

The Sword AND Staff

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

“THE WRATH [ORGÉ] OF GOD”

● By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 Fairfield Drive
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IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, as well as the Old Testament, it many times speaks of the wrath of God and of the wrath to come. Whether looking at this as anthropomorphic (attributing human feelings and attributes to God to enhance our understanding) or otherwise, the reference is there. And, unquestionably, the truth is there.

The Words for Wrath

There are two words for wrath (or anger) in the original language of the New Testament. The first is *thumós*, and the other is *orgé*. Anger, as seen in *thumós*, is more of a passionate and temporary thing. Having flared up with intensity, it soon subsides. However, *orgé* seems to be more of an abiding and settled type of anger with vengeance in mind. It just builds up and builds up until it can take no more. Although God may express Himself with fierceness in the execution of His judgment when it comes, it is the *orgé* anger that anticipates this judgment and slowly brings it to its climactic and dramatic conclusion.

Evident Throughout the Bible

This is evident throughout the Bible. Although many times referring to that which is good, the expression “day of visitation” at times has reference to the climactic day of God’s wrath and judgment (Jeremiah 14:10; Isaiah 10:3). Psalms 7:11 tells us that “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” Then from the New Testament perspective, Jesus stated, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath [orgé] of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). Sometimes God can put up with wickedness no longer, then judgment comes. It may be in this life; but for the most part it is deferred until that final

Day of Judgment. In this life God gives the righteous person time in which to exercise his faith, develop patience and character, and persevere. The

There's a Great Day Coming

W. L. T. W. L. Thompson



1. There's a great day com-ing, a great day com-ing, There's a great day
2. There's a bright day com-ing, a bright day com-ing, There's a bright day
3. There's a sad day com-ing, a sad day com-ing, There's a sad day

com-ing by and by, When the saints and the sin-ners shall be
com-ing by and by, But its bright-ness shall on-ly come to
com-ing by and by, When the sin-ner shall hear his doom, "De-

part-ed, right and left,
them that love the Lord, Are you read-y for that day to come?
part, I know ye not,

CHORUS
Are you read-y, are you read-y? Are you read-y for the
judgment day? Are you read-y, are you read-y For the judgment day?

sinner is given time in which to repent (II Peter 3:9) or to fill up the full measure of his guilt. John the Baptist's response to the hypocritical Pharisees and

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially ***SPEAKING...***

***CHRISTIANITY** is the good life any way that you look at it.*

The mindset of a Christian must be that of a Christian or he cannot be a Christian (Galatians 2:20; I Corinthians 11:1; Colossians 3:1-3; Matthew 6:33,22).

The best prayer is the one that is prayed spontaneously.

The very existence of the church is one of the greatest witnesses to the message that it preaches, that message being the resurrection of Christ, the message that brought the church into being.

As a man "thinketh in his heart [good or evil], so is he"...eventually.

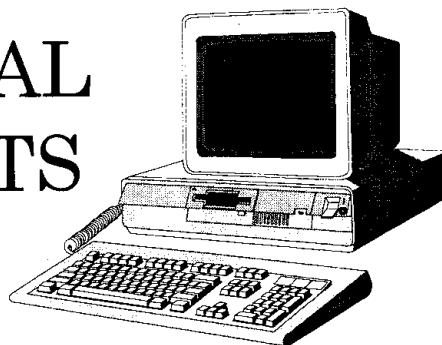
"Bad" things that happen to us are only bad to the degree that we let them be bad; trust God, and keep a positive mental attitude.

Deeds of KINDness show what KIND of person you are.

The secret to happiness is not in acquiring more and more things, but in wanting less and being content with what we already have.

People of kindred spirits can communicate without talking. □

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



MAKING THE CHURCH A STILTED STATUE

EFFORTS at "restoring" the church of the New Testament can be very much like that of the work of a sculptor. This will happen unless we tap into the essence of real New Testament Christianity, having imbibed of its spirit, and are imbued with its vigor. Otherwise, we may have chiseled out an imposing statue that looks like the real thing, but it only stone; a work of man. There is no life.

Denominational names are wrong, and give not God the glory (I Corinthians 1:10-13,29-31; 3:3-5,21-23; Colossians 1:18). In man's zeal to "restore" the church, it is called "Church of Christ" (and it is his church). But this can become artificial as this expression is used in a stilted and wooden manner. Instead of freely talking about the church of Christ, Christ's church, the Lord's church, the church of God, God's church, etc., it in essence has become the "Church of Christ Church." (Christian as in "Christian Church" meets the same fate). A sculptured work of man has taken place. In our opposing denominationalism, let us not "denominationalize" the church.

In man's zeal at "restoration," how one is saved from sin must be "Scripturally" dealt with. This can be easily understood. We come up with the "steps of salvation" (faith, repentance, confession, and baptism), as if man could go up each wooden, stilted step mechanically one at a time as he enters into salvation. Make no mistake about this, all of these things are part of God's plan, but by an inordinate emphasis on the "steps" many have been converted to the "steps" instead of to Christ. They have had to do this thing all over, and give themselves to Christ, instead of to a plan of salvation. Our lost condition, commitment to Christ, and discipleship need to get the emphasis as well as the so-called "steps." In fact, the faith, repentance, and confession are overlapping as one is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.

We are told there are five acts of worship as an outlined form is arbitrarily and masterfully laid out before us, and certainly the Lord's supper, prayer, singing, giving and Bible study are involved in worship. But the form will not suffice if the heart is not in it. Yes, worship is engaged in specifically as the church assembles, but worship is also a way of life (Romans 12:1,2—check out the meaning of "service"; James 1:25-27—check out the meaning of "religion"). If worship in the larger context of the way we live is not right, worship in the public assembly can never be right regardless of the form it may take. Paul spoke of some, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn

away" (II Timothy 3:5). The Lord Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

As we contend for the right doctrine, it is more than form that we are talking about. It is more than issues. Doctrine cannot be separated from the big picture. We cannot say, "God is love" without it being doctrine. Doctrine is not only about the church, baptism and the Lord's supper, it is about holiness, godly living and love. Read I Timothy 1:3-10. "Now the end [goal] of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Ungodliness here is spoken of as being "contrary to sound doctrine." Doctrine is not just something to wrangle about, but eternal truths to be lived, shared and enjoyed for what they are in a context of love. Contending for the faith involves more than being contentious. The Bible has a higher purpose than that of being used as a sectarian instrument with which to hit brethren over the head.

Instead of being on a mission to "restore" the church, our energies would probably be better spent on being sure that we have been restored to the church. The church has been here all of the time. The gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 3:21). We do not need an artificially sculptured body that is more physical than spiritual, drawing attention to men. The church is the byproduct of preaching the gospel of Christ. It is the spiritual body of Christ, not a stilted work of man, but it is about life. We invite men to accept this Christ, and "automatically" be added to the one church already started in the first century (Acts 2:38-47; I Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:15; Ephesians 4:1-6). Thereby we experience and thereafter we enjoy the fruit of simple undenominational New Testament Christianity. Denominationalism and sectarianism alike are contrary to the teachings of Christ. Let us not make the church a sculptured work of man. □



EDITORIAL

Byways

"PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME"

THE APOSTLE PAUL prophetically stated in II Timothy 3:1, "This know also, that in the last days *perilous* times shall come..." Dangerous times were in store in the days ahead when he wrote. Read on in this chapter and you will see in what sense he speaks of "perilous times." The times would be perilous morally speaking. Religion would be reduced to a "form" (verse 5), and without the restraining force of true religion morals erode. The

times would be dangerous morally speaking, and when times are dangerous morally, it isn't long until they are dangerous physically speaking. Violence will become increasingly prevalent (Genesis 6:5,11; Romans 3:10-18). We live in such times today, and should beware lest we become victims (either way). The old landmarks of right and wrong, which were divinely put in place, are being removed. Humanism blatantly asserts itself. Uncertainty and treacherous times are upon us. Let us consider some of the moral dangers.

Television

A friend and reader in another state recently forwarded some e-mail correspondence that allegedly took place between a gentleman in Arkansas by the name of Jim Neugent and the ABC Network involving a television program. We were appalled by what we read; so much so that we contacted Mr. Neugent to verify the certainty of it.

First, here is his e-mail letter in response, and then the correspondence with the ABC Network.

Mr. Gibbons,

The program (The Practice) I mentioned in my original message to ABC was aired on Sunday evening, April 5, 1999, and [I]received the response on April 6, 1999.

I will also forward you the 'generic' apology which was sent out yesterday, April 12, 1999.

You have my permission to use all material which I wrote to ABC and that which I received from ABC.

Thank you for your concern. We probably should be talking to the sponsors rather than ABC. I don't have the complete [list] with me today...but among them are: McDonald's, Wendy's, Dodge, Tide, Dove, Target...

Jim Neugent

About the TV program:

Hey...the following is a letter I wrote to ABC concerning a program called "THE PRACTICE". One of the lawyer's mother decided she was gay and wanted her son to go to court to help her get a marriage license to marry her 'partner'. I just sent the letter yesterday and really did not expect a reply...but I did...

Original message to ABC Network:

ABC is obsessed (or should I say abscessed) with the subject of homosexuality. I will no longer watch any of your attempts to convince the world that homosexuality is OK. THE PRACTICE can be a fairly good show, but last night's program was so typical of your agenda. You picked the 'dudus' of the office to be the one who was against the idea of his mother being gay and made him look like a whiner because he had convictions.

This type of mentality calls people like me "gay bashers". Read the first chapter of Romans (that's in the Bible) and see what the apostle Paul had to say about it...He and God and Jesus were all "gay bashers."

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EDITORIAL *Byways*

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What if she'd fallen in love with her cocker spaniel...is that an alternative lifestyle? (By the way...the Bible speaks against that too.)

Jim Neugent

Response from ABC Online Webmaster (April 6):

How about getting your nose out of the Bible (which is ONLY a book of stories compiled by MANY different writers hundreds of years ago) and read the Declaration of Independence (what our nation is built on) where it says "All Men are Created Equal"—and try treating them that way for a change!? Or better yet, try thinking for yourself and stop using an archaic book of stories as your crutch for your existence.

Reply to ABC Network:

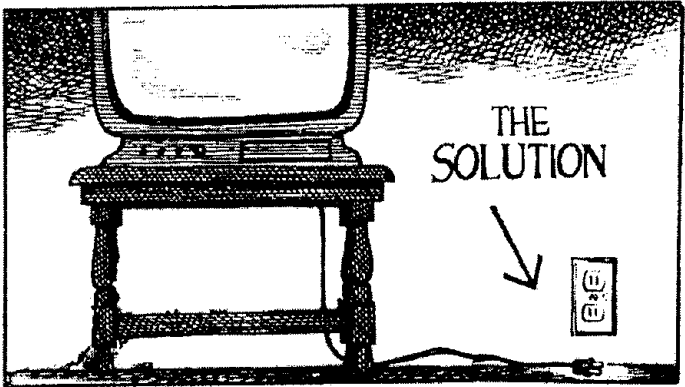
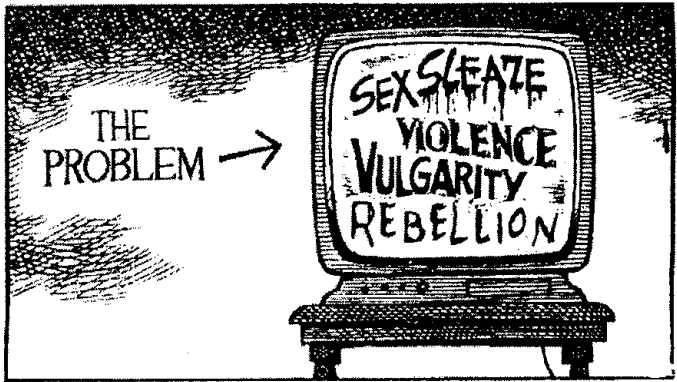
Thanks for your reply. Evidently, I hit a nerve from your harsh reply. I will share it with all with whom I come in contact. Hopefully, the Arkansas Democrat/Gazette Newspaper* will include it in one of their columns. And...I will be praying for you.

Beloved, it is more than apparent that not only is television the great American wasteland, it is now a land fraught with mortal danger morally speaking. They who have forsaken the eternal verities of right and wrong (and their very source) are hitting us in the face with their senseless agenda, trying to brainwash naïve and unthinking people. There is method to their madness. This writer [editor] has chosen to go through life without a TV (an oddity to some); however, this has not made us completely free from the overflow of such garbage. While shopping in stores and while waiting for our car to be serviced, thereby exposed to omnipresent television, we have been bombarded with such senseless nonsense time and time again. Recently we were glad that the children with us were looking at a magazine instead of the blaring TV. It was hard to believe that such things were being said. It was supposed to be funny, a "sitcom" (in a family setting), with the canned laughter in the background (your cue to laugh). If they can get you to laugh, it will break down the moral repugnance of what is being said and pretty soon you will be brainwashed into accepting their agenda.

This information mentioned above about the ABC Network was forwarded to some others. A response came back from the other side of the world: "I am glad you sent this information. We in India will soon be getting 'THE PRACTICE' on our cable. It is good to be warned." The problem is endlessly compounded with the rerun of such material in other countries. These are perilous times!

The homosexual agenda is only one facet of the danger of television that we have highlighted. There is the anti-religious sentiment, the violence, the ma-

terialism, the humanism—all of this is there (and more)! Gore is glorified. Tender sensitivities are blunted. Human sexuality is degraded. The writer of Proverbs tells us that as a man thinks in his heart so is he. How we need to control our thoughts as Christians! Beware lest we have the mindset of this ungodly world. Consider Philippians 4:8.



The Internet

With the advent of the computer and the Internet, a whole new world, and access to all of the world, is opened to us. Indeed, it is the information superhighway. How intriguing. However, everything is there, good and bad. The situation is about like driving down the street with all kinds of places to stop. Some places would not be desirable to stop. So we drive on. However, the ease of stopping, clicking, and going into an unsavory location is so fast and simple on the Internet. Precautions must be taken; especially with children.

Even in doing research on religious themes, problems can be incurred. Type a word in a search engine and all supposed web sites related to the subject are displayed. A lady recently wrote: "I am to teach a class on angels (good ones). What material do you have on it? I have just one book on angels by Billy Graham. I went into a web site on 'angels' and got a shock of my life. It was plain filthy and a shame that someone should use such a site to promote pornographic material."

Danger lurks. Children should not, and must not, be left alone on the Internet without definite

supervision and protection. We understand there are certain software programs and setups that are very helpful in blocking this "stuff."

Other dangers lurk on the Internet besides pornography. Let us not be ignorant, brethren. We need to be on our toes.

BELOVED, any way that you look at it, we are living in "perilous times." The times are dangerous morally speaking and consequently become dangerous physically speaking, producing violence and its disruptive fruits. We are seeing it more all of the time. Let us be aware of this, live the righteous life, and enjoy the fruits of righteousness. □

* **FOOTNOTE:** Mr. Neugent informs us that *the AR-KANSAS DEMOCRAT/GAZETTE* did indeed follow through with some stories regarding his letter to ABC and the homosexual agenda (and he has sent us copies of the articles). He writes:

According to article, written by Michael Storey, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) says there are 16 network prime-time series with 24 gay, lesbian, bisexual, cross-dressing or transsexual characters. NBC has 12; ABC = 4; CBS = 4; FOX = 2; WB = 2. [May 13, 1999]

My complaint is that the attempts to normalize homosexuality are not just in the story line of so-called sitcoms and dramas but also on programs such as ABC's 20/20 and NBC's DATELINE. These programs (especially 20/20) have regular reports regarding the plight of the homosexual and their mistreatment. After such a report, Hugh Downs and Barbara Walters will usually say something like, "When is America going to wake up and start being 'tolerant'?" As if to say, "Shame on us."

TOLERANT? (Rev. 2:20 NIV)
I don't hate these folks but I certainly don't approve of what they are doing. □



A Series Involving the Bible and Prophecy...

Which Tribulation?

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WILL CHRISTIANS live through the Tribulation? Will the Tribulation begin less than ten years from now? Such popular questions pose a problem. The problem is not simply that someone may receive wrong answers. The problem is that the questions themselves are wrong! "The Tribulation"? Which tribulation?

The Popular View of Tribulation

Today's popular belief is that "the Tribulation" is a period of seven years just around the corner. It is foreseen as the worst period of suffering the world has ever known. It is widely thought that the

church will not suffer through the tribulation because the "rapture" will occur first.

The common claim is that large portions of Bible prophecy will be fulfilled in the supposed coming tribulation. "They" equate this period with the final week of Daniel's 70-weeks prophecy. It is further claimed that Matthew 24, Mark 13 and 2 Thessalonians 2 will all be fulfilled in that coming brief period. "They" further claim that all the events in the book of Revelation from chapters 6 to 18 will be fulfilled in this tiny seven-year period.

The question which few people ever ask is "which tribulation?" Careful Bible study reveals that there is no such thing as one solitary tribulation.

"Many Tribulations"

Paul and Barnabas made it plain to the new Christians in what is called Turkey today. "We must through **many tribulations** enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22, bold emphasis added). "Must." "Many." Do not be mislead into thinking that tribulation cannot touch Christians. The Gospel message is not one of a bed of ease. Tribulation is not one set period of time in the future. Tribulation is a repeated reality for followers of Christ.

"Tribulation" in the singular is found 21 times in the New Testament. The plural is found seven additional times. In 2 Thessalonians 1:4 Paul speaks of "all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure." "All your...tribulations."

Thus it is obvious that the Bible teaches more than one tribulation. The present day practice of speaking as if there were just one tribulation, grossly twists and perverts the true Bible doctrine of tribulation. It closes peoples' minds to the Bible truth about tribulation.

"Yes," someone says, "but when we speak of 'the tribulation' we have in mind 'the great tribulation.'" Actually, "great tribulation" is a topic in and of itself, deserving lengthy treatment. *Watch for an article in the next issue that discusses just that.* But ahead of time, here is a key point: the New Testament speaks of **three** "great tribulations."

Three Premillennial Views

Premillennialists are divided into three camps regarding the timing of the "rapture." There are pre-tribulationists, mid-tribulationists, and post-tribulationists. The pre-tribulationists are by far the largest and most popular group. They are premillennial because they believe Jesus comes before a literal millennium. They are pre-tribulationist because they believe the "rapture" will occur before "the tribulation." Since this is the most popular view, it is the view being discussed here.

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Which Tribulation?

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Notice what Hal Lindsey says: “Dr. Gundry [a post-tribulationist] repeatedly says that pre-Tribulationism is based largely on arguments from inference and silence. This is in some measure true. But here is the big point: *All* [emphasis by Lindsey] of the views have to be developed to some degree on arguments from inference and silence. The truth of the matter is that neither a post-, mid-, or pre-Tribulationist can point to any single verse that clearly says the Rapture will occur before, in the middle of, or after the Tribulation” (*The Rapture*, pages 36,37).

Are Christians Protected from Wrath?

On what “inferences” do “they” arrive at the conclusion that “the rapture” will take place before “the tribulation”? One common “inference” mentioned by various teachers goes something like this: “‘The tribulation’ is a time of ‘wrath.’ God promised to deliver Christians from ‘wrath.’ Therefore, Christians will be taken out of the world before ‘the tribulation.’” Two of the main texts used as “proof” are 1 Thessalonians: 1:10 and 5:9. “To wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come...For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The unproved assumption in this popular argument is that when these texts speak of “wrath” they refer to a future seven-year tribulation. The argument assumes what is to be proved. Wrath is mentioned in many different contexts throughout the Bible. It is impossible to assume that any particular mention of wrath refers to a supposed future seven-year-tribulation period.

What wrath are saints protected from? Certainly not all wrath. Moses experienced the wrath of Pharaoh (Hebrews 11:27). Jesus experienced the wrath of the Nazarenes (Luke 4:28,29). Early Christians experienced the wrath of the Ephesian pagans. (Acts 19:28). The book of Revelation speaks of true believers suffering the wrath of Satan (12:12; 14:8; and 18:3). Clearly the followers of God are not protected from all wrath.

On the other hand, the majority of the 47 times “wrath” is mentioned in the New Testament, it does have reference to the wrath of God.

The question remains: When Scripture speaks of Christians being protected from future wrath, what wrath is it talking about? Rather than a mere seven years of wrath, could it not be protection from eternal wrath? Several texts clearly point out God’s

eternal wrath upon the lost—in contrast to eternal life for the redeemed.

Look at John 3:36: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Did you notice? The wrath of God is placed in contrast to eternal life. This is therefore a clear parallel to such texts as Matthew 25:46: “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

In like manner Romans 2:1-11 makes a contrast between those who will receive “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,” and those who will receive “eternal life.” Two groups: one lost, one saved; one to perish, one to live; one to suffer eternally the wrath of God and the other to enjoy eternal life.

Considering such verses, we can never assume that a verse about “wrath” is talking about a supposed future-seven-year period. It is much more likely that such passages are talking about eternal wrath, also called “the second death,” “the lake of fire,” and just plain “hell.” This is the wrath from which Jesus saves us by His death on the cross.

Is the Church Missing from Revelation 6 to 18?

There is another frequently mentioned “inference” by which the pre-tribulationists arrive at the conclusion that “the rapture” will take place before “the tribulation.” “They” assume that Revelation chapters 6 through 18 is talking about a future-seven-year tribulation. Then they argue that the church is not present in all these chapters.

As an example, notice what John Walvoord says “The word ‘church,’ prominent in chapters 2-3, does not reoccur until 22:16 though the bride mentioned in 19:7, no doubt, is a reference to the church. The total absence of any reference to the church or any synonym of the church in chapters 4-18 is highly significant” (*Every Prophecy of the Bible*, page 544.). Significant of what?

Please notice two things. “Absence” is “absence” only when it fits their theory. “Church” is also “absent” from chapter 19, but Mr. Walvoord believes that “the bride” “no doubt” is the church. In 19:17 suddenly he accepts a synonym for “church.” So, by his own argument, silence in regard to a particular term has no significance.

On the other hand, if “bride” is an acceptable synonym for “church” (and it is), even more so is “saints” an acceptable synonym. The New Testament barely mentions the idea of the church being the bride of Christ. However, in Acts and the epistles, the members of the church are called “saints” about 45 times! In Revelation, the “saints” are

found 10 times in chapters 6 to 18. Surely, with these 10 references, "the church" is indeed found in Revelation 6 to 18.

Does Jesus Have Two Bodies?

Revelation 7:9-14 says that great multitudes will be saved during great tribulation. Of that, there is no question. The question is if this particular tribulation is yet in our future after a "rapture." It must also be kept in mind that no interpretation of prophecy is acceptable that contradicts the clear doctrine of the New Testament.

According to the pre-tribulationist interpretation of the book of Revelation, there are two classes of saints: "church saints" and "tribulation saints." "Church saints" are saved from "wrath"; "tribulation saints" are not, nor are they part of the Lord's church. "Tribulation saints" thus become a new body of believers whereas Scripture proclaims "one body" (Ephesians 4:4).

Besides that, the truth is that "church saints" **do** suffer tribulation. The truth is that "tribulation saints" **do not** suffer God's eternal wrath. Biblically speaking, "church saints" are "tribulation saints."

All Saints are Tribulation Saints

Pre-tribulationists fail to distinguish between the words "wrath" and "tribulation." As we have seen, the word "wrath" in the New Testament most often refers to the wrath of God. In contrast, "tribulation" in the New Testament most often refers to what Christians suffer. Specifically, twenty out of twenty-seven times "tribulation" refers to persecution, afflictions and suffering experienced by the church of our Lord. It is a great mistake, therefore, to treat "wrath" as an equivalent of "tribulation." Whatever the Scripture may teach about Christians being protected from the "wrath to come," it has nothing whatsoever to do with Christians being protected from "tribulation."

Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 1:4: "so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure." Revelation 2:9 tells of the tribulation of the church in Smyrna: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)."

Far from teaching that God will not allow Christians to pass through tribulation, the Word teaches that tribulation can even be beneficial spiritually. "And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3,4). Tribulation develops Christian character if we are willing for it to have that result. Romans 12:12 commands us to be "patient in tribulation." Tribulation helps us to grow in Christ.

Jesus Promised It

Jesus not only walked in the path of suffering, He promised the same to us. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). "In the world you will have tribulation." Jesus said it and that settles it.

Jesus' parable of the sower can be considered a prophecy of what will happen as the Gospel is preached. Consider the seed sown in the stony ground. "Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble" (Mark 4:17). Thus, Christians should not be surprised when fellow Christians fall away due to tribulation. At the same time we ourselves are warned, so that we do not fall away in like manner. Superficial Christians look for a bed of ease. They expect the Christian life to be a continual emotional "high." When hard times come because of serving God, they quit. Mature Christians, however, learn to handle tribulation with the help of the Savior who led the way in all his sufferings.

The Apostle John Was IN the Tribulation

The apostle John, as he wrote the book of Revelation some 25 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, was sent into exile by Emperor Domitian. How did he view his situation? "I, John, both **your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom**

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Which Tribulation?

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and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:9 bold emphasis added). Notice! John said he was "in the tribulation" and also in the "kingdom." As far as the apostle John was concerned, neither the tribulation nor the kingdom was 2000 years off into the future. He was already in the kingdom. He was already in the tribulation. Those introductory remarks of John certainly have a great bearing on the proper interpretation of the entire book of Revelation.

Synonyms

Time fails to discuss all the texts of the New Testament that speak of tribulation, much less to discuss all the texts that use synonyms of tribulation. The dictionary defines tribulation as "distress or suffering resulting from oppression or persecution." And to these four words (distress, suffering, oppression and persecution) can be added four more: trial, affliction, trouble, and bearing the cross. These eight terms are all closely related to each other and to tribulation. All of them must be taken into account to gain an adequate understanding of the Bible teaching on tribulation. Notice how Paul groups many kindred terms together in 2 Corinthians 6:4,5: "But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults."

Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12 wrote: "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." That tells us that if a person does not know through personal experience what it means to "suffer persecution," then that person must not know what it means to "live godly in Christ Jesus." Strong words? But they are words of the Holy Spirit. All this talk of escaping tribulation is totally contrary to both the letter and the spirit of Scripture.

Then there are the powerfully beautiful words in Roman 8: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:35-37). "More than conquerors" in tribulation. We today, the church, are the tribulation saints. We do not promise people that they can accept Jesus and be raptured out of tribulation. Rather, we promise people that they can be more than conquerors in the very midst of tribulation.

In the next article, Lord willing, there will be an in-depth study of the three "great tribulations" mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 2:22; 7:14). Even those three are not the only periods of great tribulation. It is perhaps because we have it so soft in the United States today

(Continued on Page 11)

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. Of the first ten generations when men lived so long, beginning with Adam (line of Seth), how many of the patriarchs lived to be over 900 years of age?
2. From which son of Noah did the Jews eventually descend?
3. What is the literal meaning of the expression "make a covenant" in the Old Testament, and where is a Scripture that illustrates this basic meaning?
4. Where was Sarah, the wife of Abraham, buried?
5. In his patriarchal blessing, which one of his twelve sons did Jacob speak of as being unstable as water?
6. Moses was from which tribe of Israel?
7. When the city of Jericho was destroyed in the conquest of Canaan, what curse was placed upon anyone who would rebuild it (and who rebuilt it)?
8. When the prophet Elisha would not take a gift from Naaman in connection with his being cleansed of leprosy, what gift did Naaman request from Elisha?
9. What thoughts prompted Augur, a writer of some of the Proverbs, to say, "Give me neither poverty nor riches"?
10. After a ministry of prophesying to his nation the inevitability of the coming Babylonian captivity, and rejection by them, what is the last we read of Jeremiah?
11. Where was Jesus when he said, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country"?
12. How many men by the name of Simon are mentioned in the New Testament Scriptures (and identify them)?
13. In the time of Jesus, what Jewish leader advised his fellow Jews that it would be better for one man to die for the people than the whole nation to perish?
14. How did Jesus' disciples know where to go to prepare for the Passover (and last supper)?
15. To whom did Jesus appear on the way to Emmaus after his resurrection?
16. Where did Philip the evangelist go and live after baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch?
17. Name two preachers in the early church who were Roman citizens?
18. Of whom was it said, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"?
19. What does the word "Abba" mean (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15,16; Mark 14:36)?
20. In the book of Revelation, how many seals were on the book (scroll) that only the Lamb could open?

(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:

■ "...I am most grateful and thanks to you for your great lessons from God's Word. Please accept my check to support your continued work in the kingdom..."

■ "...I want to tell you I enjoy very much reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF*...have been reading and enjoying your paper for several years...The contents of your paper are worth reading several times. I always do. Now I'll give it to my daughters...Keep up the good work, and I'll try to do the same. God bless you!"

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ "Please remove us from your mailing list. Thank you."

VIRGINIA:

■ "Thank you...for the hard work you put into the paper. May God bless you with health and strength to keep on keeping on."

MASSACHUSETTS:

■ "...Thank you for all the hard work that goes into the publication. We pray that God will give you the strength to your physical body for this work as well as strength spiritually as you bring forth the truth for the Almighty."

VERMONT:

■ "...Keep up the good work! Also your article 'Did God Stop the Prophetic Clock' in the last *SWORD AND STAFF* was **OUTSTANDING!!** Look forward to this continuing series!!"

MICHIGAN:

■ "Excellent article on 'Did God Stop the Prophetic Clock?'"

OHIO:

■ "Enclosed is our contribution to help in the publication of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. We enjoy receiving and reading the paper."

■ "Please use the enclosed check for your great work for our Lord! Each issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* is excellent.

"I hope your health stays good. It is marvelous that you are continuing to keep *THE SWORD AND STAFF* printed and mailed to we hungry people who need Scripture for our daily lives..."

"God bless you and yours."

INDIANA:

■ "Greetings in the Name of the Lord. Just finished reading your study in *THE SWORD AND STAFF* entitled, 'The Real Parenthesis: Did God Stop the Prophetic Clock?' Excellent!..."

■ "I just recently became an evangelist and I am excited that the Lord is using me. I must say that part of my excitement is that there still are some strong men of God that want to do what God's Word says in a perverse generation. I do commend you, brother, and I will pray for you daily that God continues to use you in such a mighty way to continue to stir people's hearts unto repentance. You are an inspiration to me as a young evangelist, and I hope many other evangelists can be or get on fire for the cause of the gospel like you have done. May God bless you!!" (E-mail)

ILLINOIS:

■ "Please send me the complete series on Daniel's 70 weeks by David Vaughn Elliott. I have read two of the articles and would like the entire series for my files. As a preaching minister I found the articles very helpful in teaching people God's truth about His glorious church! Keep up the good work!"

■ "Thanks for the series on 'The Bible and Prophecy.' They are excellent.

"I have read many present day articles on Prophecy and Revelation, and they are nothing but confusion and an overactive imagination. I cast all them aside and have studied nothing but the Bible and have learned more truth over the last 10 years about the true Bible prophecy.

"I cannot believe that Israel is the center of all future prophecy. I do believe that a remnant will be saved, but I believe that those saved will be saved through the blood of Christ and no other way. Also, because of what is taught in Galatians and Hebrews about the dissolution of the Old Covenant I cannot believe that God would re-institute that which Paul called the "beggarly elements" and the sacrifices which were insufficient to save us and which were replaced by the one-time all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus for our sins.

"I have misplaced my three earlier copies of your papers, and I want to secure them from you. I want to save them. Enclosed find a gift for your ministry."

IOWA:

■ "Thank you so much for the good news you publish. You speak the **TRUTH**. The Lord has richly blessed you with the talent of writing—thank you for sharing it with us."

NEBRASKA:

■ "Thank you so much for *THE SWORD AND STAFF* issues you send us. They are quickly grabbed up and read. Keep sending the same amount please and keep up the good work."

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

MISSOURI:

■ "I have been getting *THE SWORD AND STAFF* paper since 1957. Some one sent our name in, and we never canceled out. Now we have the bound volumes since 1971. That is a lot of good reading..."

LOUISIANA:

■ "Thank you very much for *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Every time I receive it in the mail I read through it for refreshing materials and ideas to help me grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior and to share it with others. Keep the good news coming, and I will keep praying and supporting as much as I can..."

TEXAS:

■ "I have a copy of your 'Our Great and Glorious God.' I need more copies. I hope they're still in print. I've never seen election or predestination so well explained. Thank you."

■ "I always enjoy your paper so much. I sent the article about the Mormons to some friends of mine who have turned to Mormonism in hopes it will make them see the truth. Keep them in your prayers."

ARIZONIA:

■ "Enjoy your articles immensely!"

■ "Enjoy your site...Would like *THE SWORD AND STAFF* mailed...Thanks." (E-mail, web page response)

■ "Just one comment on the 37th issue [volume 37, number 1] of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* on the topic, 'Can Love Be Commanded?' The subject was so concise and so simplified and gave me a better understanding of this love 'business.' Thank you so much! Also, the issues put out are so apropos for these tragic times. We ask God's blessings on you and yours with the endeavors and hard work put into these articles..." (E-mail)

CALIFORNIA:

■ "Your article in 37:1 [Vol. 37, No. 1] on *LOST!* was a good one...I plan to use some of your thoughts in teaching and also reference it..." (E-mail)

■ "I read on your site that you would send a free complimentary issue, and I would greatly appreciate this offer..." (E-mail, web page response)

OREGON:

■ "You are putting out the best 'church' paper I have ever seen. I especially learned some needed information from the latest edition, especially David Vaughn Elliott's 'Did God Stop the Prophecy Clock?' I am ready to read it again..."

WASHINGTON:

■ "Please remove this name from all mailing lists and records."

■ "I am truly sorry I have neglected this for so long. I hope the Lord will forgive me. Your publication is the best I have read other than the Bible. May God bless you and give you strength to continue in the good work."

PUERTO RICO:

■ "By this means I want to express my commentary to *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I am extremely grateful for your sending me *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. On occasions I am really impressed by the thoughts and proverbs pre-

sented. I will be informing the Director of Christian Education about the same (*THE SWORD AND STAFF*) and I will show her the magazine.

"Please do not stop sending me the magazine *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I say that because of the beautiful thoughts and proverbs that it offers.

"Besides, the Director of Men of the district of Rio Piedras in my country is interested in your magazine *THE SWORD AND STAFF*..."

"Thank you for your kind attention. God bless you and keep prospering in this beautiful ministry." (Translated)

UNITED STATES:

■ "I have your web site bookmarked in my favorites. I find it very interesting. Thanks again." (E-mail, web page response)

■ "Thanks for your web site. I'm using your questions in Acts in my Sunday school class..." (E-mail).

SURINAM, SOUTH AMERICA:

■ "Kindly place me on the mailing list. Thank you." (E-mail, web page response)

GHANA:

■ "I am so grateful to receive...*THE SWORD AND STAFF*... I read and read the good things... Many brethren who read from your paper are daily encouraged by its wonderful contents..."

ROMANIA:

■ "Pray that those making the decisions to kill and bomb will come to their senses. Serbian Christians are being killed by NATO. There are thousands of evangelical believers there...many churches and Bible Schools. All sides are wrong...it is always wrong to kill. The Muslims want what they call a 'Greater Albanian State'...which includes Kosovo, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania. And they are being financed in part by Iran and Saudi Arabia. We are certainly in troubled times..." (E-mail)

INDIA:

■ "I checked your web site. Interesting! ... How can I get hold of a copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*?" (E-mail, web page response)

PHILIPPINES:

■ "*THE SWORD AND STAFF* magazines that you send me are very useful in my ministry in God's vineyard...I am very happy to receive these materials that you are sending me because it helps me in my Bible studies..."

■ "I am very thankful that finally I found your web site. I've been looking for it for more than a year.

"I have read your magazine from our minister and would like to have new issues as well as back issues. I am very thankful for having been educated by your publication. This has contributed a lot, has encouraged my faith to God, and for everything I am—much has been greatly influenced by you.

"I pray that God will continually give you strength to continue your ministry..." (E-mail)

AUSTRALIA:

■ "Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ...We pray this year is a special blessing to you in Christ and that the work you do for the Lord is further supported. We appre-

ciate so much you sending us your magazine. We will send a love gift and pray we both keep in touch as we continue in the Great Commission. If ever you are in Australia, please look us up..."



Which Tribulation?

(Continued from Page 8)

that believers can easily swallow the idea that Christians will not suffer tribulation. Such an attitude can be maintained only by glossing over the horrendous tribulations that Christians have endured in the past twenty centuries. For the moment, passing over the three that are specifically called "great" in the N. T., take a quick glimpse at other great tribulations.

Middle Ages Tribulation

When the church of Rome held absolute power in Europe during the Dark Ages, the infamous Inquisition held sway. All "heretics" were at risk, a "heretic" being anyone who disagreed with Rome. As one tiny example, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (in chapter 5) offers the following gruesome picture in Madrid in 1682.

"At the first time of torturing, six executioners entered, stripped him naked to his drawers, and laid him upon his back on a kind of stand, elevated a few feet from the floor. The operation commenced by putting an iron collar round his neck, and a ring to each foot, which fastened him to the stand. His limbs being thus stretched out, they wound two ropes round each thigh; which ropes being passed under the scaffold, through holes made for that purpose, were all drawn tight at the same instant of time, by four of the men, on a given signal.

It is easy to conceive that the pains which immediately succeeded were intolerable; the ropes, which were of a small size, cut through the prisoner's flesh to the bone, making the blood to gush out at eight different places thus bound at a time. As the prisoner persisted in not making any confession of what the inquisitors required, the ropes were drawn in this manner four times successively.

"The manner of inflicting the second torture was as follows: they forced his arms backwards so that the palms of his hands were turned outward behind him; when, by means of a rope that fastened them together at the wrist's, and which was turned by an engine, they drew them by degrees nearer each other, in such a manner that the back of each hand touched, and stood exactly parallel to each other. In consequence of this violent contortion, both his shoulders became dislocated, and a considerable quantity of blood issued from his mouth." Read enough? No tribulation for the church?

The Inquisition was especially awful in Spain. In the *Summary* of Chapter 5, Foxe says: "Yet, even in Spain, thus gleaned of all heresy, the Inquisition could still swell its lists of murders to thirty-two thousand! The numbers burned in effigy, or condemned to penance, punishments generally equivalent to exile, confiscation and taint of blood, to all ruin but the mere loss of worthless life, amounted to three hundred and nine thousand. But the crowds who perished in dungeons of torture, of confinement and of broken hearts, the millions of dependent lives made utterly helpless, or hurried to the grave by the death of the victims, are beyond all register." Tribulation for the church in this world.

Twentieth Century Tribulation

But all such persecution is past history, right? Wrong. As recent as August 1997, *The Reader's Digest* carried a lead article entitled "The Global War on Christians." The author begins with three specific examples: in China a woman murdered; in Pakistan a man shot, and in Bangladesh a man beaten till his leg was broken. "Their crime? They are Christians. Never before have so many Christians been persecuted for their beliefs." Mention is made of "torture, enslavement, rape, imprisonment, forcible separation of children from parents." The two main enemies of believers today are Muslim militants and communist oppressors. But communism collapsed when the Berlin Wall fell, no? Try posing that question to believers in China today.

Tribulation varies with time and place. There are believers in Christ who are suffering great tribulation today, even unto death. Even in "free" United States, incidents appear to be on the increase where individuals get into trouble with the authorities for speaking out in the name of Christ. Also, do not forget that Christian tribulation may be as "simple" as being laughed at. Or, one may lose a job for refusing to lie. Whatever form it takes, God has warned us that persecution and tribulation are part of the Christian walk.

According to the Word of God, tribulation cannot be limited to a seven-year period. According to the Word of God, the church cannot escape tribulation. To teach that tribulation is something in the future after the "rapture," does not help Christians to understand the true nature of life in Christ. Not till the end of the world and the arrival of the New

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CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE:

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

TELL OTHERS ABOUT IT

Which Tribulation?

(Continued from Previous Page)

Jerusalem will saints be free from trials, anguish, tribulation and wrath. "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jesus). □

Note by author: This is the fifth article regarding Daniel's seventy-weeks 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.)

Clarification: Word counts in this article are based on the New King James Version. Other versions may vary.

"THE WRATH [ORGÉ] OF GOD"

(Continued from Page 1)

Sadducees who came to his baptizing was, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath [orgé] to come?" (Matthew 3:7) The apostle Paul spoke about "the day of wrath [orgé]" which is yet to come (Romans 2:5).

VIVID ILLUSTRATIONS OF GOD'S WRATH

There are classic examples of these truths throughout the Bible. As a reminder to the ungodly, the listings of the apostle Peter and Jude are well known (II Peter 2:4-6; Jude 5-7). But let us look at some other vivid Scriptural illustrations of God's wrath as embodied in the meaning of the word **orgé**.

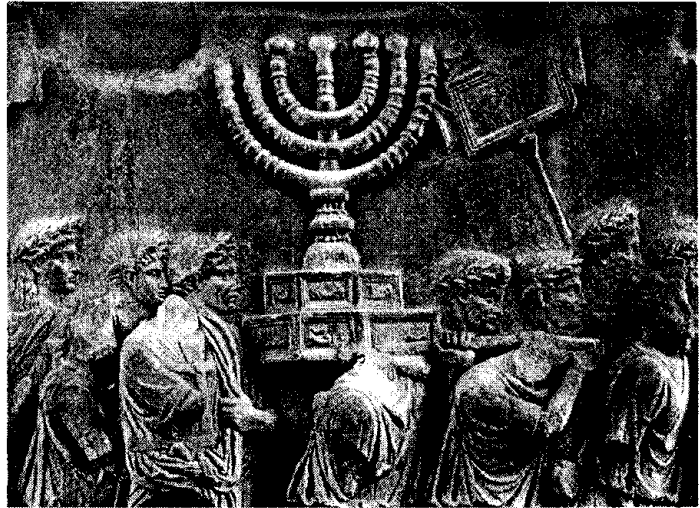
The Iniquity of the Canaanites

God had called Abraham, and that call was filled with great promises (Genesis 12:1-3). However, the fulfillment didn't take place immediately, and Abraham needed reassurance. Yes, his descendants would occupy the land of Canaan, they would be a great people, and finally the Savior of the world would come through them. But for an intervening period of some 400 years his descendants would be sidetracked in Egypt (Read Genesis 15 and Exodus 12:30). God said, "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: **for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full**" (Genesis 15:16). It is implied that when their iniquity became "full," they would be ripe for judgment. The **orgé** wrath that slowly, but surely, was building up, now would find its corresponding climax in that which was "full." The Israelites became God's instrument of judgment against the wicked and depraved Canaanites. This took place in the conquest of the Promised Land.

The Jewish Nation

The apostle Paul in writing to the Thessalonians speaks of the hindrance of the Jews in the preaching of the gospel. He said they were, "For-

bidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, **to fill up their sins alway**: for the wrath [orgé] is come upon them to the uttermost" (I Thessalonians 2:16). He saw their situation as being so bad that the apparent end results were the same as realized. Although God had called Abraham and his descendants to be the vehicle of bringing the Savior and salvation to the world, Abraham's posterity had been reluctant to accept this role. Time and again in their exodus from Egypt and their



A Picture of engraving on Arch of Titus in Rome depicting the sack of the temple in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

journey to the Promised Land, God's anger had to be held back from destroying them. In the Promised Land, it was a continuous cycle of going into idolatry and having to be called back by the prophets (Read Acts 7). Finally, they experienced God's wrath in their being taken into Babylonian Captivity. In New Testament times we find them back in the same old mold. The week before his crucifixion, Jesus "locked horns" with the Pharisees, and said, "**Fill ye up then the measure [of sin] of your fathers**. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation" (Matthew 23:32-36). Read Luke 19:41-44 and 21:19-24. This awful thing is anticipated in Deuteronomy 28:49-58. The Lord calls this time "the days of vengeance" (Luke 21:22) and "wrath" (**orgé**) (21:23). No doubt the Lord had in his eye the de

(Continued on Page 14)

How Much Time Do You Spend in Prayer?

MOST "PASTORS" in the United States pray fewer than 30 minutes a day. A study of 572 "pastors" by church growth expert Peter Wagner showed that 57% pray fewer than 20 minutes a day; about 34% spend between 20 minutes and an hour praying daily. Australian "pastors" spend 23 minutes a day praying, Joel News said. In New Zealand, the average is 30 minutes. "Pastors" in Asia spend more time praying, the study showed. In Japan, "pastors" spend 44 minutes a day, and in Korea the average is 90 minutes.—*GOSHEN Internet Religious News (February 25, 1999).* □

BARBS... with a Point

IF YOU are not right with God, you are not right.

If you must talk about others, why not try talking to God about them?

Some people think they have all the answers when they don't even know all the questions.

A little bit of religion, like vaccine, will immune you against the real thing.

The one who **rules** the universe is the one who made the **rules**, so we better go by them.

It is hard to be nice to people who are not nice to you, but that is Christianity.

It is not what you have, or how much you have, but what you do with what you have that really matters.

A gauge of your love of the truth is seen in how much false teaching disturbs you.

If doing your thing only involves things, though you gain the whole wide world, your life won't amount to a thing if you leave God out.

Self-serving "servants" do not serve, except their own selfish ambitions.

The danger of overlooking the faults in others is that we will try to excuse them in ourselves (and we will all end up being lost).

An empty church building is not compatible with the message of the empty tomb.

If our cup is full and running over, it should be an occasion of being thankful; but, really, it is of little spiritual consequence and significance unless we are sharing it with others.

Alcohol is the devil's brew, and those who consume it are under his power.

Some people's concept of salvation is to have some kind of overwhelming emotional experience, and then live as they please thereafter.

Doubt won't help you out when you are down and out; trust is a must.

The more we help some people the less we help them for they become dependent upon us and will not help themselves; so let us help them to help themselves.

You can give and not be a Christian, but you can't be a Christian without giving.

The most snobbish people are those who once had nothing and now have, imagine that they have, or pretend that they have something, as they look down their noses at others; thus foolishly venting their inverted insecurities.

You can't walk with Christ unless you are going in the same direction that he is.

In a society where success is measured by bigness and numbers, some churches feel paranoid if they are small in number rather than being burdened because of the great number lost in sin.

The narrower the mind, the harder the passage of big and expansive thoughts through it.

The object of worship must be right, the expression of worship must be right, and the worshipper must be right before the worship can be right.

If you shut God out of your life, the doors of heaven will not be open to you.

Many times arrogance and pride are glorified, and even deified, in what is called patriotism.

Most church problems are caused by selfishness. □

Bright and Gray Days

THE DAY broke bright and shining, a beautiful day with visibility clear as crystal, and the horizon miles away. As I looked out to the far hills, I did not notice an old tree near at hand; I looked though it to the things beyond.

The next day, as the fog surrounded, all I could see was the tree. Then I noticed the beauty of its form, the etched tracery of its interlocking branches as they stood out in the dark relief against the foggy background.

I wondered, is this why a divine Creator gives us our gray days, or days of depression and sorrow? Why He doesn't always give us bright days? Why He doesn't grant our every wish? We cannot always understand that with too much brightness we would see nothing, and tire of everything. But with gray days we can see and prize what we have so near and in such abundance.—*Iris Higgins* □

"THE WRATH [*ORGÉ*] OF GOD"

(Continued from Page 12)

struction of Jerusalem and the dismantling of the obstinate Jewish nation by the Romans that took place in 70 A.D. Eusebius assigns the words of Jesus to this happening. Josephus tells us that 1,100,000 Jews were slain, 97,000 taken captive, besides many other drastic and almost unbelievable things that took place. The full measure of their sins and the impending wrath (*orgé*) of God catastrophically converged.

THE FINAL DAY OF GOD'S WRATH AND JUDGMENT

Romans 2:3-11 anticipates the final and deferred wrath of God (and it's awfulness) more generically facing mankind. Having spoken of the sinfulness of the ancient Gentiles, and then that of the hypocritical Jews, Paul writes, "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shall escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath [*orgé*] against the day of wrath [*orgé*] and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation [*thumós*] and wrath [*orgé*], Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God."

The Wrath of the Lamb

By spurning God's goodness in turning down opportunities for repentance time after time, and persistently continuing in sin, mankind "treasurest up" (or is storing up) impending wrath (*orgé*) and thereby adding to the intensity of it when it comes. A parallel application can be made in Revelation 6:16-17 (although this likely is not talking about the final wrath to come). It speaks of the "wrath [*orgé*] of the Lamb," and says, "For the great day of his wrath [*orgé*] is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 5:6, in the chapter before, relates that there "stood a Lamb as it had been slain." An unusual sight and an unusual figure: a lamb slain, but still standing, and a lamb wrathful (usually thought of as being gentle and harmless). The Lamb has been slain for the sins of the world. The sacrifice

has been spurned, turned down. The Lamb is now venting his wrath on the impenitent sinners who have turned it down. This is the *orgé* wrath that has been stored up and has been building up. Now it is felt in all its fury.

The Graphic Picture

Having mentioned this wrath in I Thessalonians in more of a passing way (I Thessalonians 1:10; 2:16; and 5:9), the apostle Paul now more graphically pictures its coming in II Thessalonians 1:7-9, "...The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The same subject is dealt with in Matthew 25:31-46, as all of this takes place with the coming of Christ. As the judgment takes place, we read, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Then everything concludes with these words: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

WHAT A TERRIBLE FATE awaits those who have filled their cup of iniquity and now must drink of the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, whether in time or for eternity (Revelation 14:10,11; 16:19; 19:15; 20:10-15)! But, thanks be to God, Christians have already been delivered from the wrath to come (John 3:36; Romans 5:9; I Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Hebrews 12:28,29). Amen! □

Thing As Ugly As A Knee (And Immodest, Too)

*I think that I shall never see,
A thing as ugly as a knee,
Above whose knurled and knotted crest,
The mini hemline comes to rest;
Or one that's even worse than that,
When padded with repulsive fat.
Then, there's our sister
Who's nearing fifty,
Who thinks she's young
With knees quite nifty
Behind whose flex there oft remains
A network of blue, broken veins.
Some knees continue to perplex
As they form the letter "X"
While in another set one sees
A pair of true parenthesis.
Small nuts write verses such as these,
But have the sense to hide their knees.*

—Anonymous

Spiritual Food for Thought

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

OUR MOST DANGEROUS EXPLOSION



"...WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER" ~ 1 JOHN 3:11

WE ARE LIVING in a day and age of tension and strife. Not only is the family unit affected by these destroying factors, but also our society in general. Hate crimes are being committed, gang violence is on the rise. Revenge is a way of life.

The family unit is being destroyed by divorce, homosexuality and sin in general. The family unit as established by God is being labeled "old fashioned."

Why is it that the very thing that gives stability to a civilization is being deemed outdated? You can't leave God out and expect Him to bless you; you don't have to look very far to see the effects of the "God is Dead" or the "Free Love" movements.

When God is left out, people will destroy themselves by their own foolishness, but it is sad to say that many so called "Christians" are as clueless as the heathen to the problem. What is the problem?

The problem is that Christianity has to go beyond the doors of the church building. A true follower of Christ is one who adheres to the teachings of the Bible day in and day out. Until we see a change in the commitment to Jesus the Christ and a true following of God's Word, the family is still going to suffer.

God's plan for marriage and home will produce positive results if we stick to it and don't let the world dictate what's in and what's out regarding to the family or even Christianity in general.

Be a person with conviction: Know God's Word and live by it through thick and thin. ☐

"That's the Best Sermon"

AS THE MOTHER was completing the purchase of two new suits for her boys, Charles proudly said to his brother Arthur, "Won't I look nice in Bible class Sunday?"

A friendly lady standing nearby overheard him and asked, "Do you go to Bible school?" The smaller brother, Arthur, only five years old, answered somewhat indignantly with a withering glance, "Where else would we go on Sunday morning?" Blushing, the lady remarked, "That's the best sermon I ever heard."

Where will you be Sunday morning? ☐

Winners At The Seattle Special Olympics

A FEW YEARS ago at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win.

All, that is, except one boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. They all turned around and went back. Every one of them. One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better."

Then all nine of them linked arms and walked across the finish line together. Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for some time.

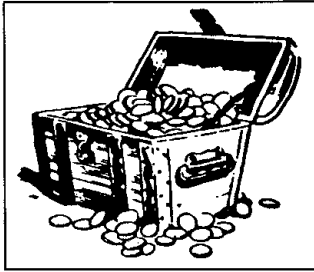
People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What truly matters in this life is helping others win too, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.—Selected ☐

Answers to: BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Seven (Genesis 5:1-32; 9:29); 2. Shem (Genesis 10:1; 11:10-12:3); 3. Cut a covenant (Genesis 15:8-18); 4. Genesis 23; 5. Genesis 49:3,4; 6. Exodus 2:1-10; 7. Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34; 8. 11 Kings 5:1-18; 9. Proverbs 30:1,8,9; 10. Jeremiah chapter 43 and following; 11. Matthew 13:54-58; 12. (1) Simon Peter (Matthew 10:2); (2) Simon Zealotes or the Canaanite (Matthew 10:4; Luke 6:15); (3) Simon the father of Judas (John 6:71); (4) Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9); (5) Simon the tanner (Acts 9:43; Acts 10:6); (6) Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-48); 13. (1) Simon Peter (Matthew 27:32); (8) Simon brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55); (9) Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6); 13. John 11:47-53; 18:14; 14. Luke 22:7-13; 15. Luke 24:13-33; 16. Acts 8:35-40; 21:8; 17. Paul and Silas (Acts 22:25-29; Acts 16:25,37-39); 18. Acts 17:10,11; 19. It is an Aramaic word for father, i.e., daddy; 20. Revelation 5:1-7. ☐

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And Who Are These?

Who are these motley ones clothed in such gorgeous robes of spotless white?
Who are these that surge forth upon the streets of gold in wild delight?
At first it seems they're out of place, unfit, as if they don't belong
As angels step aside somewhat aghast, they merge—a happy throng!
Just who are these that dare to stand before the Mighty God of all?
To Praise His Holy Name (Amen!), and then before Him prostrate fall?
They're earthly creatures, born again, children of Adam's fallen race;
Saved forever by Jesus Christ, his precious blood, through God's amazing grace!

—By James E. Gibbons

- ☐ 1995-1996 volumen encuadernado de "La Espada y El Caydo" (en español)—\$7.75; ☐ 1997-98—\$7.75

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