

Blue Death

June 1997

A recent article in the *Birmingham News* (5/22/97) told of a tragic story unfolding in the Brazilian city of Goiania. An abandoned medical clinic had been looted and a lead capsule taken from a piece of equipment. Scrap dealers opened the capsule to find an eerie, glowing blue stone inside.

The alluring stone was broken into pieces and distributed among the curious. The superstitious wondered if it might have magical powers.

But over the next few days people throughout the city of Goiania began to drift into area hospitals with unusual symptoms. One man had blistered flesh on his thigh, next to where he had carried a piece of the blue stone in his pocket. Others died, including a six-year old girl who had swallowed a fragment of the stone.

As panic ensued, authorities investigated the remaining pieces of the mysterious stone. It was no ordinary stone but highly radioactive cesium 137 used in radiation treatment of cancer. For sixteen days this deadly bauble had been passed around the unsuspecting populace of Goiania.

“Everyone who had direct contact with it received a radiation dose of between 400 and 1,000 rems – as much as some victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts in World War II,” the article noted.

As I read this story some spiritual applications were immediately obvious. People are often attracted to sinful things while oblivious to the potential for harm. They want to touch it, hold it and put it in their pockets without realizing that it is contaminating their souls.

Further, a little exposure to sin can do a lot of damage. We might consider sin merely an act that can easily be confessed and then put aside. But sin is more powerful than that. A personal sense of guilt or remorse or weakness to certain temptations once indulged can linger for a very long time.

Also, as with radiation poisoning, the effects of sin may not surface for years. Sometimes other events in life will trigger hidden memories and feelings and make us vulnerable to sin. We recently met a young woman who is having emotional problems in her adult life because of her exposure to certain powerful sins in younger days.

Finally, everything contaminated by the cesium 137 – 6,000 *tons* of clothing, furniture, pieces of buildings, and even dirt – was packed in steel drums and buried in earthquake-proof concrete vaults. Likewise, sin should be avoided at all costs. Sin is lethal and polluting. Root it out. Pack it up. Bury it. Forget it.