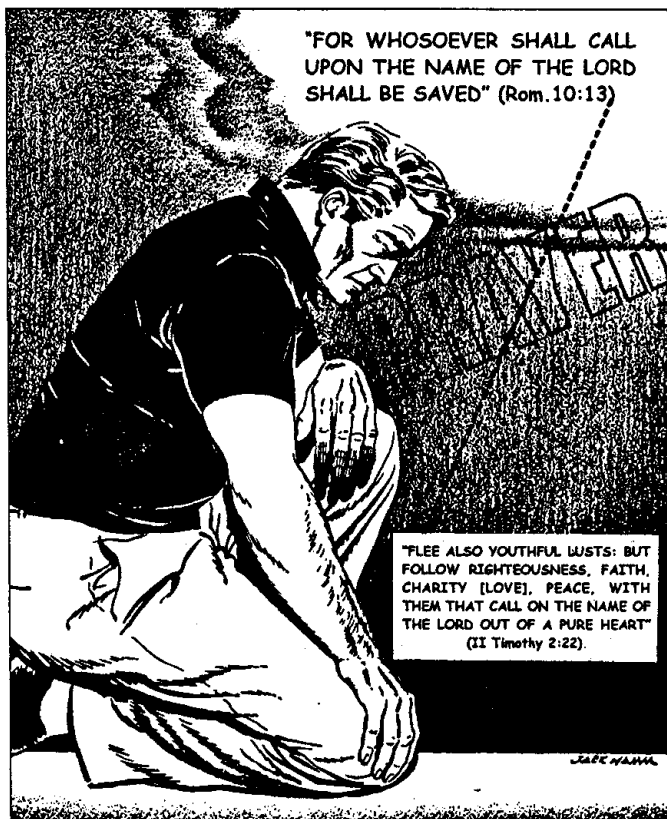


The Sword AND Staff

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

What Is the Meaning of the Expression to —"CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD"—



● By **JAMES E. GIBBONS**—1535 Fairfield Drive
MOUNT AIRY, NC 27030 USA

WE HAVE HEARD denominational preachers tell alien sinners (people who have not become Christians yet) to "pray the sinner's prayer," to "call upon the name of the Lord," and they would be saved. Perhaps you have heard and witnessed this too. Such is very common. Some of this may in a sense be Scriptural language, but for the most part Scriptural thought is not behind the use of the language. They are simply saying for the sinners to ask the Lord to save them, and that they are therewith saved in this asking and calling. But is

that really what the Bible teaches? Is this really how a person is saved? Perhaps it would be well for us to get a deeper insight into the use of these words in the Bible and then to more fully understand what is involved in a sinner being saved.

I. THE SCRIPTURAL USE OF THE EXPRESSION TO "CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD"

A study of the Scriptures has led us to the conclusion that for the most part the expression "to call upon the name of the LORD" is a technical use of words with a distinctive meaning. Let us illustrate.

Old Testament Scriptures

The first use of this expression in the Bible is found in Genesis 4:26. It involves the righteous line of Seth, son of Adam and Eve. It reads, "And to Seth, to him also was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men *to call upon the name of the LORD*." We next find this expression in Genesis 12:8. Here, after coming into Canaan, we find that Abraham built "an altar unto the LORD, and *called upon the name of the LORD*." Genesis 13:4 tells us that after an interlude in Egypt, he returned "unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram [Abraham] *called on the name of the LORD*." Later the same language is used in connection with Isaac. This happened at Beersheba: "And he builded an altar there, and *called upon the name of the LORD*, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well" (Genesis 26:25).

The first time an expression is used tends to identify and define its usage. Thereafter it can be used as a point of reference in understanding the word. In these references in Genesis, from the very first one going back to Seth, we get the impression "to call upon the name of the LORD" means to worship

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THE SWORD AND STAFF

Post Office Box 147
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030 U.S.A.

E-Mail Address:
JGibbons@InfoAve.Net

INFORMATION:

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially *SPEAKING...*

INSULT is the prelude to injury.

If a man's life is in place, he won't have to worry about his place in life.

Let's not be pragmatic when God is dogmatic.

Trying to develop character without being religious is like not having a track to run on.

Delay is the best course of action when experiencing anger.

Through godly sorrow and tears we prepare ourselves for a land where sorrow and tears will be no more.

Honesty should not be regarded as a matter of policy, but of principle.

Negative and hurt feelings repressed, suppressed, and unexpressed will make a person depressed.

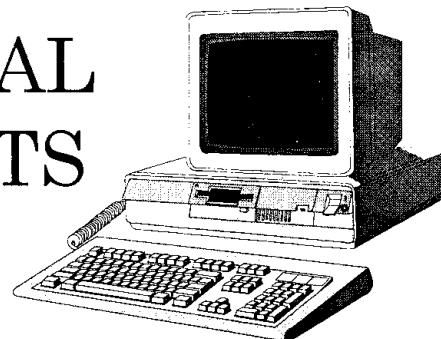
The only thing that equals being loved is to love another.

We should not be in such a hurry that we cannot stop and enjoy life, nor should we be so engrossed while stopping that we let life pass us by.

It is best to say little and do much.

The way you try to live is your commentary on the meaning of life. □

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



SOME PRODDING THOUGHTS (AND MORE TO COME)

THERE IS NEED to study again the simple organization, corporate life, and function of the church of the New Testament. Organizationally, that church stands out as being local, independent, and autonomous in nature (bound only by love to other local, independent, and autonomous churches). That local church was under the direct oversight of men called "elders" who themselves were under Christ. Evangelists were sent out from this local church to win the world for Christ. Deacons were servants to assist the elders in the work of the church. And all the members constituted a priesthood of believers, serving the God of heaven and standing on equal footing before their Lord.

Today in so-called Christendom we are confronted with varying degrees of departure from this simplicity, with the most glaring example seen in a monolithic system with a single man as its head. And within this organization are others exercising such authority all the way down to the local level. Then other denominational spin-offs can be seen bearing a strong resemblance to the original. One man over a multiplicity of churches is called a "bishop," whereas in the New Testament there were several "bishops" (elders) over one local church. And then in many local situations one man called "the minister" is very much parallel to the apostate system just mentioned (that has one man over a universal church). Generally, "right reverends" and clergymen have replaced the simplicity of the New Testament way of doing things.

When believing men sincerely study the Scriptures, they will seek to restore the local church in all of its simplicity (and they have). It will be a local, independent, and autonomous body. But when their love grows cold, and they cease to respect the Scriptures, the old departure that was originally prophesied in the early church begins to take place all over again. They look beyond the local scene with an eye to ecclesiastical organizations and denominational setups that usurp and eventually replace the local church in God's plan. It doesn't happen all at once, but it happens, and has repeatedly happened.

We offer these words as prodding thoughts. As stated, we need to study anew the organizational structure and function of the early church. It may be that there are things that need to be taught all over again (or even understood for the first time). □

Answers to:
BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 11:1-9; 2. Genesis 11:29; 20:11,12; 3. "North" = hidden, dark, gloomy (from this direction came winter); "South" = scorched (associated with the sun; in the direction of the Negeb, desert region of Israel); "East" = the front (direction facing the rising sun viewed as being the front); "West" = to rear (direction toward the Mediterranean Sea in Israel); 4. Genesis 13:18; 14:13; 18:1; 5. Genesis 43:32; 46:34; Exodus 8:26; 6. Joshua 7; 7. II Chronicles 26:17-23; 8. Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1; 30:1; 31:1; 9. Jeremiah 38:6; 10. Ezekiel 3:17; 33:1-19; 11. Luke; 12. Matthew 2:12-15; 15:21; 13. John 8:58; 14. Acts 1:1-3; 15. Acts 17:1-9; 16. The apostle Paul; 17. I Thessalonians 4:13-18; II Thessalonians 2:1-12; 18. I Timothy 1:1-3; 19. James 1:1,2; 2:1,5,14; 5:19; 20. Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14. □

**THE CHURCH HAS ERRED IN MAKING
EVANGELISM A "SPECIAL EVENT"
RATHER THAN A WAY OF LIFE**

WHAT DO I mean? Please consider: We have "church growth clinics"; special "out-reach" programs; a "calling" night or day; evangelism classes, etc. Along with these we have special literature, brochures, charts, films, equipment, etc. all designed and intended to be used in the special evangelistic effort. In fact it seems that we often feel we can't evangelize unless we have a hefty array of special aids and equipment.

Please don't misunderstand; I am not saying these are all wrong, but I do believe we have felt they are necessary because we have never learned that evangelism is to be a way of life and not a "special event."

In the account of the "great commission" as recorded by both Matthew and Mark we find the word, "go." Contrary to popular misconception this word is not a verb, nor is it the "command." The Greek word in both verses is the word *poreuthentes*. It is an aorist passive participle: which denotes action prior to the time of the action of the leading verb. The leading verb of Matthew's account is *matheteusate* ("disciple ye") and the leading verb of Mark's account is *keruxate* ("proclaim ye").

The participle mentioned above is a descriptive word. I believe it describes a condition or state of being. The followers of Christ are to be people who are moving about in society, whether on a local basis or on a worldwide basis. We are not to be people hiding our light under a bushel nor in a church building.

We are to interact with those around us and be both a seasoning influence on them and a source of enlightenment for them (Matthew 5:13,14). They are not required to seek us out in our nice church buildings, nor should we defer our interaction with them

until some special "calling day." We are to "disciple" them and proclaim to them the Gospel of Christ that is the power of God unto salvation. We are to plant and water and trust God for the increase.

How is all of this to come about? Obviously, some have more day-by-day contact with the lost than others, and certainly evangelism is to be the number one function of the evangelist, but it should be clear to all of us by now that the church will never accomplish what it should in the area of evangelism until every member does its share (Ephesians 4:16). When will this begin to happen? When every Christian is imbued with the attitude of the apostles Peter and John when they said, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Or the attitude of the apostle Paul when he wrote, "woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel!", or when he wrote, "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

When should this attitude begin to be developed? As soon as a person becomes a Christian. While the person is rejoicing in their own salvation, would it not be a good time to point out that his/her friends and acquaintances also need salvation? Then, with this reminder, why not give them some practical instruction by word and example as to how to approach others with the Gospel of Christ?

It will be harder for the person who is not outgoing or gregarious to make evangelism a way of life, but perhaps if they can spend enough time with those who find it easy to talk to others, they will learn.

Some of us never received any help or instruction in how to witness to others. Probably we are the ones who have relied more heavily on "special" days, literature and equipment. May we all resolve that upcoming generations of Christians will be shown how to make evangelism a way of life and not a special event.—*Kenneth Strever* □

The Kind of Life to Live

Trust in the Lord and do that which is good,
And live a life of love and brotherhood;
A better way to live one will not find,
A life that's right with God and all mankind.

—*By James E. Gibbons*

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE KINGDOM

THE BOUNDARIES of the kingdom of heaven (and thus the church) extend as far as the blood of Christ has been applied, having been accepted, and as far as men have unconditionally submitted themselves to the LORD of Lords and KING of kings, and are living according to His teachings. □

—What Is the Meaning of the Expression to “CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD”?—

(Continued from Page 1)

God. It takes on this decided technical flavor, and even is expanded in the New Testament to identify followers of the Lord. It has reference to the worship of God and the lifestyle of those who worship God. It encompasses the life of trust and reliance upon God.

New Testament Scriptures

Let us pinpoint some New Testament Scriptures that make use of such expressions having to do with calling upon the name of the Lord. The use of these expressions is quite interesting as well as being very informative.

- “Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy *saints* at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priest to bind *all that call on thy name*” (Acts 9:13,14).
- “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed *them which called on this name* in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?” (Acts 9:20,21).
- “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with *all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*, both theirs and ours” (I Corinthians 1:2).
- “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with *them that call on the Lord* out of a pure heart” (II Timothy 2:22).
- “And if *ye call on the Father*, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” (I Peter 1:17).

In these Scriptures, “*saints*” and *they that call upon the name of the Lord* are used synonymously. *They that call upon the name of the Lord* is talking about Christians. It is a very fitting appellation. It is all-inclusive of the life of trust. One commentator said, “To call on this name is to confess it as being the bearer of salvation, to pray and to worship God in this name, and to expect all help in time and eternity from him who is revealed in the name” (Lenski). It is not talking about becoming a Christian as much as it is in being one. The life of prayer, and consequently trust, characterizes the Christian’s life.

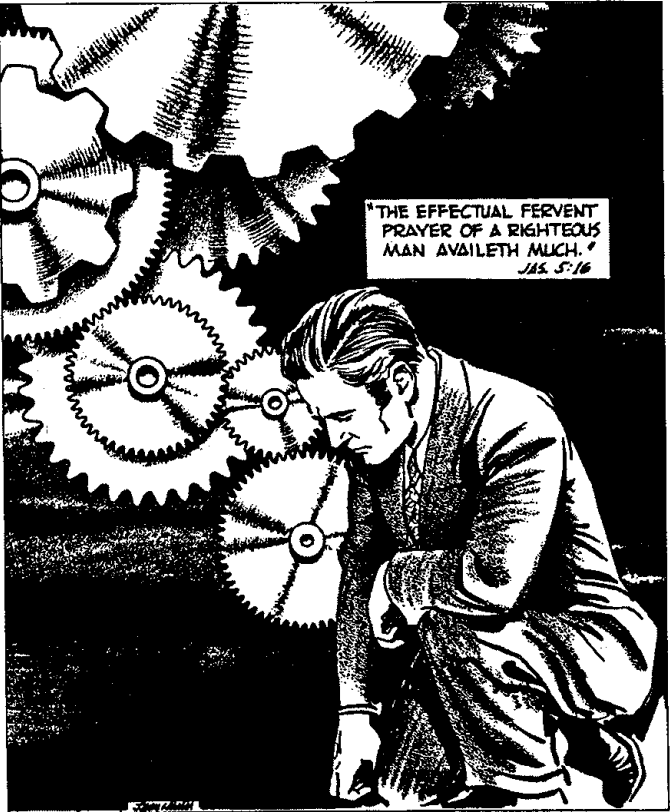
Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13

This information being crystal clear, there is no reason why we can’t understand Acts 2:21 and perhaps consider Romans 10:13 in this same light.

Acts 2:21 reads, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Whether we understand the context of this Scripture (read the verse before) as leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem or the end of the world, the statement of truth is still the same. Those who are calling upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Christians by their lifestyle will be ready. It won’t do any good to call upon the Lord when that day has actually come. The book of Revelation ends by saying, “And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for *the time is at hand*. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:10-12). The five foolish virgins, who were not ready, cried out, “Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:11b-13).

The context of Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” is to be understood in the larger context of Jew and

PRAYER STARTS WHEELS TO MOVING



Gentile alike being accepted by God. The things that are said here in reference to calling upon the name of the Lord could be a panoramic view that encompasses the life spent in calling upon the name of the Lord or it could refer to the initiation into the Christian life. All of the things we have said about this expression characterizing the Christian life are true, but if it pertains specifically to becoming a Christian here, we must call upon the Lord in the way the Scriptures say.

II. "CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD" AND BEING SAVED (BECOMING A CHRISTIAN)

Does the book of Acts, the book of conversions (and history of the early church), record any cases of men calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved in the sense that denominational preachers tell people to do today? Here specific cases are seen in the 3000 on Pentecost (Acts 2:36-41), the Samaritans (Acts 8:5,12), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27,35-39), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-18; 22:12-16), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10 and 11:13,14), Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14,15), the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:27-34), the Corinthians (Acts 18:8), and some disciples of John who got a deeper insight into the gospel (Acts 19:1-7). Today people are told to pray the "sinner's prayer," and to ask the Lord to save them, and that they are at that moment saved. We have yet to find anything like this in these accounts in the book of Acts. Let us "zero" in on some of the more explicit examples.

Baptized for the Remission of Sins

Take note of the conversions on the day of Pentecost in the second chapter of Acts, the day the church was started (Acts 2:36-41). A vast number, after being told to "know assuredly" the truthfulness of that which they heard, were pricked in their hearts. They wanted to know what they must do. The apostle Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said, "*Repent and be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (Acts 2:38). Then we read, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Having truly repented of their sins, remission of sins would come in connection with baptism (not in asking God for forgiveness independently of baptism).

"If You Believe With All Your Heart"

Acts 8:35-38 present a very plain and explicit account of conversion to Christ. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eu-

nuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." Philip simply preached the simple gospel message, using Isaiah 53 as his text. Obviously as he expounded this message, the Ethiopian was told what he must do to accept it. So, as they rode along, he said, "See, here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?" What did Philip tell him? Preachers today would have said, "You have to pray through first"? Is that what Philip told him? No, Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." He therewith confessed his faith, and without any further adieu he was baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). That was the nature of his "calling upon the name of the Lord." How simple! All of this is in harmony with Mark 16:16.

"Thy Prayer is Heard"

Acts 10 contains a most interesting case of a man named Cornelius coming to the Lord. Read it. He was a Gentile earnestly seeking after the true God, and God used him to open up the gospel to the Gentile world. An angel appeared to him, and said, "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard..." (Acts 10:31). Was his prayer heard in the sense that he was at that moment saved? No. He was told that a man by the name of Peter would come, "who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). Before this was fully accomplished, a charismatic outpouring of the Spirit occurred to demonstrate that the Gentiles should be accepted, prompting Peter to say, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized...?" (Acts 10:47). This phenomenal happening did not set aside Christ's plan of salvation. This same apostle Peter had told the believing Jews earlier on the day of Pentecost to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. He then continued saying in Acts 2:39, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off [Ephesians 2:11-17], even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This included the household of Cornelius, and everyone who ever will be saved will receive the promise of salvation in this way. And from the example of Cornelius we conclude it is fitting for a sinner to pray in seeking after God (although this is the special privilege of Christians). It is only natural as he reaches out to God. But it is not fitting to think that a person can be saved by praying without doing what the Lord says.

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—*What Is the Meaning of the Expression to “CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD”?*—

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“Be Baptized, and Wash Away Thy Sins, Calling on the Name of the Lord”

A study of the conversion of the apostle Paul should clear up any misunderstanding about being saved by simply praying to be saved. A record of his conversion is found in Acts chapter 9, 22, and 26. We are first introduced to him as Saul of Tarsus, prime persecutor of Christians. On the way to Damascus to carry out such a mission, the Christ of eternity abruptly appeared to him in a light that was overwhelmingly brilliant. As we read on we find this appearance was to qualify him to be an apostle, as he accepted the gospel message. But in the meantime, he was blinded for three days and was praying (Acts 9:9,11). God sent a devout believer by the name of Ananias to convey the gospel message to him and to tell him of the Lord's plans in reference to him. Having done this, Ananias said, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and *be baptized, and wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Paul had been praying, but his sins were still there. Now he was to be baptized to get his sins washed away, “calling on the name of the Lord.” It would be a cruel joke to tell a repentant sinner he needed to go ahead and be baptized to get his sins washed away, although he had been praying for three days, if it were not so. Saul therewith was baptized (the blood of Christ spiritually is applied to wash away sins in baptism, Romans 6:3-6; Revelation 1:5) and accepted the call to be an apostle.

III. APPENDAGE CONSIDERATIONS

“Pray the Sinner's Prayer”

Before closing this study, it would be good, in particular, to look into what is called the “Sinner's Prayer.” The alien sinner is told to “pray the sinner's prayer” and be saved. They have in mind Luke 18:13. It reads, “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner.*” This is given as a model of what a non-Christian must do to be saved. Just pray, and you are therewith saved. Certainly the alien sinner must come with such an attitude, or he can't be saved. But Luke 18:13 is not talking about the alien sinner. It is talking about Jews who have come into the temple to worship, one a Pharisee and the other a publican. Jews were God's Old Testament people, and the publican was a renegade Jew who had cooperated with the Romans, a Roman tax

collector. He was in the category of chief of sinners to his fellow Jews. This particular one in Luke 18 is not self-righteous like the Pharisee, but humbles himself, acknowledging his unworthiness before God. He is parallel to an errant Christian repenting, not an alien sinner accepting Christ. The alien sinner must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved.

An Altar in the Church?

Also, as a student of the Scriptures, we have long been perplexed by men calling the front of the church building an altar. Sinners are urged to come to the altar and pray through. We are at a loss to understand this. In the Bible an altar was a raised platform of stone or earth upon which animal sacrifices were made. We are not under that old system any more. Could it be that the front of a church building being called an altar is a carry over from Catholicism? We understand that these people believe when the priest says his ritualistic words in the mass, the emblems turn into the body and blood of Christ. Christ is sacrificed all over again. Thus, the front of the church building would be called an altar where this takes place. Could this be the origin of this expression? However, any way that you look at it, it is not fittingly used in reference to Christianity. Christ has once and for all been sacrificed for us. We accepted this sacrifice when we repented and were baptized for the remission of sins.

Concluding Statement

In conclusion, let us say that we must call upon the name of the Lord, but this is to be understood in the larger context of accepting and doing the will of the Lord. Otherwise it is meaningless. We must call upon the Lord in the way the Bible teaches. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ are true any way that we choose to look at them. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). □

Five Men Made Five Mistakes

ONE MAN struck a match to see if the gasoline tank in his car was empty.

It wasn't.

One man patted a strange dog on the head to see if it was affectionate.

It wasn't.

One man sped up to see if he could beat the train to the crossing.

He didn't.

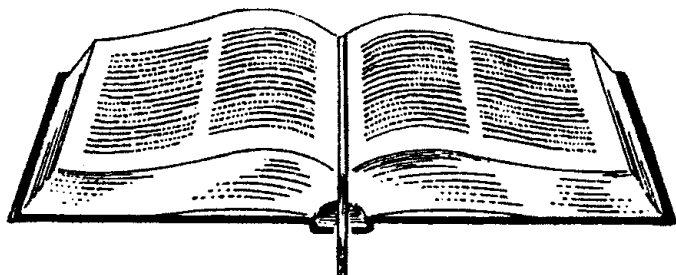
One man touched an electric wire to see if it was dead.

It wasn't
One man thought he could get to heaven with-
out Christ.
He couldn't.—*Selected* □



A Series Involving the Bible and Prophecy...

"THE MAN OF SIN"



Part I: The Prophecy

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

WE ARE ALL SINNERS. Yet, one man in all history is singled out as "the man of sin...the son of perdition." Not a lovely description. Why talk about him? Yet, the Word of God does talk about him.

Most students of Scripture, past and present, see a connection between "the man of sin" of 2 Thessalonians 2 and the "little horn" of Daniel 7. They also see a connection with one or more of the beasts in Revelation 13 and with "the great harlot" and "Babylon" in Revelation 17 and 18. From ancient times, these outstanding prophecies have been lumped together under the common title "antichrist."

In spite of such agreement, views regarding the fulfillment vary widely. Is this enemy of God someone in the past, present or future? The most popular view today, premillennialism, says that he is yet in the future. To the opposite extreme are a growing number today, preterists, who believe that he is a relic of ancient history. Howbeit, for hundreds of years, the vast majority of Bible believers unswervingly proclaimed that "the man of sin" is a present reality.

What Difference Does it Make?

Since there are so many conflicting views, why bother to try to figure out who "the man of sin" is in 2 Thessalonians 2? To ask that question betrays an ignorance of the text. This is not just some idle study out of vain curiosity. Eternal issues are at stake here.

Number One: Christ versus "the man of sin" (verses 1-3). It is our Lord Jesus Christ on the one

side, and "the man of sin" on the other. Paul assures his readers that Christ is coming, but that "the man of sin" is also coming. The best and the worst. The Son of God versus a son of the devil (verse 9). Nothing less is involved than the eternal battle between the forces of good and evil. The eternal battle between God and Satan.

Number Two: "not shaken" versus "falling away" (verses 2-4). Some people think the study of prophecy has little to do with "practical" Christianity. How much more practical can you get than holding fast or falling away? The problem is that many believers think that "falling away" relates only to drunkenness, adultery, forsaking the assembly and the like. However, Paul speaks of being "shaken" by not knowing if "the day of Christ" is past or future. Paul speaks of "the falling away" which involves "worship" in "the temple of God." We need to investigate what this is all about.

Number Three: "the love of the truth" versus "not receive the love of the truth" (verse 10). Love God. Love Jesus. Love your brother. Love your spouse. Love your neighbor. Love your enemy. Also—love the truth. To some people, "love" means "sex." To others, "love" means "unconditional acceptance" of whatever another person believes or does. Enter "love of the truth." That love is not at all popular in our relativistic-materialistic society. It is not at all popular with the do-it-if-it-makes-you-feel-good club. If you love the truth, you will search for it as diligently as for a hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:1-4).

Number Four: "truth" versus "deception," "delusion" and a "lie" (verses 10,11). Living the Christian life is more than morality. It has to do with what we believe. It has to do with truth versus error. In the Garden of Eden, it was God's truth versus Satan's lie. It still is. Eve wanted the "freedom" of "choice." Paul tells Timothy that Eve was deceived. So are millions today by "the man of sin." We are not dealing here with idle prophetic curiosity. We are dealing with nothing less than the issue of truth versus lies. Jesus is truth. Satan is the father of lies. That is what this prophecy is all about.

Number Five: "saved" versus "condemned" (verses 10,12). Eternity is involved in "the man of sin" prophecy. Saved or lost; blessed or condemned. Many Christians sidestep various issues by retorting: "Well, it isn't a matter of salvation." However, the issues of this prophecy are very much "a matter of salvation." This prophecy has very much to do with understanding the characteristics of those who are saved and those who are condemned. The issue is live and real.

(Continued on Next Page)

"THE MAN OF SIN"

Part I: The Prophecy

(Continued from Previous Page)

Number Six: holiness versus "unrighteousness" (verse 12). Yes, morality does count. You cannot believe right and live wrong. At issue here are those who have "pleasure in unrighteousness." Reminds us of "lovers of pleasure" in 2 Timothy 3:4. Sin is fun; you had better believe it. Fun now; pay later. If it were not fun, why would people bother with it? Moses chose to suffer with the people of God rather than "enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25). "The man of sin" has to do with fun religion. Fun because you can have one foot in a church and another foot in the world. They "worship" yet have "pleasure in unrighteousness."

These are six solid reasons why "the man of sin" prophecy merits serious study on the part of every person who cares about his relationship with the God of the universe and His precious Son.

Must Be Based on Sound Doctrine

The interpretation of prophecy must always agree with sound doctrine. Example: if Christians are no longer obligated to keep the Sabbath, then the seal of God in Revelation 7 cannot possibly be Sabbath keeping. The doctrinal issue must be settled before attempting to interpret prophecy.

The prophecy at hand has several doctrinal issues that must be clarified in the light of New Testament Scripture. Among the most important issues is the meaning of "the temple of God," since that is where "the man of sin" will sit.

Which "Temple of God"?

Six centuries before Christ, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia devastated the temple in Jerusalem. Howbeit, three great prophets of God, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel, foretold the rebuilding of Jerusalem with its temple. Ezra and Nehemiah recorded the history of the fulfillment.

Nevertheless, Daniel and Jesus prophesied the destruction of this second temple. That was powerfully fulfilled in 70 A.D. (See several former articles for details.) There is not one Bible prophecy foretelling a rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple after its destruction in 70 A.D.

Those who claim the temple will be built again at some future date base their views solely on inference. Their arguments run like this: "Since the man of sin will sit in the temple of God, the temple in Jerusalem has to be built again in order to fulfill that prophecy."

What proof is there that "the temple of God" in 2 Thessalonians 2 is to be a physical temple in

physical Jerusalem? Indeed, there are at least three reasons for rejecting that interpretation. First is the fact already mentioned that no Scripture makes a direct prediction of rebuilding after 70 A.D.

Secondly, one must consider the nature of the Jerusalem temple in the New Testament. Everyone understands that the temple in Jerusalem was the temple of God when Jesus arrived on the scene.

(Continued on Page 10)

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. In building the tower of Babel, what was used for stone and what was used for mortar?
2. What kin were the wives of Abraham and his brother Nahor to their husbands?
3. As a matter of interest, and information, what are the meanings (and root meanings) of the words "north," "south," "east," and "west" in the language of the O.T. (as in Genesis 13:14)?
4. Although Abraham had no permanent place of his own in Canaan at the time, what location seems to have been his adopted or favorite dwelling place there?
5. When Joseph was second in command to Pharaoh, what is mentioned as being an abomination to the Egyptians?
6. What was the sin of Achan that cost him his life?
7. What king of Judah became a leper because he offered incense unto God?
8. What two other names, in addition to authorship attributed to Solomon, are attached to some of the Proverbs?
9. What O.T. prophet was lowered into a miry dungeon?
10. Which one of the O.T. prophets was set by God to be a "watchman unto the house of Israel"?
11. Which one of the gospel writers traces the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam?
12. While Christ was upon earth, what are the only two times recorded that he went outside of the land of Israel?
13. "Jesus said unto them [the Jews], Verily, verily, I say unto, Before Abraham was, _____."
14. After his resurrection, how many days did Jesus appear to his disciples at various times before he ascended back to heaven?
15. What man, along with some other Christians, in what city was required to post a peace bond because the Jews accused Paul and the other preachers of turning the world upside down?
16. What writer of much of the New Testament in all of his writings does not refer to conversion as being born again, using other terminology?
17. What misunderstanding did the Thessalonian Christians have in connection with the second coming of Christ as addressed in I Thessalonians and then in II Thessalonians?
18. Where was Timothy when the epistle of I Timothy was written to him by Paul?
19. To whom was the epistle of James written?
20. What are seven beatitude-like statements found in the book of Revelation?

(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:

- "Great web page..." (E-mail, web page response)
- "Please send me a complimentary copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* and information about subscribing...Thank you." (E-mail, web page response)
- "Just found your web site and have enjoyed looking through it. I was really blessed and did copy some of the articles to use..." (E-mail, web page response)

GEORGIA:

- "My husband and I have recently relocated to...He just received volume 37, # 2 of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*, and I just had to tell you how much we enjoyed it! We are truly delighted to find such a treasure trove of goodies and I have just finished e-mailing several friends to share with them what a delightful blessing this publication is!..." (E-mail)

SOUTH CAROLINA:

- "Just a line from South Carolina to let you know that we love you for doing the Lord's work with *THE SWORD AND STAFF*...Keep up the good work."
- "I have just reviewed some of the material on your web site and really appreciate the effort. Would you please place me on your mailing list? My wife and I will use the material in teaching others." (E-mail, web page response)

TENNESSEE:

- "I am the Library Director at... I was getting issues of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* ready to go to the bindery and noticed that we have only received 1 issue in 1999, vol. 37, no. 1. I was wondering if you could send us the ones we are missing which by now are 2 and 3... We do collect *THE SWORD AND STAFF* and have since 1985. Thanks for your help." (E-mail)

KENTUCKY:

- "Thanks for *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. It will be very helpful in my ministry...It seems we believe the very same way. We must be reading from the same book. Amen!"
- "Please find enclosed a small check to help cover the cost of sending *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I really enjoy it and want to continue to receive it...I also noticed in a recent issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* that you hold to the historical view of Revelation. This is the view that I grew up believing. It is amazing that so few still hold to this view..."

WEST VIRGINIA:

- "Thank you for faithfully sending *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. We enjoy reading it and get a lot of spiritual good from it..."
- "Thanks for an 'uplifting' paper. I do enjoy reading your fine work. Please always defend the faith as you always have. So many false teachers now are among the saints. Our own have gone away from us, teaching doctrine contrary to the gospel of Christ. Keep up the great work you are doing. My prayers and a little help [are with you]. God bless."

NEW YORK:

- "I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate Vaughn's [Vaughn Elliott's] articles in *THE SWORD AND STAFF*...They are quite enlightening..."

MICHIGAN:

- "Thanks so much for the efforts to further the kingdom! Please continue the great work! Find enclosed something to help the ministry, and may God bless!"

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- "Please use this to continue your good work—*THE TRUTH!*"

ARKANSAS:

- "I would like to have your permission to reproduce in my church paper the article you wrote in the most recent issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* (Vol. 37, No. 3) entitled *Is Denominationalism Really Wrong?*" (E-mail)

(Continued on Next Page)



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READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

TEXAS:

■ *"We are not interested in receiving copies of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Please remove our name and address from you mailing list."*

■ *"THE SWORD AND STAFF had a good take and especially the moral and spiritual lift concerning 'Unique Expressions and Great Truths from the Apostle Paul'."*

ARIZONA:

■ *"This is my first letter to you, and I am ashamed to admit that I have been receiving your paper for so many years and not responded by sending you a donation. I have no idea how you got our name in the first place. I appreciate your paper and your stand for God and truth. There is always so much good information in each copy..."*

OREGON:

■ *"Enclosing a contribution for your work. Keep up the good writing. We enjoy your magazines and try to share them with others. May the Lord Continue to bless your efforts."*

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UNITED STATES:

■ *"...Your [web] site is truly an inspiration. Full of great material. I have been there a few times...picked an article or two. I will be back frequently to pick some more. I have also forwarded your URL to a few of my friends who I'm sure will spend some time there as well. I am about to over haul my site...Would it be OK if I added a link to your site as one of my favorites? Please respond. I will not add the link without your approval. Thank you again for being an inspiration to me in my walk with the Lord." (E-mail, web page response)*

PHILIPPINES:

■ *"I am a Christian in the Philippines, and I have read some of the issues of THE SWORD AND STAFF. It's really a blessing that this type of publication has reached our far away nation. My father before was a subscriber of this paper...I would like to receive this paper...God bless you and may He continue to strengthen you (both physically and spiritually) in proclaiming the Truth. Thank you so much." (E-mail)* □

The Indestructible Bible

MANY MEN have tried to destroy the Bible. For instance, in A.D. 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian issued an order to destroy Christians and their Bibles. The persecution that followed was brutal. Over a burned Bible, Diocletian built a monument on which he wrote these words: "Extincto

mommene Christianorum" (meaning "the name Christian is extinguished"). A short 20 years later, he was dead, and the new emperor, Constantine, commissioned 50 copies of the Bible to be prepared at government expense. The Bible survived! In 1776, Voltaire (a French philosopher) announced, "One hundred years from today, there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by some antique seeker." One hundred years later, Voltaire was dead, and his own house and press were being used to print and store Bibles by the Geneva Bible Society. Further, the first edition of Voltaire's work sold for 11 cents in Paris, while an ancient Bible manuscript sold in Russia for half a million dollars! Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).—Selected □



"THE MAN OF SIN"

Part I: The Prophecy

(Continued from Page 8)

Jesus himself said of the temple, "Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:16). It was in the temple that animals were sacrificed and their blood shed for the remission of the people's sins. However, Jesus came into the world to offer His own body and blood as the perfect sacrifice for sins. Thus, at the moment of His death, God acted in an unprecedented manner: "Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked" (Matthew 27:51). In this graphic fashion God declared that when Jesus died, He was finished with that physical temple.

Following the rending of the veil, the term "house of God" never again refers to the temple in Jerusalem. A physical temple has not existed now for over 1900 years. Any physical temple built today would be a slap in the face to Jesus, who shed His blood to do away with the temple's animal sacrifices. The second temple, which existed in Jesus' day, was once the temple of God and then ceased to be. A third temple, if built, would not for one second of time be a temple of God.

This brings us to the third point. Notice how clear 1 Timothy 3:15 states it: "that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the **house of God, which is the church** of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (bold emphasis supplied). Scripture could not say any more clearly what the "house of God" is today. God's church.

The same is true of the expression "temple of God." Examination shows that after Jesus' death,

“temple of God” never again refers to the physical temple in physical Jerusalem. Rather, it refers to the church of God. It seems that our brethren in Corinth were not quite clear on this point. Thus Paul asked them, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). Today we would ask people a similar question: “When you study prophecy about the ‘temple of God,’ do you not know that since Jesus’ death the people of God are the ‘temple of God’? Do you not know that the ‘house of God’ is the church of God?”

This is sound doctrine. Using sound doctrine as the basis for the study of prophecy, the careful student of the New Testament will realize that when 2 Thessalonians 2 speaks prophetically of “the temple of God,” it must be a prophecy about the church. Something very bad is going to happen to Jesus’ church.

What is Apostasy?

There are more doctrinal issues that must be clarified in the light of Scripture before attempting to find the fulfillment of “the man of sin” prophecy. The matter of the “temple of God” is only the **first**.

Second, there is the question of the meaning of the expression “the apostasy.” Actually, several versions make it clear when they render the word “the falling away.” That is exactly what apostasy means.

A man can not fall from a cliff if he has never been on the cliff. A child cannot fall from a train she never boarded. Since this prophecy has something to do with “the temple of God,” the church, it is therefore predicting a falling away from the true church. It is a prophecy about apostasy, a prophecy about a departure from the faith “once for all delivered” (Jude 3). The prophecy cannot be talking about Judaism, because it preceded the church of Christ. It cannot be talking about Islam, because it is a wholly distinct religion unrelated to the Gospel of Christ. We have to study church history to search for “the falling away.”

Notice also that the prophecy is not about just any falling away. It prophesies “the” falling away, “the” apostasy. That would seem to tell us that to find fulfillment we must look for the most important false church in all history.

Connected with the idea of falling away is “the lawless one.” That is to say, he would turn his back on the law of Christ and establish his own laws. A person is a “law breaker” for breaking just one law. However “lawless one” conveys the idea of someone who repeatedly and in large measure opposes the commandments of the New Testament. This prophecy, then, is not dealing with just any slight variation from the true Gospel. It foretells a departure of major proportions.

Paul wrote this more than 1900 years ago. Before thinking that “the man of sin” might be future, a believer must search 1900 years of church history to see if the prophecy has already been fulfilled. It is only when people ignore 19 centuries of Christianity that they can be deceived into thinking that fulfillment is in the future.

One Man or a Group of Men?

Third, there is the question of how many people are involved. The text says “the man” of sin. However, in Bible prophecy, one person often represents an entire body of people. For example, most students agree that the four beasts in Daniel 7 represent Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Rome. Each beast represents an entire empire. Daniel 7 clearly says as much. In verse 17, it says “Those great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings.” Yet, in further exposition, in verse 23 it says, “The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth.” So, a beast represents a man and both represent a kingdom. This Bible symbolism is not nearly as strange as some seem to think it is. Ever hear of Uncle Sam? What about the elephant and donkey representing the Republicans and Democrats?

This same type of symbolism is found in Revelation 17. Who would argue that “the great harlot” is a prophecy of a red-light-district prostitute? Indeed, the prophecy itself clears up any doubt when verse 18 says, “And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.” One woman represents an entire city. She represents especially the power of the leaders of that city to exercise control over many nations.

Both Daniel and Revelation thus make clear that a prophetic individual may well represent an entire city or an entire empire, especially the governmental powers.

A Matter of Religion

Fourth, “worship” is involved in this prophecy. Whatever political power he may have, “the man of sin” is a religious figure. He presents himself as God. Moreover, he does this in the temple of God, which is the church.

God does not want just any religion. The very first murder in the human race was for religious motives. “The LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry” (Genesis 4:4,5). The first sin of Cain was not murder, not even hate for his brother. Cain’s first sin was false worship.

The Bible is filled with accounts of religious conflict. Jesus, for example, told the Samaritan woman, “You worship what you do not know” (John 4:22). Jesus said of the religious leaders of his day, “in

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"THE MAN OF SIN"

Part I: The Prophecy

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vain they worship Me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). "The man of sin" is all about false worship.

Miracles by Satan

Fifth, the apostate church here foretold would be "the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). This eliminates many apostate people and organizations as candidates for "the man of sin." "The man of sin" works miracles. Satan working miracles is nothing new to the Bible. As early as the time of the Exodus, Pharaoh's magicians were capable of duplicating Moses' signs of turning rods into snakes, of turning water into blood and of producing a plague of frogs (Exodus 7:8 to 8:19). Yes, Moses by the hand of the Almighty outdid them. However, make no mistake about it. These pagan magicians worked real miracles.

There are numerous ways God's people can distinguish between the miracles of God and the miracles of Satan. One way is exactly that recorded in Exodus 8:18: "Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not." They had worked many miracles, but they came to the point where they tried again and they failed. Anyone who tries to work a miracle and fails is not of God, no matter what other miracles he has worked. Because God's miracle workers do not fail. They do not blame other people for their failures.

Sixth, do not overlook the fact that "strong delusion" (verse 11) is a part of the picture. Do not expect the people of the world to be convinced easily that some false church is "the man of sin." Do not expect the ecumenical movement to believe it. Do not expect those who put unity above purity of doctrine to believe it. "The man of sin" is very religious, he works miracles, he seems to many to be the true church of our Lord. Multitudes will be deceived, strongly deluded.

Started in Paul's Day

Paul made it clear that in his day "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (verse 7). Therefore, in searching for the fulfillment of this prophecy, we must look for some principle, some spirit, some activity that was already at work in the first century. It makes no sense to start our search with the year 2000 and work backward. It makes even less sense to theorize about some future possibility. How can we believe that something, which was already at work in Paul's day, has not been able to break out into the open for over 1900 years?

Rather, the sensible thing is to start our search with the first century and move forward in time. We must examine the movement of church history from its origin. We must search for something that was already working in Paul's day that in time became the full-blown apostate church. When we find that, if it fulfills all the details of the prophecy, then we have found "the man of sin."

Destroyed When Jesus Comes

Verse 8 of our text is very clear: "the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will...destroy with the brightness of His coming." Clearly "the man of sin," the antichrist, comes before Jesus returns.

Strange as it may seem, the popular premillennial view says just the opposite and uses this text as a basis. "They" say that the antichrist will be manifested in all his power *after* the "rapture."

Premillennialists accomplish their twist by making "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 1) as one event, "the day of Christ" (verse 2) a second event, and "His coming" (verse 8) a third event. They claim the text teaches four events in this order: the rapture, the man of sin, the tribulation and the Second Coming of Jesus. Did Paul say all that?

"They" claim that the "coming" in verse 1 is "the rapture" and that the "coming" in verse 8 is "the Second Coming" seven years later. However, the Greek word for "coming" in the two verses is identical. If they are two different comings, then verse 1 is the Second Coming and verse 3 is the Third Coming. However, since no one accepts the idea of a third coming, "they" avoid such an expression. Instead, they invent the theory of "two phases" to the "second" coming. *(Look for a future article totally dedicated to the topic of the "rapture." At this time, the discussion will be limited to 2 Thessalonians 2.)*

Their theory holds that "the day of the Lord" (or "day of Christ") is neither the Second Coming nor the Third Coming. Rather, they say, it is something in between. As in the case of "temple of God," they lean heavily on Old Testament usage while side-stepping New Testament usage.

Without leaving 2 Thessalonians 2, let us examine the question. In verse 1, Paul introduces the topic for discussion: "the coming of our Lord Jesus." Now if that is "the rapture," it is the only verse from verses 1 to 12 that speaks of the "rapture." In such a case, "they" put Paul in the position of saying he would talk about one topic but instead he talked about another.

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What Non-Attendees Can't Do

- 1. Pray for the success of the church without being hypocrites!
- 2. Say that Christ is first in their lives!
- 3. Say they are stronger in their absence!
- 4. Say they glorify God with their neglect!
- 5. Blame anyone else for the lack of growth in the church!
- 6. Use others as an excuse for their own lack of spiritual growth!
- 7. Have any assurance that God is pleased with their actions.—*Selected* □



ZEAL without knowledge is the sister of folly.

Religion that has no backbone is unstructured and worthless.

Self-consciousness is a form of pride; otherwise a person would not care what another person thought about him.

Some people try to split hairs when the hairs aren't even there.

People who are snobbish because of their wealth really in their minds are still poor, insecure, and don't know how to handle their situation.

The things that really matter are the things that don't have to do with matter.

Some Christians when they hear the word "fellowship" smell coffee instead of the sweet aroma of the gospel of Christ (Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 1:3-5).

If we have repented of a sin, we will not be offended if that particular sin is preached against.

Baptism can never take the place of faith and repentance; however in its true practice it is the outworking of faith and repentance, and their extension.

God never made junk, but some people choose to become "junkies" with their lives.

The "New Testament" is to be put into practice by people who are "new creatures" in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4)—others will find it less appealing, boring, or even repugnant to them.

If you take pride in saying what you think, you better think before you say it.

If a repentant sinner is baptized for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38)—to get his sins washed

away by the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; Revelation 1:5), how can a person say he is saved before he is baptized and his sins are washed away?

Religious convictions coupled with pride and arrogance makes for an irreligious situation.

We are strange creatures: some feed their hurts and insecurities with food in excessive eating; others turn to alcohol, while others refrain from eating almost altogether.

There is no way that we can lift people unless we come down to their level.

Truth is so valuable and important that it does not need to be artificially embellished with high sounding words, but simply spoken and accepted for what it is.

If people must handle you with kid gloves to get along with you, it may mean that you are a goat (and not one of the Lord's sheep).

A paranoid preoccupation with prophecy for the purpose of trying to divine the future instead of trusting in God amounts to witchcraft.

Christ is the solid foundation on which to build, but this great truth is meaningless unless we do just that.

There are two things I have found it hard for people to see, their own faults and the faults of their children.

To be "Christians only" we must follow Christ only, not men nor the traditions of men.

If you are on fire with the message of Christ, but do not find suitable material on which to ignite a flame, you may soon experience "burn out." □



Folks Who Try

Be not concerned nor be surprised,
If what you do is criticized;
There are always folks who usually can
Find some fault with every plan;
Mistakes are made, we can't deny,
But only made by folks who try.

—Anonymous

Does This Sound Scientific?

AN EVOLUTIONARY scientist ponders in his laboratory: "If I can just synthesize life here then I'll prove that intelligence was not necessary to form life in the beginning." (Hmm-m-m-m?—Editor)



"THE MAN OF SIN"

Part I: The Prophecy

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But if you take "the day of Christ" (or "the day of the Lord") in context, then certainly "the coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ is "the day" of our Lord Jesus Christ. In verses 1 and 2, Paul is simply saying that in regard to Jesus' coming, don't think that it has already happened. Verse 3 says why they should not believe that: because "the man of sin" must come first. Verse 8 explains that the man of sin will be destroyed by the "coming" of Jesus. Obviously, therefore, "the man of sin" comes before Jesus comes. Now, if the "coming" in verse 8 is not the same "coming" as in verse 1, then Paul said he was going to talk about one thing but tricked us by talking about another thing.

These then, are the things to consider about "the man of sin" prophecy before ever going beyond the Biblical text. Once we have learned all we can from the Bible itself, only then are we ready to launch out into history in search of fulfillment. □

Note by author: This is the first installment in a two-part study. Look in the next issue for "Part II: The Fulfillment."

(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.)

Do You Want This \$20 Bill?

A WELL-KNOWN speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill.

In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?"

Hands started going up. He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you but first, let me do this." He proceeded to crumple the \$20 bill up. He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air. "Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all illustrated a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20."

Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But

no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value in God's eyes. You are a being created in His image.

THOUGHT: Regardless who you are; regardless of your circumstance or station in life, you are valuable in God's sight—Don't ever forget it! □

—Adapted

What Does Your Future Hold?

A NEW YEAR is fast approaching with many uncertainties over the horizon. What lies ahead in your future? Y2K has people thinking beyond today, but what about you? Have you thought about the direction of your life, whether physical or spiritual? Are you caught in the malaise of the minimum, thinking that life is something we are just to endure? Or maybe something we just go through and everything will end up all right. Now is the time to consider your (life) future. God has so much more for you! Now is the time to learn what that is. Now is the time to come to the realization of your need to excel. But where does one start? In this article we are going to explore the following: 1) Malaise of the Minimum and the Need to Exceed and 2) Getting in Step with God.

The Malaise of the Minimum and the Need to Exceed

Many people have settled for less while God has so much more to offer. I'm not just referring to those who do not know God, but sometimes those who claim to be Christians have gotten into the rut of just getting by. We have developed this "buy now, pay later" mentality, not really taking time to count the cost for life decisions or direction. Large or small decisions can cause problems when bad choices are taken. These frustrations cast us into a state of helplessness. We fail to see the hardship and life-zapping effects of the "minimum payment" approach to life. Or another approach is the "let's just get by and keep them off my back" mentality. We are not only slaves to the creditors but we are slaves to the decay all around us. We suffer from the decay of destroyed relationships with our Maker, with our spouse, our children, and our parents, and the list goes on. Any relationship where you are just trying to get by will not last. There is more to serving God than just to escape hell. You are deceiving yourself and you will be miserable now and later. The same holds true in marriage, if you are just existing where there is a void of love and understanding. Parents and children alike need an environment of love,

acceptance and encouragement. True happiness and peace can come when one sees that there is more to life than just getting by.

Are you living life to the fullest? Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." The god of this world (Satan) has misery on his mind. If Satan can keep you from understanding God's plan through Jesus the Christ, he has won the battle. To be fully aware of God's plan is to truly act upon it. Jesus came to give life, purpose and meaning. But until we realize the need to go beyond just getting by, we will not truly enjoy what God has for us.

Getting in Step with God.

God desires fellowship with His creation. This fellowship is only possible through His Son, Jesus the Christ. Jesus said that many are called, but few are chosen. To get in step is to answer the call and follow wherever that takes you. It is in losing your life that you will find it. Notice John 12:25-26, "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Jesus came to this earth that we might know how to live. He died for our sins and to set the example. He was buried and rose again to show His power over Satan and the grave, thus giving us hope of eternal life. Notice Romans 6:3-6, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

Faith in and obedience to the death, burial and resurrection is the heart of the gospel message of Jesus the Christ (I Corinthians 15:3-4). When a person sees God's way of salvation through the death, burial and resurrection, then he realizes the need to be conformed to Christ's death in dying to self and sin. Repentance is the key. Repentance is the turning from serving self and sin to serving God Almighty. By being buried with Christ in baptism we then can experience the forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. It is the power of the resurrection

through the Holy Spirit that transforms life into a child of God (Romans. 8:11, Acts 2:38-39). It is so simple yet so complex, the very thought that you can be born again into a royal family (John 3:3-5, I Peter 1:22-23, I Peter 2:9).

Many today are just trying to get by without ever being united with Christ in the death, burial and resurrection. True life comes from being born again through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. What about you? Have you come to Jesus in faith? Have you yielded your life to Him completely in obedience? Behold, today is the day of salvation.

Going beyond just getting by is God's desire for each person. True life is found only in Jesus Christ. Seek the Lord while He can be found and start today. Your future's direction and happiness depend upon it.—*J. Andrew Gibbons* □

A Prayer to Pray in View of Growing Older (Lightly Spoken as Derisive Wit)

"Lord, thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older and will someday be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to try to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody, helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all—but thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

"Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details...give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by...I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of others' pains, but help me to endure them with patience.

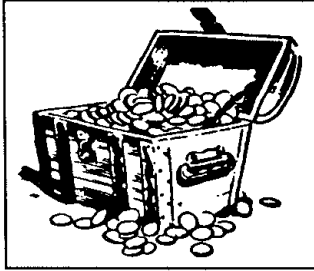
"I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

"Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a self-righteous saint—some of them are so hard to live with—but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people. Give me the grace to tell them so. Amen."—*Selected* □

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And thus fulfill God's will as you.

—By James E. Gibbons

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