

The Restitution Herald

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Fan the Flames



Business as Usual?

I have vivid memories from my younger days of attending our national youth camp (now RYOT) and sitting around the campfire with my old and new-found friends in the Church of God from across the country. We'd sing all the campfire songs — "Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning" and "It only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up to its glowing." As I read through each of these messages those memories come rushing back. I remember at the end of each camp going home refreshed and renewed in my faith and determined to crank up my commitment to God in my home, church and school. I would begin again in earnest to read my Bible, clean up my thoughts and actions, tell everyone I knew about Jesus, and thoroughly annoy everyone at school with my "enthusiasm." But after a few weeks it wore off and I was back to "normal."

You see, it's easy to get fired up when those around you are also hot — but

when the students at Youth Congress or the delegates from General Conference return to their local churches, where quite often it's still "business as usual," it's tough to keep the momentum going.

The 1997 General Conference has come and gone. The delegates have returned home, many of them fired up from the flames that were fanned by these messages, ready to set the world on fire for Jesus. I'm guessing that by now more than a few are frustrated by the apathy and boredom in their local churches. As a service to you and each of the local churches, we are making available the messages from this year's General Conference to the entire membership of the Church of God. It is my prayer that these messages will "fan into flame" those sparks of revival that were brought back from Minnesota. May they be used by you as a tool to spark revival in your personal life and church and community. Pastors, let them serve as the basis for a sermon series in your church, or how

about a six-week home Bible study series featuring a different article each week?

With this issue, THE RESTITUTION HERALD begins its 87th year of bringing you the best teaching that we, as a body of believers, have to give to encourage and support you in your growth as a disciple of Jesus, and to assist you in sharing your faith with those around you. To all of our loyal subscribers I say, "Thank you for your commitment to our magazine." If you are not currently a subscriber can I ask you, right now, to turn to the back page of this issue and fill out the subscription form and mail it in along with your check? Please continue to let me know what you think of the articles you read here. What subjects do you enjoy? What are you missing? What would you like to see addressed in future issues?

May God bless you as you seek to "fan into flame the gift of God."

In Christ's service to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeffrey Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor

The Restitution Herald

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Rekindling the Flame

BY PASTOR GARY R. TURNER — WINNEBAGO, ILLINOIS

It is an honor to address the membership of the Church of God General Conference. Let me begin with a question, "Have you led someone to Jesus Christ this week?" No? This is why we need to rekindle the flame.

In the forty years that I have been a Christian, I have experienced every emotion there is to experience with the church. I have gone from the joy of a small child racing to hear stories of Jesus to the frustration of an adult, warming a pew and wondering if this is all there is! I have gone from committed Christian to lukewarm and then just plain cold, back to committed, and then back to cold. I have gone from feeling like I could make a difference to wondering what difference it makes. I have sung songs. I have prayed prayers. I have cried tears of joy and tears of sorrow. I have held my head high and I have hid my face in shame. Through it all, God has extended His grace with love, dignity and gentleness.

In time past, I have pitched in and worked with the congregation, but there have also been times when I failed the congregation. I have fulfilled my responsibilities, and I have neglected my responsibilities. I have given my tithe, and I have withheld my tithe. At times, I have led the singing; and, at times, I have refused to sing because I didn't like the song, the service or the people around me. I have scrubbed toilets, mopped floors, taught Sunday School lessons and preached from the pulpit. I have done just about everything there is to do. Yet, until just a few years ago, I had never led anyone to Jesus Christ. I had experienced the entire gamut

of emotions within the church, but I had never experienced the joy of seeing someone make a decision for Jesus because of me.

I justified my actions by a number of excuses but the fact remained that I produced little, if any, fruit with my service to the Lord. It was simply service for the sake of serving, rather than service because of God's love for lost people. My service, done just for the sake of serving, was extremely frustrating and unfulfilling to me. I believe that I am not alone in feeling frustration with that kind of service. I have discovered that kind of service, while done in the name of Jesus, is incomplete in what was intended by our Heavenly Father. Our willingness to serve within the church, without a regular harvest of fruit being produced, is as incomplete as a refrigerator without electricity. A refrigerator without electricity looks good and is nice to have but it is not serving its purpose. When I began to serve the Lord of the Harvest instead of service itself, I became fulfilled and we have experienced growth in the Rockford area churches of God.

Before I go on, I want to make a disclaimer. I don't intend to cast guilt on our service. I don't want to downplay or destroy anybody's service within the church. My intention is to point out that I have found a better way to serve because of my loving relationship with our Heavenly Father. When we have and understand that relationship, we can go out and sell other people. We can share the gospel message, the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. We will

gain joy, satisfaction and fulfillment. And we will gain something else! We will gain growth. Numerical growth! When we understand the love relationship between God and us, we will see fields that are ready for harvest, and each one of us will become a worker in those fields.

There's a verse that explains this relationship well. John 3:16 reads, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." In the margin of my Bible I have written four statements — "God loves; God gave; I believe; I live!" As I look at these four statements I find that I have a pretty good handle on two of them. I understand the concept of God giving His Son to die on the cross for my sins. I have a good idea of what it means to forgive and be forgiven because of Christ's shed blood. I also have the concept of what it means to live forever. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him," and in that sense I don't have a clue of the greatness of the coming kingdom, but I do understand the coming kingdom. I understand the concept of living in that kingdom with God and ruling and reigning with Jesus Christ.

What I didn't seem to understand in this John 3:16 text are the "God loves" and "I believe" statements. It is these two pieces that make up the love relationship between God and us. It seems that most people struggle to understand that relationship! To understand our relationship with God, we might learn from the marriage relationship between a husband and

wife. As there are expectations between two people in love, there are also some expectations between God and man. God has one set of expectations for us, and we have another set of expectations for Him. As with two people in a marriage, if we work on our relationship with God, it will grow and prosper and be long-lasting. As I have been calling door to door in Winnebago, I am finding that most people believe in God. But I am also finding that far too many of those same people have given up on their commitment to Him because they simply do not understand the love relationship and what is necessary to make it work.

In any love relationship, the main component is trust. A husband and wife must be able to trust each other at all times. When the foundation of trust begins to crumble, the rest of the relationship will soon topple. In our relationship with God, we must be able to trust Him to do what He says He will do for us. He gave His Son to die on the cross for our sins. He will forgive us of our sins if we repent and ask for forgiveness. He will send His Son back to the earth some day to set up His eternal kingdom.

These principles are pretty basic to Christianity and simple for us to incorporate into our minds and hearts. But these principles have to do with eternity and, to those of us fighting the battle in the trenches day by day, eternity might as well be a million years away. We must also be able to trust that God will do what He says for the here-and-now. Scripture says, "All things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose." Do we trust those words when we are almost ready to retire and the company that we have been working for closes up with no benefits? Do we trust those words when our grandson or granddaughter is diagnosed with cancer and doesn't live through it? Do we trust

those words when our husband of 29 years runs off with another woman and leaves us abandoned and alone? Do we trust those words when our 19-year-old daughter is brutally murdered by the hands of another human being? Do we trust God to take the very worst things that happen in our lives and make good come out of them? When we can come through these kinds of problems and look to God for our daily care and our hope, then we have a relationship that is built on a foundation of trust. Whether we ever experience similar difficulties or not, if we believe then we must trust that God does care and have concern for us daily. But remember, a relationship is two-sided and God must be able to trust us with His expectations.

There are several things that God must be able to trust us with if our relationship with Him is going to flourish. As followers of Christ, we have done fairly well with most of these expectations — all but one. It is this one expectation that was the center of my frustration with myself, my service and my church. God expects us to evangelize the world around us. The entire Christian belief is established around faith. Faith is a huge part of trust, and trust is what a relationship is built on. The opposite of faith and trust is doubt and fear. On the mountainside, after Jesus was resurrected, His disciples worshipped Him, but Matthew 28:17 includes three little words that would have torn their ministries apart — "but some doubted." With the resurrected Savior standing in front of them as they worshipped Him, there was doubt in their hearts. Jesus saw a problem with the doubt in His disciples' hearts and He gave them a way to erase that doubt on the spot. He told them in Matthew 28:18-20, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching

them to obey everything I have commanded you." Jesus recognized that commitment to God is built by telling and teaching others about Him.

Because of things that I was experiencing in my life, I had doubt in my heart that God really cared for me as He says He does. Through that doubt came fear of what people might think if I said too much about being a Christian. I had fear of failure, fear of rejection and fear of persecution. My roller coaster ride of service was due to the doubt and fear that I had. Because of that doubt and that fear, I kept silent about Jesus to lost people around me and produced no harvest within the church.

It is through our combined silence that doubt maintains its position in our lives and renders us ineffective as a church. With all the other pieces of our love relationship in place, if we are not sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with lost people, we are not meeting the expectations that God has for us in our relationship with Him. God must be able to trust us with everything that He has given us, not just what we pick and choose. As in any relationship, we must work to meet the expectation or convince God that it is unreasonable and that we cannot meet it. I don't think that God will accept that line of reasoning. And so we must ask the question, "How do we grow to the point of meeting *all* of God's expectations for us?"

Frequently, Paul states in his letters "follow my example," and I am learning by doing just that. In his letters to Timothy we see the wisdom of an elderly, experienced man being delivered to a younger man who is just entering into ministry. Both men are committed to Jesus Christ. Both men are committed to taking the gospel message to lost people, but Paul sees the potential for a problem with Timothy because Paul recognized the problem within himself. That problem is the same

doubt, or fear, that Jesus saw in the hearts of His disciples. It is that same doubt, or fear, that immobilized me and kept me on the spiritual roller coaster for far too long. I believe I'm not alone in this spiritual roller coaster ride, in my frustration of service just for the sake of serving, and what seems to be our inability to reach out to lost people in our communities.

From this point on, I want to accomplish three things. The first thing is to share with you the advice that I see Paul giving to Timothy, which he practiced in his ministry. The second thing I want to accomplish is to share with you how I have put this advice into practice and how I have seen it work. And the third thing that I want to do is challenge you to give it a try.

In 2 Timothy 1:3-8, we see Paul pointing out several characteristics about Timothy that he has observed. These characteristics are important for us to understand because they tell us that Timothy was a person just like we are. We already know that Timothy was a young man, not experienced in dealing with what would be coming at him. Paul points out his tears, which tell us that Timothy was tenderhearted. Paul points out his sincere faith, which tells us that Timothy was motivated in the right direction. Paul points out his heritage, which tells us that this was not something new to Timothy. And then, in verse 6, Paul tells Timothy something that he has obviously told him before. Paul reminds Timothy "to fan into flame the gift of God."

It is this part of the letter that really began to hit home with me as God began to open my eyes. At home we have five large trees located at different places around our house. They offer great shade in the summer, but look out in the fall of the year. Leaves start falling about October 1st and don't finish until well after there is snow on the ground. We burn huge amounts of leaves and I know what it

means to fan something into flames. If the leaves are dry when you first light the fire they will burn rapidly. As the fire consumes the leaves, it begins to slow down and will eventually burn out all together. It is at this time that a certain amount of "fire management" comes into play. If I dump more leaves on the fire I can smother it, unless I "fan into flames" the fire again. If the original fire is burning down, I can dump leaves on it and then, with my rake, lift the leaves and allow fresh air to get to the burning embers and the fire takes right off. The leaves are burned as they were meant to be. In my "fire management" I can smother the fire completely with new leaves, or I can rebuild it to the point where it was originally.

In our ministries the commodity that we are dealing with is not leaves, but people. If we don't continually add people to our churches, the fire will eventually die out. As I burn leaves at home I can stand and stir the original fire for a long time and it will continue to burn. But eventually there is nothing left to burn and it dies. We can talk about the fact that "our numbers are not growing but we are sure growing spiritually." What we are really saying is that we aren't adding new leaves to the fire, and we are guaranteeing the death of our church somewhere down the road. Maybe the fire won't go out during our ministry if we can stand and stir long enough. But the good folks who are now there will eventually die off and, without new growth, the death of the church will come. "Fanning into flame" the gift of God is for the sake of both those already in the church and those who are lost. In the long run, we can't have one without the other.

In verse 7 we see the formula that Paul used in his ministry of reaching new people. From my studies of Paul, I believe that he could write these words to Timothy because he said these words to himself every

day of his life. Paul says, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity [fear, KJV], but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline." We can blame our lack of growth within the Church of God General Conference on a lot of things. We can blame our doctrines, we can blame our General Conference leadership, we can blame our pastors, we can blame God for not drawing people to us. We can blame a lack of commitment in our people, we can blame the busyness of today's society, we can blame the evil of the world around us, but the truth of the matter is we have nothing to blame but the doubt and fear within us. We are afraid to share the good news of what Jesus Christ is doing in our lives with lost people around us.

Our fear is over what people might think of us or do to us, and Paul seemed to experience that fear daily. In Romans 1:16, he wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." In Ephesians 6:19 he pleads, "Pray for me so that . . . I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel." In 2 Corinthians 7:5 he says, "For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn — conflicts on the outside, fears within." And then while he was in Corinth, in the midst of changing lives and leading lost people to Jesus Christ, Jesus appeared to him in a vision — and look at the words Jesus said to him: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent" (Acts 18:9). Paul knew what fear was; he knew where it came from and he fought to overcome it daily.

Let's look at the words that Paul wrote to Timothy on overcoming fear: "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:7, 8). Paul knew that he could not make a difference

in anyone's life by his own power. It had to come from the power of God, the power that makes the impossible possible. Paul tells Timothy that this power is a gift from God, and when you fear, fan into flame the power of God. When you find yourself hating what you are doing, fan into flame the love of God. When you can't make yourself go another step, fan into flame the self-discipline of God. God's power is mightier than anything fear can throw at you. Paul knew the spirit of fear, unchecked, will immobilize, but God's Spirit will take a weak man and change the world through him. Jesus did not command us to become immobilized within the four walls of our buildings. He commanded us to go and make a difference in the lives of lost people.

I want to share with you what is happening in Rockford, Illinois. In 1986 I had come to a point in my life where I could no longer continue the roller coaster ride I was experiencing with my commitment to service. I decided that my service was going to begin to make a difference in people's lives or I was going to get out of it altogether. I stood in front of my kitchen sink and prayed, "Dear Lord, if this stuff about your Holy Spirit is real then you are going to have to show that to me and use me to make a difference in the lives of other hurting people." I had always said as a child that I would be a minister or missionary when I grew up. I think that I grew up that day (I was 39 years old). I was selling real estate at the time and it was then that I began to see how other people around me were hurting, too. It was the first time in my life that I realized that I had something that they didn't and by sharing it with them I might make a difference for them. It was also the first time in my life that I looked out for others instead of looking out for myself. During that period of time I began to see masses of people around me that were as Jesus

described them, sheep without a shepherd. They had nowhere to go and nothing to go anywhere for. They seemed to be in total darkness and couldn't find their way out. It was then that I began to feel differently toward the church and, instead of seeing it as a source of frustration, I saw it as a way to help lost people. What I didn't see was a way to get lost people to come to church because most of them were more frustrated with it than I was.

My first step of faith was to go back to college and become prepared to preach the gospel message. In less than five months, I was asked to pastor a new church planting effort in Loves Park and God gave me the way to reach out to lost people. The first years of that work were a true training ground in faith, love and endurance. The fire began to burn low and, as I fanned it back into flame, God stressed in my heart the importance of continually reaching into the homes of these lost people. As a church, our work is essentially done when we have no one else to win to Jesus. The commodity that we are dealing with is lost people. If we are spending our entire effort working with people who are already saved, we are missing the point. The work of the church is to bring lost people into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to teach about the need to bring in more lost people.

In 1988, just prior to the first service at Family Bible Fellowship, the Church of God had an average attendance in the city of Rockford of 45 people. After the first service at Family Bible we jumped to an average of 100 people. In 1993 we planted Beloit New Life Church of God and our average attendance has jumped up to 150 people. In three months, New Life Bible Church of Winnebago will have its first service and on that Sunday we are planning on more than two hundred and fifty people in services in a Church of God in the greater Rockford area. With God's

continued blessing, and with the prayer and financial support of individuals and churches within this General Conference, our vision is to continue to plant additional churches in Rockford, Freeport and Belvidere, Illinois, and Jamesville and Madison, Wisconsin. When that is done, we should have reached into the homes of over 40,000 church and unchurched families as we seek out those who are eager to know more about the one true God, and His Son, Jesus Christ. With a lot of work and perseverance, and if the Lord tarries, we will have over 350 people worshipping as a part of the church of God in the greater Rockford metropolitan area. All of this because of one prayer that said, "God, if this stuff about your Holy Spirit is real then you are going to have to show me," and God is doing just that.

With all that has happened, and the difference that we have made in the lives of people now living all over the United States, I have to overcome fear on a daily basis: fear of failing, fear of being rejected, and fear of being persecuted for what I believe. Satan keeps those fears going through my mind every time I face a decision that will affect the life of someone who is not saved. The only way I can "go and make disciples" as Jesus has commanded is to fan into flame the gift that God has given to me. The fire burns all the time. Like the leaves at home, we need to keep adding something to it and then fan the flame to keep it going.

As you ponder this message you need to ask yourself, "How am I going to respond?" Some of you will say, "That guy has his nerve! He might as well have called my service to God worthless!" Tomorrow you will go back to serving God for the sake of service. The lost person that you work beside, the neighbor who doesn't know about Jesus Christ, the hurting mother of four across town whose husband just left her will never see God's love

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Preparation for Leadership

BY PASTOR WARREN SORENSON — SIMI VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

To be a leader for God — become His follower! A leader can set his own agenda; however a leader in God's service must follow God's agenda! In God's service it is necessary that one study God's Word faithfully in order to clearly understand God's purpose and God's will. God's purpose determines our purpose. Obedience to the will of God is vital in developing any program for the betterment of the individual and also for the Body of Christ.

Jesus set the example when He said, "I came to do the will of Him that sent me." It was this complete obedience to the will of God that led Jesus to endure the suffering of the cross — "Not my will but thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

Jesus, the Son of God, extended an invitation to any who would become His servants: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

The first requirement of leadership is followership. ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

The second, and this cannot be out of order, is to wait. Wait until the promise of Acts 1:4-8 is fulfilled. Wait, however long that takes, for the power of God. "Wait for the promise" (Acts 1:4).

A third requirement is stated in Acts 20:28: take a good look at yourself and consider wisely your character, your personality, and your motives. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" *then* "the flock of God, over which you have been made overseers." Before you can *feed* the church, before you can *lead* the church — take *heed* concerning yourself.

Companion verses regarding leadership and the flock of God are in our text, 1 Peter 5:1-4:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when

the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

The characteristics of leadership which are vital according to this text are:

- 1) Shepherds are to serve according to the will of God.
- 2) They are to be persons who are eager and willing to serve.
- 3) They are to lead as a living example.

God's leaders are to demonstrate how it is done by first doing, not just telling. God's leaders are not bosses who give orders but rather leaders who go before and show the way. H. Gordon Selfridge expressed it thus:

God's leaders are to demonstrate how it is done by first doing, not just telling.

The boss drives his men; the leader coaches them.

The boss depends on authority; the leader on goodwill.

The boss inspires fear; the leader inspires enthusiasm.

The boss says "I"; the leader, "We."

The boss fixes the blame for the breakdown; the leader fixes the breakdown.

The boss knows how it is done; the leader shows how.

The boss says "Go"; the leader says "Let's go."

Preparing for leadership is first of all preparing self. This preparation makes the difference between being a *leader* or a *lightning bug*.

The lightning bug's life is most confused — he has no mind. He wanders through his existence with his headlight on behind.

There is always a list of do's and don't's in any subject or project. I'll give you only the seven "D's" of leadership preparation: 1. Decision — being able to make decisions wisely; 2. Diplomacy — the art of communication so as to inspire enthusiasm rather than fear; 3. Delegate — the ability to enlist the right people for the job. The other four "D's," which we will discuss in more detail, are important character issues.

4. DISCIPLINE

"If a man cannot rule his own house, how can he take care of the Church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:5). In Titus 1:6-9 a list of characteristics is provided for those in leadership. These are specifics listed to demonstrate what a disciplined life looks like. Most important is that the person be disciplined and have self-control. The specifics in this text are merely examples and not intended to be a complete and exhaustive list.

5. DISCERNMENT

This is one of the special gifts that God imparts to some of His servants. It is also one that is to be developed by those who expect to be among His leaders. Solomon displayed wisdom when he prayed for this specific basic need. "Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge, to discern between good and bad" (1 Kings 3:9).

The importance of this quality is made clear by the warning in 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God." Considering the influences that circulate in society and that have an impact on Christians and leaders, it is vital that we pray for discernment to be able to judge between truth and error and that which is proper and improper. This is valuable regarding not only facts but also people. Solomon's prayer becomes the prayer of all leaders: "Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge, to discern between good and bad."

6. DEDICATION

The prophet Jeremiah made it clear on one occasion that he was going through a very troubled time. He was having trouble making up his mind.

O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long. But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot (Jer. 20:7-9).

"His word is like a fire burning inside of me." That's real dedication.

7. DEPENDENCE ON GOD

"Our efficiency turns out to be a deficiency unless we have God's sufficiency" (Vance Havner). "My strength is made perfect in weakness. . . . for when I am weak then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). □

Rekindling the Flame (continued from page 7)

for them from you or anyone else around them. Their lives will not change, even though you hold the power for that change in your hand. Your church board, of which you are probably a member, will spend hours talking about aluminum siding on the outside of your building, the fan motors in the furnace room that need to be oiled, the dead branch in the tree outside the office window, but none of that will make a difference to lost people in your community.

For others, many of you have forgotten this message already because you have a big appointment tomorrow and you were running through the last minute

preparations as you had a few minutes to relax tonight and not have to listen to the wife or the kids. I ask you, "Is the man or woman that you are putting a million dollar investment together with saved for eternity?"

Finally, there are those who are saying to themselves: "This guy has described my life of service in the church and I don't know that I have ever led anyone to Jesus. For that matter, my church hasn't led anyone to Jesus for months or years now, and how can we make a difference in lost people's lives?" For those of you who are wondering about that right now, it's not too late to make a radical difference in the

world around you. Fan into flame the gift that God gave you when you came to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Ask God to show you what His Holy Spirit is able to do in your life and the lives of others around you. But be prepared when you do. It won't happen without some cost to you! It won't happen without a change of attitude toward the people around you who don't know Jesus Christ. When that attitude change comes, you must be prepared to use your faith like you have never imagined you could use it before. God works in a mighty way and He expects us to join Him in that work. Will you join God in His work to reach lost people? □

Spiritual Growth and Renewal

BY PASTOR MICHAEL P. BROWN — MACOMB, ILLINOIS

From 1904 to 1905 a great spiritual awakening took place in Wales called the great Welsh Revival. Here is an account of this incident written by Thomas DeCourcy Rayner:

The world still feels the influence of the great Welsh Revival which flamed across the tiny country of Wales at the beginning of this century. But few remember just how this mighty spiritual movement began:

A Christian Endeavor meeting was in progress in a small town in Wales when a timid young Welsh girl arose. She was so nervous that she could utter only one short sentence: "O, I do love Jesus!" Then she sat down. The Lord used that earnest testimony to fulfill His own divine purpose. Spiritual fire came down on that young people's meeting, even akin to Pentecost. Quickly it spread through that church, then through the little town, and on through the whole of Wales. Its influence was soon felt all around the world.

The Welsh revival illustrates the effectiveness of a personal testimony when it is fanned into flame by those who are enthusiastic about spreading the good news of Jesus Christ and His salvation. But what about that flame today? Here we are, almost a hundred years later, and what do we as the Church of God have to show in regard to the spiritual flame in our own place and time? Indeed, if we are to see a flame that's glowing with revival, we

ought also to see that the flame is kept that way as we guard it with utmost dedication and zeal for the truth.

Truth is the fuel that keeps the spiritual flame alive and meaningful. Truth is the basis for true spiritual growth and renewal. Truth is found in the living Word of God — the sword of the believer.

Think about it. Can you imagine guarding something without an instrument to help you protect it? Today guards normally carry some kind of weapon, perhaps a gun, in order to preserve and protect what they're guarding. In Bible times the weapon was usually a sword. The Hebrew and Greek words for "guard" may refer to a member of the king's bodyguard, who would kill anyone who tried to harm the king.

In a similar sense, believers guard the spiritual fire of renewal by the sword of God's word as they stand ready to preserve and protect the truth of the Gospel. When the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian church of God he included the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, as part of God's complete armor along with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. All of these pieces are essential for guarding the flame "so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand" (Eph. 6:13; note: all Scriptures are from the New International Version).

Since God's word and His truth are part of our spiritual equipment, it's

reasonable to believe that we cannot truly guard the flame if we aren't reading and studying the Bible each day. As an organization that traditionally prides itself upon believing the fundamental truths of Scripture, we realize the need to continue along this line. But if we do not keep searching the Scriptures as the early Bereans did, then our guard will be down. If we do not "receive the message with great eagerness and examine the scriptures every day to see if what [the preacher or teacher says] is true," like the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11), then we will have lost our edge as a Bible-believing group.

Leaders of the Church of God have always supported guarding the flame by putting scriptural truth at the forefront of Christian growth. In 1970, Brother J. R. LeCrone, one of our long-time pastors who is now deceased, wrote a short message in *THE RESTITUTION HERALD* where he pointed out that the only offensive piece of the armor in Ephesians is "the sword of the Spirit — the Word of God." He said, "It is also worthy of serious thought that the Word of God is also mentioned as a part of the defensive, or protective armor, 'having your loins girt about with truth.'" So, you have the sword of the Spirit, God's Word, on the offense while you have the truth of the Word as your defense.

Brother LeCrone added, "He who leaves God's Word of truth out of his spiritual armor is vulnerable in his defense against evil, and completely lacking in the only effective weapon against it. He

is helpless before its attack, and unable to mount an effective counterattack."

He went on to say something that every Church of God member needs to remember today:

It is not mere coincidence that the tendency to substitute sincerity for truth, and to place "togetherness" at the forefront of Christian aims, has been accompanied by an increase in all manner of evil which has not spared the membership of the churches. Church membership is no longer an effective defense against the attacks of evil, nor an effective weapon with which to attack it, because the truth of the Word has been set aside as unimportant.

If you believe that the truth of God's Word is of primary importance, you cannot escape your obligation to know and practice its truth. The Church of God wants to help you to do just that!

I believe Brother LeCrone's message rings as true today as it did when he wrote it. We may talk to a lot of sincere persons who claim to believe in Jesus and we may want to get along with other Christian groups for the sake of "togetherness," but if we place doctrinal truth on the back burner, we are weakening our guard and setting ourselves up for a defeat.

A 1975 issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD reprinted an article by Brother Harold Doan, published in the *Progress Journal* back in 1950. It was submitted by Church of God minister Brother Clyde Randall. Brother Doan wrote:

The Church of God holds certain distinctive doctrines of the Bible which have been neglected, ignored, or perverted by most other religious

groups. These distinctive doctrines are the reason for the separate existence of the Church of God . . . [They] are the reason for the formation of the General Conference — to print these truths; train ministers and teachers to evangelize with these truths; and to help organize new churches and district conferences where these truths will be upheld. . . .

If these doctrines are not important, there is no reason for separate existence. It would be easier and much more efficient to merge with a larger group and eliminate the struggle for growth and recognition. If these distinctive doctrines are important, they demand the utmost from us in service, sacrifice, and faithfulness. If these distinctive doctrines are essential, it is important that we preserve them and make them known through literature of truth, through songs of truth, through training workers in truth, through activities which emphasize the truth, through Sunday school and vacation Bible school lessons of truth, and through evangelism and missions based on these truths.

I don't think the truth has changed since Brother Doan wrote these words 47 years ago, do you? And if the truth was of "primary importance" as Brother LeCrone wrote 27 years ago, then surely it's just as important today, wouldn't you say? And if we put as much emphasis on that truth today as we've always advocated, then how much more important is it that we continue guarding the flame by walking the truth, talking the truth, and living the truth day by day?

I was recently browsing through another RESTITUTION HERALD published in 1970 and noticed an interesting editorial

by Brother Terry Ferrell. He had quoted W.A. Criswell, then president of the Southern Baptist Convention, who said on several occasions that if the members did not believe the Convention's articles of faith then they were not truly Baptists. In fact, Criswell reportedly told the executive committee of the church, "If we have men who do not believe in our articles of faith, why don't these people just leave us and join denominations where they would be happy?"

In light of Criswell's words, Brother Ferrell commented:

[T]here are many Americans who do not love America. To them some say, "Love it or leave it!" But they don't. Some have the obsession of changing our government, by revolution and violence if necessary. Some Church of God members do not love the truth, and consider our church just another denomination, no better — and probably worse — than some others which are more "successful." We wonder why these don't just get out, and join the denomination they admire. But they don't. (Naturally we desire that they would "get in," that is, realize that God's church has the message and faith the world needs.)

There are some who might not like to hear these words for fear that our stand for the truth might make us sound too narrow-minded, or legalistic like the Pharisees. But we need not fear this will happen if we abide in the truth, for Jesus said, "The truth will set you free" and "I am the truth." "God did not give us a spirit of timidity [Greek — *deilias*, cowardice], but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to

testify about our Lord . . ." (2 Tim. 1:7, 8). Besides, how are we to keep guarding the flame if we don't courageously take a stand for the truth?

Recall what Jeremiah declared about the flame of God's message: "His Word is in my heart like a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot" (Jeremiah 20:9). As surely as we cannot keep fire shut up inside of us, neither can we hold back our passion for God's truth. Guarding the flame means we do not withhold the teachings but uphold them through deep, personal conviction and faith.

In his editorial, Brother Ferrell also wrote:

A study of our history shows that our forefathers in the faith individually studied themselves out of the so-called "orthodox" churches. In their search for truth they found others who held the same faith, so came into a voluntary association. Being of different backgrounds religiously, there were often divergent views on some subjects, but amazing unity on the major doctrines such as the oneness of God, the sonship of Jesus, the non-personality of the Holy Spirit, the mortal nature of man, the second coming of Jesus, the Kingdom on earth, the importance of the resurrection, the Abrahamic covenant, the restoration of Israel, the steps toward salvation — faith, repentance, and baptism, and the necessity of living the Christian life.

The fact that our forefathers studied themselves into this faith caused them to have conviction, strong conviction on these things; uncompromising conviction of the truth.

Brothers and sisters, I firmly believe that we can't even begin guarding the flame if we don't have "uncompromising conviction" of these truths. If you believe various doctrines only because our church believes them, rather than because that's what the Bible says, then it's very likely you are not guarding the flame very well. If you are in the Church of God merely because that's where you were raised, rather than because that's where you can grow in the true teachings of God's Word, then perhaps you had better think about how seriously you are guarding the flame. If you are accepting what another person says about the Bible and are not studying what the Bible says for yourself so as to "rightly divide the word of truth," then you will not be guarding the flame as you should.

When one is convicted in the truth of God one will guard the flame through regular Bible study, prayer, personal and public worship, personal witnessing, submission to God's moral principles, and preparation for the coming Kingdom. Revival will only continue in the Church of God as long as its members grow in Spirit and Truth.

Once a native of India wrote this to a friend about a great revival they were having: "We're having a rebible." Not a bad idea. The church needs to be "rebibled." To have a "rebible" we need to have personal revival by seeking God and applying His Word each day.

Answering the question, "When will we have revival?" Bishop William F. Anderson wrote:

When Christians wear out more carpets around the family altar than around the dressing table;

When Christians wear out more rubber tires calling on needy homes than they wear out on pleasure trips.

When Christians stop bickering over little things, and have fellowship in the spirit of divine love;

When "my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land" — then the revival will come.

When dad stays home from the club and lodge.

When mother stays away from the amusement places and parties.

When the car is left in the garage long enough to cool oil;

When the radio and TV are turned off long enough for the entire family to tune in on God; then we shall have revival.

When preachers preach the Word of God, rather than essays on philosophy and psychology and the opinions of men.

When churches quit trying to hold together by means of entertainment and picnics.

When the folks all get back in one accord, rather than discord; then we shall have revival.

In genuine humility and submission, let us seek God's face. We must save our homes, our churches, our country.

Fellow believers, when revival fires of this nature are applied, we'll not only fan into flame the gifts God has given but we'll be guarding them as well. □

Guarding the Flame

BY PASTOR DALE SWARTZ — BRUSH CREEK, OHIO

This theme and topic are near and dear to my heart and, I believe, timely to what is taking place in the Church of God.

My text is 1 Timothy 4:14-16. In this passage the apostle Paul is writing to Timothy, his son in the faith. Timothy is already a Christian. I believe that for us to properly use and understand this passage we have to realize that this passage affects us who have already made a commitment to Jesus Christ. We need to have an understanding of God's word and know what God expects from us as individuals after we have become Christians. In order to guard a flame, there first must *be* a flame, and that flame must be worth guarding.

When I think about our faith as being worth guarding, I think back to my childhood. In the fall of 1960, my parents drove my grandmother's car to Florida for her. During the week they were gone, my oldest brother, then married, stayed at our home and was my guardian for the week. This brother, when he married, left the Church of God and joined the church his wife attended, one that did not teach the things my mother and father held dear. It happened that the church of which my brother was now a member was having a revival. Since he was my guardian for the week I went to the revival because he went to the revival. Now those of you who know me know that there aren't very many people who remain strangers to me. I mean, I'm willing to talk to anyone; so when my brother whispered and asked me and my twin brother during the sermon if we wanted to go down and talk to the preacher after the service I thought "why

not, I'll talk to him." By the time we left the church, we had talked to the pastor and received a little tiny copy of the Gospel of John. On the way home, I was told how thrilled Mom and Dad would be when they heard what I had done. I had just walked forward in a Baptist church. When Mom and Dad arrived home from Florida, I told them what I had done. I will never forget how angry my parents became when hearing the news. They had been hurt that

*To guard a flame,
there must first be a
flame worth guarding*



their oldest son had married outside the faith and left the Church of God. Now he had taken me to his church and urged me to accept Christ in that church. They were angry and felt betrayed. Their look of disappointment will ever be etched in my mind.

Up to that point in my life I attended Sunday School faithfully, and during the worship service I would look up and count the tiny holes in the ceiling tile, then count the tiles and try to figure out how many tiny holes were in the entire ceiling. After seeing my parents' hurt and frustration, and observing the righteous anger of my father, I realized there must be something very special in their faith. The teaching held by the Church of God must be very special. From then on I listened to my pastor, and I took notes during his messages. About one year later, during a

revival conducted by Pastor Z. B. Duncan in November of 1961, after hearing a message on Tuesday night of that week on the subject of "Russia's Last Battle," I walked forward in the Golden Rule Church of God and accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. This time I knew what I was doing. I had learned there was, indeed, something special to understand in the Scripture. I was then baptized by Pastor C. F. Pryor on November 17, 1961. I had learned that there was a flame worth guarding, something worth preserving.

We've all had experiences with flame — from a match or candle to a campfire or bonfire. We've laughed together and cried together during special times around a flame. Candlelight is associated with quiet, intimate times with our spouses or other loved ones. There is something special about a flame. The sudden attraction of two young people toward each other has been referred to as a "spark." We talk about the flame of love and how it is important to keep the spark in our marriage and not let the flame of love go out.

In the theme text for this year's conference, 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul uses the phrase "kindle afresh" when urging Timothy to use his God-given ability. As we observe life we have to realize that there are two ways in which we need to guard our flame. One is to make sure the flame does not go out; the other is to keep the flame under control and not let it get out of hand.

Tonight, the main text for my message is found in 1 Timothy 4:16. Hear what the apostle Paul has to say to Timothy: "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as

you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." The King James Version says: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine." Tonight, in order to help **GUARD THE FLAME** and make strides toward spiritual growth and renewal, I want to urge you to do two things as Paul directed Timothy to do. Watch your life and watch your doctrine!

Watch Your Life

Most of you here have heard your pastor speak, at one time or another, about spiritual growth and personal renewal. Books have been written on the subject, and videos have been produced in order to spur God's people on to do greater things for Him. The things I want to share with you tonight may not be totally new to many of you, but they are absolutely necessary for the Christian to be successful for God in the modern world in which we live.

In Revelation 2:2-5 we have Jesus' message to the church at Ephesus. Here Jesus says:

I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

In verse 5, Jesus says, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at the first." He tells them to repent! Think back to where you used to be and make a U-turn in your life. Go back to the foot of the cross. Get back into a right relationship and let's do things as we did at the beginning.

The story is told of a young person in church who chose to accept Christ as his Savior. During a personal testimony time, he told the audience how excited he was and how wonderful he felt knowing he had been forgiven, his sins had been washed away and now he wanted to "turn the world upside down." Two older gentlemen, who had been Christians a long time, were sitting near the front and were carefully but cautiously listening to the young man. After the young man sat down, one man said to the other, "He'll get used to it." Folks, Jesus does not want us to "get used to it"; He wants us to be as excited about Him and His message as we were at the first, at our conversion. Notice again, Jesus said in verse 5, "do the deeds you did at the first." I believe it is the Lord's desire that we make church attendance a priority; have more fellowship with others in your congregation; trust the Lord more; pray more; read your Bibles more; and, of utmost importance, clean up the bad habits we've developed since our conversion.

Turn to 1 John 2:6. Here John writes, "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." John says, "Walk as Jesus walked, live like Jesus lived, and act and react like Jesus acted and reacted in life's situations." In other words, if you say you are a Christian and claim to be a Christian, *act like a Christian!* John 13:35 says, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Act like a Christian!

As we renew our commitment to Jesus Christ, we need to periodically examine our lives. Many people are like the lost son in Luke 15. They think they are part of the father's household and they believe they are Christians, but they have let a lot of worldly things sneak in and take hold of their lives. The lost son was in trouble until "he came to his senses" (Luke 15:17) and saw how far he had slipped. The young

man saw where he was, made a U-turn and went back to his father. Was he met by reproach and condemnation? No, he was met by a loving father, who welcomed him back with open arms and full acceptance as a son and heir. For those of us who find ourselves in this same condition, there is hope; but we must change our present course and return to our first love. Notice Acts 19:20: "the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." This was in Ephesus. What caused this to happen? Verses 18 and 19 give the answer:

Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

What did the people do? They dug into their lives and confessed hidden sins. They dug into their houses and cleaned out their closets. They burned books and treasures that were unacceptable to God. The rich young ruler of Matthew 19 refused Jesus' offer of salvation because the lure of his possessions was too great. In Psalm 66:18, the Psalmist says, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." Sin hinders your relationship with God. The son in Luke 15 was considered "lost" because his sin had cut off his relationship with his father. Let's be honest with ourselves: some kinds of sin are pleasurable, otherwise they wouldn't be so alluring — and there is a difference between pleasure and true happiness or joy. What sins are hindering your relationship? What do you watch on television? Do you have HBO or a similar channel on your cable system? What about the sex, violence, language and homosexual situations that are

blatantly thrown at us on those channels? What secrets would be found in your closet? What secret things do you hide from your family?

1 Timothy 4:16 says, "Watch your life." You, as a Christian, are to be an example to the world.

Watch Your Doctrine

The Church of God Abrahamic Faith is unique in the world. Most major denominations share roughly similar theology known as "orthodoxy," meaning "straight teaching." But their orthodox teachings are anything but; in fact, some of their teachings are completely foreign to the message and teaching of Jesus and completely foreign to the Hebrew Scriptures. We have often felt "alone" like the prophet Elijah, because our understanding of Scripture is so different from the other major denominations. Some have called these differences in beliefs "our distinctives." Over the years we have talked at length about these "distinctives," and in recent months some of them have dominated COGmail.

We've made one major error. The beliefs we hold are not our distinctives or our doctrine; they are scriptural things that Jesus taught — they are Jesus' doctrine. Let's get our priorities straight. Church of God people may not be the only people who will be saved in the Kingdom of God. Those who will be saved are the ones who believe what the Bible teaches. It just so happens, in my humble opinion, that the Church of God believes what the Bible teaches. A danger which has caused me a great deal of concern is that I see many in the Church of God who, because of their desire to reach people for Christ, do not share the message of the kingdom that has so separated us from other people. It seems this is being done in order not to offend others. These people believe the doctrines of the Bible, those things that the Church

of God holds dear; they just don't place much emphasis on them in public worship. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul wrote about a great falling away that would take place in the last days. This falling away is a departure from the truth. The fact is, people who are not *in* Christ have nothing from which to fall away. Therefore, if we don't watch our doctrine, this great falling away could include some of us in the Church of God.

I want to get specific now in two areas. First, in Matthew 16:13-16, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Their answer was: "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Jesus then asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" From our knowledge of Scripture we know that Peter spoke up and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus' question in Matthew 16 still stands today. "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Some say God incarnate; and others God, the Son; but still others, a preexistent Jesus, existing from the beginning of creation.

"But who do you say that I am?" Jesus told Peter that God had revealed His identity to him. The Bible is the Word of God and God is still trying to reveal to mankind the identity of His Son, but most of Christendom will not listen. Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, and He is coming to establish a perfect kingdom on the earth. Let's pretend we are in school, and Jesus, our teacher, is giving us a multiple choice quiz. He has given us the same question that He gave to Peter. What would the world's answer be? What would your answer be? "God incarnate" is wrong! "A preexistent Jesus" is wrong! Christ, the Son of God is the *only right answer*.

For the second area, I ask you, "Do we believe the truth or a lie?" In Genesis 2:17 God told Adam not to eat from the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil, "for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." Later, in Genesis 3:4, the serpent told Eve, "You surely shall not die!" Who should we believe? The answer seems so simple! Why do the majority of churchgoers in America, as well as unbelievers in general, believe that when they die their soul leaves the body and goes straight to heaven? In fact, people will tell you that their dead loved ones are watching them from above. They don't believe they really die; they live on somewhere else when the body wears out. What do you believe? God's statement of fact, or the serpent's lie? For anyone to be in heaven now, they would have to be immortal now. The Bible says immortality is a reward for the righteous in the future at the coming of Jesus.

Folks, it does make a difference what and who you believe! In Matthew 24:5, 11, 24, Jesus warned His disciples that deceivers and false prophets will come. Therefore they were to be ready and prepared so as not to be fooled by them. A further concern of Jesus is revealed in Luke 18:8 where He says: "when the Son of Man comes, will He find the faith on the earth?" Take a look at this verse in your own Bible. You will probably find it simply says *faith*, and not *the faith*. Most translations, of course written by men, leave out the article "the" in regard to faith. The article "the" is included in the Greek and should be included in your Bible as well. But translators have left it out, making faith a generic term, rather than a definite term. Jesus was not generic in what He said the Son of Man would be looking for at His return. Jesus knew full well that the gospel would be in jeopardy in the last days. In Matthew 24:13, Jesus told His disciples that there would be tough times ahead, "but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved."

(continued on page 17)

Revitalization and Outreach

BY PASTOR THOMAS SCHMITT — RIPLEY, ILLINOIS

My name is Tom Schmitt. 1997 marks my 15th year of affiliation with the General Conference. I'm a Bible-believing, conservative, evangelical, fundamental Christian, who is solidly pre-trib, pre-mill, and futurist. I serve as pastor of Ripley Church of God — a rural church that is so far out that we have to go towards town to hunt. I'm also the principal of a private K-8 school. And I'm probably the only male student — still living, that is — who has hugged Kent Ross at an OBC graduation ceremony. And I'd still do it again, Kent! Thanks for helping me prepare my lamp.

Take out a coin — steal one from a neighbor, if you need to. Look at it. No matter what coin it is, it has two things in common with every other coin in the room. It has a head and it has a tail. Both sides make up the coin. You cannot remove one without the coin ceasing to be legal tender — it is vital to commerce. So it is with today's theme: "Revitalization and Outreach."

Revitalization — Coming Back to That Which Is Vital

- A. Saving faith (1 Cor. 15:1-3). Paul writes to the church at Corinth about those things that are of "first importance," that is to say, they are essential. And at the core is the need to know Jesus.
- B. Call on the name of Jesus. We also need to know about Jesus. By learning what the Bible says about Him, we can accurately call upon His Name for salvation. The Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures

daily. And in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, we learn from Paul that he wanted to preach Christ and the atoning sacrifice to the people. We must know Jesus *and* know about Him.

- C. The third essential element for revitalization is a decision by God's people to act upon Jesus. In Acts 2:42-47 we discover what the early church was devoted to: *knowing about Jesus* (the apostles' teaching); *knowing Jesus* (through prayer); and *acting upon their faith in Jesus* (the fellowship and breaking of bread).

And then . . . the Lord added to their number daily:

1. Dr. Ryrie noted that some 53 things happen at the moment of conversion. But the first is God's regenerating the person to a new life.
2. We don't lead anyone to Christ; God calls them. The burden is off us. We are required to be faithful witnesses and share what Jesus and the Father mean to us, but we cannot regenerate a person to new life.

We also have a responsibility to the saints. We cannot and should not dismiss them or call them names. It is un-Christian at best or anti-Christian at worst to divide, separate, or relegate any of God's people to second-class status. We should not and cannot just talk about outreach or the youth. We need to make sure that we minister to all of God's people for everyone is a person for whom Christ died.

- D. Why is it that we keep talking about revitalization, but it doesn't seem to happen? Perhaps because we try to focus on one element rather than all three. It takes all three — knowing, knowing about and acting upon. And it takes all of us — our church, our College, and our Conference are each only as strong as the weakest. We have a responsibility to help each person become the person God would have them be — to find the vital center in their lives.

The Clinic

A friend of mine who works for a food re-distributor in Mt. Sterling, IL, got hurt one day. He dropped several cans of soup on his thumb and it hurt a bit. His supervisor saw him favoring the thumb and advised him to go to the company's clinic. He walked in the front door, into a lobby with a desk and two chairs, but no one was there. He saw two doors though, one marked "ILLNESS" and the other marked "INJURY." He said, "I just hurt my thumb," and walked through the door that said "INJURY." There was another room with a desk and two chairs, but no one there. But there were two doors, one marked "EXTERNAL" and the other marked "INTERNAL." He thought, "it's just my thumb," so he went through the door marked "EXTERNAL." There was a desk and two chairs, but no one there. There were two doors though, one marked "SURGERY" and the other marked "THERAPY." He went through the door that said "THERAPY," thinking he just needed a band-aid. He got into yet another room with a desk and two chairs, but no

one there. There were, however, two doors, marked "MAJOR" and "MINOR." And he thought, "I just hurt my thumb," so he walked through the door that said, "MINOR." He found himself on the sidewalk behind the clinic. He returned to work. Later his boss asked if they helped him at the clinic. My friend replied, "I don't know if they helped me at all, but I will tell you this — they are the most organized group of people I have ever seen!"

It makes me wonder, are we giving help? Or are we just very well-organized groups?

1. To the saints — do we minister and care for them as we should?
2. To the saints-yet-to-be — do we reach out and disciple them as we should?
3. There is a big difference between "doing things right" and "doing right things." You and I need to make sure that we are doing right things. It is good to do them well, but it is more important to do what is right and most important.

The Great Commission is really a command. We must be reaching out and discipling the saints-yet-to-be. Outreach is the other side of the coin. We can't have one without the other.

80% of the world population is not Christian by the most liberal definition. Where should we spend our time? Jesus left the 99 to find the *one*. We concentrate on the less than 20% instead of the over 80%. Are we fishers of men or keepers of the aquarium?

DC-10 Crash in Chicago/Des Plaines

When I was in high school, my family lived less than a mile from O'Hare International Airport. You may have heard of it; it's the world's busiest airport. One day an American Airlines DC-10 crashed about one-half mile from the runway. The worst airline crash in history, it claimed the lives of 291 people. As I reflect back on that incident, I wonder what I would

have done had I known that it would crash. I wonder what you would do.

We know the answer . . . we would have run to the airport, through the terminal and out onto the runway. We would have told those people, even compelled them to get off that airliner because it was going to crash. We would have done whatever we could to save those lives.

The book of Revelation tells us that airliner Earth is headed for a crash. The question before us is this: If we know that this airliner is going to crash and kill all the people who are not in Christ, what will we do?

What will you do?

1. Look at your coin. There are two parts of it: revitalization — caring for the saints that are, and outreach — caring for the saints-yet-to-be.
2. Get on the runways of life and tell people that they need to know Jesus, know about Him and act upon Him. □

Guarding the Flame (continued from page 15)

As we guard our flame and move toward spiritual growth and renewal, I'd like to have you turn to one final verse for our consideration this evening. It is Jude 3. Jude is writing to Christians and in this verse he says: "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Jude told his readers to "contend for the faith." Contend means to struggle, to fight, or to labor fervently for something. And he said to do it earnestly, which by definition means to pursue it with an intense state of mind as it deals with something of grave importance. Is the flame we guard something of grave importance? It is to me, and I hope

it is for you too. If it is not, *it should be!* Jude said that the faith was "once for all delivered to the saints." Jesus gave His message of the coming Kingdom of God to His disciples. We know from Scripture that entrance into the Kingdom of God only comes through Jesus Christ. The message from Jesus was "*once for all delivered to the saints.*" It did not come in installments down through the centuries since the early church. The popular theology preached today has drastically changed since the day that Jesus gave it. The Roman church, after the time of Christ, altered the message by bringing in myths and other ideas that were totally false and foreign to the Scriptures.

In closing, I firmly believe that we in today's generation need to make some

drastic changes in our personal lives in order to have this gospel firmly and deeply entrenched in our lives. I also believe that unless this faith, the gospel message of the coming Kingdom, is firmly entrenched in our lives, we are going to leave ourselves open to any idea that accomplishes numerical growth, even to the point of selling out, or watering down this great message. I ask you *now* to decide if this gospel message is a flame worth preserving and a flame worth struggling for. I happen to believe that it is! I hope you do too! I ask you *now* to guard, preserve and share it faithfully as Jesus has asked us to do! If we do, the Bible says our reward for our actions will be to hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . ." That will be much better than to hear, "Sorry, I don't know you . . ." □

Spread the Flame

BY PASTOR DAVID RILEY — McDONOUGH, GEORGIA

Growth in the Church of God, deliverance from disunity, awesome worship, the lost coming to salvation, healing in relationships, ministry, progress, success, fruitfulness, excitement, revival. I want revival. We need to spread revival through our lives, our churches, and across this land.

Some think that revival will never happen. Some think that revival can happen because of evangelism — going out and sharing our faith with every single person we see, even at the expense of possibly turning them off. Some people think that we need to put more money into youth programs. Some people have said that church planting is where it's at. Some have said that we should build buildings. Others have said that to have growth and revival and to move forward in the Church of God we need color in our Sunday school material. Some have said that we need to get back to our distinctives. Others have said that we need to get away from our distinctives. Some have said that we're legalistic, while others have said that we're not narrow enough. Some have said that to have revival in the Church of God, they need to get rid of their pastor and get a new pastor. Some have said, "Let's do contemporary worship" while others have said, "We need to do it the old way. Sing the hymns and give me that old-time religion."

I've probably said all of these, on both sides of the issue. What have you said? I want you to look around. Look around in your heart, and look around in your present situation. Look around in your church. Look around in your lives. Look around in our denomination. I submit to you: if we

think that any of those things that I mentioned will change us, I want to tell you something: it doesn't get any better than this.

You see, many times we think a change in one area or one program would help revival take place. But I want to tell you that there is only one way for revival. The way to have God's blessing and presence and Spirit in our lives; the way for the Church of God to go forward from the location where we are now; the way for the flame of God to come into our lives and into our hearts and into our church and into our denomination is to come before a Holy God as unrighteous people, to fall on our faces before Him, to confess our sin, and say, "O God, we have sinned, and we need You to cleanse us and to pour out Your Spirit in our lives."

I believe the answer is revival. I've heard of revivals in the past. I venture to say I don't believe we're experiencing revival today. I have one desire before the day I die; and that is to see revival in the church. You know, I hear about revival all over the United States. And I guarantee you that a hundred years from now, if Jesus has not come back at that time, they'll point back to the 1990s and they'll say, "Those were years of revival." Thousands of people are coming to the Lord. And my heart says, "I want to go and see what's happening there," but my heart really says, "I want what's happening, what God wants to happen, I want it to happen here in the Church of God."

Survival is not in God's economy. Revival is. Faithfulness is important. Commitment is important. But I believe God wants to put His fire in His church.

You see if we rekindle the fire, and we prepare it, and we guard it, and we never do anything with it, namely spread it, then we are of all people unfaithful. Revival: Do we really want it? That's the question I ask you. Do we really, really want revival? What an incredible experience revival would be if God gave it to the Church of God. Do we really understand what it would mean for our lives if God would say, "Wake up, church"? What an incredible change it would be. What an incredible cost it would take.

Do you know that when God spiritually awakens His church with revival the result is a purification — the refiner's fire comes in and sweeps through our lives and our churches and our denomination? And that lives are changed? Did you realize that if revival comes to the Church of God then people will come to the Church of God to find out what is happening?

I want to challenge you to the next step: *spreading the flame*. The flame represents many things, but I see the flame of God as His wave coming over His people, and lives and churches being changed and made into His likeness and complying to His will of obedience. Rick Warren said in his book *The Purpose Driven Church*, "When God sends his wave, just get on it and ride it. Don't try to create a wave. Only God can send the wave."

You see, I believe every church needs a revival. I believe every person needs revival. I believe that every pastor needs revival, because there is an element of death and stagnation and complacency in all of us. Ezekiel understood that. In Ezekiel 37, the word of God says:

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'" So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet — a vast army.

I'm no prophet, but I believe with all of my heart that the Lord would say to us that we are like the nation of Israel. We're standing up. Our bones are together. The skin is on. The tendons are together. But where is the breath? Are our bones dry and our lives breathless? Ezekiel prophesied as God said, and the winds came and the breath entered and the vast army stood up. The result was that we know He is Lord.

Look at Psalm 80:17. I found this verse almost four months ago. I think it says a lot about us today. "Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand." Here it's in reference to Israel. My mind thinks about Jesus Christ as He sits at the right hand of God. My mind also thinks that you and I are the right-hand men and women of God. "Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved." That says it. That says it for me. As God rests His hand on us, we will never turn away from Him. He revives us; we'll call on His name; He restores us; He blesses us.

People are saved because of that blessing in revival. I want you to realize something very important. We need revival, but only God can give it. Only God can cause revival to come into the church — into your church. We cannot make it happen, but we can return to God as Malachi says and He will return to us.

You know, about the closest we've ever come to revival is when we sing "Revive us, O Lord. Fill each heart with Thy love. May each soul be rekindled with fire from above." And then we just kind of move on. Look at the early church when fire fell upon them. What a drastic difference it would make if the fire from heaven really came into our lives and into our churches and into our denomination. My prayer this evening is, "O Lord let it come. Let it come. For we are nothing without your fire. O Lord let it come; let the rushing wind blow into the cobwebs of our lives and our churches and, for goodness' sake, our denomination." You know, Webster calls revival the "act of being revived from a deficient state." I didn't choose this topic, but I believe we need it. Webster says "revive" means "to become active and flourish again." Webster also

says it's "to restore to consciousness." And that may be very well where we're at. In Luke 12:49 Jesus was teaching in relation to judgment, but I think His words are relevant for us today: "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and I wish it were already kindled." I wish it were kindled too.

I want to make some suggestions for if we really want to *quench* revival:

1. Let's sit in a state of satisfaction and contentment. Let's just be happy with the way things are. You know, things are good. You are faithful. I feel faithful to my church. You are committed to the truths of the Church of God. I feel committed to the truths of the Church of God. Let's just leave it as it is, and revival will never come. I believe that we need to admit that God wants more of us. He never promised, "come to Me, receive My Son, go in the waters of baptism, and then sit in the pew every Sunday in the same location doing the same thing, singing the same songs, preaching to the same people." I pray God, give us a hunger for Your Spirit.

2. When disunity prevails, revival will never happen. We need unity with His Son, Jesus. Unity with God. Unity with each other. I believe we're unified in doctrinal cohesiveness. My friends, disunity will tear our hearts apart.

3. To quench revival, just give pride and sin a front seat in our lives. The Bible says a little leaven leavens the lump. A little sin that comes into our life will leaven the whole lump. We need to resist sin. The Bible says to get rid of the old batch and become a new batch of dough. Get rid of the old yeast, the old leaven; we must have the right yeast of the kingdom flowing through our bodies. You know, God has given us the doctrines that we teach and preach in the Church of God. What a privilege it is to share those, but

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Spread the Flame (continued from page 19)

how sinful it is when we become prideful and arrogant with them. By the grace of God, we understand them. But how sinful it is and how unhappy God is when we use those doctrines for pride and arrogance. They should drive us to humility.

4. If we really want to quench revival, let's just ignore our youth. You know, we forget that we have a vast army of youth. And I for one am tired of the way we treat our young people. I for one am tired of people who criticize RYOT. They say, "I'm not going to send my kid to this." Where else will you send them? There are a lot of great things that happen in this one week out of the year.

5. And finally, revival will never, ever take place when there is an aversion to God's word and to prayer. Great revivals have started because of the prayer of one person. Great revivals have started because people returned to the Word. The Bible says in Psalm 19:7, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,

making wise the simple." The Word revives us. If you want to quench revival, leave the Word alone. Jeremiah 23:29 says, "Is not my word like fire?" I want you to understand clearly that revival does not happen by formula or program or one sermon at General Conference or a letter from the General Conference telling you to have revival. It doesn't happen like that. Revival happens when our lives and our hearts become yielded to the God who breathes into us His fire, and when His Son becomes Lord of our lives.

I was supposed to preach on outreach also. The reason I didn't is because I couldn't preach a sermon good enough to motivate you to outreach. I could only preach on revival and say to you, "If we truly had revival in the Church of God today, we wouldn't have to worry about outreach." There would be so many people coming to our doors; we'd be so busy teaching them the truth, and baptizing them, and discipling them that we wouldn't have time for any evangelistic method or program. When God rains His fire down

from heaven, His breath resuscitates us. The flame will be spread. Evangelism will take place. Outreach will take place. More people will understand the Abrahamic faith.

This is my prayer: "Holy Father, let the wind of your Spirit move among us. Fan into flame our burning desire to serve you." Have you stopped once this week to consider the flame burning inside of you? For some of you, it's a great big, flaming flame that God has placed in you. And you're fanning it, and you're doing something with it. And God is working through you. For others of you, it's barely there. You can do something. Revival happens when we come before a holy God and fall before Him on our faces. We repent of our sins and say to Him, "Lord of heaven, Holy God, I'm turning to you; I'm praying. Won't you have your way with my life on your pottery wheel?" I pray, "Lord, send your fire to the church today. Lord, bring revival to waken us from our spiritual slumber. Lord, fan into flame our burning desire to serve you by spreading that flame through us." □

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Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

— John the Baptist



No More Stone People

As I was preparing to preach to my local church recently I ran across an interesting passage of scripture in Luke chapter three. It's the story of John the Baptist's preaching of repentance, and heralding the coming of the Messiah. Verse nine introduces a concept I find interesting — stone people.

In the time of John the Baptist the scribes and Pharisees had become stone people. For them religion had become all about being a part of an exclusive club. "We and we alone have the truth about God." "We and we alone are the special ones, the elite. We have the law of Moses, the one written on the stone tablets, and we follow it to the letter. We do all of the right things prescribed by the law . . . we

don't work on the Sabbath, we pay our tithes. We alone are righteous, for we are the

true descendants of Abraham." This was their claim to righteousness, they were part of the right club and they did the right things. They didn't need what John was peddling.

So, while the rest of the crowd was confessing, repenting and being baptized, while their hearts were convicting them of their sins and causing them to change their direction in life . . . there stood the stone people, unmoved.

John says: "Don't give me some argument about already being descendants of Abraham," (paraphrased). Then John does something to illustrate his point, he points to some stones and says "You see these stones here . . . If God chose to, he could transform these stones into children of Abraham." God has the power to make people from out of the stones to replace the stone people.

God has the power to create new life from places of hardness. The gospel of Luke, chapter 19, records an event toward the end of Jesus' life on earth, as He is entering Jerusalem on what we celebrate as Palm Sunday. The people cry out "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord." Luke writes that some of the people in the crowd were stone people, who didn't want the disciples shouting such things about Jesus. But Jesus answered them, "If they keep quiet, then the stones will cry out."

If the hardened stone people were to have their way, word of Jesus would be silenced — but there can be no victory for

them, for God will cause the stones to cry out.

Now, let's ask ourselves a question. What was John the Baptist's beef with the scribes and Pharisees anyway? So what if they were stone people who derived their religious faith from two stone tablets? After all, wasn't it right that they should observe the sabbaths? Wasn't it right that they should pay their tithes? Wasn't it right that they should observe the laws of Moses? Weren't those all good and right things?

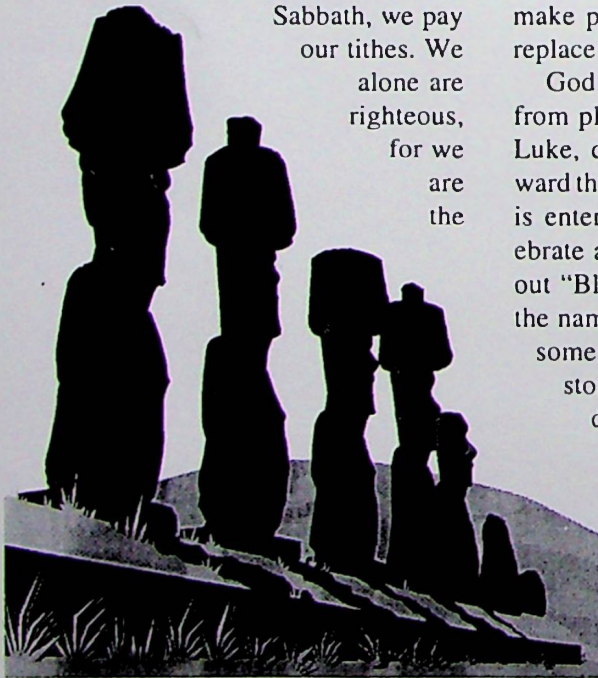
Yes, those were good things to a point, but while they kept the external forms of religion they missed the main point. They were failing to produce the fruits of righteousness.

They were like a petrified forest. A petrified forest is a place of beauty and mystery. There is a real beauty to some of those huge, magnificent looking forms that at one time were living trees . . . but now they are literally made of stone. Time and the elements have hardened the trees into rocks. They maintain the external appearance of trees, but they are dead rocks. The problem with stone trees is they can't bear fruit because there is no real life in them.

This was the problem with the religion of the stone people that John is addressing here, they have the external appearance of true religion, but in reality they are dead. There is no life to them, and they are incapable of producing fruit.

Their external forms of religion were unable to move them to acts of love and mercy towards other human beings:

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- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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The Greatest* Kingdom Message Ever Heard

BY JOE MARTIN — MORROW, GEORGIA

I have wanted to preach/write this message since I last sang the song "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red, and yellow, black, and white, they are precious in His sight." The title of this article is "The Greatest Kingdom Message Ever Heard." So if anyone asks if you ever heard the greatest Kingdom message ever, you could say, "yes," maybe. I hope you are interested. What is the greatest Kingdom message ever heard?

In Revelation chapter five Jesus comes and opens the scroll of history for mankind. An angel asks, "Who is worthy?" to take the scroll and to open its seals. Jesus is: "For you were slain and with your blood you purchased individuals" (whatever theory of atonement you want you may plug in here, but He did it for you). He is able to open up history for you. The unrolling of our future is through Christ Himself.

With His blood He purchased for God people from every tribe, language, people and nation (v. 9). The Greek word for tribe is *phulee*, which can mean file, group or category. Every category that you can think of, God has thought about.



Red and yellow, black, and white they are precious in His sight.

In the word *glossa*, as in *glossalia*, we have "languages." Not only every file or category that one could possibly organize but also every language that one can think of, God is concerned with. Think about it: that is Navajo, Spanish, French, English, every language!

The third category is people (Greek *laos*). You may or may not know that I am from southern Louisiana. Yes, God even thinks about me. I am not necessarily a "cajun" but one of my great-grandfathers came directly from France and got off the boat at New Orleans. But no matter what my "people" group is, God is concerned and some of us will be in the Kingdom.

The last word is nation. People in the Kingdom are from every tribe, language, people group and nation. The Greek word is *ethnos*. Will every "ethnic" group, whether Cajun, African, American, European, or Hispanic, be represented? Red and yellow, black and white, Jesus died for each one to have a place in the Kingdom. The fact that God saves some from

every tribe, every language, every people and every ethnic (nation) group is the greatest Kingdom message ever heard (at least for me!).

Revelation 11:15 is where the world system, "the present evil age," becomes God's Kingdom. "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.'" Hallelujah! He will reign forever and ever. When everyone gets together to reign, that's when the party starts.

Further, in Revelation 19:6-9 we read, "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.'" Lots of people, red, and yellow, black and white, are precious in His



*With apologies to George Ladd, now deceased, a former teacher who brought much Kingdom of God theology into evangelical Christianity, and Anthony Buzzard, a friend and colleague who has preached many great Kingdom messages.

sight. Not only are all invited, someone from every group of people *will be there*. Revelation 7:9 continues, using the same Greek words: saying "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language . . . were wearing white!" Hallelujah!

Yes, Jesus loves the little children, and the big children. Does the world understand this message? I'm sorry to say that even the church doesn't understand the message. The most segregated period of time in American society is ten to twelve o'clock Sunday morning. *The most segregated period of time!* Is that a



sin? According to my reading of this, it probably is. We separate ourselves from God's people of our own language, much less our own nation. Amen?

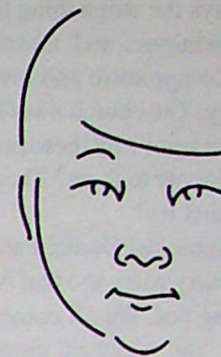
It is a sin for people of God who are the hand to say of the foot: "I don't need them around here" (apologies to Paul's exact words). Or for the eye to say to the hand: "well, we don't do that around here." Or for the old folks to say to the young folks: "we can't compromise on this; we can only have 'hymns.'" Or for our youth to tell our older folks: "if you do not clap you do not belong." Anything superficial, like the examples given, that keeps us from coming together is probably sin. Anyone who cannot compromise and work together with someone who will be in the Kingdom — though they are of another tribe, or generation, etc. — has a problem!

When I was young, my mother raised a large strawberry crop to supplement my father's income. Often we would hire black migrant workers to help. I picked strawberries side by side with them from

first daylight until we were done. One was a young man, James from Clarksdale, Mississippi. I never looked down on James. I was right there breaking my back along with him. We went fishing together; we talked together; we dealt with each other. I got to know him. One cannot dehumanize or demonize a person who is really known (if you and they are any kind of human at all).

James was black. I did not look down on this young migrant worker. I kept wondering during many tense racial situations, what's the big deal here? Christian people can't get along? Now I know what the Bible says every tribe, language, people and nation! I do not know how we are going to overcome these barriers, which include generational and racial barriers. However, we need to work toward that now and open ourselves up to others and compromise superficial things because the Kingdom of God will definitely accommodate those we appear to have trouble getting along with.

Red and yellow, black and white, Jesus loves the little children of the world. We need to do something. It seems the largest dividers now in some of our churches are generation divisions. Sociologists and others divide society into about five generations. We have the golden oldies, anyone over 65. Then we have the blessed ones, ages 50-65. Then we have the boomers, born after the war (WWII, the "Big One"). And then we have Gen X, or generation X, those born from 1960-1980. Anyone under that who does not



quite fit, belongs to the next generation. They do not have a definite name yet but some call them "Gen Y."

Did you know that these generations are different? Did you know that the golden oldies and the blessed ones really appreciate hymns? I don't think I'm telling you anything new. Did you know that the boomers, if they are from the black community, really appreciate an upbeat gospel hymn? I am not telling the blacks of our church anything new, am I? A little more upbeat music and we get to generation X. You can use some drums, a little bass guitar, or whatever you can do, because they want to see vitality, life! We're doing the same things to ourselves with generations as we have done with racial barriers. Superficial things are keeping us apart. This will not be the case in the Kingdom.

The point is harmony. This passage in Revelation tells us who will be in the Kingdom. The church is the bride of the King. The church must be a place of compromise and harmony. Harmony is not unison. You do not have to sing like me, and you do not have to do what I do, and I do not have to clap like you. Hallelujah. We are all different. However, we are the church, the future inhabitants of the Kingdom. In 1 Corinthians 12:21 Paul is working at saying the church needs to be in harmony. We do not have to be the same. We can even be from different generations. But we can compromise, whether it is in music or length of service or whatever it is. We should be compromising tribally, racially, and generationally! The Kingdom will encompass all of these elements. Why not now in the church?

I'm saying we might have a vibrant service because one generation, "Gen

X," says the worst thing that they feel is the phoniness and meaninglessness of life. Compromise and love appear to be the key. The church must become honest and gut level with these people. How will we minister to them? They will be there! We must try!

Sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan said thirty years ago that America is a big melting pot. We all come together. You know, the potatoes, carrots, and meat,



etc. We just blend totally. However, that is not always true and we recognize that. Moynihan had to revise that thinking thirty years later and say that beyond the melting pot there is a stew pot, where we're all together and each can be a little different. There can still be a black ethnos and a white ethnos and a Hispanic ethnos. But in the church, it should be a blended situation. The hand cannot say to the foot: "I do not need you."

Did you know that the book of Jonah is about a cross-cultural situation? "The word of almighty God came to Jonah the son of Amittai: 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me'" (Jonah 1:1, 2). Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. The Assyrians, for whom Nineveh was the capital, were the hated enemy of the Israelites. Assyria was like the Romans to the Jews in Jesus' time; like some southern whites to black slaves; like Hispanic migrant workers to some North Americans; like "traditional hymn



singers" to new worship folks?! Jonah hated the Assyrians to the point that he ran away from God (or tried). If generation X is saying to the golden oldies, "I will not have any part in this" because of some superficial issue, it is not the church of the Kingdom.

I believe that Jonah, in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, looked like a walking ghost because of gastric juices in the fish's stomach. When he went to the Ninevites and told them: "you are going to die; you've been persecuting us; you're evil and you're going to be destroyed by God in forty days," they believed him. He looked believable. You have some guy coming in who's a skinhead, no eyelashes, no eyebrows, bleached white, leprous white as snow — talk about albino, he was not just albino but glistening white, and no hair — shouting "you're going to fall!" He was believable. And he was glad.

But you know the story: God had mercy and Jonah got mad. "Oh man, you've got to be kidding. You were going to take them out and now you're going to let them off the hook?" questioned Jonah. The main verse that I want us to look at is Jonah 4:11, "Should I not be concerned?" Are you going to use the word of the Lord as the bottom line, or the way you feel about Gen X or the golden oldies, or another race?

Jesus loves the little children. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. God loves the little children. A hundred and twenty thousand babies are counted by God. The

people repented and Jonah still wanted God to take them out. There were many cattle as well. Here is a potential animal rights perspective.

The bottom line question to Jonah is "Should I not be concerned?" I have a hundred and twenty thousand babies, Jonah, should I not be concerned? Yes, they are different. Yes, you do not like them. Yes, they have a different perspective. Yes, they may be like generational barriers in our time, like Gen X. Yes, they don't like your dogmatism; they want relevancy. Yes, they want genuineness and gut levelness. Yes, they want you to give them experiences, mission trips, group events to let them feel they belong. They are different, but does not God say to us for them as well, "Should I not be concerned?" "God is not willing that any should perish."

Should I not be concerned if God is concerned? Therefore, the greatest Kingdom message ever heard is that people from all divisions, every tribe, every language, every people, and every nation, will be in the Kingdom. They are purchased by Jesus' blood. Hallelujah. Should we not be concerned in working through superficial boundaries with the people we will spend eternity with? Let's work through generational, racial, ethnic or whatever boundary that keeps the church separated now. It will not be separated then! Why not compromise on these superficial issues and work it out now? □

From a message preached at New Friends Bible Church, Morrow, GA.



The Legacy of Abraham

BY PASTOR MICHAEL MATTISON — BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

The future is fascinating to us. How we will impact the future is compelling and sobering. Have you ever wondered what your legacy will be?

People have left all sorts of memorials to themselves or their loved ones. Monuments have been erected, from the Pyramids to the Taj Mahal to plaques on libraries, church furniture, bridges, and hospital wings. Obituaries often ask for bequests to favorite charities, especially those which are searching for cures for diseases, as a way to honor the deceased with a gift more significant than flowers. Many people have planted a tree to someone's memory. In fact, whole forests have sprung up in Israel dedicated to victims of the holocaust. These are efforts to extend someone's memory and even their influence beyond their own generation.

The best legacy comes from one's direct impact on people. This is why many teachers, camp counselors, coaches, and ministers are remembered so fondly. Their example and love left an impact on a young life that helped set a course toward good character and success.

A report was released by the US Government on October 2, 1997 based on interviews with parents of almost 17,000 schoolchildren. It showed that dads' involvement with their children's schools had a positive influence on attitudes, grades, and promotions. Two days later, about a million Christian men rallied in Washington, DC, pledging to be Promise Keepers to their families and communities. Christian parents have a deep hope that their children will meet or surpass their own development. They try to invest as much of themselves in their

*Abraham boldly took
the step of faith.*



children's growth as they know how. We even hope to influence our grandchildren. In seeking how to better impact future generations with our legacy, we naturally look for examples.

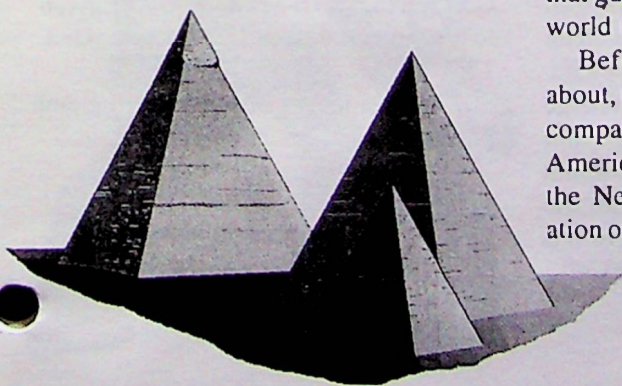
One of the most awesome successes we could imitate is a man who uttered no fancy speeches or sayings, owned no real estate, built no buildings, and left no monuments. Yet Abraham left a legacy that guides billions of people around the world today.

Before examining how that came about, think of how that accomplishment compares with the legacy of a giant of the American experience. Columbus found the New World and spawned the creation of dozens of nations. In the past, the United States was sometimes even called "Columbia, the

gem of the ocean." Our capital is named Washington, the District of Columbia. Several American cities are named Columbus or Columbia. A South American country was named after Columbus, though its reputation has been tainted by the drug trade. Besides seeking to find new trade routes, Columbus sought to bring the Christian faith to new places. Unfortunately he also helped bring Old World disease and cruelty to the natives.

Christians today can be proud of his good intentions and good accomplishments. Most of us can be thankful that his exploration brought our ancestors to a new homeland of freedom and opportunity. Imagine how much more intense our appreciation would be if he were our literal ancestor! This is partly why Abraham's influence is so strong. Not only did he venture out to the Promised Land, but he fathered the nations of Israel and the Arab world. In addition, he is called the father of all who walk in his steps of faith in God, circumcised or not, who are counted righteous by God because of their trust in God and His promises (Rom. 4:3-12). This makes Abraham the father of scores of nations around the world today.

Now look at what was so inspiring about Abraham. His life is summarized in Hebrews 11:8-19. "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go." "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents." "By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born (continued on p. 8)



descendants as many as the stars of heaven." "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac . . . He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead." Abraham was an original! When circumstances were diametrically opposed to God's promises, he boldly took the step of faith. No wonder he is an inspiration to all who want to believe in and base their actions on God!

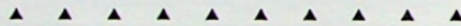
Abraham's legacy also contains some sobering examples. Yes indeed, he eagerly followed when God called him from his homeland and promised to make him into a great nation. But when he was well past age 70, with Sarah past 60, the faith of Abraham and his wife wavered and they took control of the situation by having a son by a surrogate mother. Ishmael marked the beginnings of the Arab nations, who are the jealous enemies to this day of the descendants of Isaac. They both claim Abraham as Father and they both claim the Promised Land and Jerusalem as their Holy City. Approximately one hundred and fifty generations ago, Abraham himself set in motion a feud that has caused heartache to millions of his descendants.

Also, when a famine hit Canaan and he went to Egypt for a while, he feared that his wife's beauty would put him in jeopardy so he lied and said Sarah was his sister. Sure enough, the Pharaoh took her in. But when he and his house were afflicted with great plagues, he perceived the deception and banished Hebrews from his empire. A chance to evangelize the second ancient home of civilization was lost for generations. Only when Abraham's great-grandson Joseph was slipped into Egypt as a slave without a passport was a representative and messenger of God once again welcomed by a Pharaoh.

In the meantime, Abraham's son Isaac followed his father's bad example when a famine led him to move in with the Philistines. King Abimelech personally discovered the deception. In an embarrassing reversal of missionary work, the

Philistine king lectured Isaac on morals, then showered him with generosity and economic development (Gen. 26:6-13). Furthermore, Isaac's son Jacob became widely known as a deceiver in his family and business dealings; rather than being known as an evangelist, he was selfish with God's promises and blessings. This trend dominates the history of Israel throughout the Old Testament. They were called on to "be a blessing": "and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:2, 3). But although the Israelites were constantly forced into contact with Gentiles, they rarely tried to teach them faith in God. Jonah had the typical attitude.

*The need of the world
is for obedient children
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These examples of lack of faith or obedience can be a warning to all Christian parents and leaders. Whatever your traits are, good and bad, they tend to be imitated! The habits and consequences, good or bad, can be perpetuated for generations. A parent, teacher, or pastor can legitimately be terrified of any personal flaws or bad attitudes being not only adopted but magnified in the next generation.

In spite of Abraham's lack of perfection, the good in his legacy far outweighs the bad because of his deliberate attention to his children. When the Lord was contemplating the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, He looked at Abraham and commented on the contrast. He said, "I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:19, RSV).

When God looked over a backsliding human race and picked out a man to be the founder of a nation that would be loyal to him, he picked a good family man and knew that no individual or nation would do any better. As evidence of that, consider an offspring of Abraham's about 800 years later. When young David first saw and heard Goliath, his reaction was, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. 17:26, RSV). Fourteen generations after Abraham, this young man saw his entire identity wrapped up in belonging to the living God and being openly marked as a member of a Covenant People. Goliath, on the other hand, saw himself as a representative of pagan idols and cursed David by them. The time was right for a confrontation. One of the frustrations we face today is that in a time when everybody knows everything and believes nothing, our Christian example or witness is often seen as fuzzy and bland. This brings up the question, should we make the Bible relevant to us and our times, or make us relate to the Bible?

The more clearly we see ourselves as children of God walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, the more clearly will we see the ways of worldliness as rejection of God. The need of the world is for obedient children who will leave a godly legacy. It starts with faith and obedience, as Abraham showed. When God spoke, he didn't discuss or wait for miracles — he listened and obeyed.

A "legacy" is anything handed down from an ancestor (Webster's Dictionary). Abraham's legacy is the agreement between God and him and all of his descendants that (1) the Lord would be their God and that (2) the earth would be given to him and his descendants forever (Gen. 17:7, 8).

That is a legacy worth receiving and passing on! □

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

BY ALLON MAXWELL — HEATHMONT, AUSTRALIA

There are of course many Christians who sincerely believe that in time of war it is their duty to serve in the military. On the other hand there are many (including the writer of this article) who believe with equally passionate sincerity that service in the military is a denial of the teachings of Jesus. Those who believe this way are prepared to lay down their lives, if necessary, to demonstrate the love for enemies enjoined by Jesus.

This article is not written with the intention of making war about peace! Nor is there any desire to offend those whose convictions are opposite. But, on behalf of other Christian pacifists, I do want to present a case for why we believe that Christian pacifism is a nonnegotiable element of the Gospel of Peace.

THE GOSPEL CALL

The Gospel of the Kingdom begins with a call to repentance (Matt. 4:17). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus defined repentance. He reaches deep into our personal space to touch virtually every area of human life. We are challenged to re-evaluate our actions, and even our secret thoughts, towards our neighbor. We are called to renounce our rights to possessions, to legal redress, to reputation, and even to personal safety.

We are called to repentance from all manner of hatred for enemies, and all forms of resistance against evil, and all acts of revenge. We are called to be peacemakers instead of war makers! That, Jesus said, is the path we must walk in order to become sons of God (Matt. 5:9, 45).

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

The Gospel is not only about forgiveness for sins. It is much, much more. It is also the Good News about inheritance of the kingdom of God in the future. And it is the Good News about the eternal way of life which restores fellowship with God now, and prepares us for our place in that future kingdom.

Believing the Gospel means believing that Jesus is the Prince of Peace; it means believing that Jesus was, and is, and will be for all eternity the living example of what it means to be a peacemaker.

It means believing all the words of Jesus, including those which call us to join Him now as sons of God, by following His example of peacemaking.

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

For this writer, pacifism is a nonnegotiable element of the Gospel of Peace. It is what Jesus did Himself; it is what Jesus commands us to do; and it is what Jesus commands us to preach in His name.

Believing that about Jesus will change us. It will change forever our attitudes and actions, our goals in life, and even the career we choose. It will change how we deal with both friends and enemies.

RECOGNIZING LOVE

Jesus laid down His life for friends and enemies alike (John 15:13 and Romans 5:8-10). This is how He commands us to love (John 13:34-35).

(continued on page 10)



How shall we demonstrate this love which Jesus left as the test by which the world is invited to measure our discipleship (John 13:34-35)? How is it possible to claim that we love as Jesus does if we do things which are clearly *not* love at all?

It is imperative that we ask ourselves some hard questions about what it really means to be peacemakers. It is even more imperative that we accept the hard answers to these questions, if it is really true that our whole aim in life is to become children of the living God. How is it possible to love our enemies, do good, resist not evil, and yet be ready to strike back at the aggressor? How is it possible to shoot at the enemy, or drop bombs on him, or threaten him with all the other horrors of modern warfare, when our *real* calling is to pray for him and bless him?

How is it possible for us to delude ourselves that praying for the defeat of our enemies is what Jesus meant by "blessing"? Is not such a prayer really a curse — instead of the blessing to which our calling commits us?

How is it possible for two Christians in opposing armies to shoot at each other, instead of laying down their weapons to pray together and be reconciled?

How could two Christians who do shoot at each other convince the world that they love one another with that divine love which Jesus says is *the* mark of His disciples (John 13:35).

How is it possible for a Christian to make war against any man, friend or foe, for whom Christ died and for whom he also is commanded to take up his cross with Jesus?

How is it possible for a Christian to make a career in a military organization which trains its servants in the best methods to hate and maim and kill — and binds them by *oath* to do those things on command?

How is it possible for a Christian to swear an *oath* to obey orders which require him to commit these sins?

How can such "Christians" ever give meaning to the self-sacrificing love which took Jesus to the cross? How can we ever

claim to carry a cross with Jesus if our own love falls short at the point where our safety *in this life* is threatened?

Certainly, if the example of Jesus means anything at all, we have not attempted to live at peace with all men, so far as it lies with us (Rom 12:18), until we have determined that we will go *all the way* to preserve peace . . . even to an undeserved death . . . even to an unjust crucifixion!

Nothing less can adequately demonstrate the Divine love that cannot be quenched by even the worst evil devised by carnal men. To this we are called (1 Peter 2:21)!

ELEMENTS OF PEACEMAKING

If we are peacemakers:

- we will not defend ourselves against aggression.
- we will not make war.
- we will not assist others to make war.
- we will not work in any situation directly associated with the manufacture of the instruments of destruction.

Peacemakers act in ways which deal with others as we wish to be dealt with in return. Some practical applications of this are:

- turn the other cheek instead of resisting aggression.
- love our enemies.
- do good to those who hate us.
- pray for those who mistreat us.
- never protect ourselves by threatening another.
- never take revenge.
- if our enemy is hungry, feed him.
- if he is thirsty give him a drink.
- overcome evil only with good.

It is not possible to give meaning to any of those things with swords in our hands.

CONQUERING THE ENEMY

If enough people believed Jesus, and obeyed Him, there could never be another war. In fact, His way is the only way in which the evils of war can ever come to an end. Some of us believe this so completely that we are prepared to put it into practice, regardless of the cost.



Jesus left us that example! It is our calling to follow Him in this radical way of peace.

A man who loves his enemy enough wants to see that enemy become a friend. That means for me that no matter what my enemy does to me I will return only friendship.

Even if he so hates me as to seek my life, or the lives of my loved ones, threatening our safety with all the horror of modern warfare, my best proof of my love for him is to refuse to do that back to him and his loved ones.

If he cannot be moved to peace by that demonstration of love, then, in the cause of peace, I must lay down my life for him. He is the one who needs to live — not me. If he lives, perhaps he will eventually learn his need for the change that I have already experienced.

If it costs me my own life, or something even more precious than that, to give him that opportunity, that is the final expression of my love for him. That is the love we learn from Jesus. That was our salvation when Jesus gave Himself for us on the cross.

I can afford to love my enemy that way. My life and the lives of my loved ones are far safer in God's hands than in mine. I can afford to lose my life so that he can live, for I am already eternally safe! And it would be my very great

(continued on p. 18)

On Masonry*

BY CLAIRE BUZZARD — BROOKS, GEORGIA

Masonry claims to be a friend to all religions yet we shall see that this is an impossibility, considering its beliefs. "Masonry is not the rival of any religion, but the friend of all" (*The Religion of Masonry*, Newton). By definition Masonry is a religion for it claims to worship and believe in a Supreme Being, the Great Architect of the Universe. Yet Masons themselves reject this association, for if they identified their organization as a religion it would hurt their ability to gain and keep members. Freemasonry adheres to the view that all religions are fundamentally the same. It asserts that its teachings are basically the core teachings of every religion, whether or not the followers of those religions realize it. "There is under all the creeds one universal religion" (Ankerberg, 58).

The Masonic brotherhood aims toward self-improvement through personal good works. They believe that salvation is not based upon one's belief system, but rather depends upon one's personal merit and character. Masons teach that people can redeem and perfect themselves because human nature is intrinsically good. Of course the idea that people are able to perform works acceptable to God conflicts with Isaiah 64:6. This doctrine eliminates the need for a savior and thus declares that Jesus' death was unnecessary (Ankerberg, 160). Here lies a clear opposition to Biblical thought (Rom. 3:10-18; 5:1-10; Eph. 2:1-9).

The teachings of the Masonic Lodge evolve from pagan and occult views (Ankerberg, 36). In turn, Freemasonry has influenced the Unitarian Universalist church, the Mormon church, and witchcraft.

In light of all the previous information let us discuss the conflict between Christianity and Freemasonry. Three of Masonry's main principles are the universal fatherhood of God, the universal brotherhood of man, and the immortality of the soul. Each one of these Masonic doctrines is at least partially opposed to the message of the Bible. Masons are of the opinion that men need to have faith in themselves, not in God. This is clearly not biblical (Jn. 1:12). For example, Masonry teaches that because we are all God's children we will all be saved no matter who we have put our faith in. How does a Christian reconcile that with Acts 4:12? Because of the universal salvation that Freemasons offer there is no punishment after death, and death is viewed as a friend to man. This is not the Biblical portrait of death.

Masonry desires its members to abandon the worship of specific personalities, such as Christ, because according to their arguments a name has little meaning. A Freemason "recognizes only the light and not the bearer . . . worships at every shrine, bows before every altar, realizing with his truer understanding the oneness of all spiritual truth" (Ankerberg, 58).

The ideal morals of a Freemason are subjective and self-determined. "What is moral to one man may be immoral to another. Each man must decide for himself what the world encompasses" (Ankerberg, 61). While it can be true that people must judge what is moral in a particular situation, our overall guidelines are set by the Bible, not our own feelings. Ever since Adam and Eve ate the fruit we have had consciences, the

ability to discern our failings. But this ability does not provide us with personal definitions of right and wrong, it just makes us conscious of wrong. It is clear from what Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount that sin is not simply an issue of individual interpretation.

Consider based upon this description whether Masonry truly befriends Christianity. "Freemasonry carefully excludes the Lord Jesus Christ from the Lodge and chapter, repudiates his mediatorship, rejects his atonement, denies and disowns his gospel, frowns upon his religion and his church, ignores the Holy Spirit, and sets up for itself a spiritual empire, a religious theocracy at the head of which it places the GAOTU, the god of nature, and from which the one and only living and true God is expelled by resolution" (Ankerberg, 133).

Reflect on this quotation from a former Freemason: "We were taught that if we would find God, look for his revelation within our souls. We are a part of him and he of us" (*The Meaning of Masonry*, 139). Freemasons accept a gnostic view of God which is not in accordance with Scripture (Jn. 14:6).

Sadly the average Christian is quite unaware of the implications behind becoming a Mason. "The obvious conclusion is that the Secret Brotherhood is hiding something so serious that decent men would never join if they were fully informed in advance of its activities and purposes" (Ankerberg, 73). Apparently the men who join are uninformed about

*Notes on *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge*, by John Ankerberg and John Weldon.

Masonry's basic purpose. I would hope that Christian men would also be decent men and not ignorant of Freemasonry's real aspirations. Even if Freemasonry may not appear blatantly anti-Christian, why would a Christian want to support this group when it involves disagreement with the Bible? They promote belief in the immortality of the soul, which should be enough to deter one's membership without digging deeper into their belief system.

It seems plain that "Masonry's distinctive beliefs are attractive only to those who are nominal members of their particular religious faith" (Ankerberg, 195). Why would a genuinely committed Christian choose to indirectly support the occult, deny the necessity of Jesus' death, perpetuate the Masonic influence in the church, and associate with a group that holds views which are in direct opposition to Scripture? If you are a Christian Mason this is what you involve yourself with whether deliberately or unknowingly. God may not accept ignorance as an excuse (Hos. 4:6).

It is dangerously easy for the Masonic Lodge to deceive its members since Masons are obligated to take an oath before they understand everything involved in their pledge. Freemasonry may appear innocent on the outside but "behind all Masonic symbolism there is an undisclosed occult interpretation of which most Freemasons are ignorant" (Ankerberg, 216). "The average Mason is lamentably ignorant of the real meaning of Masonic symbology and knows as little of its esoteric teaching" (*Freemasonry—Its Hidden Meaning*, Steinmetz). It is unwise to swear to something without being fully informed about it, especially when it is known to be secretive. But Christians are especially to beware such matters. Our honesty should prevent us from pledging loyalty without understanding what that loyalty means.

Ankerberg suggests in his investigation of Masonry that Masons are unknowingly being used as vessels of the spiritists. We must remind ourselves that

Satan masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) and that false prophets will disguise themselves like wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15).

Would God support Masonic leadership in His church? "Let us take a look at the number of great Bible classes for men which have been organized by the church. Many of these classes are being led by enlightened Masons . . . These laymen are bringing to the interpretation of the Bible many of Masonry's great revelations" (Ankerberg, 209). First of all a Mason in the church might bring in Masonic interpretation of the Bible, including the belief that we are saved solely through our good works. Galatians 1:8 says, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" Secondly does God wish to support a sin that He opposed in the Old Testament, that of idolatry? One former Mason has realized that "the very religious philosophy and false worship which caused Jehovah to destroy his own temple, and banish into captivity his ancient people, are precisely the same philosophy and worship which modern Masons profess shall fit them for the glories of heaven" (Ankerberg, 207). God strongly punished the Israelites when they associated a pagan deity with His name (Ex. 32:10). The Masons have done just that by creating the name Jabulon. This name is meant to combine the names Jehovah and Baal.

A spirit guide for occultist Alice Bailey taught that there are three instruments for preparing the Earth for the coming universal religion, the New Age movement. These three instruments are the field of education, the Christian church, and Masonry (Ankerberg, 235). We must be on guard as members of God's church in order that Satan might not outwit us (2 Cor. 2:11). Unfortunately some have already been outwitted (1 Tim. 5:15). Let us hope that "God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their

senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:26).

One final note on Freemasonry reveals its incompatibility with the Bible. Here is an excerpt from a book on Masonic teachings which is strikingly similar to the teachings of Heavens Gate: "Man has an immortal soul imprisoned for a time within a mortal body, which is capable of improvement and of spiritual development. It is released when death occurs, thus mingling the divine with the human . . . So, if you will seek and discover, you can travel beyond the material, you can grasp the supersensual, you can touch the Divine" (Clausen's *Commentaries on Morals and Dogma*). Masonic teachings are deceitfully subtle. They may appear Christian-friendly, but we must realize that the teachings of Freemasonry and the teachings of the Bible cannot be united without contradiction.

NOTE

There is a book written by Southern Baptists that discusses the question of allowing Masons to hold leadership in the Baptist church. The Baptists conducted a study of Masonry and concluded that it is not worth the conflict and division that would result from forcing Masons out of the Baptist church since they believed Masonry is really harmless and neutral. However Baptists are strongly discouraged from becoming Masons. The Southern Baptist Convention resolved that it is up to each Baptist to decide whether or not he should be a Mason. Clearly they would not mind if one of the main doctrines of the Masons is the immortality of the soul. We must consider the position of those conducting the study of Freemasonry and whether God will validate the union of Christians and Masons in His body of believers. □

For further information, see *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon.

The Solid Rock

BY PASTOR HOLLIS PARTLOWE, OREGON, ILLINOIS

"He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth — praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and trust in the LORD" (Psa. 40:2-3, NKJV).

Here the Psalmist tells us of an experience of answered prayer. "I waited . . . he inclined and heard" (v. 1). After a period of waiting on the Lord, David was rescued from great trouble. It may have been a serious illness or situation where death seemed imminent. At any rate, God did something wonderful for him after a long period of prayerful, patient waiting. Using figurative language to describe his distress and release, he affirmed that the LORD saved him from his dilemma. It was like being in a slimy pit of mud and mire and the LORD lifted him out and placed his feet upon a solid rock. Moreover, this deliverance gave him a new song for rejoicing which inspires trust in God.

This kind of symbolic language is often used to express how the believer has been lifted out of sin and placed firmly in Christ. Song writers have done especially well in this area:

In loving kindness Jesus came
My soul in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depth of sin and shame
Thro' grace He lifted me.

Now on a higher plane I dwell,
And with my soul I know 'tis well
Yet how or why, I cannot tell,
He should have lifted me.
From sinking sand He lifted me,
With tender hand He lifted me,
From shades of night to plains of light,
O Praise His name, He lifted Me.

— Charles H. Gabriel

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,
I dare not trust in earthly fame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the Solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

— Edward Mote

Jesus told the story of the wise man who built his house on the rock and the foolish man who built his house on the sand (Matt. 7:24-27). The rain and wind came, and the house on the rock stood firm, while *the house built on the sand fell flat*. Its fall was great! Jesus offers us two options for our lives. We can build on the big rock, the Lord Himself, or we can build on sand. Wise men still build their lives on the Savior, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

The following selected article teaches us how foolish man can be in trying to solve his problems alone.

The Pit

- A man fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out.
- A SUBJECTIVE person came along and said, "I feel for you down there."
- An OBJECTIVE person walked by and said, "It's logical that someone would fall down there."
- A PHARISEE said, "Only bad people fall into pits."
- A MATHEMATICIAN calculated how he fell into the pit.
- A NEWS REPORTER wanted the exclusive story on the pit.
- An IRS AGENT asked if he was paying taxes on the pit.
- A SELF-PITYING person said, "You haven't seen anything until you've seen my pit."
- A FIRE AND BRIMSTONE PREACHER said, "You deserve your pit."
- A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST observed, "The pit is just in your mind."
- A PSYCHOLOGIST noted, "Your mother and father are to blame for your being in that pit."
- A SELF-ESTEEM THERAPIST said, "Believe in yourself and you can get out of that pit."
- AN OPTIMIST said, "Things could be worse."
- A PESSIMIST said, "Things will get worse."
- JESUS, seeing the man, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit. □

"Indwelling of the Spirit": Part One

BY JUAN BAIXERAS — MIAMI, FLORIDA

In this study our primary purpose is to try to understand what is meant by the phrase "the Spirit of God in us." This is also referred to as the "indwelling of the Spirit." Our task may at first sound easy, but it is a bit more complicated than one would imagine. We will have to compare many different Scriptures in order to understand what these phrases mean. We have to understand what the word "spirit" means in depth, and examine its many different uses. We have to understand the difference between the baptism and gifts of the Spirit and the "indwelling of the Spirit of God." We will also have to determine if we should expect the same experiences of the Holy Spirit as the apostles had. I think this study will help the reader in his or her continued study of the Scriptures.

SPIRIT

A thorough understanding of the word "Spirit" is needed in order to understand the many passages in the Bible in which it is used. We will discuss what I believe are the most important and frequent uses of the word. The most difficult challenge to most people will be to discard the definition of "spirit" which we have been exposed to since childhood and embrace the Jewish definition of "spirit." The Bible after all is a Jewish document, and we must always use the definitions of the people who wrote it if we are ever to understand its true meaning. Unfortunately this is not what has happened in the course of history. People have inter-

preted the Bible with Greek philosophical definitions, or have injected their own modern-day definitions into Jewish words, which of course will lead to incorrect conclusions.

Let us first understand Greek philosophy's definition of "spirit," which is the prevalent definition in our society today. This view originated with the Pythagoreans, a group founded by Pythagoras, a great philosopher and mathematician in ancient Greece.

Pythagoreans believed the soul to be immortal and separable from the body. By leading a pure life, an individual might secure the release of his or her soul from all flesh.¹ To someone educated in Greek philosophy "soul" and "spirit" are interchangeable and mean basically the same thing, much as in our society today. To a Jew the two words are vastly different in meaning. While Greek philosophy considers the soul (i.e. spirit) immortal, the Jews believe that only God is immortal, and that immortality is a gift that only God can bestow upon an individual. We must receive immortality as a gift from God; it is not inherent in us. 1 Timothy 6:16 says it clearly: "whom [God] alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see."

The Pythagorean view was later adopted by Plato, who adjusted it a little and popularized it. Through Plato it ultimately became the standard definition of spirit. Platonism extended the Pythagorean view of immortal souls,

contending the immortality of *pre-existent* souls, and the idea that souls become incarnate in human bodies when they begin earthly life.²

The Christian hope of resurrection is a bodily resurrection, not a spiritual one. However, the majority of people today believe that a person's spirit separates from the body at death and goes to either heaven or hell. As you can see, this is the Greek concept of death which is in direct opposition to the Jewish concept of death. The Greek view sees the spirit as something similar to a ghost; this view is sometimes portrayed in movies today. It is even evident in some Bibles in which the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Holy Ghost. The word in Greek is "pneuma," which means "spirit," not "ghost." The spirit to a Greek philosopher is immortal, but the Bible states that immortality belongs only to God. These Greek definitions have vast consequences when injected into the Jewish Scriptures.

We must discard these definitions if we are to understand the Bible. Let us proceed to the Jewish understanding of "spirit." The Jews used "pneuma" in Greek in the same way that they used "ruach" in Hebrew, so we will treat *ruach* and *pneuma* as equivalent. Both words carry the meanings of wind, breath and spirit.

The spirit (*ruach* and *pneuma*) is the breath of life, the vital principle by which the body is animated. This is the life force God gives to people and animals. When He takes it away they die.

Examples:

Psalm 104:29-30: "When you take away their breath [*ruach*], they perish and return to the dust from which they came. When you send forth your breath [*ruach*], they are created."

Ecclesiastes 12:7: "And the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the life breath [*ruach*] returns to God who gave it."

Psalm 146:4: "When his spirit [*ruach*] departs he returns to his earth; on that day his plans perish."

These examples are extremely important for interpreting a verse such as Luke 23:46: "'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit [*pneuma*];' and when he said this he breathed his last." If you use the Greek philosophical definition as most people do, you will arrive at the conclusion that at that moment Jesus' Greek-type spirit went to heaven to be with God. But this is impossible, because when Jesus was resurrected after three days He appeared to Mary of Magdala and told her: "I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17b). If we use the intended Jewish definition of spirit this verse makes perfect sense. Jesus' breath of life returned to God and He died. This is in accordance with the Scriptures and the understanding of spirit given above, and does not conflict with John 20:17. It is the intended Jewish meaning. A second very important meaning of "spirit" is a person's mind-set, disposition, or temper. The word is used of one's mind or thinking. The Spirit is said to dwell in the minds of Christians.⁴

These definitions are crucial in order to understand many verses of the Bible. If you are one in spirit with Jesus it means that you are one in mind with Jesus. You have the same mind-set, the same disposition; you think in the same way as Him. This after all is what a Christian strives for — to reach the example of faith Jesus showed us, to discern the will of God as Jesus did. We are told to have the same mind, the same attitude as Christ.

Examples:

1 Corinthians 2:16: "But we have the mind of Christ."

Philippians 2:2: "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing."

1 Peter 4:1: "Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself with the same attitude, for whoever suffers in the flesh has broken with sin, so as not to spend what remains of one's life on human desires, but on the will of God."

Philippians 2:5: "Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus."

With these definitions we can better understand a verse like 1 Corinthians 6:17: "But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit." In other words, whoever unites himself with the

*The Christian hope of
resurrection is a bodily
resurrection, not a
spiritual one.*

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Lord is one with him in mind, mind-set, attitude, thinking, or purpose, which are all synonymous. Here are some other examples. Try substituting one of the given definitions for "spirit" and you will get a clearer meaning of the verse.

Numbers 5:14: "or if a man is overcome by a spirit of jealousy."

Galatians 6:1: "even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one with the spirit of gentleness."

1 Corinthians 2:12: "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God."

Deuteronomy 34:9: "Now Joshua, son of Nun, was filled with the spirit of wisdom."

Genesis 41:8: "Next morning his spirit was agitated."

This definition of "spirit" is still very popular even in our own society. A recent article in *Flying Careers* magazine was about how some pilots volunteer their time for such programs as Young Eagles or Angel Flight. The title of the article was "The Spirit of Volunteering." Another way of saying the same thing is "The Mind-set of Volunteering." One sentence in the article says, "Many organizations provide opportunities for those in the spirit." This phrase sounds like something right out of the New Testament, but as we all know, the writer is simply saying that many organizations provide opportunities for those in the right frame of mind.

With this understanding, and by comparing some other verses, we can now comprehend more fully what Jesus meant when He told Nicodemus in John 3:3-5: "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again . . . no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and spirit." Jesus is telling Nicodemus that unless you make a commitment to God (which is demonstrated by baptism) and be born again of the mind, you will not enter the kingdom of God. Our minds have to be born again; they have to think differently than they did when they followed the flesh. Our minds have to be renewed in order to be able to discern and follow the will of God.

Romans 12:2: "Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God."

Ephesians 4:23: "And be renewed in the spirit [purpose] of your minds."

2 Corinthians 4:16: "Although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self [i.e. mind] is being renewed day by day."

Colossians 3:9-10: "Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self [new mind], which is being renewed for knowledge in the image of its creator."

Romans 7:6: "Dead to what held us captive, so that we may serve in the newness of the spirit [mind] and not under the obsolete law."

You will notice that in many of the verses that we are reading, the words that are attributed to renewal are also associated with our minds, such as knowledge, discern, etc. The new covenant that Jesus ushered in is of the mind and not the letter. The Mosaic covenant was of the letter. In my opinion the majority of the people followed it from fear of the consequences, and not because they truly believed the law was good. This is why they had such hardships in the desert for forty years. They kept reverting to pagan ways they had adopted in Egypt. They had not truly accepted the law within their minds. Let me give you an example: I do not steal because in my mind I believe it to be wrong, not because I fear the penalty of being caught stealing. There are people who do not steal simply because they do not want to end up in prison. Let's suppose that the government said that on a given Friday stealing would not be considered a crime. I still would not steal because God's law is in me. But you can be sure that there would be a lot of people who normally do not steal but who would steal on that Friday because God's law is not in them.

Jeremiah 31:31-33: "The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the [Mosaic] covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt . . . But this is the covenant [ushered in by Jesus] which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts."

Hebrews 8:10: "I will put my laws in their minds."

2 Corinthians 3:5-6: "rather, our qualification comes from God, who has in-

deed qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of spirit" (of the mind).

Romans 2:28: "One is not a Jew [follower of God, in this context] outwardly. True circumcision is not outward, in the flesh. Rather, one is a Jew inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit, not the letter."

Romans 7:25: "Therefore, I myself, with my mind, serve the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin."

Christianity is a war fought in our minds. The war is between good and evil. We strive to follow the will of God over the will of our flesh.

*Are we like a shell
housing all these
different spirits —
our own spirit,
God's Spirit,
and Jesus' spirit?*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲
Romans 7:22-23: "For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self [mind], but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members."

Romans 7:25: "I myself, with my mind serve the law of God but, with my flesh, the law of sin."

This understanding of spirit in relation to the mind is essential if one is going to understand what Paul meant when he said in Romans 8:9: "Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you . . ." What does Paul mean when he says "Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him"? Are we supposed to have a Greek-type spirit of Jesus living inside us along with God's Spirit? Are

we like a shell housing all these different spirits — our own spirit, God's Spirit, and Jesus' spirit? Of course not. What Paul is saying is that whoever does not have the mind-set or mind of Christ does not belong to him. If we believe His word, His teachings on the kingdom of God, we will have the same mind-set as He does; we will be of one mind. This is how Christ is in us. His word, His teachings are in us. When we have Christ in us we have the knowledge of God's plan of salvation (the gospel) for us, our hope for glory. Christ dwells in us through our faith in His words.

John 15:7: "If you remain in me [Jesus] and my words remain in you."

Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

Ephesians 3:17: "and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

2 Corinthians 11:10: "By the truth of Christ [His words] that is in me."

Colossians 1:17: "It is Christ in you, the hope for glory."

Ephesians 4:21: "assuming that you have heard of him [Jesus] and were taught in him, as truth is in him."

Colossians 2:6, 7: "So, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted in him and built upon him and established in the faith as you were taught."

This is the Jewish meaning of Christ dwelling in us. It is vastly different from the Greek philosophical point of view. □

¹ *Grolier's Encyclopedia.*

² *Encyclopedia Britannica.*

³ *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, and Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.*

⁴ *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.*

Note: this article is continued with part two on page 20 of this issue.

Why I Don't Go to a Megachurch

BY PHILIP YANCEY

I resist the trend toward megachurches, preferring smaller places out of the spotlight. I never fully understood why until I came across this paradoxical observation in G. K. Chesterton's *Heretics*: "The man who lives in a small community lives in a much larger world The reason is obvious. In a large community we can choose our companions. In a small community our companions are chosen for us."

Precisely! Given a choice, I tend to hang out with folks like me: people who have college degrees, drink only Starbucks dark roast coffee, listen to classical music, and buy their cars based on EPA gas mileage ratings. Yet, after a short while I get bored with people like me. Smaller groups (and smaller churches) force me to rub shoulders with everybody else.

Henri Nouwen defines "community" as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives. Often we surround ourselves with the people we *most* want to live with, thus forming a club or a clique, not a community. Anyone can form a club; it takes grace, shared vision, and hard work to form a community.

The Christian church was the first institution in history to bring together on equal footing Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and free. The apostle Paul waxed eloquent on this "mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God." By forming a community out of diverse members, Paul said, we have the opportunity to capture the attention of the world and even the supernatural world beyond (Eph. 3:9-10).

In some ways, the church has sadly failed in this assignment. (Yes, 11 o'clock Sunday morning remains the most segregated hour in America.) Still, even all-white or all-black congregations are richly diverse. Church is the one place I visit that brings together generations: infants still held at their mothers' breasts, children who squirm and giggle at all the wrong times, responsible adults who know how to act appropriately at all times, and senior citizens who drift asleep if the preacher drones on too long. Chesterton's insight about small communities appears in a chapter on "The Institution of the Family," which gives a whole new slant on family values. "The common defence of the family," he writes, "is that, amid the stress and fickleness of life it is peaceful, pleasant, and at one. But there is another defence of the family which is possible, and to me evident; this defence is that the family is not peaceful and not pleasant and not at one."

The smallest units in society, families offer an ideal laboratory in which to test Chesterton's principle that "the smaller the community, the larger the world." Thinking back to family reunions, I must quickly agree that the institution of the family forces me into close contact with characters I would otherwise avoid. I have no choice about such encounters; we share a gene pool.

Several of my family members have served stints in prison. Some carry on feuds that go back generations. A few spin elaborate tales to cover up unwed pregnancies. Geographically, my family extends from Philadelphia to Australia. It includes a professional football player

and a Ph.D. in philosophy, as well as some who never graduated from high school. Methodists, Unitarian Universalists, Independent Baptists, atheists — they all come together at our reunions. It is safe to say that I have learned more about grace, forgiveness, diversity — and, yes, original sin — from my family than from all the theology books I have read. Chesterton's point, exactly. Troublesome issues like divorce and homosexuality take on a different cast when you confront them not in a state legislature but in a family reunion. Those of us who trumpet "family values" need to make clear that we are not proposing a lobotomized society of Stepford wives and their offspring. We recognize that families consist of individual human beings with all their idiosyncrasies and faults. We simply contend that the family, a very small social unit, is a good place to confront those flaws.

Recently, some commentators have been attacking the entire institution. In a column in *Time* magazine, Barbara Ehrenreich blamed most societal problems on the dysfunctions of the family. Such jeremiads miss the point of family, which is not a perfect institution by any means, but simply a place that accepts its members on one basis only: DNA. Such a tiny group just may teach the principles of true community needed in larger groups.

Our century has shown what happens when enlightened people get together and devise large institutions to improve on the family. At heart, paradoxically, liberals want everyone to be alike, sharing common values and beliefs. (continued on page 19)

No More Stone People (Editorial) (continued from page 2)

- To share an extra piece of clothing with someone who had nothing to wear.
- To share a meal with a hungry person.
- To deal honestly and fairly with others in business.
- To not use positions of power and authority to intimidate the weak and defenseless.
- To speak honestly to and about others.
- To find contentment with what they had and not be greedy.

These were the outward signs of faith, the fruit that shows that there is real life on the inside. There was nothing wrong with the external form and shape of religion that they possessed, but there was nothing inside, there was no life to their faith.

Jesus made the same challenges to the stone people in Matthew 23. There He

challenges them to begin by cleaning out the inside of the cup and not worrying so much about the outward appearance of the cup. We must not be simply white-washed tombs, that look good on the outside but inside are filled with only death. We must decide NOT to be stone people.

Is it possible for the stone people to be turned back to flesh? Yes — in Ezekiel 36:26 God makes a promise: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

Saul had been a stone person. He describes himself in Philippians 3:4-6. Yet with all of his external religion Paul was a stone person. He killed in the name of his religion. He was unmoved by others. It wasn't until Christ came and gave him a new heart, taking away Saul's heart of stone, that he became Paul, a

man with a heart of flesh, a man filled with a new spirit, the spirit of Christ.

In verses 7-9 he says he considers all of the former stuff rubbish when compared to knowing Jesus Christ. Paul spent the remainder of his life helping people realize that they could be transformed by the spirit of Christ, that they could trade in their hearts of stone, for warm hearts filled with love and a living faith in relationship with God.

It is my hope and prayer that you experience your faith as a living and dynamic relationship with God which expresses itself in acts of loving service towards others. There is no better way for us as church congregations and individuals to prepare for the coming of the King. I hope and pray that the RESTITUTION HERALD will help you as you prepare for Christ's coming. □

Blessed are the Peacemakers (continued from page 10)

pleasure to wake on resurrection day to find him standing beside me, at last, as a friend!

WAR AND ITS VICTIMS

A recent newspaper statistic claimed that there are currently more than 40 wars in progress around the world. In those wars it is not only soldiers who die. Civilians die too. Women and innocent children die or suffer as terribly as the professional war makers. They suffer and die as you read this.

Today, this awful problem extends far beyond the actual time of open warfare. In our generation, the methods of warfare leave their mark long after "peace" has been declared and the soldiers have left the battlefield.

For decades afterwards innocent civilian victims must contend with devastated cities and chemically polluted environments. They must live with the ever

present threat of the countless millions of land mines that have been left behind to carry on the maiming and killing — while men proclaim that they have made "peace"!

The responsibility for those wars and their terrible aftermath cannot be left only with the governments involved. It must be shared equally by the defense industries of the Western world who are willing to take enormous profits from all that death and suffering and destruction. It must also be shared by those who will take their bread and butter from working in those industries.

To assist in any way in making war, whether as a member of the military forces, or as a civilian in the defense industries, is to become a contributor to the wickedness and hatred and obscene disregard for suffering that is one of the deepest problems faced by the human race.

To make war, or to assist those who make war, is to be part of that problem.

Disciples of Jesus no longer want to be a part of that problem. Instead, they want to be numbered among the sons of God who have *good news* about God's answers for the violence that infects this evil world.

Do we love each other? As Jesus loves us each, equally? If we come against each other with swords in our hands, threatening each other's lives, *the world is entitled to reject the validity of our Christianity!*

Peacemakers do not carry swords. Instead they beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

They refuse to learn how to make war, ever again, for all eternity. Instead, they proclaim peace and, if necessary, lay down their lives to make peace. They take their place as sons of the living God. □

Immortality

BY FREDERICK BUECHNER

"Immortal means death-proof. To believe in the immortality of the soul is to believe that though John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave, his soul goes marching on simply because marching on is the nature of souls just the way producing apples is the nature of apple trees. Bodies die, but souls don't.

True or false, this is not the biblical view, although many who ought to know better assume it is. The biblical view differs in several significant ways:

1. As someone has put it, the biblical understanding of man is not that he has a body but that he is a body. When God made Adam, he did it by slapping some mud together to make a body and then breathing some breath into it to make a living soul. Thus the body and soul which make up a man are as inextricably part and parcel of each other as the leaves and flames that make up a bonfire. When you kick the bucket, you kick it one hundred per cent. All of you. There is nothing left to go marching on with.

2. The idea that the body dies and the soul doesn't is an idea which implies that the body is something rather gross and embarrassing like a case of hemorrhoids. The Greeks spoke of it as the prison house of the soul. The suggestion was that to escape it altogether was something less than a disaster.

The Bible, on the other hand, sees the body in particular and the material world in general as a good and glorious invention.

3. Those who believe in the immortality of the soul believe that life after death is as natural a function of man as digestion after a meal.

The Bible instead speaks of resurrection. It is entirely unnatural. Man does not go on living beyond the grave because that's how he is made. Rather, he goes to his grave as dead as a doornail and is given his life back again by God (i.e., resurrected) just as he was given it by God in the first place, because that is the way God is made.

4. All the major Christian creeds affirm belief in resurrection of the body. In other words they affirm the belief that what God in spite of everything prizes enough to bring back to life is not just some disembodied echo of a human being but a new and revised version of all the things which made him the particular human being he was and which he needs something like a body to express: his personality, the way he looked, the sound of his voice, his peculiar capacity for creating and loving, in some sense his face.

5. The idea of the immortality of the soul is based on the experience of man's indomitable spirit. The idea of the resurrection of the body is based on the experience of God's unspeakable love."□

From: *Listening to Your Life*, Frederick Buechner, HarperCollins, 1992. (Used by Permission.)

*The Greeks spoke of the
body as the prison
house of the soul.*

Why I Don't Go to a Megachurch (continued from page 17)

Consider the "politically correct" movement on university campuses. Making people more like they "ought to be" is the great liberal experiment of our century

Any parent could tell you that making just one child more like he or she "ought

to be" is a dicey proposition at best. If the smallest unit in society has trouble reforming individuals, should we trust the largest institution, the government? Better to work things out in small communities, where we may have less choice

about our companions — but so does everyone else.□

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"Indwelling of the Spirit": Part Two

BY JUAN BAIXERAS — MIAMI, FLORIDA

Many people confuse the indwelling of the Spirit of God in us with the way that the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and the first Christians. These are two completely different things. God gave the Apostles and first Christians gifts in order to confirm the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus the Messiah. That was their purpose, to confirm their teachings. We today have the greatest proof of God's plan for our salvation through the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection is proved by the lives of the Apostles (see "Proving the Resurrection"). All the persecution that they went through without any human reward can only be explained if what they said about the risen Jesus is true. But none of the Apostles had this proof. Imagine that Paul came into your town and said that the Messiah had come, and His name is Jesus, and the proof is that God raised Him from the dead. The first words out of your mouth would be, "Can you prove it? How do I know that you are telling me the truth?" Besides his testimony which you could not verify, he would have no solid proof. This is why God gave them signs (the gifts of the Spirit). We today do not need to confirm the gospel, that confirmation has already been given by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, proven through the lives of the Apostles.

The gifts of the Spirit which the early Christians received when the Apostles laid hands on them (also called the bap-

tism of the Holy Spirit) were for those early days when the church was spreading; for the reasons given above. There was as of yet no New Testament that a new church could read to learn the will of God as taught by Jesus, thus the need for supernatural revelation through prophesying and tongues. Peter states that these gifts are for two generations only, which would agree with the time frame of when the writings of the New Testament were starting to circulate. Paul says that when the church reaches maturity these gifts

Paul says that when the church reaches maturity these gifts will end.



will end. Lets take a look at both of those verses.

Acts 2:38-39: "Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord will call."

Peter tells them to repent and be baptized and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He tells them that the promise is for them and their children (two generations) and those far off. "Those far off" is a reference not to Jews who

were geographically far away, or to believers in the future, but to Gentiles. The Jews considered the Gentiles to be far off from God and His covenant with the Jews. This can be verified by Paul in Ephesians 2:11-13:

"Therefore, remember that at one time you, Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by those called the circumcision. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have become near by the blood of Christ."

So the promise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is then for those generations of Jews and Gentiles and their children. The generations after this time period have confirmation of the gospel by the greatest sign of all, the resurrection of Jesus Christ which be proven by the lives of the Apostles. These first generations did not have that proof. 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 tells us when these gifts will end:

"Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know partially and we prophesy partially; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to my childish ways," (NSRV).

This verse is interpreted several different ways. "When the complete comes" has sometimes been translated as when the "perfect comes." Zondervan's Greek and English Interlinear Bible has it as:

"but when the perfect thing comes." The interpretations of this verse range in meaning. One interpretation suggests that tongues will cease "when the perfect comes," with "perfect" being a reference to Jesus. I do not think that Paul would refer to Jesus as a thing. A quick look into the meaning of the Greek word "teleioo" that is translated as "complete" or "perfect" will help us in understanding this verse.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words; teleioo — to bring to an end by completing or perfecting, is used (I) of "accomplishing" (see Finish, Fulfill); (II) of "bringing to completeness."

Strong's Greek Dictionary; teleioo — To complete, accomplish, consummate, consecrate, finish, fulfill, (make) perfect.

With these definitions we can better understand that the word "teleioo" is not a reference to Jesus, but as we shall see, a reference to the maturity of the church. Paul is comparing the early church to a child. It's knowledge is limited like a child's. He then compares the church's adulthood to the day when it is mature in the sense that it will contain the entire truth, the completion of the Scriptures. Remember, there was of yet no New Testament for the churches to study, hence the need for prophesying and the other gifts. What Paul is saying is that when the church reaches adulthood, when the truth is completed, finished, accomplished, that prophesying and tongues will cease.

Vine's Expository Dictionary has an excellent comment on 1 Corinthians 13:8. Specifically it addresses the gift of tongues, but it is relevant to all the gifts of the Spirit.

"There is no evidence of the continuance of this gift after apostolic times nor indeed in the later times of the Apostles themselves; this provides confirmation of the fulfillment in this way of

1 Corinthians 13:8 that this gift would cease in the churches, just as "prophecies" and "knowledge" in the sense of knowledge received by immediate supernatural power. The completion of the Holy Scriptures has provided the churches with all that is necessary for individual guidance, instruction, and edification."

INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT

Before starting one thing must be said, I do believe that the Spirit of God can and still does come upon individuals to guide them, but this should also not be confused with the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

*Remember,
there was of yet no
New Testament for the
churches to study.*

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Much of the confusion about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit comes from certain passages that have been interpreted as if Jesus meant them for all Christians in the future. This is an erroneous conclusion. One such example is in John 14:15-17.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to be with you always."

Many people take this verse as if Jesus were speaking to all Christians. But the fact is that he is not. From John 14 to John 18 Jesus is at the last supper speaking specifically to the Apostles. What he is telling them is not meant for all of us. Take for example John 14:12: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these."

This is very specific. The Apostles did do works as great or greater than Jesus. They raised people from the dead, healed the sick etc., just as Jesus told them they would. Have you done works greater than Jesus? I know I have not, nor do I know of anyone that has. This is because we are not supposed to. Jesus was speaking specifically to the Apostles.

We must make sure to pay attention to whom the Scriptures are directed at. People make assumptions that all the Scriptures were written for all the people of all the ages. This is not the case. Although we can always learn valuable lessons from all the Scriptures, we must observe to whom, and for what purpose, a particular Scripture was written. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he addressed a specific problem that they were having. He did not write to them with the idea that his letter would become part of the New Testament and would be applicable to all Christians everywhere. Many parts are applicable to all Christians, such as advice on Christian living etc. But we must not take that to mean that every Scripture is meant for all people of all times.

As we shall see, the Spirit of God is in us, but not in the same way that it was in the Apostles and the first Christians. That was specific to that time period, when the church was not yet mature.

First, we must define what it means to be "spiritual," to live "in the spirit." Does that mean that we have the Holy Spirit living in us as the Apostles did, actively guiding our every move, telling us "go there" "do not go there." I do not believe so. To be "spiritual" or to "live in the spirit" means to live in accordance with the will of God. To be able to discern and follow His will. If we follow our own desires, we are "of the flesh." If we live in the flesh we are really following our own will (mind) and not the will (mind) of God. This is why our minds have to be
(continued on page 22)

renewed. Lets take a look at a few examples:

Romans 12:2: "Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind [spirit], that you may discern what is the will of God."

Romans 7:25: "Therefore I with my mind [spirit] serve the law of God [His will] but, with my flesh, the law of sin."

Ephesians 4:17: "Do not live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds [flesh]; darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God [spirit]."

Galatians 5:16: "Live by the Spirit [will of God] and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh" (our own desires).

1 Peter 4:2: "So as not to spend what remains of one's life in the flesh on human desires, but on the will of God."

Romans 8:7-9: "For the concern of the flesh is hostility towards God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it; and those who are in the flesh [following their own will] cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit [in the will of God], if only the Spirit of God [mind, mind-set of God] dwells in you."

In other words, you are spiritual if you possess the knowledge or wisdom (of His will) that is from above (from God). Earthly wisdom is considered unspiritual. James 3:15 is an excellent example: "Do not boast and be false to the truth. Wisdom of this kind does not come from above [from God] but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic."

Going back to Romans 8:7-9, Paul says that we are in the spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in us. This is a reference to the indwelling of the Spirit of God in us which we hear so much about, and which is also confused with what the Apostles and the first Christians experienced. But what does it mean to have the Spirit of

God dwelling in us? Do we have God's Holy Spirit actually living in us, or do the writers of the New Testament mean something else? What do they mean when they use the word "dwell?" Let us look at some examples:

2 John verse 2: "Because the truth dwells in us."

Romans 7:17: "So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."

Romans 7:18: "For I know that good does not dwell in me."

Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

Do these verses imply that Greek-

Do we have God's Holy Spirit actually living in us?

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type spirits called "truth," "sin," "good," and "word of Christ" come and live in us? Of course not. "Dwelling" means that it is inherent in your being, in your way of thinking. Truth dwells in you in that your mind has accepted the concept of truth and it is now a part of your belief system, in this way the truth is in you. The word of Christ dwells in you in the sense that you believe the teachings of Jesus and have incorporated them into your life. These teachings are now inherent in your way of thinking, it is in this sense that they are in you, i.e. dwell in you.

We have God in us (dwelling in us) when we are filled with the knowledge of His will. We have God in us when we accept His teachings which Jesus revealed to us. This is how the Spirit (mind) of God is in us.

2 John verse 9: "Anyone who is so 'progressive' as not to remain in the

teaching of the Christ does not have God; whoever remains in the teaching has the Father and the Son."

1 John 2:24: "Let what you heard from the beginning [the word] remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and the Father."

1 John 2:5: "But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him."

Colossians 1:9-10: "asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

The gospel which is God's plan of salvation for us (the kingdom of God message), which is His will, is reflective of the mind of God. My mind is reflective of me. It reflects who I am as a person. The gospel is referred to many times in the New Testament as the "word of God," or just the "word." The gospel (His word) is the expression of God's thoughts. In other words, the gospel is the mind of God. The mind of God is God. Another way of saying it is, "the gospel is God," or: "*the word was God*" (John 1:1).

When we truly believe and accept the word (will) of God with our minds and hearts, the Spirit (mind-set) of God dwells in us. It is an integral part of our being. It is in us. We are now one in mind with God.

To some people this concept is frightening, mostly because people like to think that God is actually living inside their bodies and guiding them through this life. But in a sense He is. If we live in the spirit (His will), the Spirit (mind-set) of God dwells in us. He has not left us alone, He has given us a renewed mind, a new way of thinking that will guide us in our journey to His glorious kingdom to come.

See you at the resurrection! □

"Lord, Just Help Me to Cope"

BY BILL BURNHAM (WITH JEFF FLETCHER)

It was all nearly too good to be true. After a lifetime of working, including the last seven as an employee of the Church of God General Conference, I was finally able to live out my dream — I was spending my first winter in warm, sunny Florida. It was the winter of 1990 and my wife, Marion and I were now able to enjoy our first retirement year away from the brutal cold of Northern Illinois (snowflakes were not even permitted in our little retirement community). Here our children and their families could visit us and enjoy a much needed break from their winters as well. A morning swim, an afternoon nap, evenings spent with our new found friends; this sure was the life.

But it was all very short lived. We returned to Illinois the following April and discovered devastating news. I was diagnosed with cancer of the prostate. It's amazing how a single word can strike such fear into ones heart, and "cancer" is one of those words, for it can mean a slow and painful death.

*people I did not
even know were
regularly offering up
my name for healing.*



When I asked the doctors about my options I was told that the cancer had already spread too far for prostate surgery. They recommended radiation treatments. The radiation left me feeling weak and it was unable to stop the spread of the cancer. I was told that the only other treatment available, aside from radical surgery and the removal of several major organs, was hormone therapy. This with the treatment plan I chose. I was told that hormone therapy would need to begin in six months to two years at most, depending on the rate of the cancer's growth.

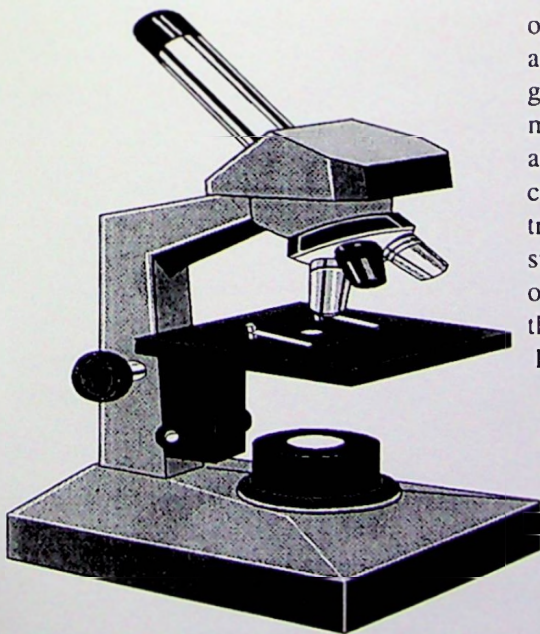
By this time word of my cancer had spread from my family to their churches and friends, who began

praying. The employees and members of the General Conference included me in their prayers as well. In fact, people from all over the country, including many whom I did not even know, were regularly offering up my name before the throne of God for healing.

Six months passed, then a year, then two years and the cancer's rate of growth was slow. Hormone therapy continued to be put off. Three years, then four, still no hormone therapy was called for. I sometimes wondered what God was up to. I had long since stopped asking God for any kind of a miracle, my simple prayer had become "Lord, just help me to cope." I sometimes wondered what others were praying or even if others were still praying after all those years.

Finally, five years after finishing my radiation treatments, a full three years longer than I was told to expect it would be, I was told that it was finally time to begin taking the hormone treatments. This was in early 1997. I began receiving the shots and taking a new medication that had been unavailable until two and a half years ago. Then, during a routine checkup in September of 1997 I was told, to the amazement of everyone (including the doctor), that the tests showed no signs of cancer anywhere in my body. The doctor said that if I had come in off the street and he didn't know that I had

(continued on page 24)



"Lord, Just Help Me to Cope" (continued from page 23)

once had cancer, he would not be able to tell.

Did God perform a miracle? I believe He did. Why was the cancer miraculously in remission? I believe it has a lot to do with all of the prayers that have gone up on my behalf over the past six years. Perhaps God said "It's time to do something for this guy and get all of those people off of my back" Sometimes I jokingly say it was my friends in the Nazarene Church in Florida where we attend in the Winter months who added their prayers about six months ago who gave God the final nudge He needed to help me.

Whatever the reasons, I do know this: I had been told to expect six months to two years before treatment would begin, it took five years and the medication I began receiving after five years had been unavailable two and a half years earlier. I believe God slowed the growth rate enough for the new medication to be developed and put into use, then He used

it in bringing about my remission. I know that my cancer, though it is in remission, could erupt again sometime in the future. None of us can live forever. However, other medications are available if needed and I believe, more than ever before, in the power of prayer.

Why did God wait six years? I don't know the answer, but perhaps it was to give more people a chance to pray for me and then to recognize this to truly be what I believe it is — a miraculous gift from God.

Since I've learned of God's gift I've had opportunities to share my testimony in Church of God congregations in Georgia as well as the Nazarene Church in Florida. I conclude my testimony of God's awesome power with a song which I feel summarizes my relationship with God.

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,
consider all the works Thy hands have made.

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder:
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.
Then sings my soul, my savior God to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, my savior God to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art.

Thank you God for this miracle you've given me. □

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bill and Marion Burnham still divide their time between Northern Illinois, where they are members of East Oregon Chapel Church of God, and Florida, where they attend the Leesburg Nazarene Church. They are enjoying their "busy" lives in retirement.

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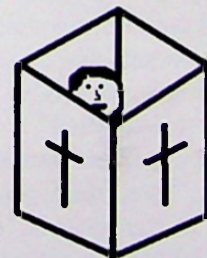
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Volume 87, Number 3



Man's Search for Meaning and Truth



Life and the Search for Meaning and Truth

As we look forward to a change of seasons and the arrival of spring, in the church we begin preparing ourselves to remember, in a special way, both the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Shortly before His death, Jesus appeared before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to give an answer to the charges that had been made against Him. As Jesus speaks to Pilate about the nature of His "kingdom" and of His role as the king, Jesus says "for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

Legally, Pilate had the power to decide whether Jesus would live or die. With this power in his hands, it would seem that Pilate would be very interested in answering one question before making his decision: "what is the truth in this matter?"

And yet, how does Pilate respond? Does he ask, "Well then, Jesus, what is the truth in this matter?" In other words, "what are the actual facts relating to the charges against you?" Pilate does not ask this question. His question is far more philosophical, and far more indicative of the state of his life and his own personal search for meaning and truth in life. He asks this question: "what is truth?"

Pilate seems to have arrived at a place in his life where he no longer even understood the concept of truth. I wonder why. Had he done so many

deals to get where he was politically, distorted so many facts, and closed his eyes to justice so many times that his conscience was seared, his heart hard, and his mind so jaded that he could no longer even understand truth as a concept?

As I look around our society today and as I listen to people try to come to terms with what is happening in our culture, I get the feeling that many folks have come to the same place as Pilate had — they no longer even understand the concept of truth. Everything is relative, things change, there are no absolutes. Words mean whatever we want them to mean to suit our needs in a particular situation. People have become so accustomed to lies from their politicians, their preachers, their newspapers, and their neighbors, that they no longer know what to believe or if they can believe the words that they hear.

This creates many challenges for the church as we enter the 21st century. As we work to carry out the mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world we know that the world will not necessarily listen to our words. Such phrases as "the Bible says" or "the church teaches" don't guarantee that our words will be believed. Fortunately all is not lost, there is still some hope. Because actions still speak louder than words.

Jesus said: "by their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt. 7:16), and also "all men will know that you are my disciples is you love one another" (John 13:35). Jesus is telling us that people will respond far more to God's love and truth being lived out by His people than to the words His people say. It is the way we live our lives, the way we treat our neighbors and love our fellow believers, that will awaken others to the truth of God in our midst. How can we help others to see and honor God? "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). All that we do as God's people should be seen as an opportunity to point people to God and His glory, that He might be praised and that they might come to see the truth about God.

This issue of the RESTITUTION HERALD is all about our search for meaning and truth in life. Some articles deal with how we come to hear truth, or about specific truths. Others focus on the struggles people have in coming to accept the truth. It is my hope that these articles will help you to minister the truth of God's word to those who need to hear it, and even to help you as you wrestle with questions of truth.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Fletcher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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How's Your Hearing?

BY ED GOIT — TONAWANDA, NY

How's your hearing? Can you hear this? Jesus said, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 13:9). In this context He said, "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower" (Matt. 13:18). This is the first of nine parables Jesus spoke to a great multitude by the seaside. Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8 chronicle this teaching. Details interspersed in these accounts will be utilized in this article with primary emphasis focused on Matthew 13.

This age in which we live is the church age. It is characterized by a sowing of seed. To this sowing there are varied responses. In a consideration of the parable commonly called "The Parable of the Sower" or more properly "The Parable of the Soils," it is of the highest priority that we use Jesus' interpretation.

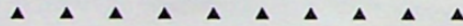
In your mind's eye picture a great multitude of people causing Jesus to leave a Capernaum house. Proceed to the seaside and then see Jesus, because of the great stress of the crowd, enter a ship and press forth from the shore to teach. What a sight! What a message! What a teacher! Hear Jesus say, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow . . ." (Matt. 13:3b). Perhaps from the



vantage point of the boat, Jesus saw a farmer sowing seed and then directed His audience's attention to the familiar to teach the unfamiliar.

The word "parable" is derived from the Greek *parabole* which means "a placing beside" and thus a comparison or an illustration. A parable

*A parable
can be revealing
or concealing. One
third of Jesus' teaching
employed parables.*



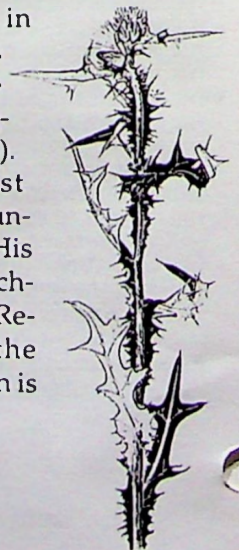
has been defined as a figure of speech in which a moral or spiritual truth is illustrated by an analogy drawn from everyday experiences. A parable can be revealing or concealing. Bible students affirm that one third of Jesus' teaching employed parables.

In "The Parable of the Soils," Jesus cites four kinds of soil: (1) "the way side"; (2) "stony places"; (3) "among thorns"; (4) "good ground" (Matt. 13:4-8). These four soils represent the hearts of various individuals (Matt. 13:19). The "heart" in God's Word often indicates the intellectual capacity of the person. The "seed" is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). The effect the Word has depends upon the state of the heart.

Whether Jesus or His followers sow the seed, it is sown as in the parable. Hear the "Parable of the Soils" as recorded in Matthew 13:3b-8:

Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Before proceeding, it is proper to establish the context of Jesus' teaching and preaching. It is written, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). John the Baptist served as a forerunner to Jesus and His teaching and preaching. He declared, "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is



at hand" (Matt. 3:2). John fulfilled his role much like the early circuit riders in the Niagara Peninsula and pastors of the Church of God have done in the past and will do in the future if the Lord Jesus tarries. Their message was the gospel of the kingdom and the things concerning Jesus Christ. Today churches of God sow the same seed from the Word of God, the message of the kingdom of God.

Jesus said, "When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which receiveth seed by the way side" (Matt. 13:19). The heart of this one (the first soil) is indifferent! His heart is trodden down by the world's feet (Luke 8:5). He says in effect, "Don't bother me. I'm busy." He is unreachable and unresponsive to the gospel. The message goes in one ear and out the other.

Peter's advice is, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). James counsels, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7a).

In explaining the second type of soil, Jesus said, "But he that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matt. 13:20-21). In Jesus' Israel this soil was not ground covered with stone but



stone with dirt scattered upon it. It was a thin skin of earth on top of an underlying shelf of limestone. The scattered seed in this soil as it grew appeared as if it would amount to something, but soon, when the sun was up, it was scorched and withered away. This is manifested by some who have no earnest desire to know duty in order to do it. This type is a charter member of the "hip-hip hurrah for Jesus crowd." He won't turn a deaf ear to the message but soon his own priorities take over his heart.

*the care of this world,
and the deceitfulness of
riches, choke the word
and he becometh
unfruitful*



The third soil was among thorns. Jesus said, "He that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). This individual's heart is cluttered with the interests of the world. His materialistic ambi-

tions soon choke out his conviction for the message of the kingdom. He says, "I love Jesus, but I love the world more."

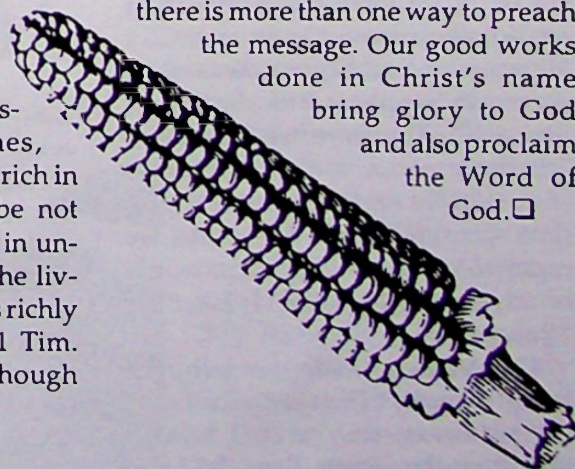
Paul, Timothy's father in the faith and our fellow Christian, admonishes, "Charge them that are rich in the world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). This third soil, though

it bears fruit, never brings it to perfection (maturity).

In Jesus' interpretation of this parable He also said something about the fourth soil. His explanation, "But he that receiveth seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt. 13:23). It is written, "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). This soil represents the type of person who is responsive, welcomes the Word and belongs to the "I'm willing to grow" crowd.

Jesus confronted Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and after bringing him to his knees, spoke to him saying, "rise, and stand upon thy feet" (Acts 26:16). Jesus then informed him of his appointed labor. In various ways, Jesus confronts us today and gives each one his marching orders. He supplies the wherewithal to accomplish these assignments. The faithful will bear the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23). This fruit-bearing of the seed sowed in good ground is manifested in various ways. Most think bringing people to Christ is accomplished only by the preaching of the Word. I suggest that there is more than one way to preach

the message. Our good works done in Christ's name bring glory to God and also proclaim the Word of God. □



Reason, Truth and Theology

BY PASTOR ARLEN F. RANKIN — BELLEVUE, WA

I believe in the simple unity and absolute supremacy of the "only true God," the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Shema of Israel states, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:4, 5). Jesus quotes this as the "first of all the commandments" (Mark 12:29,30). He, just prior to His death, addressed His Father in prayer as "the only true God" (John 17:3). Paul's simple testimony is that "there is none other God but one . . . to us there is one God, the Father" (1 Cor. 8:4-6; see 1 Tim. 2:5; Eph. 4:8).

Now we must understand that truth by its intrinsic nature holds no contradiction but is wholly harmonious. That which is true in one sphere cannot be consistently opposed by that which is true in another — whether mathematics, physical science or theology. "God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33). Reason and revelation are wholly compatible. In fact, God Himself invites, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isa. 1:18). Therefore we, like Paul, "reason . . . out of the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2) in searching for and presenting truth. To the Scriptures we repair to test the validity of the words of any teacher (Acts 17:11; Isa. 8:20; 1 John 4:1-6).

Concerning God, the prophet Isaiah records, "Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD

that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself . . . I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else" (Isa. 44:24; 45:5, 6). As the Creator, He is the Sovereign with the right to rule. David said:

Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all (1 Chron. 29:10-12).

So Jesus taught His disciples to acknowledge God as "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven . . . For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" (Matt. 6:9-13).

In the parable of the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), the "householder," whom I believe to be God, says "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will

with mine own?" This is the God who with purpose "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11), even "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11). Wilson translates "the eternal purpose" as "a plan of the ages." And Peter says that "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). Isaiah speaks the words of Jehovah, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, stand, and will do all my pleasure . . . yea, I have spoken it, and I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9-11).

Recently I purchased an old *Treatise upon Theological Subjects* by William S. Andrews, from which I share the following with my comments in brackets:

"Now the Deity himself being proved to be the Author of every thing we see in nature, he must himself have consequently existed at a period anterior to them all [Gen. 1:1]. And as we cannot suppose him to have come into being at any particular period, since we cannot suppose any thing to have existed prior to him, to call him into being; it follows therefore that he must be self-existent and eternal [see John 5:26; Psa. 90:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:17]. And since he is proved to be the Author of

every thing in the universe, and constantly employed in the operations that are going on in it, he must be omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient; that is, having absolute control over his works, superintending all of them, and understanding all their operations. [See Neh. 9:6; Acts 17:24-29; Rev. 19:6; Matt. 19:26; Psa. 139:7-12; 147:5 and Job 37:16.]

"The circumstances then of the Deity being an omnipotent Being, will also prove his Unity [I here digress to an earlier part of his writings]. By the Unity of God, I understand unity of will, consciousness, purposes, and attributes; and that the same thing is to be understood when this term is applied to him, as when it is applied to man, viz. a singleness in every thing which goes to make up an individual being or personality. I apprehend there is no more difficulty in conceiving of unity when applied to the Deity, than when applied to man; that it is, in other words, perfectly comprehensible. With respect to the Divine attributes, though we are able to form some vague and imperfect notions of the nature of these attributes, we can form no idea at all of their extent and operation; these not being within the reach of any of the faculties that are given us. [He adds elsewhere] As regards the

attributes of Deity so far are they from contradicting any of the deductions of reason, that we are obliged to believe them by the very exercise of this reason, though we cannot be said to comprehend them . . . There is a great difference in a doctrine's being beyond human reason and being opposed to it.

"[I here return to where I left off in the previous quotation.] The circumstances then of the Deity being an omnipotent Being, will also prove his Unity; since it is utterly impossible that there should be more than one omnipotent being in the universe; the very fact of omnipotence excluding the pos-

*In the nature of things
there can be but one
omnipotent being*

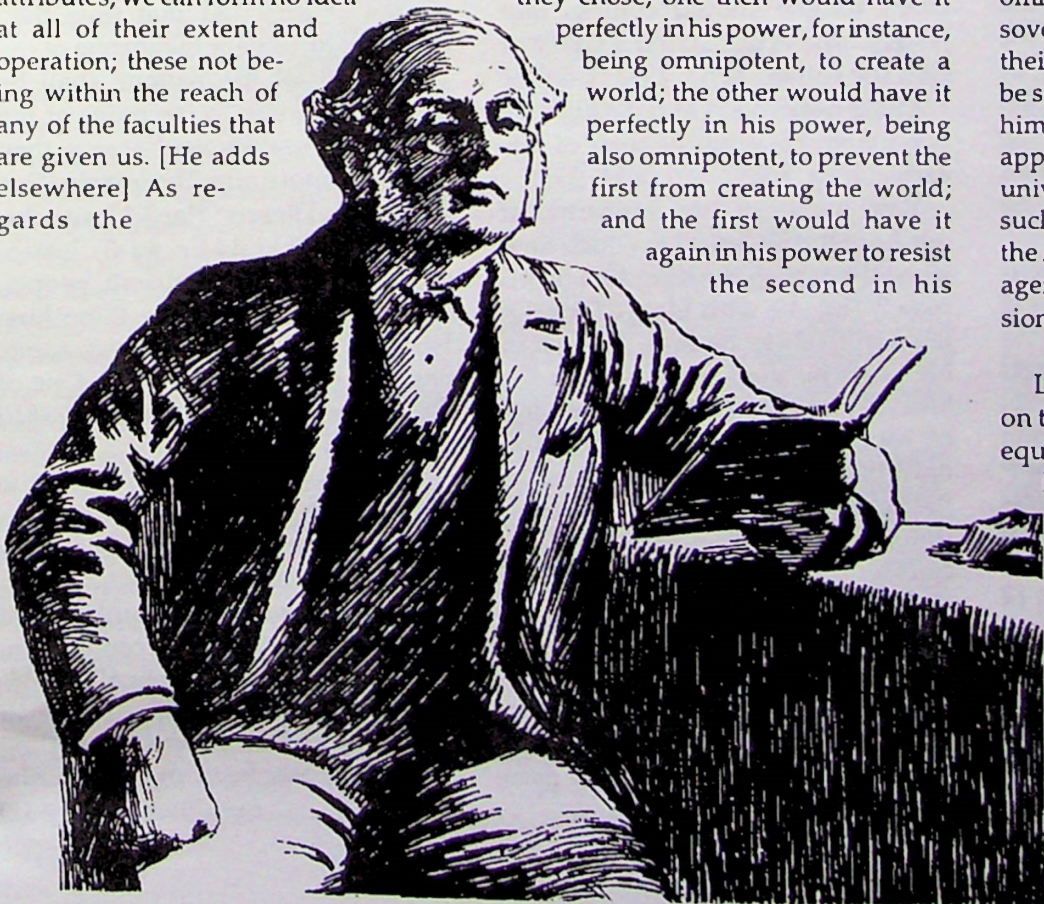
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sibility. For if there could be two omnipotent beings supposed, both, by reason of their omnipotence, would have it in their power to do whatever they chose; one then would have it perfectly in his power, for instance, being omnipotent, to create a world; the other would have it perfectly in his power, being also omnipotent, to prevent the first from creating the world; and the first would have it again in his power to resist the second in his

attempt to prevent him; in other words, both could do and could not do, the same thing at the same time, — which is a contradiction. This therefore proves, that in the nature of things there can be but one omnipotent being, and also proves that there is a natural impossibility that he should create a being equal to himself, this involving an absurdity in itself. This then, conclusively proves, I conceive, the strict Divine Unity, and is utterly destructive to the doctrine of a Trinity.

"In confirmation of this deduction from abstract reasoning of the Unity of Deity, the unity of design manifested in all the operations of the material, the moral, and the intellectual world will have considerable weight. For although if such a thing could be supposed, as two or more Deities co-equal in all their attributes, it would clearly follow that there would still be the same unity of design apparent, as they would all be acting under the same influence precisely, and of course leading to the same ends, still having by other reasoning proved there can be but one omnipotent, or in other words, one sovereign being, and that all others, let their powers be what they may, must be subordinate to and dependent upon him, it follows that the unity of design apparent in the moral and physical universe must be his work alone, in such a sense, that he is to be considered the Author of it directly, or through the agency of others, who may be commissioned by him for this purpose."

Let me make some observations on this last paragraph. Regarding co-equality, note that "equal" demands limitation, for only the finite can be measured to determine relative powers. That which is infinite (Psa. 145:3; 147:5; Job 11:7) cannot be measured or have an equal. Jesus plainly declared "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). And again, "My Father is greater than all" (John 10:29). He "did not count equality with God a thing to be



grasped" (Phil. 2:6, RSV, NASB) or usurped (Wilson). In fact, he considered himself wholly dependent upon God and not able to do anything without His Father. He said, "the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). And again, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). Jesus is the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32, 33). The Most High (Dan. 4:34) can have no equal or He would cease being the Most High. Jesus was given the Spirit by God (John 3:34). It was God who did miracles by Him (Acts 2:22). His authority was given Him by His Father (Matt. 28:18; John 5:22, 27). The Father raised Him from the dead and gave Him life (Rom. 10:9; John 5:26).

Regarding the concept of agency, note that "He who does anything by another does it by himself" (*Qui facit per alium facit per se*). So the act of the agent is the act of the principal for everything done within the scope of his authority. Hence in the millennial kingdom when it is stated that "the LORD [Yahweh] shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one" (Zech. 14:9) or "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. 19:6) it is understood that God reigns through or by the agency of His Son. It is God who sets the Son on the throne in Zion (Psa. 2:6-8). It is God who sends the Son back and makes the foes His footstool (Acts 3:20, 21; Psa. 110:1, 2). It is the "zeal of the LORD of hosts" that accomplishes this (Isa. 9:7; compare Phil. 3:21 with Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14 and 2 Cor. 4:14). The prophet declares, "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand and *his arm shall rule for him*: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him"

(Isa. 40:10). It is God who "will judge the world in righteousness *by that man* whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31; Isa. 2:4; 9:7; 11:3, 4; 42:1-4; Psa. 72:2). It is the Ancient of Days (God) who accepts Jesus into His presence and gives Him authority or "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve him," i.e., serve the Son of Man. Compare Acts 1:9-11; Dan. 7:13, 14 and Luke 19:11-15. The Son in humility and obedience went to the cross, "wherefore God hath highly exalted him,

*"He who does anything
by another does it
by himself"*

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and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8-11). So the Father is honored by and through the Son whom He sends as ruler of this earth.

Paul speaks of "the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" at which time He will establish the Kingdom (compare 2 Tim. 4:1 with Matt. 25:31). Of Jesus in that age he says, "Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen" (1 Tim. 6:14-16). The Father is the only one who is inherently immortal (John 5:26; Rom. 1:23). It is the Father who dwells in unapproachable light and upon whose face no mortal eye can gaze

(Ex. 33:20-23; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rom. 1:19; 1 John 4:12). It is the Father who is the "blessed and only One of Authority," i.e., who innately possesses sovereign authority and hence, in the highest sense is the "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."

Throughout the millennial reign of Christ Israel and all the nations shall seek the LORD, learn His ways and walk in them, submitting in obedience to the Sovereign God. The prophet Jeremiah, speaking of the new covenant to be made with all Israel in that day, records God's words, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:31-34; see 24:6, 7; Isa. 2:1-5). So likewise the nations will turn to and recognize Yahweh as the Sovereign over all. Again Jeremiah speaks of this: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil hearts" (Jer 3:17; see also Zech. 8:21-23 and Mic. 4:1-3). Isaiah, speaking to God's ancient people, says, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; *The God of the whole earth shall he be called*" (Isa. 54:5).

Jesus, as God's Agent, will rule the nations of the world a thousand years to bring them into subjection. It is evident that the Sovereign God who puts all things under the authority of the Messiah is Himself excepted from that subordination. When all the enemies of earth — "all rule and all authority and all power," including death — have been put down, the

(continued on page 17)

A Closer Look at the Person

BY BEN CAMPBELL JOHNSON — DECATUR, GEORGIA

I don't know where he came from, nor do I know who inspired his diabolical scheme, but I see the success of his endeavors everywhere I go. Who is he?

The prankster! The spectacles prankster! From the nature of his work, he could be another nephew of Screwtape, a brother of Wormwood.

Most anyone can spot his handiwork by taking the time to notice. His most diabolical work consists of distributing spectacles to church people — laity and ministers alike. Once the prankster persuades persons to wear these invisible glasses, they see persons outside the church as monsters. Some look like tigers, others warriors, and still others like hideous creatures from one of the endless sequels to *Friday the 13th*.

When wearing these glasses, each church member reacts the same way — fear of the outsider. Because of their fear, they never approach a friend or a stranger to share the good news of Christ's love. I cannot recall visiting a church where the prankster has not visited and left his distorting lenses.

The visions created by these lenses stimulate wild pictures in the imagination. Those ministers and lay people captivated by these distorted visions imagine that if they were to approach outsiders, these non-participants in church would respond, "What concern of yours is my religious life?"

Or, "If God is loving, why did an earthquake in San Francisco kill all those persons?"

Or, "How can you believe that a man who lived two thousand years ago has anything to say to our generation?"

These unfounded fears of outsiders heighten the wall between the baptized Christian and those who need the church. And as long as persons wear these distorted lenses, the outsider will remain an object of fear and mistrust. Not only will the outsider be lost to the church but those

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fearful believers will continue to create a culture within the church that perpetuates the stereotype of the outsider.

The distorted vision created by the prankster's spectacles has indeed already shaped the culture of our churches. I see indisputable evidence of this stereotype in the men and women who come to seminary. They are afraid to approach a stranger because they fear negative reactions — "the tiger's growl." While one can understand the power of this cultural influence on seminarians before they come for theological

training, you would expect these distortions to be dispelled after a couple of years of study. Unfortunately, such is not the case.

The prankster's work showed up in a recent continuing-education seminar I conducted at a theological seminary. On the first day I introduced the notion that during the seminar, after proper preparation, I wished each of them to have a conversation about personal faith with a stranger. After the assignment the atmosphere became tense and silent.

On the third day when I reminded them that on the following day we would listen to their verbatims, I got several reactions. Some said they could not do the interview; others indicated that they did not consider this task part of the seminar; several remained silent. One particularly sensitive minister said, "I can talk with persons in my congregation, but I simply can't approach a stranger and introduce the subject of religious faith." Since many of these seminar participants had been in the ministry for twenty years or more, I had falsely assumed they would have no difficulty initiating a conversation about personal faith.

To aid the ministry of spiritual guidance, we must take off the spectacles so widely distributed by the prankster. As sensitive, caring people, we need to see more clearly the perspective of persons outside the church. After all, they are the subjects of our evangelization.

Removing the Spectacles

Two things can help us see more clearly: information and experience. Good information about unchurched persons may be the best place to begin. For me, at least, the lenses to my glasses were wiped clean by the findings of Russell Hale, formerly professor of sociology of religion at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. I first encountered Russell through his book, *Who Are the Unchurched?* After reading of his experiences in conversing with the unchurched, I wanted to meet him and hear his story firsthand. So I asked him to be an instructor at a Columbia Theological Seminary "School of Evangelism." During the school, he told his story.

Some years ago, he became interested in knowing why persons did not go to church. He received a grant and a sabbatic leave for a year. Before setting out on his journey, he identified six of the most unchurched counties in the nation — Waldo County, Maine; Sarasota County, Florida; Marion County, Alabama; Boone County, West Virginia; Orange County, California; Polk County, Oregon. His goal was to interview the "hard-core" unchurched. To get their names, he went to ministers, priests, and religious leaders and requested them to identify the persons in their community most indifferent to the church. Armed with one question, "Why do you not go to church?" he set out to meet them.

In six months Hale made some amazing discoveries about this sample of the group that constitutes 40 percent of our nation. To a person, these strangers welcomed his call. They eagerly answered his questions. Often they sought to give him gifts or serve him dinner. Occasionally, others would hear about his project and request a visit so they could tell their story. And the persons he visited

always thanked him for listening to their stories and for showing so much interest in them.

After six months in the field with the unchurched, Hale sorted through his 165 interviews, which had consumed more than 400 hours. As he reflected on his notes and listened again to the recorded conversations he had had across the nation, he came up with a dozen categories to describe the unchurched. Perhaps a short description of each will help form a clearer picture of that undifferentiated mass about whom the spectacles prankster has deceived us for so long.

The anti-institutionalists

These persons have been offended by the church's preoccupation with itself; they react to the church's demand for money, the support of bureaucratic programs, and the emphasis on tradition rather than people.



The boxed in

These persons have been reared in narrow fundamentalist churches and have experienced the church as oppressive; they have fled the church in order to find space to grow as persons.

The burned out

These persons were found mostly in retirement in Sarasota, Florida.



They feel they have done their part for the church; they were loyal members, teachers, leaders in Michigan or Minnesota but now that

their children are grown and they are retired, they wish someone else to take responsibility.

Cop-outs

These persons never really got involved with church. Perhaps they attended a worship service or their children attended Sunday school for a time, but they never made a serious commitment.



Happy hedonists

As pleasure seekers, these persons have found so much entertainment in the world that the church cannot compete for their loyalty. Hale seemed to enjoy telling about the young man in southern California whom he caught at 1:30 p.m. between engagements.

"Why do you not go to church?" he asked.

"Well, I'll tell you, I've been surfing in the Pacific all morning, and now I'm headed for the mountains to ski this afternoon. When the church has anything to compare with this life, count me in!"

The locked out

These are persons who do not feel welcome in the church. Some were locked out because of race, culture, or life situation. This group includes divorcees, racially different persons, perhaps those with an alternative sexual preference.



Nomads

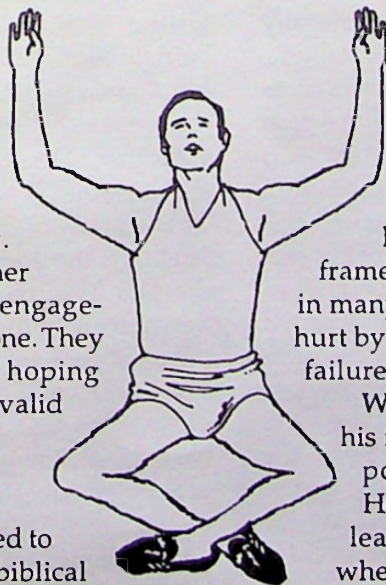
Persons on the move represent that part of the population who move every five years. Putting down roots and pulling them up again in a few years has proved too painful, so they have decided to avoid serious commitments.

Pilgrims.

These persons are religious tasters, experimenting with a variety of religious experiences. Some were reared in mainline homes and churches but became weary of the dull life of the church. They are testing Eastern religions, yoga, meditation, and even the occult. None feels his or her present religious engagement to be the final one. They are on a journey hoping sometime to find a valid faith.

Publicans

They are so named to contrast with the biblical Pharisees. These persons look



upon church members as hypocrites; they consider themselves to be more moral than those within the church.

The Scandalized

These persons wonder, if Jesus Christ is the way to God, "Why are there so many different churches?" They are put off by the scandal of division.

True Unbelievers

These persons simply do not believe in God. Hale found in his sample about the same percentage as that of the Gallup Poll; only about 6 percent of the population claim to be unbelievers.

The Uncertain

These persons do not have a reason for their inactivity in church. Most say, "I just don't know why I don't go to church."¹

When I heard Russell Hale describe the unchurched and tell his stories about them, especially their responses to his visits, my image of the non-churched person changed dramatically. Persons outside the church are not the monsters that the prankster's spectacles have caused us to see. They are searching for the meaning of their lives, they have usually had some experience of the church, they have a religious vocabulary and a frame of reference for faith, and in many instances they have been hurt by the church's practice or its failure.

When Hale had concluded his research, he made four important recommendations. He suggested that we should learn to listen. "The overwhelming experience my conversations with the unchurched

conveyed to me — the sort of conversation from which I will never recover — was that those outside the churches of America want and need to be heard."²

Hale also suggested that we should learn to proclaim the gospel without offensiveness. He acknowledged that the New Testament message has an offense but need not be proclaimed offensively. "If the Christian gospel is an offense to the unbeliever, it is legitimate to ask whether the gospel has in reality been proclaimed and whether the offense may lie in the offensiveness of the proclaimers."³

A third plea by Hale involves "understanding the ethos." "The community's spirit or ethos was discernible in the rhetoric. It seems desirable that this spirit be understood and accepted, even if not embraced, by the churches."⁴ The community, in part, creates the person; when the church understands the ethos of the community in which it ministers, it more effectively reaches those persons on the outside.

In reflecting upon the data of his interviews, Hale called the church to repent. "Honesty may demand that the churches be reminded of their own need for renewal." Maybe there is something in us as church persons that blocks the communication of the gospel. Hale concluded, "The imperfect moral behavior of Christians is the chief offense the unchurched recognize among the church." ⁵ □

From *Speaking of God*, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991, used by permission.

¹ J. Russell Hale, *Who Are the Unchurched?*, p. 38-44.

² Hale, p. 90.

³ Hale, p. 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Hale, p. 94.

Endless Torture — Is it Biblical?

BY STEVE JONES

Many Christians consider the doctrine of endless torture a non-negotiable tenet. Many sincere Bible teachers insist we believe in a God who torments the unconverted forever. At the same time, we are told that God does not delight in the death of the wicked, that He is full of tender mercies.

Is this the consistent doctrine of Scripture regarding final punishment? Will God, whose name is love (1 John 4:7), keep most of mankind alive so that He can perpetually burn them with flames? Certainly we have a right to ask the question, since Paul tells us to "test all things" (1 Thes. 5:21).

We would concur that certain isolated texts may suggest such a punishment for the lost. These passages are very small in number. The general tenor of Scripture, on the other hand, seems to suggest something different. Consistently, we read that the wicked will finally die, perish, be cut off, slain, devoured and destroyed.

Old Testament Teaching

One of the great difficulties with the popular view of final punishment or hell is the profound silence of the Old Testament. Everywhere we find God warning sinners to repent. He threatens judgment for disobedience and carries it out on many occasions. But the idea of endless torture after death is extremely obscure.

God threatened Adam and Eve with death as a punishment for their sin. This He defined not as an eternity of pain, but as a return to the dust of the earth (Gen. 3:19). Many Bible teachers will point out that God said "in the day you eat of it [the tree of knowledge of good and evil] you shall die" (Gen. 2:17). Their reasoning is that because the pair did not drop dead the same day they sinned, the "death" must be of a different kind.

This does not follow. The Hebrews often spoke in an anticipative or prophetic sense. That which is certain to happen is spoken of as a present reality. For an example, when Abimelech took Abraham's wife, God said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man" (Gen. 20:3). In other words, death was imminent, though not literally present.

The absence of explicit instructions regarding the punishment due Adam and Eve — and their posterity — is bewildering in light of the common view. Did God send sinners to hell for thousands of years before He ever disclosed this awful fact? We wonder how God could have warned Israel in precise detail about plagues, droughts and other punishments without saying a word about the worst punishment of all. Read the penalties for disobedience to the Mosaic Law (Deut. 28:15-68). Where are the warnings of hellfire in a future life?

Not a word came from the lips of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob about an

endless hell. Likewise, Moses, Joshua, the judges of Israel and the psalmists are silent on the matter. The prophets of Israel and Judah, though they say much of God's wrath, fail to teach anything about torments after death. Jeremiah does mention "the valley of the son of Himmon" (Jer. 7:32), which any Bible dictionary will identify as the Gehenna or hell spoken of by Jesus. But in this text, the prophet calls this place "the Valley of Slaughter." Anyone can see that "slaughter" is something entirely different than an endless existence in agony.

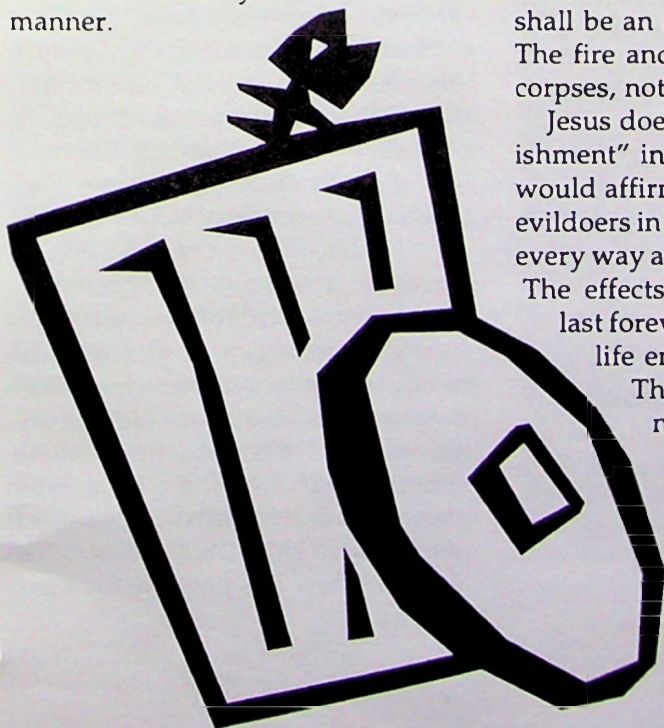
Isaiah mentions "everlasting burnings" in his prophecy (Isa. 33:14). But, amazingly, he calls this judgment "the devouring fire." This contradicts what many Christians teach about hell. Sinners are supposed to writhe in the flames without ever being devoured. But Isaiah denies it. He also says that no one can dwell in the everlasting burnings, despite the view that hell is "the eternal abode of sinners."

The many occurrences of the word "hell" in the King James Version of the Old Testament are the result of faulty translating. Modern versions of Scripture have corrected the error. They seldom, if ever, render the Hebrew word *sheol* in this way. Instead, we read such words as "the pit," "the grave" or "death." The same is true of the New Testament word *hades*, which should never have been translated "hell" in the first place. Check any Bible dictionary.

Many times, the prophets of Israel mention fire in connection with divine judgment. But they always present fire as an agent of destruction, not torment in a future life. Zephaniah, for example, said, "In the fire of his jealous wrath, all the earth shall be consumed" (Zeph. 1:18). Malachi said, "the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1). He goes on to say that the wicked would be reduced to ashes under the feet of the righteous (verses 2, 3).

The Teaching of Jesus

Jesus spoke of a final judgment in which God would "destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). This text is so ruinous to the common view that Bible teachers have assigned a theological meaning to the word "destroy." Many who claim to "take the Bible literally" escape the obvious meaning here by re-defining "destroy" as eternal, conscious separation from God. But the Bible nowhere else uses "destroy" in such a self-contradictory manner.



The word "hell" is translated from the word Gehenna, seldom used in the Scripture. Once the site of idolatrous worship, it was a garbage dump outside Jerusalem where the bodies of executed criminals were cast. Worms fed on the carcasses. The imagery was familiar to the Jews. When Jesus said that the wicked would be destroyed in Gehenna, everyone knew what He meant.

In Mark 9:48, Jesus speaks of a place where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." But this does not prove endless torments. The passage is actually a quote from Isaiah 66:24: "And they shall go

The word "hell" is translated from the word Gehenna. It was a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem.

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forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." The fire and worms are feeding on corpses, not "never-dying souls."

Jesus does speak of "eternal punishment" in Matthew 25:46. But we would affirm that the destruction of evildoers in divine wrath qualifies in every way as an eternal punishment.

The effects of such a punishment last forever, as long as the eternal life enjoyed by the righteous.

The wicked will be extinct, never to rise again. The punishment is eternal.

Some may object that we are playing games with words. But the authors of Scripture often use "eternal" to modify an activity that takes place in limited

time, as long as the effects are ongoing. For example, the Bible uses the term "eternal redemption" to signify a once-for-all event with ongoing effects. Jesus Christ is not eternally redeeming his people. He did that in time, on the cross. But the effects of his redemption stretch into eternity.

Jesus often informed his hearers that unbelievers will perish in the judgment (Luke 13:1-5; John 3:16) and not see life (John 3:36). They would be gathered and burned, as men burn withered sticks (John 15:6). The meanings of these words were evident to the common people of his day.

Many will appeal to the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 as proof of eternal torment. But the story is admitted on all hands as non-literal in many respects. Few believe that the story is an accurate account of what goes on after death. The Hebrew imagery of the dead carrying on conversations is not unique (Isa. 14:3-10). Furthermore, the story does not deal with the final punishment at all. It is a pre-resurrection account (verses 27, 28) and does not address the duration of punishment after the Judgment Day.

Apostolic Teaching

The apostles taught the same view. Read the evangelistic sermons in the Book of Acts and see if they speak a word about eternal torments. Peter said, "every soul that does not listen to that prophet [Jesus] shall be destroyed from the people" (Acts 3:23). Destruction, not endless suffering, is the end of God's Judgment.

The epistles take up the same idea. Paul, who "did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable," (Acts 20:20) warns no one about eternal torment. On the contrary, he writes of those whose "end is destruction" (Phil. 3:19) and of the ungodly who will face "eternal destruction" at the coming of the Lord (2 Thes. 1:8, 9).

(continued on page 23)

Between Belief and Disbelief

BY JEFF FLETCHER – PONCHATOU LA, LA

It's Sunday morning, the third day since Jesus was crucified. You're one of the disciples who followed Jesus. You saw Him die. It was the worst day of your life.

Ever since His death you've been in hiding. You just know that any moment the authorities are going to come bursting into the house where you are staying and arrest you for having been associated with the criminal Jesus.

Suddenly, in the early morning light you hear a knock on the door. It's the women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, James' mother. They had left a short time ago to go to the tomb and anoint Jesus' body with spices. They couldn't be done already; you figure something must have gone wrong. As they come in the house they tell the most amazing, ridiculous story you have ever heard. They say that the tomb was empty, and that two men in white told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. Your immediate reaction is to disbelieve their story. It's not credible, not humanly possible . . . it can't be true. Nevertheless, you see Peter run out the door — impetuous Pete always acting before he thinks. You know he's going to the tomb. He comes back later with an amazed look on his face: "Truly the tomb is empty." And then he claims that Jesus appeared to him.

Later in the day, Cleopas and his wife come in and tell an amazing story of how they had been traveling to the village of Emmaus when they were approached by a stranger who seemed to be unaware of what had happened involving Jesus. As they explained to him what had occurred he began to chasten them for their foolishness. He then began to explain the Scriptures to them. That evening

"Why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

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as they arrived in Emmaus, they invited the stranger to come in and eat with them. They said that as the man broke the bread and handed it to them, they suddenly recognized him . . . it was none other than Jesus. Immediately they ran back to Jerusalem and came in to tell you about it. Once again, you refuse to allow yourself to believe their story. You'd love to believe that what the women and Peter and Cleopas say is true — but you just can't.

Finally, to top it all off — in your midst appears a man in radiant white. He looks like a ghost and you are terrified. He says, "Peace be with you." And then He goes on to ask you the strangest question: "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

What would your answer be?

1. "Because just a couple of days ago you were dead."
2. "Because dead people don't just get up and walk into a room."
3. "Because we can't believe what our eyes are seeing."
4. "Because we're human. It isn't easy to believe the impossible."
5. "Lord, we're afraid to believe because we don't want to be disappointed again."

What do we mean by the word "doubt"? Os Guinness writes; "Doubt comes from the Latin 'dubitare' which is rooted in a word meaning 'two.'" To believe is to be in one mind about something — that it is true. To disbelieve is also to be in one mind about something — that it is not true or is false. To doubt is to waver between the two, to believe and at the same time to disbelieve. It is to be "in two minds" about something. It is to believe and not believe.

Scientists have been learning more and more in studying the brain. They have discovered that your brain has two halves and that each half seems to "have a mind of its own," so to speak. The left half of the brain seems to be more logical and analytical, while the right half seems to be more responsible for our artistic and creative capabilities; it is more intuitive. Most people are either right brain dominant or left brain dominant, but we use both sides of our brains. This explains how it is possible for a per-

son to believe something on the right side of their brain — intuitively, but at the same time not believe something on the left side or rationally. In other words, they are in two minds.

There are some word pictures to help clarify: A person can be spoken of as "having a foot in both camps." The Chinese call it "having a foot in two boats." A Greek word found in the New Testament, *dialogizomai* — which is the root of the word "dialogue" — means the inner debate of a person who is reasoning with himself.

I'm reminded of something Jimmy Durante sang: "Did ya ever have the feelin that ya wanted to go, but still had the feelin that ya wanted to stay — started to go, decided to stay . . ."

It's important to understand that doubt is not unbelief. A person who is experiencing doubt is not an unbeliever. When it comes to the issue of faith, doubt is the state of mind between faith and unbelief. Doubt is transitional. It is part of the decision-making process. Doubt should never be a final resting place. A person will have lasting problems if they find themselves in a permanent state of doubt.

Today there are two extremes of doubt. Within the Christian community doubt is kind of a dirty word. It has led to some extreme kinds of thinking. Some people pretend it doesn't exist—they hide their doubts behind a mask of false certainty. Doubt is unmentionable. This tends to be stronger in more conservative

churches. People deny their doubts because admitting them would create tension or dis-ease.

At the other extreme, some like to constantly talk about their doubts, to forever parade them out in public. They treasure their doubts. In fact, some people find their identity in being skeptics. Their motto is "Question everything . . . believe nothing." The person who forever claims to be an agnostic falls in this category. They have misunderstood the place of doubt as a temporary resting place and turned it into a permanent home.

There is a right view of doubt.

Doubt should never be seen as a goal or as a stopping point, but it can be considered a resting place. In fact, in some ways doubt plays an essential role in our development and growth as believers.

Let me give an example: During the past 20 years a lot of research has gone into faith development. Researchers have tried to learn how people develop in regard to their religious faith. Chief among the researchers is James Fowler of Emory University. In his research Fowler has identified six different stages of faith development. The lowest levels of faith are those

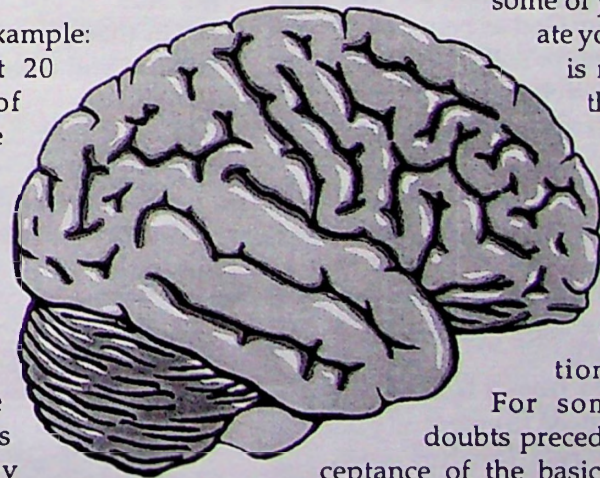
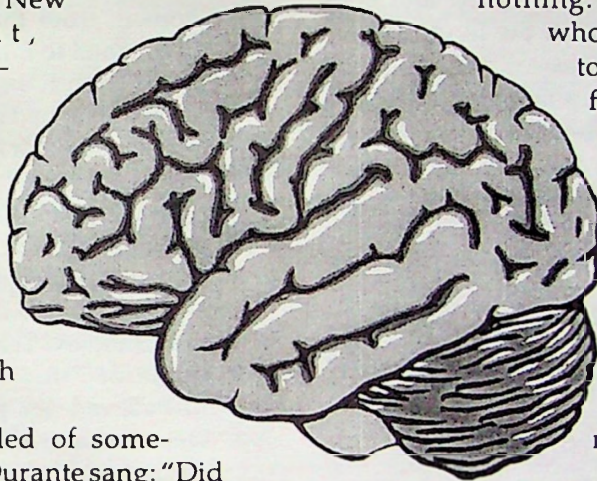
which people essentially inherit uncritically from others. People who are easily influenced by cults like Heaven's Gate, the group who collectively committed suicide in early 1997, or street gangs tend to operate on this level of faith. They allow the group to do the bulk of their thinking for them.

In the Christian church this level of faith takes the form of extreme fundamentalism, the almost militant adherence to strict doctrinal beliefs and statements of faith. It can be seen in unquestioning allegiance to the church or religious leader.

Fowler went on to discover that people who operate at the highest levels of faith may, in fact, believe many of the same things that people believe at lower levels, but their thinking process and reasons for believing are different. In the middle stages of believing, these higher stage believers went through a period of doubt, in which they critically examined and questioned things that they had taken for granted at an earlier time. This occurred as a part of the process of making their faith their own.

I tell you this as a way of helping some of you alleviate your guilt. It is normal, in the process of our Christian journey, to have periods of doubt, to question things.

For some, those doubts precede their acceptance of the basic Christian message. They wrestle with those doubts prior to entry into the church through baptism. For others, those doubts may follow their acceptance



of the basic Christian message. In other words, they were at a place, at one time on their journey, where they had no difficulty believing, but later found themselves "in two minds" about one or more aspects of their faith.

Doubting is not necessarily a bad thing. It is simply indicative of the fact that our faith does not remain static; it changes and grows — which is a good thing.

Doubting is not something that we should feel guilty about. Doubting should not make us feel we are somehow betraying God or our family or our church. It should be seen for what it is, a sign that our faith is continuing to evolve and grow.

Let me share with you now a summary of seven different types or families of doubt. For this I am indebted to the research of Os Guinness, a British theologian and scholar.

1. Doubt from ingratitude. This involves forgetting to remember what God has done for us.

2. Doubt from a faulty view of God. When we somehow get a wrong view of God it can keep us from really getting to know the true God. Do we view God as being angry and judgmental, or soft and permissive? Both are extreme views and both are wrong and can lead to problems with doubt.

3. Doubt from weak foundations. Failure to have a strong foundation in Christian instruction can lead to doubts. We need to know not only "What" we believe but also "Why" we believe it.

4. Doubt from a lack of commitment. We need to enter fully into the covenant relationship with the church, be involved with the life of the church community. Without that commitment we can find ourselves filled with doubt.

5. Doubt from lack of growth. Faith must be used and developed, grown and exercised.

6. Doubt from unruly emotions. Depression and despair can lead to doubt. This was Elijah's situation.

7. Doubt from fearing to believe. This final type of doubt is the one which confronts us in the Gospel reading. On the evening of the resurrection, without warning Jesus suddenly entered the room where His disciples were assembled and confronted them with the living reality of His risen presence. Momentarily they were taken aback, caught in two minds over whether to believe, and Luke captures the curious suspension of that moment: "And while

*Luke captures
the curious suspension
of that moment:
"And while they
still disbelieved
for joy"*

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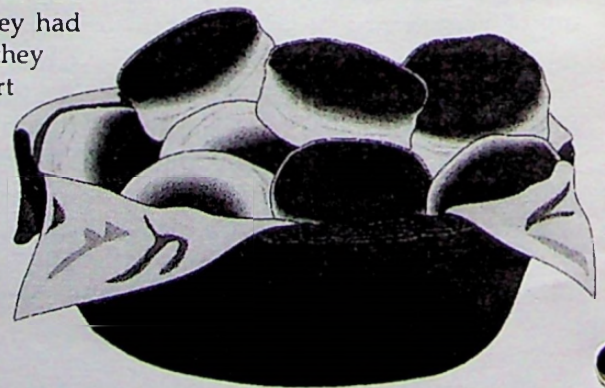
they still disbelieved for joy..." or as the New Revised Standard phrases it: "In their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering."

What a distinctive and intriguing variety of doubt this is! The average doubt is more like those mentioned earlier in the story (vs. 11) where the disciples refused to believe that Jesus had risen when they heard the first accounts that the tomb was empty. They had no first-hand evidence, so they dismissed the initial report as an idle tale. But in doubt or not, at least they hurried to find out the truth for themselves. It was not that they believed and then doubted, but that they refused to believe

without sufficient evidence. They wanted to make sure for themselves.

This later doubt, however, is quite different and there were not the same excuses. More than half a day had gone by, and the evidence to confirm the first accounts had been flowing in from all sides. They heard it from the women, from the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and from Simon Peter. Before Jesus appeared they had already come to a conclusion. "It is true, the Lord has risen" (vs. 34). But suddenly, now that Jesus was actually right in front of them and their faith was not just a tacit agreement but a demanding reality, they disbelieved for joy. That is the uniqueness of this doubt. They disbelieved for Joy. What they were seeing was the one thing in all the world they wanted most. That was precisely the trouble. They wanted it so much that to believe it and then discover it was false would have been profoundly disillusioning. So, instead, they preferred the safety of doubt rather than the risk of disappointment.

This doubt comes from the fear of being hurt where we have the scars from an old psychological wound. It is one to which many of us are prone. Are not most of us wounded at some point? It is not necessarily that we have scars which stand out publicly, livid and unhealed, but that even if



our wounds are not visible, we know they are there and we know the pain and discomfort which pressure on them brings.

This means that even though we have come to believe in Christ and have grown into a deep conviction of faith, there is still one place sealed off, one place where healing is not allowed, one place where we shy away from complete openness. So if to trust involves opening up, if to believe means laying ourselves open, if to love is to make ourselves vulnerable, then rather than taking the risk of faith we choose to doubt. (Os Guinness)²

This final type of doubt, which we see the disciples experiencing here, is a defense mechanism built by our psyches to insulate us from disappointment by refusing to believe that which we want most to believe.

In order to overcome this type of doubt, we must open ourselves up to the pain of disappointment — but only then can we experience the joy of true faith.

Is there a prescription for doubt? Remember that as long as doubt is experienced not as a permanent home, but as a transitory resting place, a stage of growth, it is okay. Admit those doubts to yourself and to trusted friends. Allow the doubt to carry you on to new areas of growth.

The best prescription for doubt that I know is the one that Jesus gave in Luke 24:45 where it says, "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."

God's word will help us overcome doubt.

1. For the doubt of ingratitude, the Scriptures help us to recall and remember what God has already done for us and for His people in history.

2. For the doubt caused by a faulty view of God, the Scriptures will help us to gain a clearer picture of who God really is.

3. For the doubt which comes from a weak foundation, the Scriptures will help us to lay a stronger foundation through truth.

4. For the doubt from lack of commitment, the Scriptures will help us to understand the need to deepen our commitment by following Jesus, carrying our crosses, serving one another, and not forsaking the corporate gathering together of the church.

5. For the doubt that comes from a lack of growth, the Scriptures will help us to grow as we become not only hearers of the word, but doers.

6. For the doubt that comes from unruly emotions, the Scriptures will help us by feeding not only our minds but our spirits.

7. For the doubt that comes from fear, the Scriptures will help us to let go of that fear, and truly believe.

One of the disciples was not present that Sunday evening. One was not there to see Jesus in person, to have Him open his mind to the Scriptures. That was Thomas. Now Thomas has gotten a bad rap over the years. He's been called Doubting Thomas. But let's remember, all the disciples doubted at first. And later, when Thomas heard the report, he refused to believe, he said, "unless I can touch his wounds." Thomas was given that opportunity, when again Jesus appeared. Thomas fell to his knees and worshipped. He then laid his doubts aside and became a true believer. Jesus said, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Jesus was talking about us. Where are the ones who have not seen and yet have come to believe?

Thomas and all the disciples had doubts, and yet they became true believers. You may have areas of doubt in your life. Don't lose hope; don't give up. Allow God to work through those doubts to bring you to a deeper level of faith in Jesus Christ. May His name be praised. Amen. □

¹ *In Two Minds: the Dilemma of Doubt and How to Resolve It*; InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 1976, p. 24.

² *ibid.*, p. 171-173.

Reason, Truth and Theology (continued from page 8)

Son shall deliver up "the kingdom to God, even the Father. . . that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Then shall John's prophetic words become reality: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3; see 22:3, 4; Matt. 5:8 and Job 19:25-27).

The Psalmist worships Him: "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of

Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen" (Psa. 72:18, 19). It shall be so (Num. 14:21; Isa 11:9; Hab. 2:14). Jude also praises Him: "To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (v. 25; see 1 Pet.

4:11; 5:10, 11). We add our voice to "worship him in spirit and in truth," and endeavor to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (John 4:24; Heb. 12:28). □

This article was adapted from a presentation at the 6th annual Theological Conference held at Atlanta Bible College, Morrow, GA, April 1997.

The Church: The Israel of God

BY MARK COOMER

THE KINGDOM OF GOD The Hope of Israel

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the Gospel'" (Mark 1:14, 15).

The coming of the Kingdom of God was the hoped-for salvation of Israel. Beginning with Abraham, God cultivated a People of Promise to inherit both a land and a royal priesthood, administering the Age when God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. God Himself would anoint One from among these people to rule Israel — and by extension the nations of the world — from Jerusalem. Through the rule of this Savior and His people Israel, wars and conflicts would cease; poverty, sickness and death disappear; even nature would be at peace with itself; and the knowledge of God would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The Future Kingdom Breaking in Now

Jesus, begotten of the Holy Spirit, was born to fulfill the role of the Anointed One, the Messiah, the King of Israel. Jesus summed up the substance of His Gospel with one phrase: The Kingdom of God. On the one hand, Jesus taught that the time for the coming of the Kingdom of God was fulfilled. The Kingdom of God was seen breaking in upon the world through the advent of the Messiah

and the Power of God evident in His healings and the casting out of demons.

On the other hand, the Kingdom of God, as pictured most often, was something to be prayed for: "Thy Kingdom come." The Kingdom had to be watched for and waited for.

The Kingdom of God is, as many scholars note, in a state of tension or development described as "*already, but not yet.*"

It is a seed that grows into a mighty plant, or a sower that waits for the harvest; or as a man traveling into a far country who calls his servants and delivers to them his goods. The Kingdom of God likewise is, since the first advent of Jesus, a present power wherein Satan's defeat is assured and the believer's salvation put in process, yet the Kingdom is above all a promise of fulfillment and realization yet to come when Satan is deactivated and the children of God, and even nature, are released from bondage unto glorious liberty.¹

As prophesied of old, the vast majority of Israel did not recognize her Messiah. Israel stumbled.

Yet not only did God not cast Israel away, He reserved in Israel a representative remnant to carry on as His People of Promise.

THE REMNANT

Given to Some; Not Given to Others

Israel has been reduced to a remnant and Gentiles are grafted into them.

During Jesus' ministry, He declared that His disciples fulfilled the "remnant" passages of Isaiah by understanding His Message of the Kingdom, although the majority of Israel did not understand. This remnant of Israel who recognized Jesus as Messiah were His "called out."

"Jesus spoke many things unto them in parables" (Matt. 13:3), for example the parable of the sower. After that parable His disciples asked Him: "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (v. 10). Jesus explained: "Because it is given unto you to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but unto them it is not given" (v. 11).

Jesus' parables could either conceal or reveal mysteries concerning the Kingdom of Heaven to two classes of people: Those to whom it is given to know and those to whom it is not given to know.

Grace and Election

This statement immediately brings to the forefront two Hebraic ideas: (1) The idea that this knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven is a *gift*. It is given; it is *grace*, and (2) The idea that there is an "elect" chosen to whom God reveals these mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.² These to whom it is given to know are preordained. They are *proginosko*, foreknown: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things that have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35; cp. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:9).

Kingdom Rejectors Fulfill Isaiah's Prophecy

Set against this elect are those to whom it is not given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. "Therefore," said Jesus, "I speak to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matt. 13:13).

Then Jesus made an amazing claim. These Kingdom-rejectors, He said, fulfill Isaiah's prophecy. Jesus then quoted Isaiah 6:9, 10:

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Matt. 13:14, 15).

Turning to Isaiah 6:9, 10 (the passage Jesus quoted), we read:

And He [God] said, "Go and tell this people, 'Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but

perceive not.' Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

The Hope of a Remnant, the Holy Seed

Jesus said this passage from Isaiah was fulfilled by those who did not understand His parables revealing the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Isaiah was the contextual background for Jesus' understanding. Isaiah continues:

Then said I, "LORD, how long?" [How long will your people be blind and unhearing and hard-hearted?] And He answered, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the Land" (vv. 11, 12).

Isaiah draws a gloomy picture. All seems lost. But listen! "And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the Land"

(v. 13). "Stump" is variously translated "substance" (i.e. vitality), "stock," "sap," "root," "trunk," "germ."

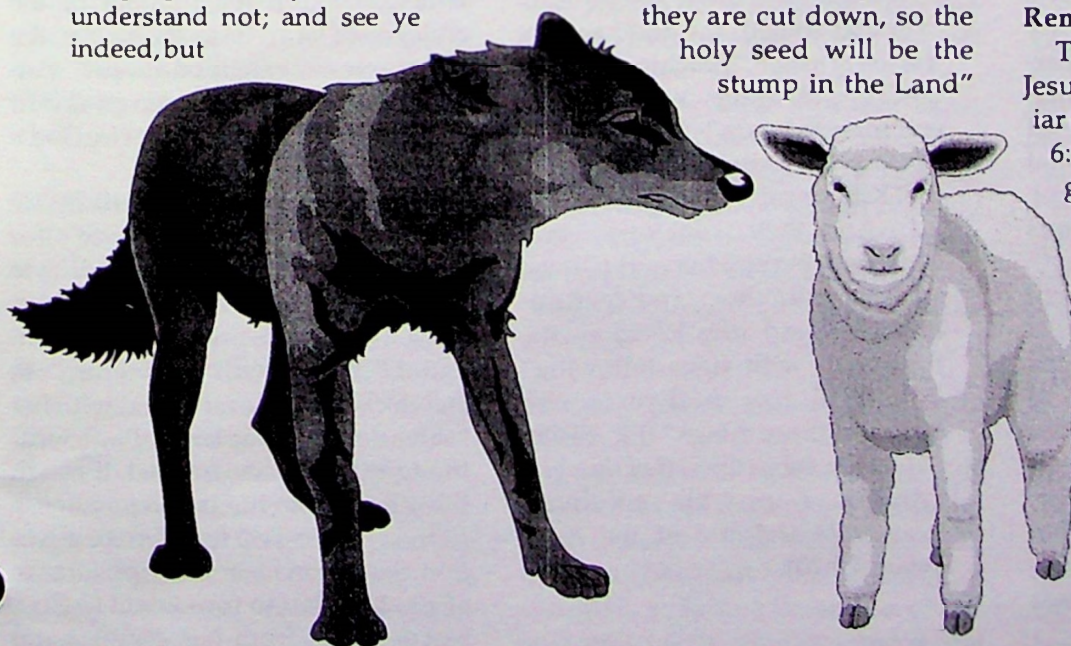
This is the remnant. First, in verses 11 and 12, the picture is that of utter ruin. This is the "Gloomy Prophet." This is typical of prophecy. Prophets often would speak as if all were lost, but then dramatically unveil the hope of a remnant: "But the holy seed is the stump in the Land"(v. 13).³

The remnant of the tenth is the stock or the substance from which the nation is to be renewed. "However frequently," says Alexander, "the people may seem to be destroyed, there shall still be a surviving remnant, a tenth, and however frequently this very remnant may appear to perish, there shall still be a remnant of the remnant left and this indestructible residuum shall be the holy seed, the elect remnant according to grace (Romans 11:5). There is nothing tougher than the life of this everlasting Jew."⁴

Biederwolf, *The Prophecy Handbook*

THE REMNANT IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD Kingdom Hearers Fulfill Isaiah's Remnant

This is the background to which Jesus referred, a passage quite familiar to His audience. He applied Isaiah 6:9, 10 to those to whom it is not given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. But listen to what Jesus said as he turned to those to whom it was given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven: "But blessed are your eyes for they see: and your ears for they hear" (Matt. 13:16). The Kingdom rejectors, Jesus said, fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. To whom is Jesus equating His disciples? The holy seed, the tenth of a tenth, the remnant.



"For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (v. 17).

The Word of the Kingdom

See and hear what? The mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven! Jesus continued: *Hear ye* therefore the Parable of the Sower" (v. 18). *Listen*, Jesus said. Hear with your ears and understand with your heart! "When anyone heareth the Word of the Kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that was sown in his heart" (v. 19), or "then cometh the devil, and taketh away the Word [the Word of the Kingdom] out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12). Salvation is dependent upon an understanding of and subsequent belief in the Gospel of the Kingdom. "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the Word [the Word of the Kingdom], and understandeth it; which also beareth good fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (v. 23).

The Kingdom in Continuity

Is this Kingdom held in abeyance or continuity? Jesus immediately spoke another parable: "Another parable put He forth unto them, saying 'The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while the men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way'" (vv. 24, 25). And so the man let them grow together until the harvest. Jesus then explained: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the harvest is the end of the age" (vv. 38, 39). Jesus then repeats His allusion to Isaiah: "Who hath ears to hear let him hear" (v. 43).

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." Jesus began the sowing, and the effect continues, wheat and tares growing together until the harvest which is the end of the age (v. 39). The Jews divided all time into two ages: this Present Evil Age (the *oham ha-zeh*), and the Age to Come (the *olam ha-ba*), that is, the Age of God's Kingdom.⁵

Jesus has therefore promised to be with us "unto the end of the age." "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even unto the end of the age*" (Matt. 28:19, 20). The church is to remain on earth until the harvest (Resurrection) which is the End of the Age.

Notice the parallels between the Parable of the Tares and Wheat and the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke:

- "The field is the *world*." "Go ye unto all the world" (Mark 16:15). "Go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19). "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:47).
- "He that soweth the good seed is the *son of man*." "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). "Preach the Gospel [the Gospel of the Kingdom] to every creature . . . And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word [the Word of the Kingdom] with signs following" (Mk. 16:15, 20). "And ye are witnesses of these things" (Lk. 24:48).
- "The harvest is the *end of the age*." "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the Age" (Matt. 28:20).

REMNANT AS THE CHURCH Paul's Obedience in Preaching the Remnant

As Jesus' remnant of true believers obediently went forth unto all the world, starting first at Jerusalem, did any in Israel see, and hear, and understand? Or did God cast away His people, even if only until a future time? God did not put His people on hold. God's Kingdom is living, it is at hand, and it will not be held in abeyance.⁶ Not only will all Israel be saved in the future, but a believing remnant exists now. Paul, the bond-slave of Jesus Christ, obediently continued to teach all things that Jesus commanded — including Jesus' teaching of the remnant: "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for" (Rom. 11:7). This is the Gloomy Prophet: "all is lost." But listen: "But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Here is Paul's dramatic unveiling of the remnant.

The Meaning of Salvation for the Election

"But the election hath obtained it . . ." What did the election obtain? Salvation. What is Salvation? Two chapters earlier, in Romans 9:27, Paul said, "Isaiah also crieth concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.'" Salvation was never by genealogy or works of the Law, but rather by God's call of election and grace.

Paul here quoted Isaiah 10:22. He substitutes the word "saved" for Isaiah's word "return." According to Paul's way of thinking, all that involved the remnant of Israel's "salvation" began with her "return" in Isaiah chapter 10 and ended with her "salvation" in chapter 12. Paul, writing to the Romans, evoked, through his reference to the Isaiah passage, a rich eschatological tradition of salvation. Salvation meant the appearance of the Messiah to turn Israel to God, rescue Israel from her enemies and assume His Messianic Kingdom,

setting a rule of righteousness for Israel and the nations of the earth. This process has begun now, and is yet to be consummated. It is *already, but not yet*.

Paul did not disobey Jesus' Great Commission to the church. A summary of what he taught the Ephesians is found in Acts 20:24-25. Paul told the elders of the church that he had received from the Lord Jesus a ministry "to testify the Gospel of the *grace* of God," which Paul then refers to as "preaching the Kingdom of God." Grace is the essential character of the Gospel of the Kingdom, as the Gospel according to John states: "For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

The Election and the Rest Were Blinded: Israel Divided in Two

Back to Paul in Romans 11:7: "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for. But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Paul concludes that Israel, then, is temporarily blinded in part (v. 25). They are not completely blind — only in part. There are two parts, two Israels: the remnant, and the rest who are blinded unto this very day. Paul then quotes the now-familiar Isaiah: "According as it is written, 'God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear'" (Rom. 11:8).

Israel Reduced to a Remnant Again

In Romans 11:7-8, we've seen Paul teach, as his Master Jesus did, the remnant of Israel from Isaiah.

Now let's read Romans 11 from the beginning: "I say then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (v. 1). How can God have cast away His people? Am I not a Jew? Paul asks. "God has not cast away His People whom He foreknew [*proginosko*]" (v. 2). God foreknew this holy remnant, the seed in the

land. He did not cast them away. He had a plan for them, a well-worn plan that He had used over and over throughout Israel's history. "Know you not what the Scripture says of Elijah? How he maketh intercession to God against Israel saying, 'LORD, they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life'" (vv. 2, 3). Elijah thought he was all alone. If he had been, he would have been the remnant of Israel. "But what saith the answer of God unto him? 'I have reserved to myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal'" (v. 4). God did it. God reserved the 7,000 for Himself according to His election and grace. "Even so then [in just the same way] at this *present time* also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (v. 5). This immediately reminds us of Jesus' statement in Matthew 13:11 that it is "Given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven," by both grace and election. "And if by grace then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work" (v. 6). Your election was by grace, not earned by works. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for. But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (v. 7).

In rejecting their Messiah, Israel committed a national failure. However, national failure was nothing new to Israel. In failing, they not only fulfilled Scripture, but repeated their historic pattern: Israel falls away, but, whether one faithful Israelite or 7,000, a *remnant* remains to carry on.

Faithful Remnant Continues Israel

Paul said that he knew God had not cast away His people because he was a Hebrew and there was still, even as always in Israel's history, a remnant. In Peter's second recorded sermon in Acts, he explained it this way: "Moses truly said unto the fa-

thers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Acts 3:22). Now here's the remnant: "And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people" (v. 23).

Which people? The Israelite people. Some souls are destroyed, but some hear. The remnant who hear are not classified as "leaving Israel." They are not "called out" to "leave Israel," but rather to follow Messiah. If anything, it's the Messiah rejectors who "leave." Regardless of what happened to the balance of Israel — whether destroyed, scattered or kingless — the faithful followed Messiah. This turn of events was completely Jewish. These times were expected by those who followed Messiah: "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and [the children] of the covenant which God made unto Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed'" (vv. 24, 25). "These days" — these days since Pentecost in which we live — were foretold by all the prophets. Speaking to "ye men of Israel" (v. 12), Peter declares they are "children" of both the prophets and of God's covenant with Abraham — not by fleshly descent; but rather they are children by promise and election. Peter seems to say that it's not that they are no longer Jews; it's that they are the only true Jews left. The others who do not hear are being destroyed. But you are the children of all the prophets, and all the prophets said this would happen.

Israel: Some Believed the Kingdom and Jesus, and Some Did Not

Paul's last recorded act in the book of the Acts of the Apostles relates to the remnant: Paul "expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them [the Jews] concerning

Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23).

How many of us could do that? Jesus did not come to create a new religion but to fulfill the prophecies — prophecies which predicted the coming of a New Covenant with His people Israel, prophecies which predicted His rejection by Israel and His death and resurrection and His seating at God's right hand until His enemies become His footstool.

After His resurrection, Jesus approached two men on the road to Emmaus who were sad about His crucifixion because, they said, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." They hoped for the redemption of Israel in the New Age which was to be, according to the words of the prophets, their salvation. Jesus did not reprimand them for having the wrong concept of His mission; instead He answered, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: *ought not* Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (cp. Acts 13:26-49). "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:21, 25-27), including His present session at God's right hand (Psalm 110:1) until God makes His enemies His footstool.

Jesus told the men to believe "all that the prophets have spoken." Perhaps they did not understand God's game plan, but that was not the prophets' fault. It was all in there, in the Scriptures.

Paul expounded to the Jews the Kingdom of God and Jesus from the Old Testament, "And some believed the things which were spoken [that's the remnant], and some believed not" (Acts 28:24).

Then Paul quoted a prophet you may have heard before:

"Well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, saying,

"Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of the people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Be it known therefore unto you, that *this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles*, and that they will hear it.

The holy seed will be the stump in the Land



The Gentiles Inherit the Kingdom

A different salvation was sent unto the Gentiles? No, it was *this* salvation, God's salvation, the salvation God meant for the Jews to have in Acts 28:23: "The Kingdom of God . . . and Jesus." Do you remember what salvation is?

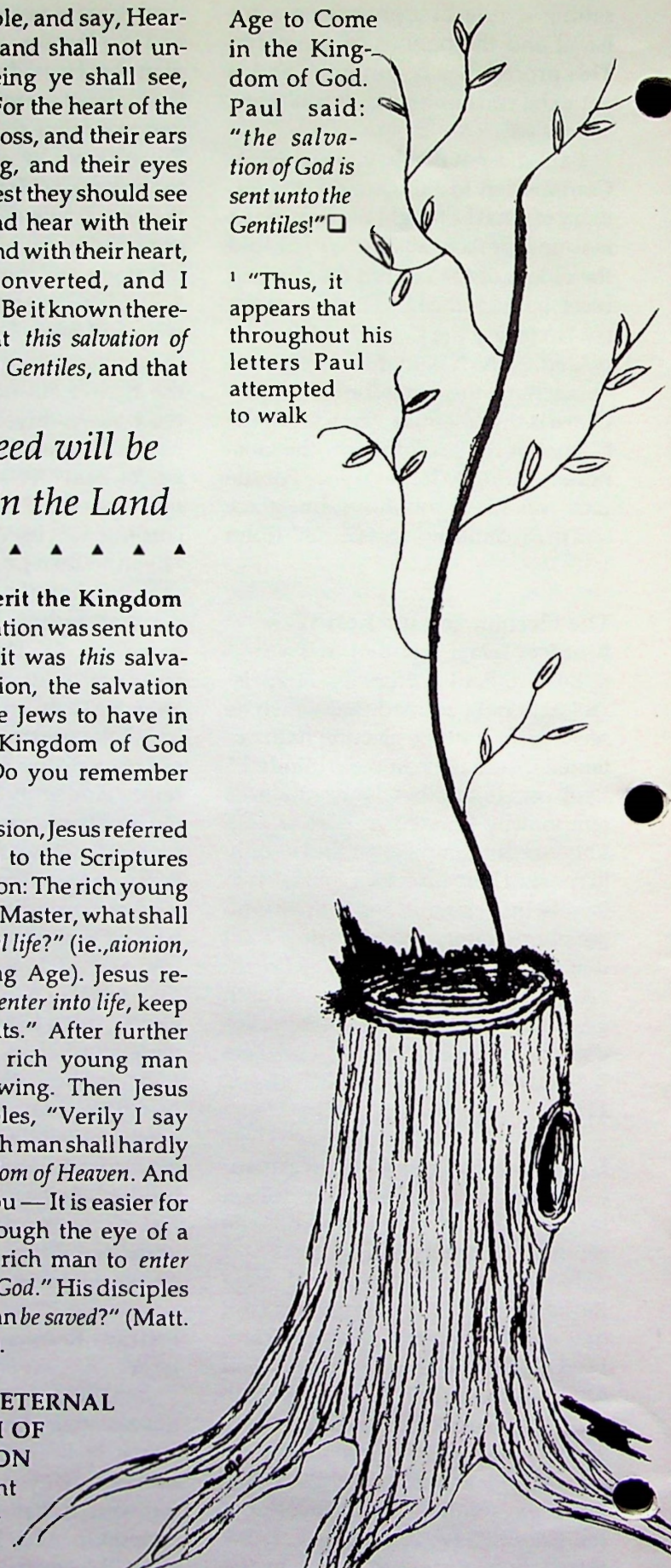
On another occasion, Jesus referred a rich young man to the Scriptures concerning salvation: The rich young man asked, "Good Master, what shall I do to *inherit eternal life*?" (ie., *aionion*, Life in the Coming Age). Jesus replied, "If you will *enter into life*, keep the commandments." After further conversation, the rich young man went away sorrowing. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. And again I say unto you — It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to *enter into the Kingdom of God*." His disciples said, "Who then can be *saved*?" (Matt. 19; Mk. 10; Lk. 18).

INHERITANCE/ ETERNAL LIFE/ KINGDOM OF GOD/ SALVATION

Salvation meant receiving an inheritance of life in the

Age to Come in the Kingdom of God. Paul said: "*the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles!*" □

¹ "Thus, it appears that throughout his letters Paul attempted to walk



a narrow tightrope between overrealized and unrealized eschatological viewpoints. There was an already to his eschatology that definitely shaped his world view, but that view was also affected by the not yet, the anticipated return of the Lord. Since that return was at an unknown time and since the eschatological age had already dawned, Paul could use an appeal to "that Day" as a means of producing moral seriousness in his audience. Christians must always be prepared since they know not the hour. The certainty of that coming, combined with its possible nearness, made the exhortations especially effective. On the one hand, Paul did not want to fall into the trap of an overrealized eschatology that suggested that there was nothing significant left to happen in the eschatological timetable (see 1 Cor. 4:8-13, 15:12-19), or perhaps nothing significant left to do prior to that Day of the Lord (see 1 Thess. 5:12-23, 4:11-12). On the other hand, Paul did not want to suggest that God's work of salvation was all promise and no fulfillment yet (see Rom. 8:1-4, 9:ff, 2 Cor. 5:16ff)." Ben Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World*, 1992, InterVarsity Press, p. 34.

² "There is a common belief in today's Church that Judaism—whether in Paul's day or our own—teaches salvation by works of the Law, whereas Christianity is a religion of grace. Such

an understanding of Judaism is in reality far more a caricature or misrepresentation than the truth. Indeed, as one Christian scholar explains, 'to the extent that we propagate this view in our preaching and our teaching, we are guilty of bearing false witness' [Evans, Carl D., "The Church's False Witness Against Jews," *Christian Century*, May 5, 1982; 531]. Paul emphasizes that the true sign of belonging to the seed of Abraham is not physical but spiritual (Rom. 2:28-29). It involves circumcision of the heart rather than earning one's way into his family through personal achievement. This teaching of Paul is nothing new, however; Moses and the prophets taught the same thing (Deut. 10:16, Jer. 4:4)." Wilson, Marvin, *Our Father Abraham, Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, 1989, Eerdmans, p. 20-21.

³ "Even in the most gloomy of the prophets there is usually a ray of hope, at least for a faithful remnant after the judgment falls." Witherington, p. 255.

⁴ Biederwolf, William Edward, *The Prophecy Handbook*, reprinted 1991, World Bible Publishers, p. 54.

⁵ "But according to Scripture the age that follows the present one is that of the kingly rule of Messiah. Moreover, Matthew XXIV:3 shows that the consummation of the Age is Christ's Advent in glory and power to establish

that Kingdom." Reese, Alexander, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, Chapter VII: "The Great Missionary Commission and Its Fulfillment," p. 108.

"As we have so often seen, the Jews divided all time into two ages. There was *this present age*, which is wholly under the domination of evil and wholly bad, beyond all reformation or cure. There is *the age which is to come*, which is the golden age of God" Barclay, William, *The Revelation of John*, Westminster Press, 1960, p. 1.

"It is common knowledge that Bible eschatology as a whole is set within a definite framework—the conception of two distinct worlds or aeons; "the present age," or simply, "the age" largely subject to the powers of darkness, and "the coming age," which by its victorious advent abolishes all tragedy. It is upon this grand apocalyptic opposition that Paul builds his main view of the last things." Mackintosh, H.R., in "The Expositor" [*Studies in Christian Eschatology*], Feb., 1914, p. 123.

⁶ "In order to have a delay there must be a specific time or schedule whereby an event, arrival or expectation can be known to be late. Without such information it is not possible to use the term 'delay' . . . This factor suggests that 'delay of the parousia' treatments of the New Testament may not be built on firm foundations." Carroll, R.P., "Eschatological Delay in the Prophetic Tradition?" ZAW, no. 1, 1982.

Endless Torture — Is it Biblical? (continued from page 13)

"The wages of sin," says Paul, "is death" (Rom. 6:23). He does not tell his readers, "the wages of sin is to burn in hell without dying." Again, the apostle says that "if you live according to the flesh, you will die" (Rom. 8:13). If eternal torment is true, why would he cloak the doctrine in ambiguity — especially considering the gravity of the matter?

Peter also teaches the destruction of the wicked on Judgment Day. He likens their fate unto the incineration of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pet. 2:6, 7). James speaks of the unrighteous rich who will be led off to slaughter and consumed by their wealth (James 5:1-5).

In Revelation 14:10, 11, we read that God torments those who worship the beast, adding "the smoke of

their torments goes up forever and ever." But this is language borrowed from the destruction of Edom (Isa. 34:10), it has nothing to do with misery in a future life. There is nothing in the text that demands such a thing.

The testimony of both the testaments is conclusive: the wicked will most surely perish. "The Lord preserves all who love him; but all the wicked will he destroy" (Psa. 145:20).□

No More Mister Nice Guy

BY STEVE JONES

Christianity is a revolution! Now that's something with appeal and substance. This flabby, wimpy thing we call Christianity nowadays is not.

For many, the ultimate goal of Christ's religion is niceness. After all, people who go to church are nice people, aren't they? They come in Sunday hoping to hear a nice sermon. Well, I hope I never preach a nice sermon in this church ever again. A nice sermon won't prompt you to do anything. It won't prompt you to change things that have gone awry in your life nor will it encourage you. It will only prompt you to shake my hand and say, "That was nice."

Christ, our example, was righteous, holy, undefiled. But He wasn't necessarily nice. He wasn't nice when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple or when He called the

Pharisees "whitewashed tombs." He wasn't necessarily being nice when He put the cost of discipleship on the line for a rich young ruler.

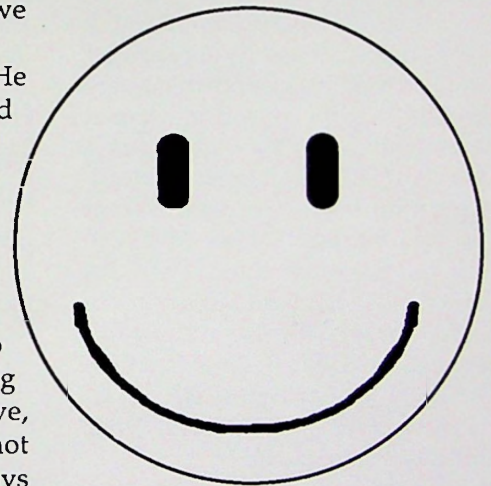
The Lord wasn't being nice when He said that most people are on the broad road that leads to destruction. In fact, He really wasn't the kind of person we have in mind when we say, "Boy, he sure is a nice guy."

Still, Christ was love incarnate. He had compassion on the sick and oppressed. He touched lepers and ate with tax collectors. He gave His life as a ransom for many. But Mister Nice Guy He was not. He was a spiritual revolutionary.

Jesus is our example. Maybe that means we need to stop saying so many nice things and start speaking the truth. We must speak it in love, but we must speak it. The truth is not always nice. The truth is not always

covered with velvet and silk. Sometimes it's hard and rough, even when spoken tenderly.

The time has come for us to become spiritual revolutionaries, to get serious about this thing we call Christianity. No more Mister Nice Guy! □



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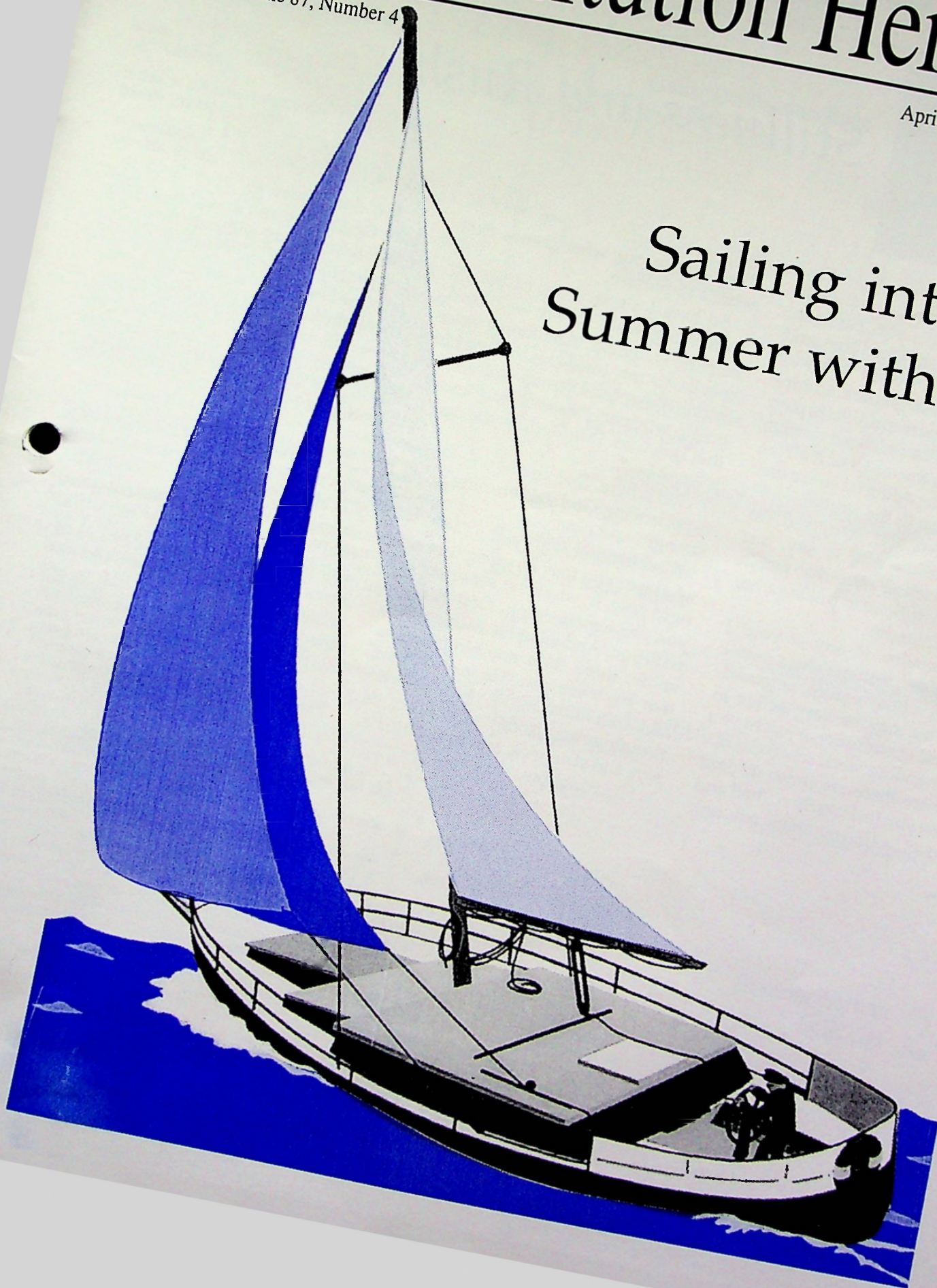
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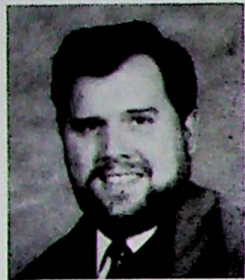
The Restitution Herald

Volume 87, Number 4

April, May • 1998

Sailing into
Summer with Joy





Stillness and Rush

It's been another one of those weeks for me . . . run, run, run, rush, rush, rush. Deadlines and commitments . . . pulled this way and that. Sermons to prepare, administrative tasks to perform, bills to pay, people to visit who need care. Never enough time. In the midst of it all . . . gotta get out that editorial so we can send the HERALD to the printer.

I've wrestled and struggled for something meaningful to say, but things are whirling around so fast in my brain it's difficult to put together a coherent thought.

Sound familiar to any of you? I suspect it does. You may be a pastor like me, or a busy parent, or grandparent. You may be very active in church and community or just have a very demanding work schedule, but chances are there are times in your life when you feel overly rushed and unfocused, and you have a tough

time sorting out what comes first, what's important.

So here I sit, in front of the PC wondering what to say — "Lord, help me . . . quick!" And then a voice speaks to me inside . . . Shhhhh! listen. It's a "still, small voice." A gentle whisper. "Be still, and know that I am God. I am God, so you don't have to be."

God is here. God knows what I am experiencing. God is able to offer help, strength and direction.

God is there with you as well — whatever you may be going through right now. In whatever season of life you are experiencing, God is there with you. And what He wants you to know, more than anything else, is that He loves you, He is with you, and He is able to fill your life with meaning, both today with all of its joys and struggles, and in the future, in His Kingdom.

We don't have to work hard to earn God's love and acceptance; He offers it freely and willingly through faith in His son. Take a few moments now, as I have just done, to stop and thank the Lord for His unconditional love, His unmerited favor, and His unending presence in your life. Be still, and know that He is indeed God, and He is with you.

This issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD covers a range of topics to help you along your journey through life. I hope you find them stimulating and challenging. Please drop me a line and let me know which kind of articles you find most helpful, and also what topics you would like to see covered in future issues of the HERALD.

Thank you,
Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Fletcher'.

Jeffrey Fletcher

The Restitution Herald

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Getting Our Priorities Right

BY PHYLLIS WACHTEL – WENATCHEE, WA

I believe there is a massive force in the world today that is masquerading and squelching our freedom of expression toward our Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

It seems there is so much demand on our time that we don't always have time to sit down and figure out our priorities and decide what needs to come first in our life so we can become the person God wants us to be.

Are we slaves to ourselves, our culture, our work, our family, or to the people who surround us? Should we ask ourselves how or why we can so easily get caught up in the things of this world? How did I become what I am? We may or may not be able to honestly answer these questions, but this one thing we can say: we have simply been programmed to think and act in certain ways. We can be full of preconceived ideas. How many people can honestly say they've laid aside these ideas in a completely unbiased and unprejudiced way and asked the Lord to guide and reveal to them more truth?

Personally, I've been guilty of being so busy with everyday life that I have neglected, in the past, to rethink my priorities. Ask my friends who have had to, many times, make an appointment to see me. We quite often do not take time to see the flowers bloom, the sun rise or set, or spend quality time with our family, let alone with our Lord and Savior. We have no time to get serious with God. We are content and comfortable with just

going along with our usual activities. We can all spend a whole lifetime (maybe 60 to 80 years) earning just enough money to barely scrape by. All the while we are neglecting to prepare for the greatest life one could ever imagine. What are we doing?

My fellow Christians, we are to be "ambassadors" for Christ. We are a "chosen people" of God (chosen to do the works of God), a people of

Let's get serious with God!

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲
God choosing to prepare ourselves to reign with Christ as kings and priests, and to be co-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom of God.

Let's get serious with God! There's not much time left. Let's get rid of anything and everything that hinders our progress in serving the Lord. Cast away all the evil hindrances and get started with a program that will bring glory to God.

Let us say, "I love you, Lord! I love you enough to give you quality time: time for reading your Word, time to build a close relationship between us, and time to praise and worship your Most Holy Name. Time to give you the thanks you deserve. Time to listen for your guidance and be aware of how we can serve others."

Friends, Jesus is coming soon, which gives us limited time. Try to feel the urgency like you've never felt

before. Do not feel inhibited by those around you; instead, feel free in the Spirit of God. Let God work in you and through you to produce fruits for Him. If it is your desire to serve Him in a better way, ask to be "renewed in the Spirit" day by day along the journey. "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). Give Him the praise He is worthy of.

You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

Say to yourself, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Rom. 1:16, 17).

Humble yourselves and become like little children. Worship the Lord; feel His presence just as a child would accept love from his mother. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the

kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3, 4).

Brothers and sisters, if you are having difficulty with pride in any way, please fall on your knees and ask the Spirit of God to cleanse you from that and, in fact, anything else that hinders your walk with Him. A cleansing has to take place in our lives in order for us to manifest godliness in any form. There is no time to *play* church or to *play* games with God. Surrender your will to Him completely and feel freedom that you have never experienced before. Cry out to God — and tell Him that you love Him, because that is what He wants to hear.

"The Spirit itself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory . . . the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:16, 17, 21).

The worship of God is a necessary part of practicing truth in the gospel. Psalm 66 tells us: "Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name.'"

Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.
(Psalm 95:6, 7)

Exalt the Lord our God
and worship at his footstool;
he is holy.
(Psalm 99:5)

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.
(John 4:24)

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. . . . They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped

"They became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images."

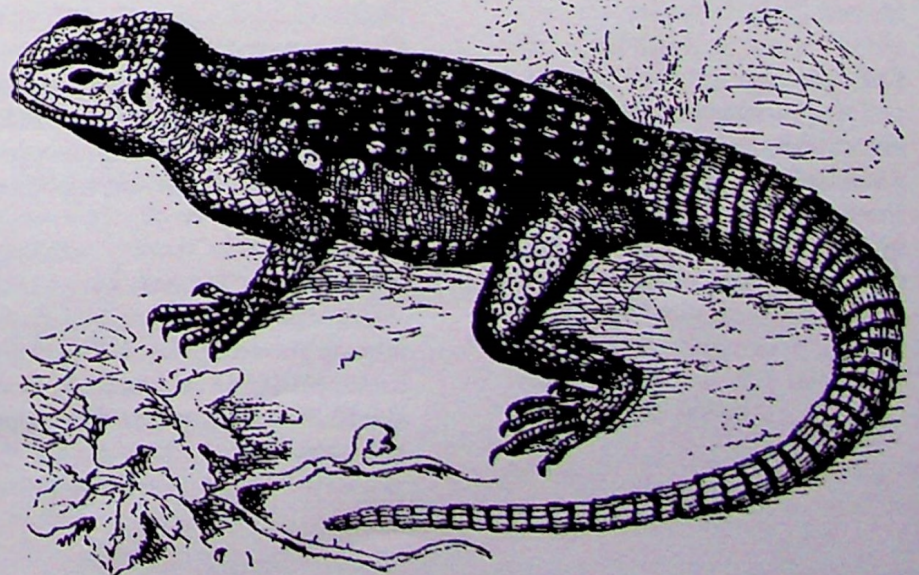
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and served created beings rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.

(Rom. 1:20-25)

Let us not worship the things we have or even the things we want to have, more than God Himself. God and His Son, Jesus Christ, are the ones whom we must serve and worship. They deserve our love and praise more than any other. Let us not put other gods before them as some did in the past. Feel free to show them in every possible way that you care. Give them thanks, for they need it, want it, and deserve it.

If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" So, then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good (1 Pet. 4:16-19).

To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen (Rom. 16:27). □



16 Traits of True Love

BY MICHAEL MATTISON — BATON ROUGE, LA

Patient

A caring person gives the other person space and the freedom to be himself. He doesn't get uptight or clinging, but is able to let go. The Bible names at least three things that produce patience: love, hope, and tribulation (see James 1:2, 3; Rom. 8:25).

Kind

In modern society, the atmosphere often implies "only the fittest survive." The motto in many places could read, "Kindness not spoken here." If the atmosphere needs improvement, you can make the choice to pray for instead of retaliate against others.

Does not envy

Kindness eliminates jealousy because it wants the other person to have more, not take away what he has. It gives rather than looking out for self.

Does not brag

The generous person will develop an attitude that will not gloat over what he has. Boasting often hides an insecurity that can't appreciate self or one's neighbor, or it can come from a self-righteous, superior attitude.

Is not arrogant

Pride is self-centered confidence, not humble nor generous. Loving obedience toward others makes good relationships possible, but pride stands in the way of that. Pride wants to control. Love brings humility.

Is never rude

Can a humble person be obnoxious? No, he is gentle.

Is not self-seeking

The opposite of being rude is being considerate, which comes naturally to the caring, loving, obedient person.

Is not provoked

Love is not hyper-sensitive about "me." When we really care about what someone thinks of us, we are more defensive, easily hurt and easily angered. Love gives soft answers that bring peace.

Keeps no record of wrong

The peaceful person is forgiving, not harboring resentments. He lives in the present, accepting people the way they are. "Love covers a multitude of sins."

Does not delight in evil

Anyone is sad when someone he loves does wrong. Love does not condone, justify or excuse, nor does it shield the wrongdoer from consequences.

Joyfully sides with the truth

Love wants honesty and fights deception and denial. Knowing that "the truth shall set you free," the person who loves will confront the other person, in love, with reality and truth about their traits or behavior.

Bears all things

There is nothing love cannot face, no limit to its endurance.

Believes all things

There is no limit to its trust. It is faithful and believes the other person will be too. Trust enables a person to be himself and give of himself without fear of rejection — to confide in the friend and expect acceptance.

Hopes all things

Love hopes for success for the other person and hopes for a happy relationship. It never quits trying for that.

Endures all things

Hope produces perseverance. It says to the other person, "Don't give up, let's work on this together." It says to God, "I won't put limits on you; give me unlimited resilience and power over this."

Love never fails

If it does all of the above, it can't fail.

Love lasts forever. □

The Church: The Israel of God

Part Two

BY MARK COOMER — EVANSVILLE, IN

THE REMNANT IN THE MYSTERY The Mystery: Gentiles Grafted into Remnant of Israel

In Romans 11, we see the faithful remnant of Israel, and we see the rest of Israel. "I say then, have they [the rest who were blinded] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid! but rather through their fall *salvation is come unto the Gentiles*, to provoke them [the rest of the Jews] to jealousy" (v. 11). Jesus said, "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). The salvation of God — the Kingdom of God — is sent unto the Gentiles! "And if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in *among them*, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree..." (Rom. 11:16, 17).¹

Are all Israel's branches broken off? No. Some of the branches were broken off, not all. Some remain: the remnant. God has not cast away His people Israel. They are not cut off. Those who were with Jesus from the beginning, those who heard the word of the Kingdom and believed, were never broken from the olive tree. Paul distinctly says: "Some of the branches are broken off." Not all. Some were never broken off; therefore he says to the Gentiles of faith: "thou, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in *among them*." And with them they partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree. This is salvation. And this is the teach-

ing of the Mystery! "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of *this Mystery*, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness *in part* is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25).²

How do the Gentiles "come in"? They are transplanted, taken from their wild olive tree and grafted into the olive tree of the people of God,

*Paul wanted all
members of the church
to regard each other
equally.*

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grafted in *among the remnant* who remain, to partake *with them* of the root and fatness of the olive tree. That is the Mystery.

Why does Paul warn the Gentiles: "Be not wise in your own conceits"? Because the Gentiles of the church were getting high-minded. They were saying, "They were broken off that we might be grafted in." So Paul puts them in their place. Actually, Paul wanted all members of the church to regard each other equally. Paul's great concern in his church letters is to break down the walls of old prejudice. So he tells the uppity Gentiles: "Beware yourselves. We are the root, and you don't support the root; the root supports you!" And he tells the

condescending Jews: "Yes, we have a history as God's people. But we are now a remnant of our former selves, and 'we that remain' remain by grace. And don't forget, we've provoked God for thousands of years." Then Paul tells everyone: "God has judged you all under sin. Besides that, you are all partaking of that olive tree through faith."

So the Gentiles were grafted in among the remnant of Israel, and partake with the remnant of Israel of the fatness of the olive tree, and "come in" to Israel. This is the Mystery of the one body in Christ.

The Mystery: Jew and Gentile in One Body

Immediately following his analogy of the olive tree, Paul states:

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you [Jew or Gentile, the whole church], not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think [no Jew or Gentile should be wise in his own conceits]; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body *in Christ* and everyone *members one of another*.

This expresses the Mystery also. There is one body. All the members, including engrafted Gentiles, are *in Christ*. Keep this "in Christ" terminology in mind; it will come up again.

Does Paul, through this body analogy, immediately undermine or discard the olive tree analogy? No. There is one body; there is one olive tree. The olive tree explains how things came to be and how they are now, and the one body explains how things are and how they ought to be.

Yet the Gentiles Are Debtors

There are many members and one body, yet the Gentiles are "their debtors" (Rom. 15:27). "For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their *spiritual things*, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things."

Whether viewed as two Israels or two parts of Israel, there is a spiritual Israel (that is, the remnant), and an Israel which Paul calls "Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18, that is, those who reject Christ). Believing Gentiles, no longer ignorant of this Mystery, are engrafted among and partake in the spiritual things of the remnant, spiritual Israel — as engrafted branches and as members of one body in Christ.

Gentiles, as they come into the body, are united with believing Jews. Believing Gentiles also become one "in Christ," as Paul says in Ephesians: "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise *in Christ* by the Gospel" (3:6). The NIV has: "This Mystery is that through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."³

THE REMNANT AS THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

Two Israels, Two Circumcisions

Gentiles partake of spiritual Israel's spiritual things. In a sense, Israel has

always existed on two levels. There have always been two Israels: Israel after the flesh and the true spiritual Israel. "Circumcision" is another word for "Jew" (as in, "You Gentiles who are called un-circumcision by those who are called the circumcision" Eph. 2:11). God wanted a people not after the flesh but after the promise. Immediately after relating the Ten Commandments, Moses told Israel to love God with all their heart and soul (Deut. 10:12), and to keep His commandments for their own good (10:13) because God had chosen them (that's grace) (10:15). Therefore they were to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts (10:16). Yet when Israel honored God only with their

*"God is able to make
these stones into
children of Abraham."*



lips (Isa. 29:13), and did not live by faith (Hab. 2:4), God said "Let your foreskin be uncovered" (Hab. 2:16). That is, God counted circumcised people as uncircumcised (Jer. 9:25-26), saying, "All the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart."

That is why John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees, "Don't claim Abraham as your father. God is able to make these stones into children of Abraham" (Matt. 3:9). Jesus also told them, "I know you are Abraham's descendants [after the flesh], . . . but if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:37, 39). And Paul said, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.' That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the

children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. 9:7-8). Paul said again:

For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made un-circumcision [your Judaism is made like unto a Gentile]. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? [Will his "Gentile"-ism not be counted for Judaism?]. For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But *he is a Jew* which is one inwardly; and *circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit*, and not in the Letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God (Rom. 2:25-29).

The Church Is the True Circumcision

Since converted Gentiles have been grafted in among the circumcised of heart, in the spirit, and with them have become one body in Christ, Paul can proclaim of the whole church, both Jew and Gentile: "For *we are the circumcision*, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

Salvation Is "From the Jews"

We are the true circumcision. He is a true Jew who is one inwardly. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: "Salvation is from the Jews. You don't know what you are worshipping, but we know. Salvation is from the Jews. The time is coming, and now is ["The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand!"], when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him" (Jn. 4:22-

23). Salvation is from the Jews. Jesus said to Nicodemus, a master of Israel, "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Unless a man is born of spirit and water, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Are you a master, a teacher, of *Israel* and you don't know these things?" (Jn. 3:1-10).

THE REMNANT AND THE SPIRIT
**Israel Expected the Spirit
 in the Last Days**

What things didn't Nicodemus know? About being born again; about receiving the Spirit of God. Jesus expected Nicodemus as a master teacher of *Israel* to know these things. Why? Because receiving the Holy Spirit was the blessing for which *Israel* earnestly waited. *Israel* expected this sign to appear in the Last Days. Listen to Peter address the multitude on the Day of Pentecost:

For these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into dark-

ness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:15-21).

**The Church as the Remnant of
 Israel Receives Holy Spirit**

Is it not incredible that the church, which some say has no connection to Israel's promises or prophecies, supposedly began on the Day of Pentecost, a Jewish festival? We have been taught that being born again of God's Holy Spirit is the hallmark of the church, setting her apart from *Israel*!

*"Except a man be born
 [again] of water and of
 the Spirit, he cannot
 enter into the Kingdom
 of God" (John 3:5).*

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 Yet *Israel* earnestly expected the coming of the Spirit. Joel prophesied the coming of the Spirit of God upon *Israel* in the Last Days (Joel 2:28-32). John the Baptist

prepared *Israel* to receive this Spirit: "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33).

Jesus, throughout His ministry, spoke continually of the coming of the Spirit as He proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to *Israel*. "Except a man be born [again] of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5). "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, 24). "Jesus stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the [Old Testament] Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39). *Jesus said the Holy Spirit with which His followers are filled is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy for Israel.*



Two flocks united; one flock, one shepherd.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-14). "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). *And this refers to what was spoken by the prophet Joel!*

The church, baptized by one Spirit into one body, existed for years as an exclusively Jewish organization until the Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his household. Then the Lord began to add Gentiles to the elect of the body of Christ, to graft Gentiles into the olive tree. We are baptized by one Spirit into one body. That is the Mystery: that Gentiles are now of that joint body. And the body is what we will examine next.

THE REMNANT AND
THE ONE BODY

Christ's Death:

Jew and Gentile Reconciled

For *he himself* is our peace, who has made the two [Jew and Gentile] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of

hostility, [how?] by abolishing *in his flesh* the Law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create *in himself* one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and *in this one body* to reconcile both of them to God *through the cross*, by which he put to death their hostility (Eph. 2:14-16).

"He himself/in his flesh/in himself/in this one body/through the cross." These terms proclaim our peace and reconciliation. It is not found on a treaty written on expensive parchment and signed in ink, protected in a climate-controlled vault 30 stories

*Our peace . . . is not
found on a treaty
written on
expensive parchment
and signed in ink.*

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below the ground; our peace is not engraved in stone on the side of a mountain; our peace is living in one man, in His flesh, in His body, and He accomplished that peace by subjecting His body to the death of the cross.

Jew and Gentile were reconciled to God in *one body* — *Jesus' body* — *by the cross*, the cross meaning Jesus' death. The wall separating Jew and Gentile was abolished in His *flesh*. This was Christ's purpose for dying. Through His *death* we become one with both Him and each other.

Christ's Death: Oneness with
Christ in His Flesh and Blood

Jesus knew at least as early as Mark 2:18-19 and John 3:16 that He had to die. I believe that He already knew from the Scriptures, before His

ministry began, that He had to die. John's Gospel records how Jesus began to link His death with the disciples' oneness in Him. "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. *This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world [kosmos] . . . Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him*" (John 6:51-56). Jesus has His death in view because He speaks of giving His life for the life of the world. The *kosmos* consists of "whoever" (v. 56), that is, both Jew and Gentile. Jesus speaks of eating His flesh as bread and drinking His blood as the means of oneness with Him. Whoever does so remains in Him, and He in them.

"You in Christ and Christ in you" is not a post-Pentecostal concept or revelation. Jesus began teaching this concept of oneness in the Spirit to the Jews early in His ministry. Listen to what He said before His crucifixion: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever . . . At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and *ye in me, and I in you*" (John 14:15, 16, 20).

Christ's Death: Two Flocks United

Jesus speaks again of his death in John 10: "I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me — just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — *and I lay down my life [I die] for the sheep*. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be *one flock and one shepherd*" (John 10:14-16). There are other sheep, says Jesus mysteriously. He will die for them also and the result will be one united flock. This information combined with that of John 6:51-56 provides an early picture of the mystery of Jew and Gentile

reconciled to God in one body through the cross, although His disciples did not yet understand.

Christ's Death: The One Body and the Blood of the New Covenant

In Matthew, Christ again picks up the theme of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Knowing His death is imminent, He speaks of His body and a New Covenant of reconciliation:

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; *this is my body.*" Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my *blood of the New Covenant*, which is poured out [in death] for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's Kingdom" (Matt. 26:26-29).

Here at the Last Supper, a New Covenant is formed by means of Jesus' impending death. Jesus again draws a picture of eating His flesh and drinking His blood as a means of oneness with Him. His disciples are invited to share in His death, to become one with His body. This is the body, according to Paul, to which Jew and Gentile belong: "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a *participation* in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a *participation* in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are *one body*, for we all partake of the *one loaf*" (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

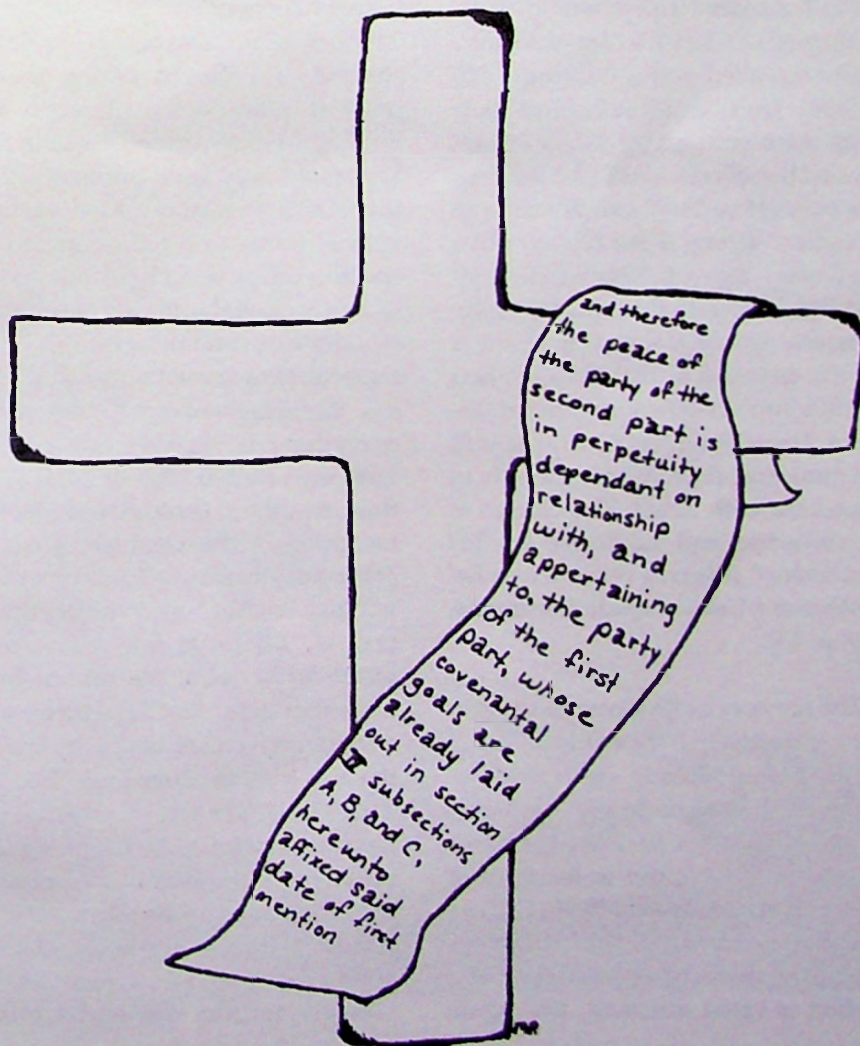
We, Jew and Gentile believers, are one body in Christ, under a New Covenant:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two [Jew and Gentile] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing *in his flesh* the Law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create *in himself* one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and *in this one body* to reconcile both of them to God *through the cross*, by which he put to death their hostility.

Christ's Death: His Purpose

This is the unity and continuity of the Gospels and epistles. This plan and purpose to create one new man in Himself through the cross was the Mystery that had been in Jesus' brain from the very beginning. Christ knew

the Scriptures; He knew He had to die. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26). "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days" (Acts 3:24). Jesus knew from Psalm 110 that He must sit at God's right hand from whence He would pour out the Spirit for which Israel had waited for generations. This Spirit is Christ in you. Listen to Paul explain the Mystery in 1 Corinthians 12: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink... so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for



each other. . . . *Now you are the body of Christ*, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Cor. 12:13, 25, 27). Paul, writing before his imprisonment, goes beyond a simple analogy of the human body by claiming that Jew and Gentile believers are *the* body of Christ. They are in Christ, and Christ is in them.

Christ's Death:

His Church in the Kingdom

It is more than a little interesting that in Matthew chapter 16, Jesus, in

preparing His disciples to hear of His impending death, proclaimed that He would build a church to which He would give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Immediately after this announcement, He began to explain His death and His disciples' absorption into His death. Intimately associated with Jesus' pronouncements concerning His death (and consequently His body, the church) is the central point of His teachings: the Kingdom of God. Anticipating His approaching death, He

covenanted a Kingdom with His disciples at the Last Supper: "And I confer on [I covenant with] you a Kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me" (Luke 22:29). Jesus continued, promising His apostles special status in His Kingdom: "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (v. 30). If Israel and the church are absolutely non-related, how can the apostles, who are the foundation of the church, sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel? □

Footnotes for "The Church: The Israel of God: Part Two"

1. "Here Paul points to a unity between Israel (the tree) and the Gentiles (the ingrafted branches) by drawing upon a horticultural metaphor familiar from the Old Testament. It is Hebraic through and through. Of Israel Jeremiah writes, 'The LORD called you a thriving olive tree, with fruit beautiful in form' (Jer. 11:16). Also concerning Israel Hosea states, 'His splendor will be like an olive tree' (Hos. 14:6). David refers to himself by saying, 'I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God' (Ps. 52:8). Paul uses this symbol of the living and growing olive tree to show that the destinies of faithful Jews and Gentiles are inextricably bound together. Thus the church, firmly planted in Hebraic soil, finds its true identity in connection with Israel. The church is fed, sustained, and supported by this relationship" (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, p. 13).

2. "The mystery he now invites them to share is precisely the confirmation of the possibility already envisaged. 'A hardening has come in part on Israel' Paul does not attribute the hardening here to God, but in the light of what he has already said (9:18; 11:7) he does not need to. In this summary fashion the mystery of the dark side of election is again affirmed, and again

with firm reference to Israel itself. The blindness is partial as both temporary and as afflicting what Paul hopes will in the end be a relatively small proportion of his people.

"[U]ntil the fullness of the Gentiles has come in' The harshness of God's punitive action against Israel is ameliorated by the setting of a time limit. What had only been implicit prior to this is now spelled out: God's severity against those who fell is limited to a specific purpose and period. As elsewhere in apocalyptic, the specification of a definite time limit (though not in terms of days or weeks or years) heightens the emphasis on divine control: everything is working out in accord with the original plan of God. Within this penultimate phase the object is the incoming of the Gentiles. What was previously expressed in terms of 'salvation,' 'riches,' and 'reconciliation' (vv. 11, 12, 15) is now expressed in terms which echo the typical Jewish hope that in the last days there will be a mass conversion and pilgrimage of the Gentiles to Zion (e.g., Isa. 2:2-3; Tob. 13:11). The time limit is specified more precisely as the incoming of the 'fullness' of the Gentiles. In repeating the word used of Israel in v. 12 Paul almost certainly implies a degree of complementarity between Jew and Gentile within the eschatological

assembly of God's people. But the word also has the advantage of implying an apocalyptic precision which is not yet visible to the recipient of the mystery, and so a (somewhat convenient) degree of vagueness in the details of the future foreseen (cf. 4 Ezra 4.35-36). Certainly there will be a full measure of the Gentiles, the full number intended by God, but how many that would be Paul does not say — all, many, or only some; he is content simply to specify all that God will call" (Dunn, James D.G., *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 38B, Romans 9-16*, Word Books, 1988, pp. 690-691).

3. "It is the distinctive message of Ephesians that no Gentile can have communion with Christ or God unless he also has communion with Israel" (Barth, *Ephesians 1-3*, Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1974, p. 337).

"From Paul's time until the present, the church has tended to view its existence independently of Israel In Paul's view any church which exists independently of Israel ceases therein to be the church as a part of God's salvation plan and becomes simply another religious society" (Dan G. Johnson, "The Structure and Meaning of Romans 11," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46, 1984: 100, cited by Wilson, p. 15).

We Set Our Sails Toward Joy

BY CHARLES SWINDOLL

Basically there are two kinds of people: people who choose joy and people who don't. People who choose joy pay no attention to what day of the week it is . . . or how old they are . . . or what level of pain they are in. They have deliberately decided to laugh again because they have chosen joy.

Without exception, people who consistently laugh do so *in spite of* and seldom *because of* anything. They pursue fun rather than waiting for it to knock on their door

in the middle of the day. Such infectious joyfulness has no trouble convincing people around them that Christianity is real and that Christ can transform a life. Joy is the flag that flies above the castle of their hearts, announcing that the King is in residence.

Joy is a choice. It is a matter of attitude that stems from one's confidence in God — that He is at work, that He is in full control, that He is in the midst of whatever has happened, is happening, or will happen. Either we fix our minds on that and determine to laugh again, or we wail and whine our way through life, complaining that we never got a fair shake . . . Laughing one's way through life depends on nothing external. Regardless of how severely the winds of adversity may blow, we set our sails toward joy. □



A Parable of Grace, the Story of a Vineyard Owner

BY TREVOR BRIERLY

Grace is a difficult concept for human beings to wrap our minds around. We are much more used to the human idea that you have to give something to get something. Our entire capitalist system is based on the idea of exchange. We say "there is no such thing as a free lunch." We sometimes imagine and act as if we can earn our way into the kingdom by good works.

Yet when we think about this, we begin to see how ridiculous it sounds. There are many people who think that they will be rewarded for doing something that they were supposed to be doing anyway. Jesus says, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10).

The gift of eternal life, of relationship with God and with Christ, is not something we can earn. Even if we were to lead perfect lives, this would not give us any right to go up to our Creator and demand that He give us eternal life. He would have every right to say to us, "Good, you were only doing what you were supposed to do."

All good gifts that come from God come because we are His sons and daughters, because we have chosen to respond to His love, extended to humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ. In short they come because we have a relationship with Jesus, and we continue in that relationship. Paul says:

Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if

*All of God's good gifts
come because we have
a relationship with
Jesus.*



indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Rom. 8:14-17).

God's love is extended to us from out of His grace. Everything good in your life is a gift from God to His son or daughter. Jesus speaks of this relationship when He says, "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how

to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" He goes on to say: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:9-12).

Obedience is required of us if we are to be disciples of Christ. Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." But, obedience is not a coinage to be used to pay our way into the Kingdom. Doing so cheapens the relationship between ourselves and God and His Son, and turns it into a commercial one.

Jesus knew that grace is a difficult concept for us to understand, which is why He told parables. Jesus knew the power of stories to convey ideas, to teach.

One of the most striking stories He told was about a vineyard owner who needed workers (Matt. 20:1-16). (I'm going to expand on this a little bit, to help us remember this parable better.)

The vines were bursting with grapes, and if he didn't get them in soon, they would rot on the vines and become worthless. So we read in Matthew that he went out early in the morning to the town square and hired some workers. They were to be paid a denarius, a typical day's wages in those times.

A few hours later he gets a little nervous. There are a lot of grapes here, and he's not quite sure he's

going to be able to get them all. So he goes again into the marketplace and finds some workers who haven't been hired so far. He tells them to go and work in the vineyard. "I'll do right by you" he says. He isn't thinking about money right now; he wants to get those grapes in and soon. The workers shrug and go off to work. They are glad. They were beginning to wonder if they were going to get any work today. They'll get something at the end of the day. Maybe dinner will be a little smaller than normal, but off they go, thankful to be working.

A few hours later, he scratches his head as he looks at the rows of grapes that are still hanging from their vines. The crops have been good this year, and they aren't even half done at noon. So he scurries to the marketplace and finds another group standing by. He sends them off to the vineyard. At three o'clock, he again thinks he should get some more workers. At the marketplace he's happy to see some still standing around. Off they go to the vineyards.

It's five o'clock and getting close to the end of the day, and our vineyard owner thinks to himself, "I'll just check one more time, to see if maybe I can get a few more people, so we can finish up today." But he is still surprised when he goes to the marketplace and sees that there are still some workers left. He asks them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?" They reply, "Because no one has hired us." So off they go to the vineyard.

It's clear from what the owner of the vineyard says that these workers had been waiting all day to get hired. These were not "Johnny-come-latelies" or folks who had slept in late and decided to wander down to see if maybe they could put in an hour or two someplace, just to keep their hand in it, so to speak. These were laborers whose families depended on their labor for food. Their hearts must have sank as they day passed and they were passed over. There would not

be much joy at the dinner table that night. So when they were hired at the last hour, they must have been somewhat glad. They would work a little bit, and get a little bit, enough to buy a little food so they wouldn't have to go home completely empty-handed.

But they were ready to work. They weren't asleep, or off in the fields watching the clouds go by. They were ready to work long hours in the hot sun.

So not much later all the workers assemble to get their pay. Imagine, if you will, the joy on the faces of the workers who were hired later, when

*Imagine, if you will,
the joy on the faces
of the workers who
were hired later.*



they look in their pay envelopes and find, not a fraction of a day's wages, but an entire day's wages. Their eyes grow wide. This is much better than they expected. Now they and their families can have enough to eat that night. They might even have a little left over for all the other things that growing families seem to need.

That, brothers and sisters and friends, is what grace is about. It is about that joy that we should have when we realize that God has blessed us far beyond what we deserve. In this parable, the vineyard owner represents God. God has work that needs to be done. There is a harvest for us to bring in.

Let's not make a mistake: being a follower of Christ is hard work.

Christianity is not for cowards or slackers or lazy persons. Christianity is about choosing the harder way because it is the better way.

But what we find in this parable is an important lesson: God gives us what we need, and more, not what we deserve. Grace, as I've said before, is blessings that we do not merit. How much more we can glorify God when we realize that what He has given us, and will give us, He gives to us out of love, not because we have earned it. Those workers understood grace; they understood the joy that it can bring. Do we consider God's grace to us often enough? Does it make us as joyful as these workers must have been? Do we secretly believe that we have actually earned that money, that it really wasn't a gift?

Let us also not be like the workers who had worked all day, and were put out that others who had not "borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day" were to be paid the same as they were. The vineyard owner, who represents God, has an answer for them: "Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

If you believe that you have earned what God gives you, then you will always be envious of someone who appears to have more, and to have done less. This is the beginning of sinful envy.

"It is my money." This is the whole point of the parable. It is God's money to do what He wants with. If He chooses to grace people that we do not think deserve it, then that is His right to do with His creation what He pleases. We must remember always that He is the potter and we are the clay.

This is grace. □

Biblical Thoughts on Past, Present and Future

BY ORION ANTHON — SPRINGFIELD, LA

This article is to create interest in the current events of the world as a whole. Today we have the opportunity to take a look at the whole world in general. Our knowledge is being increased as Scripture says it will be in later days.

This past year, 1997, we have seen some things that no one but God could bring about. Let's take a look at some of the things that happened that are passed off as natural catastrophes: El Niño and some of the things it is supposed to have brought about in the Americas; ice storms in our Northeast; excessive rain in our West; and storms in the South and Florida just recently.

The worst might be yet to come this summer. Excessive rain in our Midwest — from Texas to Canada and from Ohio to Colorado — would bring our grain harvest to a halt. Two years of that and bread and staple foods would get very scarce in the U.S. We don't have the surplus grain from a couple of good grain years stored in bins to tide us over for two wet years at harvest time. God gave President Truman the desire and know-how to get that done during his presidency. I personally know what it was like to be combining wheat in October with 18% moisture when it should have been done in July with 12% moisture.

In the first couple of months of the year we had a Mideast problem, which then calmed down except for some warmongers who have no idea

what God's plan is for the Mideast and don't seem to care.

Scripture has given us an outline for that area. God gave that land to Abraham as an everlasting possession. He did not give any part of it to the Kurds. Go to Genesis and study what God promised Abraham and his descendants. Then study Isaiah 19:23-24 and Isaiah 54:11-17 and cross references.

Remember that the word Israel means "Where God Rules," as well as referring to a little strip of land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. God gave Abraham the land from the Nile River to the great Euphrates River. At that time the Nile River ran into the Red Sea as well as the Mediterranean Sea. The Red Sea was just a continuation of the Nile River and the Persian Gulf was just a continuation of the Euphrates River. They both flow into the Indian Ocean through very narrow channels. Check your map. The tributary of the Nile River that flowed into the Red Sea was filled up with sand as the Bible states and men go across it dry-shod today. This took place after much timber was cut down in North Africa, causing the sand to spread.

The only place on this planet Earth where God's rule is law and is enforced by the nations is what we call the Middle East, which God gave to Abraham. To Isaac He gave a covenant which would be eventually a covenant for the people and a light to the Gentiles. The record of Isaac's

descendants has been carefully recorded. This is an example for us today of how God deals with individuals as well as nations.

God blessed Ishmael and said that he would beget twelve nations and become a great nation. The LXX has twelve nations; some other versions have "princes" instead of "nations." The nations which are within the boundaries of what God gave to Abraham are: Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Democratic Yemen, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. These twelve nations all claim to be the descendants of Abraham through Ishmael.

I am a firm believer that God sets men in authority who will further His will. God raised up Arafat and also Saddam Hussein for a purpose. I predict that both of these men will live to a ripe old age and will die natural deaths.

God is not ready for Iraq's oil to be exploited. Study Hosea 12. This prophecy is written like several Old Testament prophecies. The climax comes in the first verse; then the subsequent verses explain what led up to the climax. I predict a pipeline for oil from Iraq to the Suez Canal in the near future. This will cause the Northern Army to go there, possibly as a protector, but later it will decide to take a spoil. Consider Ezekiel 38 very carefully. □

Modern Martyrs

BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE — OREGON, IL

17 Christians Die Every Hour for Their Faith

The above headline in *Interseed*, (Vol. 8, No. 2, 1997) caught my eye. Few of us in the free world realize the severe persecution that is going on today in Communist countries such as North Korea, Vietnam, Laos and China. The governments seek to control the people and root out Christians and followers of other religions.

In some countries of the Islamic world where radicals have taken control (Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and others), persecution is increasing as Islam makes advances. They use religion to gain power and control the people with an iron hand. It appears that the words of Christ are being fulfilled: "A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me" (John 16:2-3, NIV).

Cal Thomas, the famous columnist and commentator, points out that it isn't just the Israelis that the PLO persecutes. In spite of the fact that there are Christian groups affiliated with the PLO, Palestinian Christians feel the PLO's lash. In fact, there has been massive emigration of Christians from the West Bank due to persecution by the Palestinian Authority. PLO officials deny any role in persecuting Palestinian Christians. However, it's important to note that during the British Mandate period, Bethlehem had a Christian majority

of 80 percent. Today under Palestinian rule it has a Muslim majority of 80 percent.

The whole world knows that Saddam Hussein is continuing his attempts to undermine not only Israel but anything and anyone regarded as "infidels" by Arab states and Palestinian leaders. Their objec-

"A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God."

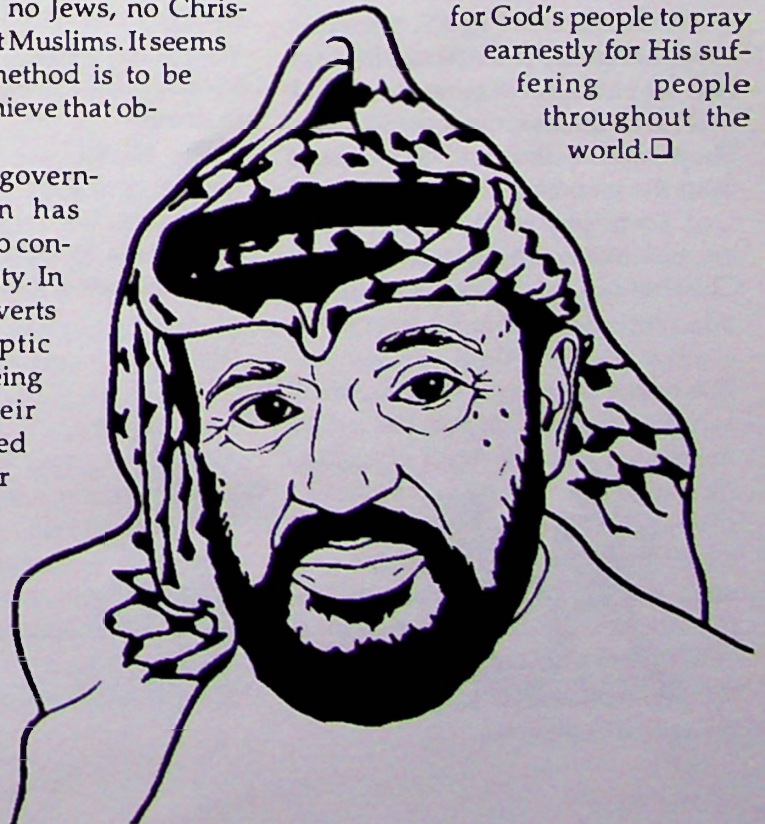
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tive is no Israel, no Jews, no Christians, nothing but Muslims. It seems clear that any method is to be used that will achieve that objective.

The Muslim government in Sudan has made it a crime to convert to Christianity. In Egypt, both converts and ethnic Coptic Christians are being persecuted, their businesses looted and their churches burned. In Iran, four prominent evangelical pastors were assassinated. Many Christians

were arrested and tortured, and many have lost homes, jobs and businesses.

Donald Hodel, president of the Christian Coalition, provides chilling statistics. "More than 160,000 Christians were martyred in 1996 in a monumental escalation of religious persecution. Today millions of people of faith around the world are being tortured, raped, maimed, sold as slaves, and more for no other reason than that they are Christians, Muslims, Jews or something else — in Sudan 1.5 million Christians."

"More Christians have been killed in this century than in the 1900 years preceding it." Mr. Hodel's remarks have been substantiated by scores of reliable sources. It's time for God's people to pray earnestly for His suffering people throughout the world. □



Forty Singing Wrestlers

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

In the days when the passion of the Roman emperor Nero was the extermination of the Church of God, there lived and served him a band of soldiers known as the "Emperor's Wrestlers." Fine stalwart men they were, picked from the best and the bravest of the empire, recruited from the great athletes of the Roman domain.

In the great amphitheater they upheld the arms of the emperor against all challengers. Before each contest they would sing before the emperor's throne. Then through the courts of Rome rang the song, "We, the wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O emperor, to win for thee the victory and from thee the victor's crown!"

When the army to which the wrestlers belonged was sent to the Middle East to patrol for Rome, this band was led by their centurion Marcellus. They learned the gospel message from the members of the Church of God. They were really excited about the truth that was being told by many Children of God. They also learned

of the hatred that Rome had for people who became believers. To be a member of the family of Jesus meant death, even to those who served the emperor Nero. All forty wrestlers were baptized and became a part of the Body of Christ. Nero heard about this and was very wroth. He sent straightway a dispatch to the centurion

*"Are there any among
you who cling to the
faith of the sect of
Jesus?"*

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Marcellus. It stated: "If there be any among the soldiers who cling to the faith of Jesus Christ they must be put to death."

The decree was received in the middle of winter. The army was encamped in the region of the Ararat mountains. There was a lake near the encampment where the army could

get drinking water. The winter was severe. The soldiers had it hard, especially the wrestlers, but they endured together and this served to unite them more closely. It was with a sinking heart that Marcellus, the centurion, read the Emperor's message. Yet to a soldier there is one word supreme — and that is "Duty."

Marcellus called the soldiers together and asked the question: "Are there any among you who cling to the faith of the sect of Jesus Christ?" Forty wrestlers instantly stepped forward two paces, respectfully saluted and stood at attention. Marcellus paused. He had not expected that many to have stepped forward. "The decree has come from the emperor Nero," he said, "that any who cling to this new faith must be put to death. For the sake of your country, your comrades, your loved ones, renounce this false faith!" Not one of the forty moved. Marcellus continued, "Until sundown I shall await your answer."

Sundown came. Again the question was asked, "Are there any among you who cling to the faith of the sect of Jesus Christ?" Again the forty wrestlers stepped forward and stood at attention.

Marcellus pleaded with them long and earnestly without prevailing upon a single man to deny Jesus. Finally he said, "The decree of the emperor must be obeyed, but I am not willing that your blood be on your comrades. I am going to order that you march out upon the lake of

(continued on page 20)



Cessationism: A Biblical Study

BY BILL WACHTEL — WENATCHEE, WA

The title of this article is a term used by Bible students, one that is based on the word "cease" in 1 Corinthians 13:8 (KJV). In that text the apostle Paul is talking about the supernatural "gifts" of the Spirit — *charismata* in the Greek — the main theme of chapters 12, 13, and 14. Those gifts include the word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:8-10).

The term "cessationism" is used to denote the teaching that those gifts have now ceased, that with the death of the apostles — or shortly afterwards — such gifts were no longer needed and were therefore taken away from the church. Some think that by the end of the first century the charismatic gifts became inoperative, and thus they should not be sought by anyone today. If cessationism is correct, any charismatic gift that is claimed to be from God in modern times must be regarded as fraudulent, the result of error or deception.

A close look at Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 makes it clear that in fact he *did* expect the gifts to cease someday. The question, then, is not *whether* the gifts would cease, but *when!* Cessationism, as a teaching, declares that they have already ceased and are not to be expected any more. On the other hand, Christians whom some call "charismatic" believe that the gifts were intended to

continue throughout the church age and that both the New Testament and church history demonstrate that this is so. For believers who demand biblical proof, only a sound exegesis of the relevant texts can provide satisfaction. Although the subject of the charismatic gifts is controversial, sincere truth-seekers and "Berean" types of Bible students will not allow

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Since it is in 1 Corinthians 13 that the term "cease" is found in connection with the charismatic gifts, it must also be in the same text that we find some clue as to the *time* of their ceasing. In the context, Paul is declaring that faith, hope, and especially love are superior to the gifts. These three are permanent and are indispensable

to true Christian character. By comparison, the gifts are temporary and imperfect. He envisions a time when these transitory gifts will no longer be needed and will "pass away" (v. 8). He states that "when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears" (v. 10). (The A.V. renders this, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.") Such gifts as "knowledge" and "prophecy" are described as being "in part" (v. 9).

Paul says that now "we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (v. 12). We have here a contrast between what is "now" and what is "then." The "then" is obviously future to the time Paul wrote those words, a time when he says he will know "fully" and will see "face to face." Again the question is, When is this future time? We have already seen that verse 10 describes it as a time of *perfection*, or "when that which is perfect is come."

We may ask ourselves at this point whether the Bible ever mentions a future time of perfection which will allow believers to know things "fully," to know even as they themselves are known, to see "face to face" and no longer a poor reflection as in a mirror (and the mirrors of Paul's day were crude indeed!). In fact, there is such a mention in Scripture. In Hebrews 11 — the celebrated "faith" chapter — the writer concludes with

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Cessationism: A Biblical Study (continued from page 19)

a promise of the future perfection of believers from both Old and New Testament periods (vv. 39, 40). In context, the obvious reference is to the future resurrection, the resurrection that will be "better" than the ones in Old Testament times (v. 35).

Paul knew that at the future resurrection he would be made like Christ (Phil. 3:20, 21). He knew that all the believers will share Christ's "glory" when He "appears" (Col. 3:4) the "second time" (Heb. 9:28) to bring them final salvation. If this is not the future time that Paul was thinking about in 1 Corinthians 13, when he and all other perfected believers will "know fully," will know as they are "known," and will "see face to face," we must certainly wonder what other time could have been in his mind!

It is at this point that some cessationists have theorized that what Paul had in mind was the soon-to-be-perfected New Testament. They believe that when the New Testament stood complete, around the end of the first century, the "perfect" had arrived and the charismatic gifts were no longer needed, and so "ceased." This ingenious theory sounds plausible and has many supporters. The problem it faces is that there is nothing in the context to suggest that Paul has such an idea in mind, while in the context there is clear evidence to support the view that he is thinking about the future perfection and resurrection of the saints at Christ's coming. (In fact, chapter 15, following immediately after the three chapters on the charismatic gifts, is totally occupied

with the theme of resurrection!) This writer is convinced, therefore, that 1 Corinthians 13 does not support the cessationist view, but rather the view that the gifts were intended to continue throughout the present age, until the return of Christ and the resurrection of His people. □

Editor's note: The editor appreciates the author's clear and concise scriptural presentation on this subject. This is a subject where diversity exists within our local fellowships. We encourage all who read this article to prayerfully consider the scriptural evidence given. Those whose study of the Scripture has led them to other conclusions are invited to share the fruit of their study in equally clear and concise ways.

Forty Singing Wrestlers (continued from page 18)

ice and I shall leave you there to the mercy of the elements. Fires, however, will be waiting to welcome anyone willing to renounce this false faith."

The forty wrestlers were stripped of their clothes and then without a word they wheeled and, falling into columns of four, marched out into the middle of the lake of ice. As they marched they broke into the chorus with the music of the arena: "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory and from Thee, the victor's crown!"

Through the long night Marcellus stood by a fire and waited, hoping that some might come to recant their faith. He could hear the wrestlers singing different hymns but they were getting weaker and weaker. As

morning drew near one figure, overcome by exposure, crept toward a fire. In the extremity of his suffering he had renounced the Lord Jesus. Faintly but clearly from out of the middle of the lake now came the song: "Thirty-nine wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory and from Thee the victor's crown."

Marcellus looked at the figure drawing close to one of the fires, and then he looked out over the lake to see if any others would come. He saw a greater light than what the camp fires were projecting. He heard the sound of thirty-nine saints out there in the darkness. He realized that those thirty-nine faithful men had something that he lacked. The faith they had acquired truly was not false. Off

came his helmet, off came his armor, off came his clothes. He sprang upon the icy lake and he was received with dying joy by the thirty-nine faithful soldiers of the cross. On the shore once again they heard very weakly the chorus: "Wrestling for Thee O Christ..." And the number of God's forty singing wrestlers was complete. □

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Pastoral Search Report

AUTHOR ANONYMOUS

We do not have a very positive report at this time. We have been unable to verify a suitable candidate for this church, though we still have one promising prospect. We appreciate all the suggestions from our church membership, and we followed up each candidate with interviews or by calling at least three references. The following is our confidential report on the present candidates.

Adam: Good man, but problems with his marriage. Additionally, one reference told of how he and his wife enjoy walking nude in the woods.

Noah: No converts in his former pastorate. Seems prone to unrealistic building projects.

Abraham: References suggested wife-swapping; no supporting evidence that he slept with another man's wife, but apparently he offered to share his wife with another man.

Joseph: A big thinker, but a braggart, believes in dream-interpreting, and has a prison record.

Moses: A modest and meek man — poor communicator, stutters at times. May act rashly when angry. Some say he left an earlier post over a murder charge.

David: Seemed like the most promising leader of all, until we discovered the affair he had with his neighbor's wife.

Solomon: Great preacher, but our parsonage would never hold all of his wives.

Elijah: Prone to depression — collapses under pressure.

Elisha: Reportedly lived with a single widow while in his former position.

Hosea: A tender and loving pastor but our people could never accept his wife's occupation.

Deborah: Female.

Jeremiah: Emotionally unstable, alarmist, negative, always lamenting things, and reported to have taken a long trip to bury his underwear on the bank of a foreign river.

Isaiah: On the fringe? Claims to have seen angels in church. Has trouble with his language.

Jonah: Refused God's call into ministry until he was forced to obey by getting swallowed by a great fish. He told us the fish later spit him out on the shore near here. At that point we hung up.

Amos: Too backward and unpolished. With more training he might have promise, but has a hang-up against wealthy people — might do better in a poor congregation.

John: Claims to be a Baptist; definitely doesn't dress like one. Has slept outdoors for months on end, has strange diet, and provokes denominational leaders.

Peter: Too blue collar. Bad tempered, and has been known to curse. Had a big run-in with Paul in Antioch. Aggressive, but a loose cannon.

Paul: Powerful CEO-type leader. Short on tact, unforgiving with younger ministers, sometimes harsh. Very good writer, less fascinating as preacher and has been known to preach all night.

Timothy: Too young.

Jesus: Has had great popularity, but once when attendance had grown to 5,000 he managed to offend so many that it dwindled to twelve. Seldom stays in one place very long. And he's single.

Judas: Solid references. Good connections. Conservative, a steady plodder. Knows how to handle money. We've invited him to preach this Sunday. Possibilities here. □

God's Heart

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD — BROOKS, GEORGIA

The Bible presents God as "the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth, who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generation."

God, in the Bible, has a heart which is the center of His personality, His character and mind. We, too, made in His image, have a heart, which is equivalent to our inner man, the control center of our being.

God's heart or mind is very close in meaning to God's spirit. The spirit is in our heart (2 Cor. 1:22) and it is a downpayment, a first installment and guarantee of a much greater amount of spirit which will be ours at the resurrection. Paul several times refers to the Holy Spirit as a downpayment. It is a business term transferred to God's precious gift to Christians who have believed in the Gospel of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus and have been baptized (Acts 8:12).

A Christian is to share God's heart and spirit. That spirit, mind and heart is revealed to us in the pages of the Bible, which is God's

love letter to the human race. God extends His spirit to us and works with us to form godly thinking and character. We must think right before we act right. Genesis 6:5 tells us that "wickedness of man was great on the earth and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It is in our heart that we make our plans and do our thinking. Notice God's reaction to the rampant evil on earth at the time of the flood: "The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth and He was grieved in His heart" (Gen. 6:6). We all remember that the New Testament warns us not to grieve the spirit of God. This shows us an important link between the heart and the spirit.

When Solomon dedicated his great temple God promised to put His Name, His eyes and His heart there

perpetually (1 Kings 9:3). God's presence and His interest and attention would be focused on the temple. Today the church of believers baptized into the teaching of Jesus receives God's constant attention. His heart and His spirit are with us.

God's plans and purposes are formed in His heart. In 2 Kings 10:30 Yahweh says to Jehu: "Because you have done well in executing what is right in My eyes and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your sons to the fourth generation will sit on the throne of Israel."

What a blessing to be able to share the mind of God by knowing what is in His heart. Christians are those who have "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). God and His Son, of course, think alike (John 10:30). □



Searching the Heart (continued from back cover)

Jesse hadn't thought him important enough to bring him before Samuel. Look closely at the outward marks that lessened him in his father's eyes. David was but a lad and as such he occupied the humblest position in the family. He was the one he left in the field with the sheep while everyone else went to meet Samuel.

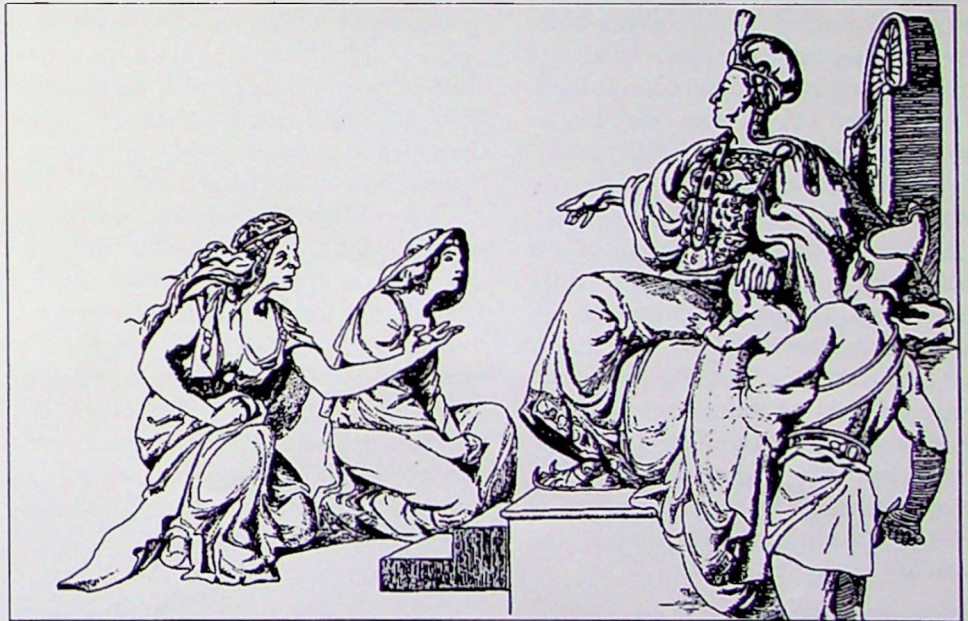
In God's selection process, He looked for a man with character, a man whose heart was right toward Him. Beyond David's external beauty was a heart that longed to know God in deeper dimensions. David was faithful in small things and, with this beginning, God could trust him with greater things. In approximately seventy-three Psalms, which King David authored, we have a record of his personal views of God. Among these convictions are his commitment to the omnipotent (all-powerful) God, his firm belief in God's creative power, his acceptance of an omniscient (all-knowing) God and unending praise for God's loving concern for His creation.

While Jesse and others looked at the outward appearance, God looked at David's heart. He saw the heart of an obedient shepherd, which was exactly what God was searching for. Among other things, God saw a believing heart, a thankful heart, a truthful heart, a repentant heart and a dependent heart. It was then that God spoke to His man, Samuel. He told Samuel, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took

the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16:12b-13). It was the beginning of a journey that led to the throne of Israel.

Advertisements still express the lie that what we are on the outside is most

significant. The all-important word has become "image" and that is wrong! In this day of media trickery with all its externals, never forget that who you are in God's sight is far more important than what you are in the sight of others. The LORD still looks at the heart! □



*Like Solomon, those who use God's
judgment must search the heart,
not appearances.*

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Searching the Heart

BY ED GOIT — TONAWANDA, NY

Presently, mankind lives in the era of the materialistic three — the scanner, the bar code and the computer. On the threshold of the 21st century marvels of technology are utilized by our commercial enterprises to record purchases, maintain inventories, catalog customer's purchases and multitudinous functions ad infinitum. God's Word sets forth an even greater wonder: the searching of the heart.

Today's culture looks upon the outward appearance in judging one's success. Stores, libraries and some of our homes have shelves lined with books on success. They suggest that one can dress, negotiate and even manipulate others for success. These books contain laundry lists of things necessary to achieve success. From God's perspective these "success" books begin with a wrong premise. The right basis for success in life is not what you do but who you are in God's sight.

1 Samuel 16:1-13 chronicles the unexpected visit of the prophet, Samuel, to Bethlehem where he frightened the natives. It is written, "the elders of the town trembled at his coming" (v. 4). It was not every day that Israel's most prominent prophet visited a small village. God had sent him with the mission to anoint Israel's next king. God had informed Samuel that the new king would be one of Jesse's eight sons. Which one would he anoint?

When Eliab, the first son, was presented to the prophet, Samuel observed his outward appearance and declared, "surely the Lord's anointed is before him" (v. 6). Certainly, God's reply surprised him. The LORD said, "Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart"

(v. 7). God's instruction to Samuel is a valid principle for mankind in today's era.

Success in God's eyes begins in the heart! God's penetrating gaze bore through the outward appearance of each of Jesse's sons and each one's heart was examined. The appearance of Jesse's son, Eliab, was as if he had dressed for success. He was tall and good-looking, but he was not the one. Neither were Abinadab nor Shammah. As the selection process proceeded, seven of Jesse's sons passed in review and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD hath not chosen these" (v. 10). Jesse was then asked by Samuel, "Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither" (v. 11).

(continued on page 23)

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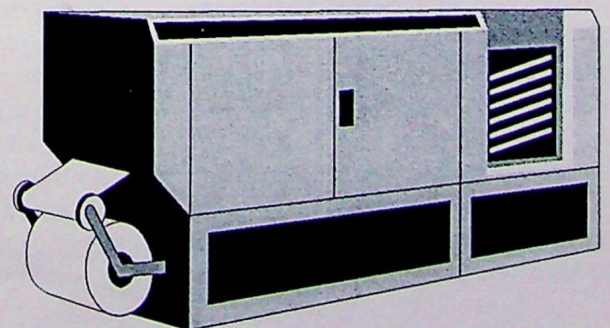
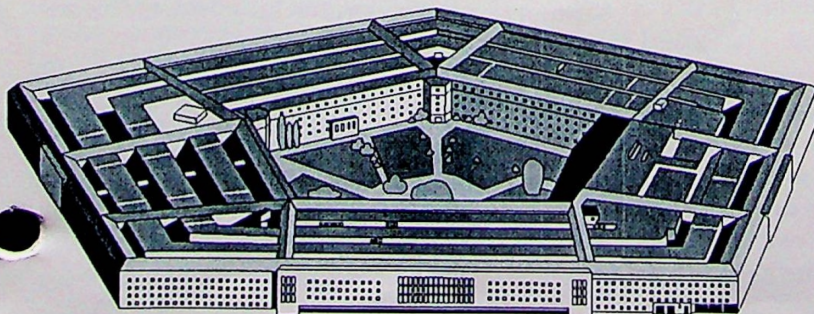
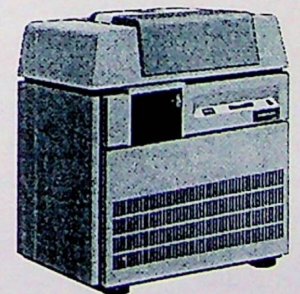
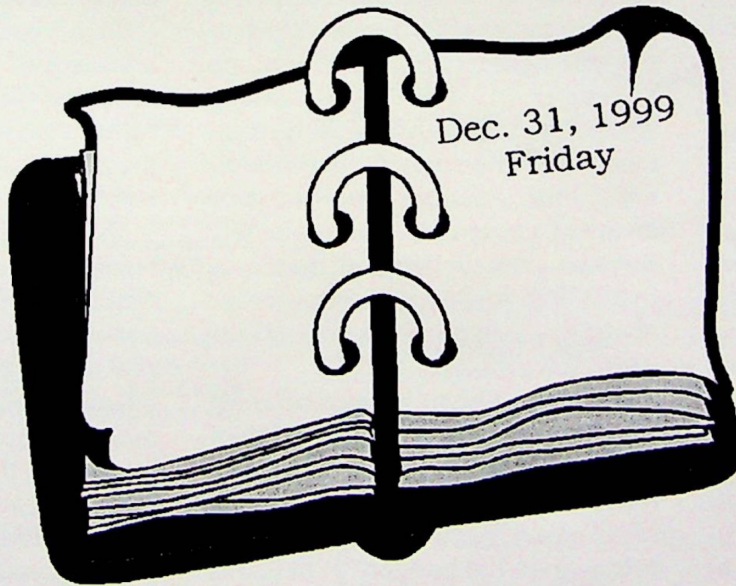
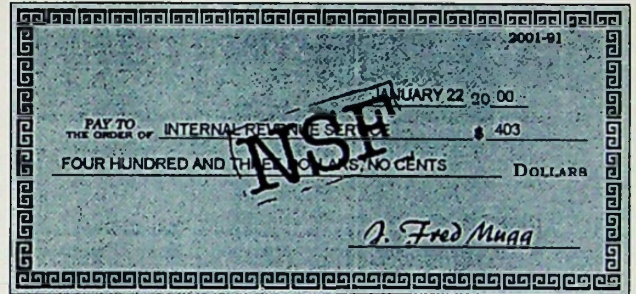
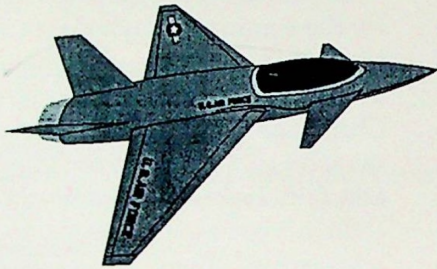
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With the soon approach of the new millennium, it's tempting to devote ourselves entirely to the study of the end times. There is certainly much apocalyptic talk in the air. Even Hollywood is jumping on the bandwagon with movies such as *Deep Impact* and *Armageddon*. If you peruse the weeklies at the supermarket counter you have seen the constant barrage of warnings that "the world is ending" or that "Jesus has come again." Of course Jesus told us to expect this (see Matthew 24) so there are no sur-

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Thank you, and may the Lord bless you.

Grace and Peace,

Jeff Fletcher

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Religion or Relationship

BY BILL WACHTEL – WENATCHEE, WA

All the religions of the world have one thing in common: they each have a body of teaching or doctrine that is characteristic or peculiar to them alone, causing each to be distinct from all the others. In this respect, even Christianity can be classified as simply one more of the “world religions.”

In another respect, however, there is a vast and crucial difference between Christianity and all the other religions. That difference results from the fact that the central figure of Christianity — Jesus the Christ — was not simply a teacher of spiritual ideas or the founder of a religion, but rather a man of incredible and demonstrable miracles, culminating in His own bodily resurrection from the dead and His continuing on as a powerful and living person down through the centuries to this very day! No other religion can make that claim or disprove the claim that Christianity makes.

Adherents of other religions will, of course, put forth evidence to support their own claims, or will try to show evidence that questions the unique claims of Christianity. Christians who have been both convinced and transformed by Christ do not let such objections trouble them. The reality of Jesus in their own lives makes it impossible for them to take these objections very seriously.

The fact that Jesus is a “reality” for Christian believers implies that they possess a personal relationship with Jesus, not just a religion composed of

His teachings! The difference between “religion” and “personal relationship” is the critical factor in the spiritual equation that is basic to true Christianity. The truth of this is seen in the fact that a Muslim can never have a personal relationship with Mohammed, a Buddhist with Buddha, or a Hindu with his gods. Such a relationship is simply inconceivable for followers of those religions

*Jesus Christ was not
simply a teacher of
spiritual ideas.*

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and in fact impossible, since their historic teachers never rose from the dead, but merely founded a “religion” for their followers!

Christ’s true followers, on the contrary, are willing to stake their lives on the reality of Jesus in their own life and experience. They know Him in a way that, for them, is beyond question. Some may look at the Christian’s assurance and conviction as either some kind of arrogance or else a case of self-delusion. But the believer knows better! He or she can say with the apostle Paul: “I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

This was not said in the midst of easy circumstances, but out of the misery of a Roman prison cell as Paul awaited execution for his faith. Even

in such a place and with death staring him in the face, Paul could triumphantly proclaim his joy and hope and utter certainty based on his intimate friendship with the risen and living Son of God! This is the kind of reality that is available to every Christian and that is so desperately needed by those not yet His followers, who are lost in sin, “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

Dear reader, if you are among the latter group — which is by far the majority of all human beings — please consider the loving invitation that Jesus extends to you: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Jesus wants to be your friend. That’s right! He wants to have a close and personal relationship with you. He proved His love by dying for you on the cross, shedding His innocent blood for you, so that your sins could be forgiven and that you could receive a life that will never end, the resurrection life that Jesus demonstrated when He came forth from the tomb. His death and resurrection proved not only Jesus’ love, but also His Father’s love: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Will you accept His love? □

The Christian's Road Map

BY PASTOR HOLLIS PARTLOWE – OREGON, IL

If you were traveling very far in your car, out of state for example, you would need a good road map. It would not only be a convenience, but a necessity. Hardly anyone would think of making a long trip by car without one.

The Bible speaks of the Christian life as a long journey that leads to the kingdom of God. As it was with the saints of old, we are "strangers and pilgrims" in this world. "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14). As it was with Abraham, we look for "a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (11:10). If we are to find that eternal city, we must carefully follow our road map, the Bible.

Jesus Christ declared Himself to be "the way" that leads to God (John 14:6). Christianity is not merely a system of doctrines or a code of conduct. It centers in a person who is "the way." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Christ is the message; the church is the messenger.

In this world there are only two highways, and you are traveling one of them — the broad way that leads to destruction or the straight and narrow way that leads to life eternal (Matt. 7:13-14).

However sincere one may be, if he is on the wrong road, he won't reach his goal. One cannot travel in the

opposite direction and expect to reach his hoped-for destination. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12, NASB).

It is also wise to heed signs along the road such as "Detour," "Drive Carefully," "Slow Down," "Curve Ahead." Only a fool would ignore them. Our scriptural road map is

*Christianity centers in
a person who is
"the way."*

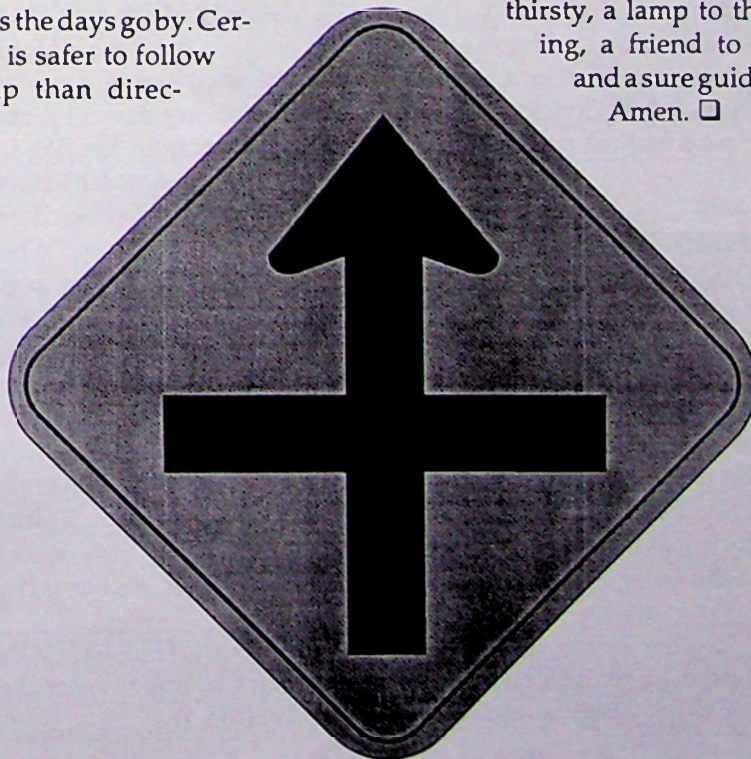
dependable and trustworthy. It should be studied more diligently as the days go by. Certainly it is safer to follow our map than direc-

tions of strangers. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105).

I'm constantly amazed how up-to-date the Bible is. It's truly the Book for our time. Our world is littered with confusion and disillusionment. Some are crying out for sanity in a world gone mad.

Christians need a dependable road map, and the Bible is that map. If we keep our eyes on our goal and follow the map we won't be sidetracked. Those who think that they can travel without it are doomed to failure.

"Read the Bible to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and direct the feet. It is bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, a lamp to the straying, a friend to sinners, and a sure guide to all."
Amen. □



Do You Love Jesus?

BY LARRY BURKETT

We've heard stories of how tragedies caused dramatic spiritual turn-arounds in people's lives. But for people with wavering faith, tragedies can be the breaking point.

One woman I counseled many years ago was on the verge of divorce. Her husband appeared to be in the midst of a mid-life crisis and showed all the classic symptoms: a sports car, mod clothes, and involvement with a much younger woman.

This woman did all the things her Christian friends suggested to get God to restore her marriage, but in the end her husband divorced her and married the younger woman. She became resentful and bitter and declared that religion did not work.

Like this woman, many other Christians fall away and become entangled in the world after a tragedy strikes them. Why? Consider the life of Peter, who walked daily with the Lord.

GONE FISHIN'

Peter had long assumed the position of leader of the disciples. During Christ's arrest, it was Peter who was willing to fight, and it was Peter who vowed his loyalty, even unto death. But during Christ's trial, it also was Peter who denied knowing Him.

Certainly, Peter's faith was virtually destroyed as he watched Christ's death on the cross, and in John 21:3 we find Peter saying, "I am going fishing." In other words, it was great while it lasted, but it didn't work out, so it's time to get practical and earn a living.

In this setting, Jesus appears to Peter to ask him why he is there. Obviously, Peter wasn't totally committed to Jesus, who asks, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Christ uses the word for God's perfect love, "agape."

Peter responds, "You know that I love (*phileo*) you." What he meant was that Jesus was his friend. Three times Jesus asked His question; only the third time did He ask Peter if he *really* loved Him, even as his friend. I believe Peter clearly understood Christ's message and was forced to decide that what he had felt before was something less than dedication to the Lord. Peter's total perspective of service changed at that point.

TRANSFORMED ATTITUDES

Compare the Peter of John's Gospel with the Peter of Acts, and you'll see that fishing doesn't seem to play much of a role in his life, but Jesus Christ does. In Acts 4:19-20, he stands against the Jewish council and defies their authority, saying, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."

What transformed Peter (and Paul) was coming face-to-face with the reality of who Jesus Christ really is, and then allowing the Holy Spirit to guide their decisions. This was a daily choice for Peter, just as it is for us.

TRANSFORMED ACTIONS

Many Christians wear the helmet of salvation that Paul describes in

Ephesians 6:17, but otherwise they are naked.

They appear to be content in knowing they are saved, but they never have accepted the lordship of Christ over their daily lives and especially their possessions.

They are greatly attracted to evangelists who teach salvation as the only step a Christian ever has to take. They also may be attracted to prosperity teachers who Americanize God and rationalize their indulgent, wasteful lifestyles.

Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "And why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" It is obvious that He expects changed attitudes to lead to changed actions.

The Lord gave us some fundamental guidelines to follow when dealing with others, and virtually every one of them involves pride and priority.

(1) **Others first.** It seems that the Christian world has all but forgotten the material needs of the unsaved around us.

How often do churches open their doors to the unsaved community and show they love them by caring for the children of divorced mothers, paying utility bills for the elderly, or repairing homes for the aged and ill?

(2) **Humility.** Jesus talked about pride so much that it must be the most obnoxious attitude a believer can develop. Matthew 6:1 begins with Christ saying that if we do things to be recognized by others, we will have no reward in His kingdom.

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Maybe We're Asking the Wrong Question

BY DICK ALCUMBRACK

What is the most important number as we consider the mission of the church? Most every church has certain numbers that are brought before the congregation on a regular basis. It may be attendance figures, offering totals or budget needs, mission giving, or converts/baptisms. These are all important numbers. To a lesser degree a congregation may be concerned with the number of seats in the sanctuary, the number of classrooms, the number of parking spaces, or even the number of Sunday morning services.

These are all important numbers. But which of these is the most important number? Or did we overlook a number that is even more important? According to Kenneth Callahan, author of *The Twelve Keys to an Effective*

Church, there is a number we have failed to mention. And this number is the most important number in determining the health, vitality and mission of any church.

What is the number? It's the number of people served by the congregation in the course of the week. More than any other statistic, this number indicates whether a congregation is *inward focused* or *outward focused*. A small church may serve a large number of people in the community, while a large church may serve just a few outside the immediate congregation.

The church serves people in two basic ways. First, through a specific mission project (such as a food kitchen or after-school tutoring program). The goal of such a mission is to meet the real needs of people — even though they may never attend your church. Second, the members of the church

help people in various ways, but not as part of a specific church program.

Although arriving at the number of people served takes a little work, and may vary greatly from week to week, it is an excellent indicator of the vitality of the church. A church of 50 that serves 50 people not associated with the church may be much healthier than a church of 150 with a big budget and several programs for the members, but which only serves 15-20 people not associated with the church.

Jesus underscored the importance of servanthood when He said, "The greatest among you must be your servant" (Matt. 23:11).

When people find out I'm a pastor they often ask, "How big is your church?" or "How many families do you have in your church?" They are missing the bigger picture: "How many does your church serve?" □

Do You Love Jesus? (continued from page 6)

Satan would like nothing better than to take disciples of Christ and elevate them until they get prideful about their assets, abilities, or recognition. It's at that point when they are most vulnerable to the temptations that Satan offers.

(3) **Priority.** In Matthew 6:19 Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth." I believe He was evaluating our priorities in relation to serving Him. In verse 24, He says "No one can serve two masters."

Clearly, when taken in context with all of God's Word, Christ is forcing

believers to decide what their positions are in relation to material assets. In other words, "Who comes first, Christ or possessions?"

THE TRUE TEST OF OUR LOVE

Ultimately, the test of whether or not we love Jesus is measured by our actions. Christ said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

How great should our love for Him be? In Luke 14:26 he said, "If anyone comes after Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes,

and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." Christ didn't mean that we should actually hate these people. He meant that our love for Him should be so great that our love for everyone else would, by comparison, be as hate.

Would you surrender everything you own to Christ if He asked? If not, you are serving the wrong God. □

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How Important Is Truth?

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

God is interested in human beings who tell the Truth. But what is Truth? Jesus did not answer that question in the presence of the skeptical Pilate (John 18:36-38), but He had much to say about Truth when He taught receptive audiences.

If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free . . . I speak the things which I have seen with my Father . . . which I heard from God. You are of your father the devil . . . He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the Truth, because there is no Truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies (John 8:31-44, NASV).

There are some who hold that believing Truth is unimportant, but Jesus contrasts the lies of the Devil with the Truth He taught. By truth Jesus meant His word. And by "word" He meant not the Bible but specifically His own Gospel about the Kingdom of God (see Luke 4:43; 5:1). (The Bible refers to itself as "the Scriptures.") Jesus concentrated on the Gospel which God had given Him to proclaim and on His own role as the executive of that coming Kingdom.

Paul shared Jesus' emphasis on Truth versus lies. In an important message to the Thessalonians, Paul warned that Satan's energy and ac-

tivity are to be manifested in a display of miracles and signs designed to support his lies. These miracles will overwhelm and deceive those who are unprepared to see through the lies. They are perishing — going to ruin — "because they refused to love the truth" (2 Thess. 2:10). Nothing could be more important than to be prepared, by learning and practicing the Truth.

Paul makes it clear that the way to destruction is inevitable for those

*The spirit of God is
God's guidance
transmitted to us.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

"who did not welcome the love of the Truth in order to be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10). Paul emphasized the phrase "love of the Truth" by placing it at the beginning of his sentence in the Greek version. He contrasts the Truth with the Lie of the Devil, just as Jesus had done in John 8. Paul goes on to explain that if we do not develop a passion for Truth, God will actually send on us "a deluding influence, an activity of error, so that we might believe what is false" (v. 11). In this way "all may be condemned who did not believe the Truth but took pleasure in wickedness" (v. 12).

Paul develops this theme even further. He gives thanks for the true believers, "beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the

beginning for salvation through holiness by the spirit and belief of the Truth" (2 Thess. 2:13, RV: "belief of the Truth").

The apostle makes believing true things and rejecting lies the basis of good Christianity. And he then traces the source of that good understanding to "our Gospel" (v. 14). He urges the disciples to hold onto the truth by holding onto the "tradition which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or letter from us" (v. 15).

The spirit of God is God's truth-influence working on our minds through the inspired words of the Bible and God's guidance transmitted to us. Christians are to share "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16) which is the spirit of Christ. God's spirit never lies. Satan lies and promotes his deluding influence, his activity of delusion which tries to suppress and confuse the work of God's spirit. Satan is responsible for "the spirit which now works in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). But note the counteractive energy of God. Paul thanked God that the Gospel of the Kingdom had been received by the Thessalonians. That Gospel was "at work" in those who believed (2:13). Believing the Truth unleashes a power in our life. It is the power of God Himself as He transmits His own mind, character and energy to our minds.

God graciously allows us to understand His mind as revealed in the words of Jesus and the apostles. What a privilege! What an encouragement!

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Two Gospels

BY JIM MATTISON

Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14, 15). It was a gospel that would save (Luke 8:12). Jesus was preaching the same gospel that God gave to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). It concerned inheriting the earth (Matt. 5:5). Jesus confirmed these promises made to the fathers (Rom. 15:8). The promises included land inheritance forever (which would necessitate having everlasting life) and the heir, the son of Abraham, Jesus (Gal. 3:16).

God promised land on the earth to Abraham (Gen. 13:14, 15; 17:7, 8). Abraham never received it (Acts 7:5). How, then, does God plan to cause Abraham to receive his promise? By resurrection from the dead (Heb. 11:39, 40; Luke 14:14) when Jesus returns (Matt. 22:30-32).

The earth is vital to the Kingdom of God plan. Daniel the prophet showed by inspiration that four great empires of man would rise, then be replaced by God's Kingdom (Daniel 2, 7). The hope of Israel and all righteous people, as expressed in the prophets, is that the time is coming when the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Num. 14:21; Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14). When Jesus returns and rules the earth as all the prophets foretold, the earth will be restored to its Edenic perfection (Acts 3:19-21), and the curses God placed on earth shall be removed (Rev. 22:3). The glory of God will embrace the earth. This was the message of Jesus, the apostles and the prophets.

In order for us to come into these promises God has given of ruling over the earth forever with Jesus, the perfect Jesus has died as a sacrifice for our sins. This, too, is gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4). So there are two parts to the Gospel of Salvation: 1) The Kingdom of God is coming to earth, and 2) Jesus died and was resurrected to eternal life, providing a way for us to enter that Kingdom. This is the simple gospel of salvation as Jesus and the apostles proclaimed it, and it will save us.

But we see another gospel being preached everywhere today. It is an idea that men are already immortal inside and, if one has been good, at death that immortal soul will go immediately to heaven, or if one has been bad, that immortal soul will go to hellfire and be tortured forever. This gospel also teaches the death and resurrection of Jesus. But it maintains that the destination of the righteous is heaven, not earth. I recently heard Dr. Billy Graham say in a TV interview that he was looking forward to death so he could go to heaven, the idea being that heaven was a wonderful place with perfect conditions. We have noticed that the preachers who preach going to heaven very seldom have a funeral where one goes to hell.

So there are two gospels being taught today: 1) the coming Kingdom of God to the earth and the death and resurrection of Christ, and 2) going to heaven or hell at death because of an immortal soul, and the death and resurrection of Christ.

Something is wrong here. How can both ideas be correct?

We remember that the apostle Paul said that if anyone preaches another gospel than the one he and the apostles were preaching, "let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9). Paul so wants us to understand how important it is to preach the true gospel that he repeats it: "Let him be accursed."

It is true that Matthew calls the Kingdom of God the Kingdom of heaven. It will be a kingdom from heaven, but not in heaven. Daniel makes it very clear that this kingdom will be "under" heaven, that is, on earth (Dan. 7:27). The Kingdom of God has not yet come. Jesus said that when the signs of His coming are seen, then know "that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21:31). The Kingdom of God is not the church, but will be a real literal governmental kingdom with territory, laws, a king, co-rulers, subjects, and a capital city, as the prophets show. The church is promised rulership with Jesus in that Kingdom by means of the Davidic covenant (Rev. 3:1). The people of God are promised the earth through the Abrahamic covenant (Matt. 5:5; Gal. 3). We shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:10). Nowhere is heaven promised to the righteous. Neither is any part of us immortal today. This is why we need the resurrection, of which Christ is the firstfruits.

Another Jesus is being taught today by most church groups, a Jesus who is God the Son and not a mortal

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Where Is Heaven, and Did it Always Exist?

BY HAZEL CRAMER

Is more than one heaven mentioned in the Scriptures? *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* contains 131 references to "heavens" in the plural, and several pages of the singular form, "heaven."

Common sense tells us that God had to exist somewhere, in order to create our particular planet and heavens. Why do so many learned and intelligent Bible scholars put a limit on what they believe God has done?

Just because astronauts and powerful telescopes have failed to penetrate beyond our particular galaxy to find God's abode, or even other inhabited planets, does not mean they don't exist. Even King Solomon recognized this fact, saying in 2 Chronicles 6:18, "But will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee."

God has declared in Psalm 115:16: "The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's, but earth hath he given to the children of men." The words "heaven" and "firmament" are interchangeable. Surprisingly, heaven or the firmament begins directly above solid ground or water. Birds fly in it; we walk and breathe in it. Obviously there have to be many dimensions of it, not the least of which is God's dwelling place.

As for our own planet earth, and our designated heaven prepared for our mortal existence, is it only about 6000 years old? Scientists universally agree that the earth may very well be millions of years old. Studying the Genesis account closely, one can

readily see that even Scripture has room to uphold this theory. Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 there could have been a lapse of countless years. (I often think that God must observe and watch us, much like we would an ant farm.) From verse 2 through 8 it is apparent that water encircled all the earth. Not until verse 9 is God said to have made dry land appear.

*The firmament begins
directly above solid
ground or water.*



We know that God caused a great flood to cover the earth in the days of Noah. How do we know that God didn't destroy a previous creation on earth? Is it possible that dinosaurs, mammoths, winged serpents, etc. had existed and been destroyed by God in a great flood? Why are we so arrogant to believe that God is ours exclusively, and everything revolves around us? Our finite, mortal minds cannot even faintly imagine how vast and magnificent are God's heavens with all their constellations, planets, suns, and moons.

I love to read the account given in Ezekiel 1 which describes visions that Ezekiel saw pertaining to God, and a chariot that resembled our UFOs of today.

Paul speaks also of a supernatural vision which he referred to as a "third" heaven.

John, we know, had prophetic visions difficult to understand concerning both heaven and earth, and the coming Kingdom of God upon earth. In Revelation 21:1 John speaks of a "first" heaven and earth as having passed away. However, in verse 5 he writes that God says, "Behold I make all things new" (not "all new things"). It appears to be a regeneration, a perfecting of a sin-sick, somewhat polluted, "old" earth and heaven.

We know that Christ will restore the earth to original conditions such as found in the Garden of Eden, referred to as Paradise by many. Revelation 22:2 speaks of a tree of life in the midst of a city (no doubt New Jerusalem), and Revelation 2:7 testifies that the tree of life is in the midst of the "Paradise" of God.

Paradise also seemed to be a term used by Christ to designate His coming Kingdom on earth. Remember when one of the thieves dying on a cross beside Jesus asked to be remembered when Jesus would come into His Kingdom? Instead of using the term "Kingdom," Jesus used the word "Paradise" (Luke 23:42, 43).

We are well aware that the original manuscripts did not have punctuation marks, paragraphs, or even chapters such as we have in modern Bibles. Leaving out the comma, and reading from the *Emphatic Diaglott* (a Greek-English translation by Benjamin Wilson), it appears that Jesus used the term "Paradise" in place of "Kingdom." He meant the day of His kingdom to come, not an immediate

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Where Is Heaven, and Did it Always Exist? (continued from page 10)

fulfillment of His promise. Since Jesus did not go directly to heaven, nor to a so-called Paradise, neither did the thief. Jesus died, was buried for three days, then arose to immortality, residing on earth for yet forty days more. The thief, along with many others, has yet to receive the promises.

Inasmuch as John 3:13 asserts that "no man hath ascended up to heaven

but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven," we also wait in hope.

If we want to have part in Paradise, the coming Kingdom of God, then we have an obligation to fulfill. Both Matthew 24:14 and Mark 13:10 inform us that the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached (published) among all the nations before Christ will return.

With the increased skills of communication of many types, surely we can all find some way to do our part!

Jesus promised in Revelation 22:12: "Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

May we all be in that number, counted worthy to obtain eternal life. □

How Important Is Truth? (continued from page 8)

to daily study and meditate on the energy-producing words of the Bible, the Holy Scriptures.

"Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord or become His counselor?" (Rom. 11:33, 34). Paul marvels at God's graciously sharing His very heart and mind with us. He quotes the words of Isaiah: "Who has directed the spirit of the Lord or as his

counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult or who gave Him understanding?" (Isa. 40:13, 14). Did you notice that Paul substituted the phrase "mind of the Lord" for the "spirit of the Lord" in Isaiah 40:13?

God's spirit is the spirit or mind of Truth in communication with us, giving us vitality and hope. God's spirit teaches us the Truth and helps us to see through the ruinous lies of the Devil. According to John's Gospel, God's spirit is "the spirit of the Truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Truth is the

essential characteristic of the spirit of God. In order to worship God through the Messiah it is necessary to have that spirit of Truth active in our lives. "Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and Truth" (John 4:24). God is looking for people to worship Him in this way. The Spirit is also "the spirit of the promise" (Eph. 1:13), and the promise in this case is the promise of the Kingdom or Land contained in the original promise to Abraham (Gen. 12; 13; 15; 17) and renewed in the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 5:5; cp. Rev 5:10). □

Two Gospels (continued from page 9)

man. Paul told us, "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus was a man conceived by the holy spirit in the womb of Mary. Jesus died. God cannot die. Jesus did not know the date of His second coming, but God knows. Jesus said that His Father was greater than He was,

and that He always did those things which pleased His Father. He said God sent Him to preach the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43). This is the gospel all preachers ought to preach, not going to heaven, not a gospel that says part of us is immortal, and that there are three Gods rather than one.

Yes, there is another gospel preached today. But there is also the true gospel of the Kingdom coming to earth, and Jesus is the way into those promises. This is the one we must believe and obey in order to live forever. □

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

BY JUAN BAIXERAS — MIAMI, FL

A lot of people have used the parable of the rich man and Lazarus as the sole basis for their doctrine of death. They will quote this one passage and completely ignore all the other verses that deal with this subject. This is an irresponsible way of interpreting Scripture. One should never reach a conclusion from a single small part of the Bible, but instead compare all the related verses on that topic before coming to conclusions. In this case, the situation is made worse by the fact that the small section that is used to uphold an entire doctrine of death happens to be a parable. All major Bible scholars consider this to be a parable. The New American Bible, in a section entitled "Literary Genres or Forms," explains "parable" like this: "A short fictitious narrative from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn. Keep in mind that the point of the parable (not the details) is God's message to believers."

Parables are fictitious; they have never happened. They are meant to teach us a point. We cannot take this parable literally. If we do, it will contradict everything in the Bible that teaches us that we will receive our reward or punishment on judgment day and not before.

The biggest clue that this passage is not meant literally is that the rich man is speaking from the nether world. Under "nether world" the *New American Bible Dictionary* directs us to "See Sheol": "Sheol — The ancient concept of the abode of the dead (the nether world, in Hebrew, *Sheol*)

supposed no activity or lofty emotion among the deceased, who were pictured as surrounded by the darkness of oblivion."

The rich man is speaking from the nether world, he is in torment, and he is pleading with Abraham in order to help himself and save his brothers. These are impossibilities in the nether world. In the nether world there is no activity or emotion among the deceased; they are in oblivion. Yet the rich man displays both activity and emotion. If we do take this parable literally it will make no sense whatsoever. We also have Lazarus on Abraham's chest, spirits with eyes and tongues, and the ability of the righteous and the wicked dead to see and speak to each other. This is bizarre! This parable is not intended to teach us about death, despite the way many interpreters have used it. The reason for their misinterpretations is that they bring with them a lot of baggage (preconceived ideas) which hide from them a true understanding and lead them to incorrect conclusions. Please approach this parable with a mind-set free from prior influences; then the truth will be obvious. If you approach this with the mind-set that it is about death, then that's what you will find.

In order to understand a parable we should always be aware of its context. The verses before and after the parable usually provide us with clues to the parable's point. Let's see what this most controversial parable is about. In this case only the preceding verses are helpful. We will see

that this parable has two points, one primary and one secondary.

Jesus gives us this parable because of the conflict he is having with the Pharisees over their love of money, their use of "dishonest wealth." This thought starts with the parable of the dishonest steward in Luke 16:1 and continues until Luke 16:15, which leads to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke 16:13-14 starts with Jesus speaking: "No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (money)." The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all these things and sneered at him."

The book *All the Parables of the Bible* states: "These religious leaders who fared sumptuously, living in the love of money, and of the enjoyments which money purchased, only mocked at the counsel of using their wealth for the benefit of others in a way to earn them eternal rewards. Their money was theirs and they wanted no advice from Jesus as to its right use. Then came this parable."

The main point of this parable is to show the consequences of making money your god, putting it first in your life instead of putting the will of God first. The sin of the rich man was not that he was rich, but that he failed to realize that he was God's trustee, with wealth and influence that could have been used for God's glory, and for the spiritual and material benefit of his fellow men. Lazarus was rewarded because in spite of his pitiful

condition he had served God, finding his constant help in Him. In a similar vein, *The Quest Study Bible* states: "His point was that, contrary to popular opinion, money is not evidence of favor with God, nor does poverty indicate God's displeasure."

The parable's secondary point is that even after Jesus' resurrection, men would still refuse to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they repent if someone should rise from the dead'" (verse 31). The New American Bible refers to this as "a foreshadowing in Luke's gospel of the rejection of the call to repentance even after Jesus' resurrection."

Now that we understand the reason for and the points of the parable, let us examine the details of this parable which have been disastrously misinterpreted. We will start with verse 22: "When the poor man died he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham."

What does the "bosom of Abraham" mean? According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, it means in this verse: To be a partaker of the same blessedness as Abraham in paradise. So Lazarus will share the same reward as Abraham in paradise. God blessed Abraham by promising him that he would inherit the world (the kingdom of God). Romans 4:13 states: "It was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham and his descendants that he would inherit the world, but through the righteousness that comes through faith." Abraham has not inherited the world yet: he will first have to be resurrected. When will the resurrection occur? At the coming of the new age, the Second Coming of Christ. Luke 20:35 states: "But those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead . . ."

Lazarus was carried away by angels to be with Abraham. When are

the angels supposed to collect the elect? At the coming of Christ at the end of the age in order to enter the kingdom of God. Matthew 13:39-42 states it clearly: "The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up [destroyed] with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace" (to be destroyed as the weeds were destroyed).

Matthew 13:49 follows six parables on the kingdom of God: the parables of the sower, the weeds, the mustard seed, the treasure, the pearl, and the net thrown into the sea. The verse is still dealing with that topic, the kingdom of God. It states: "Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth" (vv. 49, 50). Both of these events, Abraham's blessing and the collection of the righteous by the angels, will happen in the future, at the return of Christ. Let's continue and then we will put it all together.

Luke 16:22, 23 states: "The rich man also died and was buried, and from the nether world, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side." The rich man and Lazarus are not in the same place: one is in the kingdom of God and the other is in the nether world. When the rich man sees Abraham "far off" it means that he sees him far off in time, not in distance. This parable is pretending that the rich man from his grave in the present time is having a vision of Abraham (in the kingdom of God) in the future after the angels have collected the elect and the dead have been resurrected. The rich man realizes that he is still in the grave and has missed out on the blessings of Abraham.

The rich man is in torment because he realizes that he will not have life in the age to come because he has been thrown into the fiery flames (destroyed). He then asks Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers in the present time to warn them so that they will not suffer the same fate as him in the future. Verse 27 states: "Then I beg you, father, send him [Lazarus] to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them." But Lazarus in the present time is also dead. When Abraham says in verse 29, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them," the rich man replies in verse 30: "Oh no father Abraham, but if someone [Lazarus from verse 27] from the dead goes to them they will repent."

Where is Lazarus? He is dead in Sheol. This is why the rich man says that "If someone from the dead comes they will repent." He will be in the kingdom next to Abraham after the resurrection when the Son of Man comes and sends His angels to collect the dead in Christ. Of course this verse foreshadows Jesus' resurrection, but it is here speaking specifically about Lazarus.

Summary

You cannot serve two masters at once. If you choose the things of this world (i.e. money) over God, when Christ returns and inaugurates the kingdom of God you will be counted with the wicked and will not share in the inheritance (bosom) of Abraham. You will instead be thrown into the fiery flames and destroyed. Remember that this is a parable, and a parable is a fictitious short story with a point. The details are not important, only the point. This parable was not meant to be the sole authority on death. It does, however, detail the end results correctly. Either we enter the kingdom of God or we are destroyed forever. □

The Church: The Israel of God

Part Three

BY MARK COOMER — EVANSVILLE, IN

THE REMNANT AND THE NEW COVENANT

Jesus and Paul said that we *participate* in the body and blood of Christ. Jesus said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Paul also referred to this as the New Covenant.

Jeremiah clearly prophesied that this New Covenant was to come upon Israel:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to [or "not like," NIV] the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them, saith the LORD. [When God led Israel out of Egypt He made the covenant of the Law with them. This is the covenant that Israel broke.] But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD": for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto

the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more (Jer. 31:31-34).

Jesus might have thought of them as "born again."

New Covenant Falls to Remnant of Israel

If we continue reading here in Jeremiah, we immediately see another foretokening of the remnant:

The epistle of Messiah, written in fleshly tables of the heart



Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts is His name: "If those ordinances depart from before Me," saith the LORD, "Then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever." Thus saith the LORD; "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done," saith the LORD (Jer. 31:35-37).

God says that He will establish a New Covenant with Israel to replace the covenant of the Law that she has broken. God will write His Law in their hearts. At no time will Israel ever cease to *be a nation* before God. There will always be some seed left: He will *never* cast away all the seed of Israel. There will always remain a remnant of Israel as a nation before Him. "For the gifts [grace] and calling [election] of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29).

New Covenant Operating in the Church

Jesus and Paul believed that the New Covenant had already been established in the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, and through the Holy Spirit which had been poured out upon Israel during the Feast of Harvest (Pentecost). The New Covenant had been established and was *already breaking in* upon the world, heading for that great climactic *parousia* of God's Messiah: "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Messiah ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." And God has also "made us able ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter [the Law] but of the spirit: for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:3, 6).

By breaking down the barrier of the Law (which was a shadow of

better things) *through His death*, Jesus became the mediator of the New Covenant:

But now [now, not in the future] hath he obtained [past tense] a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is [now, at this time] the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant [the Law] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah [God swore the new covenant would be with Israel and it was]: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people (Heb. 8:6-10).

Jesus established the New Covenant through His death, concerning which "all the prophets" had spoken:

Jesus: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

Paul: "After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:25). "And for this cause he is

the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called [election] might receive the promise of eternal inheritance [aionion, "age inheritance," inheritance in the Age to Come. This, remember, is salvation]" (Heb. 9:15).

THE REMNANT AND THE INHERITANCE OF ABRAHAM

Church Receives Inheritance as Abraham's Seed

To those who eat His flesh and drink His blood, Jesus said: "You

The Spirit is the downpayment on our inheritance.

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲
will remain in Me, and I in you." You will remain *in Christ* and have Christ *in you*. You are covenanted a Kingdom and will receive an inheritance in the Age to Come. The children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the sons of Israel, looked for a promised inheritance in the coming new age when the Kingdom of God is established over all the earth.

Do you belong to Christ? "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). Abraham is much more than a great role model of believing. Through faith the church is heir to the blessing God promised to Abraham: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Messiah; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). The promise of the Spirit, as we have seen, was an Old Testament elaboration upon the original promise to Abraham

(Matt. 3:11-12). And the Spirit, says Paul in Ephesians 1:14, is the *downpayment* on our inheritance. So we see this verse, Galatians 3:14, speaks not only of our faith-connection with Abraham, but of the blessing of Abraham which comes to us through that faith. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (Gal. 3:16). The promises to Abraham and his seed are clearly laid out in Genesis. These promises, also called "the blessing of Abraham" (Gal. 3:14), were passed on to Abraham's son Isaac, who in turn passed them on to his son, Jacob, who was renamed *Israel*: "And give thee [Jacob/Israel] the 'blessing of Abraham,' to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest *inherit the land* wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham" (Gen. 28:4).

James Hester states in *Paul's Concept of Inheritance*:

What Abraham was promised was a land in which his descendants would be formed into a holy nation. This implies a unique relationship to God, a relationship which is described in both Testaments as "sonship," or "heirship." In other words, salvation was living in the land, for a man could only live in the land if he had been adopted by God. The promise of a land, therefore, is the basis of salvation, and salvation is the confirmation that a man will share in the promise.¹

The promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the children of Israel include real estate: *the land*. But, like a seed, the substance of many promises lie within, and, like a budding tree, many promises unfolded to Israel through her prophets.

The implication in God's promise to Abraham and his seed was eternal life. In order to inherit something

forever, an heir must live forever or the inheritance passes on. All of this is Abraham's inheritance: "For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are you *Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:18, 29). This same promise of the *seed's* inheritance of the world is written in incontestable terms in Romans 4:13: "For the promise that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the Law [the old covenant], but through the righteousness of faith." Is the "inheritance of the world," promised to Abraham and his seed, promised to us also? Yes: "For if they which are of the Law be heirs [heirs of the world, v. 13], faith is made void, and the promise [the promise of inheritance of the world, v. 13] made of none effect" (Rom. 4:14).

The promise was never, at any time, through the works of the Law. On this point Paul and the Old Testament prophets concur: "Therefore, it [the promise of inheritance of the world, v. 13] is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promise [of inheritance of the world] might be sure to *all the seed*; not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us *all*" (Rom. 4:16). "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).

Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture [Old Testament], Behold, I lay in Zion [in Israel] a chief corner stone, elect, precious:

and he that believeth on Him [the remnant of Israel] shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient [who fulfill Isaiah's prophecy by not hearing, seeing or understanding the Kingdom message], the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling [unbelieving Israel has stumbled], and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word [of the Kingdom], being disobedient: whereunto also *they were appointed* [it was not given to them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom]. But *ye* are a chosen [elected] generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people [you have inherited Israel's salvation and attributes]; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out [called out, elected] of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people [Gentiles], but are now the people of God [Israel]: which had not obtained mercy [grace], but now have obtained mercy (1 Pet. 2:6-10).

A Summary

To summarize: The promise to Abraham unfolded throughout the Old Testament. God's covenant with David (1 Chron. 17:11-14) promised a Kingdom ruled by a Messiah, which advanced Abraham's claim to the world. In Jeremiah, God declared that Israel had broken the Old Covenant (made 430 years after His covenant with Abraham) and announced a coming New Covenant with Israel. In the Gospels, Jesus was born both the "son of Abraham" and the "son of David" (Matt. 1:1) and His Kingdom shall endure forever (Lk. 1:32-33). Not surprisingly, then, the main topic of Jesus' ministry (both before

and after His resurrection) was the Kingdom of God. The same Gospel of the Kingdom is taught throughout Acts and in the epistles and other letters. Paul received from God a special "stewardship" to the Gentiles, to bring to them the understanding of the Mystery that now they could be grafted in *among* the remnant of Israel and, *with* the remnant, partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree. Thus we all, being many, are *one body in Christ*, and every one members one of another; and the Gentiles are now joint-heirs of a joint-body and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.

The New Covenant which God promised to make with Old-Covenant-breaking Israel is the New Covenant which Jesus has established with His remnant, His elect, His called-out: the church. The gift of Holy Spirit, promised to Israel, is given to the church. Abraham's inheritance, promised to Israel, is promised to the church. The resurrection to "life in the Age to Come" promised to Israel, is the future resurrection of the church (1 Cor. 15:54; Isa. 25:8).



The status of chosen people, the royal priesthood and holy nationhood tendered to Israel (Isa. 43:20; Ex. 19:6) becomes the property of the church consisting of Jews and Gentiles converted to Christ (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:9-10). Even the name of Israel is given to the church (Gal. 6:16; cp. Phil 3:3).

THE REMNANT AND THE MYSTERY

The Mystery Revealed

Now we can read Ephesians with knowledge. First, Paul reminds his audience (2:11) that they were in the past "Gentiles in the flesh." He explains what this term means. He reminds them that they are still called "the uncircumcision" by those who call themselves "the circumcision," although these are circumcised only in the flesh, implying they are not circumcised in the heart. Paul then reminds them (v. 12) that at the time they were Gentiles in the flesh, they were at that time without Messiah (the Anointed one of Israel destined to rule from Jerusalem). He reminds them of what being without Messiah meant: that in the past, before Messiah, they were aliens from the commonwealth (*politeia*) of Israel, they were strangers from Israel's covenants of promise, which means having no hope like the hope of Israel, and being utterly without God in the world. Paul then explains (v. 13) that the former Gentiles in the flesh who were once far away from Israel (not the Israel that is circumcised only in the flesh, of course — they have no inheritance. He means the Israel of the circumcised heart, the Israel of Messiah-believers), who were once far away from Messiah and God, have been brought near to the polity of Israel with her covenants of promise, her Messiah, and her God. This magnificent access to glory has been provided by Israel's Messiah who has broken down the middle wall of par-

tion. This new turn of events (explained in vv. 14-18) has created from two one new man, in one body.²

Even in this snapshot of the church, Paul does not see Jew and Gentile exiting the Temple. When Jesus died, the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, allowing the Jews access to the Holy of Holies. The trajectory is *inward*: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to *enter into* the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10:19, 20). Through Jesus' death the dividing

*Gentiles in the flesh
who were once far away
from Israel have been
brought near.*

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wall is also thrown down (Eph. 2:14-16), not so that Jews may flow out into the court of the Gentiles or away from God, but that the Gentiles may flow *in* to join the saints, the people of God, in the Holiest; and thus co-joined become one new man, in Christ's one body, inheriting all that Israel hoped for.

Sumpolites in the Politeia

Did Paul's language declare a new organization set apart from the polity of Israel, her covenants of promise, her Messiah, or her God? No, Paul continues, saying that "now therefore" you former Gentiles in the flesh who have been brought near are no more strangers or foreigners, but rather fellow citizens (*sumpolites*, that is, citizens in the *politeia* of Israel) with the already existing saints, and members of God's household.³ We have to remember that the "called

out" (*ekklesia*), the "body of Christ," had previously existed for many years as an exclusively Jewish (i.e., those Jews circumcised in the heart, not Israel after the flesh) organization. They had considered themselves the prophesied remnant, the true followers and believers of the hope of Israel. They did not see themselves as breaking away from Israel.⁴

Paul, in prison, said: "For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for *the hope of Israel* I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20). Paul and his brothers and sisters in faith were the minority of true hold-outs for the faith of their fathers, fulfilling the same role as past remnants in Israel's history. Their faith rested in the unfolding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God by Jesus the Anointed One of Israel:

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the stewardship [i.e., ministry] of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He [Jesus Christ] made known unto me the mystery (which I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets [not revealed to Paul alone or even first] by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs [heirs of Israel's promises through Abraham], and of the same body [participate as members of Christ's body], and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel [of the Kingdom]: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual

(continued on page 19)

Preparing for the "Year 2000" Problem

BY LARRY BURKETT, WITH JOSEPH SLIFE

As the 1900s give way to the 2000s at midnight on December 31, 1999, the world could face the biggest technological malfunction in history. The cause? A seemingly insignificant detail: the way computers read dates.

Many computers [programs] use only two digits rather than four to indicate the year. For example, 1998 is recorded as simply "98." So when the year 2000 arrives, the year designation will read "00." That's the problem. These computers may assume that "00" means 1900 and start generating spurious data. Some computers may reject any new data, believing it to be old. Others may simply shut down.

Computer crashes related to the date changeover could create communications disruptions, record-keeping chaos, bank closings, and even power failures.

The serious nature of this Year 2000 problem (Y2K for short) is illustrated by the huge sums of money being spent to try to avoid it. General Motors, for example, is planning to

spend up to half a billion dollars to make the company "Year 2000-compliant." Citibank, the nation's second largest bank, is expecting to spend \$600 million. The federal government may spend as much as \$50 billion on Year 2000 fixes.

However, even with strong efforts being made in both the public and private sectors to rectify the Y2K problem, it is clear that all noncompliant computers and software simply cannot be upgraded or replaced before the nonnegotiable deadline.

The possible economic fallout from these noncompliant systems is unknown. As Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan put it in testimony before the Senate Banking Committee, "We . . . cannot realistically make an evaluation of what the economic impact is as a consequence of the [computer] breakdowns that may occur And we do not know how rapidly we can resolve the problem."

The impact of the millennium bug on the nation's utilities is of growing concern. "Scattered power outages

are likely," reports *Business Week* magazine. A summary of a Year 2000 workshop for utility executives, hosted by the Electric Power Research Institute, concluded, "Despite the industry's best attempts, there will probably still be some problems that will not be resolved, necessitating some degree of emergency/disaster planning."

What Should You Do?

"God is our refuge and strength," said the psalmist. "Therefore we will not fear." As we look ahead to the full impact of the Year 2000, panic and fear should *not* be our response. Instead, we should — as instructed in Proverbs — take prudent action.

Here is what I suggest you do now.

☉ Write your banker, asking for a written assurance that your bank will have all its internal computer systems reprogrammed and tested by the end of this year, leaving all of 1999 for external testing. If you can't get that assurance, switch to a bank that can give you that assurance.



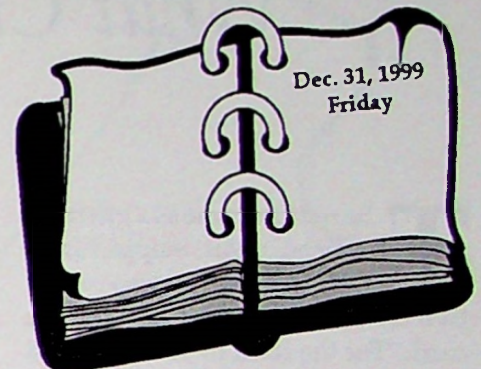
ⓐ Keep printed copies of all financial transactions — bank, insurance, money market fund, mutual funds, stocks, taxes, etc. Also get a copy of your Earnings and Benefits Statement from Social Security. You may need these hard copies to verify your financial claims if computer-based information becomes corrupted.

ⓑ Get hard copies of other important records that could be lost during a computer failure: birth certificate, immunization records, medical history, school transcripts.

ⓒ Write your utility companies (power, water, natural gas) and request written responses about their Year 2000 compliance strategies. Also, think through the practical preparations you would need to make if you were going to be without utility service for several days or weeks.

ⓓ Stay informed. If you have Internet access, you can keep abreast of Y2K developments at: www.year2000.com. We'll also do our best to keep you informed on our Web site: cfcministry.org. □

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The Church: The Israel of God (continued from page 17)

working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints [Paul received his stewardship by grace], is this *grace given*, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: And to make all men see what is the *stewardship* [i.e., understand Paul's ministry] of the Mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. ["I will utter things that have been kept secret from the foundation of the world," Matt. 13:35b.] To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the *eternal purpose* which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:1-11).

Israel has been reorganized under the New Covenant according to the revealed mysteries of Jesus the Messiah. He has called out His elect from

both Jew and Gentile according to the grace of God to become members of His body in preparation to rule with Him in the coming Kingdom of God. □

Footnotes

¹ Hester, James D., *Paul's Concept of Inheritance, A Contribution to the Understanding of Heilsgeschichte*, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, No. 14, 1968, Oliver and Boyd, p. viii.

² "The argument is once again about the inclusion of Gentiles into Israel, the already existing people of God. It is not about replacement of Israel with the church. The church is simply seen as the development of Israel in the direction God always intended (see 1:10-11). Nor is there talk of a new Israel here. Such language apparently arises in Christianity only when there were no longer any Christian Jews or their numbers had dwindled to an insignificant few. Also, what citizenship means to the

author of this document is at least in part getting in on the promises of the covenants (v. 12), a theme heard previously especially in Galatians 3-4" (Ben Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul, and the End of the World*, InterVarsity Press, 1992, p. 126).

³ "Hence Gentiles have a new history — Israel's history is now their history. In writing to the predominantly gentile church of Corinth, Paul states that the ancient Israelites were the forebears of the Corinthians: 'our forefathers were all under the cloud, and . . . they all passed through the sea' (1 Cor. 10:1). In the early church, therefore, Jew and Gentile claimed a common spiritual ancestry with the Hebrews of old" (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, p. 9).

⁴ "Here again the precedence of Jews is given its due. Nothing in Ephesians contradicts anything in Paul's earlier letters" (Witherington, p. 127).

What Children Can Teach Us

BY SUE MONK KIDD

The red kite came as a gift from a friend in Mississippi. Naturally I assumed it was for my two children, but then I checked the card. "For the child in you," she had written.

"Let's go fly it, Mama!" the children begged. I glanced at the stacks of paperwork on my desk. But it was a perfect kite-day, full of sun and bluster and turquoise sky. So off we went to a nearby athletic field.

I watched as the children tried to coax the kite into the slippery fingers of the wind. "Why don't you try?" my son said. "It's *your* kite." I took the kite string and trotted off shyly, as the children cheered me on. All at once the kite caught a current. It soared higher and higher — my laughter traveling with it.

Those moments beneath the kite put me in touch with a childlike spirit too long neglected, too often buried under the worries of adulthood. We become convinced early in our grown-up lives that we must leave behind all vestiges of childhood in order to be taken seriously. In doing so, we cheat ourselves. "Without childlikeness," says Elizabeth Weathersby, a therapist at the Atlanta Art Therapy Institute, "we are cut off from our capacity to be simple, spontaneous, aware, trusting, open to life."

These traits need not die as we grow older. We can reclaim our healthy, childlike spirit by opening ourselves to the lessons children offer us every day:

1. *Lighten your heart.* One day I passed a playground where a boy was swinging. A man in a three-piece suit walked by and paused to watch. Suddenly he propped his briefcase against a tree, loosened his tie and joined in the swinging, exchanging amused glances with the boy. In the middle of a hectic day, the man had found a small oasis of childlike play.

Working Americans spend an average of 40 percent of their waking life on the job. Tedious hours at the office can dull us to the joy of life, and we can't ignore the demands of the workplace. But we *can* punctuate our work day with bits of playfulness.

Betty Blackerby, district manager of American Family Life Assurance Co. in Anderson, S.C., keeps a sign in her office that reads: "Enjoy life. This is not a dress rehearsal." She says, "Employees who stay in touch with life's joys are the most productive employees I have. There's a charisma about them that attracts customers."

Some of us just can't let go unless we are actually in the company of children. "They give us permission to free the child inside ourselves," says Joy Miller, a psychotherapist in Peoria, Ill.

One weekend, Jim McDermott, a magazine editor in New York City, had a load of work. But his wife was out of town, so Jim was in charge of their three-year-old son, David. On Saturday morning, David turned to his dad and said exuberantly, "Let's play!"

"Count me in," Jim proclaimed. The weekend highlights included a water fight with two garden hoses, pizza and pickles for lunch and a slap-happy bath with a flotilla of plastic boats. Vitalized from playing, Jim accomplished his work in half the time.

Childlike play jump-starts internal batteries that have given out from driving ourselves too hard. Lightening our hearts in this way allows us to loosen up and enjoy our days rather than endure them.

2. *Wonder at the world.* While supervising some two-year-olds during church one Sunday, I was dragged to the window to ponder the belly of a caterpillar outside the glass. The children squashed their noses against the pane and studied the caterpillar's flowing crawl in hushed wonder, with only an occasional "Wow!" breaking the silence. Watching them, I was caught up in their awe as well.

Could it be that the worst blasphemy of all is to look at what God has made and say, "So what?" Yet preoccupations crowd out our capacity to wonder. As author Sam Keen put it, "Our eyes become so focused on goals that we forget to wonder in the presence of a rose."

Children see things most adults never do, and their observations often lead to questions that stretch the mind and quicken the soul. Aristotle taught that philosophy begins in wonder. Children, then, are the philosophers among us. How high is the

sky? Why do dogs wag their tails? How does a leaf know it's time to change colors? What was here before God made the world? I've been presented with all these mind benders at one time or another. They spark my own ponderings, causing me — like a child — to dream questions bigger than myself.

3. *Dare to be yourself.* When my son was in elementary school, he brought home a picture he'd colored of a purple bird. Across the top the teacher had written: "Birds are not purple. Please do over."

"But, Mama, my bird is purple," he insisted. "I imagined it in my head."

We taped the picture over the mantel — a testament to the creative daring of a child who risked his own vision of truth. Sometimes when I debate whether to risk my individuality or conform, the memory of my son's picture brings me courage.

"I know this is a purple bird,"

someone in my family is often heard to say, "but I'm going to fly it anyway." Many of the world's artistic creations

and scientific discoveries spring from just this sort of childlike daring.

4. *Be open to faith.* Once I had to pack a weekend bag to stay with my husband, who was hospitalized. I was filled with doubt and fear. Outdoors, our four-year-old daughter churned down the driveway on her tricycle, right turn at the oak bump, bump over the roots. Then a wail, "Ma-a-a-ma!" She lifted a skinned knee for me to kiss.

"Who'll kiss my hurts while you're away?" she asked, chin



enormous capacity to be open, to believe. They have to be taught to be wary."

5. *Let go and love.* Perhaps the greatest lesson children can teach us is to be in touch with the heart. When my daughter was six, she had a goldfish named Spanky. She never tired of watching him swim, calling me to see how he "blew kisses" at her with his puckered mouth. Spanky was the first one she greeted each day after returning from school, and I often overheard her telling him secret things, like her latest math grade and why she had to stay in at recess.

One Saturday she asked, "Do fish sleep?" Spanky was lying on his side at the bottom of the fishbowl. She cried so hard in my arms that I wished she had never loved him at all. But soon she mopped her face with her sleeve and said, "At least I had him for a little while." In her eyes I saw the beauty and growth that come from having loved with the whole heart. I had learned to be guarded with love for fear of being wounded. Love is more joyous than the hurt is painful, her heart was telling me. Let go and love. It's worth the risk.

Children teach us, too, about unconditional love. After my son spilled

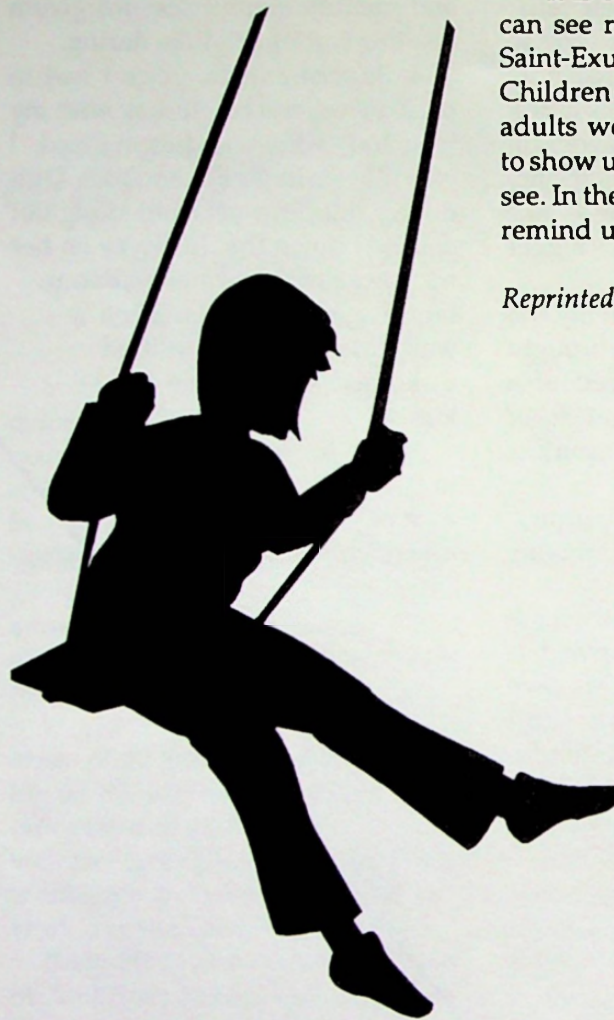
quivering. I was about to mention the baby-sitter when she said, "I know. God will do it." And off she went, back to the ups and downs of the tricycle track. Her simple yet resolute faith that a loving Presence exists revived my own wavering faith. I went off to her father's bedside, my heart braver.

"Children are essentially trusting," says Bennett Sims, the retired Episcopal bishop of Atlanta. "They are born with an



grape juice on a new camel-colored carpet, I let loose a barrage of angry words. Later I told him, "It was an accident. I was wrong to yell at you."

"It's okay, Mommy," he said, winding his arms around me. "I love you when you're good and when you're bad." That moment pierced me with a lesson that has lingered ever since. We love most deeply when we love with the full and indiscriminate compassion of a child.



"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly," writes Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in *The Little Prince*. Children excel at this heart vision. As adults we sometimes need children to show us things we are too clever to see. In their openness to life, they can remind us all what matters most. □

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Addressing Anger (continued from back cover)

should have regained your composure.

• Identify the source of your anger. Are you angry at your boss for passing you over for the recent promotion, or are you distressed by your own lack of initiative? Sometimes it's easier to find a scapegoat for our emotions than it is to address upsetting aspects of our own personalities.

• Talk it out. When you confront the offending person, remember that the goal of the discussion is to solve the problem, not assign blame. Avoid name-calling, public confrontations or any other scenario that will antagonize the opposing party.

• Listen, without interrupting. Try to understand the other person's viewpoint. Listening shows respect and may help defuse anger.

• Apologize, when you've done or said something wrong.

In the long run, carrying grudges and blowing up over minor setbacks do the most harm to the one experiencing the hostile feelings. Often, anger can be avoided. For example, the next time you find yourself faced with a mile-long line at the supermarket, don't throw hostile glances at the lackadaisical sales clerk or

nudge the customer in front of you with your grocery cart. Instead, peruse a magazine or make a to-do list for the next day.

Controlling anger doesn't mean never getting angry. There are times when angry feelings are justified — even called for. However, anger without forgiveness can be a harmful formula. Forgiving and forgetting should be the healthy, soothing conclusion to any angry outburst. □

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Addressing Anger

Your jaw clenches, nostrils flare, heart races, blood pressure surges — you are angry. You got a \$50 speeding ticket in your rush to make a 12:30 lunch, and now your lunch date is 30 minutes late. This morning, your son spilled grape juice all over your newly upholstered couch. And you should be on vacation, but your companion got the flu. Life's many irritants are enough to make us lose control 20 times a day. But it is precisely in response to the "little things" — traffic jams, long lines, distracted clerks — that we should strive to control our emotions.

In small doses, anger is normal and can even be a healthy emotion. Anger can serve as a great motivator, inspiring us to address problems and resolve issues. But anger can also be dangerous. Uncontrolled anger often spawns violence, which can lead

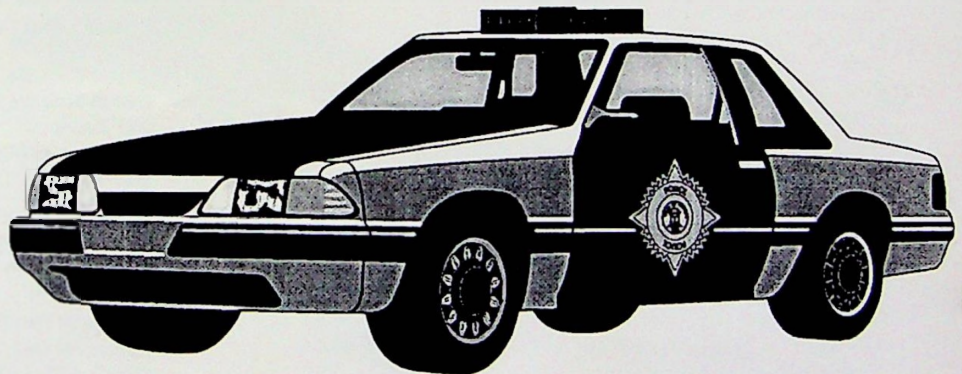
to job termination, estrangement from friends or loved ones, injury or death. Homicide — often the result of uncontrolled anger — is the second leading cause of death among adolescents and young adults.

The ability to express anger fairly and constructively is an important skill and can be an asset on the job. Learning to cope with the everyday pressures that arise at home and at

work without blowing up is a skill to be practiced and perfected. The next time you feel yourself getting angry, try these simple strategies:

• Before acting on your anger, take a few minutes to calm down. Close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths. By the time you open your eyes, you

(continued on page 22)



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“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help”

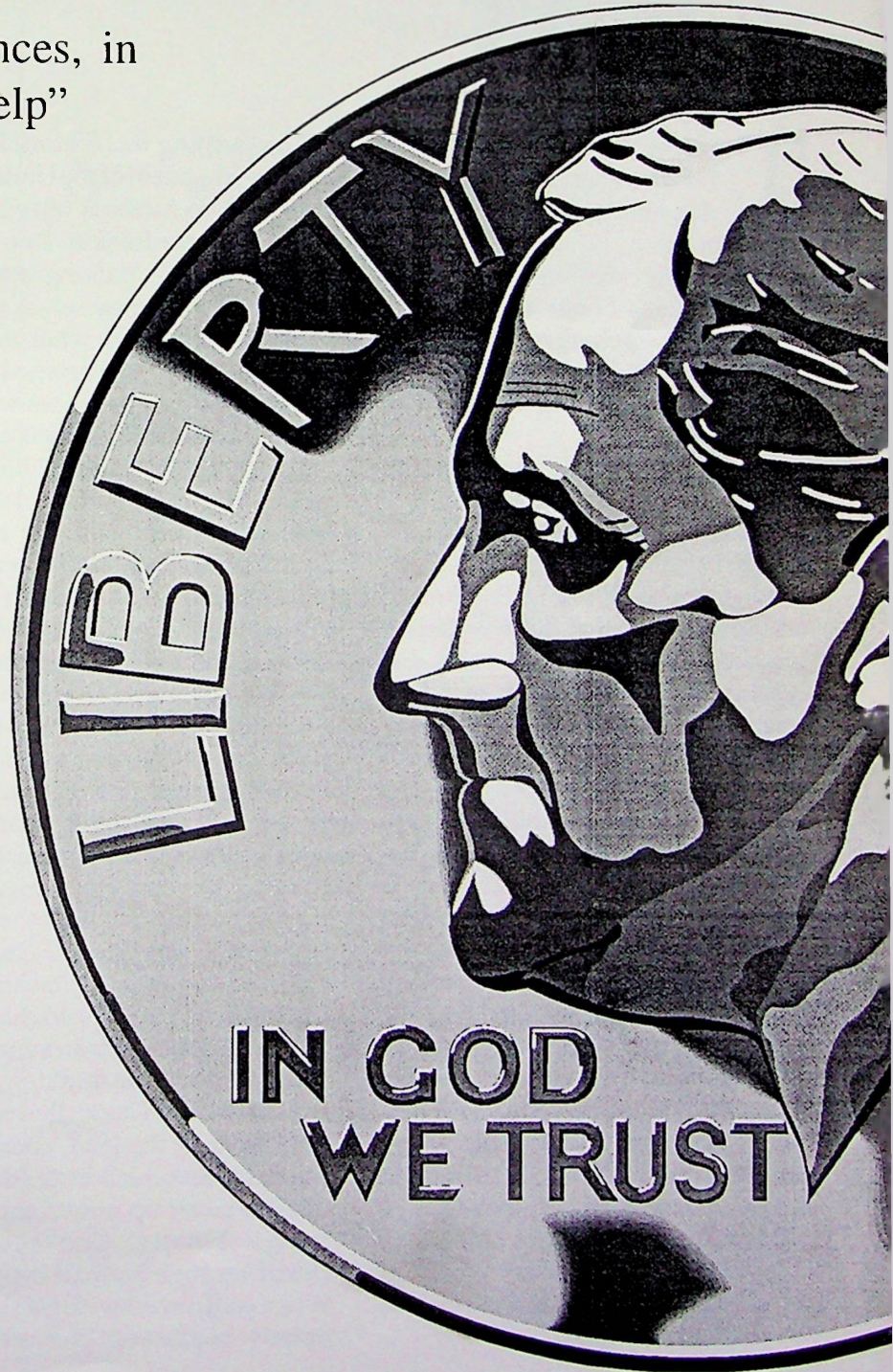
Psalm 146:3



“The Lord says to my Lord,
‘sit at my right hand until I
make your enemies your
footstool’”

Psalm 110:1

Who Do
You Trust?





Trust Not In Princes

- T**rust n.
1. Firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing.
 2. Custody; care.
 3. Something committed into the care of another; charge.
 4. a. The condition and resulting obligation of having confidence placed in one.
b. One in which confidence is placed.
 5. Reliance on something in the future; hope.

When I was living in England, it was understood that there were two subjects that one should avoid discussing if you wanted to maintain polite conversation: religion and politics. I know that there are some readers among you who feel that THE RESTITUTION HERALD should be only about religion and should not be partisan or political. I agree that this is not the place for expressing partisan political opinions, however, the whole Christian faith is premised on the understanding that one day the governments of this world will be conquered by the Messiah "and the government shall be upon His shoulders." So, from time to time as we consider our faith and our efforts to live as citizens of the kingdom of God, even while we are citizens of this "present evil age," we will need to wrestle with the issues of this world's governments.

I am writing this editorial the day after the President of the United States appeared on national television and offered his confession. I've listened to the late night "talking heads" discussing among themselves what the President said and what the President didn't say. I've listened to some of the radio call-in shows where ordinary people voiced their opinions: "forgive him"; "impeach him"; "I'm sick of hearing about it." I've heard how "the President's poll numbers have held strong" etc. *ad nauseum*.

I suppose I'm like many of you. I'm trying to interpret and understand these events from the viewpoint of my faith. What does my understanding of God and His word teach me, and how should I respond? I'm not going to give you the answers in this editorial, other than to say that, as Christians, we must be cautious not to allow our thinking to be shaped by the pundits or the opinion polls but by the word of God.

To be honest, the "soap opera" surrounding our President and his indiscretions sounds an awful lot like a biblical story. I'm thinking of David and Bathsheba. David, the most powerful ruler in the land, committed a shameful act which he tried to cover up. The cover up only compounded things. Finally, God confronted David through Nathan the prophet. When confronted with his sin, David openly confessed "I have sinned

against the Lord." David received from the Lord complete forgiveness, yet there were still consequences to those actions.

None of us can peer into the heart of the President and determine the level of sincerity of his confession. I personally did not feel that his words to the American people were a complete confession. I felt that he used his confession as an opportunity to blame others. This is something akin to if King David had said to Nathan: "Okay, I admit I did some indecent things with Bathsheba and tried to cover it up, but that's between Michal and me, it's none of the people of Israel's business, and I wish you'd get off my back now, Nathan!"

How should we respond to the President's confession? We are required by Jesus Christ to forgive others, but forgiveness does not guarantee that there will be no consequences. If someone injures us in some way, we are to forgive them. We are not to seek retaliation or retribution. But even if we, as individuals, forgive, the society still has a right to punish individuals for their crimes.

Will the President have to face any consequences for his actions? That's ultimately for the Congress to decide. As individuals we are to honor and submit to the office of those who are in authority over us, even if we disapprove of their conduct.

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The Restitution Herald

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN." (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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The Trust Abraham Had in God

BY JAMES MATTISON – PELZER, SC

We are asked to have the same trust, or faith, or belief that Abraham had. How Abraham arrived at that complete trust in God we see outlined in Romans 4:19-21. We quote (KJV):

And being not weak in faith, he [Abraham] *considered not* his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He *staggered not* at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, *giving glory to God*. And *being fully persuaded* that what he had promised, he was also able to perform.

The reasons Abraham bore the son of promise were that he: 1) considered not, 2) staggered not, 3) gave glory to God, and 4) was fully persuaded. If we are to have that same complete trust in God that Abraham had — trust that what God promised would come to pass — we can follow these same steps and receive God's promise.

Consider Not

Abraham didn't dwell on, or take into account the fact of nature that he and Sarah were too old to have children. He didn't ignore it. He knew it was physically impossible for them to have children. What he did do was to concentrate so hard on God's faithfulness that he knew this physical handicap would be overcome by the Almighty. The fact was, Abraham

was not "weak in faith" but "strong in faith" as this passage says. Abraham's faith was so strong that he didn't consider the fact that he and Sarah were too old. God promised them they would have a son, and Abraham didn't even consider that God couldn't bring it about.

God is stronger than our fears. We can overcome all things by faith.



Staggered Not

At first Sarah laughed. She had to grow in faith. Abraham laughed too, but it was not a laugh of unbelief, but a laugh of rejoicing, as was Sarah's laugh when Isaac was born. She said then, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me" (Gen. 21:6). They didn't stagger at what God had said. Abraham didn't say, "How is God going to do this?" or, "Everyone knows old people can't have children" or, "This is too hard to believe." *He believed God*. He did not stagger.

A person who staggers or wavers in faith will not receive anything from God (James 1:6, 7). Our enemy is always trying to get us to consider our circumstances rather than *believe* what *God* has said. But God is stronger than our circumstances. The en-

emy in Eden said, "Well, God has said this, but have you thought about this?" They chose to stagger, or waver, but Abraham didn't. Our enemy knows that if we can be turned from what God said, we won't receive the blessing.

Yes, we have to acknowledge the facts, but we don't have to dwell on them. God is stronger than our fears. We can overcome all things by faith (1 John 5:4). Abraham knew he was one hundred years old, but he *refused to waver* or stagger at that fact, because he believed what God said: "You will have a son."

Give Glory to God

Notice the next step: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, *giving glory to God*." What does this mean? To this writer it means he thanked God and praised God for the coming son *before* the son was born. He gave glory to God. Abraham had had many dealings with God before this time. God had talked to him 25 years before this, had told him to leave his people and go to a land He would give him. Abraham had developed faith because it had been proved to him over and over that God was true. He could glorify God as though the son were already born, because he knew what God had promised *would* come to pass, that God could speak of things that be not as though they were. So he glorified God.

We, too, are to glorify God before the answer comes. Why would we pray if we didn't think we would receive the answer? This is what Jesus said in Mark 11:24: "All things for which you pray and ask, *believe that you have received them*, and they will be granted you" (NASV). Possibly this is also the meaning in Philippians 4:6: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God" (NASV).

When we are in some particularly desperate circumstance and cry out to God for help we have faith that He can change the circumstance in some way and deliver us. So we can thank Him beforehand, too. We can give glory to God.

Be Fully Persuaded

Abraham was strong in faith, so he didn't consider the circumstances, or stagger at the promise of God through unbelief. He even glorified God before the event happened. Why? Because he was fully persuaded. This

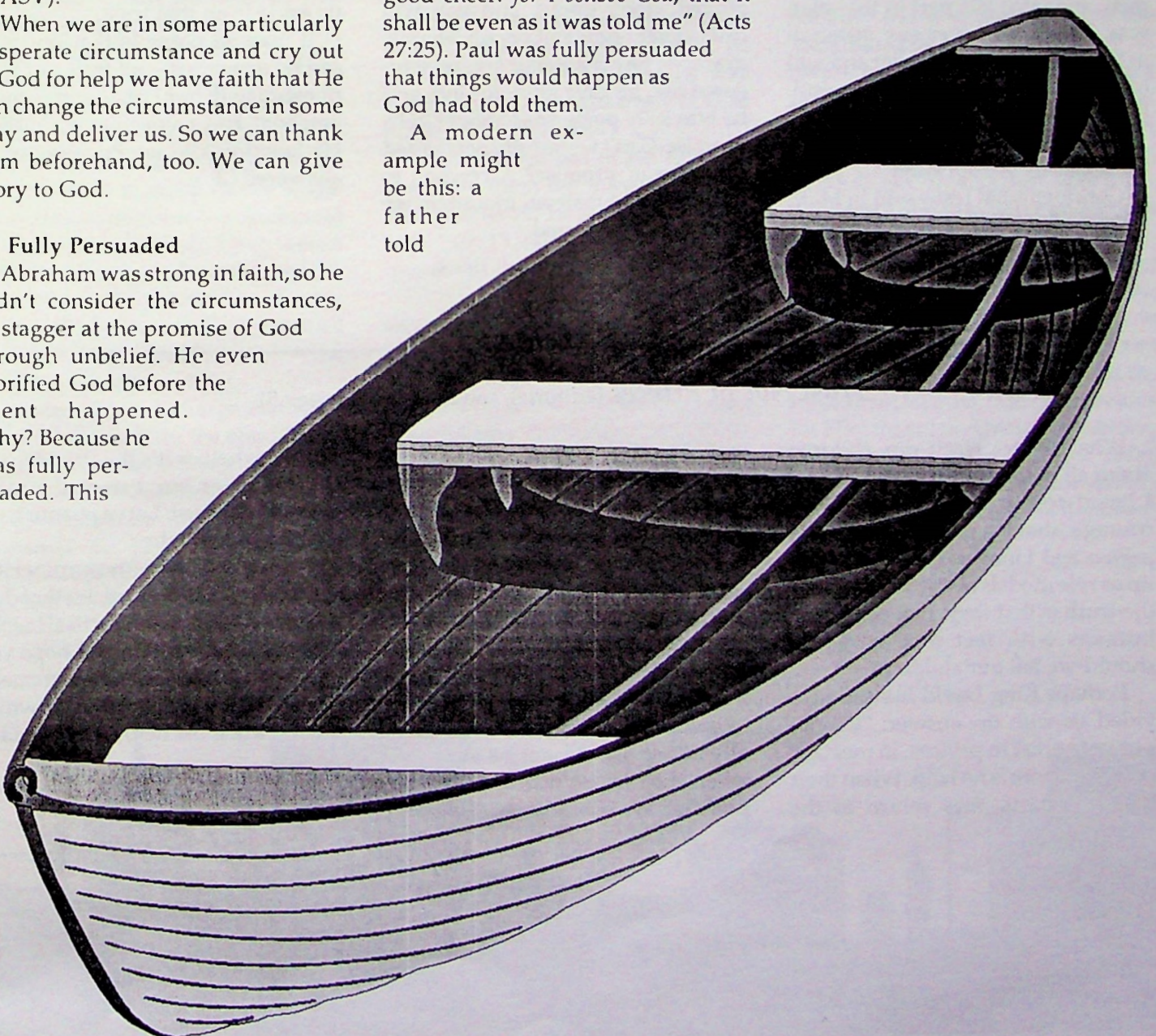
was his part of the deal. God had promised. He had to believe. He had to be fully persuaded that what God said God would do.

Notice Paul practicing this step on board the ship. The storm was so severe that the men on board believed they were about to drown. But Paul encouraged them. He told them an angel of God had given him a good message. The ship would be lost, but none of them would die. Then he said, "Wherefore sirs, be of good cheer: *for I believe God*, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25). Paul was fully persuaded that things would happen as God had told them.

A modern example might be this: a father told

his fifteen-year-old son that when he was sixteen and had his driver's license, the father would buy him a second-hand car. The son went around telling his friends his dad was going to get him a car. He hadn't seen the car, didn't have the keys, and hadn't even passed the driver's test. Why did he tell everyone he was going to have a car? Because he believed his father. We can believe God when He promises us some blessing.

(continued on page 6)



Jesus our Lord was fully persuaded about God. He trusted Him completely. He was obedient to what His Father wanted Him to do. God gave Him the Spirit without measure, and Jesus went about doing good with it, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Jesus didn't like the thought of dying, but He bowed His heart and said, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." Jesus had read the Old Testament. He knew the whole story of God's plan to redeem men, and what His part in that plan was. There was never any question in His mind about the power and will of God to do what God had in mind. Jesus *knew* God.

Present-Day Application

Consider what Jesus said in Mark 11:22-24. Jesus tells us to have faith in

God. He said, "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain [problem], 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you" (NASV).

Here is a promise from God's Son, our Lord, to help us in this life. If there is a problem, ask that it be removed, don't doubt, and you will find relief. Remember Abraham's example: he considered not, he staggered not, he gave glory to God, and he was fully persuaded about God's promise. Can't we be fully persuaded about Jesus' promise? According to this passage, whatever mountain we have can be removed.

While we wait for Jesus to come to make us immortal and establish the Kingdom of God here on earth, we maintain our confident trust in Him and in God's Word. We live by faith. We refuse to give in to our pain or approaching death or any other circumstance that might cause us to stagger. We consider not the evil of this age, *knowing* the faithfulness of Him who promised a coming righteous peaceful empire of God on earth. Nothing present now can turn us aside from that trust.

It may be possible that our faith can be deepened, and thus our relationship with our Lord become more personal and enjoyable, because of His goodness to us. Prayers can be answered. □

Trust Not In Princes (editorial, continued from page 5)

What do we teach our children about all of this? When I was a child I heard stories of truthfulness and courage about men such as Washington and Lincoln. They were held up as role models of virtue. Of course the truth is that they, too, were only humans with feet of clay. What should we tell our children?

Perhaps King David himself provided us with the answer: "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the

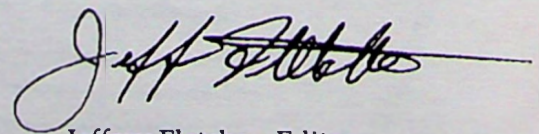
earth; on that very day their plans perish. Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God" (Psalm 146:3-5).

The trust we have in human beings must be tempered with the knowledge that human beings are just that, only human. This is not an excuse for us to live untrustworthy lives. As individuals we should strive to imitate God, but when we look at others, we should not be surprised when they let us down and disappoint us. We should not make other

people, whether it's the President or our Pastor or our Parent the main object of our trust. Let us put our trust ultimately in God.

This issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD has a number of articles that deal with trust, and some practical help in our marriage and family. I hope you find information and encouragement. Please write and let me know which articles are most helpful to you. □

Grace and Peace,



Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor

“Put This Money to Work”

BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE — OREGON, IL

Let us look at one of the parables Jesus gave during His earthly ministry, “The Parable of the Minas,” recorded in Luke 19:11-27. The occasion and purpose of this parable are given in verse 11: “They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.” Had it not been for the church age, Israel would have been expected to pass from the cross to the kingdom. Jesus’ hearers failed to grasp God’s whole program as it relates to the three great groups of mankind: They erred dispensationally, and overlooked the church age in which we live, the period in which God is calling out of all nations a people for His name — the church (*ekklesia*).

This parable is a charge that Jesus left His followers for the church age. The man of noble birth is Jesus Christ, “who went into a far country [heaven] to receive for himself a kingdom and to return” (v. 12). This illustration was familiar to Jesus’ hearers. During New Testament times, it was com-

mon for a ruler to go to Rome to receive authority to rule over a certain territory. Jesus’ hearers did not understand that there would be a long interval between Jesus’ first coming and His second coming. During this interval, the church would be built, while its Head (Christ) was enthroned at the right hand of God (Luke 24:51; Heb. 4:14).

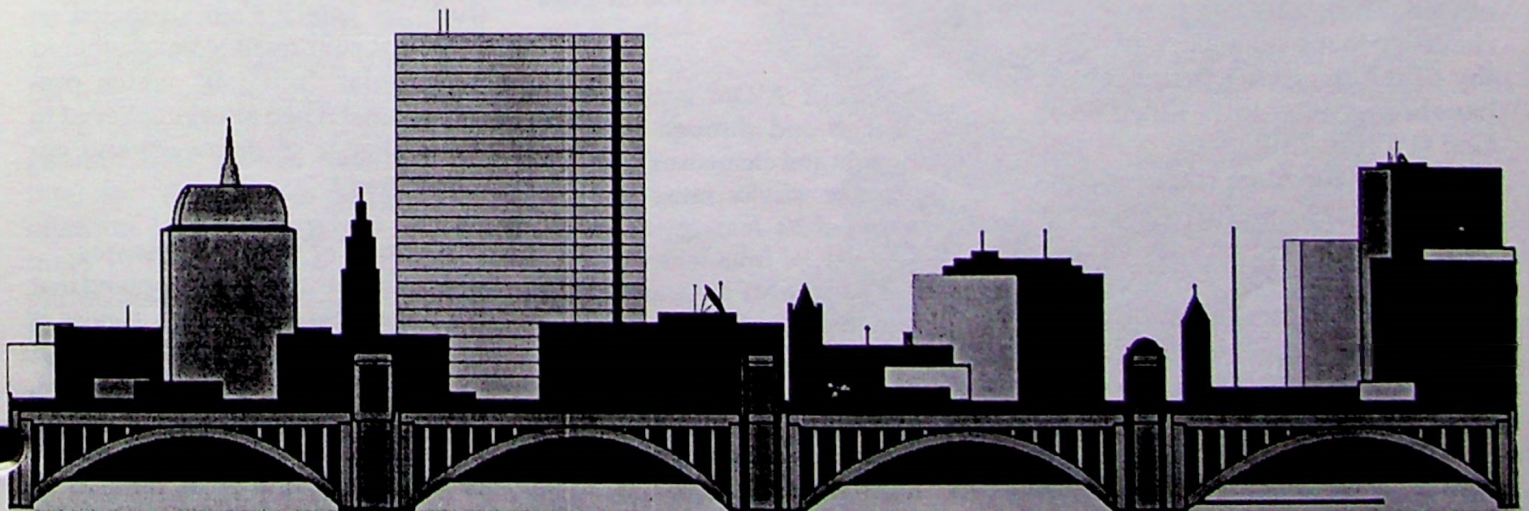
“So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back’” (v. 13, NIV). A mina (pound) was about three month’s wages.

This is also a parable of the second advent. We are accountable to the Lord for the way we use our means and our time. Make no mistake — there will be a day of reckoning when Jesus returns. The parable makes that clear.

One man in the illustration gained ten minas and was given charge over ten cities. Another one gained five and was given charge over five cities. The third man came and said: “Sir,

here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man” (vv. 20, 21). This third one was called a “wicked servant,” was judged harshly, and was thrown out of the kingdom. His sin was in failing to invest his mina and not gaining a profit for his master. Stewardship is important. “Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). Someday Jesus will return and say: “Give an account of thy stewardship” (Luke 16:2).

God has ordained that Jesus Christ should rule over planet earth in the age to come from David’s throne in Jerusalem. Some day He will exert His authority over all nations. In the meantime let’s be faithful servants for Him that at the Great Day we may hear from His matchless lips: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt. 25:23). □



THE BIBLE

Aionios: The Word to Unlock the Future

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD — BROOKS, GA

Two things struck me recently as evidence that the Bible is not holding its own against the winds of theological confusion which are blowing so violently in the 1990s. Firstly, an article in the *Brethren Life* magazine in which only one of ten writers grappling with the issue of homosexuality felt able actually to include in his assessment of the problem the fact that the Bible condemns homosexuality as a sin serious enough to keep you out of the Kingdom (salvation). Secondly, an article which presented statistics to show that the born-again camp in America generally behaves no better, if not rather worse, than the group which claims no rebirth experience.

If believers really understood what is at stake in being a Christian, I am sure they would find their resources to be radically different from the world's. I think the trouble is that many do not grasp the awesome nature of their destiny as co-regents with Christ in the coming Kingdom of God. They cannot thrill to Paul's challenge that we should walk worthy of the staggering invitation we have been given — to the Kingdom of God (1 Thess. 2:12).

Until the Kingdom comes into focus in people's spiritual vision, the situation is likely to remain unchanged. In this brief study I suggest that the foggy translation of a key Greek word keeps Bible readers in the dark about their future and the future of the world. It also helps to propagate the monstrous notion that God is going to torture the wicked forever.

In 1855 Charles Kingsley helped to dispel the darkness with which Platonism had shrouded the truth of Scripture in regard to the future. He declared:

The word "AION" [age] is never used in Scripture or anywhere else in the sense of endlessness (vulgarly called eternity). It always meant, both in Scripture and out, a period of time AIONIOS therefore means, and must mean, belonging to an epoch, or the epoch; AIONIOS KOLASIS (eternal punishment) [Matt. 25:46; cp. 2 Thess. 1:9] is the punishment allotted to that epoch.

Tradition rose to oppose this idea when Dr. Pusey preached a sermon at Oxford to maintain that *aionios* ("ay-ohn-ios") in classical Greek does mean endlessness. But classical Greek is a poor measure of the Hebrew-orientated New Testament language. Samuel Cox (for ten years editor of *The Expositor*) replied by pointing out that:

the word AION is saturated through and through with the thought and element of time. The adjective *aionios* must take the whole of its meaning from the noun AION from which it is derived. In the NT the word is used in connection with the Jewish doctrine of the aeons. Instead of affirming that time shall be no more when men pass out of this present order and age, the NT speaks of "ages to come" as well as "ages that are past."

The Bible recognizes the patriarchal age, the Mosaic age, and in the future, "the age of the Messiah" or "the age to come." No wonder then that Paul spoke of God's "purpose for the ages." *Aionios* refers to the great age to come and God's great purpose for that age (Luke 20:35).

In 1877 Cannon Farrar added the weight of his scholarship to the emerging light of truth by asserting that "it has been so ably proved by so many writers that there is no authority whatever for rendering *aionios* as 'everlasting.'" Nevertheless the public were continuing to read in their inadequate translations that God was going to usher the wicked into "everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46) and that the same wicked would suffer "eternal punishment." In this way the fog of Platonism continued to interfere with the inspired word. The latter could not be heard clearly as long as the confusion of Greek philosophical concepts jammed the pure Hebrew signals of God's word. The truth, for which Paul struggled so valiantly, continued to be smothered by popular "religion" which preferred what it had always believed to the challenge of discovery and enlightenment.

Derivation of the Word *aionios*

Moulton and Milligan contend that the Sanskrit *aye*, to which *aionios* is related, contains the ideas of life and long life. In the Septuagint (LXX), AION (age) translates no less than nine different Hebrew expressions, of which the one most familiar to Jews is the famous word OLAM =

age. Interestingly, in the vocabulary of Plato the word AION applies to things belonging to the world of eternal ideas. It is that (pagan) meaning which has been foisted on our translations, as though Platonic metaphysics are the basis of what the prophets and Jesus said about the future! Little wonder, then, that people expect souls to enter at death the eternal, heavenly realm. But nobody could have got that impression from the Bible if *aiionios* had been allowed to retain its Hebraic association with God's plan of the ages. What the Bible promises is the "life of the age to come" consequent upon resurrection into the Kingdom to be established on earth when Jesus comes back.

Platonically-minded writers and thinkers, then, will use *aiionios* in the transcendent and timeless sense in which Plato used it. The word deserves to be heard in its Hebraic environment, but it is often obscured. In Bible times we shall naturally find the pagan, Platonic meaning current in Alexandria, that great home of Platonizing philosophy, and also in the writings of the philosophically minded first-century Jew Philo.

Use of the Word *aiionios*

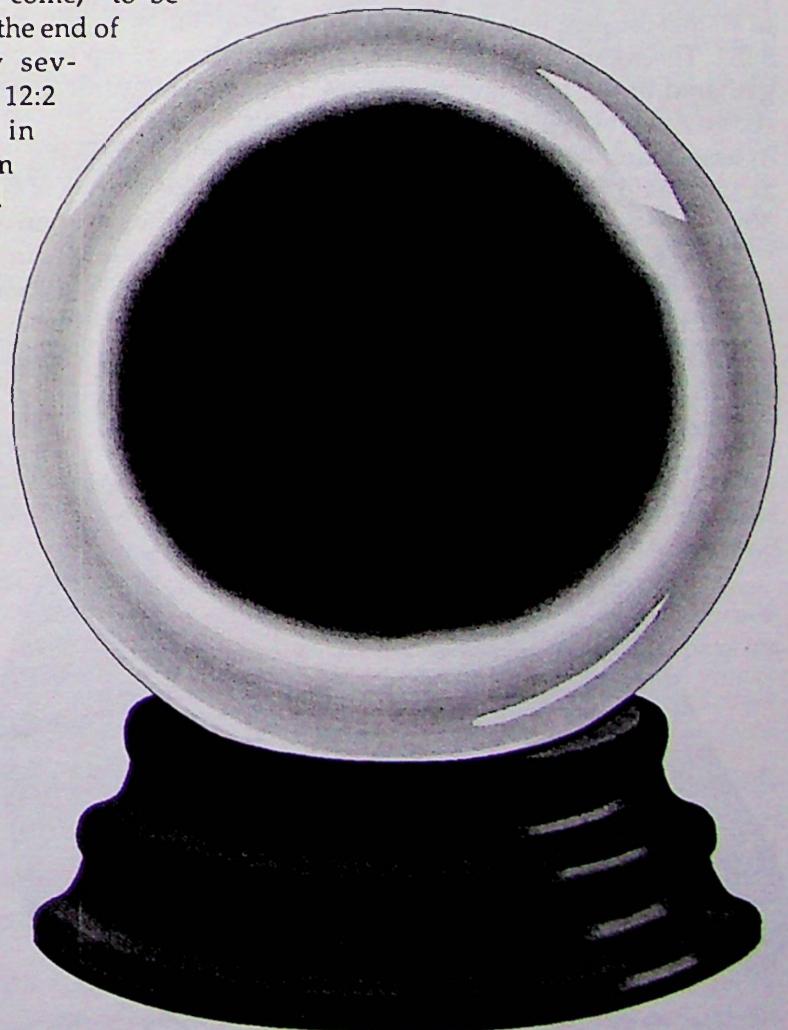
In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament (written in Greek) *aiionios* occurs over 160 times. One of these texts is of paramount interest to us: Daniel 12:2, where it describes the resurrection life of those who after the tribulation emerge from their sleep of death in the dust of the ground. Here *aiionios* modifies *zoe* (life) and this famous phrase was often on Jesus' lips. It appears 40 times in the NT, along with other phrases endorsed by Jesus and drawn from Daniel, i.e., "son of man" and "kingdom of heaven." Daniel provided Jesus with a storehouse of phrases and ideas, all of which have been tragically distorted or ignored by Platonically-oriented theology.

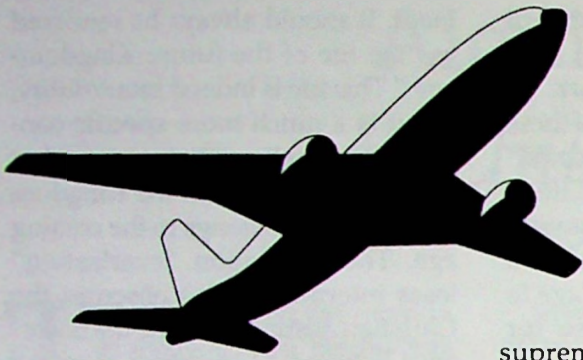
The phrases "eternal life" and "everlasting life" appear in our standard translations. They reflect the Platonizing influence at work on translators. The real meaning of these phrases is "the life of the age to come" or "life in the age to come." "Life in the age to come" is synonymous with "life in the future Kingdom of God on the earth." The "life of the age to come" gives the right sense for Daniel's "life of the age" (Dan. 12:2). This is the Christian hope, and the heart of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

In Daniel *aiionios* refers to the Kingdom to be set up at the return of Jesus. In 7:14 we are told of the "dominion of the age to come." In 7:27 we read of the "kingdom of the age to come," and in 9:24 of the "righteousness of the age to come," to be introduced at the end of the "seventy sevens." Daniel 12:2 reveals that in that Kingdom the resurrected saints will obtain "the life of the age to come." The contrasted fate of the wicked is to be "the shame of the age to come," that is, the punishment which excludes a person from enjoying the life of the age to come. It is that wonderful phrase *chayé olam* (Dan. 12:2), "the life of the age," which

comes across into our New Testament. It should always be rendered as "the life of the future Kingdom-age." This life is indeed immortality, but it is a much more specific concept. *Aionios* tells us that we are going to enjoy life forever in the Kingdom of God, which belongs to the coming age. The translation "everlasting" loses information and obscures the Christian destiny. It is like the difference between "Tomorrow at nine I am going to take you to the airport to catch your plane to Tokyo," and "Sometime in the future you are going to take a trip."

Aioniosis the word which describes those precious facts of the Christian future. Those wonderful events associated with the





future coming of Jesus can be tasted now through the spirit, which grants a downpayment guaranteeing the fullness of the spirit at the return of Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives us a taste of the "powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5). That future age will see the new world of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 19:28) and the restoration of all that the prophets foresaw (Acts 3:21). The tribes of Israel will be regathered in the land and the resurrected Apostles will administer them in association with Jesus in His role as the Davidic Messiah (Luke 22:28-30).

Things described as *aionios* are things which "pertain to the coming age of the Kingdom of God on earth." Try substituting that translation of *aionios* wherever it currently appears as "everlasting" or "eternal." You will

see how prominent the future Kingdom-age is in the New Testament.

The Bible is indeed a forward-looking book, brimming over with hope for a better world to come on this planet. What Christians are to seek as the

supreme reward of faithfulness is the Life of the Age to Come in the Kingdom. Christians are called not only to be *in* the Kingdom but to *be* the Kingdom — the royal family of priests and kings — to assist Jesus in the reordering of our disordered earth (Rev. 1:6; 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:1-6; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Isa. 32:1; Dan. 7:14, 18, 22, 27). The Gospel of the Kingdom is rightly called "the Gospel about the Age to Come" (Rev. 14:6), inadequately translated as "everlasting Gospel."

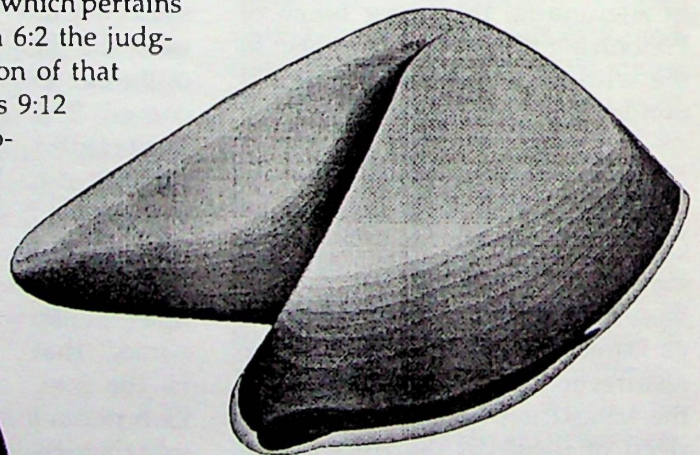
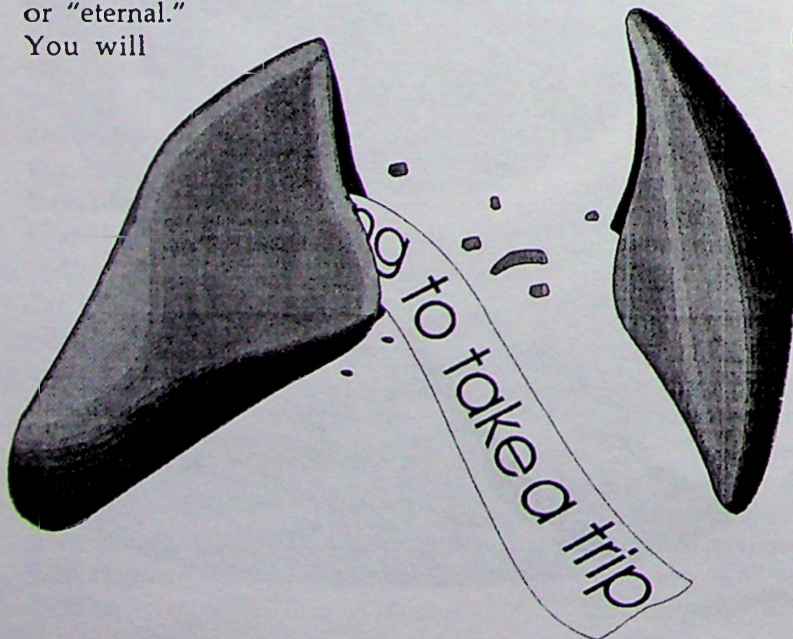
Now try applying this meaning of *aionios* to the book of Hebrews. In 5:9 we have the salvation which pertains to the coming age, in 6:2 the judgment or administration of that coming age. Hebrews 9:12 speaks of the redemption of the

coming age and verse 14 designates the (holy) spirit as the spirit of the age to come. Most appropriately 9:15 speaks of the inheritance (of the Kingdom) of the future age, and 13:20 tells us that the New Covenant has to do with the age to come.

Jesus Himself spoke of the covenant of the Kingdom and kingship which conferred the right to rule on Himself and the apostles, in Luke 22:28-30. "Just as my Father has *covenanted* to me a Kingdom so I covenant with you a Kingdom." This Jesuanic covenant is the climax of the earlier Abrahamic covenant — the promise of land and descendants (Gen. 12:1-4), and the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17) — the promise of a perpetual royal family.

Finally, *aionios*, when properly translated, will dispel the monstrous idea that God intends to torture human beings for ever and ever. The

(continued on page 13)



The Two Genealogies of Jesus

BY ALLON MAXWELL — HEATHMONT, AUSTRALIA

Matthew and Luke both record a genealogy for Jesus. However, while they do include a number of names in common, there are also significant differences. It is clear that they describe two different lineages.

Inevitably, any attempt to resolve this apparent difficulty must contain some degree of speculation. The Bible simply does not spell out the answers as clearly as we would like. Consequently the solution offered here does not claim "infallibility." All it does is present a view which attempts to maintain consistency with other biblical facts. For me personally, it is the most logical of several alternatives which have been proposed by students of the Bible. If any of you do have an alternative view, please note that I do not feel obliged to promote, defend, or discuss the view presented here, to establish its "supremacy" over others. Just receive it if you will.

Two Genealogies for One Man?

Actually there is nothing remarkable about that! All of us have two lines of descent, one through our father and one through our mother. As we shall see, this is the most likely explanation for the differences between the two genealogies in Matthew and Luke.

These two genealogies of Jesus establish that Jesus, His mother Mary, and His adoptive father Joseph are all part of the lineage of Adam, Abraham, Judah, and David.

The importance of that lies in the Gospel claims that Jesus is the fulfillment of promises made by God:

- To Eve, in the Garden of Eden, that through one of her descendants the penalty and other consequences of her sin and Adam's would be undone.
- To Abraham, that through one of his descendants unprecedented blessing would come upon all families of the earth.
- To David, that one of his descendants would also be called Son of God, and inherit the throne to establish the promised everlasting Kingdom.

The genealogy of Matthew is the line of royal inheritance, through David's son Solomon. It establishes that in his time Joseph was the rightful heir to the throne of David. It is from Joseph that Jesus inherits that right. He is the Messiah, the anointed one. But, Matthew also tells us that Joseph is not the natural father of Jesus — and that raises an important question. The terms of God's promise to David require that Jesus should be not only the legal heir, but also the natural descendant of David. How can that be?

That is the point of that second genealogy in Luke. Jesus has his natural descent from David through Mary, whose lineage is traced from Nathan, another of David's sons.

Matthew's Genealogy

Matthew's Gospel gives the appearance of being written more for

Jews. That is probably why his genealogy traces the line of descent back only as far as Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. Matthew's genealogy is clearly that of Joseph. But we have seen that Matthew also tells us that Joseph was not the real father of Jesus. He makes the staggering claim that Jesus is the virgin-born only-begotten Son of God!

During the betrothal of Joseph and Mary, she was found to be pregnant. Joseph would have put her away, if the angel had not intervened to tell him that this was not a case of fornication with some other man, but a miracle from God. It was truly a virgin birth. Mary's child was the one promised, who would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

As the then living heir of David's throne, Joseph would have been very familiar with this promise. It was part of his heritage. How it must have made his heart rejoice as he came to grips with the miracle of the virgin conception. His betrothed had not been unfaithful to her vows, and he was free to marry her.

Best of all, he was the one chosen to foster the Son of God, and pass his throne on to the Messiah.

Joseph and Jeconiah

Although the virgin birth made Jesus the one promised as both Son of God and Son of Man, there is another very important practical reason why it was necessary that the inheritance should come to Him as an adopted son of Joseph. If He was to prosper on the throne of David, His natural descent could not come through

Solomon's line. Centuries earlier, God had said about Jeconiah: "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days; for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David, and ruling again in Judah" (Jer. 22:30).

Neither Joseph himself, nor any of his other natural sons born later by Mary, could expect to prosper on the throne of David. Only Jesus can do that, because, although heir to Jeconiah's throne, he is not the "seed of Jeconiah" — He is adopted! Isn't it remarkable how God takes care of "little" details like that?

Luke's Genealogy

In contrast to Matthew, Luke's Gospel appears to have been written more for Gentile readers. That is probably why Luke's genealogy goes back much further than Matthew's. It traces the line all the way back to Adam, and ultimately to God. The inference is that Jesus is God's provision of a Savior, not only for Jews, but also for all men in all time. Luke makes the same amazing faith-stretching claim as Matthew does about the virgin birth. Matthew tells Joseph's story. Luke, however, tells the story seen through Mary's eyes. In his genealogy, Luke does use Joseph's name at the start, but then he points us somewhat obliquely to Mary, by saying that Jesus was "the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, son of Heli" (Luke 3:23).

It seems more than likely that, to protect Mary from the gossips, the details of the story about the miraculous conception of her son would not have been common knowledge. Even when he had thought Mary guilty of fornication, Joseph was not willing to put her to public shame (Matt. 1:19). And although Joseph learned the truth in a dream, few others would have been likely to believe it! So Mary's reputation was protected by

the silence of those closest to her, and it was simply left for people to "suppose." Luke uses that word "supposed" almost as an aside, to emphasize the miracle believed only by those who agree with Mary that: "with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

Of course it would be possible to place other constructions on Luke's use of Joseph's name. However, given that the virgin birth is central to both Gospels, there is a compelling need to show that Jesus is also the Son of man, naturally descended from David. Luke has done that for us by recording Mary's place in David's line.

Shealtiel and Zerubbabel

Both Matthew and Luke mention these two names (Matthew 1:12-13 and Luke 3:27). Some commentators have claimed that the blood lines of Solomon and Nathan must have been combined somehow by marriage at this point, and that in both Gospels, these two names refer to the same persons. However, if this is really so, it would mean that Luke's genealogy of Mary actually proves that Jesus was a blood descendant of Jeconiah, and therefore unable to prosper on the throne (Jer. 22:24-30).

Genealogies were important to Jews. Most could recite their genealogy from memory. It was their "calling card." Priests, especially, were required to establish their bonafides as full blood members of the tribe of Levi. How much more important for a king who claims to be the Messiah to establish his line of inheritance.

Luke claims to have researched his story carefully (Luke 1:1-4). It seems fairly safe to assume that he includes his genealogy for Jesus in that claim, especially since it differs from Matthew's. That confirmation would certainly have been possible, either from a member of the family

who could recite the names of his ancestors from memory, or from the public records.

Thus there is no reason to doubt that Luke has taken the necessary care to get it right, and that there is a logical and important reason for these two completely different genealogies, a reason which does not in any way compromise the accuracy of the Bible record. Although Matthew does have several unexplained omissions of names, he does agree with the Old Testament genealogies of the royal line through Solomon. On the other hand Luke has made it clear that his Shealtiel and Zerubbabel are descended from Nathan, not Solomon. The names of their immediate ancestors and descendants are not found at all in the Old Testament lists of Solomon's descendants.

It is obvious that Matthew's Shealtiel and Zerubbabel are not the same as Luke's. Thus there is nothing in Luke's genealogy to link Jesus to Jeconiah — and there is no barrier to His prosperity on the throne of David.

Was Mary from Judah or Levi?

If Jesus is of the "seed of David," He must also be from the tribe of Judah. However there are some skeptics who claim that Mary was from the tribe of Levi, and that therefore, if Mary was a virgin, Jesus could not be of the tribe of Judah, or descended from David. This claim that Mary was from the tribe of Levi is based on a misunderstanding of Luke 1:5 and 1:36, which refer to Elizabeth as "of the daughters of Aaron" and Mary's "cousin" (KJV) or "kinswoman" (RSV).

"Kinswoman" does not necessarily mean the closer blood relationship implied by our common English use of the word "cousin." In the Jewish culture, it can just as easily mean that Mary and Elizabeth were distantly related by marriage, rather than

by a close blood tie. It would certainly be possible for them to share a common ancestor from the tribe of Judah, one of whose daughters had married into the tribe of Levi. There is no real difficulty in understanding how Mary and Elizabeth could be related as "kinswomen," but from different tribes. Certainly Hebrews 7:11-14 is quite definite that Jesus is not from Levi, but from the tribe of Judah.

Born King of the Jews

This is Matthew's claim about Jesus (Matt. 2:2). It is central to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Jesus claims to be the heir of the throne of David, who will establish the Kingdom for ever (Luke 1:32-33). The Gospel stands or falls on the truth of this claim by Jesus. That is why those

genealogies are so important. They are not simply boring lists of names with no purpose! They give us the blood line of descent for Joseph, from whom Jesus inherited the right to the throne. They give us the blood line of Mary, through whom Jesus is legitimately descended from David. When they were written in the first century, they threw down the gauntlet for Jews to examine that claim by checking out the credentials of Jesus in the genealogies held on public record!

Is Jesus King of the Jews?

This was the charge leveled against Him when He was questioned by Pilate (Matt. 27:11) and to which Jesus confessed (Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 18:37). It was the charge on which Pilate sentenced Him to crucifixion (Matt. 27:37). It was written in He-

brew, Latin and Greek (John 19:20), the three major languages spoken in the world of that time, and placed on the cross with Him. It was the unwitting admission of the soldiers who kneeled before Him in mock homage, when they tortured and tormented Him just before they crucified Him (Matt. 27:29). Most important of all — this was **the truth** which God upheld when He declared Jesus innocent of any sin, by raising Him from the dead (Rom. 1:3-4). By this, we may know beyond question: God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36)! □

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Aionios: *The Word to Unlock the Future* (continued from page 9)

punishment to be inflicted on the incorrigibly wicked is "aionian fire" (Matt. 25:41). It would be quite wrong to think of this as everlasting fire. The same expression appears in Jude 7, where we learn that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the penalty of "eternal fire" (see KJV, etc.). But was that fire literally everlasting? Of course not; it has long since ceased to burn. It was in fact "the fire of the age to come," supernatural fire, fire which will likewise burn up the wicked and consume them as smoke (Ps. 37:20). The ruin of Sodom is the model for the ruin of the present wicked world. This judgment will happen when Jesus returns (2 Thess. 2:7-9). "Everlasting (*aionios*) destruction" really means "the destruction to be brought about when the age to come arrives."

This gives no support for popular ideas about "eternal punishment."

Christians should take time to show their friends and neighbors these keys to understanding God's wonderful plans for the future. A proper understanding of *aionios* sheds a brilliant light on God's revelation. This information is readily available to truth-seekers. Early in this century the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* stated: "The adjective *aionios* ('everlasting') does not in itself mean 'unending.'" This applies to Daniel 12:2 which describes the future life of Christians as the life of the age to come. It applies to the fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah thousands of years ago, which was not "everlasting" (Jude 7).

The late Nigel Turner, Ph.D. (a world famous scholar of New Testa-

ment Greek), wrote: "It would be imprecise to translate *aionios* as 'eternal.' It means 'belonging to the future age or dispensation'" (*Christian Words*, T & T Clark, 1980, pp. 452, 455, 456). He was right. Often these gems of understanding go no further than learned books. They belong in preaching and teaching.

Translations of the Bible may sometimes reflect not the truth of the inspired original but merely a prejudice in favor of established traditional doctrine. One of the tasks of the Bible scholar is to expose such misinformation. The Bible must be rescued from the corrupting influence of paganism which hit the church from the second century onwards. Paganism has affected Christianity in all of its central doctrines, including the doctrine of God — but that is another story. □

THE BIBLE

Israel, God's Chosen

BY FRANCIS BURNETT — BELLE PLAINE, IA

During the time I was growing up and endeavoring to learn about the Bible and the many teachings it presents, ministers preached and taught all of what we call the major teachings of the Bible. It was not unusual during the evangelistic meetings my church had at least twice a year for a message to be on the return of Israel to the land of Palestine (now Israel). Yet, the nation was seldom mentioned in the news because it was under the mandate of England, according to what was known during those years as the Treaty of the White Paper. It was in 1948 on May 15th that Israel became a nation with its own government, as it is today. Since that time Israel has made the headlines time and again because of wars, social unrest, and interference with Arab nations which today demand that Israel give to the PLO quite a lot of the land it conquered, which includes Jerusalem. Many nations are in the news, but no nation causes more concern, at least to the government of the United States, than Israel. This is a fulfillment of prophecy. We read, "the LORD . . . declares: 'I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. . . I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves'" (Zech. 12:1-3, NIV). The nation of Israel today is not the nation it will be in the Kingdom of God. It has an earthly government. In the future, it will have the godly government established in David's reign with Jesus as the king.

Israel is, has been, and will be a very special nation before God first and then before the whole world. It began with Abraham when God said to him, "I will make you fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you" (Gen. 17:6, NIV). The covenant (agreement) made between God and Abraham was to be everlasting. The nation became fully established through Jacob's sons. To make it legal, God changed Jacob's name to Israel. The Hebrew word means "he shall rule with God." It comes from a combination of two words which mean prevailer and power. God's covenant with Jacob and the changing of Jacob's name gave Israel a very special place in relationship with God. No other nation, ever, has been given such a status; nor will any ever be given it. Moses, as a representative of God, said to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, 'Let my son go, so he may worship me'" (Ex. 4:22, 23, NIV). The Psalmist wrote, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance" (Psalm 33:12, NIV). This principle is good for any nation, but the writer is referring here to Israel — the chosen of God. Again we read, "But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen" (Isa. 44:1, NIV). There are other expressions used in the Old Testament to show God's great love for Israel, such as when He likens Himself to a mother to Israel, and when He says, "whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye," (Zech. 2:8).

Israel's history began with Abraham and continued through Isaac, then Jacob and his 12 sons. Due to famine, Jacob took his family to Egypt after having sent his sons after grain for food. As we know, Joseph had been sold to a caravan who later sold him to an officer in Egypt. A total of 70 male descendants of Isaac, including Joseph and two sons, lived in Egypt. Israel lived in Egypt for more than 400 years, and became enslaved. Their cries of abuse went up to God. God heard their cries and sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Moses did lead Israel out of Egypt, after ten plagues were brought upon that nation due to the stubbornness of the Pharaoh. Israel came out of Egypt more than 600,000 men strong in number. This number did not include any below the age of 20, and probably did not include the Levites.

After 40 years of testing due to rebelliousness, Israel was led across the Jordan river by Joshua. They took the land of Canaan and divided it among the 12 tribes. The Levites did not get a portion of land but were furnished with cities throughout the land where they lived.

Israel was a rebellious people who did not always follow God's laws and commands. They wanted to live like the people of the nations around them, and they did. Finally, in keeping with what God had declared even while Moses was alive, God brought destruction, first by Assyria against the ten tribes of the northern nation, and then by Babylon against Judah and Benjamin. (For information about what God had told Israel He would

bring on them, see Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28). Since about 585 BC, Israel has been without a king. Many Israelites did return in about 505 BC to the land of Canaan (or Israel even then). Yet, only about 50,000 returned out of a possible 500,000 who had been removed by Assyria and Babylon. In addition, they had no appointed High Priest as they were to have under the law of God. We read, "For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king" (Hosea 3:4, 5a, NIV). The book of Hosea dates from after the return in 505 BC, so it is a prophecy of the time after that date and on into the future. Yes, today, Israel has taken its common name and has a government. However, David is not currently their king.

None of this past history has taken away from the many promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and through the prophets. Israel is still God's "firstborn son," the nation He has "chosen," and "the apple of His eye."

In Isaiah 62:12 we read, "Then you will be called the LORD's own people, the Ones he rescued! Your city will be known as a good place to live and a city full of people" (Contemporary English Version).

Israel did not follow the laws and commandments of God. For this He allowed them to be scattered to all parts of the earth. "I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions" (Ezek. 36:19, NIV). God did separate Himself from Israel. Isaiah 50:1 reads, "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away? . . . Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your

mother was sent away." Actually, when examining the content of that quotation, it should be agreed that God did not give Israel a divorce but sold her and sent her away. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2 NIV).

Since sin was the reason that God discarded Israel and cast the nation out of His sight, it might seem that for those of us who are reading this written message there is no hope. But each of us knows that God has provided for the sin of the world, which certainly includes the nation of Israel, through His Son Jesus Christ. It is because of God's mercy that any and all will find grace in His sight. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee" (Isa. 54:7). God will gather Israel again to the land which was first promised to Abraham and his seed. "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.' For the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they" (Jer. 31:10, 11, NIV). Many are the promises of God to Israel, "His firstborn son," that God will keep because no promise that God has made will go unfulfilled. "But now, this is what the LORD says — he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine' (Isa. 43:1, NIV). Again, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth — everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed

and made" (Isa. 43:5-7, NIV). It should be here noted that "by my name" is included in the meaning of the name, Israel. God promised Abraham that his seed coming after him would inherit land, much land and much greater than the land of Canaan. In fact, it was to reach to the east as far as the Euphrates River — even the Persian Gulf. Several years ago, a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem had his class examine history to determine how much of the land promised to Abraham had been occupied by Israel. The class determined that Israel had only occupied 3% of that promised land.

God's outstanding love for Israel is shown in these words:

For your Maker is your husband — the LORD Almighty is his name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit — a wife who married young, only to be rejected, says your God. For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back" (Isa. 54:5, 6, NIV).

But, it is asked, what about the brazen sin(s) that Israel committed against God? The question should be asked and there are Bible answers — answers from the Lord God. "I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me" (Jer. 33:8, NIV). Again, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt" (Ezek. 36:33, NIV). Yet another: "You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths

of the sea. You will be true to Jacob [Israel], and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago" (Micah 7:19, 20, NIV).

It is well understood that Jesus died for the sins of the world. There is yet another question: Will God forgive Israel aside from the sacrifice of Jesus? The answer is an emphatic *no!* "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb. 9:15, NIV). Israel was under the "first covenant." Israel was called of God to become His new people and to be made righteous. This cannot be done without Jesus. The prophet Zechariah plainly shows Israel's repentance and their forgiveness:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son . . . The land will mourn, each clan by itself . . . On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity (Zech. 12:10-13:1, NIV).

It is Bible teaching that forgiveness of sin comes through Jesus and through baptism. Hebrews 10:22 tells us that our bodies must be washed with pure water. Israel will, after being gathered back from the "east, west, north and south," recognize Jesus and the tremendous sin that was committed in rejecting Him. Their sins will be forgiven because God promised it.

It will be at this time that Jesus will become the king of Israel as the angel told Mary. Jesus will take the throne of David to rule over Israel and over the whole world: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever" (Luke 1:32, 33, NIV).

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for him as one grieves for a first born son . . . The land will mourn, each clan by itself . . . On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity" (Zech. 12 10–13:1 NIV). It is Bible teaching that forgiveness of sin comes through Jesus and through baptism. Hebrews 10:22 tells us that our bodies must be washed with pure water. Israel will, after being gathered back from the "east, west, north and south," recognize Jesus and the tremendous sin that was committed in rejecting Him. Their sins will be forgiven because God has promised.

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Who Do You Trust? (continued from page 23)

you will find great rewards beyond what you can possibly imagine today.

Jesus cautioned His disciples not to look with envy at those who are rich and full and happy and popular today. If that is all they have to trust in, then that is all the reward they will get. In the end their trusting in things rather than in God will be their downfall. By doing so they bring a curse upon themselves.

Life goes in cycles. There are times of prosperity and times of poverty; times of feasting and times of famine; times of laughter and times of tears; good times and bad times. These times come to all of us as individuals, families, churches, communities and as a nation.

For our nation right now things are good economically, but morally there are some real problems. A nation that forgets to obey God won't stay prosperous for very long — and the end cannot be far away if we don't hurry up and repent. We are losing our moral authority to lead the nations of the world. How dare we try to clean up our neighbors' houses, when our own house is in disarray?

Many of our local churches are prospering financially, but we must be careful not to trust in our riches. True faith is not demonstrated in seeing what we have and limiting our vision by that. True faith is trusting in God to lead us, and then allowing Him to equip us to do whatever He is

calling upon us to do. We must be willing to stretch beyond our existing resources to whatever God is calling on us to do. That is how we learn to trust Him more.

As for our individual lives, please, please remember that wherever you find yourself — whether it's flush with cash, or with empty pockets; whether it's with a full belly or empty; with a heart full of laughter or cheeks wet with tears — the one we trust first and foremost is God, not man.

If you sense that you have failed to trust Him, or if you fear that your faith has died, remember this: God is the one who can create life, where once there was death. Trust in Him today. □

Ten Tips for a Happier Marriage

BY DIANNE HALES

When Marcie Jackson (not her real name) was a beaming bride seven years ago, she never thought she would end up bickering constantly with the man she loved. And she certainly never expected to hear her own quivering voice say to a counselor, "Our marriage is in serious trouble. My husband and I need help."

The Jacksons are far from unusual. At least one in every five U.S. couples needs professional counseling. Says John Guidubaldi, professor of counseling at Kent State University in Ohio, "So many props — religious, social, familial — have been kicked out from under marriage that marital distress has become the number-one mental-health problem in this country."

But there is good news for sparing partners: marital therapy can and does help. Studies show that the relationships of about two-thirds of those who get counseling do improve — both in their own judgment and by objective measures of marital satisfaction.

A well-trained counselor can spot destructive patterns and help couples view their situation in a new light. Therapy also teaches couples new skills and behavior, so they can move beyond their problems toward solutions. As Lori Heyman Gordon, director of the Family Relations Institute in Falls Church, Va., observes, "Marital counseling provides hus-

bands and wives with a kit of 'tools' and shows how to use them."

Here are ten key tools of the marriage trade:

1. *Focus on what's good.* "Most couples in troubled relationships notice only the bad things," says Irene Vogel, a psychologist in Bethesda, Md. Vogel asks couples to swap compliments for five minutes every evening. "It may sound contrived," she says, "but couples who haven't

*"Many people like
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▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲
said anything nice to each other for a long time are amazed at how many things they still like about each other."

2. *Stop recycling gripes.* Some couples have the same ritual fight over and over. "It can start with any specific incident," Professor Guidubaldi notes. "Then a tape replays the same old arguments — about in-laws, money, sex, whatever."

"Many people like playing the wounded victim forever," says psychiatrist Frank Pittman of Atlanta. "But you can't keep punishing a spouse. You can let your mate know you're hurt, but you have to be forgiving and assume that your wife or husband doesn't want to hurt you again."

3. *Get rid of ghosts.* Past experiences creep into even the most trivial aspects of our relationships. One couple came to a therapist because of a heated fight over who would prepare breakfast. As the counselor probed, the husband recalled that his mother always served big breakfasts to his father. His wife said that her mother always left for work early and her father got breakfast for himself and the kids. As the spouses talked, they realized that long-ago "ghosts" were making each one feel that the other was doing something wrong.

Such seemingly minor matters can trap couples in conflicts they can't untangle. The only way out is to ask: Why are we acting like this?

4. *Set rules for defusing anger.* Anger denied can smolder until it explodes; anger unleashed without restraint can tear a relationship apart. To avoid both dangers, therapist Gordon advises couples to establish a ritual for handling anger.

For example, if one spouse — say the husband — feels fury bubbling up inside, he lets his wife know that there's something he has to get out of his system. She agrees that he can let loose with a verbal tirade, usually for no longer than five minutes. "The anger gets out with her support and permission so it is less likely to do damage," Gordon explains. Once the heat is off, the two set another time to talk through the issue.

Therapists generally feel that fighting — as long as it's not violent —

isn't necessarily bad. "What's important is what you do afterward," says Vogel. "You have to discuss what happened and why and how you can avoid the situation in the future."

5. *Negotiate for what you want.* One effective approach is to offer your mate what he or she wants in return. A husband hates chaos at home after work. His wife agrees to keep the day's crises on hold for a while — if he'll give her a back rub before they go to bed. "These simple favors make both of them feel loved," Gordon observes.

6. *Rewrite the script for situations you don't like.* One doctor and his wife were locked in battle because of his chronic lateness. Vogel had the doctor's wife visualize herself not expecting him when he said he'd be home. "In her mind, and then in reality, she developed her own things to do instead of waiting," Vogel explained. "She'd do aerobic exercises

or talk on the phone with a friend. If he did get home early, they enjoyed their time together instead of arguing. Like lots of couples, they realized that, once you can imagine a solution, you can overcome almost anything."

7. *Look for the problem behind the problem.* Sometimes couples are sure they know exactly what's wrong: an affair, a lack of sexual interest, a conflict in careers. But often these are only symptoms.

"You have to analyze the factors that led to your present situation," says Vogel. "Perhaps you and your spouse haven't been communicating for years. Maybe you haven't adjusted to a change in your lives, like a move or a new baby. Or one of you may be seeking revenge for an old, unresolved hurt. A crisis brings matters to a head, so a couple can set about establishing a better relationship."

8. *Don't let small things loom large.* Uncapped toothpaste tubes, dishes piled in the sink — such things can break up a marriage if you let them. A husband may leave his socks on the floor simply because he's sloppy. But if his wife thinks he's trying to show her who's boss, a silly squabble can snowball into a full-blown fight.

"To improve their marriage, two people have to ask why they allow little things to become intensely irritating," Professor Guidubaldi says. Once two people put their actions and reactions in perspective, they can focus on the issues that really matter to them.

9. *Take regular "temperature readings."* "The greatest enemy of marital satisfaction is lack of time," says Gordon. She recommends setting aside a period every week for just the two of you.

Start by saying what you've felt good about during the

week. Take turns sharing what you've been doing and thinking. Both of you can complain — as long as you suggest what would make the situation better. Use the time to solve any puzzles about your spouse's behavior ("You seemed down on Tuesday. Why?") Finally, you should confide wishes, hopes and dreams.

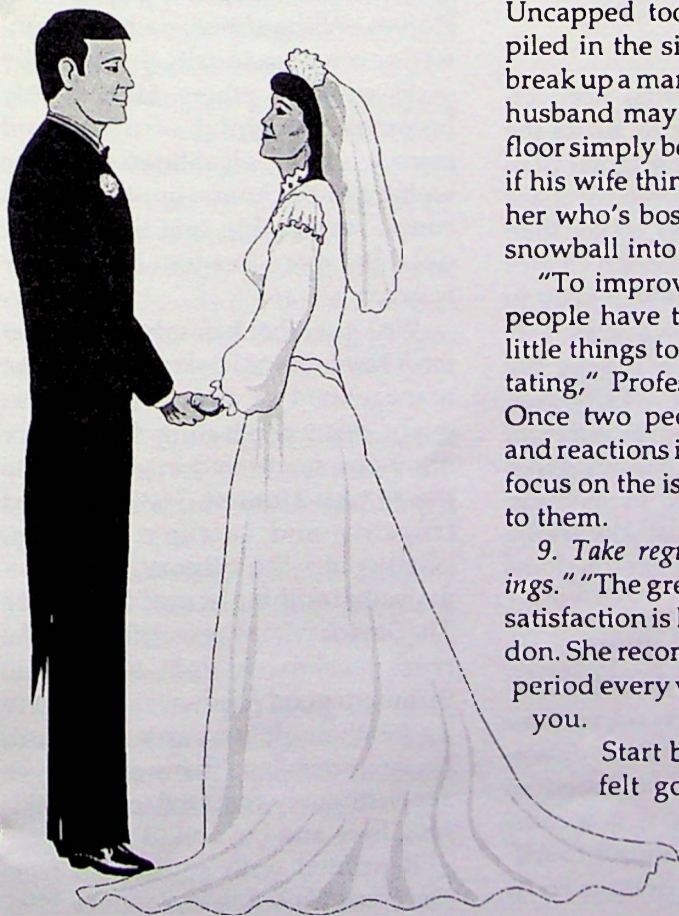
10. *If your spouse won't see a therapist, go on your own.* Sometimes one spouse will balk at counseling. Say a husband doesn't want to air marital problems before a stranger; experts encourage the wife to start therapy on her own. Once she begins, her mate often follows, because he's curious or wants to tell his side of the story.

Even if one person stays adamantly at home, the other can make the marriage better. Although a wife, for example, can't save her marriage singlehandedly, she can examine her own behavior. As she changes — sidestepping no-win quarrels or suggesting compromise solutions — her husband may well change too.

Therapy can prevent as well as solve problems. Often it helps stop couples before they hurt one another irrevocably. "In the heat of battle, people don't see what they're doing to each other," says Dr. Pittman. "They'll say anything, however destructive, to defend their point of view."

Therapy restores a sense of optimism about the marriage. "People get into the habit of complaining about their relationships," Dr. Pittman observes. "The most important insight couples get from therapy is that they can make their marriages work. Once they realize that they can't be married and always be right — that winning is beside the point — the rest is easy." □

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Balance in Character Education

BY DR. RAYMOND AND DOROTHY MOORE

In the last century about 90% of us lived or worked on the farm. Today the number of farmers is down to four percent of our population! That migration has spelled disaster in scores of ways. The fortunate among us can return to the country. But what about those who cannot?

Children's Chores

When parents rely on amusement, toys, and sports to take the place of manual work, they can be sure their youth will lose security, self-confidence, and self-respect. When we give allowances for routine chores at home which children should do without pay, we trick our children into expecting something for nothing, and they often become lost in a welfare desert.

Institutionalizing Children Before They Are Ready

When kids are around home with few constructive tasks to fill their time, parents often find them "in the way." So, we send them off to school without thought of the influences there, particularly before family habits, manners, language, and other values settle in and character is formed.

Much Larger Schools

The larger the school the less like family it is and the harder the behavior of students is to control. The late Harvard president, James Bryant Conant, thought large schools could be "educational parks," but was anguished to find that too often they became educational ghettos. Admin-

istrative savings were offset by costly behavior problems of students and professional disputes with teachers.

The Perils of City Food, Water, Air, and Sanitation

This is not to say that all city eating, drinking, and breathing is hazardous, nor are all farm environments disease-free. Yet farm and country living usually permit more family togetherness at the table, simpler food, fresher air, and greater regularity at family altars. Perhaps far more important is the moral environment with fewer unnatural distractions which are foreign to godliness.

Crowding

Children (and parents) need elbow room, space to grow up as the Creator designed. His original plan was a garden, and the needs for space and gardens are keener today than ever. The child who misses a chance to grow a garden — even if only in pans and pots in city windows — is genuinely deprived. He misses the character-building lessons of the seed going into the ground to give of itself that others might live; of multiplying by faithful cultivation; of learning that responsibility must always be the basis for granting larger freedoms and authority.

Authority and Responsibility

Many parents give their kids allowances without hands-on, responsible work. Thus they start downward to grant authority or freedom without responsibility. It is a most certain and deadly initiation into selfishness, depression, delinquency,

drugs, and suicide. Sound authority, real freedom, always mandates commensurate responsibility. The state will not normally issue a driver's license until a person is at least age 16, has passed a qualifying examination, and has proven himself a responsible driver. This is a principled example of a way of life that should guide all dealings with our children.

The child who is taught to work when he starts to walk is on a sound path. He tosses his toys in a box before he goes with Mom to the store. He puts books away before he takes others. He soon is picking up his own clothes. Without being a perfectionist he even occasionally thoughtfully picks up after others. He not only becomes thoughtful of others and pursues order, cleanliness, and the welfare of the home, but he also becomes responsible, and the more he does, the more freedom he logically is given.

We know that habits build character. They form crucial matrixes in the management of any worthy home, every one cooperating with every other one as ordered in principle by the Master Himself. Jesus modeled frugality and sacrifice. He said, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost" (John 6:12). The Savior who was sacrificed on the cross teaches children to learn to throw no good food away, care gently for their clothes, save and sacrifice for others (and themselves). Such are on divinely-inspired roads to success, here and beyond. □

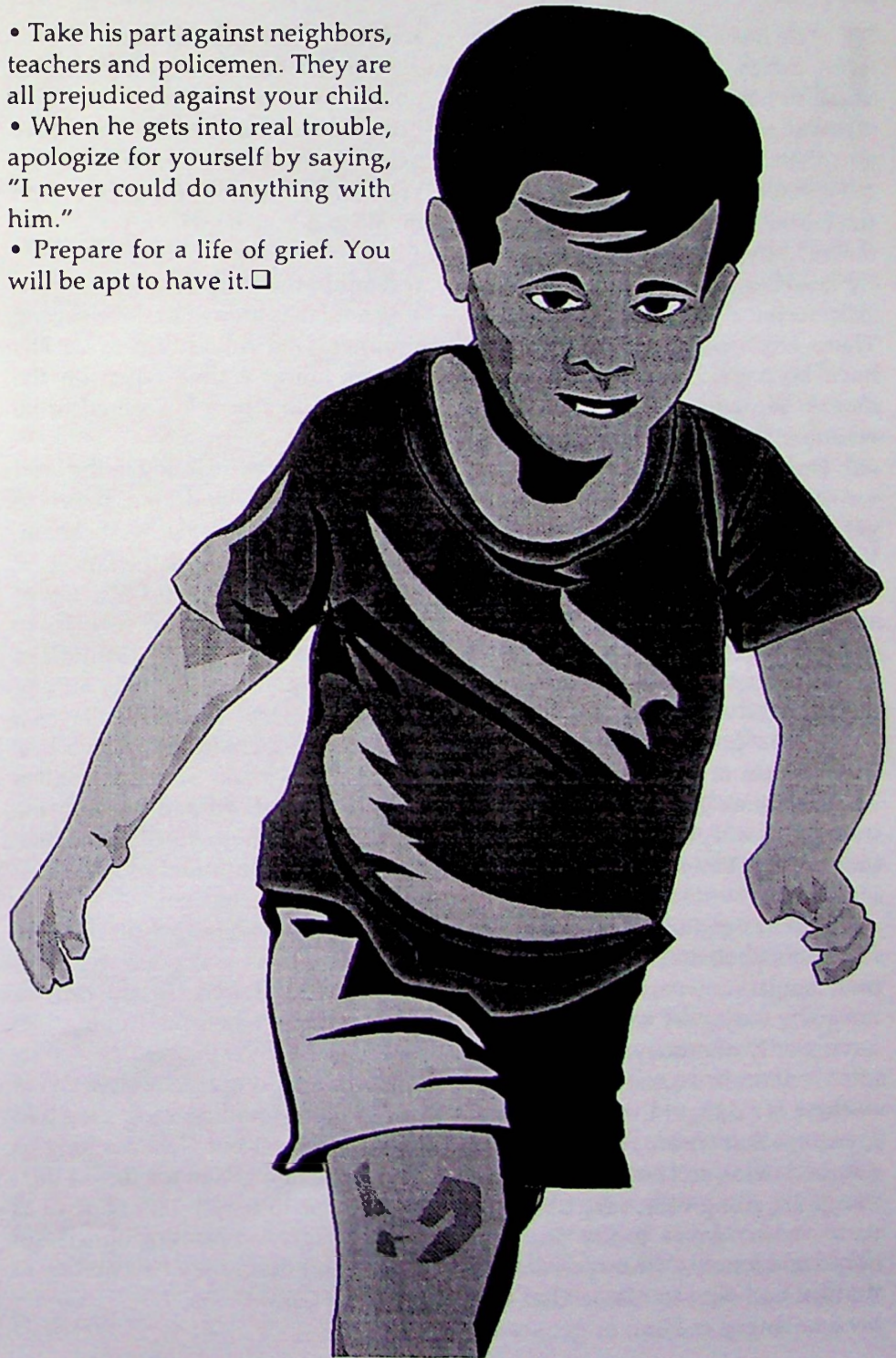
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How to Raise a Juvenile Delinquent

BY REX CAIN — BEDFORD, OH

- Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
- When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he's cute. It will also encourage him to pick up cuter phrases that will blow off the top of your head later.
- Never give him any spiritual training. Wait till he is 21 and then let him decide for himself.
- Avoid use of the word "wrong." He may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.
- Pick up everything he leaves lying around — books, shoes, and clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility onto others.
- Let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
- Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later.
- Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?
- Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.

- Take his part against neighbors, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
- When he gets into real trouble, apologize for yourself by saying, "I never could do anything with him."
- Prepare for a life of grief. You will be apt to have it. □



Who Do You Trust?

BY THE EDITOR

Life has a tendency to move in cycles. It has its ups and its downs. There are good times, when all seems well with the world; and there are bad times, when we have to look up to see the bottom of the barrel. There are times when we feel healthy, strong and full of vitality and there are times when we are sick, feeble and drained of energy. There are times when all the bills have been paid and we still have money left over and there are times when we scarcely have two nickels to rub together. There are times when we rush around frantically trying to get everything done and there are times when we are bored and can't find a thing to do. There are times when we are surrounded by people and can't get a moment alone and there are times when we feel all alone, isolated and abandoned.

Nations go through cycles like these. Times of prosperity and times of depression. Times of high morality and times of great and widespread immorality. Times of war and times of peace.

Churches go through these cycles too. Each spectrum of the cycle has its own dangers and perils. When things are going very, very well — when we have plenty of money, plenty to eat, lots to entertain us, and lots of friends — there is a danger that we can start to believe that we are responsible for the good times, and forget God. When things are going very, very badly for us — when we're broke, hungry, bored and lonely — there is a danger that we can start to blame God and become angry at Him, or get scared

and turn our backs on God.

Whether things are going well, or poorly, whether we have much or little, the real issue is this: Who do we depend on? Who do we lean on? Who do we turn to? Who do we hope in? Who do we *trust*?

Jeremiah, the Prophet

Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. God called him to be His spokesman at a time when on the outside God's people seemed to be doing well.

The people were living in the land of promise, the land God swore to give to their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was the land that Moses had brought them out of Egypt and across the desert for 40 years to come to, the land that Joshua led them to conquer and divide among the tribes. Here, God made David a king and placed him over all the tribes. Here, David's son Solomon built a temple to the Lord and brought the world's wealth to the land. Here, David's heir continued to rule from his throne in Jerusalem.

The people were prospering economically; there was great wealth to be had and shared by all. But, of course, that's when the troubles really began for the people.

You see, as long as they were slaves in Egypt and had nothing they had no one to trust but God. As long as they were nomads in the desert they had no one to trust but God. And as long as their enemies surrounded and threatened them they had no one to trust but God.

They were not unlike our ancestors, many of whom came to this, the new world, to find a place of religious freedom. When they arrived here they had close to nothing but some clothing on their backs and their hands with which to begin building a new civilization. They trusted God and prosperity came little by little until a society built on the principles of trust in God (which they even came to print on their currency) grew to become a prosperous and powerful nation.

But here is the danger: with the growth of wealth and prosperity there is always the temptation to begin trusting in the *blessings* rather than in the one who *gave* the blessings.

During Jeremiah's time God's people in Judah found this out the hard way when they began to worship the creation of their own hands. They built idols, god substitutes, and worshipped them. They forgot or ignored God's commandments. Those were the principles God had given them to help them order and govern themselves. They forgot the principles of honoring and worshipping God alone; the principles of respecting and loving their neighbors by not stealing or murdering or coveting; the principle of honoring parents; of reserving one day in seven for honoring God and giving the body and mind a rest — all of these principles that God had given them for the benefit of all the people were being forgotten. The landscape became dotted with images carved out of stone and wood, symbols of divided loyalty and shattered trust.

So God sent a word of warning through Jeremiah the prophet.

The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts, and on the horns of their altars, while their children remember their altars and their sacred posts, beside every green tree, and on the high hills, on the mountains in the open country. Your wealth and all your treasures I will give for spoil as the price of your sin throughout all your territory. By your own act you shall lose the heritage that I gave you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever (Jeremiah 17:1-4, NRSV).

God's people forgot to remember Him and began to put their trust in things rather than in the creator of all things. As a result, they were in danger of losing everything.

"All your wealth and treasures I will give away as plunder."

"You will lose the inheritance I gave you."

"I will enslave you to your enemies."

"You have kindled my anger."

Two Similes

At this point (verse 5ff) there is a transition in the narrative. Jeremiah goes from speaking as a prophet of doom to acting more like a poet and moral philosopher. He paints for us a word picture using two similes.

Jeremiah compares the one who trusts in man (or in himself) with a desert shrub. Can't you picture an old, dried up shrub out in the wilderness? There is no life around it; it's out there on its own, alone to battle the sun and wind. It must face the scorching heat of summer without

anyone or anything to help it. It is destined to wilt away and die alone.

These words portray the person, or the family, or the society, or even the church which relies on itself to survive and grow. This is the nation about whose interests it can rightly be said that "it's the economy, stupid." In other words, a people who will believe that while we have jobs and enough money to make ends meet, and more people can afford their own homes, and the unemployment rolls are shrinking, and *my* family is doing better than they were last year or five years ago, and we have plenty of material wealth and prosperity as a nation, then it doesn't *matter* what our leaders are doing behind closed doors. Why should we care if our elected officials have no moral integrity? Such things shouldn't matter as long as the economy keeps ticking along at a good pace.

Jeremiah would say "It's *not* the economy, stupid. The important issue is who we are trusting: God and His ways, or ourselves."

Any culture which places more value on economic wealth, full bellies, pleasure and popularity than on faithfulness to God is destined to destroy itself. Has God changed? Is the God we worship today different from the God in Jeremiah's day? If God ignores what is happening in our society today and fails to discipline us as a nation, then on judgment day He owes a great big apology to the nation of Israel because anyone knows that it's not fair for a parent to punish one child severely for their misbehavior while turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the sins of another child.

Here, of course, we are speaking of groups of people as those shrubs, but we know that society is made up of individuals living together, and so change must begin at the most basic level and work up.

First me as an individual, then my family and network, our local church, our town, parish, state, and region — each level must be infused with a basic trust in God first.

Jeremiah's second simile is that the one who trusts God is like a tree planted by a river.

It is strong; it can endure trials when they come. It remains strong and untouched by the heat of summer for it has a rich and endless supply of water, which gives life. And it shows continual signs of life, with its green leaves. The end result is that it never fails to produce fruit.

When we trust God we are open to all that God is willing to do to empower and equip us for life, and we will be productive for God.

As was written earlier, it is not only a temptation for us to cease trusting in God when everything seems to be going well, but also when our whole world begins to fall apart. It can be really hard to trust God when you are broke and swamped with bills. It can be really hard to trust in God when you don't have anything to eat. It can be really hard to trust God when you are grieving over the loss of someone or something important to you due to a death, a divorce, a firing, or an illness. It can be really hard to trust God when people are out to get you, to do you harm.

Jesus warned His disciples of this in one of His sermons in what is known as the Blessings or Beatitudes. He says: when you're broke don't lose heart, for you will find your wealth in God's Kingdom. He says: when you're hungry don't lose hope, for in God's Kingdom you will be fully satisfied. He says: if you are grieving, don't despair, for you will experience great joy in God's Kingdom. He says: if you are experiencing suffering at the hands of those who hate you because of your faith, don't give up, for in God's Kingdom

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Sexual Sins

BY DON WARD — RAYMORE, MO

In the N.T., sexual immorality is referred to 27 times (there are 27 books in the N.T.) and lust (of various kinds) 16 times. That's significant but certainly not what I would call an obsession.

God looks at His children like loving, concerned parents look at their children. They want them to avoid the pitfalls, the guilt, and the havoc a lack of propriety and self-control can lead to.

Sexuality is at the core of our beings. "God made them male and female." (Mark 10:6). God instilled a proper modesty in Adam and Eve. He spoke with disdain of how shameless Israel became: "No, they have no

shame at all; they do not even know how to blush" (Jer. 6:15).

Proverbs 4:23 suggests that morality adds to life: "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

Paul writes, "It is God's will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God" (1 Thess. 4:3-5).

Unfortunately our present world often mimics the "heathen" of Paul's day. Listen to one man's pain:

[Pornography] has hurt hundreds of people whom I have known all my life. Almost 40 years of reading pornography has got me one thing, in a mental hospital for sexual assault on a child. [It] is where I got started in deviant thoughts and actions. The article [in *The Plain Truth*] hit a bulls-eye when it said, "Pornography is to throw aside proper restraints and force yourself on another." The whole article was true. Even if it's too late for me, I pray others will be stopped and helped . . . unfortunately, pornography is addictive. □

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