

The Sword AND Staff

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

"Let Us Go Unto Perfection [Maturity]..."

Perfecting and Exercising Faith—No. 1



● By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 Fairfield Drive
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THE APOSTLE PAUL had deep concern about the new converts he had to abruptly leave in Thessalonica (and especially since they had just "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God," 1 Thessalonians 1:9). Persecution had prompted him to make an early departure from here (Acts 17:1-10). It was not for his sake, but with him gone there would be less pressure on this little band of new believers. Through Silas and Timothy, he had kept in close touch with them. Throughout 1st Thessalonians, and especially chapter 3, he repeatedly expresses concern about their faith and spiritual well being. It was most important that their faith be "perfected" for them to make a go of it in the Christian life. The writer

James in his very practical epistle speaks of faith being "made perfect [*teleioo*]" (James 2:22). They, and we, need to be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13; 2:2), grounded and settled (Colossians 1:23; 2:7).

The Importance of Faith

Yes, faith is of the utmost importance. It seems that everything in Christianity hinges around it, and Christianity itself is characterized as "THE FAITH" (Jude 3; 1 Timothy 4:1).

- Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).
- We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11).
- We are justified by faith (Romans 5:1; Acts 13:38,39).
- We have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand (Romans 5:2).
- We are strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man as Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:16,17).
- We walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).
- We are kept by the power of God through faith (1 Peter 1:5).
- By believing unto death we receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Hebrews 10:35-39).

And the list goes on. Faith opens the door to everything else that follows in Christianity. It must be activated to accomplish salvation and it must remain and continually be active before we can even think in terms of going on unto "perfection" (maturity) in any and every way as a Christian. It is no wonder that the writer of the book of Hebrews said, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God...For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast until the end" (Hebrews 3:12,14). All of this being true, it behooves us to learn all that we can about faith; to exercise and perfect it so that it will become continually stronger.

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially *SPEAKING...*

IT TAKES faith to forgive (Luke 17: 2-5) and to be forgiven (Mark 2:5).

To know God is to personally know that God loves you and that our lives are in the center of His will.

To have a fulfilling life, fill your life with that which is good.

Sometimes it takes more faith to accept unanswered prayer than it does to have our prayers answered.

When it seems the hardest to pray, that's when we should pray the hardest.

Christian character is more convincing in establishing the credibility of Christianity than Christian evidences.

People who don't know how to love don't know how to forgive.

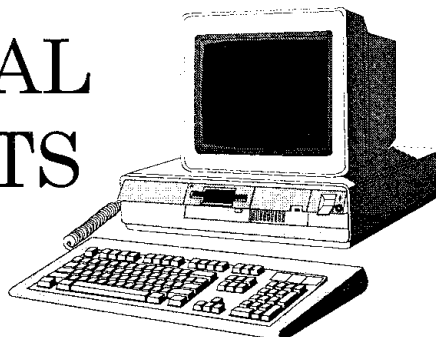
It is hard to be bold for righteousness when we have done wrong and are in the wrong (Proverbs 28:1).

Be kind for kindness begets kindness (each kind after its kind).

If we can control our minds, we can control our actions; if we can control our actions, we can get things done.

Confronting problems with anger only compounds the problems. □

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



ARE OUR SUSPICIONS CONFIRMED?

THE FOLLOWING interesting bit of information was recently gleaned from a religious news service on the Internet (1/9/2001):

Churchgoers are donating an increasingly smaller share of their incomes. The percentage of income Protestants give fell from 3.1 in 1968 to 2.5 in 1998, according to Empty Tomb, a research group in Champaign, Illinois. That means church members gave \$4 billion less in 1998 than they would have if they were giving at the same rate they did in 1968. Total annual contributions rose by an average of \$202 to \$570 per church member, after inflation was taken into account, because incomes also rose.

Most of the money is being spent on salaries, in-church programs, and building-maintenance rather than on outreach efforts such as missions and services for the poor. Donations for external church activities dropped to a 30-year low as a percentage of income, falling below 0.4 percent, according to the study. Gifts to support local congregations represented 2.2 percent of church members' income in 1998.

The report said that if U. S. church members had tithed, or given 10 percent of after-tax income in 1998, churches would have had an additional \$131 billion to help the poor. About 30,000 children die each day, many from problems that would cost relatively little to fix, the authors of the report said. The study, "The State of Church Giving Through 1998," tracked 30 mainline Protestant and evangelical denominations.

These words seem to confirm what we have been suspicious of for a long time. Modern "churches," to a great extent, are self-centered, self-indulgent and lavish most of their attention upon themselves. Giving falls way below the Old Testament standard of 10 percent, being only one-fourth of a tithe (let alone thinking in terms of the cross of Christ and sacrifice). Then, that which is received is used by the "churches" to house themselves in finer and finer buildings (buildings of which the New Testament says not a word). A well-paid staff of specialized "ministers" is hired to do what all of the members individually should be doing (Ephesians 4:11-16), and reaching beyond that, entertaining and pleasing them with endless play programs. Spending money beyond themselves with the Great Commission in mind is secondary and forgotten (and little money is left for this, even if the thought ever seriously entered their minds). The poor and worthy causes beyond their own little circle, if remembered there, are forgotten as they pamper and indulge themselves more and more.

Beloved, God has dealt with us abundantly in grace and mercy. As we truly imbibe the wonderful teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, let us have everything in proper per-

spective. And then reach out unselfishly as Christians individually and collectively to fulfill our mission as his church in this world. We have freely received, let us freely give. Genuine love and appreciation will not let us do otherwise. □

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The Two Facets of Faith

When we think about faith, the faith chapter of the Bible immediately comes to mind. Of course that is the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. And when we think about this chapter, verse 6 stands out. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Of this verse, two things stand out about faith. (1) We must believe in the reality of God, and (2) We must trust this God who is real—"believe...that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The first part, our concept of God, has a lot to do with the second part, trusting Him (and to the extent that we do trust Him).

The Reality of God

Paul, in refuting idolatry, asserted, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead [deity]; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). The reality of God can be seen in His creation. Just look out into the star-studded and strutted heavens, as the heavenly bodies go reeling through boundless space. Contemplate the world of nature about us. Therein is displayed awesome, almighty power—*omnipotence!* The power is not erratic and unpredictable, exploding in all or different directions at once, a mass of confusion. It is almighty power that is controlled, governed and regulated by laws and principles; laws and principles that can be defined and depended upon; scientific laws. This implies intelligence, and not just any intelligence, *supreme intelligence! Nothing short of omniscience!* All of creation, all of nature, the heavenly bodies, the visible world, the microscopic and the invisible; everything—all are in the scope of this intelligence. This undeniable display of almighty power and supreme intelligence implies and points to an Almighty and Supreme Being, *GOD!* It is no wonder that the Psalmist wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalms 19:1). Likewise, it is no wonder that He also wrote, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God..." (Psalms 14:1).

The Revelation of God

If God is Supreme Intelligence, and man is an intelligent being created in His image (Genesis 1:26; Acts 17:28), is it not altogether reasonable to think that He would communicate with His intelligent creation? That is where the Bible comes in. It starts out by saying, "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:1). It is God's revelation of Himself in His relationship to mankind. In this revelation we find that God is Spirit (Genesis 1:2; John 4:24), which is in a different dimension from our immediate experience and being (although we are a spirit clothed with a body). The Bible lets us know that God is a moral being, perfect in every sense of the word. Consequently, since we are made in his image, the command of God to man was and is, "Be ye holy: for I am holy" (Leviticus 19:2; I Peter 1:15,16). But the story of man from the very beginning took another direction. It is summed up by Paul when he said, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). (That is part of the underlying factor of unbelief, as the Psalmist said, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." Then he continues, "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works..." Psalms 14:1. To believe in God would be to acknowledge an absolute moral being who expects us to be moral. It means responsibility and accountability, which many are not ready to accept; thus they "cop-out" with unbelief) Yes, the Bible tells us what is essential to know about God and man in his relationship to Him. It goes beyond what we see in nature. It is the source book of an intelligent and saving faith. The apostle Paul said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

The Incarnate Word of God

If we were left to nature alone in our belief and concept of God, impressive as it is, it would still be terribly deficient. We might even think of God as being a cold, calculating scientist in the category of omnipotence and omniscience. And if we were left to the Old Testament Scriptures alone, great as they are, we would still have incomplete impressions of God. That is where the New Testament comes in with the rest of the story. The gospel is God's concluding message to man.

Amazing words are found in the prologue of the gospel of John. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..." (John 1:1f). Then we read in verse 14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth)." This all came about through the virgin birth of Christ. He is called "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Paul declared, "For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). These truths are further amplified in Hebrews 1:1-3, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by

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the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." What amazing truths! God became man. But at the same time he was truly God and truly man. We don't claim to fully understand all of this. But in this manifestation of Himself, Christ became our Savior, and we behold the glory and fullness of God as never seen before.

The Savior of Mankind

Man was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26), but we seemingly are confronted with an insurmountable problem. What a mess man has made out of things: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). With sin comes guilt and the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Consequently, "it is appointed unto man once to die, but [and] after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). But God became flesh to save us from our human predicament. This was accomplished by the Word that became flesh through the sinless life of Christ that climaxed in his death and resurrection from the grave. Paul tells us that he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). The message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ constitutes the gospel (the good news) that brings salvation (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). As he died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3), the righteousness of Christ is declared to be ours (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30) when we accept his sacrifice to take away our sins, validated by his resurrection from the dead. To be saved, we must first believe that we are lost (and that we cannot save ourselves). We must believe that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God. We must trust him to save us from our sins. The inspired records of the life of Christ are very helpful in acquiring faith (John 20:31). Paul declares, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). In the early church a declaration of faith that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God was required in becoming a Christian (Acts 8:35-38; Romans 10:9,10). This faith centered in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

"Faith Made Perfect"

It is not enough to just "believe," it must be a faith that is alive to bring about salvation. Faith must move us to repentance. Yes, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ must be believed in our hearts (Romans 10:9,10), and these truths must be reenacted in us personally as we obey from the heart that form of doctrine (Romans 6:17). God's plan calls for baptism into the death of Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Consequently, Paul said, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through

the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12; Read Romans 6). It is as James points out, "Seest thou how faith wrought... works, and by works was faith made *perfect* [*teleoo*]" (James 2:22). *Teleoo* is the verbal use of *teleios*, and it means to complete. Repentance and baptism are the outworking of faith as we identify ourselves with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, thus perfecting our faith in obedience. Obedience of faith is repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures (Acts 6:7; Romans 1:5; 16:26). Such obedience is not a work of human righteousness, as some would try to make baptism conflict with faith, but it is faith in action. Titus 3:5 declares, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]." Works of faith make evident a faith that is active and real. James further wrote, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and *not by faith only*" (James 2:24). He is not talking about works of human righteousness, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but works of faith. And by the works of faith we will be judged in the Day of Judgment (Revelation 20:12,13; cf. Ephesians 2:8,9).

Walking in Newness of Life

Summing up the great transaction in becoming a Christian, and that which follows, Paul said, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). "Newness of life" characterizes our "walk" now. It is new because of what has taken place and what lies ahead. We were baptized for the remission of sins and given the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). We have become "new creatures" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Walking in "newness of life" involves a life of faith "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). It involves walking as Christ walked. John wrote, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). The eleventh chapter of Hebrews, that great chapter on faith, is sandwiched in between the last verses of chapter ten (10:35-39) and the first verses of chapter twelve (12:1-3). The context is about believing "to the saving of the soul" (10:39). Pre-Christian examples illustrate faith in action, then in view of all of this, the writer concludes, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our faith*..." (12:1,2). This walking in "newness of life," this walk of faith (which now is looked upon as a race) is accomplished by keeping our eyes on the object of our faith, Christ. In the Christian life everything is Christ-centered. □

(In forthcoming issues of this paper other articles on faith will be featured—Editor)

A Series Involving the Bible and Prophecy...

Jesus Announces Arrival of Kingdom



"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

—the message of John and Jesus

● By **DAVID VAUGHN ELLIOTT**

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THE JEWS were squirming under the iron hand of Rome. Was it lawful for a believing Jew to pay tribute to a pagan Caesar? Time was ripe for the violent Zealots. The Jews longed for independence. They envisioned a return to the Golden Age of David and Solomon. Had not Daniel and other prophets promised them as much? Israel was in expectation of God's great indestructible kingdom.

Enter Jesus of Nazareth. The kingdom of heaven was a major theme of His ministry. No understanding of the Bible doctrine of "kingdom" will be adequate which does not study in depth what Jesus had to say. All four Gospels must be carefully examined. Any concept that focuses mainly on the Old Testament will fall woefully short. The twelve apostles, with just the Old Testament Scriptures as their source, did not grasp the basic nature of the kingdom of God. How can we today do any better, if we use only the Old Testament for our "proof texts"? No. We must see what King Jesus had to say. It is essential to interpret Old Testament prophecies in the light of New Testament teaching.

One article is insufficient to complete the task. The present article will be limited to the Gospel accounts, with Daniel as a backdrop. It will further be limited primarily to the issue of the time for the arrival of the kingdom.

84 Preachers Announce Arrival of Kingdom

For four centuries, Israel was without a prophet of God. Then one day, near the Jordan River, a man of strange garb and diet appeared. John the Baptist began to preach an amazing message: "Repent,

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2). For centuries, the Jews had been waiting for this very day! Now their dream was about to become reality! The kingdom predicted by Daniel was just around the corner! The Jews were stirred. Matthew records that "Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him" (3:5).

John was anything but a self-promoter. He plainly said that his task was to "make the introductions," so to speak. He humbly confessed, "He who is coming after me is mightier than I" (Matthew 3:11). John's job was that of herald, forerunner. He laid the groundwork for Jesus.

From the beginning, Jesus' message was the same as John's: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). He became so popular in Capernaum that the populace tried to keep Him from moving on. However, Jesus resisted their desires, saying, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43).

In time, Jesus selected 12 men as His apostles. When He was ready to send them out on their own, He told them to preach: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7). This is the only direct quote recorded in the four Gospels telling what Jesus commanded the 12 to preach at that time. Mark adds that they preached repentance. Luke says they preached the Gospel. This indicates a relationship between the kingdom, the gospel and repentance.

Later Jesus sent out 70. Again, He told them to preach, "The kingdom of God has come near to you" (Luke 10:9,11). We can only deduct that, whatever they preached, the nearness of the kingdom was at the heart of their message.

In short, John, Jesus and the 12 preached, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The 70 preached, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." How remarkable that the united message of these 84 men of God was that the kingdom of the God of heaven was near. It was just around the corner. It was about to come. As Jesus Himself once put it: "The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached" (Luke 16:16). The prophets had foretold the kingdom as something off in the future. Now Jesus declares that since John, a new phase had begun. The kingdom was just about to become a reality.

"The Time Is Fulfilled"

A fuller description of this message is found in Mark 1:14,15. "Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'" Notice how Jesus

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interconnects four vital elements: 1) the gospel, 2) the kingdom, 3) repentance and 4) faith. It is "the gospel of the kingdom." In addition, in preaching this gospel of the kingdom, the response Jesus was looking for was repentance and faith. There is nothing temporal here. There is nothing political here. This is a spiritual message, a message to the heart.

Not only did Jesus say that the kingdom was near; He said that this was the fulfillment of prophecy: "the time is fulfilled." What time? The time for the kingdom. What prophecy did Israel have regarding the time for the kingdom? Surely, there is no kingdom prophecy that is more time-specific than Daniel 2. Six centuries before Jesus, Daniel prophesied regarding the fourth kingdom (Rome), "in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom" (Daniel 2:44). *(See the previous article, "Daniel Foretells Indestructible Kingdom," for an in-depth study of Daniel 2.)*

Jesus lived under the Roman Empire. He was saying that the time foretold by Daniel was fulfilled. God was ready to set up His promised kingdom.

In Their Lifetime

Indeed, Jesus put far more stringent limits than did Daniel on the time for the arrival of the kingdom. Jesus narrowed the time considerably when He said, "There are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present [footnote: having come] with power" (Mark 9:1). The companion text in Matthew records, "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). Luke says, "there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27).

All three record identically, "there are some standing here who will (shall) not taste death till they see..." The remark, "taste death," may seem strange. However, what else can it mean but this: "Some of you will not die before you see..." Or, to put it another way, "It will happen in your lifetime." What will happen? Matthew says, "...see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." Mark records, "...see the kingdom of God present [having come] with power." Luke simply says, "...see the kingdom of God." Though with different words, all three accounts record that the apostles would see the kingdom of God in their lifetime. Jesus was speaking in the year 29 A.D., more or less. By the wildest stretch, we could not look for fulfillment beyond the early days of the second century.

Any kingdom, therefore, that has begun after the second century cannot possibly be the kingdom that

Jesus was talking about. By the same token, it cannot possibly be the kingdom that Daniel foretold. The fulfillment must be found in the first century (or by a stretch, early second). Early in His ministry, Jesus said, "*the time is fulfilled.*" Later on Jesus said, paraphrasing, "*in your lifetime.*"



More Comparisons with Daniel 2

Jesus' teaching coincided not only with the timing aspect of Daniel's image-and-stone prophecy. There are a number of other parallel issues.

First, Daniel also spoke of the *growth* of the kingdom of God. At first, the fifth kingdom was no larger than a stone. However, this stone "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:35). This is strikingly similar to Jesus' parable of the mustard seed. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches" (Matthew 13:31-32). The figures are different, but the concept they teach is identical. They both speak of a small beginning, followed by great growth.

Second, Daniel's great-image prophecy stressed the *victory* of the divine kingdom over the worldly ones. The stone "struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces...and [they] became like chaff from the summer threshing floors"

(Daniel 2:34,35). Centuries later, King Jesus referred to Himself as a stone. He did not quote Daniel; rather, He referred to two other “stone” prophecies as related to Himself: Psalm 118:22,23 and Isaiah 8:14,15. “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone...And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21:42,44).

Sandwiched between the two “stone” quotes, Jesus said, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” Thus, Jesus makes a connection between the kingdom and the “stone” texts. Both Daniel and Jesus speak of the stone breaking and reducing the enemy to chaff or powder.

It is true that Daniel 2 applies the breaking action to the kingdom, whereas Jesus applies the breaking power to the King Himself. To a student of prophecy, this poses no problem. Various times in Daniel, “king” and “kingdom” are interchangeable. Similarly, Saul, the great persecutor of the church, was accused of being the persecutor of Jesus (Acts 9:5). Therefore, the breaking power of the stone, which both Daniel and Jesus refer to, are easily seen as interconnected. After all, the King is the one who directs the activities of the kingdom.

Third, Daniel prophesied that the kingdom would be *eternal*: “A kingdom which shall never be destroyed...It shall stand forever” (2:44). Not for a century; not for five centuries; not for a millennium; but forever. It is eternal, never-ending, standing forever and ever.

Daniel’s declaration is exactly what the angel Gabriel said to Mary regarding the Son she was going to bear: “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:33). Daniel and Gabriel agree. God’s kingdom will be eternal. The kingdom prophesied by Daniel and Gabriel is not to be a passing kingdom, but an eternal kingdom. Any kingdom lasting for only one thousand years would not be the fulfillment of either Daniel’s or Gabriel’s prophecy.

Fourth, Daniel prophesied the *spiritual nature* of the kingdom. Daniel made an important point when he said of the fifth kingdom, “a stone was cut out without hands” (2:34) and, “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom” (2:44).

When Jesus stood before the Roman Governor, He said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight” (John 18:36). The concept is identical to Daniel’s. Jesus is pointedly declaring that His kingdom is not one that defends itself, or extends itself, by force of arms. Jesus’ weapons are not physical. His kingdom is not political. His kingdom is spiritual, other-worldly. *(The next article will enlarge on this theme.)*

Time Also for the King

Daniel’s prophecy of the image and stone is not his only prediction of a specific time period. One of the most amazing time prophecies in all of Scripture is the one that pinpoints the year for the arrival of the King. It is found in Daniel 9:24-27—the famous 70-weeks prophecy. The Spirit of the living God, through Daniel, predicted that “Messiah the Prince” would arrive exactly 483 years after the command “to restore and build Jerusalem.” That command was given in the year 457 B.C. Adding 483 years, we arrive at 26 A.D. This is exactly the date of Jesus’ baptism—the date He began proclaiming, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” *(For more details on this prophecy, see a previous article: “Jesus Fulfilled God’s Timetable.”)*

The King arrived on the scene in the very year predicted! With His arrival, He announced, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The fulfillment of each prophecy reinforces the other. This is more than an interesting coincidence. These are amazing predictions! They leave no room for doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was/is the promised Messiah/King. They leave no room for doubt that the kingdom of God was then just around the corner, as Jesus said.

Daniel predicted the arrival time of both the King and His kingdom. The two time prophecies coincide. The King came on time. Who can deny that the kingdom also came on time—that God did not fail—that God is faithful and kept His Word!

Kingdom During Jesus’ Lifetime

All these evidences of time lead to the specific question: exactly when was the kingdom set up?

The 84 preachers said that the kingdom of God was near. However, they never said, “The kingdom is here.” Or did they? Most texts in the Gospels point to the kingdom as being future (future to their time). However, two texts appear to say that the kingdom had already arrived. Matthew 12:28 says, “Surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Luke 17:21 says, “For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

Since truth is not self-contradictory, we must seek the harmonizing element. Jesus came to establish the kingdom and to be its King. Though He lived under the old Law, He was involved in the process of setting up the new kingdom. He was having victory of Satan. “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matthew 12:28).

Did Jesus mean that the kingdom had already arrived? Or, might this instead be compared to conception and birth in the physical realm? For nine months before birth, there is physical life in the womb. All the makings of the child are there, in the

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Jesus Announces Arrival of Kingdom *(Continued from Previous Page)*

initial stages. Everyone is awaiting the birth. Thus it was with the kingdom. With the appearance of John and Jesus, the conception of the kingdom took place. Characteristics of the kingdom began to be on display. The presence of the kingdom could be felt, as can the movements of a baby in the womb. Nevertheless, the actual birth of the kingdom was yet a little while into the future.

The other text reads, "Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you' [footnote: in your midst]" (Luke 17:20,21). Jesus sidesteps the question of when the kingdom would come. Rather, He calls attention to the nature of the arrival. The kingdom was not to be anticipated with fan-fare, parades and worldly show. It is something "within you."

However, since the kingdom was obviously not "within" most of the Pharisees, the alternate translation is probably more correct: "the kingdom of God is in your midst." Elements of the kingdom were already present, albeit, in the embryonic stage. Such a view of this text harmonizes it with the fact that, in the Gospels, the vast majority of texts regarding the timing of the kingdom put it yet a little while into the future. Specifically, Jesus put it in the near future, within the lifetime of His disciples.

Jews Couldn't "Tell Time"

Those were great days in which to be alive. Days of the fulfillment of so many of the prophecies/promises made by the prophets of old. Indeed, said Jesus, "many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*" (Matthew 13:17).

How sad that so many Jews did not realize the tremendous value of what they were witnessing. The apostles and other disciples, on the one hand, were experiencing considerable difficulty comprehending what was transpiring before their eyes. On the other hand, most of the Jewish leaders and much of the populace were having more than difficulty. They were in complete denial. "Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them..."Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times' " (Matthew 16:1-3). Luke records that Jesus said this to the "multitudes": "Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how *is it* you do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:54-56).

Jesus repeated this theme, in far more drastic terms, at His "triumphal entry." As He approached Jerusalem, He "wept over it, saying...'Days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you...and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation'" (Luke 19:41-44).

(Continued on Page 12)

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. What two nations came from the sons born as a result of Lot's incestuous relation with his two daughters?
2. Who is the only woman whose age and death are recorded in the Bible?
3. How many sons did Ishmael, son of Abraham by the Egyptian handmaiden Hagar, have?
4. What seven tribes are mentioned as living in the land of Canaan before the Israelites took it?
5. From where did the Philistines come who occupied part of Palestine?
6. What were the five cities of the Philistines?
7. What man in the Bible had a name that meant "God shall hear," and what man had a name which meant "asked of God"?
8. What prophet prophesied that the Jews would be seventy years in Babylonian Captivity?
9. What did Jehoiakim king of Judah do when the writings of Jeremiah were read to him as he sat in his winter house beside the fire?
10. How long was the city of Jerusalem besieged by the Babylonians before it was broken up and taken?
11. Where in the book of Jeremiah is the prophet Micah quoted (and what is the quotation)?
12. Where in the book of Micah is the prophet Isaiah quoted (and what is the quotation)?
13. Which gospel writer is the only one that uses the expression "kingdom of heaven" whereas the other writers use "kingdom of God" when talking about the same thing?
14. Which of the four gospels is the only one that prefixes the statements and declarations of Christ with a double "verily"?
15. Where were Jesus and his disciples when Peter made the great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and the Lord said upon that rock he would build his church?
16. Which disciples of Christ, not understanding the nature of his kingdom, requested the privilege of sitting on his right and left hand when it came?
17. Where was Paul when a man from Macedonia appeared to him in a vision in the night, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us"?
18. Where are three different times the apostle Paul quotes Greek poets in the New Testament?
19. Where else did Paul anticipate going when he came to Rome?
20. What definition of "pure religion" is given in the New Testament (and where is it found)?

(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. ☐

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"I enjoy your web site so very much, going there quite often for inspirational messages and spiritually fulfilling articles. I especially enjoyed the article, 'The Rapture,' finding it very informative and helpful. There are so many arguments, both pro and con, on this subject that it is such a God-sent blessing to find one as informative [as this one]..."*

"Would you be so kind as to send me a complimentary copy [of THE SWORD AND STAFF]...?" (E-mail)

VIRGINIA:

■ *"Please cancel."*

■ *"Just a note to thank you for the site [web site] and the newsletter [THE SWORD AND STAFF]. I truly enjoy them!!!!..." (E-mail)*

KENTUCKY:

■ *"Please accept this donation as a token of my greatest appreciation for your efforts in spreading 'The Word.' You do a remarkable job! I appreciate and enjoy reading your papers more than words can convey."*

WEST VIRGINIA:

■ *"Have you done a word study on the translation of the Greek or other languages of the words rendered 'obey' or 'obedience' in the English?..."*

"THE SWORD AND STAFF continues to be helpful on many great subjects of the Bible."

WORDS FOR "OBEY" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Answer: We claim to be no authority in the study of words. However, there is a lot of good source material available today to expedite and make such a study relatively simple. Personally, we find word studies to be most fascinating, as well as enlightening. And this is likewise true as we dig into the words behind the

word translated "obey" in the New Testament.

There are basically two words rendered "obey" (KJV) in the New Testament, *hupakouo* and *peitho*.

The first word, *Hupakouo*, is the primary word for "obey" that is used. It is a compound word made up of two parts, *hupo* (under) + *akouo* (to hear). (We get our modern word "acoustic" from this root, *akouo*). The use of this word for obey would seem to imply that Christianity is a religion that has been spoken. And from an underling position we are to listen, to hearken, and to obey. *Hupakouo* is once translated "*hearken*" in Acts 12:13. However, elsewhere throughout the New Testament the word "obey" (or obedient) is used extensively to represent the Greek, as in the following references: Acts 6:7; Romans 6:12,16,17; 10:16; Ephesians 6:1,5; Philippians 2:12; Colossians 3:20,22; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 3:14; Hebrews 11:8; 1 Peter 3:6). We attentively listen and comply to what the Lord says.

The second word translated "obey" is *peitho*. It basically means to be persuaded and is primarily rendered that way in the New Testament. However, it has an extended meaning of not only being persuaded (or convinced), but yielding to that persuasion in obedience. *Peitho* is represented by the word "obey" in the following references: Acts 5:36,37; Romans 2:8; Galatians 5:7; Hebrews 13:17; James 3:3.

Take the word *peitho* and put the little privative prefix "a" in front of it, and we have *apeitheo* (a + *peitheo*). It negates the word. Consequently this word is translated "not obey" in Romans 2:8, 1 Peter 3:1 and 4:17. "Disobedient" is used for it in Romans 10:21; 1 Peter 2:8 and 3:20. It carries the idea of being disobedient, having resisted persuasion (even obstinately so).

An interesting variant use of *peitho* is found in Acts 5:29 (and 32), Acts 27:21, and Titus 3:1. This is combined with *archo* to become *peitharcheo* (*peitho* + *archo*). We already have found that *peitho* means to obey out of persuasion. The last part of the word, *archo*, is reflected in our word *monarch*. It has reference to a ruler. So the Greek word *peith* + *archeo* (*peitharcheo*) means to obey a ruler or one in authority. It is quite expressive that Peter used this word when the rulers in Jerusalem commanded him to not preach any more in the name of Christ. His answer in no uncertain terms was, "We ought to obey [*peitharcheo*, obey a ruler] God rather than men [God is our ruler, not you]" (Acts 5:29). The KJV renders this word "obey magistrates" in Titus 3:1. And in the other Scripture listed, Acts 27:21, it is translated, "ye should have *hearkened unto me...*" They had followed the orders of the master of the ship and were headed into a winter storm. Is Paul implying that his words should have been listened to on a par with, or above, the "master" of the ship? Paul was a man of experience on the high seas; thus he would be an authority on the subject.

Truly, this is an interesting word study. These are the impressions that we gleaned from our simple study of the word "obey" in the New Testament. Let us be found obedient to the Lord in all things.—*J.E.G.*

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "Thank you for your great effort in sharing God's Word..."

■ "...Excellent is the word for THE SWORD AND STAFF. So truthful. So educational. It strives to bring others to God and Jesus with the truth. Really encourages you to read your Bible! Thank you for THE SWORD AND STAFF..."

NEW YORK:

■ "Please cancel my subscription to your publication."

OHIO:

■ "...Thanks for your efforts for the Lord. I enjoy every article and pray you will be able to continue."

■ "On a Christian radio station the other week (I think the radio station comes out of Tulsa, OK), I heard a message of hope from THE SWORD AND STAFF and they mentioned a newsletter or magazine from your organization. Anyway, I am writing to find out if it would be possible to send me the information and magazines or such? This would be very much appreciated. Thank you and God bless you all."

MICHIGAN:

■ "Greetings from the north woods of Michigan. We are long time friends of THE SWORD AND STAFF, over 30 years we have been in Christ and love your true to the Word of Christ publication. We pray for you and your work. God bless you and your family."

INDIANA:

■ "Here is a little donation for THE SWORD AND STAFF. I really enjoy it very much. When I read it, I know it is from the Holy Word. There is a lot of good information in it. Keep up the good work."

ILLINOIS:

■ "I found your web site on the Internet and I enjoyed it very much. The articles are good and sound. Thanks." (E-mail)

■ "Just received the latest SWORD AND STAFF. I read it from cover to cover. I thank God for men like you, who bring us the true Word of God. I am praying for your continued health. I am sending you a check to help with the cost of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I am sorry I have not sent any sooner. May God continue to bless you and your work."

IOWA:

■ "Would you please remove our name from the mailing list of THE SWORD AND STAFF?..." (E-mail)

MISSOURI:

■ "We so look forward to every issue. Keep them coming!"

■ "...I sure appreciated the last issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Especially the front-page article. I look forward to reading it each time it comes out. Enclosed is some money for the next issue."

"Do you have two extra copies of the last paper I could have? There are people I would like to give them

to. Enclosed is a self addressed envelope for you to mail them to me."

■ "I'm writing in regard to your newsletter, THE SWORD AND STAFF. A friend of mine let me read his and I really liked it, so I was wondering if I could get on your mailing list."

"I am...an inmate serving a fifteen year sentence...so my income is really limited. If that's a problem, I fully understand. But if there's a chance I could receive your newsletter, I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you for your time."

OKLAHOMA:

■ "Please remove our church's name from your mailing list...Your prompt attention in deleting our address would be appreciated."

NEBRASKA:

■ "We love your paper and would like to be added to your mailing list. We are new subscribers. We find your articles to be God-honoring and thought-provoking..."

"Enclosed is a check for our subscription to the paper and also for the following bound volumes [all available] of THE SWORD AND STAFF..."

"May God bless you for printing the truth!!"

CALIFORNIA:

■ "Thank you for years of dedicated work in God's Word. We appreciate your commitment to the truth and the integrity of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Keep up the good work."

OREGON:

■ "Please take off mailing list."

■ "I wish to remain on your mailing list. Enclosed is my contribution. I look forward to each new edition of your paper. I have been a reader for several years. Thank you very much."

■ "Thank you again for your wonderful work. I wish I could support you as you deserve. (But with prayers—yes!)"

"Would you kindly send me 'An Overview of Ephesians 4:11.' I believe it is in two or more parts. (I saw it mentioned in Readers' Response column.)"

"Thank you."

UNITED STATES:

■ "I have been enjoying your web site immensely..." (E-mail, web page response)

■ "I just viewed your wonderful and very informative and helpful site..." (E-mail, web page response)

■ "I have enjoyed THE SWORD AND STAFF I have gotten... and now find your web site excellent. I shared the site with a Baptist who has a radio call-in show and he said you have a warped view of the local church. It is amazing how truth as viewed through denominational glasses looks so fuzzy..." (E-mail)

■ "Let me thank you, first of all, for sending THE SWORD AND STAFF. I really appreciate it."

"I have a question: May we have permission to use the article 'The Rapture' by David Vaughn Elliott for publication (not for monetary gain). We have a real

problem here...with the books and the movie 'Left Behind.' I would like to print a handout using the article. It is excellent and concise. I believe it would do a lot to counteract the effectiveness of the movie and the books. I find it hard to believe that so many people are falling for this. I have taught on the subject and that has helped, but we need to saturate the area.

"And while I'm asking, are your articles copyrighted? There are times that I would like to run them in our church paper.

"Thanks for your work. I have followed it since 1962. God has truly used you for good." (E-mail)

■ "Thank you for the latest issue (vol. 38, no. 4). It is amazing how God works through faithful men like yourself. The article on *teleios* [perfect] was excellent and I believe rightly divided. It gave me much to think about in my daily work and walk among my unsaved co-workers.

"However, the placement of the following article about drawings and throwing darts at our enemy must have been divinely inspired. It took several minutes for my eyes to stop leaking some strange, clear, water-like liquid. (Men are not supposed to cry.) The power of that illustration placed a dart in my heart. I actually felt a twinge in my heart when I read the words of our Lord, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these brethren, ye have done it unto me.' My mind raced to review who might have received darts from me. I immediately went to God in prayer for forgiveness. Someone wrote, 'The word of God is living and active...' I am fully aware of how active it is. Thank you for the admonition and rebuke. May God continue to bless you in your work through this print ministry." (E-mail)

■ "Since Christ said in Matthew 16:18 I will build My church and Paul said in Romans 16:16 the Churches of Christ salute you, why can't we call the congregation where we worship Christ's Church. In Ephesians 1:23, 4:15, 5:23, Paul says He is the head of the Church and in 1 Corinthians 15:24 Paul said He would deliver up the Kingdom to God and Father. Since Christ now has all authority and died to save the Church. Should we not honor Him enough to call the place we worship, Christ's Church?" (E-mail)

THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

Answer: Certainly it is appropriate to speak of the church as Christ's church just as it is appropriate to call it the church of Christ, the Lord's church, church of God and many other expressions pointing to Deity. If a person wanted to get technical about it, "church of God" is the most commonly used "name" in the New Testament, found nine times (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; 1 Timothy 3:5). When we speak of God, we know this term applies to Christ, who was God incarnate. But we believe it is inappropriate to use one expression exclusively as a proper name. The church has no proper name as such, like John Doe. Expressions like "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16), and "church

of God," expressive as they are, are translated with a little "c" in the Scriptures (and are not used as an appellation). To use one expression as a name in a wooden, artificial way in essence is to "denominationalize" it. As we claim to be identified with the Lord's church, which is not a denomination, we need to be consistent in that claim. And, by the way, in the language of the New Testament, the place or building where we worship is never called a church. Church (*ekklesia*) always refers to people.—J.E.G.

■ "I have enjoyed your web site. I often get asked by those who have left the fold to explain the following references:

"Matthew 16:28, Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

"Mark 9:1, And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

"Luke 9:27, But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

"The question is invariably if Jesus said that there were those who were alive who would not die before they saw Him coming again, then isn't he about 2,000 years late?

"I would like to know if you have any articles on these verses." (E-mail)

**NOT TASTE OF DEATH
BEFORE THE KINGDOM COMES**

Answer: I don't have any articles *per se* that I have written on what you asked, but I will share my thoughts with you.

Obviously the Scriptures which involve your question don't refer to the Second Coming of Christ (at least the part about tasting death before he came in the kingdom). As you said, about 2,000 years have come and gone, all have died, and Christ has not come. Some have suggested that this refers to the transfiguration and others to the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in 70 A. D. I believe neither represents what he is saying here.

In the context of these Scriptures Jesus had been talking about his final coming with the holy angels. The mere mention of his final coming suggested and brought to mind a coming nearer at hand which would take place during the life time of most of those present. So, appropriately, he calls this to their attention. John the Baptist and Jesus himself had been preaching that the kingdom was at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; etc.). Jesus had made his declaration to Peter that he would build his church and that Peter would use the keys of the kingdom in Matthew 16:16-19 (here "church" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably). Mark 9:1 explicitly says that some in his presence would not experience death until they saw the kingdom come with

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...*Response*

(Continued from Previous Page)

power. Jesus the night before his crucifixion in John chapters 14, 15 and 16 promised the coming of the Holy Spirit. And in the person of the Holy Spirit Jesus said that he would come unto them (John 14:18; etc.). With the fulfillment of this promise, they would be endowed with power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). In the second chapter of Acts when the Day of Pentecost had fully arrived, there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit and demonstration of power with the sound of a mighty rushing wind and cloven tongues of fire (and miraculous deeds were thereafter done by the apostles). Peter told those present that what they had seen and heard was proof that Christ had gone back to heaven and fulfilled his promise. And, consequently, as the resurrected Christ, he was now (spiritually speaking) sitting on the throne of David. Note Peter said that God "would raise up Christ to sit on his [David's] throne: He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ..." (a fact then accomplished) (Acts 2:30,31). Jesus is now declared to be "both Lord and Christ" (the anointed one sitting on David's throne), Acts 2:36. The kingdom had come with power. Thereafter the church and kingdom are spoken of as a reality (Acts 8:1; etc.) and people are spoken of as being in the kingdom (Colossians 1:13; etc.).

These thoughts represent my humble understanding. I trust they will prove helpful.—*J.E.G.*

PUERTO RICO:

■ *"My wife and I have enjoyed THE SWORD AND STAFF so much and thank God that you teach the Truth as it is. I want some friends to read it..." (E-mail)*

SOUTH AFRICA:

■ *"Thank you for your dedication in giving your time to share your knowledge with us." (E-mail)* □



Jesus Announces Arrival of Kingdom *(Continued from Page 8)*

"You did not know the time." They rejected God's kingdom because it did not fit their interpretation of prophecy. Within the week, they used Roman hands to crucify their own God-sent King. Jesus had clearly announced, "The time is fulfilled." However, the Jews could not tell time—not spiritual time. They were blind to the fulfillment of the King and kingdom prophecies, which so many prophets and righteous men had longed to witness.

Kingdom at the End of Time

Though Jesus clearly speaks of the arrival of the kingdom during the lifetime of His disciples, yet some Gospel texts refer to the kingdom as something at the "end of the world." We must not ignore these texts, much less deny them.

The account of the judgment of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25) is a clear case in point. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' " (verse 34). Then the account ends with these words, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (verse 46). Thus, this text is talking about the final judgment, eternal punishment and eternal life. "Eternal life" is called "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." It is not talking about the here-and-now or about any millennial kingdom. It is talking about judgment and eternity.

Many of the kingdom parables in Matthew 13, such as the parable of the sower, are obviously talking of the here-and-now. One at least, the parable of the dragnet, is obviously talking about the end of time. "The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind...So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (verses 47-50). The only conclusion to be drawn from Matthew 13 is that the kingdom of God has to do with *both* this world and that which is to come at the end of time.

If we take all that Scripture has to say on the subject, we must conclude that the kingdom is here in one sense and future in another sense. It may be thought of as two phases of the same kingdom. There is a sense in which the kingdom is future; there is just as certainly a sense in which the kingdom is present now. Call it "two phases," or whatever you want to call it, neither truth can be denied.

Connected With Jesus' First Coming

We do, indeed, look forward to the future phase of the kingdom—that blessed state of eternal life that follows the judgment at Jesus' second coming. However, the Gospels contain abundant evidence that the initial establishment of the kingdom of God was closely connected with the *first* coming of Jesus.

The 84 preachers said the kingdom was, so to speak, "around the corner." Jesus said that the prophecies regarding the time for the kingdom were fulfilled. He said the kingdom would arrive in the lifetime of His disciples. Jesus Himself fulfilled Daniel's 70-weeks prophecy regarding the time of the King's arrival. In addition to all this, elements of the kingdom of God were already evident during Jesus' ministry, albeit in an embryonic stage. Since God is faithful and true, a student of prophecy

would turn to the book of Acts, confidently expecting to find recorded the actual arrival of the Kingdom of God. □

Note by author: *This is only the second article regarding prophecies of the Messianic Kingdom and their fulfillment. 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.)

BARBS...
with a Point

MODERN CHRISTIANITY: Everything nice, and no sacrifice.

We can never profit from our mistakes until we recognize them as such.

If you are not a humble person, it is hard for others to teach you (for they are rebuffed by your arrogance), and it is hard for you to learn (for you think that you know it all).

We must first see ourselves for what we are before we can envision ourselves for what we ought to be.

It takes a real man to recognize that he is less than the man that he ought to be and then do something about it.

Just a little bit of religion can be like a vaccine, making a person immune to the real thing.

It takes a little negative preaching to deal with sin and then some positive preaching to get things turned around.

Seeking righteousness aside from the context of grace amounts to nothing more than self-righteousness.

If we are sectarian in our presentation of the truth, our adherents will be sectarian in their acceptance and stand for it.

If your Christianity doesn't work in the work place, it doesn't work any place.

Grace cushions us as we conscientiously strive to get sin out of our lives, and it is never a cushion upon which to indifferently recline to continue in the practice of sin.

It is always nice to be nice, and it is never nice to not be nice (even to people who are not nice).

Religion is merely a delusive opiate of the people when it only soothes their consciences but has not changed their lives.

If you throw your life away, you had better watch out where it will land (for it won't be in heaven).

We must be crucified with Christ, if we would be raised with him; we must be raised with him, if we would walk in newness of life; we must walk in newness of life, if we would go to heaven (Romans 6; Colossians 2:12; 3:1-4).

Better not make a mountain out of a molehill unless you are good at mountain climbing.

It doesn't make sense to talk about getting back to and restoring and the church of the New Testament then bypass that church, setting up other organizations to do the work of the church.

The mind steeped in Calvinism is a stony ground upon which the seed of the gospel to fall.

We can talk about the "right church" all we like, and even be against denominationalism, but if we are not right with God, we are not in the "right church" no matter what we say.

Some religious movements move like water going down the drain; slush! And they are with us no more.

It is not the responsibility of the Lord's church to provide play programs for you and your children; that is not what the church of the New Testament is all about; *its mission is spiritual* (1 Peter 2:5).

Beware! You may be setting yourself up for the devil when you set yourself in front of a television set.

If your brand of *spirituality* makes you arrogant, self-righteous and proud, it would be better called *carnality*.

If we live like animals, we will die like animals (with no hope).

Some "churches" represent a system of compromise wherein the truth will not thrive (nor long survive).

Selfishness is the key to unhappiness. □

Myself

I have to live with myself, and so,
I want to be fit for myself to know.
I want to be able as days go by
Always to look myself straight in the eye;
I don't want to stand with the setting sun
And hate myself for the things I've done.

I don't want to keep on the closet shelf
A lot of secrets about myself.
And fool myself as I come and go
Into thinking that nobody else will know
The kind of a man that I really am;
I don't want to dress myself up in a sham.

I want to go with my head erect,
I want to deserve every man's respect;
But here in the struggle for fame and pelf,
I want to be able to like myself.
I don't want to think as I come and go
That I'm bluster and bluff and empty show.

I never can hide myself from me.
I see what others may never see,
I know what others may never know,
I never can fool myself—and so,
Whatever happens, I want to be
Self-respecting and conscience free.

By Edgar Albert Guest

The Fruit of the Spirit

GALATIANS 5:22 and 23 tell us that “*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...*” (NKJV) Notice the subject “fruit” is singular as well as the verb that follows. But it would appear that there are nine direct objects of the verb, or is it just one object, *love*, with the other things being the outworking and manifestations of love? According to Paul, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost [Spirit] which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5). Following, this is graphically presented. It has been explained both ways, and, no doubt, both are true.

(The fruit of the Spirit comes in a cluster)

1. The fruit of the Spirit *is*:

(This listing that follows is looked upon as manifestations and outworking of love)

2. The fruit of the Spirit *is LOVE*:

Love

Joy

Peace

Longsuffering

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-control

Joy

Peace

Longsuffering

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-control

How especially beautiful this is when put in contrast with all of the ugly, unseemly, and divisive works of the flesh that have just been named in Galatians 5:19-21! What great and wonderful truths! Let us not quench the Holy Spirit of God. As Christians let us walk in the Spirit, sow to the Spirit, and “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14).
“LET THE BEAUTY OF JESUS BE SEEN IN ME.” AMEN! □

How the Apostles And Other Christians Died

MATTHEW suffered martyrdom by being slain with a sword at a distant city in Ethiopia.
Mark died at Alexandria after having been cruelly dragged through the streets of that city.
Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece.
John was put in a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterward exiled on the island of Patmos.
Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downward.

James the less was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the Temple and then beaten to death with a fuller club.
Bartholomew was flayed alive.
Andrew was bound to a cross and from there he preached to his persecutors until he died.
Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies.
Jude was shot to death with arrows.
Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death by the Jews at Salonica.
Paul was beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero.—*Selected* □

The Apostle Paul's Humble Estimation of Himself In the Context of Grace

THE APOSTLE PAUL gives a thumbnail sketch of himself (and resumé) in Philippians 3:5-10, along with a statement of his aspirations.
“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

Then these other profound statements follow at other places in Paul's writing.
1. “Christ Jesus Came Into The World To Save Sinners; Of Whom I Am Chief”
“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the *grace of our Lord* was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*” (1 Timothy 1:12-15).
2. “Unto Me, Who Am Less Than The Least Of All Saints”

“If ye have heard of the dispensation [stewardship] of the *grace of God* which is given me to you-ward...Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the *grace of God* given unto me by the

effectual working of his power. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints*, is this *grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:2,7,8).

3. "For I Am The Least Of The Apostles"

"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. *For I am the least of the apostles*, that am not meet [suitable] to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the *grace of God* I am what I am: and his *grace* which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the *grace of God* which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:8-10).

Likewise, by God's mercy we have been brought into the context of grace (unmerited favor). That being the case, let us have the proper estimation of ourselves (Romans 3:23), and then by that grace be motivated to move on out like the apostle Paul to be everything that God has intended for us to be as Christians. □

Esau and Fornicators



IN HEBREWS 12:15-17 an interesting reference is made to Esau. In the same breath he is lumped together with fornicators. How can that be? The initial reference is to the selling of his birthright to his brother Jacob for a mess of pottage found in Genesis 25:29-34.

The birthright in the line of the patriarchs was a matter of highest esteem and importance. Of all of humanity, God had called Abraham to become a great nation through whom all families of the earth would eventually be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). The dignity of such a calling was evident in the favored birthright that was passed on to the firstborn in the line of descent of each generation. This involved material and spiritual privileges. Extra honor and dignity came in being the firstborn.

The episode involving Jacob and Esau is quite revealing. Jacob, imperfect as he was, recognized the value and dignity of the birthright. But to Esau it was something lightly esteemed. In a moment of passing hunger, coming in from the fields empty-handed from hunting, he flippantly traded his birthright for a measly pot of red pottage. Having gotten him to swear to the deal, "Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised [disesteemed] his birthright" (Genesis 25:34).

Consequently, we have the warning in the book of Hebrews. "Looking diligently...Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat [food] sold his birthright" (Hebrews 12:15,16).

But, again, why is he lumped together with fornicators? Perhaps Proverbs 30:20 would be helpful in understanding this. Here it speaks of the sexually loose "strange woman." It reads, "Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness." She goes from the heinous act of casual sex with no more moral scruples than a person wiping her mouth with a napkin after eating a common meal. There is no respect for that which is holy and sacred that God has placed in the context of marriage (that which produces other human beings). In a real sense, it is the same sin that Esau committed when he sold his birthright. There was no respect for the value and dignity of the birthright. He ate, got up, and went his way as if nothing perverse had happened. Just a casual meal—"thus Esau despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:34). □

What Is on the Other Side of the Door?

A SICK MAN turned to the doctor as he was leaving the room after paying a visit and said, "Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side."

Very quietly the doctor said, "I don't know."
"You don't know? You, a Christian man, don't know what is on the other side?"

The doctor was holding the handle of the door, on the other side of which came a sound of scratching and whining. As he opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness.

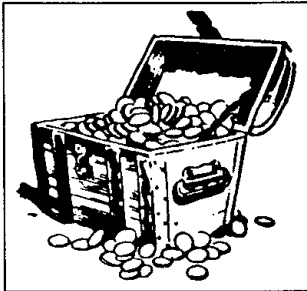
Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice that dog? He had never been in this room before. He did not know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing. I know my Master is there, and that is enough. And when the door opens, I shall pass with no fear, but gladness."—Selected □

Answers to:
BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 19:30-38; 2. Sarah (Genesis 23:1,2); 3. Genesis 25:13-16; 4. Deuteronomy 7:1; 5. Jeremiah 47:4; Amos 9:7; 6. 1 Samuel 6:17,18; 7. Genesis 16:11; 1 Samuel 1:20; 8. 2 Chronicles 36:17-21; Jeremiah 25:8-14; Daniel 9:2; 9. Jeremiah 36:20-28; 10. Jeremiah 39:1,2; 52:4-6; 11. Jeremiah 26:18 (Micah 3:12); 12. Micah 4:1-3 (Isaiah 2:1-4); 13. Matthew 4:17; 5:3,10, 19,20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11,12; 13:11,24,31,33,44,45,47,52; 16:19; 18:1,3,4,23; 19:23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1,14; 14. John 1:51; 3:3,5,11; 5:19,24,25; 6:26,32,47,53; 8:34,51,58; 10:1,7; 12:24; 13:16,20,21,38; 14:12; 16:20,23; 21:18; 15. Matthew 16:13-19; 16. Mark 10:35-41; 17. Acts 16:8-10; 18. (1) Acts 17:28 (Cilician poet Aratus); (2) 1 Corinthians 15:33 (Attic poet Meander in Thais); (3) Titus 1:12 (Cretan poet Epimenides in poem Cretica); 19. Spain (Romans 15:24); 20. James 1:27. □

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3. Call people by name. The sweetest music to anyone's ears is the sound of his own name.
4. Be friendly and helpful. If you want friends, you must be one.
5. Be cordial. Speak and act as if everything you do is a joy to you (and may it be real).
6. Be genuinely interested in people. You can like almost everybody if you try.
7. Be generous with praise and cautious with criticism.
8. Be considerate with the feelings of others. There are usually three sides to a controversy: yours, the other fellow's, and the right side.
9. Be eager to lend a helping hand. Often it is appreciated more than you know. What counts most in life is what we do for others.
10. And add to this a good sense of humor, a huge dose of patience and a dash of humility. This combination will open many doors and the rewards will be enormous.—*Selected* ☐

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