

# The Sword AND Staff

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

*Perfecting and Exercising Faith—No. 6*

## The Moving Impetus of Faith And Grounds of Our Assurance



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**B**ELIEF in the reality of God is the great underlying truth behind all references to faith in the Bible. But that is not the main thrust of faith as found there. Ancient man, not that far removed from creation and the Garden of Eden, had no problem believing in God. In fact, two psalms (Psalms 14 and 53) dogmatically assert that only a fool would say there is no God. Even though man fell into idolatry with its corrupted concepts of deity, he still believed in a higher being (or beings). Overall

then, the main thrust of faith in the Bible is trust and consequently hope (and not just basically believing in the reality of God). “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). It involves taking the one and only true God at His Word and living in hope.

### Genesis 3:15, The Moving Impetus of Faith

In view of this, trusting God, the great moving impetus of faith begins in Genesis 3:15, continues throughout the Bible and has its climax in the New Testament (and finally in eternity). Aside from this, all other exercises of faith were secondary, simply feeding into the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. This Scripture reads, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; *it* shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise *his* heel.” Mankind had sinned in rebellion against God, and consequently fallen; the sentence of death had been passed upon them. These words were directed at the different parties involved in the transgression. There would be an ongoing struggle between right and wrong. Finally of the seed of woman one would come to bring a crushing blow to the devil (and death), restoring life. This one of the seed of woman is distinguished from others by use of the words “it” and “his.” This refers to the coming Savior. In the meantime, mankind would learn to trust God and live in hope, looking forward to that day.

Let us highlight these truths in this article as we focus on men of faith who trusted God, what they looked forward to, and God accommodating Himself to them to enhance this trust. Abraham, who was assured by God, will first get our attention and then we will notice the fulfillment of this assurance in the New Testament with the coming of the Savior.

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—THANK YOU—

## Proverbially *SPEAKING...*

*RELIGION that is not Bible-based is way off base.*

Where you are coming from has a lot to do with where you are going and the route you take to get there.

*The way to heaven is a "one way" street (Ephesians 4:4-6; John 10:1).*

Real Christians, for the most part, are ordinary people living extraordinary lives.

*Hope and despair are not compatible.*

Love is a wonderful thing; the more that you love, the greater your capacity to love becomes.

*Get your spiritual exercise by walking with God.*

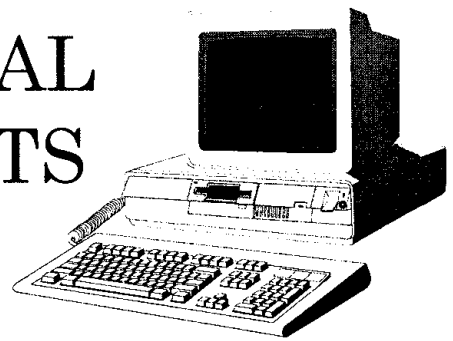
You can tell much about a person by what he does when he has nothing else to do, what he does when no one is looking, and what he laughs at.

*The fruit of honest labor has the sweetest taste.*

If you have been blessed, you should be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 10:8; Ephesians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:3-6).

*Interesting people are people who are interested.* ☐

# EDITORIAL COMMENTS



## WHO ARE GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE TODAY?

**N**O ONE who believes the Bible will doubt that the Jewish people were God's chosen people in the Old Testament, but are they God's chosen people today? It seems that much of so-called Christendom is all wrapped up in this concept. But being a citizen of an eternal kingdom not of this world (John 18:36; Hebrews 12:28; Philippians 3:20), whose law is love (Galatians 5:14), this writer tries to maintain an aloof and independent position as far as worldly governments and conflicts are concerned. Some are all wrapped up in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as if this were in an Old Testament setting. Those who look upon the Jews as God's chosen people today have failed to understand (1) the purpose of the promise made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and (2) the conditional promise made to Israel by God (Exodus 19:4-6; Leviticus 18:24-30; 20:22-24; Deuteronomy 28:9,15-68; 30:19,20).

### The Purpose of the Chosen People

(1) Mankind sinned. The human race became a dying race. God's plan called eventually for salvation, in destroying the power of the devil over death (Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:10). He narrowed the human lineage to that of Abraham in bringing this about. In the call of Abraham, God laid out promises before him: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and *in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis 12:2,3). But the bottom line and end result of all these promises made here is in the words "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." God called Abraham and made of his descendants a nation with the express purpose of bringing the Savior into the world through them. Read the lead article in this issue, "The Moving Impetus of Faith and Grounds of Our Assurance."

### Their Position Was Conditional

(2) Notice all of the Scriptures given at the end of the first paragraph of this article. God's continued blessing of Israel as a nation and people would be determined by their obedience to Him. It was all conditional. The big "if" was there. Otherwise the land would spew them out just like it did the Canaanites. In their exodus from Egypt, God had already threatened two times to destroy them and start over with Moses (Exodus 32:9-14; Numbers 13:31-14:12). We know that when they became a nation, they weren't faithful to God for very long at a time (and time and time again the prophets were sent to call them back to God). Finally they were carried into Babylonian Captivity because of their sins. God made great promises to them in their return from captivity. But by the time of

Christ, they were so engrossed in spiritual apathy and apostasy that they were not about to accept who he was. John the Baptist rebuked their arrogance in thinking that just because they were Abraham's descendants they were God's people. He said, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet [appropriate] for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that *God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*" (Matthew 3:8,9). Jesus marveled at the faith of one centurion, who was a Gentile, in contrast with the Jews of his day as he emphatically said, "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But *the children of the kingdom shall be cast out* into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:11-12). In His long dealings with the Jewish nation, God's cup of wrath was filled to the point that Jesus said that all of the righteous blood that had been shed from Abel until then would be required of that generation (Matthew 23:32-39). This came about when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A. D. and in the dispersion of the Jews. (Read Matthew 24; Luke 19:41-44). Obviously sounding just like what Jesus had foretold, Stephen was charged with teaching that the Lord would destroy that place [the temple, etc.] and change the law (Acts 6:14). In his defense before the high court of the Jews in the 7th chapter of Acts, Stephen pointedly tells them that from the very beginning they had never obeyed the law of Moses, and who were they to bring such hypocritical, sanctimonious charges against him? He was stoned to death.

#### God's Chosen People Today

The apostle Paul more explicitly deals with who the chosen people of God are today. It all has to do with the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and faith. The physical now blends into the spiritual with the coming of the "seed." That was what the promise to Abraham was all about anyway, and much of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah were clothed in the physical imagery of the times. In the earliest of Paul's epistles, he instructs the Galatians, "Know ye therefore that *they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham*. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [Gentiles] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:7,8). In the last verse of this same chapter in Galatians, he further asserts that if we are "Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Paul, again looking at the crux of the matter in Romans 2:28,29, said, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly;

neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly*; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Paul enlarges more upon this in the 9th chapter (Romans 9:2-8). In particular, listen to him: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, *They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*." It's plain, isn't it? In God's sight fleshly Israel is not Israel today. There is "Israel after the flesh" (1 Corinthians 10:18). There is spiritual Israel, the church, which replaces physical Israel. Paul in Galatians 6:15 and 16 identifies those who are "a new creature" in Christ as being "the Israel of God." In view of fleshly Israel (and the present situation), Paul continues this same line of thought in Romans 11:1 and following. He rhetorically asks the question, "Hath God cast away his [Old Testament] People?" His answer: "God forbid." He gives an illustration of himself, a Jew, as being part of spiritual Israel, the church (thus they were not all cast away). He further illustrates with Elijah who thought that he was the only one left serving God in the face of the prophets of Baal. But God reassured him, "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." Then Paul notes, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." He is talking about Jews like himself who had become Christians and were a part of the church, the Israel of God. He goes on to say in this chapter that fleshly Israel that had been broken off because of unbelief could be grafted back in when they believed in Christ. This is done on an individual basis as they accept Christ.

#### Old Testament Imagery Conveys New Testament Truth

More than once Paul speaks of Christians as being God's chosen people (Colossians 3:12; Titus 1:1). Paul hints at the Old Testament concept when he tells us that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar [special] people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14; Deuteronomy 14:2). Certainly such Old Testament Scriptures as Exodus 19:5 and 6 must have been in Peter's mind when he wrote, "***But ye [the church, Christians] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people***; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in times past were not a

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people, but **are now the people of God**: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9,10).

What great and wonderful truths! The church now constitutes God's chosen people. The church is the Israel of God today. Let us cease in our thoughts of the Jews being God's chosen people and appreciate the unique standing of every Christian before God. The ultimate blessing that would come through the promise made to Abraham will likewise be that of every Jew when they accept Christ like the rest of us. Ask Peter (He knew—Acts 3:25,26). Amen! ☐



## The Moving Impetus of Faith And Grounds of Our Assurance

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### I. THE CALL OF ABRAHAM: PROMISES, PROMISES, PROMISES

#### Abraham, a Nation, the "Seed"

The first major step in the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 is seen in the call of Abraham. This happened about 2000 BC as he cut ties with his homeland in Mesopotamia to migrate to the land of Canaan. Genesis 12:1-3 tells us all about it, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram [Abraham], Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." It is no exaggeration to say that the rest of the Bible unfolds through these few verses of Scripture. These promises were stated over and over again as they moved toward fulfillment. God would use Abraham and his descendants as the means of bringing the "seed" into the world that would destroy the power of the devil over death and restore life to man. This didn't happen all at once, and it took real faith on the part of Abraham and those who came after him to live in anticipation of its fulfillment.

#### God Accommodated Man

God accommodated Himself to man in this preliminary time of preparation for fulfillment. Although God is Spirit, at certain times He has communicated with man through angelic beings who momentarily took the form of man (Genesis 18:1,2, 17-22; 19:1,5; 32:24-30; Exodus 24:10,11 [Acts 7:53]; Joshua 5:13-15 [Exodus 23:20-23; 33:2]; Judges 13:3, 6,15-33; etc.). And, although God cannot lie, He has accommodated Himself to the customs of men to en-

hance their trusting Him. This can be seen when God put Himself under oath with Abraham (Genesis 22:16) and His making a covenant with him (yes, even literally "cutting" a covenant, Genesis 15:9-21—Jeremiah 34:17,18). In those early days of partial and limited revelation, this was especially reassuring (as well as later with more of an extensive revelation). God can be taken at His Word, trusted, and man who had entered into covenant relationship with God is made to realize that he must likewise keep his word.

#### Promises and the Oath

The writer of the book of Hebrews sums up these dealings of God with Abraham in a most excellent way (and finds a lesson and reassurance for us today). "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things [His promise and His oath], in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast..." (Hebrews 6:13-19). God cannot lie. What He says stands. As Isaiah said in the Old Testament Scriptures, His Word will not return unto Him void (Isaiah 55:11).

#### The Mission and Hope of Israel

The promises and oath were repeatedly given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:4-6; 17:1-8; 22:15-18; 26:2-5; 28:12-15; Exodus 32:13). Abraham's descendants would indeed be a great nation, and at the heart of all that God said, and the end results, was the promise of the coming "seed" through whom all families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). This was really the reason why God chose to make of them a nation, a distinct people; to be the vehicle of bringing the Savior into the world. That was their mission and hope, not to be just a pampered people with no purpose. The crescendo of Bible history continually moved in the direction of fulfilling Genesis 3:15 as anticipated and outlined in Genesis 12:1-3. The whole Old Testament system and the nation of Israel itself, and even the history of that nation, were symbolic prophecies pointing to that day (this in addition to the more explicit prophecies that are found in the Old Testament). When the New Testament finally comes, we find people who were eagerly

waiting and looking for the coming Messiah (Luke 2:25,38; Matthew 11:3; John 6:14; 11:27). Later, in his defense, Paul looking back, said, "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews" (Acts 26:6,7; also, Acts 28:20).

#### **Abraham Believed God**

Although Abraham was called by a name that meant exalted father, and later the father of a great multitude, the initial part of the promise as well as the last part made to him would be long in coming. He believed God, although he would live to see only a little of it fulfilled. Being repeatedly called by such a name, which for so long seemed redundant, could get pretty threadbare. His marriage was childless, he was 75 years of age when they first came into Canaan (Genesis 12:4), and he would remain childless for years to come. He didn't understand the details of the working of God, but he believed it would come to pass. And while he seemed to have been put on "hold" in even being a father, God told him that his unborn descendants would be sidetracked in Egyptian bondage for a few hundred years before they would even be a nation and possess the Promised Land (yes, the land wherein he was then camping out as a nomad and would be doing so the rest of his life) (Genesis 15:13-21). Still he believed God. He remained childless for the next 25 years, and contrary to nature when he was about 100 years old and Sarah, his wife, about 90 years, a son was born (Genesis 17:17; Romans 4:16-21). Then, seemingly in contradiction to all that God had promised him, Abraham was put to the test when called upon to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:1-19). He took steps to comply, believing that God would raise Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19).



**The Climax of  
Faith Now and in Eternity**

Hebrews 11:8-19 highlights the faith of Abraham, even looking beyond the earthly fulfillment into eternity. The concluding part of all of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob always had as its goal the "seed" through whom all families of

the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). This was the great impetus of it all. Of course this involved man's spiritual restoration to God (Acts 3:25,26), which reached into eternity. It is amazing that these old patriarchs saw the eternal beyond the more immediate fulfillment of the physical in God's promises. Hebrews 11:13-16 reads, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." God's whole plan for humanity would be filtered through Abraham and his descendants, and he believed it. No wonder he is called the father of all who believe (Galatians 3:7,29; Romans 4:16; 9:8) and was called the friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). He knew that God couldn't lie. This was the assurance of his faith.

#### **The Promise Narrowed and Expanded**

There are other great and wonderful Scriptures that line up in showing us the route through which the promised "seed" would come, but for the purposes of this article we will not explore them all now. It will suffice to say that the route, now being narrowed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (and the nation of Israel), was next directed through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). And finally more specifically we are pointed to the house of David and his "seed" (Psalms 89:3,4; Jeremiah 33:15-17). Then to see what would be actually entailed in the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, the coming of the concluding "seed" would involve a virgin birth without the instrumentality of man in conception (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35). And all of the time while this line was being narrowed through which the Savior would come, the revelation of just whom and what he would be is expanded. Yes, he would be the one to crush the head of the serpent, but he also would be a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18,19; Acts 3:22,23). He would be the Messiah, raised to sit upon the throne of David (Psalms 89:3,4; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:30-33,36). Daniel explicitly speaks of the Messiah and matters in reference to him (Daniel 9:23ff). He is pictured as the suffering servant by Isaiah, bearing the sins of all (Isaiah 53:1-12; Acts 8:26-35). Amazingly, he would be raised from the dead (Psalms 16:8-11; Acts 2:22-33; Romans 1:2-4).

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Also, he would be a priest (Psalms 110:4; Hebrews 5:5,6f). These are great and wonderful prophecies, and we could go on. Behind all of them stand the immutable counsel of the Mighty God of eternity whom cannot lie. Consequently the Scriptures cannot be broken and God's Word would not return to Him void. All of this inspired trust and was the grounds of blessed assurance for the saints of old. God would bring it to pass.

### II. THE FULFILLMENT: WITNESSES, WITNESSES, WITNESSES

#### The "Seed" Has Come

With all of that said, let us now hurriedly move on to the New Testament Scriptures. Here we see the grand climax of it all. It is no longer the message that the "seed" was coming, he has come. Galatians 4:4 states that "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman..." As the time was fast approaching, the angel explained the unusual situation to Joseph, "And she [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sin" (Matthew 1:21). Before, the angel had personally said to Mary, "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33). With the birth of Jesus, the angel called out to the shepherds in the field, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Just before Jesus started his public ministry, John the Baptist said that the time was fulfilled and told the Jews to "repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). They already believed in God, but their faith was to be taken to a new level in believing in Jesus Christ. Read Romans 1:1-4 and then the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians. John declares that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). It was "through death he [Christ] might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil" (Hebrews 2:14; Genesis 3:15). Paul, viewing the greater scope of it all and its wonderful outcome, speaks of the "hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began..." (Titus 1:2,3). Yes, Jesus was the "seed" that was to come. Paul nails this down in Galatians 3:16, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to

seeds, as of many; but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ.." Peter, in his preaching following Pentecost, openly declares that Jesus is the "seed" through whom all families of the earth would be blessed and he explains about this blessing (Acts 3:25,26). How great and wonderful are all of these truths in their fulfillment!



#### "In the Mouth of Two or Three Witnesses"

Fittingly, the New Testament Scriptures begin with the four gospel accounts of the life of Christ (although the New Testament proper does not begin until after his crucifixion, Hebrews 9:15-17). There was a principle laid down in the Old Testament, which reoccurs throughout the Bible that is quite relevant here. That is, "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:16; John 8:17,18; 2 Corinthians 13:1). Here we have two witnesses doubled, or one beyond three witnesses. Actually two of the writers, Matthew and John, were first hand witnesses and two, Mark and Luke, were "witnesses" in a secondary sense. Matthew and John as apostles of Christ had accompanied Jesus in his ministry and were among the official witnesses set aside to tell about it. Mark and Luke were somewhat removed, but very close. It is generally thought that since Mark was a close associate of Peter, his writings directly represent Peter's preaching. Then since Luke was very close to Paul, Paul's preaching would be reflected in his writings. Luke speaks of the faith of Christians and witnesses that verified the truthfulness of it (Luke 1:1-4).

#### The Synoptic Gospels and John

Upon reading the four gospel accounts, it becomes apparent that the first three are much alike in the way they present the life of Christ. Consequently, they are called the "synoptic" gospels (seen together).



John is different in his approach. Matthew seems to have been written initially for a Jewish reading audience, and it is believed by this writer to have been the first written. The gospel was first preached among the Jews and such a document at an early date would have been highly desirable. Perhaps that is why it was placed first in the New Testament canon of Scriptures. It has been suggested that Mark was especially suited for a Roman reading audience, and Luke, bearing the name of Theophilus (a Greek name) as the one who received it, was for a Greek audience. John with its simple, yet awesomely profound, gospel message comes last and is regarded to have been the last one written.

#### **Where Each Gospel Writer Begins the Story of Jesus**

Interestingly, in presenting the wonderful story of Christ, Matthew identifies Jesus as the “son of David” and then takes us back to Abraham and his line of descent (Matthew 1:1f). For a Jewish reading audience, this would be very impressive and necessary. Although it states that the Lord’s birth was a virgin birth, the ancestral lineage here is considered to be that of Joseph as this would be a legal requirement for Jesus to be the Messiah in the way that Jews looked at things. Next, Mark in the beginning of his account ushers us right into the dynamic of John the Baptist preaching, the baptism of Jesus and then we move with rapid pace into the Lord’s earthly ministry (Mark 1:1ff). Following, Luke’s account traces the lineage of Jesus all of the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). This is significant because it is thought that this ancestral table is that of Mary, the mother of Jesus, wherein the Lord actually made his flesh and blood contact with humanity. Then the gospel of John in its prologue takes us all of the way back into eternity with awe-inspiring information. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1), and amazingly we learn that God became flesh in Jesus Christ (John 1:14). The gospel accounts are great and wonderful in their scope and presentation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Our faith is grounded in the records of these faithful witnesses.

#### **The Gospel of John: Witnesses, Testimony, Bearing Record, Believing**

The gospel of John is unique and in many ways stands alone in its graphic presentation of the mighty Son of God. We would have no trouble understanding what John is trying to get across, but after almost completing this great work, he states, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”

(John 20:30,31). Throughout this gospel John is pre-occupied with witnesses, testimony and bearing record of that which has taken place. With him witnesses, and especially having two or three credible witnesses, is basic to faith and the acceptance of the truthfulness and reliability of what he writes. The Jewish nation already believed in Jehovah God as revealed in the Old Testament. Now they must be convinced that Jesus is God incarnate, the Christ and the promised Savior of the world. The miracles and signs that Jesus did were his credentials. They inspired faith and trust.

#### **Keep This in Mind**

When we read John, if we keep John 20:30 and 31 in mind (as well as witnesses, testimonies and bearing record), it will be amazing how this will help us get hold of what John is driving at. The prologue establishes the truth that the Word became flesh and introduces us to John’s first witness of this truth. “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John [the Baptist]. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe” (John 1:6,7—read this entire chapter). In chapter 2 after the miracle at the wedding feast, John writes, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (2:11). With the cleansing of the temple, the Jewish leaders wanted a “sign” from him to validate his having asserted such authority. He spoke to them of the ultimate “sign” that was to come, which they didn’t understand. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (2:18-22). But some of the leaders believed because of his miracles, like Nicodemus in chapter 3. Notice the reoccurrence of the words “testify” and “witness” in this chapter (3:11,26,28,32,33). In chapter 4 the Lord’s supernatural knowledge about the Samaritan woman brought about an early declaration of faith from these people (4:29,39-42). The nobleman’s son is healed—another “sign,” faith (4:46-54).

#### **More Than One Witness**

Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath day that had been an invalid for 38 years to the dismay of the unbelieving Jews (John 5). And on top of that he called God his Father. They accuse Jesus of making himself equal with God, and what he said in answering them no doubt intensified their hostile feelings toward him. He ties his works and that of the Father together. He declares his authority, even to judge the world. He appeals to witnesses beyond himself in reference to his identity. (1) There was the witness of the Father (5:32,37-39,46,47—perhaps including the Old Testament Scriptures). (2) There was the witness of John the Baptist (5:32-35). (3) And the works

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## The Moving Impetus of Faith And Grounds of Our Assurance

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that Jesus did bore witness of him (5:36). Then again this principle of two or three witnesses surfaces in 8:17 and 18 when Jesus answered the Pharisees at another time. "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that *bear witness* of myself, and the Father that sent me *beareth witness* of me."

### The Connecting Theme Continues

So the thrust of the connecting theme continues throughout the book of John. John 7:31 reads, "And many of the people *believed* on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more *miracles* that these which this man hath done?" Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (9:4). Thereupon he heals the man blind from birth. Later we read of the prodding of the Jews and how the Lord answered. "How long dost thou make us to doubt [hold us in suspense]? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they *bear witness* of me" (10:24,25).

### 5,000 People Fed, Lazarus Raised

The feeding of 5,000 people with merely five barley loaves and two small fish and the raising of Lazarus from the dead are miracles of greatest magnitude. John records them both. Even after feeding the vast multitude of people from such a small initial amount, there were twelve baskets full left over. "Then those men when they had seen *the miracle* that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world" (6:14). And the raising of Lazarus is only exceeded by his own resurrection. When Martha came out to meet Jesus, he spoke these reassuring words to her, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die..." (11:25,26). Lazarus had been dead four days, and his unembalmed body in that warm climate had already begun to decay. Arriving at the tomb after the emotional encounter with the other sister, Jesus prayed and then he said, "Lazarus, come forth." "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, *believed* on him" (11:43-45). Only Almighty God would have power over life and death in such a manner. What a sign! (And signs!) In the

feeding of the 5,000 life was sustained. In the raising of Lazarus from the dead life was brought back. Believe! Believe!

### The Sign of All Signs

The ministry of Christ and the week leading up to the crucifixion were now behind him. John has vividly highlighted some of this for us. His "hour" had

*(Continued on Page 11)*

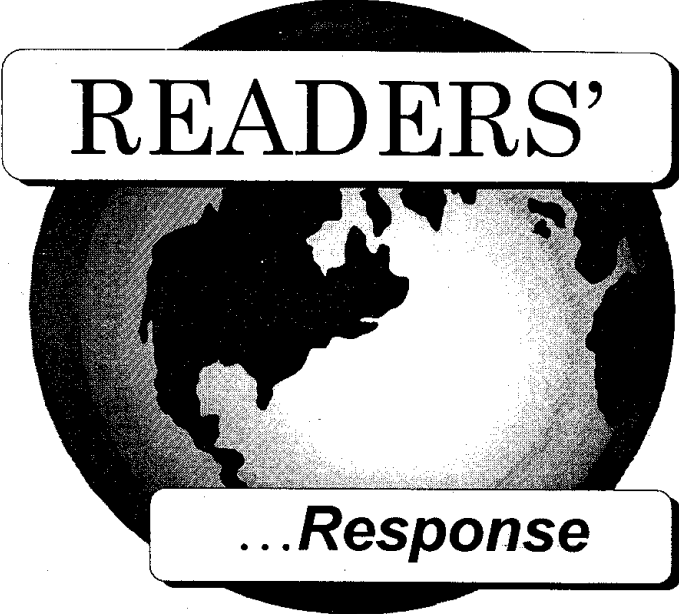
## BIBLE QUESTIONS

*(Random Questions Over the Bible)*

1. What people occupied the land that became Edom, were displaced by Esau, and what does their name mean?
2. What woman in the Bible said to her husband, "Give me children, or else I die"?
3. How old was Joseph when Jacob came back to Canaan, when he was sold in slavery, when he appeared before Pharaoh, and when he died?
4. Who were the first people to fight against Israel after they came out of Egypt?
5. What was the age requirement of the priests who served in the tabernacle (and later the temple)?
6. What three different instances do we read in the Bible of men escaping their adversaries through a window on a wall?
7. What judge of Israel killed a thousand men with the jaw bone of an ass?
8. How much was Delilah paid by the Philistines for finding out wherein the strength of Samson lay?
9. Who in the Bible did God speak of as "a man after mine own heart"?
10. Which psalm is the longest, and which one is the shortest?
11. Which psalm is written with headings of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, with 8 verses under each heading, and each verse beginning with the letter of the Hebrew alphabet under which it is placed?
12. Who were the Rechabites, and what was unique about the way they lived?
13. What woman in the Bible, when we are told about her, had been a widow for 84 years after only 7 years of marriage?
14. How old was Christ when he was baptized and began his earthly ministry?
15. To which of his disciples did Jesus say, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men?"
16. Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy \_\_\_\_\_ is truth."
17. How many pounds of spices were used in preparing Jesus' body for burial?
18. What man was chosen to take the place of Judas as an apostle and eyewitness of Christ?
19. Who was the first person to experience martyrdom in the early church?
20. Where was the apostle John when he received the book of Revelation from the Lord?

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





**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:**

■ "Please find enclosed a check for support...THE SWORD AND STAFF is very meaty and sound. Thank you for your love of our Father and the paper you put out. I pray it can be put in every congregation."

**SOUTH CAROLINA:**

■ "This is to help spread the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. May God bless your ministry. Love you in Christ."

■ "Is it possible for me to obtain the first six articles on 'First Resurrection'? A friend gave me a copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I'm much impressed with your magazine."

**Editor's Note:** The Lord willing, the material on prophecy by brother Elliott will be available in a full fledged book in a few months. Be on the lookout for an announcement about this in *The Sword and Staff*.

**NORTH CAROLINA:**

■ "Keep up the good work. Your paper is a blessing to me."

■ "...I want to tell you how much we enjoy your paper. I give the paper to other people to read...Thanks again for the paper..."

■ "Enclosed you will find my contribution...Thanks for the continuing devotion to Christ and obedience to His will. May God continue to bless you in all areas of your life."

**VIRGINIA:**

■ "...I enjoyed reading the Editorial Comments in No. 3 issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF. They are so true. We have so many sad situations in the world today..."

■ "I truly enjoy THE SWORD AND STAFF magazine. I am 100% disabled and not able to get out

much. I especially enjoy the proverbial quips, the barbs and little stories. My prayers are with you. Keep up the good work."

■ "Thank you so very much. I've learned so much from your publication. I pray for the continued success of your ministry."

"Keep printing the truth, brother. Truth is what separates Christians from the world. Personally I don't want to be just religious. I want to be saved. And regardless of our 'feelings' the truth will save us. God's truth will always overcome all obstacles."

"Again, thank you."

**DELAWARE:**

■ "Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus. Enclosed find a check to keep me on your mailing list for THE SWORD AND STAFF. I read each issue and enjoy it. Thank you."

**NEW YORK:**

■ "May I request that you please include me in your mailing list? I have missed your magazine for a long time. I am blessed in reading it. It's wonderful...Please send me one copy of your POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS...Thank you so much."

**MICHIGAN:**

■ "Thank you for the great publication of truth!..." (E-mail)

■ "Please cancel any subscription that we have with you. Attached is the label from the latest publication that we received from you."

■ "I recently had the opportunity to read an issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I found it quite enjoyable. I'd like to be added to your mailing list..."

**OHIO:**

■ "I wish to receive a complimentary copy of your magazine...Thank you for being there, able to do the LORD'S Work." (E-mail, Web page response)

■ "I just wanted you to know that I enjoy reading THE SWORD AND STAFF. I would like to have a copy of your book POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS..."

■ "I am enclosing \$... for 5 issues of THE SWORD AND STAFF, Volume 40, Number 3, 2002."

"I wish I could get your material into the hands of more people. The church is failing many because it only teaches and preaches what people want to hear, not what they need to hear."

■ "In the 3rd chapter of Ezekiel, verses 17-21, God commissions Ezekiel to be a watchman over the house of Israel. He must warn both the wicked and the righteous; when they do wrong they much repent. If he failed to do that the blood of the perishing would be upon his hands, but if he warned them and they continued in the sin then he was no longer accountable."

"Thank you for being a modern-day Ezekiel, a watchman over the house of Israel (the church)."

(Continued on Next Page)

## READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

"Please accept our humble gift as but a small token of our appreciation."

### INDIANA:

■ "I would like to receive an issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I recently heard of this paper and am very interested. One of your subscribers turned me on to this paper..." (E-mail)

### ILLINOIS:

■ "\_\_\_\_\_ was telling me about your wonderful publication called *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. If you would be so kind as to put me on your mailing list, I would greatly appreciate it."

### TEXAS:

■ "I am sending a donation to the paper. I am sorry I have not sent one before. I enjoy the paper very much.

"The articles on prophecy by brother Elliott are excellent. Would it be possible to put them in book form so individuals could have the whole series together? These articles are so needed today, as there is so much sensationalism put across by denominational preachers as fundamental Bible teaching.

"Thank you so very much for the good articles in the paper."

**Editor's Note:** The Lord willing, the material on prophecy by brother Elliott will be available in a full fledged book in a few months. Be on the lookout for an announcement about this in *The Sword and Staff*.

### LOUISIANA:

■ "...We appreciate your work very much and every time I receive *THE SWORD AND STAFF* I read it from the very front to the very end. Sometimes I read some articles more than once.

"I pray that God would continue to bless you and your work which helps so many..."

### OKLAHOMA:

■ "Please, to conserve your resources, discontinue sending materials..."

■ "Thanks for *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. It is refreshing to read material that remains true to God's Word. Keep up the good work."

### KANSAS:

■ "I very much enjoyed your editorial comments on *Second Thoughts*. Could you send them to Bill O'Reilly at Fox News? He hasn't been paying any attention to my comments!" (E-mail)

### NEBRASKA:

■ "Would you remove me from your mailing list?" (E-mail)

### WYOMING:

■ "Thank you. And may God continue to bless His ministry of the Word through you. We so look forward to every issue and the joy of like precious faith." (E-mail)

### NEVADA:

■ "Your paper has come to us for years! It's real good, and always full of sound doctrine. We're ashamed we have never taken time to write you before or pay anything towards your publishing and mailing cost. God bless your good work we pray (as He always has)."

### CALIFORNIA:

■ "I am enclosing my check...for you to please send to \_\_\_\_\_ a copy of your booklet *POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS*. She saw my copy and was so impressed..."

### OREGON:

■ "Thank you for still working hard to spread God's love. Yours is the best, the most rational and accurate teachings I've seen. And I appreciate you..."

### WASHINGTON:

■ "Please find the enclosed check for the advancement of this ministry. We have received the paper since 1975. It has been a blessing to our family and it is our desire and prayer to assist in its continuance.

"God bless you for your 'plain truth' approach and for your steadfastness in His work."

### ALASKA:

■ "Please remove [name of church]...from your mailing list. We do not wish to continue receiving your magazine. Thank you."

### UNITED STATES:

■ "You don't know me personally but I have enjoyed *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for 30 years. I think it is one of the finest publications out there today which is why I am writing you.

"I am launching my own web site (for my personal tape ministry) and I would like to include your web site as one of my favorite links...So, would it be all right if I added your web site to my link page?"

■ "Could you please explain the concept of body, soul and spirit? Some individuals say that soul and spirit are the same thing. Please advise." (E-mail)

### "BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT"

**S**PEAKING of the body, soul and spirit of man seems to be the technical and more exact way of identifying the essence of man in his present state. Then our speaking of the body and soul, at times, seems to be inclusive of the spirit and is a little less encumbered way of referring to our being (but soul does not always mean spirit).

The thought of the three components of our being in our present state is brought out in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Here Paul writes, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This verse mirrors the three aspects of man first found in Genesis 2:7, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The breath (spirit)

coming from God is what produced the life in the body. The soul seems to represent our animated life. In death the body returns to the dust of the earth and the spirit goes back to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). As James said, "the body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). You remember that Jesus, who truly became man, when he died, said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit..." (Luke 23:46). Likewise, Stephen when he was being stoned to death, said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). The spirit is the eternal part of us and in the resurrection will be clothed with a glorified spiritual body that will never be subject to death (1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 2 Corinthians 5:1-8; Philippians 3:21).

Then again, sometimes we speak more generally of man as a dual personality, body and soul. We use the term "soul" when we really mean spirit. But soul, in the light of the Scriptures, seems to refer to life more generically (although it may at times include the spirit). But spirit is more specific as to the eternal aspect of our being. This is my humble understanding.

*(Editor's Note: In answering this request for more informational thought on the matter of body, soul, and spirit, I concluded, "It was nice hearing from you. Hang in there. We have a hope, as the writer says, that is an anchor of the soul. It will sustain us through our worse experiences. Regardless how bad things may get, as a Christian we know they are going to get better. The best is yet to come."*

Our e-mail correspondent replied with a note of appreciation for my letter. Then a few days later I received another e-mail letter from the same address, but it was not from the one who had written, requesting the information. It was from his family. He had passed away. Perhaps now, first hand, he has the answers to his questions. I answered the family with a letter, concluding with the words, "I would encourage you and the rest of the family to look to the LORD God. There is hope and purpose in living for Him. May you find strength and comfort in doing this."

**CANADA:**

■ *"I would like to say thank you for your highly informative Biblical teachings. Please find enclosed a token of my appreciation of what you do for the Lord..."*

**ECUADOR:**

■ *"Greetings in Jesus, Brother Gibbons. I am a co-minister of a church on the outskirts of the city where I live. I have carefully looked at your web site. I would like for you to help us with a donation of Biblical studies and tracts in Spanish since this is a church with few resources. Just like LA ESPADA Y EL CAYADO, everything completely in Spanish. We are very appreciative of your voluntary collaboration." (E-mail, translated)*

**GHANA:**

■ *"It was a blessing for me, very much encouraged, to receive copies of THE SWORD AND STAFF editions with the titles 'Christianity, Grace and Grace Invalidated' and 'The Question of Faith and Works.'*

*"Daily my prayer goes to God for your good works for the growth of the kingdom. Absolutely we are very much*

*thankful that a number of souls have been converted by the help of THE SWORD AND STAFF magazine.*

*"My spirit is always lifted when I receive THE SWORD AND STAFF at the post office. I have a small library of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Brethren visit the library daily for articles..."*

**INDIA:**

■ *"Greetings in Christ Jesus from India!... I received you magazine, THE SWORD AND STAFF... I enjoyed reading the contents of the magazine very much. I would love to receive it regularly. May I request you to include me in your mailing list...We will highly appreciate it if you will please send us even back issues for our library copies and references. Thank you in advance. We will highly appreciate it if you will please send us the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF for our library copies. Thank you once again in advance. Grace and peace." (E-mail)*

■ *"Praise the Lord. I greet you in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I am giving my postal address. I request you kindly send me a complimentary copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF. (E-mail, Web page response)*

**PHILIPPINES:**

■ *"Thank you very much for sending me THE SWORD AND STAFF. They are a very good source of spiritual food. I am using much of them in my preaching..."* □



## The Moving Impetus of Faith And Grounds of Our Assurance

*(Continued from Page 8)*

come (13:1; 17:1). Now Isaiah 53 will be graphically fulfilled right before our eyes. The heel of the "seed" of woman would be bruised as he crushed the head of the serpent. Then in concluding the awful ordeal of the cross and the excruciating suffering that the Lord had to endure, he cried out, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). But the crowning victory, and the sign of all signs, was yet to be witnessed. This happened three days later with his resurrection from the dead. The empty tomb, his repeated appearances to his disciples, all proclaimed his victory (and the victory for all of mankind). And, as Paul would write of the Lord Jesus later, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). For some reason Thomas was not there when Jesus first appeared to his disciples after his resurrection. In unbelief, He said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). But after eight days and the unquestioned appearance of Jesus in their midst, this was not necessary. Without hesitation Thomas spontaneously cried out with emotion, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28). Then we read, "Jesus saith unto

**(Continued on Next Page)**

## The Moving Impetus of Faith And Grounds of Our Assurance

(Continued from Previous Page)

him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (20:29). This is when John told us as to why he wrote his gospel. There were many other signs that Jesus did, but this was the apex of them all (his resurrection), and these things were written that we might believe and in believing that we might have life through his name (20:30,31). Amen!

### More Witnesses,

#### The Holy Spirit and the Apostles

The emphasis on witnesses is found throughout the gospel of John, but that is not the end of the story. Jesus, speaking to his disciples the night before his crucifixion, told them of the coming of the Holy Spirit who would guide them into all truth (John 16:13; 14:26). He also said, "He shall testify of me: And ye [the apostles] shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26,27). Here we learn that the Holy Spirit and the apostles are appointed to be witnesses. Not only are they to be witnesses, but, as we shall see, witnesses in conjunction with one another. Witnesses were very important in verifying God's truth. Bona fide eyewitnesses were especially important in backing up the claims of the resurrection of Christ. This new phase of witnessing is parallel with the coming of the New Testament (that must be verified by witnesses, Hebrews 9:15-17) and the carrying out of the Great Commission (Mark 16:20), as well as supplying the affirmative grounds for all belief and trust. In the book of Acts we see these things unfold before us.

#### Empowered Witnesses Bearing Witness

Before he ascended to heaven the Lord said to the apostles, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Christ's plan called for twelve apostles to guide the establishment of the early church and to be his official eyewitnesses. Judas was no longer with them. Peter, their leading spokesman, addressed the situation. He said, "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained [placed] to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22). Obviously with the Lord's approval, Matthias filled the slot (Acts 1:24-26). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles in the next chapter. They explain what is going on to the curious crowds that have gathered and bear witness to the resurrection of Christ (2:1-

4,14,22-36). All was in accordance with what the Lord had said (John 15:26,27). Peter summed up his witnessing by saying, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." In response to his clear-cut words, 3000 believing people repent and are baptized into Christ (2:36-43). Reference to witnesses is repeatedly found in the book of Acts (3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39; 13:31; etc.). The witnessing of the Holy Spirit in connection with the apostles is clearly seen in Acts 4:33, "And with great power [of the Holy Spirit] gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." This same truth is repeated in Acts 5:32 ("And we [apostles] are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost [Spirit], whom God hath given to them that obey him"). The writer of Hebrews (2:3,4) likewise sums it up nicely. He speaks of the "great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him [the apostles]; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers [diverse] miracles, and gifts [distributions] of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit], according to his own will." This supernatural manifestation of divine power backed up their personal testimony about Christ. Their message was thereby authenticated as being from God and people believed.

Paul appeared belatedly on the scene, but he was nonetheless an apostle in the full sense of that word (which involved miraculous powers and being a witness). He was a special apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18; Acts 9:15; Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 2 Corinthians 12:12). He bore witness.

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### "Jesus of Nazareth" (The Christ, the Son of God)

"Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander the Great, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of school, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times."—*Philip Schaff* □

## Let Us Have the Attitude of the Psalmist

"THOU hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD...Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word...It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalms 119:65, 67 and 71; also, cf. James 1:2-5). □

## BARBS... with a Point

**LIFE** without God is life without hope.

*If a man lies, he will cheat and he will steal.*

We need to face up to our sins now or one day we will have to face God with them.

*With too many people, values are not synonymous with virtue.*

If you leave God *out*, He will leave you *out*, and you will end up in *outer* darkness (Matthew 25:30).

*The trouble with a lot of self-made men is that they worship their creator.*

It is hard for some people to accept the truth in religion because they refuse to believe there is anything that is not true.

*Truth is absolute or it is not truth at all.*

If you are a dishonest person (and all liars are), you really have a bad heart problem, spiritually speaking, and unless corrected it will be fatal.

*Considering where you are coming from now, where will you be when you get where you are going?*

The more intelligent, educated and refined a people are, the more rational and refined they will attempt to make their sins appear to be (explaining the enormity of them away).

*The acceptance of homosexuality as acceptable is not a matter of grace but of disgrace.*

Men who frequently use the word "damn" in an irreligious way are candidates to personally experience what this word means in eternity.

*Will people who have a man-made religion go to a man-made heaven?*

We defend the right for every person as a free moral agent to believe what he chooses, if it is not injurious to others, but we don't defend what a person chooses to believe if it is not right.

*A half-hearted religion won't even take us half way to heaven; in fact, it won't even get us started.*

If we no longer preach it, we no longer believe it; if we no longer believe it, it will just be a matter of time and those who hear will no longer believe it either.

*God helps those who help themselves.*

Too many times democracies are plagued with self-seeking politicians instead of being blessed by true statesmen.

*When the winds cease to blow, it is time to row.*

We should enjoy the truth for truth's sake, but some brethren seem to enjoy a good argument about the truth more than they enjoy the truth itself.

*Some businesses go bankrupt because of the moral bankruptcy of their CEO's.*

The true church, representing Christianity, is not a forum for airing diverse and divergent views, but being found faithful, it is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

*The old ship of Zion tossed about by every wind of doctrine will have a hard time reaching heaven's shore.*

To keep the lock in wedlock, throw the keys away when you get married (be faithful to your mate and never consider divorce as an option).

*If you would train up your children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6), you must first go that way yourself.*

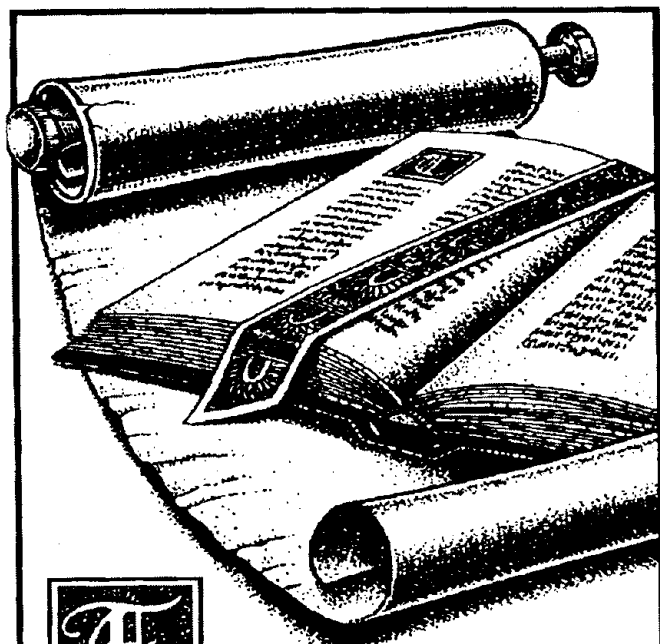
The preacher who is always ostentatiously displaying his academic credentials surely must feel inadequate and insecure. □

## What's Wrong with This Picture?

**A** LITTLE MORE LIGHT is shed on abortion inconsistencies in the furor surrounding the use of broadtail fur. It is about the use of the skins of unborn lambs, described by fashion people as "soft, shiny, and sensuous, it's a fur thin and supple enough to be made into just about any kind of garment, and it's being seen everywhere." But the Humane Society of the U.S. objects that the baby lambs are sometimes taken right from their mother's wombs for this luxurious pelt, the lamb then discarded. (This unborn fur is of higher quality.) The Humane Society calls this practice barbaric, and there are major media exposures opposing the practice. This is interesting. Notice that the baby lamb is a baby lamb and not "tissue" as is the human unborn. Notice that these people are not concerned that the aborted child is also taken from its mother's womb and by the most horrific methods imaginable. And notice further, they would never in ten thousand years object to an abortion process as "barbaric" (not even the horrible "partial birth" abortion), a word frequently used in the taking of the lamb. What's wrong with this picture?—*The Light* □

## The Moving Impetus of Faith And Grounds of Our Assurance

(Continued from Page 12)



**These are written  
so that you may  
believe...and...believing...  
have life in his name. John 20:31**

### John Bears Witness Again

We have already noticed that John in his gospel account was preoccupied with witnesses and bearing witness. In his other writings this still seems to occupy his thoughts. He makes this declaration as he begins his first epistle. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you..." (1 John 1:1-3). Later in the book he will declare again that "we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). The fifth chapter is full of references to witnesses, even speaking of sets of witnesses by three (1 John 5:6-11). Why all of this writing? Why this incessant appeal to witnesses? He tells us. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe [continue to believe] on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). Witnesses boost our faith and make sure the grounds of our assurance.

### Conclusion Appeal

Yes, we believe in the reality of God who is from everlasting to everlasting. But this faith only becomes meaningful when we trust Him. In Adam and Eve the human race sinned and became a dying race. But God spoke, God promised triumph over the serpent and God cannot lie (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3). This was the great impetus of man's faith through the ages, and knowing that God cannot lie meant that it would surely come to pass. Yes, God became flesh, incarnate, in Jesus Christ to save us from our sins and their awful consequences. The resurrection of Christ anticipates our resurrection and assures our hope. Witnesses verified the glorious news of his resurrection. This is the gospel. Our trust is in Jesus. That old hymn states it well:

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

And another hymn so vividly expresses the sentiments of our heart.

*'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to take Him at His Word;  
Just to rest upon His promise;  
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord."*

*O, how sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to trust His cleansing blood,  
Just in simple faith to plunge me  
'Neath the healing cleansing flood.*

*Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just from sin and self to cease;  
Just from Jesus simply taking  
Life and rest, and joy and peace.*

*I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee.  
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend  
And I know that Thou art with me,  
Wilt be with me to the end.*

*Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him;  
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er;  
Jesus, Jesus, Precious Jesus!  
O for grace to trust Him more.*

Kind reader, have you through faith accepted the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Savior? With the apostle Peter we say unto you, "Therefore let all...know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye [they] crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Those people who heard this testimony of Peter and his conclusion on that Day of Pentecost, cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's reply: "Repent, and be baptized [immersed] 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). Accept the Christ of God today and know personal victory in your own life. Trust him. □

Coming Book...

### **Nobody Left Behind: Insight into 'End Time' Prophecies**

By David Vaughn Elliott

**T**IME and again, readers have expressed the desire that David Vaughn Elliott publish his prophecy articles in book form. With such encouragement, he now is working toward that goal. After six years of writing prophecy articles in *The Sword and Staff*, brother Elliott has ended his series in order to devote more time toward completing and publishing just such a book.

The book will be entitled, *Nobody Left Behind: Insight into 'End Time' Prophecies*. Many of the articles which have already appeared in *The Sword and Staff* will be included, as well as a number of new chapters.

Although no precise date of publication can be given at this time, brother Elliott would like to see the book published in the spring of 2003, if at all possible. Watch future editions of *The Sword and Staff* for further details and publication information, including instructions for ordering. □

### **The Shame of Sweden**

**I**N SWEDEN sexual freedom is taken for granted to the point that the majority of Swedish couples live together without being married, and the majority of the children are born out of wedlock. Sweden has become so tolerant that it is taking the next step of prosecuting those whom it considers intolerant, even if it means throwing out freedom of speech and of religion. As of this past summer, the Swedish parliament has passed a constitutional amendment that would make it a crime to teach that homosexual behavior is immoral. A preacher, for example, who teaches what the Bible says about homosexual sin, could face up to four years in prison. We have not heard the final outcome about the amendment yet, but the new law is only one front in the Swedish establishment's war against Christianity, and consequently against the family, as well as other conservative religions. Conservative ministers and Christian schools report constant harassment by the government officials. What is happening in Sweden could be just a glimpse into what is going to happen here in the United States. Freedom of religion and speech are in jeopardy. We cannot allow homosexual activists to gain federally protected status as a mi-

nority group (which they are well on the way to seeing realized). They will use "hate crime" laws to silence all opposition to their agenda.

—*World magazine* (source of information) □

### **Good News for You**

**A**DMIRAL ROBERT PERRY spent 23 years in pursuit of the North Pole before he finally reached it—the eighth time.

Winston Churchill's career was thought to be over as a public servant in the 1930's. He stayed alert and was fully prepared when the opportunity for leadership came his way—at age 66.

*"The biggest mistake people make is giving up. Adversity is an experience, not a final act."*

As Christians we must realize God desires the best in life for us because He sees in us the image of Jesus Christ. He is molding and making each one into the image of His Son. When disappointments come and plans are destroyed, rejoice in the Lord, greater things are in store for you in higher places.

Remember: When the night has passed, the morning dawns bright and glorious.

"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created things, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:37-39)

If you are walking in the will of God, there are no real "final acts" but only opportunities to improve your walk with Him.—*Larry Sullivan* □

#### *Answers to:*

### **BIBLE QUESTIONS**

1. The Horites (Horims), Deuteronomy 2:12,27—the name means cave dwellers; 2. Genesis 30:1; 3. (1) Six years old when they came back to Canaan (Genesis 30:24,25; 31:41); (2) Seventeen years old when he was sold into slavery (Genesis 37); (3) Thirty years old when he appeared before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46); (4) One hundred and ten years old when he died (Genesis 50:25,26); 4. Exodus 17:8-16; 5. Numbers 4:1-3,21-23,29,30; 6. (1) Joshua 2:1-15; (2) 1 Samuel 19:12; (3) Acts 9:25 (2 Corinthians 11:32,33); 7. Judges 15:14-17; 8. Judges 16:4-20 (Joshua 13:3; Judges 3:3); 9. Acts 13:22 (1 Samuel 13:14); 10. Psalm 119; Psalm 117; 11. Psalm 119; 12. Jeremiah 35:1-19; 13. Luke 2:36-38; 14. Luke 3:21-23; 15. Matthew 16:21-23; 16. John 17:17; 17. John 19:39,40; 18. Acts 1:15-26; 19. Acts 7; 20. Revelation 1:9. □

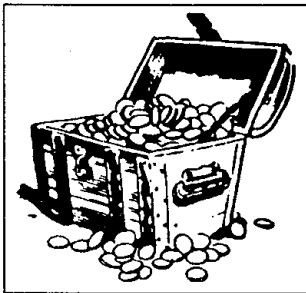
### **The Local Church of Christ**

**TOO MANY** today are set on building up denominational machinery rather than functioning simply through and by means of the local, undenominational church (the only organization the Lord has given for getting the work of the church done). □

# The Sword AND Staff

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



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