Sword AND Staff

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



—Love It, Or Lose It!-

• BY JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 Fairfield Drive Mount Airy, NC 27030 USA

respect, and believe the truth. He must recognize its value for what it is, and especially in contrast with that which is false. Christ asserted, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). In praying to God the Father, Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Christ was the embodiment of the truth, and the Word of God the revelation of it. If we do not love and appreciate the truth, we will lose it (even after accepting it). It is that simple. Delusion and error will take its place.

— I — The Great Apostasy

This truth is brought out when the apostle Paul told the Thessalonians about the great falling away that would come before Christ came back. Having warned them of this apostasy, he concludes what he had to say with these words, "...Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:10b-12). Nothing could be plainer, could it? Love it, or lose it.

The Product of Paganism

The same truth is alluded to in the first chapter of Romans, only here Paul goes back to the earliest of times in history to illustrate it. From creation all of mankind knew (or knew of) the true God. However, that was not true for long; the situation changed. We are told that finally "they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (1:21). They "changed the truth of God into a lie, and...For this cause God gave them up" (1:25,26). Delusion sets in. They become steeped in idolatry and the perverted practices of sodomy (and wrongs of all kind). (Read Romans 1:18-32). That describes the Gentile world in Paul's day.

"Buy the Truth"

How we need to recognize the priceless value of truth, love it, and appreciate it! This is most important. Proverbs, that great book of wisdom, admonishes, "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23). Jesus gave two parables that vividly illustrate this. He said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 13:44-46).

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

LIFE is short; keep it sweet.

In the New Testament, Jesus came to tell us about the love of God, then he sealed it with his blood.

God wants us to be wholly holy (I Thessalonians 5:23; II Corinthians 7:1).

Like the prodigal son (Luke 15:17), when we come to ourselves, we will come to God.

Knowledge without love does not come from above.

A good name is a priceless treasure that can be possessed by rich and poor alike.

If our hearts are warm, our words will not be cold.

Don't be unduly flattered when flowers are strewn along your way; flowers wilt so soon.

Clouds enhance the beauty of the sunset.

If you have experienced God's grace, and are in it, it helps you grow old gracefully.

The reward of faith is finally to see that which we believed. \Box



PUTTING THE BLAME ON GOD, OR GETTING BACK AT GOD

Some of them are present-day happenings and situations, and others are from the Scriptures and happened long ago.

- 1. A wayward and delinquent teenager and his father clash as he reminds him of how he ought to be living. He had been taught what was right. The agitated young man fires back at his dad, "I didn't ask to be born!"
- 2. People who believe the Bible point out that homosexual practices are wicked and morally repugnant. However, we are told that homosexuality is not a matter of conscience, but of science. In other words, that is the way that God made them.
- 3. Adam, when God questioned him about what he had done and how he knew he was naked, replied, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12).
- 4. We read about Cain and Abel. "And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the first-lings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell...And...Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Genesis 4:3-8).
- 5. We read what happened involving Elisha after Elijah was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot. "And he [Elisha] went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children [youths] out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head...And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare [mauled] forty and two children [youths] of them" (II Kings 2:23,24).
- 6. "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie...thou has not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:1-4).

7. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12).

What do all of these scenarios have in common? Were you able to come to any conclusions as you read this?

In each case, in some way, all of them are trying to get back at God, to put the blame and responsibility at His feet. The delinquent teenager, who said that he didn't ask to be born, is trying to put the responsibility of his actions upon his father and thus upon God. But that is the lot of everyone. No one has ever been asked such a question. What a cop-out! We are responsible, free-moral agents. In the Day of Judgment that will sound pretty dumb. Likewise, homosexuals are trying to put the blame on God for their twisted sexual orientation by saying that it is not a matter of conscience, but of science. Flawed studies, if indeed they are studies, prove nothing but people trying to justify depraved behavior. Nothing scientific here. When Adam said that the woman God had given him gave to him of the forbidden tree, and he did eat, he was really trying to put the blame on God. When Cain had an attitude problem involving his brother Abel, which finally resulted in Abel's death, it was really God that his feelings were leveled against. God had accepted his brother's offering and rejected his. He resented it. When the young fellows made fun of the prophet of God, Elisha, God took it as a personal insult. To make fun of God's prophet was to make fun of God. Although Ananias and Sapphira lied to the apostles, Peter said they had not lied to men but unto God. They had lied to God's representatives. Those who are godly suffer persecution for that very reason. To the degree that they are godly and righteous, they are like God. Such a likeness by contrast is a silent rebuke to the sinful world. The people of the world don't like it, and by persecution they try to get back at God.

This makes an interesting study. Let us be careful that misdirected feelings, attitudes and thoughts are not leveled against God. Let us accept the responsibility for our own actions.

4

Sermons from Nature And Human Experience...

"THAT WHICH IS AGAINST NATURE"

AUL THE APOSTLE wrote in I Corinthians 11:14, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" There are lessons to be gained from nature, and to Paul long hair symbolized submission.

Man having been created to be the head, long hair would inappropriately be displayed on him. The role of a woman is more of a submissive role in her relationship to man. Thus, long hair is becoming to her.

Jesus used parables from nature and human experience to get his teachings across. The word parable in the original language of the New Testament signifies that which has been thrown alongside, i.e., para + bolé (beside + thrown). The Lord made the application in what he was trying to get across. But there are lessons to be learned from nature and human experience that are more obvious than parables. The very nature of the thing itself is a truth and message God wants us to see.

Somewhat as a series, from time to time, we will point out some of these sermons from nature and human experience. Let us zero in on one such lesson in Romans 1:18-32 now.

"The Natural Use"

In the book of Romans Paul shows that Jew and Gentile alike are guilty before God (and need a Savior), "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). First, he singles out the Gentile. All men originally knew God. But with time, the vast majority of them plunged into the darkness of idolatry. They did not retain God in their knowledge. As we single from out of the above Scripture in Romans 1, Paul said, "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more [rather] than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet [fitting, due]. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate [debased mind [a mind void of judgment], to do those things which are not convenient [proper, seemly]" (Romans 1:24-28).

Male and Female

The practice of homosexuality is perversely unnatural. That is not the way God made us. Although the Lord was dealing with a different subject than the one at hand, he asked in Matthew 19, verses 4 and 5, "Have ye not read, that he [GOD] which made them at the beginning made them male and

"THAT WHICH IS AGAINST NATURE" (Continued from Previous Page)

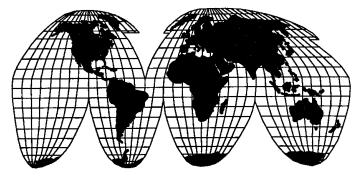
female...For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain [the two] shall be one flesh?" Going back to Genesis, we read, "So God created man in his own image [a spiritual imagel, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply..." (Genesis 1:27,28). Then Genesis 2:22, more in particular, tells us that the LORD God made a woman and brought her unto the man. This is the very foundation and basis of marriage. Thus, Moses offered his inspired commentary: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (2:24). Yes, God made male and female. The very anatomy of their bodies tell us what is natural, as their distinctive bodies compliment one another for the purposes that God made them. In this intimate relationship, they were to be fruitful and multiply. But the anatomy of the body does not naturally lend itself to homosexual practices. That being the case, one's sexuality must be given over to that which is abnormal, perverted and sub-human. No offspring can come from such a union. This is not what God intended. The Bible looks upon the practice of homosexuality as a loathsome sin.

"They Became Fools"

Men today arrogantly pride themselves in being smarter than their forebears. Their ancestors believed the Bible, and the Bible no where gives comfort to those who practice sexual perversion, except in repenting and turning from it (I Corinthians 6:9-11). Men more godly and of a Bible-believing generation made the laws of the land. The practice of homosexuality was called sodomy and legally labeled, "crime against nature." But, just like Paul wrote in Romans 1:22, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Sodomy laws are no longer enforced, and in many states they have been taken off the law books. There is even talk of legalizing homosexual marriages (as way-out as that may seem!). The president of the United States actively promotes the homosexual agenda. Then, almost as no surprise, he is involved in a sex scandal with a young woman (the scandal involved what is legally called sodomy, that which is practiced by homosexuals). A spokesman of the White House belittled those who spoke of homosexual practices as morally wrong and condescendingly called them unenlightened. We were told that it was not a matter of conscience, but of science.

How pathetic! How sad! "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Ignorance reigns. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate [debased] mind [a mind void of judgment], to do those things which are not convenient [proper, seemly]" (This was spoken of the pagan Gentile world of long ago). According to Paul, even nature itself, elementary as that is, teaches us otherwise. The truth is as plain as the anatomy of the human body. Perhaps it is willful ignorance today, if indeed men are ignorant, as they seek to justify themselves in their sins (yes, sins!). Our nation needs to wake up! It is later than we think!

"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—

Where You Can Go

IF YOU are impatient, sit down quietly and talk with Job.

If you are just a little strongheaded, go and see Moses.

If you are getting weak-kneed, take a good look at Elijah.

If there is no song in your heart, listen to David.

If you are a policy man, read Daniel.

If you are getting sordid, spend a while with Isaiah.

If your faith is below par, read Paul.

If you are getting lazy, watch James.

If you are losing sight of the future, climb up the stairs of Revelation and get a glimpse of the Promised Land.—Faith & Thought

FAME is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches takes wings, those who cheer today will curse tomorrow. Only one thing endures. Character.—Horace Greely

THE TRUTH

—Love It, Or Lose It! —

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"No Greater Joy"

The apostle John knew this unexcelled joy in association with truth. He wrote to Gaius, "The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." (III John 1-4). Yes, Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (I Corinthians 13:6).

Complimentary Elements

Truly, love and truth compliment and amplify one another. Psalms 85:10 has other elements, besides the love of truth, beautifully merging with truth. Notice. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Then love and truth combined have a bearing on the way truth is spoken. Not only are we to love the truth or lose it, Ephesians 4:15 says that we are to be "speaking the truth in love."

— II —

Let us get back to what we were saying. Great and wonderful as truth is, we will lose it if we don't love it. If we do not truly love the truth, we will become bored by that "old, old story we have heard so long" and lust for something else. We will want to be in vogue with the times. We may think it is too dogmatic, too "strait and narrow." Not "modern" enough. A materialistic mindset and an inclination of wanting to reshape Christianity into a materialistic mold may be a factor. "Let's make Christianity more compatible and palatable to the world."

The Solemn Charge to Timothy

Thoughts of this nature may have been in Paul's mind when he wrote II Timothy. He would soon die a martyr. Hard times were in store for the church. A modified message might be better, some would think. In view of this, Paul solemnly admonished, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant [ready] in season [eu-kairos, good seasons], out of season [a-kairos, no season at all]; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering

and doctrine. For the time [kairos, season] will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry [fulfil thy ministry]" (II Timothy 4:1-5).

Lusting for Something Else

Did you notice what Paul said? It was because of "their own *lusts*" they would turn away their ears from the truth and be turned to fables. That was the factor involved. Men love the truth, but when they tire of it, they *LUST* for something else. Lust is unlawful desire.

This is what happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness. The LORD God graciously provided them manna from heaven, as they had their needs met, but they became tired of it. We read, "And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Numbers 11:4-6).

And that is just exactly what happens when men no longer love the truth. It may be the mixed multitude in our midst that lusts first and cries out for fleshly things. (And the mixed multitude of unconverted people seems to be always with us). Then, it isn't long until the whole church can be carried away with this mentality. "The Scriptures are boring; we need something more exciting and different. The Bible doesn't really mean that." Obviously they don't love the truth and are ready to lose it.

Problems in Our Society

Yes, there are so many things in our society today that would make man inclined to lust after something else, or not really highly esteem or love the truth in the first place. In fact, the very nature of our society itself is a basic part of the problem. Our society is multi-cultured with hundreds of religious denominations. Couple that with the mindset of subjective relativism, and we really have a mess. The unique and distinctive edge of truth is knocked off as truth and error are homogenized together to make up the mixed-up, modern mindset. In such a context, truth and error are equally esteemed. The distinguishing of truth from error doesn't seem to enter the average person's mind. "I'm okay, you're

THE TRUTH, Love It or Lose It!

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okay" is the great American way. "It doesn't make any difference what you believe, just so long as you are sincere." Truth is not loved and esteemed as the truth, and, therefore, truth is lost. Love it, or lose it!

There is much extra expounding that could be done on this subject, but we think the point has been established by our repeated emphasis in this brief article: THE TRUTH, love it, or lose it! Initially, if we do not highly esteem and love the truth, we cannot be saved. Then if we do not continue to highly esteem, love and be thankful for the truth, we will not keep it for long. We will be deceived and enter into a state of delusion as we lust after things other than the truth.

Again: THE TRUTH, love it, or lose it!

"One Another" Admonitions and Relationships in Christ

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- "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34; 15:12; Romans 13:8; I Thessalonians 4:9; I Peter 1:22; I John 3:11; 3:23; 4:7,11,12; II John 5).
- "Wherefore *receive ye one another*, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).
- "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10).
- "Salute [Greet] one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute [greet] you" (Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 16:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Peter 5:14).
- "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love *serve one another*" (Galatians 5:13).
- "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15:14).
- "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13; 10:25).
- "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and *edify one another*, even as also ye do" (I Thessalonians 5:11).
- "Wherefore *comfort one another* with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:18).
- "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephe-

sians 4:2; Colossians 3:13).

- "And be ye *kind one to another*, tender-hearted, *forgiving one another*, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).
- "And let us *consider one another* to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24).

M-

A Series Involving the Bible and Prophecy...

Jesus Fulfilled GOD'S TIMETABLE

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

a world leader several centuries before his arrival? Imagine predicting, not only his arrival, but the year of his arrival!

490 Years

Daniel's famous 70-weeks prophecy (9:24-27) predicted the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the arrival of the Messiah, followed by a second destruction of Jerusalem. If this were the total prophecy, it would be sufficient to build one's faith. But, when one considers the chronological elements of the prophecy, the soul is overcome with wonder!

At the outset, it must be noted that the possibility of a literal 70 weeks (less than 1½ years) must be discarded. If one insists on a literal interpretation, the prophecy simply fails. That's why all Bible believers accept some type of figurative interpretation.

To discover how to interpret figures, serious Bible students will first search the Scriptures for clues. In this case, the clue comes from Ezekiel. God told Ezekiel to lie on his left side for 390 days and on his right side for 40 days. Why? "For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days. ...I have laid on you a day for each year" (Ezekiel 4:5,6).

"A day for each year" is thus a solid Bible precedent for the figurative interpretation of time prophecies. This does not mean that this "key" is to be applied to every prophecy. Rather, it is a divinely given key that should be examined every time the literal meaning of a prophecy does not make sense.

A week is seven days. Seven times seventy equals 490 days. According to the key, one day is one year. Therefore, 490 prophetic days become 490 calendar years. This interpretation offers real possibilities.

Notice what is said about the various time periods in the prophecy. The six spiritual items listed in Daniel 9:24 (see previous article: "The Jews' Time

Has Run Out") had to happen within the 70 weeks (490 years). The Messiah had to come at exactly "seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" (verse 25) (7+62=69; 69x7=483 years). During the last week (7 years), a covenant would be confirmed. In the middle of that "week" the sacrifices would cease. All these things are prophesied to take place within 490 years.

Two other items are mentioned in the prophecy that might or might not occur during the 490 years. Verse 26 mentions both the death of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem. The text introduces both events with these words: "And after the sixty-two weeks." It does not specify if "after" refers to the final week or some time later.

In short, the wording of the prophecy requires that many of the details be fulfilled within 490 years. However, the wording does not require that everything take place within that period.

The Start of the Timetable

In order to count a period of time, we must know when to start counting. Gabriel told Daniel (in 9:25):

"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."

Seven plus 62 equals 69 weeks (483 days). That's 483 years "until" the Messiah. Starting when? "From the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem."

When Gabriel was talking to Daniel, Jerusalem was in total ruins. It was time for the Jews to return to their Promised Land to "restore and build" Jerusalem. A king of Persia would give the command. The Bible tells us of **four** such commands.

First command: 536 B.C., Ezra 1:1-4: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia...Cyrus ...made a proclamation...saying...the LORD God...has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem."

This command had to do with the temple, which was the most important part of Jerusalem. Ezra proceeds to tell of this first return and of the building of the temple foundation. However, when local opposition developed, Artaxerxes, king of Persia, issued a command to stop the building. The work ceased.

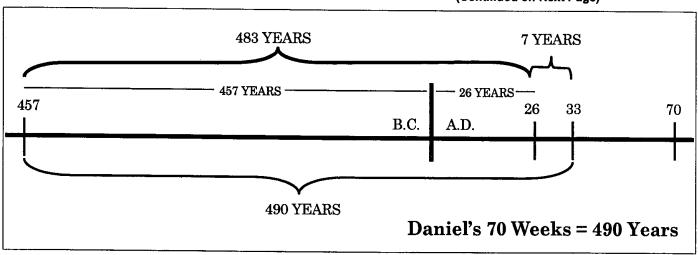
Second command: 520 B.C., Ezra 6:1-12: "Then King Darius issued a decree. ...Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site."

As with the first command, this second one dealt with the temple. The decree was issued to stop the opposing forces. This time, the work went forward. They completed and dedicated the temple, aided by the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah.

Third Command: 457 B.C., Ezra 7:11-26: "Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest...I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. ...And you, Ezra, according to your God-given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people." Ezra 9:9: "Our God...extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem."

These two texts cover a full range of activities to "restore and build" Jerusalem. They speak of establishing local law and order, as well as rebuilding the ruins of the temple and the wall.

Fourth command: 444 B.C., Nehemiah 2:1-10: "In the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes...I...said to the king... 'the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire...I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.'...So it pleased the king to send me."



Jesus Fulfilled GOD'S TIMETABLE

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This final command of a Persian monarch dealt with the building of Jerusalem's walls. Nearly 100 years had followed the first command, and the walls were still in ruins. Now, finally, Nehemiah moved the people to rebuild the walls.

Which Command to Start With

Which of these four commands to "restore and build" Jerusalem is the one referred to in Daniel's prophecy? Not an easy question! There are those who favor one or the other of these commands, based on their concept of the nature of each command. However, it must be noted that the temple, the government and the walls—all are involved in the complete restoring and rebuilding of Jerusalem. Therefore, the words of the prophecy can be satisfied as long as any one of these commands becomes the starting point.

The major outline of the prophecy is clear: 1) the city and temple would be restored and rebuilt, 2) the Messiah would come, and 3) the city and the temple would again be destroyed. The prophecy says that there would be 483 days/years from "the command...until Messiah."

Let's take each of the commands, add 483 years and see if there is any fulfillment. Remember that when we move from B.C. to A.D. we have to add the two figures of years. It is much like counting temperature from below zero to above zero. If it was 10 below and now is 10 above, you add the two figures. It warmed up 20 degrees.

- 1 -- Starting with 536 B.C. and adding 483 years, we arrive at 53 B.C. No Messiah there.
- 2 -- Starting with 520 B.C. and adding 483 years, we arrive at 37 B.C. Still no Messiah.
- 3 -- Starting with 457 B.C. and adding 483 years, we arrive at 26 A.D. Right on target for Jesus!
- 4 -- Starting with 444 B.C. and adding 483 years, we arrive at 39 A.D. No Messiah there, either.

The first two are much too early; while the fourth is several years too late. Nobody has any Messiah to suggest for those 3 dates. Thus, the only one of the four dates to examine is the 3rd one.

"Until Messiah"

"Until Messiah." Notice that when Jesus was baptized, "the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22).

Several years later, Peter mentioned this event to Cornelius: "that word...began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good" (Acts 10:37-38). Peter speaks of 1) John's baptism, 2) Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit and 3) Jesus' ministry—in that order. This leaves only one possible explanation for the anointing Peter men-

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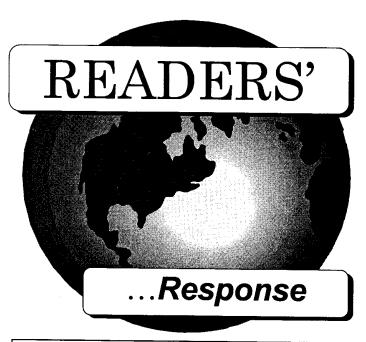
BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

- 1. Who seems to be the earliest man recognized as a prophet in the Bible?
- 2. What two in the lineage of Seth had identical names with two in the lineage of Cain in the early genealogical record of man?
- 3. How old was Enoch when he was translated from this life without dying?
- 4. Among the Jews on what day was a male child circumcised after birth?
- 5. At Joseph's command how many days were the Egyptians involved in the embalming of his father Jacob, and how many days were involved in their mourning for him?
- 6. What outstanding man was buried by God when he died, and his place of burial was known to no man?
- 7. What king of Judah was sick unto death, but was spared when he prayed to God and given 15 more years of life?
- **8.** How many years did Job live after deliverance from his experience of trials and suffering?
- 9. "The glory of young men is _____ and the beauty of old men is ____ "
- 10. Has the promise of the coming of the prophet Elijah been fulfilled (Malachi 4:5,6), and if so, when and how?
- 11. To whom were the New Testament books of Luke and Acts written?
- 12. How many years had the prophetess Anna, who saw Jesus and spoke of him when Joseph and Mary brought him into the temple, been a widow?
- 13. Which of the four gospel writers seems to have the most to say about women?
- 14. How many times did God speak audibly from heaven acknowledging His Son, and what were the circumstances?
- 15. What are the only two references in the New Testament (KJV) that have the words "only believe" or "faith only" in them?
- **16.** How many Jews in Jerusalem took a vow that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul?
- 17. What are three Scriptural definitions of sin found in the New Testament (KJV)?
- 18. Who is the only Christian mentioned by name in the epistle of Hebrews?
- 19. The epistles of I and II Peter were written to Christians living where?
- 20. Where was the apostle John when the Lord revealed the book of Revelation to him?

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

→ http://web.infoave.net/~jgibbons/index.htm ←



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:

■ "...THE SWORD AND STAFF mailing list has grown a lot! [20,000 printed in English this time and 2,200 in Spanish—Editor] Thank God that you are being used to reach people with the truth.

"I noticed there was no requests for being removed from the mailing list in the Vol 36 # 3 issue and that is very encouraging.

"Thank you for the article (letter) on the Mormons. You used Scripture to defend the truth as it should be. I can't tell you how thankful I am that THE SWORD AND STAFF is being published. It is a great work for the Lord, and I'm very thankful that we can have a small part in helping..."

SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ "...I enjoy the paper very much. Thanks for the 'sound doctrine' which so many shy away from in these perilous times...Glad you are on the Internet..."

TENNESSEE:

■ "Please send me 5 copies of POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS. I enclose \$20.00. I appreciate your work very much..."

VIRGINIA:

- "Tenjoy your publication very much. It is a great help to me in regard to my understanding the Bible. Please send me volumes 1995-1996 and 1991-1992 of THE SWORD AND STAFF."
- 'I have taken the liberty of linking your program to my web page. I hope this meets with you approval. I appreciate your conservative stand on the Word of God when so many have gone the way of the liberals..."

WEST VIRGINIA:

■ "Enclosed is a check to help keep this wonderful paper coming to me. I looked on the back where my address is and see I have been getting THE SWORD AND STAFF since January, 1990. I enjoy it very much... May God bless you is my prayer."

PENNSYLVANIA:

- "I pray you can continue the good work. The world needs the Truth, especially the church, so we can all be one in Christ."
- "It was wonderful to hear from you recently and of the devoted work of your fine publication THE SWORD AND STAFF. Truly THE SWORD AND STAFF is a much-needed work of guidance to those of the kingdom and the lost of the world. Jesus, God is pleased for sure..."

MICHIGAN:

■ "I recently received my first issue of your publication. Thank you very much for adding me to the mailing list. I appreciate your hard work in spreading the word! I have enclosed a gift to help in the effort. Keep up the great work, and may God bless."

OHIO:

- "Please remove our name from your mailing list. Thank you."
- "My husband is a minister...We love your publication and look forward to it. He can't find you wrong and in most cases today not many take and preach the whole truth as the Bible states. They weaken to be a people-pleaser...God bless you."

INDIANA:

- "I am a repeat visitor [to the web site]. I appreciate your page and information. I have been a subscriber, but it must have lapsed."
- 'T receive THE SWORD AND STAFF, and I think it is a wonderful paper. I don't know where all the people get all these denominations. If they would just read their Bibles and do what it says, and not what men say, this would be a much better place to live..."

MISSOURI:

- "I received your religious paper and liked the articles; sounds like the old sermons that were preached years ago, not the sermons we hear today ("talks")...I am 90 years old..."
- "Thank you for your excellent article in THE SWORD AND STAFF entitled Behold, Your House is Left unto You Desolate.' I read this in a borrowed paper and would like to be a regular recipient of your papers... Thanks."
- "I dearly enjoy reading THE SWORD AND STAFF.
 I hope that it will continue to be printed. I enjoyed the article on the Mormons. I also like the Proverbially Speaking...Again, thanks for a job well done and may

READERS'... Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

God bless you and your work."

■ 'T just finished reading my first copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF (Vol 36/Num 3)...and I was very impressed with the article concerning the Mormon Church...well written...fair...and quite provoking...

"Then I visited your web site...read an article on being filled with the Spirit...and was doubly impressed...very Biblical...and objective...again...the subject was presented well...

"I appreciate your heart...and will now value your insights...from time to time...the truth ALWAYS tastes good to those who hunger and thirst after it...and when it is presented in an unbiased, non-sectarian fashion...it is extremely TASTEFUL...

"Don't know how it was that we were added to your mailing list...but I'm grateful it happened...when I pass this publication to our shepherds...I will also suggest that we send a contribution (Gal 6:6) to help defray your expenses..." (e-mail)

ARKANSAS:

■ "I like what you write and your web site..."

TEXAS:

- "Please send me the oldest bound volumes you still have and maybe later I can get some of the newer ones. I was given several copies of THE SWORD AND STAFF by my brother-in-law. I really enjoy each copy. Please place me on your mailing list...Keep up the good work."
- "I loved your web site. Now I can still see some of the articles—the recent ones. I have several of the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF—I read them and then take them to the hospital where I work and leave them in the waiting room."

KANSAS:

■ 'It has been a while since you heard from me. I do enjoy THE SWORD AND STAFF. It's true to the Bible, the best publication I know of. I wish more people would read and take warning. The world is going toward denominationalism, but God's church will always be true. I'm glad you stand for the right..."

NEBRASKA:

■ "I would greatly enjoy receiving THE SWORD AND STAFF. Please let me know how to go about this..." (e-mail, Internet response)

MINNESOTA:

■ "Greetings in Christ Jesus! I want to thank you for a great paper, THE SWORD AND STAFF. It is solely needed today: The Truth!..."

CALIFORNIA:

■ "Finally I was able to log on to your web page. God bless you all. It is a pleasure to learn from the topics you have in the magazine 'La Espada y El Cayado.' I

like them and I have taught them in the church, because through your writings I see that you are very serious and maintain the Doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his primitive Church...Once again, congratulations for such a great work in the Lord; never faint, keep up the good work; the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few." (e-mail, translated)

CUBA:

■ "Greetings from the church of Christ in Cuba. We give thanks for your faith in the Lord and your obedience to His will. I hope that this letter finds you prospering in Christ.

"I am writing to you to inform you that I am a preacher of the Word of God in two churches...These churches have been organized in homes; and, if you would be so kind, I would like to receive materials for the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, in addition to any other related material. I give thanks to God if you would be able to help me in this manner with this work that is the Work of the Lord, being always conscious of the vital importance of the ministry as it is expressed in Ephesians 4:24, "And be clothed with the new man, created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

"We pray for you daily; please pray for us. I close in Christian love." (translated)

Jesus Fulfilled GOD'S TIMETABLE

(Continued from Page 8)

tions. After John baptized Him, Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Anointed! "Messiah" is the Hebrew word for "anointed." "Christ" is the Greek. The usual method of anointing was with oil; but Peter, by inspiration, says that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit. That means that, in a real sense, Jesus became the Messiah/Christ at that moment.

Many, if not most, scholars today would place Jesus' baptism in 26 A.D. That is precisely the year we arrived at when starting with the command of 457 B.C.! This is more than just an interesting coincidence. It is an absolutely amazing prediction! It leaves no room for doubt that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah of God. It leaves no room for doubt that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only authentic religion in all the world. It leaves no room for doubt that Jesus accomplished what Gabriel said would be accomplished within the 490 years; namely:

"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).

The Final Week of Daniel

Daniel's final week (7 days/years) is singled out in the prophecy for special attention. The final week starts with the arrival of Messiah. It is common knowledge that Jesus' earthly ministry lasted 3½ years. That is half of the prophetic week. Daniel's prophecy does not specifically say when the Messiah would "be cut off." He just says "after" the (7 plus) 62 weeks. Now we can see that the cutting off took place exactly in the middle of the last week.

Daniel says: "in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." Any Christian knows that the death of Jesus on the cross put an end to the Mosaic sacrificial system. "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. ... Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:14,18). Yes, those offerings and sacrifices still physically existed; but, as far as God was concerned, they were meaningless.

God not only said this through His inspired writer; He confirmed it with action. "And Jesus ... yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:50,51). The temple was no longer God's house. The sacrifices of the temple no longer had value. The cloth veil was torn in two because Jesus became the real veil: the Mediator between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19,20).

The Covenant Confirmed

Before mentioning the middle of the week, Daniel said that the Messiah "shall confirm a covenant with many for one week." Now, it is a well-known fact that Jeremiah prophesied a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). That Jesus brought in a new covenant, there is no question. At the Last Supper, He declared: "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

It thus seems easy to think of Jesus confirming the covenant for the first half of the week (his 3½-year ministry). But what about the second half—the 3½ years following His ascension? On the one hand, there should be no difficulty with understanding that the covenant was confirmed by the apostles after Jesus' ascension. But, that involved many years. Why refer to just 3½ years? What event closes the 70 weeks?

That event cannot be the destruction of Jerusalem, because that did not happen until 70 A.D. It is highly unlikely that the event is the conversion of the first Gentile, Cornelius. While we do not know the exact year of his conversion, the book of Acts places it after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul's conversion, itself, appears to be too late; scholars would place it around 35 A.D. We must seek for some significant event or condition prior to Acts 9.

Prophecy had predicted, and Jesus had commanded, that the Gospel first be preached in Jerusalem (Joel 2:28-32; Luke 24:46-49). The church started with 3,000 souls and quickly grew to 5,000 men, all Jews, all in Jerusalem. Who knows how long the Christians would have remained in Jerusalem, had it not been for the great persecution that followed the murder of Stephen. But as a result, the believers "were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1).

We do not know the exact date of Stephen's death and the resulting dispersion. Nevertheless, it must have been right around 33-34 A.D., to allow time for Saul's persecution of the church before his conversion.

This dispersion, then, brings us right to the end of the 70 weeks (490 years). Much of the 70-weeks prophecy deals specifically with Jerusalem. It would appear that 3½ years was precisely the length of time that God set aside for the new covenant to be confirmed exclusively in Jerusalem and exclusively among Jews. This was Jerusalem's moment. Large numbers were converted before the Jews, led by Saul of Tarsus, tried to stamp out the new message.

Instead of stamping it out, they caused it to spread beyond Jerusalem. The first place mentioned which then received the Word was Samaria. The Jews hated the mixed-race Samaritans. The apostle John had wanted to call fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village. Now, this same John lay hands on Samaritans so they could receive the Holy Spirit.

The day of taking the Gospel exclusively to Jerusalem and exclusively to pure Jews and proselytes was over. The 70 weeks had come to an end. World evangelism had begun. Jerusalem had had its (Continued on Next Page)

Answers to: BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Luke 11:47-51; 2. Enoch (Genesis 4:17; 5:18) and Lamech (Genesis 4:18; 5:25); 3. Genesis 5:23,24; 4. Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:1-3; 5. Genesis 50:1-3; 6. Deuteronomy 34:5,6; 7. Il Kings 20:1-7; 8. Job 42:16,17; 9. Proverbs 20:29; 10. Matthew 11:9-14; 17:10-12; Luke 1:13-17; 11. Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1; 12. Luke 2:36-38; 13. Luke (check it out); 14. Three (Matthew 3:13-17; 17:1-8; John 12:28-30); 15. Mark 5:36; James 2:24; 16. Acts 23:12-22; 17. I John 3:4 (Sins of commission); James 4:17 (Sins of omission); Romans 14:23 (Questionable matters); 18. Hebrews 13:23; 19. I Peter 1:1 (II Peter 3:1); 20. Revelation 1:9-11

Jesus Fulfilled GOD'S TIMETABLE

(Continued from Previous Page)

golden opportunity. Many took the opportunity; but others only further sealed the doom of their city.

The Desolation of Jerusalem

It is that doom which much of the 70-weeks prophecy is all about. That doom would come "after" the 69 (7+62) weeks. The language of the prophecy requires that the removal of sin take place within the 70 weeks. It requires that the Messiah come within the 70 weeks. It requires the confirmation of a covenant during the last week. However, it does not require that Jerusalem and the temple be destroyed within that time. "After." It in no way specifies how long after.

Nevertheless, we cannot help noticing that the doom of Jerusalem was, indeed, sealed during the 70 weeks. The rending of the veil was proof that God was finished with the temple. Besides that, the Jews proclaimed their own doom at the trial of Jesus: "And all the people answered and said, 'His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25).

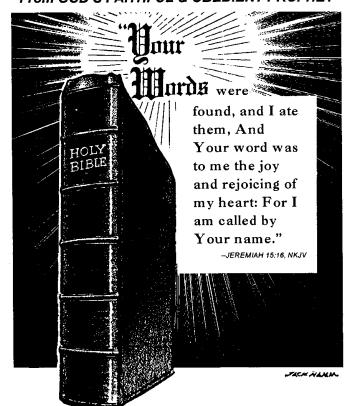
During His last week, Jesus lamented: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:37,38). "Your house." No longer "My Father's house." "Your house...desolate" puts us right back in Daniel 9 with "abominations...makes desolate." Their rejection of Jesus during the 70th week ensured that the desolation would come; it could not be withheld.

As Jesus looked upon Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, He "wept over it, saying...'days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you...and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation'" (Luke 19:41-44). "You did not know the time.'" They rejected God's timetable! They crucified their Messiah! The fate of Jerusalem was sealed in the 70th week.

Why the Delay

When Jesus died, the temple sacrifices no longer had value, as far as God was concerned. Nevertheless, the temple and Jerusalem were granted 40 years of grace. The Gospel had to begin in Jerusalem. The temple area was an important meeting place to preach the Gospel. It was Jerusalem that crucified Jesus. It was right outside Jerusalem that Jesus arose from the dead and in Jerusalem that the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

From GOD'S FAITHFUL & OBEDIENT PROPHET



Being thus empowered from on high, the apostles preached the Good News to Jews who had gathered for the annual feast of Pentecost. These Jews were present from all parts of the Roman Empire (Acts 2:8-11). Scripture had said: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3). The Lord's Kingdom needed time to become established. The Jewish Christians needed time to understand the passing away of the law.

For the sake of the Gospel, God was gracious to Jerusalem for 40 years. For the sake of those Jews who would open their hearts to their Messiah, God was gracious to Jerusalem for 40 years. However, the time had to come when the temple sacrifices were more than a thing of the past in the mind of God. They had to become a thing of the past in historical reality. Therefore, God sent the Romans so that the Mosaic system of sacrifice would be wiped off the face of the earth. God sent the Romans to put a definitive end to Jerusalem being His dwelling place.

Jesus Fulfilled God's Timetable

The climax of Daniel's prophecy is the 70th week. In the 70th week, the Messiah comes, salvation is brought down, and the King makes an everlasting covenant with His followers. It is the high point of human history. It is God reaching down to mankind in an unbelievable act of love. The 70 weeks end in triumph! The grand work of redemption is accomplished. Thousands of believing Jews are born again, to initiate the eternal kingdom of God.

The Messiah had come right on schedule. Jesus of Nazareth entered His Messianic ministry at the start of the 70th week, precisely according to God's timetable. He was cut off in the middle of that week, thus ending the Mosaic system of sacrifice, precisely according to God's timetable. Jesus' death on the cross brought in reconciliation and right-eousness, precisely according to God's timetable. Only God could make and predict such a timetable! Only the Son of God could fulfill the prediction!

Note by author: This is the third 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 (c) 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)



PEOPLE who drag their feet get no where.

Our modern world is at the same time a jungle and a desert.

Grace is a covering of sins as we repent and forsake them, not a cloak for sin that we may blindly continue in them.

Some people don't like for you to tell it like it is because that is the way they are.

Licking your wounds with self-pity will not produce healing but only contaminate the wounds and retard the healing process.

Anger, or the wrath of man, is a cop-out in handling problems.

People preoccupied with subjective religious experiences independent of the Word of God find it hard to subject themselves to the Word of God if it conflicts with their religious experience.

Immodest dress is a factor in immodest thoughts and immodest behavior.

Instead of preaching the Word of God in all of its fullness to convict and convert sinners to Christ, the modern approach is to use "psychology," flattery, enticement, and manipulation to get people "into the church" without disturbing them (and consequently without converting them).

Let your Bible be your TV guide, and you will find yourself not watching television (Philippians 4:8).

Men with a fixation on men like to recognize men and emphasize men, religious movements, and what men have done; however, our fixation should be on Christ, and the church of Christ for which he shed his blood, without human detraction. People who have experienced a change in conversion will put more than change in the offering plate.

People who believe the Bible do not try to justify the practice of homosexuality, but rather condemn it as the most gross and loathsome of sins (Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; Romans 1:24-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11; I Timothy 1: 9,10).

Of all sins, lying most conspicuously is of the devil since he is the father of the lie (John 8:44).

The kind of love taught in the Scriptures is love with a backbone; a tough love, not a doting, wishwashy sentimentalism that shrinks from reality and responsibility.

The church cannot take the place of what you need to be doing with your family as a family.

The Bible does not say to "earnestly contend for the faith" until you have trouble with your children and then change your convictions.

The Lord said to love one another (John 13:34), not to love one and not the other.

People all wrapped up in material things will find they cannot untangle themselves from them when this old world goes up in flames.

This world would be a good place to live if it weren't for other people and me.

The preacher's responsibility is to fill the "pulpit," not to fill the "pew" (that is determined by the response to the gospel).

It is not wise to be ignorant of one's ignorance.

Good for Your Health

GOING to church and reading the Bible regularly may do more than save your soul. Doing this may extend your life.

In a randomly selected survey of more than 4,000 people ages 65 and older in a primarily Protestant area of North Carolina, average blood pressure was lowest in those who attended church each week and who prayed or studied the Bible each day. They were 40 percent less likely to have high blood pressure. High diastolic readings are associated with heart attacks and strokes. Duke University researchers carried out this extensive study.

Numerous studies have shown that religious people are less depressed, have healthier immune systems and deal better with addictions than the non-religious.

However, according to the Duke University research, those who got their religion from the tube did not enjoy the health benefits of religion. Those who watched religious television or listened to religious radio actually had higher blood pressure than those who did not.

(Credit for this information: WRAL news, Associated Press news release, and a medical source.)

Are You a *Godly*Or An *Ungodly* Person? (From A Different Viewpoint)

F GODLINESS is being like God, the industrious and working person is to that extent a godly person. The person who doesn't work, and has an aversion to it, is ungodly. God is presented in the Bible as Omnipotent Power and Energy at work, creating everything and bringing it into being, and now upholding it by the word of His Power. In reference to His work of creation, rest (or pause) came only after work had taken place.

God created man in His own image and likeness. Then "the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15), not to idly pass the time of day doing nothing. Man having to work is not part of the curse of sin; the curse involves the aggravating conditions surrounding work. The person who works is to that degree like God. Thus, he is godly. Pause or rest is in order only after work has taken place. And the purpose of rest, humanly speaking, is to be revitalized for more work.

Yes, work within itself is honorable. The work ethic is of God. Man was originally placed in the Garden of Eden, paradise on earth, and the name means pleasure garden. As stated, he was placed there to work and to take care of it. That was the source of his pleasure. There is much personal satisfaction and enjoyment to be found in employment. In this day of the deification of leisure and of non-productive slackers let us not forget this. In working we are being like the God who made us, godly. And while being like the God who made us, let us not forget the God who made us: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). Even that which is right becomes wrong when God is left out.—J.E.G.

We Need A Standard

RESIDENT John Quincy Adams called both Houses of Congress together for a special session. He walked in carrying two "bushel" baskets and said, "The bushel measure in my right hand came from South Carolina; the one in my left hand came from the city of New York. One of these bushel measures contains sixty-eight cubic inches more than the other." He paused a moment to let that fall on the minds of the Senators and Representatives.

Then, he walked to a table and picked up two one-pound weights and said, "This weight in my right hand came from Massachusetts; this other one came from Maine. One of them weighs nearly an ounce more than the other." He gave them time to think about it, then he concluded, "Gentlemen, we need a standard measurement and a standard weight in the United States of America."

The result of that speech and demonstration was the establishment of the Bureau of Standards of Weights and Measures. Now, whether you live in South Carolina or New York City, a bushel is a bushel, and whether you live in Massachusetts or Maine, there are sixteen ounces in a pound.

And it would appear that we need a standard in matters of religion today. One man says it is this way, and another says it is that way. Denominations abound. The truth of the matter is that we do have a standard, and it is the Word of God. But the Word of God must be taken and that alone. Denominational creeds, doctrines and traditions are the standards of man's own making. Really, what does the Bible say? What does Christ say? He has "all authority" (Matthew 28:18), and we will be judged by his word in the last day (John 12:48). How we need to go by that standard today! Yes, we have a standard intended for all.—Adapted

FAITHFUL

Sometimes people compliment me for being faithful to the Lord.

The truth is: Sometimes I've been faithful, and sometimes I've not been faithful at all.

But it's because of the Lord's faithfulness, that is why I'm still here.

I thank him for saving me, and changing me, and strengthening me throughout the years.

Yes, the Lord's been faithful to me when I've had trouble being faithful to Him.

He has used my brothers and sisters, and His blessed Holy Spirit working within.

The Lord's been faithful to me through many trials and tribulations.

So if someone deserves some praise, may it go to the Lord of all creation.

He's the reason why I'm still here; He's the reason why I sing gospel songs.

He's the reason why I keep on trying; when I am weak, the Lord He makes me strong.

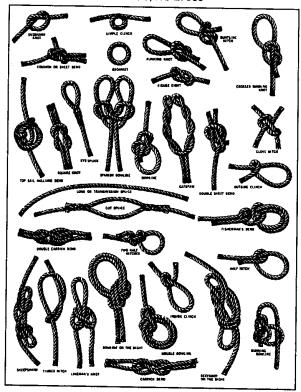
Someday when my life is over and someone perhaps speaks well of me,

For any good that I may have said or done, may God Almighty get all the praise and the glory.

—By Rafael Moreno

Spiritual Food for Thought

~ By J. Andrew Gibbons ~ 1034 Joyce Mill Road Westfield, NC 27053



ONLY ONE OF A KIND

ONLY ONE of a kind. Many people may share some of the same characteristics, but there are no two people totally alike. Even identical twins are not completely the same. Aren't you glad God created us to be different? You may be thinking to yourself, yes, I couldn't take two of so-and-so, but what about two of you?

Although mankind was created differently, we have the tendency to go with the crowd, to go with the herd instinct or the clone syndrome. You can see this in styles and fads or in what's in or what's out. This goes for the spiritual realm as well as the social.

Too many of us are afraid to be individualists. We are afraid of being rejected for not going with the flow or doing what is considered the norm, even if it is way out.

Remember, going against the flow may mean paddling upstream or taking some heat for being different. Johnny Appleseed was told many years ago to "know yourself" and because of this he quit his first job working in an apple orchard. He could not find it within himself to cut limbs off apple trees to graft in new varieties of apples. He thought it would be just like cutting off an arm or a leg of a fellow man. Sounds silly, but because of this Johnny Appleseed carved out a name for himself in American folk history.

Let us add this to the advice given to Johnny: Know yourself and be true to yourself and God.

II Corinthians 5:10, "For we all must appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive according to what he has done in the body whether good or evil."

Many people believe we are all going to the same place. This we believe too; we are all going to the judgment seat of Christ. Are you ready to give an account?

True Peace

"PEACE is not made at council tables, or by treaties, but in the hearts of men."—Herbert Hoover

"Peace" is used more than 800 times in the Bible. It was the commonest greeting among men, being translated from the Hebrew word "shalom," still commonly used to greet others. It was not a word that dealt with the cessation of war, thus could not indeed be regulated by treaties. It was a word that meant wholeness: the desire that everything may be right and well with you.

In New Testament usage, "PEACE" could only come from a right relationship with God, for it could only be given by God, never earned. It is used often in connection with GRACE. "...Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:7). Again in Romans 16:20, Paul said, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

God's peace is a peace found only in the soul. It is a peace "which passes all understanding" and "shall guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7) It is God's peace because God is "the God of peace" (Romans 15:33; 16:20). If you would know real peace you must be in Christ; it can never be found in this world.

In this connection, Henry Drummond said, "Rest [peace] is not a hallowed feeling that comes over us in church; it is the repose of a heart set deep in God."—The Biblical Messenger

Ш.

Who Should Read the Bible?

The Young: to learn how to live.

The Old: to know how to die.

The Ignorant: for wisdom.

The Learned: for humility.

The Rich: for compassion.

The Poor: for comfort.

The Dreamer: for enchantment.

The Practical: for counsel.

The Weak: for strength.

The Strong: for direction.

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—Selected

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