

The Sword AND Staff

"Preach the Word" (II Timothy 4:2) • "Feed the Flock" (I Peter 5:2)

"GOD IS FAITHFUL"

• By **JAMES E. GIBBONS**—1535 Fairfield Dr.
Mount Airy, NC 27030 USA

"GOD IS FAITHFUL." This statement and expression is found two times in the epistle of I Corinthians (I Corinthians 1:9; 10:13). The same truth repeatedly appears throughout the Bible, but is stated in different terms. This means that God is trustworthy, reliable, and dependable. He is the essence and totality of truth and consistency. He can be trusted.

This is really good to know. Man cannot always be trusted. Men may say one thing today and do another tomorrow. Friends may become enemies. Politics and politicians are synonymous with deceit. Underhanded dealings and dog-eat-dog tactics abound in the harrowed world of business and commerce. Marital infidelity is common. Religious apostasy engulfs the land.

But, thanks be to God, "God is faithful." With this short and simple statement of truth in mind, let us enter into a short and simple study of some of the greatest, yet simple, truths. On it hangs all of our hopes.

I. GOD IS FAITHFUL IN HIS PROMISE

Impossible for God to Lie

We are told in the Bible that "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). But Scripture must be understood in the light of other Scripture. We find an exception to this in Titus 1:2. Here it states that we have "hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Hebrews 6:18 more emphatically asserts that it is "impossible for God to lie." God, being God, is the totality and essence of truth. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16,17; 15:26; 16:13; I John 5:6). Therefore, when God speaks, it stands; it is for eternity. "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalms 119:89). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35; I Peter 1:25). Yes, His words can be relied upon. What He says will come to pass. Even as God said, "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void,

but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

"GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS"

T. O. Chisholm COPYRIGHT, 1982, BY W. M. BUNYAN William M. Runyon
USED BY PERMISSION

1. "Great is Thy faith-ful-ness," O God my Fa-ther, There is no shad-ow of
2. Sum-mer and winter, and spring-time and harvest, Sun, moon and stars in their
3. Par-don for sin and a peace that en-dur-eth, Thine own dear presence to

turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not, As Thou hast
cours-es a-bove, Join with all na-ture in man-i-fold wit-ness, To Thy great
cheer and to guide; Strength for to-day and bright hope for to-morrow, Blessings all

CHORUS

been Thou for-ev-er wilt be. "Great is Thy faith-ful-ness! Great is Thy
faith-ful-ness, mer-cy and love. mine, with ten thou-sand be-side!

faith-ful-ness!" Morn-ing by morn-ing new mer-cies I see; All I have

need-ed Thy hand hath provided,—"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, on-to me!

The "Seed" of the Woman

God is faithful in His Word in the promise of the coming Savior and in the fulfillment of this promise. The coming of such a Savior is first mentioned in Genesis 3:15. Man had sinned and fallen. As God speaks to the different parties involved, and in particular to Satan, He said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: *it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise*

(Continued on Page 13)

THE SWORD AND STAFF
Post Office Box 147
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030 U.S.A.

E-Mail Address:
JGibbons@InfoAve.Net

INFORMATION:

■ We are totally dependent upon your financial backing in the publication of this religious paper. To get on the mailing list, send a contribution. Subsidizing gifts are definitely needed along for us to continue this unselfish labor of love for God and truth. You may use the date affixed beside your address as a reminder to send an offering (perhaps annually). No notices are sent. Make out your checks to CHURCH IN MOUNT AIRY. The extent (and frequency) of publication is determined by incoming support. James E. Gibbons is editor. (Money received for printed material is all considered as an offering). We do not assume responsibility for material from other sources and writers beyond that which appears in this paper. This publication is available in English and Spanish. Please indicate preference. □

—THANK YOU—

Proverbially ***SPEAKING...***

***THE HEART** of the matter is the heart—Is your heart right with God?*

Character is not just the principle thing in life, it is everything (because that is what you are).

We need to have a mind-set of a mind set on heaven (Colossians 3:1-4).

It is great to be able to stand on your own two feet, but of little consequence unless you go somewhere.

Unless God is in the picture, everything else is out of focus.

We need to stand on the Word of God, and that alone, even if it means standing alone.

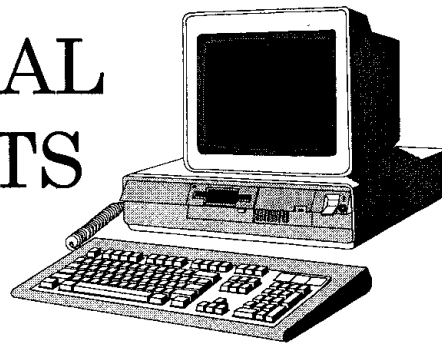
Put God first and everything else will fittingly fall into place.

If Christians are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), their own world will light up also.

That which we fail to use we lose.

The impact of one little drop of water by itself is very limited, and will soon dry up and be gone, but thousands of drops together become refreshing rain, a rushing stream, or a beautiful lake (and an extended blessing to all). □

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



GOD HAS SPOKEN AND GOD SPEAKS

GOD HAS SPOKEN and continues to speak to man. The writer of the book of Hebrews declares, "God who at sundry times and in divers [diverse, varied] manners [ways] spake in times past unto the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." To start with in the garden of Eden, God spoke audibly and directly to Adam and Eve. But sin entering the picture brought their fall and alienation from God. The close relationship was broken, and God communicated with them and their descendants from afar. During the Patriarchal age it was indirectly through the heads of families and tribes. Sometimes it was by visions and dreams; sometimes otherwise. The law was given through Moses for the whole nation of Israel. God began a special relationship with these people so that He eventually could speak to all of us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a time of preparation and revelation as his scheme of redemption was being unfolded to man. During this time, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (II Peter 1:21). Now with the coming of Christ and the giving of the New Testament, we have God's completed and final revelation to man. No other such revelation is promised, expected, or needed. God has spoken (past tense), but He continues to speak to us through that spoken Word. Let us listen.

Aside from inspired revelation, God also continues to speak to us in other ways. Just look at His creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalms 19:1). Awesome omnipotent power harnessed by nothing less than supreme intelligence (and defined by man in terms of consistent, scientific laws) emphatically speaks to us of an Almighty, Omniscient Being (Romans 1:19,20). In this way God speaks loud and clear if man would but listen. He is there.

God spoke to ancient Israel many times in judgment. Just read the prophets. The Israelites were God's chosen people for the purpose of bringing the Savior into the world (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 4:4). When they got out of line, God let them know about it. At times other nations oppressed them. Along with the sword, they faced pestilence. There came the devouring locusts. They experienced earthquake and radical disturbances in the weather pattern. God has no nation as his chosen people today, just the church (I Peter 2:9; Romans 9:8), but nevertheless we are made to wonder about the things that are happening to this country. Generically He is telling us something.

The great truth of Proverbs 14:34 hits us between the eyes. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Righteousness exalts the nation that exalts righteousness. It's that simple. Proverbs 11:19 reads, "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death." (Yes, "the wages of sin is death," Romans 6:23). And Psalms 9:17 reads, "The wicked shall be turned into hell [Sheol], and all the nations that forget God." The seeds of judgment and destruction are built into the very structure of sin itself. Sooner or later the day of reckoning will come. If a nation's leaders and its people do not recognize the enormity of sin, and exalt righteousness, we are in bad trouble. The unbridled practice of wickedness is self-destructive. Eternal judgment also awaits.

God has spoken, and God speaks. He speaks His truth and the reality of Himself. This is done by revelation as evidenced in His Word, by His creation, and even in warnings and judgment at times. He is trying to get our attention, to tell us something. We are accountable beings. May we listen. □

EDITORIAL

Byways

(A blitz of advertising seems to be under way by the Mormons on television, we understand. The following letter was written 18 years ago when they had advertising covering several pages in the *Reader's Digest*. Then there is the follow-up to the letter. Since people know so little about the Bible today, we think it timely to re-run this material. Check it out.—Editor).

(1) LETTER SENT TO MORMON CHURCH (1980)

MORMON CHURCH
P.O. Box 30700
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

Gentlemen:

I read with much interest your attractive 8-page advertisement in the October issue of *Reader's Digest*. Some of the things I read in your advertisement immediately brought some questions to mind on my part. I am no authority on the Mormon religion. However, I have spent considerable time with the Bible. This is what prompts the questions, and especially since you mentioned that the Bible was one of the "Mormon's sacred books" and since you stated that the Mormons were committed to spreading "the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people, everywhere."

First, my attention is drawn to what you call these young men who are sent out, as you religiously call them "elders." As one familiar with the Bible this is confusing to me. The word "elder" means an older man (not a young man), and to qualify to be an elder in the

Biblical sense in the Lord's church (among other things), one must be married and the father of children (1 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 1: 5-7)

Then, I read on the fourth page of your advertisement: "The Mormon doctrine of Eternal Marriage holds that Mormon marriages are forever: Men and women, married in a Mormon Temple, form a holy relationship that will endure beyond the grave, in reunion with each other, and in life everlasting with God and the Savior."

This brings another question. Have you never read the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22:23-30? Your teaching is just opposite of what He taught in the Bible (and you claim the Bible as one of your "sacred books"). Notice in detail: "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of seven? For they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven..."

Furthermore, you continued in your advertisement by speaking about "baptism by proxy" which the Mormon Church practiced and saying that the deceased wife of this man could join him in his conversion and in Eternal Marriage.

If I read the Bible correctly, it seems to me that the nature and guilt of sin is personal (Romans 3:23, etc.) and consequently salvation must be on a personal basis. The great commission instructed that the gospel be preached to every person, and "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:15, 16). "EVERYONE" was to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). They were further admonished: "Save YOURSELVES from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that YOUR SINS may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). Acts 17:30 states that "ALL MEN EVERYWHERE" are commanded to repent because "ALL MEN" must personally face God in judgement. Paul says that in the Day of Judgment "EVERY KNEE shall bow " and "EVERY TONGUE confess to God. So then EVERYONE of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:11,12). No one can accept Christ for us, be baptized for us, nor live our lives for us. It is a personal matter. And when death comes, no one can die for us, for each of us must "walk that lonesome valley."

Your advertisement in more ways than one leaves me confused. You quote the great commission, "Go you

(Continued on Next Page)

EDITORIAL *Byways*

(Continued from Previous Page)



therefore, and teach all nations." And speak of the "commitment to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people, everywhere" by the Mormon Church. You call the Bible a "sacred book." BUT THEN you speak of "the divine revelations that led him (Joseph Smith) to establish the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (in the last century).

This seems like a great contradiction to me since you claim to be working under the great commission and to be spreading the gospel commissioned by Christ. The preaching orders involved preaching what was revealed to them in the first century and it involved "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I HAVE COMMANDED you" (what Christ commanded, Matthew 28:18-20). They were to preach the message that was commissioned then (at that time) "unto the end of the world [age]." That commission was not to preach a "revelation" that came along hundreds of years later. Jesus had told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would guide them into ALL TRUTH (John 16:13; 14:26). This the Holy Spirit did, and it has been written down in the New Testament Scriptures. Jude wrote that the faith had once and for all been delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). We are warned that if we add to or take from the book of the Holy Scriptures the plagues mentioned therein will be added to us and our names taken from the book of life (Revelation 22:18,19). The inspired apostle Paul declared, "But though we, or AN ANGEL from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). It looks to me like all these Scriptures should tell us something.

Then to add to the confusion it is said that Joseph Smith established the "Church of Jesus Christ" in the

last century about 1900 years removed from Christ. I humbly say this doesn't make sense to me for Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ established his church in the first century. From Acts 2:47 onward it is spoken of as a reality, something in existence then (Acts 2:47; 8:1; Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 1:2; etc.). The "gates of hell" would not prevail against His church.

These are some things that caught my attention in your ad in the October issue of the *Reader's Digest*. Like I said, I don't know much about the Mormon religion, but I have studied the Bible. My knowledge of the Bible has prompted me to ask these questions. IF you folks believe the Bible to be the Word of God, perhaps it would be good to clear up the confusion. The *Reader's Digest* is read by millions of people and the relationship of the Mormon religion to the Christianity of the New Testament is not clear...especially to me.

Sincerely,

James E. Gibbons



(2) FOLLOW-UP ON LETTER TO MORMON CHURCH

I HAVE just mentioned the 8-page ad the Mormon Church had in the *Reader's Digest* (October 1980). In view of what I knew about the Bible, this prompted me to ask several questions. Certainly no one should be offended by this (or even by a public examination of their religion) since the advertisement is appealing to the general public. If they have truth that I don't have, I want it. A letter was received from Salt Lake City, but my questions were not directly dealt with or answered in the letter. On the other hand, some pamphlets and material more of a nature to orient me with the Mormon Church were enclosed. However, what Salt Lake City had not done, two fine looking young Mormon "elders" locally came by to do, having seen the letter in my publication, *The Sword and Staff*.

I was in the print shop in my basement, press inked, and working away. I was interrupted by my son, who said there were two men from the Mormon Church to see me. I told him that if they wanted to talk with me to come on down. The two men turned out to be two young fellows.

With smiling faces and hand shakes warm and friendly, projecting every bit of the image of the "elders" portrayed in the *Reader's Digest* ad, they introduced themselves. They said they had come to answer my questions. I told them I had ink on the press, but if we could talk while I was printing that would be fine. However, there would be one condition. We would use only the Bible in our discussions. They consented (although, I felt, for tactical reasons).

I got my Bible. I reviewed the letter I had written, pointing out the questions the *Reader's Digest* ad had prompted. There were basically four questions (I said): (1) concerning why these young men were called "elders"; (2) concerning "eternal marriage," which they teach; (3) concerning baptism by proxy (in the place of someone who is dead); (4) and the fourth question boiled down to the matter of modern day revelations.

"First, this matter of you fellows being called ELDERS," I confronted them with friendly force, "If you are an elder, I am a teenager." I emphasized that the very word for elder in the New Testament (*presbuteros*) meant an older person, that it was used applied to an older person who was an officer in the church, and that one of the qualifications for the office was to be a married family man (Titus 1:5-7; I Timothy 3:1-7).

With an assured and knowing smile, one of my young visitors who was more aggressive than the other (in a friendly way) informed me that I had misapplied one of the Scriptures (Titus 1:5-7), that an elder and a bishop were two different offices. My Mormon visitors were elders and not bishops—and that there were elders in two different orders of priesthood, the Aaronic and that of Melchisedec.

I said, "Wait a minute. Let's open the Bible and nail this thing down as we go along." Whereupon I turned to Titus 1:5-7 and read aloud, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain ELDERS in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly. For a BISHOP must be blameless..." Here I pointed out that the words ELDER and BISHOP were used interchangeably, referring to the one and same office or person. (This is further verified in Acts 20:17,18, where Paul is talking to elders of the church at Ephesus. They are called ELDERS in verse 17 and in verse 28 they are called OVERSEERS. The word OVERSEER is *episkopos* in the original Greek New Testament, being the identical word that is translated BISHOP in Titus 1:7, KJV).

As I stressed the truth and clarity of these Scriptures to my listeners, I was told that it was a matter of interpretation and that I was now arguing (obviously saying this serves as good answers when none others are readily available). I was told that they did not ar-

gue, that they testified. That they could not convince or convert anyone, only God could do this. That if we wanted to know the truth, we should pray to know it. I quoted to them where we are told to "search the Scriptures," that the Holy Spirit guided the apostles into ALL TRUTH (John 16:13), and that we have it in the Scriptures. Paul plainly told Timothy that the Scriptures are "profitable for doctrine; for reproof [proving over again], for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16,17). We are commanded to study to show ourselves approved (II Timothy 2:15). If we want the truth, we have it in the Bible.

This matter of thinking that there are really such orders as the priesthood of Aaron and of Melchisedec for us in the church today was really mind-boggling to me. In all kindness, I just couldn't see how anyone could believe that (on the basis of the Bible). I was told that it was taught in the book of Hebrews, whereupon I suggest we turn there and read (but we never got around to it). The 7th chapter of Hebrews mentions the priesthood of Melchisedec (one man). This man was a priest way back in the time of Abraham. We have no record of the beginning of his priesthood or the end of it. There is a lesson drawn here applied to the priesthood of Christ. Christ is now our high priest in heaven who lives forever to make intercession for us. Christ is the only high priest; there is no other today (I Timothy 2:5). As far as the priesthood of Aaron is concerned, that was part of the Old Testament Jewish system which terminated when Jesus died on the cross and the New Testament began (Hebrews 9:11,12; Galatians 3:24,25; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:15-17). We have no separate priesthood from the people today. Christ is the great high priest in heaven (Hebrews 7:24-26; Hebrews 10:19-21) and every Christian is a priest before God (I Peter 2:5,9; Hebrews 10:21,22). This is what has been called the priesthood of believers.

For some reason during the course of our conversation with my friendly visitors we failed to get involved with the second and third questions I had asked. The second question concerned their teaching that there is eternal marriage beyond this life, whereas Jesus said that we would be as the angels in heaven—neither married nor given in marriage (Matthew 22:23-30). And the third question had to do with their practice of being baptized in the place of someone who has died never accepting Christ.

However, we did touch somewhat upon the fourth question before they left. It concerns modern day revelations. As is commonly known, they believe that Joseph Smith received the Book of Mormon as a revelation from heaven in the last century (the 1800's). Also, our discussion uncovered their beliefs in continued revelations today to the "apostles" in their church. They believe that we still have the spiritual gifts witnessed in the early church, too.

(Continued on Next Page)

Jehovah Elohim

Jehovah Elohim, that is His Holy Name;
The God of all most High from age to age the same;
The El Shaddai, Almighty in Eternal Power
By Whom we live and are sustained with life each hour.

—By James E. Gibbons

EDITORIAL *Byways*

(Continued from Previous Page)

In response to this, let me say again that we have "ALL TRUTH" (God's completed revelation) in the form of the Bible, the New Testament. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into "ALL TRUTH" (John 16:13). The revelation was made to the apostles and prophets in the early church (Ephesians 3:5), and is now recorded in the Holy Scriptures. We have already pointed out from II Timothy 3:16 and 17 that the Scriptures are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, **THROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.**" Peter tells us that "His [God's] divine power hath given unto us **ALL THINGS** that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). According to Jude 3, the faith has once and for all been delivered to the saints. The New Testament is called an "everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20). In other words, Christianity is a completed religion, God's final revelation to man, and the Bible is a closed book (no more is to be added). Consider Galatians 1:8 and Revelation 22:18 and 19.

And that brings us to this matter of apostles and the other inspired men, prophets. As Ephesians 3:5 said, the revelation of the New Testament had been made to them. The church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). In other words, the church is built upon the truth of the deity of Christ, and the truth revealed to the apostles and prophets. There are no more apostles and prophets in the church today than there is another Christ. Foundations are laid only once, and ours is sure and steadfast. The truth has been established, confirmed. It is ours. It is here to build on.

I asked one of my young visitors what an apostle was, since it claimed they are in the Mormon Church today (and since it is claimed that they get revelations in addition to that of Joseph Smith). I kept asking what an apostle was. I finally got the answer that they were Christ's representatives and witnesses. The last word was the one I wanted. Pressing further, I asked, "Witnesses of what?" He didn't get the point, so I turned to Acts 1:22 and read. As Matthias replaced the fallen Judas as an apostle, this condition or qualification was laid down, "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a **WITNESS WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION.**" That the apostles were the personal and official eyewitnesses of Christ and his resurrection is stressed throughout the book of Acts (Acts 1:8,22; 2:32; 4:20,33; etc.). (A person can not be a witness in court unless he has seen something with his own eyes). In this capacity they con-

firmed the truthfulness of the message and got the church started. Their work was singular and unique. Obviously no living person today could qualify to be an apostle, nor is the work of an apostle needed. The church has been started and their inspired teachings endure in the form of the New Testament Scriptures. (Likewise, the gift of prophecy, along with the other supernatural gifts of the Spirit, ceased in time, I Corinthians 13:8-10; etc.).

When I said that to be an apostle one would have had to have been upon this earth when Jesus was here and to have seen him in his resurrection with one's own eyes (among other things), I was told that this was just a matter of interpretation. (But read Acts 1:22 again, and see for yourself what it says).

As we continued talking, as a matter of conversation, I asked, "If there is such a thing as modern day revelations, whom should we listen to?" The Mormons are not the only ones making this claim, and different groups are teaching different things. I was told that we should pray that God would show us the truth. My visitors said they couldn't convince anyone, only God could do this.

Whereupon I reminded them that the Bible claims to be the truth (John 17:17; I Peter 1:25), and if we followed the Bible alone we wouldn't have to worry about the various contradictory modern-day "revelations" being true or false. We know the Bible is God's Word. It is the truth.

This led me to suggest that their Book of Mormons should be in harmony with the Bible, if it is a revelation as they claim. God doesn't contradict Himself.

And this brought us back to where we had started. When I had written the letter in response to the advertisement in the *Reader's Digest*, I said that I didn't know much about the Mormon religion, but I had spent considerable time with the Bible. Therefore, my knowledge of the Bible prompted the questions I wrote. Several things I read in the ad didn't level with what I knew about the Bible. There had to be an explanation.

Time had slipped by in a hurry. With a few mess-ups, I had continued printing while talking. The young Mormon "elders," deciding the time had come to end their visit, left the way they had come—very friendly and undaunted. They certainly were gentlemen, but it didn't seem to bother them in the least that they hadn't answered my questions satisfactorily. They promised to drop by if they were ever in that neighborhood. Good-naturedly, I said, "You fellows haven't answered any of my questions. But if at any time you want to write down the answers from **THE BIBLE** on a piece of paper and hand them to me, that will be fine." With that they smilingly left. The "any time" never came, and the answers were never received. □



A Series Involving the Bible and Prophecy...

The Jews' Time Has Run Out



● By **DAVID VAUGHN ELLIOTT**
1805 McBride Road—Mt. Airy, NC 27030

SOME PEOPLE HAVE a special feeling for the Jews. Others have special feelings against them. Some believe the Jews are God's chosen people. Others want to blot them off the face of the earth.

Why are there Jews in the world, anyway? Where did they come from? Are the Jews still God's special nation? Were they ever?

Nothing to Brag About

Without question, the central nation of the Old Testament is the Jewish nation. It does not take deep Bible study, however, to discover that the Jews did not become a nation through their own greatness, goodness, intelligence or power. Without the special intervention of Almighty God, the Jews (first known as *children of Israel*) would never even have existed.

Fact one: to get the children of Israel off to a start, God promised a son to a woman who was childless and past menopause. She laughed behind His back. But Sarah had relations with Abraham, anyway, and gave birth to a son. Read about it in Genesis 18 and 21.

Fact two: the children of Israel arose from being slaves in Egypt to becoming the leading nation of the Middle East. This only happened, however, through innumerable interventions of God. From the ten plagues in Egypt to the fall of Jericho (and beyond), God's power was the moving force all the way.

Fact three: time would fail to list all the sins of the Israelites from the day they came out of Egypt. God did not bless them because of their own goodness. "Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people" (Deuteronomy 9:6).

In the days of Jesus, many Jews lived with the presumption that they were the chosen people of God—without consideration of how they lived. John the baptizer blasted this self-righteous view. "Bear fruits

worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Luke 3:8). No, the Jews have nothing to brag about on their own.

Chosen with the World in View

The Jews were so often near-sighted. Many religious people today are just as near-sighted on behalf of the Jews. They think of the Jews as being blessed of God for the Jews' own sakes. They make a distinction between God's plans for the Jews and God's plans for the whole world. The truth, however, is quite the opposite. God's working with the Jews from beginning to end was for the purpose of blessing the entire world.

From the start, Almighty God chose Israel with the whole world in view. When God first called Abraham, He promised him, "I will make you a great nation." But He quickly added: "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). Later, at God's command, Abraham was about to do the unbelievable (sacrifice his only son). Because of such faith, God intervened and confirmed His promise: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 22:18).

Several Scriptures explain **how** all the nations of the earth were to be blessed through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). Not the least of these is Daniel's 70-week prophecy.

God Sets a Time Limit

The 70-week prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) is more than a prediction of certain events which were to transpire in the nation of Israel. This extraordinary prophecy dares to predict **when!** Verse 24 sets a time limit on God's working through the Jews and Jerusalem. "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city." Verse 25 sets the time for the arrival of the Messiah.

"Know therefore and understand,
That from the going forth of the command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"
(Daniel 9:25).

Seven plus 62 makes 69 weeks. That's about one year and four months. But, 69 weeks from when to when? According to the text, the 69 weeks start with an order to restore and build Jerusalem. They end with the arrival of Messiah.

Daniel received this prophecy in the first year of Darius, 538 B.C. Two years later (536 B.C.), the Jews began returning from captivity to Jerusalem. The process of rebuilding the temple and the city of Jerusalem was very long, some 100 years. The counting of the 69 (and 70) weeks has to begin sometime during this 100-year period.

(Continued on Next Page)

The Jews' Time Has Run Out

(Continued from Previous Page)

There are those who would like us to believe that they interpret all prophecy literally. That simply is not true. Nobody does! People of all prophetic viewpoints agree in this: the 70 weeks cannot be taken literally. If we start to count 69 literal weeks (16 months), starting anytime between 536 B.C. and 436 B.C., we simply end up with nothing. No one can find a fulfillment to the prophecy within that time frame—no Messiah; nothing. The truth is that God's Word, including prophecy, is just like our everyday speech. It is filled with figurative language. (See former article: *Prophecy: Literal or Figurative?*)

To the extent possible, we must allow Scripture itself to give us the keys to figurative interpretations. As for time spans, there is no better key than that which God gave Ezekiel. "I have laid on you a day for each year" (Ezekiel 4:6). Sixty-nine weeks is 483 days. Take a day for a year, and it becomes 483 years. If you start from 536 B.C. and count 483 years, you arrive at 53 B.C. On the other hand, if you start from 436 B.C. and count 483 years, you arrive at 47 A.D. So, in the most general terms, Daniel prophesied that the Messiah would come somewhere between 50 B.C. and 50 A.D. He certainly did come within that time!

The Jews a Blessing

The point is that, apart from **exact** dates, God had very special plans to fulfill no later than the first century A.D. It all had to do with the Jews and their holy city, Jerusalem. (Exact dates will be examined in a future article.)

It is no secret that Jesus was a Jew, of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, a descendent of Abraham. It is no secret that the most important way in which the Jews have blessed all nations is by giving us the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. Though the Jews often thought (and still think) that the Messianic hope was for them alone, it is no secret that the Messianic hope was and is the hope of the whole world. Jesus is the Jew believed on in all nations of the earth!

In 70 weeks (490 years), it would happen to the Jews, Daniel prophesied. In 490 years, they would produce, humanly speaking, the Messiah. What would the Messiah accomplish? That's what the opening verse of the prophecy is all about: verse 24. Gabriel says to Daniel that God had reserved 490 years in which to accomplish His most important work for the human race.

"Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city" (9:24). God had 490 years left in which to use the Jews. In the twentieth century, it is unacceptable to push the 70th week yet into the future, as is popularly done. In that case, it should have been a 350-week prophecy! Gabriel did not say, "350 weeks are determined." He said, "Seventy weeks are

determined." He prophesied that God, through the Jews and Jerusalem, would accomplish six vital goals within the first century of the Christian era. Almighty God did, indeed, fulfill this wonderful prophecy. He kept His word. Believe it!

The Work Of the Jewish Messiah

Six things were to be accomplished through the Jews and Jerusalem (verse 24). They would, indeed, be accomplished specifically through their Messiah the

(Continued on Page 11)

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. What were the first recorded words spoken by God in the Bible?
2. What is unusual about the river that went out of the garden of Eden?
3. Who is the only woman in the Bible whose total number of years lived is recorded?
4. Where was Jacob when he dreamed and had a vision of angels ascending and descending on a ladder that reached to heaven?
5. When Israel was encamped in the wilderness, what happened to the man who was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day?
6. What happened to Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, at their priestly post of duty, and why?
7. What woman in the Bible told her husband, when facing hardships, "Curse God and die"?
8. What insect is the lazy person admonished to consider in the book of Proverbs?
9. What book in the Bible is a love song?
10. What was the occupation of the prophet Amos (who was not of the school of the prophets)?
11. What did John the Baptist eat?
12. With how many loaves and fish did Jesus feed 5000 people, and how many baskets full of fragments were taken up afterwards?
13. With how many loaves and a few fish did Jesus feed 4000 people, and how many baskets full were left over?
14. To whom, and under what circumstances, were these words spoken: "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"?
15. Who jointly sent greetings with the apostle Paul in the salutation of the I Corinthians letter?
16. Where is Scripture wherein the gospel is defined in a brief statement?
17. In putting on the whole armor of God, what kind of shield is the Christian admonished to take?
18. What does the writer of the book of Hebrews say is the anchor of the soul?
19. What is the Scriptural definition of faith?
20. What is the meaning of the expression "Lord of sabaoth" that is found two times in the New Testament?

(NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper)

READERS'

...Response

APOLOGY: Please accept our humble apology for slowness in getting correspondence answered. "We" have no staff of secretaries, etc. to handle such, and this is done by the "editor" as time allows. Be it known that you are sincerely appreciated. □

FLORIDA:

■ *"Thank you so much for THE SWORD AND STAFF. I enjoy it so much and hope you will be able to continue with it a long time to come..."*

SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ *"A little to help defray your cost. Sure do enjoy the paper."*

■ *"Your lessons on prophecy have been very enlightening. To date, I have presented your studies on the following topics: 'Why Study Prophecy?,' 'Five Ways to Unravel Prophecy,' 'Prophecy: Literal or Figurative?,' 'Is Sunday the Lord's Day?,' 'Sabbath—Shadow or Reality?,' and now, 'Jesus, King of the Jews'...We have received a great blessing from them. And for this we give you our thanks..."*

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"THE SWORD AND STAFF has such excellent articles. We'd like to keep getting it..."*

TENNESSEE:

■ *"We certainly enjoyed the last SWORD AND STAFF. Looking forward to the next one. Keep up the good work and God bless."*

KENTUCKY:

■ *"Thanks for the paper—we really enjoy it very much. Keep up the good work, and may the 'Good Lord' bless you."*

OHIO:

■ *"I first want to say how much I enjoy and utilize your publication THE SWORD AND STAFF. I began preaching for a congregation last August and your publication has been a great help to my work as a*

young (experience-wise) evangelist... "Thank you for your work for the Kingdom of Christ." (e-mail)

■ *"Enclosed please find my contribution...We really enjoy your magazine to the fullest extent. We are so glad we have a man who will speak the true word of God, not dodging any issues. We thank God for you. And please keep telling it like it truly is. May God bless and keep you."*

"Here are some new people for your magazine..."

■ *"I would like to start by saying thank you. Thank you for your great publication. Thank you for your honesty. Thank you for your devotion to the Word of God. Thank you for continuing to send THE SWORD AND STAFF to me despite my lack of support. Enclosed is a little bit of help."*

"The last time I wrote you I was in college and single. Now, I'm working a job and married...I'm so happy to be a Christian...He [the Lord] has blessed me with a woman who not only knows what the Bible says about wives, but also believes it and lives it. Praise God! Godly women are very important to the well-being of the church and family..."

*"Another suggested topic I have is unfortunately not a positive topic. It seems I often point out what is wrong with other religions and such, but it is needed. Well, my idea is that you do an article on the Mormons. I don't even own a TV, but I'm always seeing the church of...Latter Day Saints commercials on all of the time when I visit friends or family. They are even on the radio. I'm sure that most Christians (I'm using the word strictly, I mean **real** Christians) know that the Mormons are a cult. But, do many know about where their 'Bible' came from...Perhaps you could shed some light on this in an article. Thanks for taking my suggestion..."*

Editor's Comment: You will find some material involving the Mormons under "Editorial Byways" in this issue of *The Sword and Staff*. This material is also posted on our web page.

<http://web.infoave.net/~jgibbons/index.htm>

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ *"Please send me a copy of your magazine..." (e-mail, web page response)*

■ *"Please find enclosed our check for one subscription to THE SWORD AND STAFF. Thank you for your time and concern for Jesus and His church and the wonderful faithful work of THE SWORD AND STAFF."*

■ *"You have out-done yourself in your recent publication which I received. Most informative, inspiring publication. I shared it with relatives...Could not believe the wonderful reading material!"*

"...You really are serving God, and I thank you with all of my heart for preaching and teaching His Word; so easy to understand in your SWORD AND STAFF publication."

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

"...Please don't stop helping us through your magazine."

NEW YORK:

■ *"This is just a note to let you know how much I enjoyed your [web] site. Please send me a copy of your paper and how I can subscribe..." (e-mail)*

MICHIGAN:

■ *"We appreciate your work you do in and for the kingdom of God."*

INDIANA:

■ *"Thank you for your magazine which is true to the Word. Please send a copy of your POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS..."*

■ *"Hi! I just read your first installment of articles about Bible prophecy entitled 'Not One Stone Upon Another,' in THE SWORD AND STAFF (Vol. 36, #2, 1998) and I loved it! I cannot wait to read the rest of your studies. You obviously have put in a lot of diligent study and careful research..."*

(Editor's Note: In this series on Bible prophecy there have already been several studies, and plans are for many others to follow. So, check them out).

MISSOURI:

■ *"Enclosed you will find a check...to help with the paper. I really do enjoy reading it and so do the other ones whose names I sent in. Please include..."*

MINNESOTA:

■ *"Greetings from Minnesota! I want to thank you for THE SWORD AND STAFF. It's refreshing to find Bible Truth in a magazine today. Keep up the great work you are doing. It is needed!"*

"I am sorry that I haven't been of much help to you financially in the past. Enclosed is a check to help you with the high production costs."

"May God bless you!"

NEBRASKA:

■ *"When THE SWORD AND STAFF arrives I sit right down and read it, go back and read it again...God bless you and your work."*

■ *"We have enjoyed and needed your publication of THE SWORD AND STAFF for many years."*

"Thank you so very much for each and every article you have taken time and effort to share with us. We truly appreciate every single one of them."

"Your articles have enriched our lives and have opened our eyes to our many faults. Thank you so much! If we didn't know, we couldn't grow."

"Please send a copy of POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS, as I would like to use it when preparing our weekly bulletin."

"May God bless you now and eternally for your faithfulness."

TEXAS:

■ *"I just finished reading Volume 36, # 1 (As you can see, I don't always get around to reading when things are current). I thought it was one of the best you have put out since I became acquainted with the publication. I was especially delighted with the article, 'Be Filled With The Spirit.' I thought it was really well done... Also, the article 'The Suffering Servant' was one of the very best. May find myself trying to use it for a sermon or maybe even a series of sermons in the future."*

"Thanks for the good work. God bless you." (e-mail)

COLORADO:

■ *"...Praise God that you have this homepage and hopefully many people are witnessed to with this new technology that everyone is into...I would like to start receiving your publication of THE SWORD AND STAFF...May God bless you in your endeavors for His Kingdom." (e-mail)*

OREGON:

■ *"Thank you for your steadfastness and the joy you give in your printings."*

PUERTO RICO:

■ *"My name is...I have now been receiving the magazine for a couple of years, and it has been a blessing to me. Today for the first time I got connected to your web page, and I exhort you to continue doing such a magnificent work to amplify and make known the Kingdom of God in our midst. I congratulate you. Today, I have just received the copy in Spanish and I am edified tremendously with your analyses and studies of the Word. I am delighted with 'Proverbially Speaking.' Although I consider myself bilingual, I would like for you to send me the article 'Be Filled With the Spirit' in Spanish. I printed it in English. That is, if you have it available in Spanish or if you have some program to translate it. It is in order to use it for a study in the Men's Society of the First Baptist Church of..." (e-mail, translated)*

(Editor's Note: The Spanish edition containing this material is two issues behind the English, so the said article will be available at that time).

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:

■ *"Greetings from the sunny 'Caribbean!'...Thank you for 'sticking' with the Word." (e-mail)*

AUSTRALIA:

■ *"...I have just read and enjoyed very much volume 36 # 2. May the Lord richly bless your ministry. I would like to purchase five books POEMS and PROVERBS... Would you be willing to post a complimentary introductory copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF to a list of concerned followers of Christ in Australia...?" (e-mail)*

ITALY:

■ *"I am a full time preacher. I would like to receive your publication. Could you send me a free sample issue and the information about the subscription costs?" □*

The Jew's Time Has Run Out

(Continued from Page 8)

Prince (verse 25). The Messiah would also be "cut off" (verse 26).

"Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy" (Daniel 9:24).

In the first three items, Daniel foretells the solution to the problem of "transgression," "sins" and "iniquity." A century and a half earlier, Isaiah had prophesied the same thing. "But He *was* wounded for our transgressions...And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...You make His soul an offering for sin...He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:5,6,10,12). Thus Isaiah predicted the supreme sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary's cross. To accomplish this great cleansing, Messiah had to be "cut off" (Isaiah 53:8; Daniel 9:26). Two great texts prophesy one great sacrificial death.

Notice that the six items to be accomplished are all spiritual in nature. The Jews had 490 more years. Within that time, they would be God's means to bring great spiritual blessings to the whole world. The first four of the six items are such basic Gospel doctrines that little discussion is necessary to show their fulfillment.

Number One: "To finish the transgression." "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15).

Number Two: "To make an end of sins." Even before Jesus' ministry began, John the baptizer cried out regarding Him: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Paul later wrote: "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin" (Romans 6:6,7).

Answers to: BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 1:3; 2. It started out as one and became four rivers (Genesis 2:10); 3. Sarah (Genesis 23:1,2); 4. Genesis 28:10-22; 5. Numbers 15:32-36; 6. Leviticus 10:1,2; 7. Job 2:9; 8. Proverbs 6:6-11; 9. Song of Solomon; 10. Amos 1:1; 7:14,15; 11. Matthew 3:4; 12. Matthew 14:15-21; 13. Matthew 15:32-39; 14. Matthew 26:47-52; John 18:10,11; 15. I Corinthians 1:1; 16. I Corinthians 15:1-4; 17. Ephesians 6:10-20; 18. Hebrews 6:18,19; 19. Hebrews 11:1; 20. Lord of hosts (Romans 9:29; James 5:4). □

"At the end of the ages, He [Jesus] has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

Number Three: "To make reconciliation for iniquity." "And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:11). "Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

Number Four: "To bring in everlasting righteousness." "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets [including Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9], even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe...whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness...so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 3:21,22,25; 5:21).

These first four items may be summed up in one verse: "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). These *Scriptures* include Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9.

The Sealing of Vision and Prophecy

The final two items of the six are more difficult to understand. They are open to various interpretations and, therefore, require deeper study.

Number Five: "To seal up vision and prophecy." The word *seal* may mean to affix a seal so as to authenticate or establish official approval. See Esther 8:8 for an example in ancient times. Even yet today, certain documents require seals to make them legally binding. Or, *seal* may mean to fasten up by sealing. Such sealing may be symbolic and authoritative in nature, as when Christ's tomb was sealed. On the other hand, it may be more physical in nature, like using glue or tape. See Job 41:1,15-17, where it expresses how the scales of Leviathan were so tightly sealed.

Which is the meaning in Daniel? To give approval or to close it up tight? Not an easy question. Perhaps both are correct. Remember that the prophecy has to do with Daniel's people, the Jews. God allotted them 70 weeks of years, which had to terminate no later than the first century A.D. By the first century, Jewish vision and prophecy had to be authenticated or be closed up. Or, both. The fulfillment clarifies that both took place.

In the first century, the Prophet of prophets came, and Almighty God put His seal of approval upon Him. "The Son of Man...because God the Father has set His seal on Him" (John 6:27). As the Father said from heaven: "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22).

(Continued on Next Page)

The Jews' Time Has Run Out

(Continued from Previous Page)

God put His stamp of approval also on all the Old Testament prophets, by fulfilling their prophecies. As Jesus explained to His apostles: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27). Thus, Old Testament vision and prophecy were sealed in the sense of receiving the best possible stamp of approval: fulfillment.

On the other hand, Jewish vision and prophecy were also sealed up by coming to an end. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13). These words have a ring of finality to them. John the baptizer was the last prophet of the Jewish nation. Why final? "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1,2). John did the final preparation for the Messiah, Jesus. Jesus was the great Prophet of "these last days," God's superior and final Messenger for the final age, the church age.

For a limited time there were lesser prophets in the Lord's church. But these latter prophets were not prophets of physical Israel. They were prophets of the Lord's church, without regard to nationality. In the Lord's church, "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Galatians 3:28). Physical Israel ceased being God's message-bearer to the world.

Jewish vision and prophecy were thus sealed in both senses. They were sealed with the divine stamp of approval via their fulfillment; and, at the same time, they were sealed shut in the sense of coming to an end.

The Anointing of the Most Holy

Number Six: "To anoint the Most Holy." The *most holy* what? To discover the possibilities, the words must first be examined in their Old Testament context. A study of the word *anointed* in the Old Testament reveals that both persons and things were anointed. Both sacred and day-to-day anointings took place. Thus, the possibilities are many.

The words *most holy*, on the other hand, have a more restricted use. The expression occurs about 45 times in the Old Testament. *Most holy* is the usual translation when the Hebrew text doubles the word *holy*. Some scholars render it *holy of holies* when it refers to the innermost sanctuary of the tabernacle or temple. The Hebrew expression *most holy* seldom, if ever, refers to people.

A study of the texts where *most holy* appears, reveals that the expression usually refers in some way to the tabernacle or temple. It frequently refers to what we call the *holy of holies*. Even more frequently, it re-

fers to the offerings in the tabernacle. In addition, it is sometimes used of the tabernacle as a whole or of the furniture in the tabernacle-temple. Therefore, it seems entirely appropriate to apply Daniel's words "anoint the Most Holy" to the temple or things related to the temple.

But, what temple? The context, as has been seen, prophesies the work of the Messiah. The context also foretells the utter destruction of the Jewish temple. Sacred anointing carries the idea of setting apart for God's service. It would be difficult to fit into Jesus' ministry the idea of setting apart the Jewish temple for the service of God. Indeed, with the redemptive work of the Messiah taking away sin, the very opposite took place. The veil of that temple was rent in two miraculously from top of bottom. God had no more use for that Jewish temple and called upon the Romans to destroy it in 70 A. D.

However, there is another temple. Jesus said, "on this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). Later, this church is called *the temple of God*. "Do you not know that **you are the temple of God** and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16; bold emphasis added). Just as "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:38), so the church could be considered as anointed with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. See, also, 2 Corinthians 1:21,22. Bear in mind that Daniel's reference to the *most holy* is part of a prophecy about the Jews and Jerusalem. Jesus' church began precisely with the Jews in Jerusalem.

The book of Hebrews would suggest even more concerning the *most holy* and the work of Messiah. "But into the second part [the holy of holies] the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood...It was symbolic...But Christ...with His own blood...entered **the Most Holy Place** once for all, having obtained eternal redemption...For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:7-12,24; bold emphasis added).

Although the word *anointed* is not used here, the word *purified* or *cleansed* is (verse 23). Jesus surely dedicated and set apart heaven itself in a unique way by entering there with his blood sacrifice to cleanse it. Thus it is quite reasonable to consider that the work of the Messiah brought about the anointing of **the entire** tabernacle-temple. Both the holy place (the church) and the most holy place (heaven) may be considered as anointed. They were both set apart to God's service, through the most holy sacrifice of Christ.

The Jews' Time Has Run Out

In and of themselves, the Jews are no more important, nor less important, than any other nation. God never considered them His chosen people with just their own special blessing in mind. God brought them

into existence to bless the whole world. That blessing could come only through the promised Messiah.

More than five centuries before the Messiah came, God's angel Gabriel revealed to Daniel that the Jews, Jerusalem and the temple were to begin a countdown. Then there would be only 490 years left for God to complete His purposes through them.

Near the end of those 490 years, the Messiah did, in fact, come and was "cut off" to take away the sin of the world. Then, once the Messiah's church was well established and the Jews had ample opportunity to repent and surrender to Him, God utterly destroyed their temple and city. The Jews who survived were scattered to the four winds. Their allotted time had come to an end.

Now that the Messiah has come for the salvation of the whole world, "there is neither Jew nor Greek." The Jews are now on the same footing as everybody else. As a special people, they have served their purpose. God chose the Jews to bless you and me. He kept His promise. He did it on time. □

Note by author: *This is the second article regarding Daniel's seventy-week prophecy and Jesus' enlargement upon it. Look for more in future issues.*

Scripture in the preceding article is taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



"GOD IS FAITHFUL"

(Continued from Page 1)

his heel." There would be an ongoing struggle between right and wrong. Finally of the seed of the woman there would be one to bring a crushing blow to the devil. This one of the seed of woman is distinguished from the others by use of the words "it" and "his."

Abraham's "Seed"

Years later with the call of Abraham we see that God had not forgotten His promise. The account reads, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram [Abraham], Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and *in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis 12:1-3). The descendants of Abraham; the nation of Israel, would be the vehicle of bringing the Savior into the world. Promise of the coming seed is repeatedly made to Abraham and his posterity (Genesis 22:18; 26:4).

Finally David

This promise is kept alive with Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. Then from the twelve sons of Jacob, the promise is narrowed down to Judah. On his death-

bed, speaking prophetically, old Jacob said, "The septré shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh [bearer of tranquility, peace] come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:10). From the tribe of Judah, David continues this narrowing lineage. In fact, he becomes the prophetic prototype of the very "seed" himself. The Savior would be called the son of David when he came.

God Keeps His Promise

God is faithful in what He says. He keeps His promise. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of woman..." (Galatians 4:4). Paul further speaks of "the gospel of God (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:1-4). I John 3:8 asserts, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Then I John 4:9 reads, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him" (I John 4:9).

Fulfillment Declared

The sinless life of Christ took place. At the end of it he was crucified, buried, and resurrected from the dead. Then after this, following the establishment of the church on the day of Pentecost, Peter quotes the Scripture about the promised seed and shows its fulfillment. He said, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:25,26).

It is Wonderful!

It is wonderful to know that we now have a Savior. There is hope for mankind. The power of the devil has been broken. The sin problem has been dealt with. We can be saved from our sins. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Then, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!" Heaven awaits all who accept the Savior and live for him. God is faithful in what He promises.

(Continued on Next Page)

“GOD IS FAITHFUL”

(Continued from Previous Page)

II. GOD IS FAITHFUL TO ADD US TO THE CHURCH

Synonymous with the Savior

Synonymous with the coming of the Savior was the coming of the kingdom. John the Baptist came preaching, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Jesus took up the same message. He proclaimed: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). In his declaration of intent to establish his church, he uses the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably (Matthew 16:18,19). Jesus told Nicodemus that a person had to be born of water and the Spirit before he could enter the kingdom (John 3:5). The kingdom would be made up of all who accepted the Savior. On another occasion Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). The kingdom would actually be set up during the lifetime of some who heard the voice of Jesus. This came to pass in the second chapter of the book of Acts. The kingdom came with power with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Peter preached that Jesus had been raised from the dead, and now was the Christ sitting upon the throne of David. With his ascension to heaven, he was now enthroned (Acts 2:29-36). The outpouring of the Spirit and demonstration of power ushered in the kingdom. The church was formally established. Men are added to the church (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13), and thereafter it is spoken of as an ongoing reality.

For “Whosoever Will”

The Great Commission makes it plain that the gospel is for “whosoever will” (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Revelation 22:17). Jesus had told Nicodemus of the necessity of being born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom (John 3:5). The Great Commission said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). On the day the church was started, sin-convicted men wanted to know what they must do. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]. For this promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:38,39). Next we read, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Acts 2:47 further tells us likewise that the Lord thereafter added to the church daily those that were being saved.

Come and Be Added

Beloved, if we want to accept the Savior and be added to his church, we may; we can. God is faithful. His word stands. Peter’s words on Pentecost are far-

reaching: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). The book of Revelation ends with an invitation and a promise, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). Jesus said that “he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” When we repent and are properly baptized, the Lord adds us to his church (not to some man-made denomination). Denominational people belittle the concept and necessity of the church, but Paul tells us that Christ is the Savior of the body, the church; that he “loved the church and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:23-25). Paul told the Ephesian elders that Christ purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). We cannot be saved outside of the church. Being saved and becoming a part of the Lord’s church are one and the same thing. Remember, the Lord added to the church those that were being saved (Acts 2:47).

Rejoicing in the Kingdom

So, let us rejoice in our salvation, being in the eternal kingdom of our Lord, the reign of heaven upon the earth. Looking to Revelation 1:9, we can see that we are in good company: “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...” Men were simply and only commanded to preach the gospel, and the Lord did the adding to his church. We have no authority to invite men to join a denomination (or to start a denomination, or to be a denomination). Just preach the gospel in all of its purity, and let the Lord add people to the church that has already been established in the first century; teach men to observe all things that Christ has commanded. Then, and only then, can we claim the promise of the Great Commission, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world [age]” (Matthew 28:20). And with Paul we can look forward in anticipation: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (I Corinthians 15:24). Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20,21). Heaven will be our home.

III. GOD IS FAITHFUL TO BE WITH US

Great and Reassuring Truth

Then in the context of these wonderful truths, it is reassuring to know that God is with us. We don’t become His children to be left as orphans (John 14:18; Acts 2:38; John 3:5; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 3:16-21). We are not left alone to pull our own little red wagons. The Great Commission had promised the presence of the Lord for those abiding by its terms (Matthew 28:18-20). Verse nine of the epistle of II John reads, “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. *He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*” Therefore the

admonition (and promise) in Hebrews 13:5 and 6 is ours, "Let your conversation [the way that you live] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Faithful to Keep Us

The apostle Peter exclaims, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation* ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice..." (I Peter 1:3-6). God is faithful to keep us. How reassuring! However, it is not Calvinistic "once-in-grace-always-in-grace." We are kept by the power of God *through faith*. Through faith on our part we tap on to power that keeps us. Let us not cast off this faith (Hebrews 10:35-39; I Timothy 1:19; 5:12; 6:12; Revelation 2:10). Victory is assured. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:

(Continued on Next Page)

BARBS... with a Point

MANY who talk much say little.

Were you converted to the LORD Jesus Christ or just talked into being baptized?

If professing Christians cannot be distinguished from the world now, they will not be distinguished from the world in the Day of Judgment.

To pray for "daily bread," and not work to help bring it about, is to tempt God.

The depth of a stream cannot be determined when the water is muddy; be clear in your writing and speaking if you would convey the depth of what is said.

The ungrateful person of necessity is proud; if he were thankful, he couldn't help but be humble.

What kind of self-image do "religious" singers have when they copy singers of the secular world (even "rock and roll" singers) in the way they dress and present themselves?

To be neutral in the struggle between right and wrong is to be in the wrong.

The person who finds no pleasure now in going to church and living the restrained moral life likewise would not enjoy going to heaven.

Frugality unless joined, conditioned, and balanced by liberality becomes stinginess.

It seems that some preachers are more interested in establishing themselves as a scholar of the Bible than they are in establishing the church of the Bible in all of its purity and simplicity.

Not all skeletons are in the closet; some may be in the living room with the flesh still on them.

The person who will lie about one thing will lie about two things, and three and four things, and even more things.

Politicians seem to look upon people as objects to be manipulated for their own selfish purposes.

Abortion and AIDS are but symptoms of greater problems, that being fornication, adultery, and sodomy (which will send a person to hell—I Corinthians 6:9,10; Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 21:8—*Can anything be worse than that?*).

It is hard to be sold out to the Lord when we have never counted the cost (Luke 14:25-33).

According to the Scriptures, all Christians living now are called saints (for that is what they are); it is a sad commentary on the spiritual state of things to think that only those who are dead, and a select few of them, are saints.

It is an artificial unity when churches are bound together on anything other than the Word of God.

You may think of yourself as "main stream," but what does that mean when everything has been swept away and has lost its identity in a boundless ocean of muddled, mixed and merging streams?

When YOU are going the wrong way, YOU must make a YOU-turn to get back on track. □

No Shortcut in God's Plan

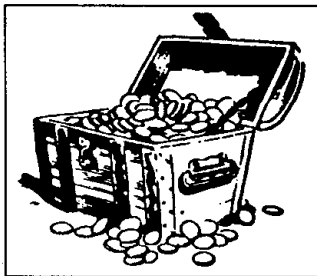
DR. JOSEPH FORT NEWTON once told of an amateur naturalist who watched an emperor moth slowly making its laborious way from the chrysalis stage. Day after day it struggled and squirmed to emerge from its cocoon. Thinking to help the butterfly, he took his penknife and cut a large opening for it. The struggle was ended and the moth emerged. Being unable to make its way in its environment, it fluttered feebly until it died. He had robbed it of the privilege to grow strong and beautiful through struggle.

By being too kind and soft-hearted, the naturalist unwittingly harmed that which he wanted to help. Parents and teachers can do the same to their children or students if they fail to recognize that work and effort are a part of God's plan for achieving excellence.—*Denver Sizemore* □

TRUTH is not determined by a big following for it is singular and stands alone.—J.E.G. □

The
Sword AND Staff
Treasure

MANY who love the Word of God have discovered Treasure much to their liking when they obtained the bound volumes of *The Sword and Staff*. If you like this current issue, you will likewise be thrilled with the back copies in book form. Notice those still available (while they are still available), and place your order now for good reading. Make them part of your library *and part of your life*. You will be glad that you did. □



“GOD IS FAITHFUL”

(Continued from Previous Page)

and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (I John 5:4). Paul pointed out to the sinning Corinthians that “God is faithful” (I Corinthians 1:9) in doing His part. Rest assured that He is. Let us do ours (I Corinthians 15:1,2; II Corinthians 7:8-11; Galatians 6:7-9).

What great and wonderful truths! There is One who is faithful in every sense of the word. His Word stands. It will come to pass. God is faithful in His promises, He is faithful to add us to His Church, and He is faithful to be with us as we serve Him. “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). And, “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (II Timothy 2:11-13). Beloved, let us trust God, and let us respond accordingly. Amen! □

□ 1995-1996 volumen encuadernado de “La Espada y El Caydo” (en español) —\$7.75

(CLIP AND MAIL\OR WRITE)

Gentlemen:

Enclosed find my contribution. Please put me on the mailing list of *The Sword and Staff*. □ New □ Renew

Name:

Address (with zip):

Check for bound volumes of *The Sword and Staff*

- 1985-86 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$6.95
- 1987-88 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.25
- 1989-90 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.25
- 1991-92 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.25
- 1993-94 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.50
- 1995-96 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.75
- *Poems of The Soul and Proverbs* (by James E. Gibbons)—\$5.00; 5 or more copies, \$4.00 each.

Live Every Day

EVERY DAY is a little life, and our whole life is but a day repeated. Therefore live every day as if it would be the last. Those that dare lose a day, are dangerously prodigal; those that dare misspend it are desperate.—*Joseph Hall* □

***O Church, Shape Up,
Stand Up, Speak Up!***

A church once stood for truth and right;
To have it preached was its delight;
But things today aren't quite the same;
Alas! Has all gone down the drain?

That church now seems an empty shell;
Poured out is truth it would not tell;
Its message now has lost its ring,
As with the world it has its fling.

O church! Shape up! And be yourself;
Stand up, speak up, for we're not deaf;
Again herald forth the gospel sound;
The word of truth and right expound.

—*By James E. Gibbons*

● **HELP US REACH OUT TO MORE PEOPLE AND CHURCHES WITH THIS PUBLICATION. Thanks!**

→ Check Out Our Web Site:
<http://web.infoave.net/~jgibbons/index.htm>

→

THE SWORD AND STAFF
Post Office Box 147
Mt. Airy, NC 27030 USA
Telephone: (336) 789-1044

Non-Profit Organ.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Mt. Airy, NC 27030
Permit No. 25