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Dear Brethren,

Since the death of Michael Jackson, we have seen a frenzy of media coverage—news reports, TV specials, Internet blogs, newspaper and magazine features—extolling the greatness of Jackson’s talent and abilities. Yet, he died at age fifty of a drug overdose. On Tuesday, July 7, the world witnessed the greatest funeral ever given to a member of the entertainment industry. It was estimated that in addition to the 25,000 invited into the Staples Center in Los Angeles for the funeral service, some 100,000 idolizing fans packed the streets and parking lots to be part of the event. Fifty movie theaters around the United States showed the proceedings at no cost. Millions of adoring admirers held additional memorials in small groups in homes, as they watched the funeral extravaganza on television. It was estimated that nearly one billion people around the world viewed Jackson’s funeral.

Immediately after his death, sales of Jackson’s CDs and DVDs skyrocketed as fans rushed out to scoop up everything in sight. One commentator noted that just as the rock star Elvis Presley, who also died of a drug overdose, was worth more after his death, Michael Jackson would likewise posthumously become a “cash-cow” worth billions! Perhaps this is why the event was more like a gigantic commercial about Michael Jackson than a solemn funeral.

But such is the way of the world—they love their own, and they worship and glorify their own. In the eyes of their fans, rich and famous entertainers or sports figures—though corrupt, perverted, immoral and often addicted to drugs—are esteemed, loved and revered. It is exactly as Jesus said, “Woe to you when all men shall speak well of you!” and “**That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination before God**” (Luke 6:26; 16:15). In this world, sin and depravity are exalted, while true godliness and righteousness are abhorred and rejected. As the true proverb declares, “An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just, and *he who is* upright in the way *is* an abomination to the wicked” (Prov. 29:27).

It is for this very reason that the apostle John admonished true believers of Jesus Christ to *not* love this world: “Do not love the world, nor the things *that are* in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him because everything that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pretentious pride of physical life—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world and its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever” (I John 2:15-17).

In this world, Michael Jackson was admired and loved. He was an incredible success, making it to the pinnacle of the entertainment industry as a singer and dancer. During his 50-year lifetime he made billions of dollars, and had everything that anyone could want. Yet, he became obsessed with perverted sex, as clearly reflected in his music and dance productions. Finally, he died of a drug overdose—a miserable, lonely, fearful individual, leaving \$500 million of debt. Where did all that money go? His life was the epitome of what Jesus warned against—**success in the world is meaningless**: “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?” (Matt. 16:26).

Paradoxically, Michael Jackson’s life of extravagant excesses in money, music, sex, entertainment and drugs is but a mirror image of today’s rapidly deteriorating younger generations. Drowning in a tsunami of moral decay, the USA has been ensnared in a vortex of godlessness, lawlessness, immorality and self-destruction—yes, even the entire world.

Under the direct inspiration of God, the apostle Paul precisely defined the causes of

what we are seeing today: “Know this also, that in *the* last days perilous times shall come; for men will be **lovers of self, lovers of money**, braggarts, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, **despisers of those who are good**, betrayers, reckless, egotistical, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God**” (II Tim. 3:1-4).

Throughout history, mankind has reached this point numerous times by rejecting God, casting off His Law, and rejecting and scorning His governance. Irrespective of the fact that God has graciously revealed His truth through His Word, men and women still stubbornly refuse to heed God, thereby bringing upon themselves the penalties for their sins: “Indeed, *the* wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who **suppress the truth in unrighteousness**; because that which may be known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested *it* to them; for the invisible things of Him are perceived from *the* creation of *the* world, being understood by the things that were made—both His eternal power and Godhead—so that **they are without excuse; because when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but they became vain in their own reasonings, and their foolish hearts were darkened**. While professing themselves to be *the* wise ones, they became fools. And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into *the* likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed creatures, and creeping things” (Rom. 1:18-23).

Once men reject God and refuse to repent, God then turns them over to their own deceptions—literally abandoning them to their own base nature, which is “desperately wicked and deceitful above all things.” Then, like a malignant cancer, sin multiplies and spreads throughout all levels of society—from the greatest to the least, from the young to the aged, from the intelligent to the ignorant, from the politician to the ordinary citizen, from the religious leader to the follower. It affects everyone and everything they do.

Notice the *first stage* of what happens when God abandons people to their own carnal, deceptive minds: “For this cause, **God also abandoned them** to uncleanness through **the lusts of their hearts**, to disgrace their own bodies between themselves, **who exchanged the truth of God for the lie**; and they worshiped and served the created thing more than the one Who is Creator, Who is blessed into the ages. Amen” (verses 24-25).

After repeated warnings, if people do not repent of their sins and abominations, God then draws back even further, leaving them to their own evil lusts. Consequently, the entire godless society falls into deeper idolatry and immorality, whereupon God **casts them aside a second time**: “For this cause, **God abandoned them** to disgraceful passions; for even their women changed the natural use of *sex* into that which is contrary to nature; and in the same manner also the men, having left the natural use of *sex* with the woman, were inflamed in their lustful passions toward one another—men with men shamelessly committing lewd *acts*, and receiving back within themselves a fitting penalty for their error” (verses 26-27).

Finally, when men and women *totally ignore* God, **the third stage of God’s rebuke** unleashes a tidal wave of depraved sin, immorality and wickedness as the entire society falls headlong into the sticky “quagmire” of their own corruption. Indeed, at this point God gives them over to their own reprobate minds: “And in exact proportion as they did not consent to have God in *their* knowledge, **God abandoned them to a reprobate mind**, to practice *those* things that are immoral; **being filled with all unrighteousness**, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, guile, evil dispositions; whisperers, slanderers, **God-haters**, insolent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things *and practices*; disobedient to parents, **void of understanding**, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable *and* unmerciful; **who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who commit such things are worthy of death, not only practice these things themselves, but also approve of those who commit them**” (verses 28-32). As such attitudes spread, the entire civilized world is seduced by satanic lies. Or as David wrote, “**The wicked walk on every side when vileness [such as lived by Jackson] is exalted among the sons of men**” (Psa. 12:8).

## *A Comparison Between the Death and Burial of Michael Jackson and that of Jesus Christ*

In watching some of the news coverage concerning Michael Jackson, I was struck by the stark contrast between his death and funeral and the death and burial of Jesus Christ. Jackson corrupted millions with his perverted, immoral, sexually explicit music and entertainment. Yet, the world idolized and praised him. On the other hand, Jesus lived a perfect life in order to save the world—but the world despised Him.

To some, such a comparison might seem unjust. But it clearly illustrates the point: On the one hand, the world vainly accepts, loves and glorifies celebrities, especially those who use a “pied piper” mentality to corrupt their followers. On the other hand, the world hated and distained Jesus Christ because He was not *of* this world, though He was the Creator of all and is the world’s Savior.

### *Michael Jackson*

Loved by the world  
Acclaimed and accepted  
Rich and pampered  
Died from drug overdose

Taken to morgue for autopsy  
Made up, dressed and put into  
a gold-plated, velvet lined casket.  
Lavish funeral with praise and music  
Hundreds of thousands attended and  
millions watched on TV.

Buried in a magnificent tomb  
Will eventually be forgotten

### *Jesus Christ*

Hated and despised by the world  
Oppressed and rejected  
Poor and worked for nothing  
Beaten, scourged, spit upon, crucified

Taken off the cross by two men  
Wrapped in linen cloth with spices

Only the two men, His mother and  
the apostle John with few faithful  
women; His disciples were scattered;  
no one else cared; His enemies  
rejoiced.

Buried in a tomb carved in a rock  
Was raised from the dead; will return  
to save the world and rule with the  
saints into the ages of eternity.

What a divergence between the vanity of this world and the glory of the coming Kingdom of God. Remember, God the Father has personally called us to help Jesus Christ save the world from utter destruction and usher in the glorious one thousand-year rule of Jesus and the saints. As Paul writes: “For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

“The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God. **Now if we are children, we are also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

“**For the earnest expectation of the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God;** because the creation was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected *it* in hope, in order **that the creation itself might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.** For we know that all the creation is groaning together and travailing together until now. And not only *that*, but even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, also groan within ourselves, awaiting the sonship—the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:14-23).

This is why we have been called to such a great calling. If we die in the faith, we will be raised in glory—by the glory of God to immortality. “And *there are* heavenly bodies, and earthly bodies; but the glory of the heavenly *is* different, and the *glory* of the earthly *is* different. *There is* one glory of *the* sun, and another glory of *the* moon, and another glory of *the* stars; for *one* star differs from *another* star in glory. **So also is the resur-**

**rection of the dead.** It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. **There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body**” (I Cor. 15:40-44).

The true hope of eternal life is the resurrection from the dead, as Paul continues to explain: “Accordingly, it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul; the last Adam *became* an ever-living Spirit.’ **However, the spiritual was not first, but the natural—then the spiritual.** The first man *is* of the earth—made of dust. The second man *is* the Lord from heaven. As *is* the one made of dust, so also *are all* those who are made of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *one*, so also *are all* those who are heavenly. **And as we have borne the image of the *one* made of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *one*.**

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the* kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep, but **we shall all be changed, in an instant, in *the* twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet;** for *the* trumpet shall sound, and **the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality. Now when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘**Death is swallowed up in victory**’ ” (verses 45-54).

Brethren, this is the glorious eternal destiny that lies ahead of us, that cannot be compared to the fleeting glory of vain, temporary human life.

**Church at Home:** Unfortunately, because of scheduling conflicts, Stan Snyder has had to reschedule to come July 16 to install the lighting and cameras for our video studio. However, we have been recording the Feast of Tabernacles videos and CDs with our old system. We should be finished with them by the time Stan gets here.

**Second Edition of The Holy Bible In Its Original Order:** In China, they are making good progress in their preparations for printing the second edition of the Bible. Next week they will forward the “blue line” page proofs to us for final inspection. Shortly after that we will receive the final dummy Bible for approval of all aspects of the lambskin cover with its gold stamping, the binding, page trim and paper quality. Unfortunately, because of several low-level typhoons, the paper was delayed for two weeks in getting to the factory. As soon as it arrives they will begin printing.

**Youth Series Number Five:** We are enclosing the *Youth Series in Proverbs* in this mailing. Don and Bonnie Burrows continue to do a great job in producing excellent material on Proverbs for youth. They also create the Coloring Books for children.

**God’s Pathway for Children:** We are in the final stages of completing this wonderful book for children. Jane Spring in Queensland, Australia, originally created this book to read to her grandchildren. She sent a copy to us and we were so impressed that we forwarded it to Don and Bonnie to have it reproduced. Bonnie drew all the pictures, following the pattern of Jane’s original hand-drawn book. Don added the Scriptures, and John and Hiedi Vogeles did the page formatting; Cindy Curley designed the cover.

Brethren, as you can see, we have been busy this summer producing a good number of booklets and other materials for you and your families. Thank you for your continued love, prayers and support with your tithes and offerings, especially in these trying economic times. May God the Father and Jesus Christ continue to bless you with Their love and grace in all things. We pray for you daily, beseeching God to bless you, heal you and strengthen you in every way.

With love, in Christ Jesus,

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