesus' three-year public ministry wasn't documented by daily newspaper reports or sent around the world by the BBC and CNN, as it no doubt would be today. How many people, do you suppose, ever saw the miracles Jesus performed or heard Him speak?—Fifty thousand?—One hundred thousand? How many saw Him die on the cross?—A few hundred, perhaps. How many did He appear to after He rose from the dead on Easter morning?—A little over 500, we are told in 1 Corinthians 15:4-6.

Jesus did what only He could do—He died for our sins—but His disciples also did what only *they* could do. They kept His message alive.

What if, after Jesus' death, Simon Peter and his fellow former-fishermen disciples had gone back permanently to their fishing (John 21:2-3)? What if Matthew had gone back to collecting taxes? What if doubting Thomas had continued to doubt? What if the disciples hadn't obeyed Jesus' final instruction before His ascension to wait for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and received "power from on high" (Luke 24:49)? How many millions would have died without knowing the Savior? Would we even have the Gospel today?

As we celebrate Jesus' resurrection this Easter, let's also celebrate Holy Spirit power and those who kept the Gospel alive by sharing Jesus with others. It was up to them. Now it's up to us.

Keith Phillips

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Phillips". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name.

For the *Activated* family

THE EMPTY CAGE



THE DAY BEFORE EASTER, a man named George Thomas was taking a walk when he saw a boy coming toward him swinging an old rusty birdcage. He stopped the boy and asked what was in the cage.

"Just three old birds," the boy said. "I'm going to take them home and have some fun—tease them and pull out their feathers to make them fight."

"But you'll get tired of those birds sooner or later," Thomas said. "What will you do with them then?"

"Oh, I have some cats," said the boy. "They like birds. I'll feed them to my cats."

Thomas was silent for a moment. "How much do you want for those birds, son?"

"What?" the boy said in disbelief. "You don't want

them, mister. They're just plain field birds. They don't sing and they aren't even pretty."

"How much?" Thomas asked again. The boy sized up Thomas as if he were crazy and said, "\$10."

Thomas reached into his pocket, took out a \$10 bill, put it in the boy's hand, and took the birdcage. In a flash, the boy was gone.

Thomas carried the cage to a grassy spot where there was a tree. Then he opened the door and set the birds free.

The next morning—Easter Day—Thomas showed the now empty cage to a group of friends and told them about the boy and the birds. Then he told the following allegory:

One day Satan and Jesus were having a conversation.

"Yes, sir," Satan gloated. "I just caught a whole world full of people! I set a

trap and got them all!"

"What are you going to do with them?" Jesus asked.

"I'm going to have some fun!" Satan replied with glee. "I'm going to teach them how to lie and cheat and steal and kill. This is going to be great!"

"And what will you do when you're through with them?" Jesus asked.

"Then I'll kill them," Satan said proudly.

"How much do you want for them?" Jesus asked.

"Oh, you don't want those people! They aren't any good. They'll just hate you. They'll cause you nothing but misery and heartbreak, and they'll kill you in the end. You don't want those people!"

"How much?" Jesus asked again.

Satan looked at Him and sneered. "Your LIFE!" "DONE!"

Then Jesus paid the price. •

"You don't want them, mister. They're just plain field birds.

They don't sing and they aren't even pretty."

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

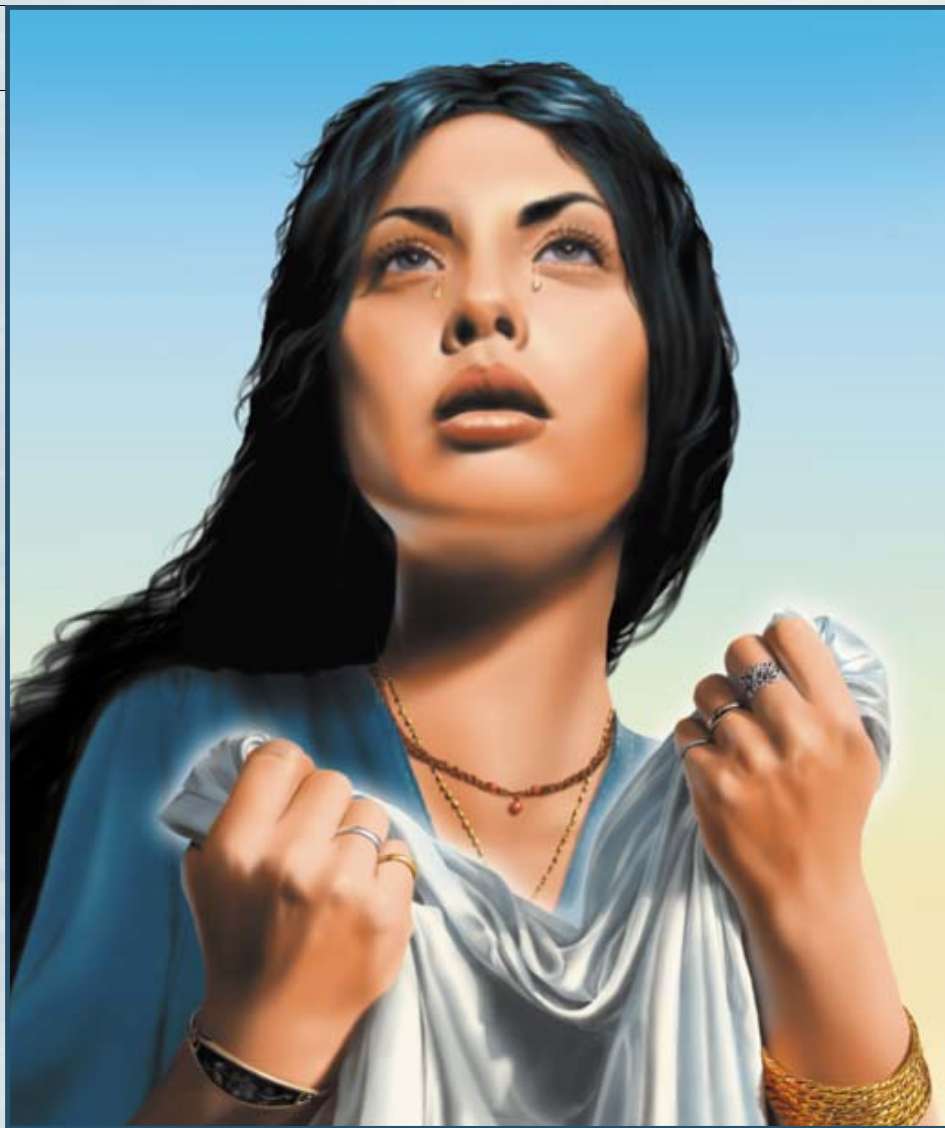


EASTER CELEBRATES JESUS' RESURRECTION. His cruel death by crucifixion took place at the same time as the Jewish holy celebration of Passover. What they had been symbolizing for over 1,000 years with the killing of sacrificial lambs and the Passover supper was now happening to the Lamb of God. On the very evening and at the very hour that people throughout the land were selecting and slaughtering Passover lambs, Jesus was crucified.

The way Jesus died also fulfilled many other Old Testament prophecies in amazing detail.

“He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). When Jesus stood trial for His life before the governor, Pontius Pilate, Jesus didn't speak in His own defense (Matthew 27:12–14).

About 1,000 years before crucifixion became a usual means of execution in the Roman Empire, King David wrote of the Messiah: “All my bones are out of joint. ... They



THE EASTER Story

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

pierced My hands and My feet” (Psalm 22:14,16). In death by crucifixion, the weight of the victim’s body pulls his arms out of their sockets. Most of the condemned were tied to their crosses, but Jesus was nailed to His—through the hands and feet.

It was also customary for the Romans to break the legs of those who had been hanging on their crosses for hours but hadn’t died yet. The lack of support for the body caused the windpipe and lungs to collapse, and hastened their deaths. But when the Roman executioners came to do this to Jesus, they found that He was already dead. Thus another Bible prophecy was fulfilled: “[God] guards all His bones; not one of them is broken” (Psalm 34:20).

Instead, just to make sure Jesus was dead, one of the Romans thrust a spear into Jesus’ side, piercing His heart. “And immediately blood and water came out” (John 19:34). This fulfilled the scripture, “I am poured out like water ... My heart has melted within Me” (Psalm 22:14). One would expect blood to flow from a spear wound, but not water. Where did that come from? Medical science has found that

God had to temporarily turn His back on His own Son so Jesus might die the death of the sinner.

people who die in great anguish of heart often have an accumulation of water around the heart. Jesus died of a broken heart—for you and me.

Jesus also died feeling like the lost sinner. He went through an experience that, thank God, we will never have to go through—not just crucifixion, not just agony of body, but agony of mind and spirit, feeling that God had deserted Him. As He died, “Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Matthew 27:46).

Had God forsaken Him? Yes, momentarily He had. He had to, that Jesus might die like a sinner dies, without God. Think of it: Jesus died the death of the unsaved, in agony! God had to temporarily turn His back on His own Son so Jesus might die the death of the sinner.

Did God answer Jesus on the cross? There’s no record of an answer. Jesus felt that God had deserted Him at that moment when He needed Him most.

Jesus suffered the spiritual agony of the dying sinner—lost, without salvation, without God, dying for his sins. Only in Jesus’ case He was dying

for *our* sins, the sins of the whole world. He was willing to go through all that so we could be forgiven and have eternal life. Such love!

“And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death” (Isaiah 53:9). Jesus was unjustly condemned and crucified between two common criminals (Matthew 27:38). Yet after His death, a rich man who was among Jesus’ followers, Joseph of Arimathea, laid Jesus’ body in his own new tomb (Matthew 27:57–60).

After Jesus’ body was laid in the tomb, to make sure His disciples didn’t steal His body and claim He’d risen from the dead, the tomb was sealed and some Roman soldiers stood guard (Matthew 27:62–66).

Three days later, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came at dawn to the tomb, and an angel appeared and rolled the stone away. When the Roman guards saw the angel, “they shook for fear of him, and became as dead men.” But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid. ... Jesus is not here; for He is risen, as He said.” And the angel showed the women where Jesus’ body had lain (Matthew 28:1–8). Jesus had risen from the dead! •

Q: MANY RELIGIONS TEACH THAT IT IS NECESSARY FOR US TO SUFFER IN ORDER TO TRULY PLEASE AND DRAW CLOSE TO GOD. IS THIS TRUE?

A: No! God loves us and wants us to be happy and enjoy life. He created this beautiful world to help us experience His love and love Him in return. One of the best ways we can show Him that we love Him and are thankful for all He's done for us is to be happy and praise Him continually.

But sad to say, a lot of people don't realize that God wants them to be happy. They equate godliness with suffering and self-denial, and physical pleasure with sin. Some poor, misguided people even go so far as to torture themselves, thinking that will get them closer to God. They sit on nails, put skewers through their cheeks, walk barefoot on hot coals, whip themselves, have themselves nailed to crosses, and suffer all sorts of other

self-inflicted pain because they think that the more they suffer, the more "religious" or "holy" they will become. This, thank God, is *not* the case according to the Bible!

It's true that there are times when we may need to sacrifice or suffer, but according to the Bible we do not need to inflict it on ourselves as a means to gain personal merit with God. If we suffer through life's trials and tests, there's usually a good reason for it—it's a result of us giving of ourselves to help others, or necessary to help us learn something we wouldn't learn otherwise—not because we think we are going to gain righteousness by it.

He wants to be our closest friend, whose love, count on. He sent Jesus to do what He knew

Q: IF SELF-DENIAL, SACRIFICE, AND SUFFERING ARE NOT THE WAY TO SALVATION, THEN WHAT CAN I DO TO SAVE MYSELF?

A: Nothing! You *can't* save yourself—nobody can! Yet the central belief of most religions is that we can be good enough to save ourselves. In fact, when you think about it, there are really only two schools of religious thought: the do-it-yourself religions, and the God-alone-can-save-you kind.

Most of the world's religions teach their followers that they can save themselves by their own piety and good works, by their own holiness, by their own suffering and self-denial, or by strict obedience to the laws and traditions of that particular religion. But according to the Bible, no

Salvation—The way to Heaven

man yet has been good enough to earn his own salvation. "There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). If we could save ourselves, then we wouldn't need God—which is exactly the point of some false religions today.

No matter how earnestly and sincerely we try by our own piety, good works, or suffering to get close to God, become "enlightened," or attain salvation, we will always fail to reach this goal. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

But there's good news, too. In spite of our mistakes and sinful nature, God *wants* us to have a close personal relationship with Him. He wants to be our closest friend, whose love, faithfulness, concern, and care we can always count on. He wants to be our nearest and dearest helper and friend, so He sent Jesus to do what He knew we couldn't do for ourselves—pay for our sins.

Each of us has made wrong choices at some

time or another. We have acted selfishly and unlovingly. In so doing we not only hurt others, but we hurt God, who is saddened when He sees us going the wrong way.

We're all sinners by nature, and our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). The only way we could be reconciled with God was if our sins were atoned for, and only Jesus—who was Himself perfect—could do that. Jesus gave His life "a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

God loves you so much that He gave His only Son to die in your place, and Jesus loves you so much that He did that willingly.

So if you've been trying to work your way to Heaven, stop! Simply receive Jesus as your Savior by sincerely praying a prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so that all my mistakes and wrongs can be forgiven. I now open the door of my heart and ask You to come in. Please forgive me and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen. •

*faithfulness, concern, and care we can always
we couldn't do for ourselves—pay for our sins.*

We are all sinners.

Ecclesiastes 7:20
Romans 3:10
Romans 3:23

Salvation is ours by grace (undeserved mercy), not works.

Romans 3:20a
Romans 11:6
Ephesians 2:8–9
2 Timothy 1:9
Titus 3:5

Salvation is only through Jesus.

John 3:36b
John 10:1,9
John 14:6
Acts 4:12
1 Corinthians 3:11
1 Timothy 2:5
1 John 5:12

Believe in Jesus.

John 3:16
John 11:25–26
Acts 16:31
Romans 10:9–10
1 John 5:1a

Receive Jesus.

Revelation 3:20
John 1:12
Galatians 4:6
Ephesians 3:17

Salvation is eternal. You can never lose it, even if you make mistakes.

John 6:37
John 10:28
Romans 8:38–39
Hebrews 13:5b
2 Timothy 2:13
1 John 5:13

You can't lose salvation, but as your loving heavenly Father, God will punish you for further wrongdoing.

Psalm 89:30–34
1 Corinthians 3:11–15
Hebrews 12:5–8
Revelation 3:19

POWER FOR A PURPOSE

Shortly before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples that He would send them a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to strengthen, empower, lead, and guide them in their spiritual lives and personal relationships with Him.

When Jesus was with them in body, His disciples loved Him and knew that He loved them. They enjoyed being in His presence and hearing the comforting sound of His voice, but they didn't yet know Him the way they were to know Him later in spirit.

But after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, when the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples found that even though His body was gone from them, His Spirit was with them in greater power than ever before—and not just *with* them, but *in* them!

✱

Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He told His followers to not depart from Jerusalem, but to “wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me. ... And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:4,8). So they waited in Jerusalem, fasting and praying (Acts 1:14).

“Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with



BY DAVID
BRANDT
BERG

one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). About 120 people, both

men and women, were numbered with the disciples at that time (Acts 1:15), and they were all together and united in mind, heart, and spirit.

Jesus had them wait in Jerusalem so that when the infilling of the Holy Spirit came, they would be in a position to win many others to Him. That was the main purpose of the Day of Pentecost—not just the supernatural manifestations that took place. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples was a means to an end.

“And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages they had never learned or spoken before], as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:3–4).

Because this took place on an annual holy day, the Feast of the Harvest, Jerusalem was filled with Jews “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:5–6).

“So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine’ (Acts 2:12–13).

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit .

drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day [9 AM]. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh. ... And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’” (Acts 2:14–17,21).

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about 3,000 souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). Thousands of people accepted Jesus and were saved! That’s the most important thing that happened on the Day of Pentecost. Power for witnessing is the main purpose of the Holy Spirit.

“Continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47).

Then came another one of God’s great setups. God picked somebody that everybody in town knew—a lame man who daily sat begging on the Temple steps. Along came Peter and John, and God performed another great miracle. The man was instantly healed, and the people were filled with wonder (Acts 3:10).

“So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers,



glorified His Servant Jesus. ... And His [Jesus'] name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3: 12–13,16).

“Many of them which heard the Word believed,” and another 5,000 people received Jesus as their Savior (Acts 4:4).

What was it about those first Spirit-filled disciples that convinced so many that Jesus was who He had said He was, the Messiah? “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they

*It shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh.*

had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Peter, John, and the others didn't let their backgrounds or anything else hold them back. They just went ahead and witnessed boldly, and they had tremendous power that got tremendous results. It was obvious that they had been with Jesus. They had the Master's power to carry on the Master's work!

✱

Have you been filled with the Spirit of God's love?

Before the time of Christ, God only anointed certain leaders, kings, and prophets with His Spirit, but now the Holy Spirit is available to *all* who receive Jesus. “It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on *all* flesh” (Joel 2:28).

Ever since the Day of Pentecost, when the first disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Lord has made the same Holy Spirit power available to every Christian. Now everybody can have the Holy Spirit and be led directly by the Lord. Now we can *all* enjoy Him anywhere, everywhere, any time, all the time, in all His power and fullness, and we can all be reached equally, fairly, and simultaneously through the communication of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone who receives Jesus as their Savior is given a certain amount of the Spirit, but receiving a complete infilling—or “baptism”—of the Holy Spirit is usually a subsequent experience to that of salvation. This is why the apostle Paul inquired

of certain disciples he met, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since

you believed?” (Acts 19:2). If you are saved, this power from God is yours for the asking. Like salvation, it is a gift of God. “Your heavenly Father [will] give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13).

Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and you will be closer to Jesus and understand His Word better. The Holy Spirit will also give you the boldness you need to share your faith with others. If you haven't already, you can receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit right now by praying this prayer:

Dear Jesus, please fill me to overflowing with the Holy Spirit so that I can love You more, follow You more closely, and have greater power to tell others about Your love and salvation. Amen. •

HOLY SPIRIT POWER AT WORK TODAY

LAST CHANCE?

FROM HEATHER BRADLEY, USA

One day while out with my son Gabriel, age 6, we offered one of our posters to an older woman as she was getting into her car. She received it gladly, and we started to talk.

A few minutes later, Gabriel pointed out the salvation prayer on the back of the poster and asked if she would like to pray it with him. She said she would. After the prayer, she was almost in tears.

Only then did she confide in us that she was terminally ill with leukemia. Two weeks earlier her doctors had asked her to come in so they could tell her how much longer she had left to live, but she said she didn't want to know. "Only God knows that," she had told them.

We offered to pray there and then for her health and strength and for her leukemia to go into remission if that was what the Lord knew would be best. She was very thankful.

We never know when we may be someone's last chance to receive Jesus and God's gift of eternal life!

SAVED ON THE BRINK

FROM JUSTIN DONNELL, USA

The phone rang at The Family's toll-free hotline number in the USA, and I answered it. Jay, the stranger on the line, sounded weird, like he was on drugs. He told me that he had a gun to his head, was "sick of it all," and was going to kill himself.

Then he explained that he had met a girl from The Family a while back. She had had "a special fire in her eyes," he said. When he had commented on that, she had told him that it was the love of God. That had really made an impression, and he had felt that love. Just a few minutes before he phoned, as he was about to pull the trigger, he had remembered her and called us as a last resort.

I told Jay that Jesus loved him, that He wanted to come into his heart and be a part of his life, and that He could give him the peace he wanted desperately but hadn't been able to find anywhere else. I shared some basic verses from the Bible about salvation, and Jay was touched and excited to hear that Jesus could love and forgive him. Jay asked me how he could receive Jesus and His Spirit of peace, and right there over the phone he prayed with me and asked Jesus into his heart. He started crying as he told me, "You just saved my life!"

The Stranger on Campus

I soaked up the sunny southern California afternoon as I walked from my last class of the day at Fullerton Junior College to the parking lot where I'd left my car. I hoped the warm sunshine would soothe my weary body and calm my spirit, and it seemed to be working. I was happy that my day was nearly over and I was free to go home, relax, and enjoy some time to myself. But before I got to the parking lot, I had a seemingly insignificant encounter that eventually changed my life forever.

A young man offered me a leaflet that turned out to be about Jesus. The young man wasn't particularly good looking, to be frank, and I could tell right away that he was extremely shy. *What motivated him to approach strangers like me? What did he know about me or my life? What did he care?*

His message was simple: Jesus loved me. It was clear that he was sharing something from deep in his heart, something he truly believed in, and I had to admire the conviction that somehow helped him overcome his shyness.

At the same time, I was annoyed that he had disturbed my peace and quiet, and I let him know by flatly rejecting what he had to say. I understand now that my pride was what stopped me from being more civil or showing any interest in the message of God's love he was trying to share with me. I had

no time for such things, I told him, and acted as though I couldn't have cared less. But despite the haughty front, my *heart* was listening. Deep down, I believed every word he said.

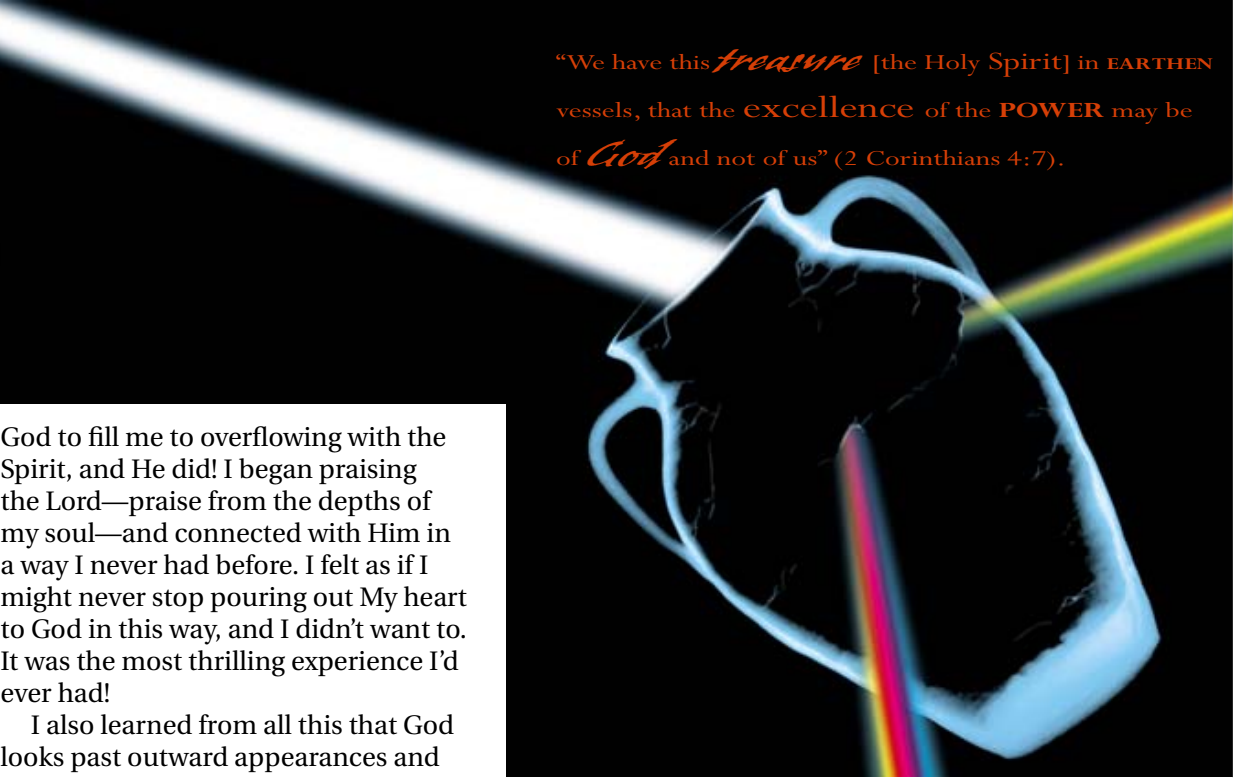
How I must have discouraged that poor young man! I'm sure he had a much harder time approaching anyone else after the way I embarrassed him—something for which I've been sorry ever since. I'm also sorry that he never knew how he got through to me that day. You see, all the way home and for many days after, I thought about him.

Though he was shy and unassuming, I could tell he had something I didn't—something wonderful and amazing that helped him smile through the humiliation I heaped on him and continue to reach out to me. I'm ashamed to say this, but I already knew Jesus at the time. I had already experienced the Lord's love, but I was too proud to talk to this young man or hardly anyone else about Him. Suddenly I wished I had as much love and concern for others as this stranger. Suddenly I wished I had as much boldness, so the Lord could use me too.

I studied about the Holy Spirit, and found that all I needed to do to receive it was ask in faith. So one night, alone in my room, I prayed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. I asked with *all* my heart. I *begged* for the power to be what I knew I wasn't capable of myself. I asked

BY TERRI MOORE

IT HAPPENED TO ME



“We have this *treasure* [the Holy Spirit] in **EARTHEN** vessels, that the **excellence** of the **POWER** may be of *God* and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

God to fill me to overflowing with the Spirit, and He did! I began praising the Lord—praise from the depths of my soul—and connected with Him in a way I never had before. I felt as if I might never stop pouring out My heart to God in this way, and I didn’t want to. It was the most thrilling experience I’d ever had!

I also learned from all this that God looks past outward appearances and sees our hearts. He knows exactly what each of us needs, and He’s just waiting for us to ask so He can help. Whether you’re like the shy stranger, needing to overcome your inhibitions in order to reach out to others, or you’re like I was, proudly pretending not to need God’s or anyone else’s help, His transforming power is only a prayer away. He can help you do things you never thought possible, He can help you be all you can be, and He can do all that through the Holy Spirit.

So if you haven’t yet experienced that miracle-working power, don’t be too proud to ask for it. Or if you have, then let God use you to help someone else. Let Him shine His love and truth through you, and a life may be changed forever—like mine was! •



TERRI MOORE IS A FULLTIME CHRISTIAN VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY.

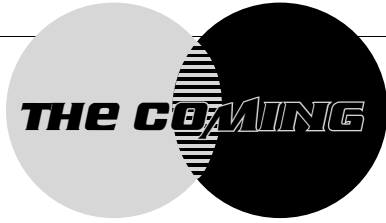
A PRAYER FOR EASTER

How wonderful, how marvelous, is Your love, Jesus! To think that You were willing to go through that for me!

What a day of rejoicing that must have been when You rose and realized it was all over—You had won the victory! You had accomplished Your mission. You had made the way for the world to be saved. You had gone through the horrors of Hell and death for us, and it was over.

You arose in victory, joy, liberation, and freedom from the hands of evil men, never to have to go through that again—and You did it all to spare us the same. Now we can say with the apostle Paul, “O death, where is your sting? O Hades [grave], where is your victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55–57).

As I think of the seemingly terrible defeat that You suffered and how it resulted in such a tremendous victory, it fills me with wonder and gives me such hope and peace. Surely You and Your love will see me through whatever troubles may come my way, from now till eternity! Amen. •



CASHLESS SOCIETY

NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR A CASHLESS SOCIETY IS MARCHING right in step with other moves toward the coming Antichrist world government. We often hear about the “New World Order” and the “global community”—buzzwords that are helping prepare the world for a new international financial and political system, a society controlled by networked computers containing a database of information on nearly everyone—as Revelation chapter 13 appears to have predicted nearly 2,000 years ago!

The switch to electronic commerce has been slow and gradual. People like the speed and convenience of electronic commerce, but they are also comfortable with the way things have been all their lives. For hundreds of years, the world has operated on cash—bills and coins that are tangible

and give people a sense of truly possessing. In that respect, the world hasn’t changed much in thousands of years, since coins were first minted. Many people are still uneasy with the idea of a computerized card or chip linking them to their invisible wealth. Cash is still the way.

As the time draws nearer, the Antichrist must speed up the move toward a cashless economy by proving to the world that it needs his “mark of the Beast” or “666” financial system (Revelation 13:16–18). To do that, he will use crisis after crisis in the nations of the world. One will be a near-global economic crash—the recession of all recessions. He will use this crash to overcome the inertia of the status quo. Without such radical intervention, people change their ways too slowly to suit his purposes and fit

his time frame.

Other factors and developments will also make this new economic system seem necessary. Governments will embrace it as a means of cracking down on crime and cutting government spending by cutting bureaucracy. Businesses will embrace it as a means of instant payment and automated inventory and accounting, cutting their expenses and thereby increasing their profits. The masses will embrace it for its speed, convenience, security, and ease. There will be many apparent advantages.

The Antichrist will also prepare the world for it in other ways—through wars, civil disorders, and fears of such things as terrorism and epidemics of new, incurable diseases. All these happenings will make people desperate for change. Eventually they will be ready to toss out the old and embrace the new. It’s already happened in a big way in the area of technology, and is now happening with commerce.

The Antichrist will introduce a new monetary system, whereby he will profess to fix the world’s economic woes. Those who want to be a part of his new economy and society will be compelled to receive the “mark of

the Beast” in their hand or forehead—probably in the form of a tiny computerized chip bearing all their personal, financial, and medical information. Big Brother and the New World Order will thereby be able to monitor everyone’s every move.

In fact, a few people have already taken the step of receiving computer chip implants. Chipping of people began quietly in the U.S. in May 2002, with the chipping of the Jacobs family. This otherwise normal family of four and several other volunteers had unique identifier chips—VeriChips— injected under their skin. The VeriChip, produced and marketed by Applied Digital Solutions, is about the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen and can be read by a handheld VeriChip scanner. How long will it be till this chipping of people becomes the norm and widely used to facilitate daily business such as shopping and banking?

One thing is certain: A global cashless economy and a totally monitored and controlled society are in the making. Fiber optics, satellites, and computer databases have the potential to control the world in a way that boggles the imagination.

Many governments

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and private corporations worldwide are already pursuing policies to eliminate cash and checks, while many other countries are testing various methods of doing business without physical currency.

The town of Swindon, England, started to go cashless in July 1995. In a joint venture, the National Westminster and Midland banks and British Telecommunications test-marketed a plastic/silicon cash substitute. This system uses Mondex cards that are similar to ATM cards, but contain sophisticated computer chips. Monetary transfers can be done by phone or a small wireless device called a “wallet.”

France moved one step closer to a cashless future with a nationwide launch in 2003 of computerized “smart cards,” dubbed Moneo. The idea behind this new breed of microchip-embedded plastic card is simple—to dispense with pocket change and speed smaller transactions.

In Japan, 650,000 electronic purses known as Edy cards are in circulation and can be used at about 2,100 stores, mainly in the Tokyo area. The plan is for these cards, which store the bearer’s financial information, to eventually be used

anywhere. What makes these different from credit or debit cards is that they do not need to be swiped through a card reader and the bearer’s identity doesn’t need to be verified by a cashier. All the bearer has to do is hold the card up to a sensor that reads the information.

Prosperous Singapore is planning to do away with “old-fashioned money” by 2008.

“[The Antichrist’s government] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on [or in] their right hand or on [in] their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:16–17). For the first time, the hi-tech means of fulfilling the chilling vision the apostle John received nearly 2000 years ago is here!

Are you ready for these great and final events of the end? You can get ready now by receiving Jesus into your heart and taking time to study what the Bible has to say about Endtime events, including the coming Antichrist world dictatorship. Then you won’t be caught by surprise when they happen, or duped into following the Antichrist. •

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

H a P P i N E S S

AS CONSTANT AS THE SUN

THE HAPPINESS OF THE SPIRIT is far above the happiness of the flesh, for the happiness of the spirit is something that will always be there for you. The loneliest nights or the darkest clouds can't take it away from you. The happiness of the flesh is fleeting. It comes and goes with your mood and surroundings, with the physical things that you see and feel, but the

happiness of the spirit comes from knowing that I am your Savior and that I care for you. Those truths never change.

The happiness that I give is as constant as the sun. When the sun disappears beneath the horizon at night, do you worry that it's gone forever? No, you realize that it is constant, always there. Though the night comes and you cannot see the sun, you never doubt its existence or that it will rise the next morning. So is the happiness of the spirit; it's ever-present, like the sun.

When darkness settles on your spirit and you lose sight of the happiness I have promised, that is the time to trust until morning, until you see and feel the sunshine of My love again. Never doubt—the dawn will come!

