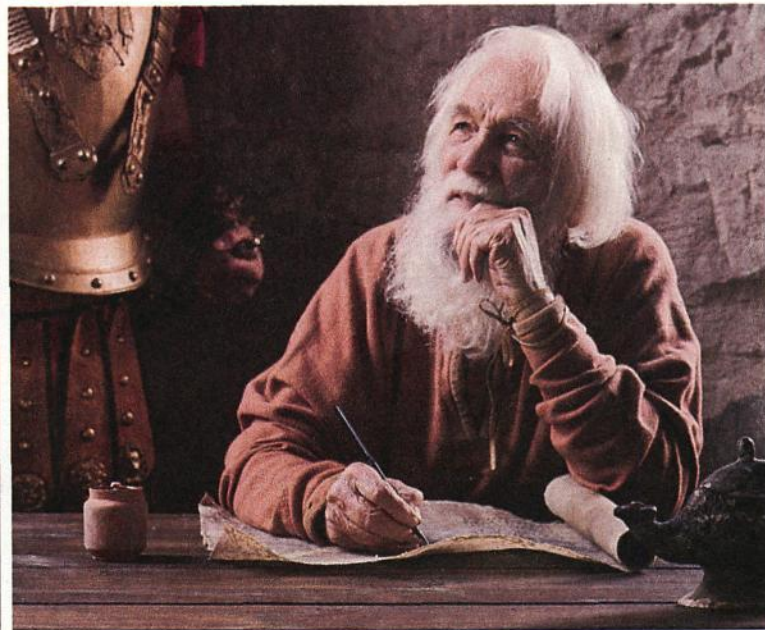
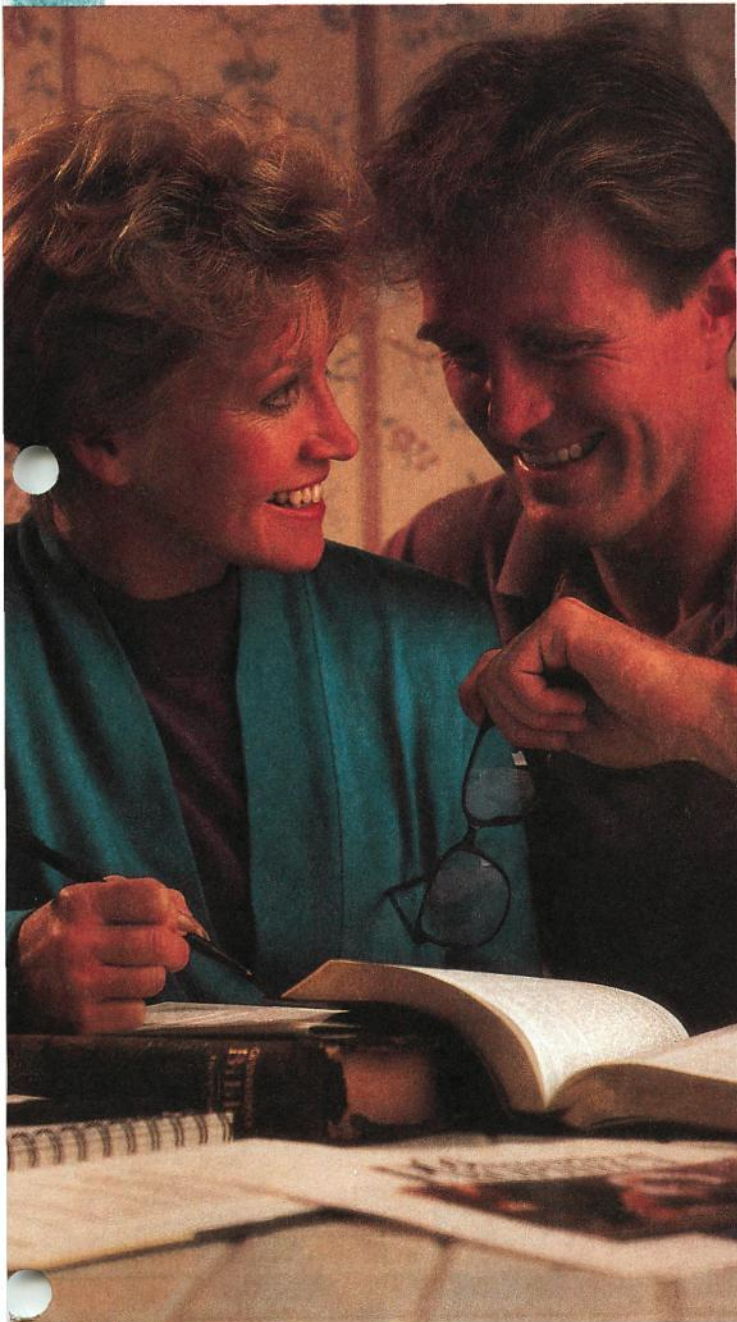


Discoveries in PROPHECY

WITH
MARK
FINLEY



The Real Truth About Near-Death Experiences

Discoveries in Prophecy

by Mark A. Finley
Speaker-Director, *The It Is Written* Telecast

Discoveries in Prophecy is a series of 26 evangelistic presentations in magazine format by Evangelist and *It Is Written* Speaker-Director Mark A. Finley. These presentations have been reproduced here just as delivered; therefore, the reader will encounter occasional references to slides shown during the actual delivery of the topic as originally preached, and other references characteristic of a live presentation.

See the inside back cover for a complete list of the *Discoveries in Prophecy* evangelistic magazines—keyed to chapter in Mark Finley's book entitled *Beyond Orion's Gates*—and information on how to order additional evangelistic magazines and other Hart Research Center outreach materials.

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Discoveries in Prophecy

The Real Truth About Near-Death Experiences

Interest in the occult and astrology is exploding today. All over the world, men and women seem to be interested in the subject of life after death. Not long ago Ralph Moody, Jr., wrote a book called *Life After Life*—the idea is that when a person dies, he leaves his body, goes through a long tunnel, and at the end of that tunnel he meets a being in white. That being in white is *always accepting*—it assures the deceased that *no matter* what he's done, he is loved and accepted.

What about these near-death experiences? Human beings are interested in knowing the answer to the question, "What happens after death?" We're fascinated by death and curious about what really goes on beyond the grave. Where can we find *reliable information* about what happens in the great "beyond?" Are some voices that interrupt death's silence *dangerous*? Who are the *spirits* of spiritualism? Is it possible for the dead to communicate with the living?

When I was holding meetings in Copenhagen, Denmark, I learned that along the coast of the North Sea, between the Danish and the Swedish coasts, a very fashionable fad among many wealthy Danes was to hire a spiritualist for thousands of dollars on a Saturday evening to have that spiritualist attempt to materialize the appearance of a loved one who had died. Spiritualism was rampant in Denmark during the late 80s and early 90s.

Not long ago a group of teenagers were interviewed in the United States on an NBC coast-to-coast television program. They were asked, "Do you believe the dead can communicate with the living?" These teenagers said, "Certainly," and in fact one girl said, "Sure I do. I frequently see my dead grandmother appearing to me." But can the dead *really* communicate with the living? Is there an immortal soul that leaves the body, and can it speak to us at certain times?

SPIRITUALISM IS DECEPTIVE AND DANGEROUS

Even some churchmen are dabbling with the idea of communicating with the dead. I think of Bishop James Pike, Episcopal Bishop of California back in the mid-60s. Bishop Pike's eldest son James, Jr. committed suicide in a New York hotel room in 1966. The Bishop was really troubled about the death of his son, and although he believed the Bible had good moral instruction, he didn't believe it was truly the Word of God profitable for doctrine. So the Bishop rejected some of the teachings of the Bible. Particularly, he rejected the fact that Christ was divine—he thought Christ was a good man, but that's about all. He also rejected the Bible teachings about death. He actually believed his son might somehow try

to contact him. He took a sabbatical in England to study the Dead Sea Scrolls, and he often walked along the English Channel.

One day the Bishop came back to his room and noticed cards with pictures of his son on them—mementos of his son—and those cards were opened on his nightstand. He also noticed other strange things. The clocks in his room had stopped at 8:20—precisely the time his son had committed suicide. Strangely enough, safety pins he'd left

closed on the dresser were open at a strange angle. He began thinking something odd was going on and wondered what it could possibly be. Mementos of his son continued to appear around the room. The mirror was tilted at that 8:20 angle. Clothes of his son were taken out of their boxes and crumpled on the floor.

He said to himself, "My son's trying to contact me. My dead son, Jimmy, is trying to speak to me." He went to one of London's spiritualists and had that spiritualist bring up an apparition of his son. The Bishop should have known that rejecting the Bible's teaching was entering on thin ice—ice that would crack beneath his feet.

Many today are playing with astrology and psychic phenomena, listening for voices beyond the grave but turning away from the Bible's truth and wisdom.

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That London spiritualist brought up the Bishop's son, and the son said, "Yes, Father. I'm in heaven, an eternal place, but don't talk to me about a Saviour. Jesus was a good man, but not the Saviour who died for all mankind. Oh, Father, I want to meet you. I have a message for you. Go to Jerusalem, go out into the desert, and I'll meet you there."

So Bishop Pike went to Jerusalem. He and his wife took their car outside the ancient city and began wandering in the Judean hills. The Bishop became dehydrated, but he believed he'd actually be taken up to his son outside of Jerusalem. His wife ran for help, but it was too late. Wandering around in the Judean desert, looking for his son, whom he believed had spoken to him in a spiritualistic seance, the Bishop died.

Playing with spiritualism is playing with disaster. Following the voices of evil spirits is following voices that will capture your soul and destroy your life. Many today are playing with astrology and psychic phenomena, listening for voices beyond the grave but turning away from the Bible's truth and wisdom. The Bible says in James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally." Jesus says in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through Thy Word: *Thy Word is truth.*" And in John 8:32 Jesus says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." But the pathway of communicating with the dead is the pathway leading to deception.

Spiritualism says that the dead don't really die when they die. I want you to see what spiritualists say because I want to show you how their deceptions are rocking the Christian church and entering right into Christian

Wouldn't it be just like the Devil to captivate our emotions while we're grieving over a loved one who died? Wouldn't it be just like the Devil to take advantage of us at a time of grief and sorrow?

churches today and, according to Revelation, preparing them for Satan's final spiritualistic deception. J. Arthur Hill, on page 25 of the book *Spiritism: History, Phenomena, and Doctrine* says, "The fundamental principle in spiritualism is that human beings survive bodily death, and occasionally, under conditions not yet fully under-

stood, we can communicate with those who have gone before." Spiritualism says that when you die, you're not really dead. When you die, you have an immortal part of you that lives on and that can communicate with the living. In fact, the second claim of spiritism is that the dead can communicate with the living.

The English spiritualist Oliver Lodge says, "There is no death in the graveyard. I have frequent talks with the dead. I cannot doubt that people live after death, for I frequently talk with them." So spiritualism teaches that there's an *immortal* part of you that lives on, that there's *no barrier* between life and death, and that the dead can communicate with the living. Spiritualism teaches that a dead person can come back to his house and speak to those still living there. Wouldn't it be just like the devil to captivate our emotions while we're grieving over a loved one who died? Wouldn't it be just like the devil to take advantage of us at a time of grief and sorrow? The devil knows we long to see that loved one again, long to embrace and talk to that loved one again. So he takes advantage of our fondest emotions—of our desire to hug and hold—isn't he a demon? Indeed, he is!

THE DEVIL'S FIRST LIE

In fact, the Bible says Satan is "the *father of lies*." In John 8:44 (NIV) Jesus said, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language: for he is a liar and the father of lies." What did Jesus mean, Satan is "the father of lies"? Who did Satan tell the first lie to? Eve—when he told Eve in Genesis 3:1-4, "You can eat of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and you shall *not* surely die." So the first lie in this old world had to do with death. The Bible says in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is *death*." But Satan lied and said you could sin and you won't die because you have an immortal soul that lives on. Always remember that he's the father of lies—and the first lie had to do with *death*.

The *spiritualist* says that Satan is not a liar, but he told the truth. Here spiritualist E. W. Sprague even goes so far as to quote the Bible when he says: "Spiritualism says that the dead know more than the living. 'And the serpent said unto the woman, "You shall not surely die.'" Genesis 3:4. In this as in many other Bible passages, the devil told the truth and the Lord is in error." No, friend, the devil *did not* tell the truth, and the Lord is not in error! If the Lord says in Genesis 2:17, "You shall surely die," you will surely die.

The Bible teaches the only way we can be saved. The acid test is not, what does my *church* teach, or what does my *pastor* teach, but what does *Jesus* teach? So let's go to the Bible. Does the Bible say that when a person dies, he

can return to his house and talk to the living? God answers that question in Job 7:9, 10, NIV: “As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so *he who goes down to the grave does not return*. He will *never* come to his house again.” So when a person dies, according to the Bible, can he ever come to his house again? No, he cannot.

SPIRITS OF DEVILS, WORKING MIRACLES

Yet someone says, “But I *saw* it. I saw it with my own eyes!” Friend, the devil can masquerade and take the form of a dead loved one. Here’s the way God’s Word

Why does God forbid us to consult our departed loved ones, if they’re alive and can talk to us?

speaks of death in Job 16:22: “When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence *I shall not return*.” When a person dies, he *cannot* return.

Once I was giving a series of lectures in the Philippine Islands, when a typhoon came through one evening. Hundreds and hundreds of people came to the meeting, and I taught them what the Bible teaches about death. The night of the typhoon, one of the Filipino army officers who’d been coming to the meetings and had accepted what the Bible says, went to bed. His wife had died six months before. When he went to bed that night, the pouring rain, the howling wind, and the banging shutters on the house woke him up. He looked up and saw a beautiful form above him. It was his wife—not as she was at 60, but as she was at 35 or 36—and much more beautiful! Her skin was a lovely olive color. She had long, flowing black hair and magnificent brown eyes. She reached out to him and said, “Darling, I’ve missed you. I want to hug and kiss you.”

As he looked up, he remembered what the Bible says: “He who goes down to the grave does *not* return.” He remembered that the Bible says the dead can *never* return to their house. He remembered a verse from Revelation 16:14, “They are the spirits of *devils*, working *miracles*.” He remembered 2 Corinthians 11:14, “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” He remembered the Bible story which talks about the witch of Endor—how the witch brought up a demon that

masqueraded as the dead prophet Samuel and how King Saul listened to the demon, lost the battle, and went out and committed suicide. And the man understood that this was *not* his wife, even though it *looked* like his wife and *talked* like his wife. And he said, “You are not my wife! In the name of Jesus Christ, be gone. Be gone, in Jesus’ name.” And the man said that right before his eyes, the ghostly figure of his wife disappeared.

God says in Leviticus 20:27, NIV, “A man or woman who is a medium or a spiritist among you must be put to death.” Or Deuteronomy 18:10-12, NIV, “Let no one be found among you . . . who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.” *Why* should God issue such *strong*, damning prohibitions against those who might put us in touch with the dead and make it a capital offense—demanding their death? *Why* does God *forbid* us to consult our departed loved ones, if they’re alive and can talk to us? God loves us, and Psalm 84:11 says: “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” *Why*, then, does He *withhold* from us any contact with our beloved dead? So much comfort and wisdom could be gained if we could talk with a loving parent who now dwells in the very presence of God! *Why* should God mind or care?—Because God knows that the *supposed* spirits of the DEAD are *really* spirits of the ENEMY—devils and demons!

Don’t play with spiritualism, my friend. Whatever your emotions tell you, that form is not your wife, your son, your daughter. The Bible says, “When they go down, they cannot come back.” The Bible, in Isaiah 8:20, points us “To the *law* and to the *testimony* [the law is the Ten Commandments and the testimony is the Bible]: if they speak not according to *this* word, there is *no light* in them.” The Word of God in the Bible is the standard by which we are to test truth. The preceding verse, Isaiah 8:19, says: “When they shall say unto you, Seek unto *them that have familiar spirits*, and unto *wizards* that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?” The Bible says, “Don’t go seeking knowledge about the dead from some spiritualistic source. Seek God. Seek what the Bible says about death. Seek what Scripture reveals about death.”

SOUL IS A KEY WORD

Let’s go back to creation to find what really does happen when a person dies. Maybe if we understand what happened at man’s creation, we can understand something about what happens at death. The Bible says in Genesis 2:7, “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living soul.” Notice, God formed man out of the *dust of the ground*. That’s his body, right?

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Then He breathed into his nostrils the *breath of life*—the power of God—and man *became* a living soul.

Does it say that God *put* an immortal soul *into* man? No, it says that God formed man out of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man *became* a living soul, a living being, a living person. In fact, virtually all modern Bible translations render the words “a living soul” as “a living *being*” or “a living *person*”—for that’s what the text means. So the formula

Man is NOT inherently or naturally immortal now. In the Bible, human beings are always mortal, never immortal.

reads: **Dust + Spirit = Living Soul.** Or, to translate it another way: **Elements of Earth + Breath = Living Being.** Adam *became* a living being or a living person. You see, a living soul *is* a living person.

Suppose you went to the supermarket, and when you came home you said to your husband, “There wasn’t a *soul* there.” And your husband jokingly replies, “Oh, I’m glad there wasn’t any soul there, because that would have scared me!” He knows, when you say that, you mean “There wasn’t a *person* there.” The Bible says in Acts 27:37 there were 276 “souls” on the ship. What does that mean? There were 276 *people* or *persons*. So it’s theologically correct to say: “That poor *soul* is struggling along on a fixed income.” The Bible never says a person “has” a soul—as if it were a *separate entity we possess*. I don’t *have* a soul, I *am* a soul, a living creature, a person—and so are you.

But someone says, “Wait a minute—I don’t want to get caught up in mere words! Just answer me one thing: Our physical *bodies* die, but our *souls* can never, ever die, can they?” Well, God says quite plainly that they can and do: “The *soul* that sinneth, it shall *die*.” Ezekiel 18:4—repeated for emphasis in verse 20. It was the *pagan Greeks*—especially the philosopher Plato—who asserted that the soul of man is “imperishable.” If that pagan idea were true, *WHY* did the Holy Spirit inspire Ezekiel to write those words—twice in one chapter!?

A soul is a person, and if a person sins, he or she will die. So modern Bible versions render Ezekiel 18:4 as follows: “The **PERSON** who sins is the one who will *die*.”—Today’s English Version. “It is for a man’s own sins that

HE will *die*.”—The Living Bible. “The **SOUL** who sins will *die*.”—New American Standard Bible (a footnote on the word *soul* says “PERSON”).

The Bible word *soul* may also mean “life.” For instance, Jesus taught that “whosoever will save his **LIFE** shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his **LIFE** for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own **SOUL**? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his **SOUL**?” Matthew 16:25, 26 (similarly translated in Mark 8:35-37). In this passage, Matthew wrote the same Greek word *psyche* four times, but the King James translators twice rendered it “life” and twice “soul.” You can see for yourself that the two words are interchangeable. And you can see, further, that “life” is not something naturally and irrevocably ours—we *can* lose it, for we’re not inherently immortal.

ONLY GOD IS IMMORTAL

The word *mortal* means “subject to death,” and *immortal* means the opposite—imperishable. You don’t find the term “immortal soul” or “immortality of the soul” *even once* in the *entire Bible*! The Word of God doesn’t teach such a concept. The Bible uses the expressions “soul” and “spirit” more than 1,600 times, but never once attaches the term “immortal” to either word. If human beings really *had* an immortal soul or immortal spirit, don’t you think the Bible would use that term at least *once* out of 1,642 times?

Mankind has the *promise* of immortality—to be given to the faithful as a gift when Jesus returns. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 says, “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound . . . and this mortal shall *put on* immortality.” You see, we mortals, who are subject to death and decay, have to “put on” immortality at Christ’s second coming. But man is *NOT* inherently or naturally immortal now. In the Bible, human beings are always mortal, never immortal. Job 4:17 asks, “Shall *mortal* man be more just than his Maker?” In Romans 2:7 God encourages us to “*seek* for . . . immortality,” but if we were already immortal by nature, why would God tell us to “*seek*” it? In the Bible, immortality is something only *God* has, something we *don’t* have, something we always *seek* for, and something we’ll *receive* only at the second coming of Christ.

In fact, the very word *immortal* is used *only once* in Scripture, and in that sole instance—1 Timothy 1:17—the word applies *not to man* but to “*the only wise God*.” To clinch this point, let’s look in the same epistle—1 Timothy 6:15, 16—where the inspired theologian Paul explicitly declares that “the King of kings, and Lord of lords . . . **ONLY hath immortality**.” Turn to those texts and read them with your own eyes in your own Bible!

When the Bible plainly declares that God alone is immortal, that “[He] ONLY hath immortality,” we needn’t waste our time trying to find verses that say MAN is immortal or has an immortal soul—for *we won’t find them*. The Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself.

Furthermore, the Bible never says a person “has” a soul that leaves the body at death—a conscious, feeling, thinking kind of an ethereal thing that floats away—that’s *man’s* idea. Psalm 22:20 prays, “Deliver my soul from the sword.” But if a soul were our non-material “essence,” a sword couldn’t hurt it.

“SPIRIT” IS A KEY WORD

Now, what happens when we *die*? Well, when Adam was *created*, God formed his body from the dust of the ground, breathed the breath of life or spirit into his nostrils, and he became a living soul. According to the Bible in Ecclesiastes 12:7, *exactly the opposite* occurs at death: “Then shall the *dust* return to the *earth* as it was”—so the body goes to the earth—and the *spirit* shall return unto God who gave it.” What goes back to God? The *spirit*, or the *breath*. The Bible never once says the *soul* goes back to God. The Bible uses the term “soul” 857 times, but never once does it say the soul goes back to God. The *spirit* goes back to God.

Here’s where people make a mistake: They don’t understand what the “spirit” is. What *is* the spirit that goes

When a man dies, what goes back to God? The breath of God, or the power of God—that spark of life—returns to God.

back to God? Is it something that *thinks*? Is it something that’s *conscious*? The word *spirit* itself comes from the same root as other common words pertaining to “breath” or “breathing,” such as *inspire* or *respiration*. The New Testament Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*, which gives us words like *pneumonia*, the respiratory disease, and *pneumatic*, the tires we blow up with air.

But let’s let the Bible define what the spirit is that goes back to God. In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament there’s a literary device called *parallelism*, in which the first phrase says something and the second phrase defines it. Let’s read Job 27:3, and you tell

me what the *spirit* of God equals: “All the while my *breath* is in me, and the *spirit* of God is in my nostrils.” So the *spirit* is equal to the *breath*. God breathed into man the breath of life—God breathed into man His life-giving spirit. When a man dies, what goes back to God? The breath of God, or the power of God—that spark of life—returns to God. James 2:26 says, “The *body* without the *spirit* is dead.” That’s how we describe death even today: we say, “He died” or “He expired” or “He breathed his last.” So the body without God’s breath is dead, because at death God’s spirit or His breath goes back to Him.

THE UNCONSCIOUS DEAD CANNOT THINK

But that breath is *not* a thinking, conscious entity which survives death. Since the Bible says the *dust* returns to earth “as it was,” we can assume that the *breath* or *spirit* returns to God the same “as it was.” And Adam’s *breath* was not conscious before God created him by breathing into his nostrils, so why should we assume that it’s conscious after death? No Bible student believes in the *pre-existence* of the human soul or person before life on earth—that’s a pagan concept.

The Word of God specifically precludes any idea of consciousness after death. What happens to us when our breath goes back to God? Psalms 146:4 tells us that when a man dies, “His breath [his spirit] goeth forth, he [his body] returneth to his earth; *in that very day his thoughts perish*.” So is a dead man able to think? No! The Bible says that on the day he dies, “his thoughts *perish*.” Ecclesiastes 9:5 says plainly, “The living know that they will die: but *the dead know not anything*. . . . Also their *love*, and their *hatred*, and their *envy*, is now *perished*.” Friends, no matter what we’ve been taught in the past, no matter what the devil said to Eve in that first lie, *the dead know not anything!*

DEATH IS A DREAMLESS SLEEP

The Bible teaches that death is but a *sleep* that lasts until Christ’s second coming. More than fifty times, Bible writers consistently describe death as a sleep. Writing under inspiration, the Psalmist David prayed to God lest he “*sleep the sleep of death*.” Psalm 13:3. Later, 1 Kings 2:1 and 10 say: “Now the days of David drew nigh that he should *die*. . . . So David *slept* with his fathers, and was *buried*.” Jesus Himself spoke of death as a sleep. The Master said, in John 11:11-14 (RSV), when His beloved friend Lazarus grew very sick in a nearby town, “‘Our friend Lazarus has *fallen asleep*, but I go to *awake him out of sleep*.’ The disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.’ Now Jesus had spoken of his *death*, but they thought that He meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is *dead*.’”

When a person dies, his body goes to the earth and his spirit (or breath) goes back to God who gave it. Then he awaits Christ's return in a perfectly restful, dreamless sleep. There's no more pain, no more suffering, no more heartache, no more sorrow. It's as if we rest in Jesus' arms till He taps us on the shoulder and says, "Wake up, My child—it's time to go home!"

Someone says, "But, Pastor, I always like to think of my mother up in heaven looking down on me. That makes me feel good." Another says, "I like to think of Daddy looking down at me—he's so proud!" Oh, dear friends, I know we've been so brainwashed in this culture that it's going to take a conscious effort on our part to say to Jesus, "Dear Lord, I just want to know Your will, Your truth. Teach me the truth about the state of the dead."

In Job 14:21 (NIV) the Bible says that after a man dies, he doesn't know what's happening *even to his own family*: "If his sons are honored, *he does not know it*; if they are brought low, *he does not see it*."

GOD'S WAY IS THE BEST WAY

And if we think it through, we'll realize that *God's way* is the *best way*. Let's suppose that a mother died and that she does have a conscious, immortal soul in heaven. Let's suppose she can look down and see everything that happens on earth. She sees her son in the Vietnam War flying a combat mission. The enemy turn their guns on him, blow his helicopter apart, and he goes down. He's

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taken prisoner of war and is tortured. Do you think that mother in heaven would be happy?

Or a little boy six or seven years old is playing ball, and the ball goes out in the street. He runs to get it as a car comes down the street, and the car is going to hit him. If his mother were consciously aware of all this in heaven, she'd scream, "Oh, please stop!" Or think of the dead mother whose kid is on drugs and she sees him lying in a back alley. He's destroyed his whole body. Wouldn't that mother weep and cry to see this? Or a dead husband looks down from heaven and sees his beloved wife suffering terribly from

cancer, yet there's nothing he can do! You see, God is so merciful, His way is best.

God's way is that when you die, you just rest—you sleep soundly. It's a perfect rest in the arms of Jesus. You're so secure, and when Jesus comes again to wake you up, earth's heartache and suffering will be all over. Our loved ones who have gone to their rest are conscious of nothing—not even the passage of time. They don't see that child abused. They don't see that drunk driver hit those kids. They don't see that man who comes home and beats his wife. Jesus' way is so much better!

Let's read it again—Ecclesiastes 9:5, "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything." Isn't God's way best? Don't you thank God that death is but a deep, unconscious sleep until the resurrection? Psalm 115:17 couldn't be any plainer: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Yet you know that if you died and immediately went to heaven, you'd praise the Lord, wouldn't you? The Bible says, "The dead know not anything." The Bible says, "The dead praise not the Lord."

THE LIGHT OF LIFE GOES OUT AT DEATH

Someone says, "Explain to me again about this *soul* and *spirit* again. I didn't quite get it." Let's suppose you take a *light bulb* and plug it in. When you plug the light bulb in, electric power flows through the cord. The power flowing through the cord comes to the bulb, and the result is illumination or a light. Let's use the symbol of the light to illustrate our human condition. The bulb represents the *body*. The electric power represents the *spirit*, the power of God. When the *spirit* or power enters the *body*, we have *life*—represented by the *light*. If you unplug the light bulb, there's no illumination—there's only darkness when the bulb is unplugged, because it's the *combination* of bulb and power which brings about the resultant light. And it's the *combination* of body and spirit which produces the soul or living person. Consider the following table:

BULB *plus* POWER equals LIGHT.

BODY *plus* SPIRIT equals LIFE—a living soul or person.

BULB *minus* POWER equals DARKNESS.

BODY *minus* SPIRIT equals DEATH.

When we turn off the power, the light goes out. We may ask, "Where did the light go?" It didn't "go" anywhere—it simply ceased to exist. And exactly the same thing happens when a man dies. The soul or person doesn't "go" anywhere—he simply ceases to exist as a conscious personality until the resurrection. So when we're "unplugged" from the Source of life, we stop living but rest in the arms of Jesus. We rest securely until the call of the Lifegiver.

NATURAL IMMORTALITY IS A PAGAN CONCEPT

Where did the doctrine of innate, natural immortality come from? From man—ultimately, of course, from the mind of Satan. The pagans worshiped on the day of the sun—Sunday, the first day of the week—and gave allegiance to the sun god. In those same centuries the Greeks came to believe in the natural immortality of the soul. They believed the soul lived on outside the body as a separate, conscious entity—an idea popularized by Plato and other heathen philosophers. When the pagans became Christians and joined the church, they carried with them many of their former heathen beliefs and practices. They brought the images and idols of their pagan gods into the church with them. They brought Sunday in as a holy day. And they brought the pagan idea of the natural immortality of the soul into the church. Here's what William E. Gladstone—four times Prime Minister of Great Britain and a brilliant Bible student—wrote: “The doctrine of *natural*, as distinguished from *Christian* immortality . . . crept into the Church, by a *back door*. . . . The natural immortality of the soul is a doctrine wholly unknown to the Holy Scriptures.”

I say it's time to get back to the Bible! It's time to get back to what *Jesus* says, because once you accept the immortality of the soul and the idea that there's an immortal soul that can communicate with you, you're vulnerable to the devil's deception. According to Revelation the devil is getting ready to deceive thousands of Christians by impersonating their loved ones telling them it's not necessary to obey God's Law. We're going to find the greatest spiritualistic deceptions in these last days.

THE CASE OF THE MISPLACED COMMA

My Bible says, “Follow the teachings of Jesus.” What did Jesus, Himself, teach about death? I'm always asked about the thief on the cross. What did Jesus mean when he spoke to the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43 and promised, “Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in paradise”? Did He mean that the thief would go with him to paradise that day? Obviously not, because remember when Mary came to Jesus on the resurrection morning, she looked at Jesus through her tears, through her weeping and crying, and thought He was the gardener. John 20:11-17. She asked, “Where have you laid my Lord?” and Jesus said, “Mary.” No one else could speak her name like that—and once Jesus said, “Mary,” her heart was moved, and she said, “Master!” and ran to throw her arms around his feet. But Jesus said, “Touch Me not; for I am *not yet* ascended to my Father.”

Jesus' promise to the thief appears, on the surface, to present some startling contradictions. First, it seems to contradict clear Bible teaching on the subject of death

that man sleeps in the grave until called forth by Jesus. Second, if Jesus had not yet ascended to his Father on *Sunday* morning, how could He have told the thief on *Friday* that they'd be in paradise that day? Must we believe EITHER Christ's statement to Mary on Sunday

The Christ who resurrected
Lazarus from the dead will
resurrect us from the dead. Death
is but a sleep—a dreamless sleep
until the Coming of the Lord.

morning OR His promise to the thief on Friday afternoon? When we encounter an apparent contradiction in the Bible, we immediately realize that *something is wrong*—wrong not with the Word of God but with our limited *understanding* or with the *translation* or something else.

But any apparent contradictions instantly disappear with the simple movement of a comma. The placement of a comma can make a world of difference. We must remember that *the punctuation found in the Bible is NOT inspired*. In fact, the original Greek New Testament had NO punctuation at all! Punctuation was not added till about the time of the Reformation—A.D. 1500 or so. Even when the King James Version appeared in 1611 with some punctuation, it still had *no quotation marks* around words spoken—those were added in *still later* versions.

THISISWHATANCIENTGREEKLOOKED
LIKEOFCOURSEITISNTGREEKITSENGLISH

You see, those who added the commas and other punctuation marks to Scripture had no help from Luke's Greek manuscript, because Greek was written all in CAPITAL letters, *with no breaks between sentences*, in fact—WITHNOBREAKSEVENBETWEENWORDS—in order to save on costly parchments.

So the comma in this verse was not added until *many centuries* later. Translators used their best judgment in inserting punctuation, but they were certainly not inspired. If their interpretation of the text was colored by their mistaken belief in the immortality of the soul—they'd naturally put the comma in the *wrong* place—which is exactly what happened.

The comma in this Bible text can be placed either *before* or *after* the word “today.”

“Verily I say unto thee, *today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*”

“Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with Me in paradise.”

“Today” is an *adverb of TIME*, telling *when* something happens. It may modify the verb “be” and tell *when the thief would be* with Jesus in paradise. Or it may modify the verb “say” and emphasize *when Jesus spoke those words* to the thief. (Incidentally, Greek, like the Latin languages, has the pronouns COMBINED in the one-word verb form, so in Greek “thou shalt be” is *identical* to “shalt thou be,” being synthesized in the very same word.)

What did Jesus really say to the thief? It’s very simple. He boldly made this promise—today, as I die on the cross and My ministry ends in agony and shame; today, as blood runs down My face and nails pierce My hands;

It’s important to know where
you’re going, to know that death
for you is not the end, to know
your life is in God’s hands.

today, when it doesn’t look as if I can save anyone and My claim to be the Son of God appears false; today, when My own disciples have forsaken Me in My darkest hour, amid all these forlorn prospects and blasted hopes—the crucified Christ calmly turns to the repentant thief and majestically declares: “Verily I say unto thee today, thou SHALT be with Me in paradise.”

The Bible is plain that Jesus Himself did not go to paradise on that day. On that day, instead, Christ would enter the grave and rest in the tomb. And as we read above, He did *not* ascend to His Father till *some time after* encountering Mary Magdalene on Sunday morning. All conflict and contradiction disappear when the comma is properly placed.

Because Christ burst the bonds of the tomb, because the shattered shackles of death could not hold Him, because Jesus went into the grave and came out the other side triumphant, you and I need not fear death. The Bible asks in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ Himself removed the tragic sting from death and gave us victory over the tomb.

TAKE JESUS’ HAND

The Christ who conquered death will take our hand and guide us through it. The Christ who resurrected

Lazarus from the dead will resurrect us from the dead. Death is but a sleep—a dreamless sleep until the coming of the Lord. We needn’t weep and cry and mourn our loved ones as others who have no hope. Certainly, there’s an emotional loss. Our hearts are broken if a loved one dies, but the Bible says our Lord will come. The Bible says those graves will open, and you and I can have the absolute assurance that though we go into the grave, Christ will take us through death into eternal life!

Here’s the interesting epitaph on Paul Adams’ tombstone:

*Stop, my friend, as you go by.
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, you soon shall be,
So prepare yourself to follow me.*

Serious words, indeed. Many people prepare for life but fail to prepare for death. In fact, one day a boy came along with a crayon and wrote some words of verse below that epitaph:

*To follow you, I’m not content
Until I know just where you went.*

It’s important to know where you’re going, to know that death for you is not the end, to know your life is in God’s hands.

When I went into the ancient catacombs of Rome and wound my way around those dark, dirty caverns, the guide translated the epitaphs on the tombstones. It’s easy to know for sure which are the Christian graves and which are the pagan graves. Notice these lines from a pagan grave:

Good-bye for all eternity; good-bye forever and ever.

The pagans didn’t know where they were going and had no hope. Their words are sorrowful laments which ring with heartache and despair:

*Good-bye for all eternity;
I am gone, gone—gone forever with no hope.*

But the Christian epitaphs in the catacombs have a tone completely different:

*Good-bye until we meet again.
Good night until the morning.*

The Christians were buoyed up with hope for Christ’s coming, hope that one day they’d see their loved ones again. Husband, if you lost a wife by death; wife, if you lost a husband by death; son, if you lost a mother or father by death; parents, if you lost a child by death, I have *good news* for you. I have the *best news* in the world for you! We can look forward to seeing that husband or wife, that father or mother, that brother or sister or child again. It’s not for the Christian to say good-bye forever.

It's good-bye until we meet again. It's good night until the morning.

Our Lord gave us a promise in 1 Thessalonians 4. Verse 13 says, "I would not have you to be *ignorant*, brethren, concerning them which are asleep." Don't be ignorant—don't be confused by the idea of the supposed immortality of the soul, don't accept the old pagan idea of natural immortality—don't be ignorant, because if you're ignorant, you'll be deceived. Don't sorrow as others who have no hope. Then He goes on to say in verse 16, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven. . . ." The Christ who died, the Christ who offers forgiveness, the Christ who can transform your life, is the Christ who went into the grave and came out victorious, *conquering death!* "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first." Good news! That little baby's hands can touch your cheeks again. Good news! You can see the smile on the face of that son or daughter again. Good news! You can throw your arms around your wife and look into those eyes again. Good news! You can hear those words again—"Oh, I love you *so much!*"

DEATH IS NOT THE END

Death is *not* the end of the road—it's a sleep. It's an instant, a twinkling of an eye, for there's absolutely no awareness of the passing of time in death. The Bible says, "We which are alive and remain [that is, remain alive till Jesus comes] shall be caught up together with them [the resurrected dead] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the

If people died and went immediately to heaven, why should they long for the Second Coming?

They'd already be in Christ's presence and walking those streets of gold!

air." We go to heaven when Jesus comes and the dead are resurrected. The Bible's whole focus is on that grand, glorious Event of Jesus' second coming.

But if people died and went immediately to heaven, *why* should they long for the second coming? They'd *already* be in Christ's presence and walking those streets of gold! The whole Christian message is based on the fact that the Christ who came once is coming again. The

Bible mentions the second coming of Jesus 1,500 times, once in every 25 verses in the New Testament. For every prophecy in the Old Testament about the *first* coming of Jesus there are eight on His *second* coming. Yes, the grave is not the end. No, death is not a dark hole in the ground.

Have you settled it in your life—really settled it? The sorrowful epitaphs on pagan tombs speak to us. The pagans had no hope because they had no Christ. Without Christ there is no hope. Without Christ there is no life—there's only death. And Jesus says to you and me, "I want you to live, not merely for time, but for all eternity. You can have the assurance of eternal life. You can have the assurance that though you may go to the grave, you can come out, as I did." Eternity is a long, long time.

When I was a young lad, I wondered, "How long is eternity?" Infinity, you know, is beyond our ability to comprehend. But as I've gotten older, I've pictured it in various ways. I've thought about the vastness of the ocean, with its infinite number of tiny drops of water. Or I've thought about the immensity of a stupendous mountain larger than Mt. Everest. How long would it take a small bird to wear away that huge mountain of granite by sharpening its tiny beak on it only once a year? The bird would fly to the mountain and scratch its beak once on each side to sharpen it and then fly away. Then a year later that little bird would fly back to repeat the simple process. The time it took for the enormous mountain to be *completely worn away* would be *one second* of eternity!

So eternity is a long, long time. Have you settled where you are going to spend eternity? Have you said, "Lord, come into my life. I want to settle it in my heart now. If I'm alive when You come, I want to be caught up to meet You in the sky. But, Lord, if I close my eyes in sleep, the next voice I want to hear is Yours saying, 'John, come forth,' 'Mark, come forth,' 'Alice, come forth,' 'Mary, come forth.' The next face I want to see is Your face. The next feeling I want to have is new *life* pulsing through my veins"?

Have you settled it in your heart? Are you willing to tell Jesus that being with Him for eternity is worth everything? Are you willing to tell Jesus that even if stepping out for Him means following truth you've never followed before, if it means making changes in your life, if it means following God's Word and not man's, if it means obeying God no matter *what*—whatever it means—are you willing to say, "I love you enough, Lord, and I want to spend eternity with You. I want to hear You say 'Well done!' I want to sense Your approval. I want to live with You forever and ever, for eternity's a long, long time."

Jesus is calling you to follow Him. Eternity is worth everything. He'll give you assurance—like Peter, so you

10 • DISCOVERIES IN PROPHECY

can put your feet onto the sea and walk ahead, following your Leader and your God. It's better to follow *Jesus* into the unknown than to follow *man* into the known. If you want to live with God throughout all eternity, then say, "I'm coming home, coming home to your arms, God—coming home." ▲

Discoveries in Prophecy Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

The Real Truth About Near-Death Experiences

Numbers in parentheses below refer to page numbers in special-edition Seminar Bibles—the first number for the King James Version, the second for the New King James Version. For example: (709 / 681).

1. The Word of God says, “The *living* know that they shall *die*, but the _____ know *NOT* _____.” To *check* your answer, see Ecclesiastes 9:5 (687 / 655).
2. If *God alone* is immortal, then neither *man* nor *angels* are. And the inspired Apostle Paul says it’s “the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who _____ hath _____.”
To *check* your answer, see 1 Timothy 6:15-16 (1183 / 1175).
3. The Bible teaches that when a man dies, “His _____ goeth forth, he returneth to his _____ ; in that very day his _____.”
To *check* your answer, see Psalms 146:4 (654 / 617).
4. The King James Version of the Bible says the ship carrying Paul as prisoner to Rome, which was shipwrecked and sank, carried 276 “ _____ ,” meaning 276 *PERSONS*.
To *check* your answer, see Acts 27:37 (1115 / 1107).
5. God settles the matter that man is *MORTAL*—subject to death and a decay—and that he does *NOT* possess a so-called “immortal soul” when He says plainly: “The _____ that sinneth, it shall _____.” To *check* your answer, see Ezekiel 18:4 and 20 (837 / 816).
6. T Since Jesus called the Devil “*the father*” of lies and lying, it’s interesting to note that Satan’s F *first lie*—to Mother Eve in the Garden of Eden—was about *death and dying*.
To *check* your answer, see John 8:44 (1060 / 1055) and Genesis 3:1-4 (3 / 3).
7. Bible writers consistently refer to death as a dreamless, unconscious *sleep*. The Psalmist David prayed, “Hear me, O Lord my God: lighten my eyes, lest I _____ the _____ of _____.” To *check* your answer, see Psalm 13:3 (586 / 543).

Quick Quiz

8. The Bible asks, "Shall _____ man be more just than God?" And when Jesus comes, "We shall all be *changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this _____ must _____ immortality." **To check your answer, see Job 4:17 (554 / 509) and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 (1146 / 1138).**
9. When Adam was created, "the Lord God formed [the body of] man of the _____ of the ground, and _____ into his nostrils the breath of life; and man _____ a living *soul*" or "a living *being*" or "a living *person*," as modern Bible versions translate it. **To check your answer, see Genesis 2:7 (2 / 2).**
10. **T** The Bible says that when we die, our *body* returns as dust to the earth as it was, and our **F** *soul* returns to God in heaven. **To check your answer, see Ecclesiastes 12:7 (689 / 657) and James 2:26 (1202 / 1195).**
11. Since God loves us and promises "No *good* thing will He *withhold* from them that walk uprightly," tell in your own words on the lines below *why* you think He places such *strong prohibitions* on our contacting loved ones who have died through a witch or spiritualistic medium using a familiar spirit. **To check your answer, see Psalms 84:11 (623 / 584), Exodus 22:18 (84 / 77), Leviticus 20:6 & 27 (133 / 121), and other verses above.**

12. On the lines below, explain whether or not the dead can *return* to their homes, and can *observe* their loved ones or communicate with them. **To check your answer, see Job 7:9-10 (556 / 511), Job 14:10, 12 & 21, and 2 Samuel 12:22-23 (350 / 320).**



Words to the Wise:

Despite what spiritualists would have us believe, death is *not* a friend, *not* the Portal to Paradise they make it out to be. The Bible says death is an enemy, a terrible intruder Christ will destroy when He comes: "The last *enemy* that shall be destroyed is death." —1 Corinthians 15:26 (1145 / 1137).

Discoveries in Prophecy

Complete list of evangelistic magazines, cross-referenced
to the book *Beyond Orion's Gates*, by Mark A. Finley

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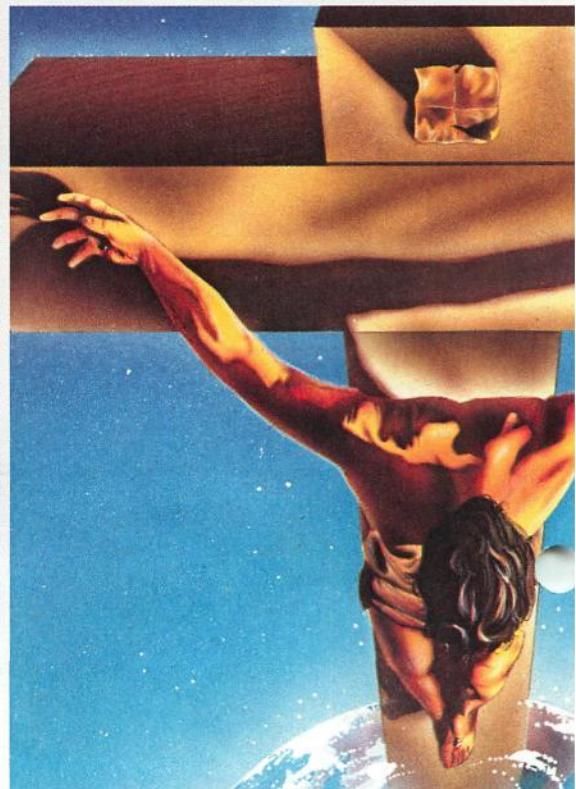
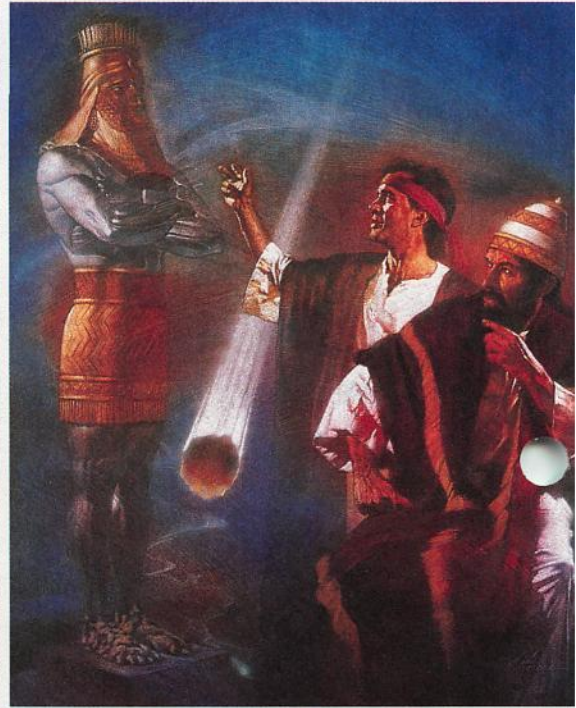
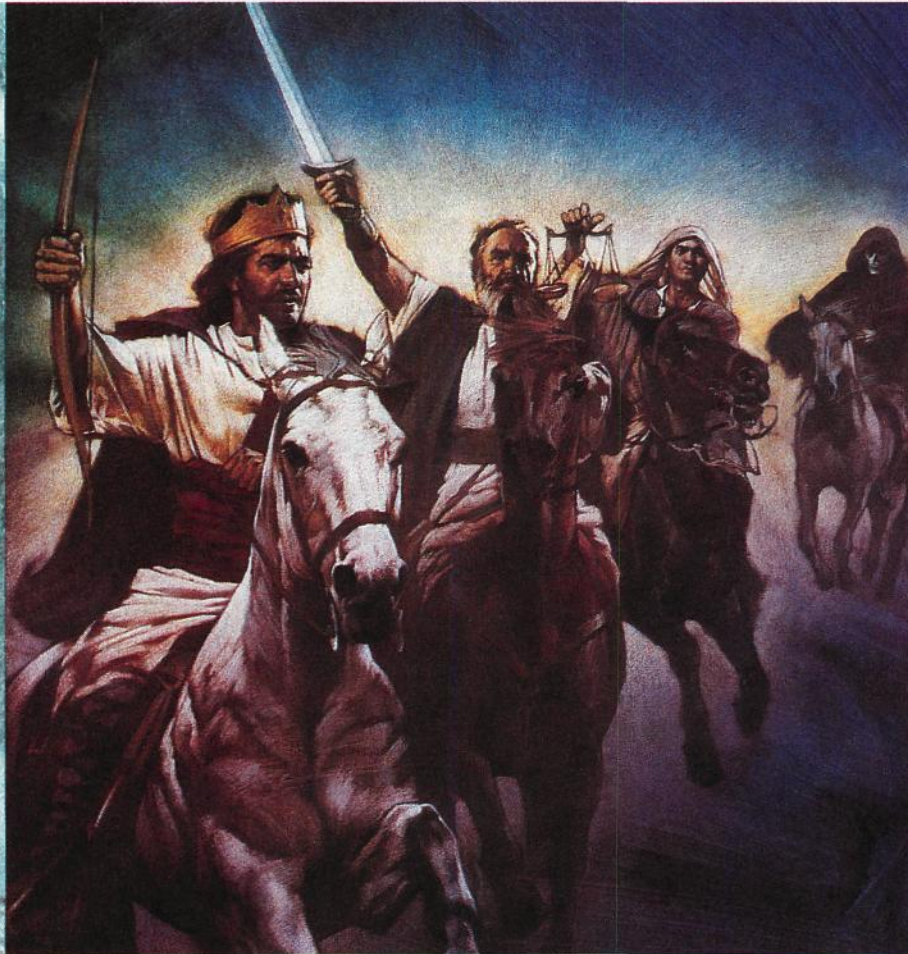
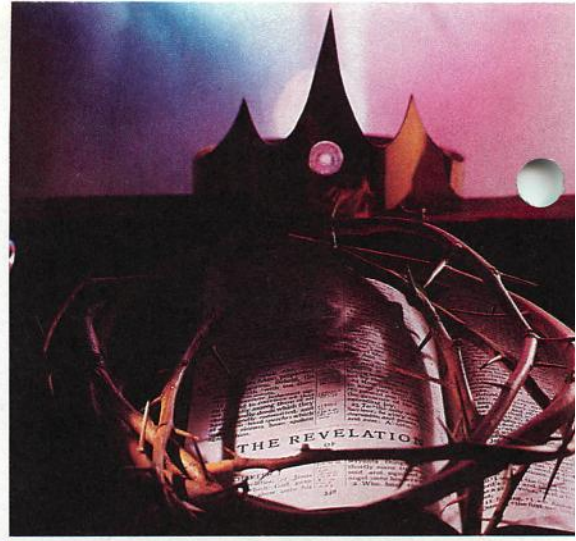
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