

The Berea Baptist Banner

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" (Psalms 60:4)

Memories of Missions

By Milburn Cockrell

(1941 -2002)

"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Ps. 68:11).

The story of missions is an old, old story. It antedates creation. In eternity past the Son of God entered into a covenant engagement with the Father and the Holy Spirit to come to earth on a mission of redemption. When on earth, our Savior said: **"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work"** (John 4:34).

In the fullness of time Christ came in fulfillment of this mission. **"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh"** (Rom. 8:3). Near the end of His earthly life He declared: **"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"** (John 17:4). When He completed His mission into the world by saving His people from their sins, He cried out in victory: **"It is finished."**

The Patriarchs and Missions

In the patriarchal dispensation, God



Milburn Cockrell

preached the gospel to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). Jehovah removed him from province to province through a protracted life and invested him with importance in the eyes of the nations among whom he so-journed.

Later God sent Abraham's posterity into Egypt and kept them as a marked and

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Dealing With Difficult Family Members

By Jeff Shortt

Mantachie, Mississippi

"And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead,



Jeff Shortt

of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the LORD said unto

Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again" (Numbers 12:10-15).

In our text, Moses is a man with a family problem. Through envy and discontent, Miriam and Aaron had murmured against Moses. An obvious rift was created and Miriam was singularly punished by God. This problem between Moses and his siblings is very relevant for us today, and especially the way that Moses deals with the situation.

Oftentimes, we find ourselves with family problems. Sometimes we have problems with our family members be-

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Seven (Or Is It Six) Church Ages

By Curtis Pugh

Bocsa, Caras-Severin, Romania

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; ...Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea... . The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the



Curtis Pugh

angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." (Rev. 1:4, 11, 20).

I have not been able to determine who originated the teaching that the seven churches of the Book of Revelation represent seven church ages. Even the eminent Baptist pastor and writer John Gill subscribed in

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The Crucified Life

By A. T. Robertson

(1863 - 1934)

"I have been crucified with Christ; and no longer do I live, but Christ lives in me: and what life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

This is one of Paul's profound mystical sayings that challenge one, and fascinate one with the depth of their meaning. Paul was one of the most intellectual of men, and yet he was a mystic in the truest sense of that term. He was not carried away by the superficial claims and language of the mystery-religions of the time, like Mithraism, but he never doubted the reality of his own union



A. T. Robertson

with Christ. The heart of Christ's work was the Cross, and Paul found contact with Christ in that supreme experience. Paul considered himself a typical sinner, "that in me as chief might Christ Jesus set forth his entire long-suffering for an ensample to those who were going to believe on him unto life eternal" (I Tim. 1:16). So then, since this

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False Proverbs

By Roy Mason

(1894 - 1978)

I suppose that all peoples who have possessed any intelligence worth mentioning have had their proverbs. Some have the idea that all of the proverbs in the world are in the Bible, in the book known as "Proverbs." Such an idea is not true. Solomon was indeed a great writer of proverbs—perhaps the greatest that ever lived. And his collection of short, crisp, sententious sayings contain an abundance of life's philosophy. But other peoples save the Israelites have had their proverbs, some of them strangely resembling those of Solomon. For instance, the Chinese classics contain a great



Roy Mason

number of these, mainly the sayings of Confucius, and some of them are exceedingly well put and true. Many of the native tribes of Africa have a wealth of proverbs current among them. These sayings or proverbs are based on life's experiences, and are supposedly the result of wide observation and

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Memories of Missions

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distinct people. Finally he led them out by a miracle and conducted them to Canaan. Thus God made the truth migratory and offered every nation which it visited an opportunity of learning of it.

The Mosaic Dispensation

The Mosaic Dispensation was stationary and national. Judea was located then in the center of the known world. From this center the light of truth poured forth in all directions over the face of the earth. The Hebrews protested idolatry and proclaimed the One Living God. They invited the nations to come and worship before Him. **"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker,"** they said (Ps. 95:6).

The Israelites constituted God's chosen representatives to an apostate world: **"Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he"** (Isa. 43:10).

Again the Lord said of Israel: **"This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise"** (Isa. 43:21). The Jewish temple was designed by God to be **"an house of prayer for all people"** (Isa. 56:7). Through Jewish rituals and ceremonies Jehovah said: **"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else"** (Isa. 45:22). The prophets preached about salvation in Christ: **"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins"** (Acts 10:43). Israel largely failed in this exalted task of witnessing to the Gentile nations.

New Testament Missions

While on earth Christ organized His church and gave it the commission to make disciples in all nations. **"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God"** (Eph. 3:10). The Holy Spirit is using the church to take out a people for the Lord.

The followers of Christ are the channels and representatives of God's grace to people in the world. To aid the church in preaching the gospel to every creature, the ascended Savior sent the Holy Spirit. **"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost 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). The eternal Spirit Himself came expressly to testify of Christ. He came to be the great missionary spirit of the true church to **"reprove the world of sin"** (John 16:8).

Missions In The Early Churches

Now let us glance at the missionary spirit and principles as exhibited in the conduct of the primitive churches. The first church at Jerusalem, and at that time in all the world, added 3,000 to her membership on the day of Pentecost. The Lord added souls to this church daily (Acts 2:47), and the number of the disciples in it multiplied (Acts 6:1). Even when persecution scattered this great church, its members **"went every where preaching the word"** (Acts 8:4). Thus we see that the first church in the world was a missionary church.

In the 13th chapter of Acts, the Antiochian church is seen sending out Paul and Barnabas to preach to the heathen. Many of the following chapters in Acts tell of the activities of these foreign missionaries. They took the message of Christ to the region beyond, preaching in the more remote regions of Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia.

The churches at Ephesus and Colosse were exhorted to be fervent, incessant, and united in prayer for the wide and successful propaganda of the gospel. In requesting prayer, he said to them: **"That utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make**

known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). The Phillipian church was to shine as a light **"holding forth the word of life"** (Phil. 2:16).

To the church at Rome, Paul wrote: **"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"** (Rom. 10:14).

The members of the church at Thessalonica became ensamples to all who believed, in Macedonia and Achaia: for from them **"sounded out the word of the Lord"** (I Thess. 1:7-8). To the Corinthians, Paul wrote: **"For we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you"** (II Cor. 10:14-16).

Rapid Growth In The Early Churches

The first church was full of missionary energy. By A.D. 180, the gospel had reached all the provinces of the Roman Empire, from Britain to the Tigris and from the Danube to the Libian Desert. There was by this time over three hundred churches and probably about 500,000 believers. By the time the imperial persecutions ended in A.D. 313, Christians numbered half of the entire population of the Roman Empire.

The historian, Tertullian (A.D. 160-222), in speaking of this rapid growth of Christianity in his Apology to the Emperor said: **"We are but of yesterday, yet we have filled your empire, your cities, your islands, your castles, your corporate towns, your assemblies, your very camps, your tribes, your companies, your palace, your senate, your forum; your temples alone are left to you. So great are our numbers, that we might successfully contend with you in open warfare; but were we only to withdraw ourselves from you, and to remove by common consent to some remote corner of the globe, our mere secession would be sufficient to accomplish your destruction, and to avenge our cause. You would be left without subjects to govern, and would tremble at the solitude and silence around you, — at the awful stillness of a dead world."**

How did the early churches reach so many people in such a short time? Why did their preaching sweep away thrones of idolatry with irresistible power? The multitudes were not reached by a beautiful cathedral, nor a magnetic pastor, nor marvelous music, or an outstanding program. It was done by the common people preaching the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation.

Missions In Church History

The true church of our Lord has always been a missionary body. Though they were persecuted unto death during the

Dark Ages, there was never a total eclipse of true justifying faith and the simple method of salvation by grace. The Montanists, Novations, and Paulicans were missionary bodies. Edward Gibbon, historian, said that the highways of those days "opened an easy passage to the missionaries as well as the legions from Italy to the extremity of Spain and Britain."

Of the Paulicans, John T. Christian tells us: "It has already been indicated that the Paulicans came from Armenia, by way of Thrace, settled in France and Italy, and traveled through, and made disciples in nearly all the countries of Europe" (*A History of the Baptists*, p. 60).

Again, the same writer discloses: "The Paulicans, in the ninth century, rebelled against their enemies, drove out Michael III, and established in Armenia the free state of Teprice....From the capital of this free state, itself called Teprice, went forth a host of missionaries to convert the Slavonic tribes of Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Serbia to the Paulican faith....Great was their success" (Ibid., p. 51). Thomas Armitage says that a Paulican missionary named Sergius "stirred Western Asia for more than a generation and brought nameless thousands to Christ" (*History of the Baptists*, p. 239).

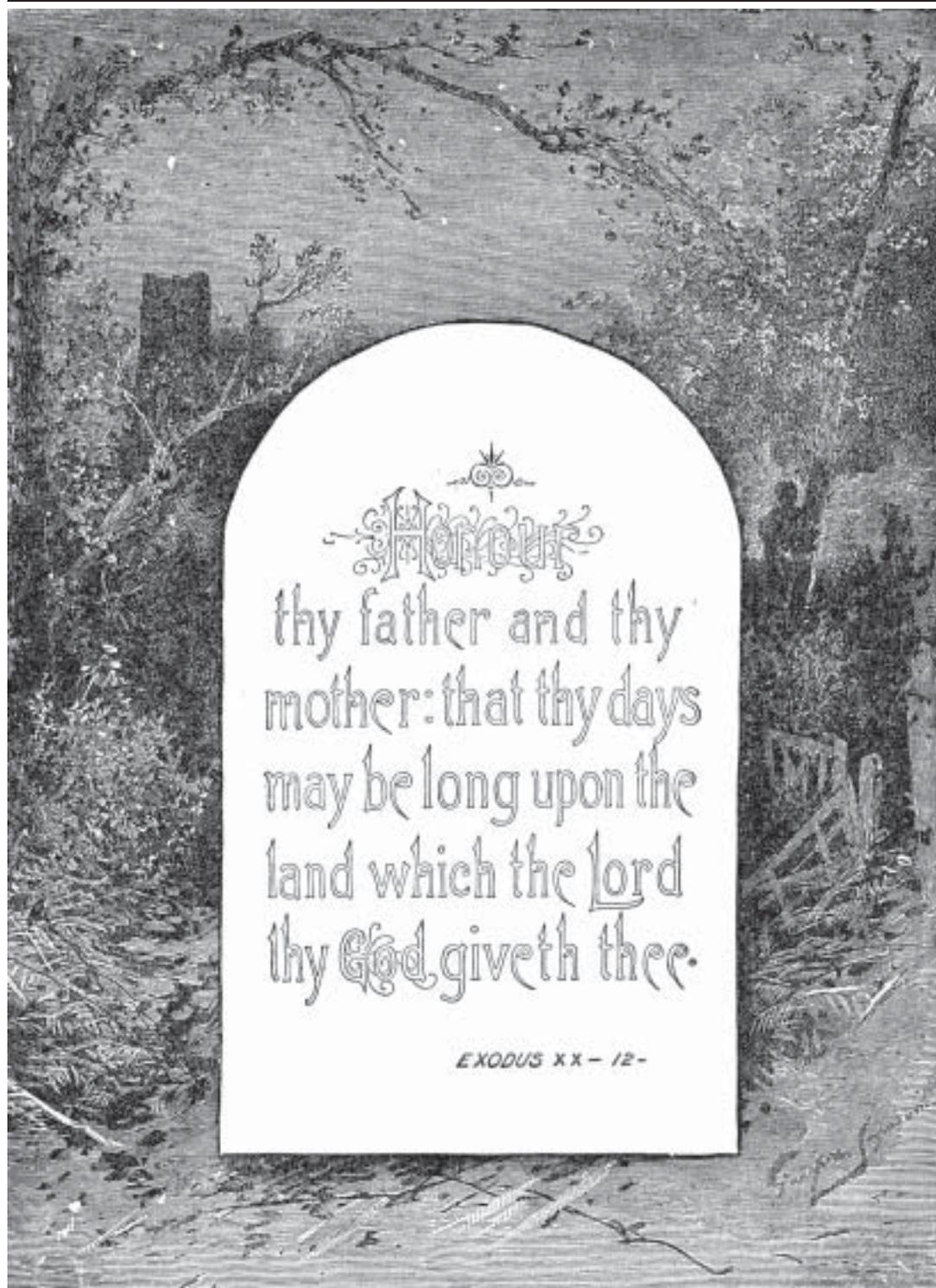
The Waldenses and Albigenes were possessed by a missionary spirit. George Stanley Faber declared the Waldenses to be a missionary body: "The circumstance is remarkable: but, so far as I am aware, no allusion to the Waldenses out of their own Country or to the Vallenses out of their own immediate Neighbourhood occurs, until we reach the days of Peter the rich Vallensic Merchant of Lyons. Then, for the first time, through the institution of that peculiar Class of the Lionists which was denominated The Fraternity of the Poor Men of Lyons, the Vallenses, who had hitherto testified against apostolic corruption only in or near their own Alpine Valleys, became missionaries upon a large scale and to a wonderfully great extent" (*History and Theology of the Ancient Vallenses and Albigenes*, pp. 357-362).

Missions Among English Baptists

The Welsh Baptists of 1663 were Missionary Baptists. Davis, the historian, reports of them: "At this time the Baptists met a Llantrisant. In the association held at Abergavamy, this church proposed to revive the old plan of supporting ministers in weak and destitute churches; which was for the strongest to help the weakest. Wm. Thomas was appointed home missionary for six months, and received from Swansea five pounds; Llantrisant, two pounds, ten shillings; Carmarthen, two pounds, ten shillings" (*History of Welsh Baptists*, p. 31).

At a meeting in Kettering, October 2, 1792, there was organized the Particular Baptist Missionary Society under the leadership of the notable Andrew Fuller.

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It was called a "Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathens." In 1793, they sent William Carey as a missionary to India. Such famous Baptist men as Samuel Stennett, Abraham Booth, Andrew Fuller and Robert Hall were leading lights in this movement, though all held to unconditional election and absolute predestination.

The modern missionary effort originated first among particular or Calvinistic Baptists in England. The Armenian Baptists did not form the General Baptist Missionary Society until 1816. Those who say that belief in unconditional election is anti-missionary ignore the indisputable facts that modern missions began with Baptists who held to the doctrines of grace.

American Missionary Baptists

A meeting took place in Philadelphia in

May of 1814. At this gathering the General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States was organized. It was also called the Triennial Convention since it convened every three years. Adoniram Judson was its first missionary and his field of labor was Burma.

The oldest Baptist association in America, the Philadelphia Association, from our earliest account of it, was a missionary body. In 1753 this association sent Elder John Gano as a missionary to the churches in North Carolina which were soon after formed into the Kehukee Association. The first Baptist church in the state of Virginia was organized by Robert Nordin, a missionary, who sailed from England in 1714. In 1755 the Charleston Baptist Association recommended to the churches composing it to make contribution for the support of a missionary to itinerate in neighboring states.

Anti-Missionary Baptists

From the days of the Apostles to the

present time, the true legitimate Baptist churches have ever been a missionary body. In 1832 the Anti-Missionary Baptists withdrew from the genuine Baptists and assumed the name "Old School Baptists." This group is often referred to by others as "Hard Shell Baptists." They are unworthy of the name Old School Baptists since they are a new set of Baptists never heard of until 1832 in America. Missionary Baptists are in reality the real Old School or Primitive Baptists.

Some of the Old Baptists lapsed into Two-Seedism and Non-resurrectionism. Yet many of these churches still possess many of the features of true Baptists. There is among them what is considered the liberal element of them, a definite moving toward the doctrine and practice of Missionary Baptists. Maybe Divine Providence will one day in the future cause these to drop their prejudice toward us so that once again Baptists will stand together in the army of the Master as in times past.

General Observations

The Bible and historic facts and documents reveal that the story of Redemption is the story of missions. Missions began with one man, Abraham. Then its scope was broadened to include the families of the sons of Jacob. After this, missions spread to the nation of Israel. Today, the church of the Savior is to go into all nations and preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ.

Church missionary work was the greatest when it first began. Paul told the Colossians that the gospel "**was preached to every creature which is under heaven**" (Col. 1:23), in Apostolic times. Later persecution drove missionary work under cover during the Dark Ages, though some groups of true Christians continued to preach the true gospel. Following the Protestant Reformation, there was a revival of missionary zeal among Baptist churches, especially in the 1800's and 1900's. There remains much missionary effort among Baptists at present though much of it is unscriptural. Among Sovereign Grace Baptists there seems to be a renewal of missionary effort.

Missionary work was carried on by the local churches until 1792, when the churches, contrary to the New Testament pattern, turned missionary work over to missionary societies. Out of this trend came the modern missionary associations and conventions with their domineering boards and committees. All of this was a

departure from the historical Baptist practice and the teaching of the Bible.

On one hand today, we have the Missionary Baptists, in associations and conventions, who in the main have forsaken the doctrines of grace, denied church authority in mission work, and degenerated to Arminianism and corrupt evangelism. Then at the other extremes, there is the Anti-Missionary Baptists who deny the need of preaching the gospel to lost sinners and only feed the sheep. At neither of these extremes are the Baptists who stand with the old Baptist fathers and believe in the doctrines of grace and missionary work to be done through the local church, as Christ commanded. I am extremely glad to be a part of this third class of Baptists.

Difficult Family Members

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cause we are Christians and they are not. They may chide us, revile us, and ridicule us for going to church and giving our tithes and offerings and our time. They may make fun of us or even persecute us because of it.

We sometimes have in our families those that are saved but do not display a very Christian-like attitude toward us. They will be very harsh with us because of the things we believe, practice and stand for, because it is different from how they interpret the scriptures. They can be very cruel and hurt us deeply. They will ridicule us if we live a more conservative lifestyle than they do. We must be very careful in how we deal with these situations and this incident with Moses and his family provides us with a good example.

Let us consider Moses' situation with Israel that gave rise to the problem in our text. In the previous chapter of Numbers, we read that the people of Israel had grown to a great number. Moses was the civil leader and a prophet to the people. The people would come to him when they needed a judge to settle their differences.

Moses had a great responsibility in judging the people. Because of the number of the people, the load became too much for Moses to bear alone. Jethro gave him wise counsel suggesting that he find and appoint seventy elders in Israel to help in the matter of judging between the people. Moses then chose seventy elders to be judges under him.

This incident was what led Miriam and Aaron to act wrongfully toward their brother. I wish to consider in this message firstly, Miriam's fault before God. Secondly, I want to examine Aaron's part in the controversy. Thirdly, we shall consider Moses in the situation and how that he responded to this problem.

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Difficult Family Members

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I. Miriam's Fault before God

Neither Miriam nor Aaron was consulted about the choice of the seventy elders. Furthermore, neither of Moses' siblings was chosen to be one of the elders to judge the people. They both began to murmur against Moses. **"They said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it"** (Num. 12:2). They were unhappy with the exercise of authority by Moses. They felt slighted that they were not involved in such an important decision. "Who is Moses to decide what is going to be done?" they questioned.

Apparently, Miriam was the one that began the murmuring against Moses. However, not only did she speak and murmur against Moses, but she led Aaron in the transgression with her. She was able to persuade him to consent with her discontent. Hers was a normal course of action in this situation. Usually when someone is unhappy about something, they go around and draft some sympathizers with them to boost their numbers and have more effect. In this case, Miriam did not go to Moses and tell him of her trouble, she went to Aaron and talked him into being upset.

The root of Miriam's problem was jealousy. She was Moses' older sister. It would seem that she should have a place of precedence before him. She was there when he was a baby hidden in the river by their mother. She was there when the Pharaoh's daughter came to the river and found the babe. She was the one that suggested finding a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. She was the one that went and called their mother to nurse the child. If it was not for her, Moses would not even be here today, she likely thought. Surely, she should have preeminence over him.

This strife actually happens often in families. God may bless one that is younger and use them in a more visible way than the older children. Those that are older will become jealous and ask, "Are you going to teach us?" Just because they are older they feel like they have a place of precedence and predominance, but it might be the younger one that God has called, gifted, and used more than the older ones. The younger may indeed be the most talented and able to do a certain work, but the older feels that he should be preferred before the younger. It may seem reasonable to the older ones, but to murmur and complain about it is really to murmur against God.

Miriam was a chief woman among the Israelites and this made her behavior that much worse. **"Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And**

Miriam answered them, sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and the rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Ex. 15:20-21).

These verses show us that she had a place of high esteem and high regard, as did Aaron, the priest. They had high positions but still she was jealous of Moses because he had the chief position. She felt as if she deserved some of the honor. She felt she should have been consulted when they chose these seventy elders and Aaron should have been consulted. I do not think she was really so concerned about Aaron, but she strengthened her case if she brought Aaron in with her.

Miriam's sin was not hidden. The Bible says of her complaining, **"And the LORD heard it"** (Num. 12:2). She was punished for what she did. **"And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow; and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous"** (Num. 12:9-10). The account goes on to say in verse 15, **"Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again."** She became leprous and, according to the law, she had to be put out of the camp. She was ultimately healed of her leprosy, but God let her remain in leprosy, out of the camp, for seven days before he brought her back in.

Miriam was restored, but she was punished. She had to suffer the consequences of her sin, murmuring against Moses and leading Aaron into transgression. Her punishment teaches us that one that leads another to fall is guiltier than the one that was led. The one that was led is also guilty but the leader bears more of the responsibility. **"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven"** (Matt. 5:19).

II. Aaron's part in the controversy

Aaron, the brother of Moses, was a priest, he and his two sons before God. He had an important work. Aaron allowed himself to be moved with envy by Miriam. He allowed Miriam to bend his ear. He probably did not have any problem with Moses' leadership until the malignant speech of Miriam began to infect his mind and fester into jealousy.

There was a time when a young man came to Moses and told him of others that were prophesying in the camp. He tried to move Moses to envy. Joshua spoke up and said, **"My lord Moses, forbid them"** (Num. 11:28). Moses answered them both, **"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!"** (Num. 11:29). Moses was not moved to envy against those that were prophesying. He was thankful and hoped that God

Funnybone

"... A time to laugh..." (Eccl. 3:4).

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that "Jonah was swallowed by a whale."

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible.

The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah."

The teacher replied, "What if Jonah didn't go to heaven?"

The little girl replied, "Then you ask him."

Little Jimmy Johnson opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he flipped through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. He picked up the object and looked at it. What he found was an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages.

"Mama, look what I found," little Jimmy called out.

"What have you got there dear?" replied his mother.

With astonishment in his voice, he answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear!"

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of the Possum Trot elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples.

There was a note posted on the apple tray: "Take only ONE. God is watching."

At the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. Someone had written a small note, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

would raise up more that would prophesy.

Aaron's was a lesser role than Miriam's was and he was spared in the judgment that fell on her. This resulted in a great fear coming upon Aaron. Because he was the priest, he had to pronounce the judgment upon his sister. He had to declare her unclean. He knew he was guilty of the same sin, but he escaped punishment. No doubt, this was very disturbing to Aaron, knowing that he was worthy of the same punishment. In some ways, this served to actually punish Aaron and bring his own sin before his eyes.

Aaron responded by repenting to Moses and repenting to God. He said **"Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned"** (Num. 12:11). Aaron acknowledged to Moses that he had sinned. He admitted that he had acted foolishly and had been jealous and envious against him. Aaron



Little Sally Sue had just finished her first week of school. "I'm just wasting my time," she said to her mother. "I can't read, I can't write and they won't let me talk!"

The Sunday school teacher at the Possum Trot Baptist Church was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to "Honor thy Father and thy Mother," she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat one little boy answered, "Thou shall not kill."

One day little Sally Sue was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother has several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her brunette head.

She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, "Why are some of your hairs white, Mommy?"

Her mother replied, "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me unhappy, one of my hairs turn white."

Then little Sally thought about this revelation for a minute and said, "Mommy, how come all of grandma's hairs are white?"

also interceded for Miriam, his sister. He pleaded, **"Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb"** (Num. 12:12). Aaron wanted her to be recovered. He knew Miriam had done wrong and he wanted her to be healed and restored.

III. Moses in the situation

What does Moses do in this situation? He is a man with a family problem. His brother and sister have been jealous of him and disrespected him. They went out to the children of Israel, spread false accusations and criticisms, and brought reproach upon him. They are making the people look more suspiciously upon Moses.

Notice that Moses did not go and contend with Miriam and Aaron. I am sure he was upset and he could have tried to straighten them out, but he did not do that. We find here the truth of Christ's

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words that **"a man's foes shall be they of his own household"** (Matt. 10:36). Oh, to God that it would not be so! However, oftentimes our foes are those of our own household. Sometimes our own family members will cause us the most trouble and distress. If someone of the world would ridicule us, it really would not bother us that much. If someone of our own family, whom we love, will do the same, it hurts us deeply.

Moses was hurt but he did not go out and dispute with them. Consider the words of the Apostle Peter in his epistle, **"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously"** (I Pet. 2:19-23). When Moses was reviled of his family, he reviled not again. He did not argue with them and fight with them. He did not try to get revenge and spread rumors about them. He did not begin to charge them foolishly. He endured it patiently. Peter says, **"This is acceptable with God."**

Notice also that Moses took no pleasure in Miriam's judgment. It did not make Moses happy that Miriam was struck with leprosy. The leprosy was a significant punishment. She desired a chief position of preferment. She was seeking honor and was brought to shame. Moses did not have pleasure in the fact that she stumbled and fell. Moses did not complain against God that she was judged but he did not rejoice in the judgment. He did not want to see her get hers. He was not looking for the wheels of providence to turn and mete out justice to pay her back.

Moses showed forgiveness and love toward Miriam and Aaron. He could have responded to their jealousy and ridicule with the same malice. However, Moses was not overcome of evil. Paul wrote, **"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"** (Rom 12:21). Moses indeed overcame evil with good. He showed forgiveness and a loving heart. No matter what they said about him, said about his wife, or did toward him, Moses rewarded evil with kindness.

Moses was innocent in this problem. He did what God told him to do. He ap-

pointed seventy elders over the people. Moses was right. He could have felt vindicated stating that he was right, they were wrong and that God justly judged them. He did not do that. He did not try to defend himself and get the last word. He was not overcome with evil. In fact, he rewarded evil with kindness.

What did Moses do? Moses prayed for his sister. **"Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee"** (Num. 12:13). The word translated "cried" here means he lifted up his voice to God. He prayed earnestly and sincerely to God and interceded for Miriam. He is not trying to make excuses but he wanted God to restore her. When Moses' family had been difficult with him, he prayed for them.

We also see the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross of Calvary, bleeding and dying for the sins of His people saying, **"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"** (Luke 23:34). He prayed for His enemies. He tells us to do likewise. **"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise"** (Luke 6:27-30).

Let us now conclude with some practical observations concerning dealing with difficult family members. First, we need to be careful how we speak about the servants of God. Moses was God's man doing God's work. He was right in what he was doing. Miriam and Aaron found it easy to criticize his decisions. We must be careful for when we criticize and condemn the Lord's servants we are not in good company. Satan is said to be **"the accuser of our brethren"** (Rev. 12:10). It is a fearful thing to speak lightly of those whom God has called. **"Who are thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth"** (Rom. 14:4).

Perhaps Miriam was not careful because she was so familiar with her brother. Maybe she felt as if she had a little more latitude and could say those things about him with impunity. She found out she could not. She was even more responsible. She was judged. We should show our respect to those who are the servants of God and entrusted with His work. Often the words of Christ are proved true in our experience: **"A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house"** (Matt. 13:57).

Next, we must realize that our families will give us opposition. We think our families will always support us, but some-

times they can be the greatest hindrances that we have. Christ spoke of this division saying, **"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword, For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. And he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it"** (Matt. 10:34-39). These verses are not telling us to cause a problem in our families. However, our doctrines and manner of life will cause division. Neither is this passage telling us to break all ties with our family.

The truth is, if we compromise the Lord Jesus Christ in order to get along with our family, we are not worthy of Christ. We must love Christ more than all else. We cannot think we will be exempt from these problems. Not everyone is going to love and adore us and help us along the way in following Christ. There will be those, even in our own family, who will seek to hinder our Christian life, and sometimes they will hinder vehemently. It ought not to be so and it is a shame that it is so, but we are not to compromise the Lord Jesus Christ, His Word, or His church just to get along with someone on this earth.

Paul wrote to the Romans, **"As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"** (Rom 12:18). We are to **"seek peace, and ensue it"** (I Peter 3:11). Jesus taught, **"Blessed are the peacemakers"** (Matt 5:9). We ought to seek peace as much as we possibly can but sometimes division will come. We must not compromise truth in order to make peace. Moses did not compromise. We have been given things to do by Christ and we do not have the authority to change them. Christ has told us plainly to follow him. Moses was not exempt. He stuck to God's word and did not compromise.

Next, we must be careful not to repay the ridicule or the criticisms that we receive because of our conscientious desire to please God. Peter exhorts us, **"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing"** (I Peter 3:8-9). We are not to debate with our detractors. We are not to get involved in railing just because they do those things to us. We are to bless them. Reward evil with kindness no matter how it is they treat you. **"He that would love life, and see good days, let**

him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Peter 3:10-12). We are not to repay ridicule but we are to offer blessing. If we are persecuted because our faith makes a difference in our lives, we are blessed, **"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing"** (I Peter 3:17).

Next, we need to learn like Moses to control our tongue. Many people are proud of the fact that they always speak up and give their opinion. They boast that they can give as good as they get. This is contrary to the Word. James wrote, **"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"** (James 1:19). I know it is hard to endure. Many times our families can hurt us the most because they know how to get to us. We must control our tongues. **"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain"** (James 1:26). The Bible teaches us to rule our own spirits. We are to have ourselves under control, including our tongue.

Next, we ought to pray for our families. We ought to pray for our unsaved family members whether they are causing problems or not. We ought to pray for those that are saved but do not agree with us and want to be hateful against us about it. Moses cried out for God to heal Miriam. We should pray that God would show them the truth and reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and save their souls.

Lastly, we should live a godly life before them seeking to turn a curse into a blessing. Peter wrote about a woman that had an unsaved husband. He wrote that she was to live a godly life before him so that the unsaved husband could see her life and that he might be saved beholding her **"chaste conversation coupled with fear"** (I Peter 3:2). We ought to live a godly life before our families so we will commend the things we believe. We will **"adorn the doctrine"** that we believe. We will live as **"becometh the gospel"** and commend the gospel of Jesus Christ to them.

If we jump in and fight it out with them, we are not doing any better than they are. If we are caught up in that, we have lost from the start. If we have such a situation, where there are those that are opposed, we ought to be even more earnest to be sure that we are being a good witness and example before them. We should sincerely seek to be the instrument that God would use to bring grace to that house. Let each of us become a mission-

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ary to our families that they might see and glorify God. Let us follow the words of Christ, **“Let your light so shine before me, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** (Matt. 5:16).

It would be great if we could be together with all of our family serving the Lord in His church, but I realize sometimes it is just not so. We should seek to be a blessing and seek to be that missionary. Moses was one, he could have done many things, but he showed forgiveness, love, and an attitude of grace and he prayed for his family and we see that they were restored after this time. I pray that it would be so with us.

False Proverbs

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generalization.

Now, a proverb may be either true or false, that depends upon whether the coiner of the proverb has correctly observed and generalized or not. David, in the heat and haste of anger once started the saying, “All men are liars.” But David’s saying was not the product of his calm, sober judgment about the matter.

When a saying becomes current, so many people accept it as the truth without ever subjecting it to the scrutiny of their own minds to see whether or not it is based on fact. For this reason, current sayings, if false, may be productive of great harm.

The slogans gotten up by political parties, and the sententious phrases applied by them to the opposition, are closely akin to proverbs. The “peace, preparedness, and prosperity” slogan, and “He kept us out of war,” practically elected Wilson to the presidency a few years ago. The two words “Crown Prince,” applied to Mr. McAdoo by his political enemies, utterly ruined his chances for the nomination for president at the San Francisco Democratic Convention. The leaders of the party knew that that title would absolutely spell defeat for the party, no matter how wrongly or unjustly it might be applied, since the average person would never stop to consider whether the words were justly merited or not.

Now, the thing that I am getting at is this: There are certain sayings current with reference to religion that have become proverbial. Some of these sayings are true, but most of them are at bottom false, with not a particle of truth, or at least with only a half-truth for a foundation. Time and again in conversing with people with reference to religion, I have had them give expression to one of these false proverbs with an air of having voiced one of the sublimest of truths. I believe

that these current ideas with reference to religion have cost many persons the loss of their souls. I wish to take up some of these sayings that have gained proverbial currency and to show the error of them. If any reader has ever been guilty of using one of these expressions, I trust that you will never do so again.

The first that I shall mention is a saying that strikes at the very heart of true religion. It is a saying that I have heard times without number. It is this: **IT DOESN’T MATTER SO MUCH WHAT YOU BELIEVE, JUST SO YOU ARE SINCERE IN YOUR BELIEFS.** It is surprising how many people there are who hold on to this illogical and erroneous way of thinking. If the thought ever flashes through their minds, “Maybe my religious beliefs are wrong,” they immediately soothe themselves with the further thought, “Oh, well, it doesn’t really matter. I am sincere in what I believe, and the Lord will just see my sincerity and overlook anything that might be false in my way of thinking.”

I want to prove to my readers the absurdity of this idea by means of some illustrations: Out in Oklahoma, where I used to be a pastor, a minister can only marry people in the particular county where his credentials are registered. He must make satisfactory arrangements at the courthouse of each county in which he desires to perform the wedding ceremony. A friend of mine told me of a certain minister who was not aware of this requirement, and who married a couple without complying with the law. Some days after the ceremony had been performed the preacher woke up to the fact that the couple had not been legally married at all. He told them about it, and both preacher and couple well nigh broke their necks complying with the law and getting their marriage on a legal basis. Evidently the preacher and couple were perfectly sincere about the whole matter. The young people thought that they were married. But did their sincerity in thinking that change the facts of the case? Not in the slightest.

Another illustration: Several years ago a little boy was taken to a certain hospital in Louisville, Ky., for an operation. The nurse, in preparing for the operation, aimed to apply alcohol, but somehow made a mistake and got hold of a bottle of carbolic acid instead, and applied that. The poor little body of the boy was so terribly burned that he died in intense agony a few hours later. I haven’t a doubt but that the nurse was perfectly sincere in thinking that she had used alcohol, but her sincerity did not prevent the death of the child, the prostration of the parents in grief, the blot on the hospital’s record, and later the suicide of the nurse herself as she brooded over the terrible mistake that she had made until she was led to throw herself into the Ohio river. Many, many disastrous things can occur

in spite of sincerity of belief or motive, and one of those things is the loss of one’s soul for eternity, simply because they sincerely believe—but believe a falsehood!

Another saying that is frequently heard among those who are not Christians is, **“I TRY TO LIVE RIGHT, AND PAY MY HONEST DEBTS. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS CONSTITUTE MY RULE OF LIFE.”** In other words, it is a saying that is based on the idea that Christless morality can save one. I am unable to understand the logic of the person who thinks that his own morality can save him. He himself goes to the Bible for his standard of morality, and then he turns right around and rejects the Bible’s teaching when it says that **“By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”** A man like that is at fault because he never takes the time and trouble to do a little honest thinking. If he would only consider a moment he would be forced to ask the question, **“If morality can save me, then why did Christ die?”** You can silence the moralist as soon as he goes to talking about the Ten Commandments, by pointing out Christ’s summary of them. Ask him if he loves God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, as Jesus taught. He will have little else to say after that question, for of course no one loves God with all his being who continues in willful rejection of God’s Son.

Still another saying that we hear quite frequently is, **“WELL, I AM LIVING THE BEST I KNOW HOW.”** This is plainly and palpably an untruth, and I always feel like telling those who give utterance to it that it is an untruth. No one lives the best he knows how. Either by word, thought or deed we have all done violence to our sense of right. I have never yet known anyone to live up to the light he had. It is true that some people have a more highly developed sense of right than others, and some have a more exalted standard of conduct and duty than others possess. This is largely because they go to the trouble of ascertaining what God’s will is concerning them. Many Christians live their lives on a low plane because they fail to find out God’s will and way. It is the duty of every saved person to familiarize himself with the Bible, God’s revealed will, in order that he may live a life that will meet with divine approval. Ignorance of the law of our land excuses no one in the sight of our courts. It is considered to be a part of every man’s duty to find out what is the law. The same well applies to spiritual matters. It is every Christian’s duty to find out the will of God. The Bible, Sunday school and preaching are within the reach of every man, woman and child of the land, so that there is no reason for anyone being ignorant in this matter.

Another saying that has about passed into the proverb stage, and that is very current among Christians is, **“I DON’T GO TO CHURCH VERY OFTEN, BUT THEN**

YOU KNOW THAT A PERSON CAN WORSHIP GOD JUST AS WELL AT HOME AS HE CAN AT CHURCH.” This is simply a bluff put up by undutiful church members in an attempt to justify themselves when they know that they are in the wrong. The Lord tells us not to **“forsake the assembling of ourselves together,”** and there is no way around that command. The man or woman who is most devout in private worship will be most regular in his attendance upon the place of public worship, whereas those who drop out of the public worship of God soon grow cold in their private devotional life. I have never yet, in any single instance, known a devout Christian who was physically able to go to church, and yet habitually declined to do so. The truth is there is a time and place for both public and private worship. Both are duties necessary to spiritual growth, and neither can be neglected without imperiling the development of the soul’s life.

“I can worship just as well at home.” That is what the spiritual indifferentist says. But whether it is possible for one to do so or not, the fact is they won’t do it! God never meant for a Christian to be a spiritual hermit anyhow. He wants Christians to meet together in Christian fellowship and mutual love, uniting in praise, prayer, and co-operating together for the furthering of His work. It is natural for folks of like mind and purpose to seek the society of one another. We have a multitude of organizations today in which are grouped those who are of the same purpose and pursuit. Labor organizations, associations of professional men, leagues of various groups of individuals, and so on. Jesus meant that His church should be an assembly of believers, meeting together in closer harmony and fellowship than is possible for any man-perfected organization, for the purpose of carrying out His Commission, which embraces the whole world in its scope. And when any saved person says that he doesn’t need the church, that he can get along just as well without meeting in assembly with other Christians, he goes contrary to Christ’s teachings; Christ’s cause suffers, and his own soul is impoverished thereby.

Another saying that I have heard over and over again is one that a great many people ease their minds with on the church question. It is this: **“ONE CHURCH IS JUST AS GOOD AS ANOTHER. IT DOESN’T MATTER WHICH CHURCH I BELONG TO. THE CHURCH DOESN’T SAVE ONE. WE ARE ALL TRYING TO GET TO THE SAME PLACE.”** Now, this idea may satisfy some folks, but it can’t satisfy those who are obedient Christians, those who had rather please God than men, and who have the backbone to stand for their convictions. It is dishonoring to Christ to say that “one church is just as good as another.” It is not

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Outlines for Country Preachers

by a Country Preacher

Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

Psalms 116:16

The Hebrew word (*ebed*) translated “servant” means “servant, doer, tiller, slave.” The Greek word (*doulos*) in the New Testament means “servant or bond slave.” It implies bondage in some cases as could be translated “bond slave.” A servant is one who serves. The person loosed from the bond of sin, death, and hell should rejoice to wear the easy yoke of Christ.

I. CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

1. In the before time covenant Christ was chosen to be the obedient servant of Jehovah (Isa. 42:1; Matt. 12:17-18). As man, Christ was a servant of the Lord.
2. Christ was foretold to be a servant (Isa. 52:13; 53:11; Zech. 3:8).
3. He took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7). He was subject to the law (Gal. 4:4) and to His parents (Luke 2:51).
4. He declared he was a servant (Luke 22:24-27).
 - (1) To prove this He washed the feet of His disciples (John 13). This was the work of a servant.
 - (2) He taught His disciples that true greatness was in serving (Matt. 20:26-28; 23:11-12; Mark 9:35).
 - (3) Paul seemed to understand this teaching (I Cor. 9:19; II Cor. 4:5).
5. Christ was betrayed for the price of a bondservant (Ex. 21:32).
6. He had the death of a servant (Phil. 2:7-8).
7. Christ is now in Heaven as a servant—our High priest.

II. MEN WHO WERE THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD.

1. “Moses, the servant of the LORD” (Josh. 1:1).
2. “My servant Job” (Job 1:8).
3. “Abraham his servant” (Ps. 105:42).
4. “David my servant” (Ps. 89:3).
5. “O Jacob my servant” (Isa. 44:1).
6. “Thou art my servant: O Israel” (Isa. 44:21).
7. “O Daniel, servant of the living God” (Dan. 6:20).
8. “O Zerubbabel, my servant” (Hag. 2:23).
9. “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:1). Not DD.
10. “James, a servant of God” (Jas. 1:1). Not the Lord’s half brother, although he was.
11. “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1).
12. “Simon Peter, a servant” (II Pet. 1:1). Not first pope.
13. “His servant John” (Rev. 1:1). Not the disciple whom Jesus loved.
14. “His servants the prophets” (Rev. 10:7). Not the very right reverend Isaiah.
15. “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ” (Col. 4:12).

III. HOW WE ARE TO SERVE GOD.

1. We were saved for service (Ps. 22:30; Rom. 6:22; Eph. 6:6; I Thess. 1:9; Heb. 9:14).
2. We are to serve Him faithfully (Matt. 25:21-23). The Lord will reward his faithful servant (I Pet. 1:7).
3. We are to serve Him continually (Dan. 6:16, 20). Here is perseverance.
4. To serve Christ is to follow Christ (John 12:26).
 - (1) He must not look for good things here—crowns, kingdoms, riches, wealth, and honor.
 - (2) He must be content with a cross (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 8:17).
5. We must serve Him acceptably (Heb. 12:28).
 - (1) We lose all our labor if we are not accepted of God (I Cor. 3:13; II Cor. 5:9).
 - (2) What good is our prayer and praise if God does not accept it? Don’t be like Cain (Gen. 4:5).
6. We are to serve with fear and rejoicing (Ps. 2:11).
 - (1) “With fear” means let reverence and humility be mingled with your service.
 - (2) There must be holy fear mixed with a Christian’s joy.
 - (3) Fear without joy is torment, and joy without fear is presumption.
7. We are to serve with gladness (Ps. 100:2). Not madness.
8. We must serve knowing we are not above our Lord (Matt. 10:24-25). At best we are unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10; Job 22:2-3).
9. Our service to God shall never cease.

- (1) We serve Him in life (Luke 1:74-75).
- (2) After death (Rev. 7:15).
- (3) In the millennium (Ps. 72:11; Dan. 7:27; Zeph. 3:9).
- (4) In the eternal age (Rev. 22:3).

IV. THE BLESSINGS PROMISED TO HIS SERVANTS.

1. They are elected by God to salvation and service (Isa. 43:10). We are chosen to be servants (Isa. 49:5).
2. They are redeemed by the Lord (Isa. 48:20; Ps. 34:22).
3. They shall be blessed of God (Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 12:42-44).
4. They have been given authority in His church in His absence (Mark 13:34).
5. They shall have Divine deliverance in the time of trouble (Dan. 3:26, 28).
6. God reveals secrets to them (Amos 3:7).
7. God will take vengeance on those who shed their blood (Ps. 79:10; Rev. 19:2).

CONCLUSION.

1. Nature (Ps. 119:91) and angels (Job 4:18) are His servants. Why not men?
2. The greatest privilege a man can have on this earth is to be a servant of God and of others.

False Proverbs

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so. Christ outlined the program for his church, and left word as to how His work should be carried on, and when any church, or so-called church, fails to carry on that work just as He commanded, it is not as good as the one that does, and it is nothing but a sickly, compromising spirit that makes anyone say so. This way of dividing the Lord’s instructions into “essentials” and “non-essentials” is basely dishonoring to God. Who and what are we to say that certain commands of our Lord are not essential, and that we can do some other way than He commanded? Christ never gave a line of instructions that was not absolutely essential. There is a difference in his teachings, in that some things are *vital to salvation* while others are not, but all are essential, or else He would not have given utterance to them.

I have never been able to see or understand how that people can think that it matters as to which political party they align themselves with, and at the same time feel that it is a matter of small importance as to which church they belong to. The saying “It doesn’t matter which church you belong to” is a falsehood. It does matter. It matters and matters a great deal that you belong to the church that is seeking to carry out the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way. And I am frank to say that if I did not believe that Baptists hold to the doctrines of Christ as taught in the Bible, pure and without the substitution of human traditions and practices, I would quit the Baptist church and ministry, no matter how embarrassing it might be for me to do it, and I would join the church which I believed to be adhering strictly to the teachings of the New Testament. I believe that you, my readers, ought to feel the same way about it. No matter what father or mother belonged to, no matter what brother or sister or wife or anybody else thinks about it, no matter if you upset the traditions

of your family for a hundred years, if you cannot absolutely satisfy your mind that the church that you belong to is a New Testament church, sticking squarely to what the Bible teaches, you ought to change churches.

“We are all trying to reach the same place,” is the current sentimental way of passing over doctrinal and denominational differences. Folks of all denominations and sects may be trying to get to the same place, but it is certain that they will not all get there. They are traveling too many different roads. Jesus tells us in the New Testament that there is but one way, and further that if any man climbs up any other way, the same is a thief and a robber. Baptists believe that a man is saved by grace through faith alone. Many of other sects think that it is necessary to add baptism, or good works. Still others hold to what we might term sacramental salvation, as, for instance, Catholics and high church Episcopalians. Now, some of us are bound to be in the wrong, for several mutually contradictory propositions cannot all be true. If those who hold to salvation by works, partly by works, or through the “sacraments” are right, then Baptists are wrong. If Baptists are right, then those who hold such views are wrong and are lost, no matter if all are “hoping to go to the same place.” The Lord never ordained nor completed but one way of salvation. To miss that way is to be eternally lost.

The things that have just been said may seem very narrow to some, but it may be truly said that one of the curses of our day is the so-called “broadness” of some professing Christians who, for the sake of being “broad,” willingly surrender every doctrine and teaching of the Word of God. To some the term “narrow” is unspeakably odious, and for one to call them “narrow” is more insulting than to receive a blow in the face. Anything in the world to be “Broad!” Jesus had something to say about broadness a long time ago. He said, “Broad is the way that leadeth to destruc-

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tion." It is easy enough for those who profess broadness to be broad and liberal. It would be easy for me to be liberal with your pocketbook, but would I have the right? It is easy enough for some to be broad with the doctrines that the Lord gave to His church. But what right have they or anyone else to change or to be liberal with the commands of Christ just in order to be popular with men?

The acme of so-called broadness is the "Community Church." A Community Church is a church composed of a lot of folks of the different evangelical denominations, who go in together and agree not to believe in or stand for anything in particular. One-third of Christ's Commission is all that they take any cognizance of. They forget, seemingly, that to make disciples is not all of the Commission. Jesus commanded immersion and the teaching of the "all things" that had been taught by Him just as plainly as He did the duty of discipling. A community Church is the logical outcome of the practical application of the proverb. "It doesn't matter which church you belong to; one church is just as good as another."

To my way of thinking, it is a poor man who thinks just as much of some other woman as he does of his own wife; a poor mother who thinks just as much of somebody else's child as she does of her own; a poor American who loves some other country as much as he does his own native land. And it is a mighty weak church member who repeats the phrase, "I think just as much of other churches as I do of my own. One church is just as good as another." I love to see people have loyalty and conviction. I can get along splendidly with a person of another denomination if he is a true-blue member of that denomination, with a deep and abiding conviction that he has the truth—provided, of course, that he is willing to grant me the same privilege as he claims, the privilege of believing as I please. But when I come across one of these "broad" persons who is set and determined to make everyone else throw down all of their cherished convictions and become as broad, as spineless and as shallow as they are, then I don't get along well with that person at all!

These current sayings that you have heard all of your life, together with others of like kind, are false proverbs, based on human philosophy rather than upon divine revelation. They reveal the disposition on the part of man to ignore the plain teachings of God's Word, and to have his own way. The thing that we need to learn is that we are not privileged to juggle with God's instructions, trimming them and changing them to suit our own whims and fancies, and interpreting them in the light of the traditions of men. We

must serve Him according to His will, being broad where God is broad, and narrow where He is considered narrow, remembering that His way is the way that leadeth to life eternal, whereas the way "that seemeth right unto man" is the way that leadeth unto destruction and unto the torments of an eternal death.

Seven (Or Is It Six)

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some measure to this view, but it was popularized among English-speaking people of our time by the Plymouth Brethren (mostly in charts published by various groups among them) and in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible. While this view does not deny that the letters were addressed to specific, real churches, this view emphasizes much more strongly that each of the seven are representative, more or less, of a particular period of what is called "church history."

Scofield says (original Scofield Reference Bible: note, pps. 1331, 1332), "...these messages do present an exact foreview of the spiritual history of the church..." (We shall not here digress to discuss Scofield's divergent views of the "true church," "local church," and "visible church." But we believe he must necessarily mean the "visible church" composed of both true churches and apostate ones.) Scofield says of this "visible church" that it does "...refer to that visible body of professed believers called, collectively, 'the Church,' of which history takes account as such, though it exists under many names and divisions based upon differences in doctrine or in government. Within, for the most part, this historical 'Church' has existed the true Church, 'which is his body...' (Loc cit). I mean to be fair, but it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the exact differences Mr. Scofield has made in the meaning of the one Greek word, *ecclesia* which can only honestly refer to a congregation or gathering of people. I believe in an attempt to be consistent with his erroneous views, Scofield has hidden the true churches amongst and within the false. He would have us believe, for instance, that when the Thyatira church age (the Papacy) existed, within those Harlot churches could be found true Churches of Christ! Within that corrupt, Baptist-hating, Gospel-perverting, baby-baptizing, works-mongering system called the Harlot were pure, loving, Gospel preaching New Testament (Baptist) churches! That is what he wrote: "Within, for the most part, this historical 'Church' has existed the true Church..." According to this view we can also look for sound New Testament churches among the persecuting, baby-baptizing, Anabaptist-hating denominations of the Protestant Reformation. Mr. Scofield not only ignores the history of

true Baptist churches, but if you believe that true churches are to be found among the Baptists, you see that he claims that these Baptist churches were to be found within the false churches!

But let us return to Mr. Scofield's explanation of the seven church-age theory. It is generally taught that Ephesus, according to this system, represents and is typical of the visible churches of the apostolic age (although Scofield disagrees for he wrote in his note on page 1331, that these Churches represent "seven phases of the spiritual history of the church from, say, A.D. 96 to the end." The phrase "from, say, A.D. 96 to the end" would make Ephesus almost if not altogether *post-apostolic* for by that time it is likely that all the apostles were dead with the possible exception of John). But the popular charts, at least all I have seen, show Ephesus beginning on the day of Pentecost at which point they also depict the birth of the church – another error, but one with which we do not have space to deal at this time. Scofield goes on to write that Smyrna represents the period of persecution that followed and that Pergamos the visible church after 316 (Constantine). (I do not understand his date for Constantine, but that is what he wrote.) "Thyatira is the Papacy, developed out of the Pergamos state" wrote Scofield (Loc cit). "Sardis is the Protestant Reformation" (Loc cit). Philadelphia, according to Scofield, does not portray an age, but is co-existent with the Laodicean age. Thus he really teaches six church ages and not seven ages at all, for he wrote, "Philadelphia is whatever bears clear testimony to the Word and the Name in the time of self-satisfied profession represented by Laodicea." (Loc cit, emphasis added). Notice that phrase, "in the time of." Thus he teaches that Philadelphia and Laodicea are concurrent. So, while the charts inspired by or published by the Plymouth Brethren universally show seven consecutive "church ages," according to C.I. Scofield, there are only six, Philadelphia and Laodicea existing at the same period of time.

As far as I have been able to learn, the Plymouth Brethren and others who produce those charts which depict seven successive church ages also believe that the Philadelphian and Laodicean "churches" exist concurrently and therefore do not really represent seven, but rather six different ages or periods of "church history" even though they portray these last two as successive rather than concurrent. This view says that there are presently on the earth visible churches standing for the truth and visible churches which are apostates. But this theory says that Philadelphia represents doctrinally sound churches and Laodicea the apostate churches – both existing in the same time period. So there you have it: seven churches representing six ages or periods of "church history." But, on their charts

they would have us view them as seven since there are seven churches, probably so as not to arouse our suspicion at the first. They can, after we have seen things beginning to "fit" together, later tell us that the last two represent the same time period – that things do not really "fit" at all!

For many years as an interdenominationalist I believed and faithfully taught this "seven church-age" view. I was a faithful follower of Dr. C.I. Scofield and the Plymouth Brethren charts. I called this theory "seven church ages" and used a number of books and charts (mostly published by Plymouth Brethren concerns) that promoted this idea. Like Mr. Scofield, I believed that the Philadelphia and Laodicean "churches" when viewed as an "age" were co-existent as far as time was concerned. So I ACTUALLY TAUGHT SIX, NOT SEVEN, church ages just like Mr. Scofield and most others who hold this view. But when the Lord made a Baptist out of me through a careful study of the New Testament, I put away this theory along with some others I had been taught (universal church-ism, birth of church on Pentecost, universal bride-ism, 4 or 5 different gospels, etc.). I write this merely to say that, having this background, I do believe I understand what these people are teaching. And now that I am a Baptist, I see the danger to the Lord's Churches in their erroneous views.

I remember when I was first introduced to this seven-church-age teaching. I was very young, but even then I had questions about it. I wanted to know the biblical basis for saying that these churches represent periods of church history. My questions were allayed by the assurance that "it fits" so it must be true. But does it fit? Seven equals six: seven churches equal six periods in "church history." I think now that "it fits" only if you make it fit. There are, I think, a great many theories that can be made to "fit" into the Bible, but which lack a biblical basis. For instance, the "gap theory" between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 which requires death being introduced into the world prior to Adam can be made to "fit." And the "day-age" theory can also be made to "fit" so as to satisfy "Bible believers" who also want to appear scientific and espouse the theory of evolution. I hate to borrow even a slogan from the inconsistent Campbellites, but if we would stand with the Bible we must do what they falsely claim to do and really and truly "speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent." It is not our job nor our right to make the Bible "fit" with any theory of man whether that theory is a historical, doctrinal, or "scientific" one!

The three verses quoted as our text contain the three instances of the words "seven churches" found in the Bible and are all found in chapter one of Revelation.

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Seven (Or Is It Six)

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However, it is in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 the specific letters to these seven churches are found. I have read, studied and preached from these chapters for years, but I have never found anything in any of them that even suggests that each of these seven churches represents anything other than a real, local, literal, scripturally organized congregation of professed believers. The specific messages, like the entire Bible, were recorded by men of God moved by the Holy Ghost in such a manner that the record is inspired (God-breathed). This record has been preserved for us that all the children of God might profit from that which is written. It is likely that there have been and are even now some churches which have one or more of the problems and characteristics of each of these seven churches. Thus all of us are called upon to "hear" the messages. Barnes, also a Protestant, but here with more apparent insight, wrote, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," #Re 2:7,11,17, 29 3:6,13, 22. *These admonitions were designed to call the attention of the churches to these things, and at the same time they seem designed to show that they were not intended for them alone. They are addressed to any one who "has an ear," and therefore had some principles of general application to others, and to which all should attend who were disposed to learn the will of the Redeemer. What was addressed to one church, at any time, would be equally applicable to all churches in the same circumstances; what was adapted to rebuke, elevate, or comfort Christians in any one age or land, would be adapted to be useful to Christians of all ages and lands.*" (Barnes New Testament Notes, Online Bible C.D.).

But what can be said against this six or seven church-age theory? Is it harmful or only a matter of indifference? As pointed out previously, there is just no Bible for it. Nowhere in the seven letters or elsewhere in the Bible have I found anything clearly stated that would cause me to think this extended interpretation is warranted. This theory is not a matter of exegesis (drawing out the meaning of the Scripture) but is one of isogesis (reading a meaning into Scripture which does not exist). I have as many verses in the Bible telling me that the seven churches of Asia represent seven church ages as I have telling me to baptize infants – or to celebrate pagan holidays under "Christian" names – absolutely none. But many people read what they want to believe into the Bible and "baptize" babies and keep pagan festivals – as long as they can call them "Christian," of course!

These seven churches were New Testament churches – true Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the most part their problems, faults, failings and successes

were of the same sort as those experienced by the Lord's Churches in every century. Churches today are mirrored in those seven. We can learn much of censure as well as commendation for our own churches and for ourselves as individual members of churches from these seven.

But let us consider a serious problem we face if we adhere to the seven church age view. Shall we say that Pergamos is the church after Constantine made her the mistress of the empire? Is it consistent to take one of the Lord's true Churches and say that she is typical or representative of that corrupt religious system that developed into the Catholic Harlot? Scofield wrote, "Thyatira is the Papacy, developed out of the Pergamos state" as quoted above. Do we Baptists really believe that the Lord's Churches were plunged into the Roman Harlot or do we believe they had a continual existence outside of her? Do we really believe that true Churches have always existed as Christ promised they would? Can we Baptists be consistent with our history and our principles and say as Scofield, "Sardis is the Protestant Reformation"? Do we mean to say that the Reformers, all of them believers in baptismal regeneration, are to be included in the history of the Lord's Churches? This seven church-age theory takes true Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and makes them representative types of the Harlot and her Harlot Daughters. It is unthinkable and inconsistent with Baptist history, Baptist perpetuity, Baptist successionism, the purity of the Lord's Churches and bare, naked logic to take these true Churches and make them represent false churches!

And there is harm done. The seven church age theory does not harmonize with the truth of the perpetuity of the Lord's Churches. It presents not the history of the Lord's Churches, but the history of false churches and does so at the expense of true Baptist history. It ignores Baptist history on the one hand, and contradicts it on the other by making the Lord's Church at Thyatira representative of the Roman Papacy. Even if you do not believe in Baptist perpetuity, it is blasphemous to contradict the promises of Christ and say that His true Churches went off into error – that "the gates of hell" did, after all, prevail against Christ's churches! (See Matthew 16:18).

The six or seven church-age theory has many faults. (1). This theory requires a twist in thinking by making the true churches representative of the false ones. Such a technique allows false teachers to make the Bible say anything – shall we adopt such methods? (2). It stumbles over the sixth and seventh "age" and requires that seven Churches be representative of only six periods of time. (3). It omits almost 70 years of true church history for it begins, according to Scofield, one of its leading proponents and expert teachers, "from, say, A.D. 96 to the end"

Berea Baptist Broadcast

STATION	TIME	DIAL	WATTS
WFTA, Tupelo, MS	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	101.9	3,000 FM
WLZA, Starkville, MS	Sunday 1:00 - 1:30 p.m.	710	2,500 AM
WCNA, Myrtle, MS	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	95.9	3,000 FM
WCTT, Corbin, KY	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	680	5,000 AM
KARI, Blaine, WA	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.	550	5,000 AM
KORE, Springfield, OR	Sunday 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	1050	5,000 AM
DXRA, Davao City, Philippines	Sunday 8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	783 Khz...	10,000 AM
DWSS, Manila, Philippines	Sunday 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	1494	16,000 AM

as quoted above. The Lord Jesus built His church about A.D. 27! Scofield starts his first "church age" at about A.D.96! That means that 69 years of history are omitted! Ephesus cannot be viewed as representative of the apostolic churches – in this theory the apostolic churches have no place as shown before. (4). It ignores the Lord's true Churches and elevates the false ones. In telling us the history of the churches we are led to believe that the pillars of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15) became enmeshed within the pits of lies and false religion and the false churches are elevated as they contain the true! (5). And it has no biblical basis other than the statement that "it fits." But it does NOT fit! Seven does not equal six! Truth and error cannot exist together (Amos 3:3). This theory is a pre-conceived notion, a man-made invention and innovation necessary only to justify the existence of churches that lack scriptural origins! Sound Baptist churches do not need this theory! (6). If consistently believed and followed it will bring about the destruction of Baptist Churches for it is contrary to Baptist Church truth and history. The argument can be made according to this view, as ecumenical Protestantism prepares to return to her Mother, let us Baptists and our churches who were once a part of Catholicism return home and end the centuries long schism so that the world will see our unity and love one for another! We are all of the same origin, according to this theory – Baptists, Catholics and Protestants – and need not press our differences. (7). And finally, it requires that the promises of Christ as to the continued existence of His kind of New Testament churches "unto the end of the world" (age) be viewed as an error that Christ made. This theory demands that Christ was wrong in thinking He could be with His kind of Churches until the end of the age! (See Matthew 28:20).

So what shall we do? Let us have nothing to do with this church-age theory! Let us teach that these seven Churches were real New Testament (Baptist) Churches. Some of them contended with real problems similar to ours today and others were in need of correction. Let us learn from them and teach the lessons learned. There are also commendations given. These ought to encourage and embolden us if we see our own churches meriting the same cheering words from the Lord. We ought to understand that the mes-

sages to these Churches are instructive to Churches in all centuries and places and leave it at that. Further than that we have no biblical basis to go. Besides that we have biblical, hermeneutical, practical and historical reasons not to go further. Can we expect the teachings of the Great Harlot and her Protestant Daughters to be of benefit to the saints of God found in the Lord's true Churches? Let us be Baptists and leave the teachings popularized by the Plymouth Brethren alone.

The Crucified Life

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chief of sinners became the chief of saints, we may study his own relation to the Cross of Christ with profit to all other sinners saved by grace.

I. CHRIST CRUCIFIED FOR PAUL.

The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me. So Paul says in our text, and so he felt always. The wonder of God's love is shown precisely in this, that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). This is God's own plan of redemption in Christ Jesus, as the propitiation for our sins (Rom. 3:25), that God may be just and justify the one with faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. There are many theories of the atoning death of Christ, with an element of truth in most of them, but all put together they fall short of explaining the sublime fact that when we were under the curse of the law Jesus became a curse over us (in our stead), and brought us out from under that curse (Gal. 3:10-13), so that we go free, we who trust Christ for what he has done for us. In a sense beyond our grasping, it is true that "the one who did not know sin he (God) made to be sin for us" (II Cor. 5:21). This supreme fact is the bedrock of Paul's theology, the death of Christ for the sinner, that the sinner may live. So then God has forgiven all our transgressions because of what Christ has done, if we trust Him as Saviour. He has rubbed out the bond that was against us, has cancelled the debt, and has nailed it to the Cross of Christ (Col. 2:13). This is the gospel that Paul preached, that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and has been raised on the third day (I Cor. 15:3). This is Paul's gospel of grace that he preached everywhere to all classes of men. He was not ashamed of this gospel in Athens or in Rome, for it

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

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1. **Considering Hebrews 2:3-4, it seems that the writer of this epistle did not work signs and wonders with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Could Paul then have been the writer of Hebrews? Did not God speak to him and did he not perform signs and wonders, etc.? – Illinois**



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Yes, Paul could have been the writer of Hebrews, however as far as I am aware, the Word of God does not tell us who actually penned this letter. The Holy Spirit is the true author of all scripture regardless of the men that God used to accomplish the writing (II Timothy 3:16 & II Peter 1:21). This is not to say that there is no significance in the men who wrote the different books of the Bible, for many times a great deal could be learned from the background and perspective of the writers. But when there is significance in the writer, the writer is given, and when the scripture does not tell us whom the writer is, there is no significance and no reason why we must know.

Hebrews 2:3-4 says, **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”** What is being said here is that the great salvation was first spoken to us (the Hebrews) by Christ and then confirmed to us by those that heard Him (the disciples of Christ). God bore witness to those that heard Christ in the signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. There is no reason why Paul could not have made this statement. It appears that he would be more likely to have made this statement than any of the other Apostles because he did not personally bring the gospel to the Jews like he did to so many other parts of the world. Christ and the apostles did these things in the midst of the Jews before Paul was ever saved, and Paul was also a Hebrew.

The important thing is not to find out who wrote the letter to the Hebrews but to take heed to what is written. I have found that Satan is a mastermind at getting us to focus on the wrong things and take our attention away from our real purpose and work that God has given us. There are untold millions of lost souls in

the world that need to hear the gospel of this great salvation in Jesus Christ, and it is our mandate to tell them (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15).

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I believe the Scriptures mentioned is simply a statement by the writer of this book explaining that he was not one of the original twelve apostles who traveled with and observed the many wonders and miracles performed by the Lord in His earthly ministry and the institution of His New Testament church.

The apostle Paul was an apostle but to the Gentiles not the Jews. He was not one of the twelve, the inner circle that witnessed many wonders performed by Christ. I do not believe this passage of Scripture in anyway denied the authorship, or I should say writer of this book. Of course the Holy Spirit is the real author who gave Paul the words to write II Peter 1:16-21.

My personal conviction is that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. Many argue over its authorship but that is true of all most everything in scripture so objections with no proof really have no bearing on the issue. Some try to contribute the authorship to Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Clement, and even Priscilla and Aquilla. Some argue that Paul was not the recognized author by many of the “Church Fathers” of the first centuries. This means nothing since many of these were notoriously incorrect about many other things.

I base my convictions of Paul’s authorship on the following evidence. Early tradition points to Paul, obviously the writer is Jewish since he identifies himself with Jewish readers. The closing of the book is typical of the Apostle Paul (10:34; 13:19). The Apostle Peter gives us some clarity on the subject in his writings. Peter said Paul wrote to the dispersed Jews as he himself had (I Peter 1:1; II Peter 3:1, 15-18). Peter calls Paul’s writings Scripture. Now if Hebrews is not Paul’s letter to the Jews then Paul’s letter is left out of the

Canon of Scripture, which Peter said was Scripture, therefore we would not have a complete Bible because there is no other letter by Paul addressed to Jews.

Therefore, because of the already mentioned evidence we conclude that Paul is the writer of the book of Hebrews. The epistle bears the marks of Paul. It is the work of a converted Jew who had been in prison, who was close associated with Timothy. He mentions Timothy in 13:23. The book bears much of the style of Paul’s writings and many of the terms used are peculiar to Paul.

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Heb 2:3-4 reads, **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”**

The question at hand has somewhat perplexed me. I have tried to look at this passage every way I know how and have yet to see where it states that the writer of this epistle didn’t work miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. The best I can figure is the use of the word **“them”** in vs. 4 implies that the writer isn’t including himself in the company of those that worked miracles. However, this is implied at most. The pronoun **“them”** is in italics in the KJV, which shows that it was added by the translators for clarity. I think it’s best not to base a doctrine solely on a pronoun and especially one that is in italics.

Having said that, I’ll have to admit that I have never spent much time considering who wrote the book of Hebrews. I know this issue has been of interest to many good scholars. However, I just have never been interested in it. Regardless of who wrote the book, it is God’s Word. If Paul wrote it, it is inspired and good for us. If another wrote it, the same truth applies. The author of the book is of little importance because God is the One who

inspired the human instrument He used to pen it.

I know this answer probably isn’t what this question looks for. For that, I apologize. I simply don’t have a lot of information to offer in this area.

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Hebrews 2:3-4 states: **“..Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”**

I believe Paul to be the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, although I cannot be dogmatic about the assertion because his name is nowhere mentioned in the text of the letter itself. In fact, there is no name definitively asserted in the text as the author of this epistle. There has always been some question regarding the author of the Hebrews through the centuries, though it is generally accepted that Paul was the inspired author. This we know for sure, Hebrews was written chiefly to the Hebrew people sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem. Paul probably did not include his name in the epistle because he was bitterly hated and persecuted by the Jews after his conversion.

The verses in question speak volumes about the earthly ministry of Christ while he was in company with the original twelve apostles. The context indicates that those who performed the miracles heard Jesus teach and preach. God confirmed their apostolic ministry with a variety of signs, wonders, and miracles. There is no indication from the four Gospels that Paul ever heard Christ preach during His earthly ministry. Paul received Christ by special revelation after His resurrection and ascension into Heaven. Paul did do signs, wonders, and miracles, but interestingly enough it does not appear that he did them in the presence of the apostles. His miracle working was largely confined to his missionary journeys as he ministered among the Gentiles. The ministry of the rest of the apostles was for the most part confined to the Hebrew and Samaritan people. Perhaps that is the reason why Paul did not include himself in this instance.

Matthew Henry is generally regarded as a fair and trustworthy scholar in matters such as these, so I will quote his in-

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2. Is the "to break bread" in Acts 20:7 a reference to the Lord's Supper? – Kentucky



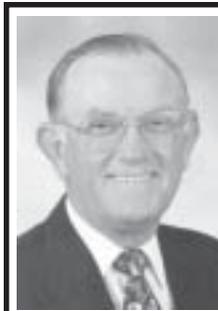
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roduction to the Hebrews: "As to the di" **And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them...** (Acts 20:7). Based on the context of this verse I see no reason to believe that the breaking of bread is a reference to the Lord's Supper, although it could be so. In the context of Acts 20:11 we read, **"When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."** The breaking of bread here appears to refer to a meal and fellowship. The breaking of bread in verse 7 could be the same as the breaking of bread here, and in both of these verses there is no direct reference to the Lord's Supper. There is no need to read anything into these verses than what is plainly recorded for us. It is possible that verse 7 refers to the Lord's Supper; however, it does not say for sure either way. If that point were important then the Lord would have recorded it for us. I would certainly not base my beliefs concerning the Lord's Supper on that scripture but on the many other scriptures where the Lord's Supper is plainly taught. There are verses where the Lord's Supper is described as breaking of bread and the context of those scriptures make it clear that the Lord's Supper is being spoken of (Luke 22:19 & I Corinthians 10:16), but there are also many scriptures where the breaking of bread is simply referring to a meal. For instance in Acts 27:35 Paul breaks bread with his shipmates before being shipwrecked on his way to Italy. In Luke 24:30 Christ is revealed to His disciples when He breaks bread and gives it to them to eat. Close fellowship is seen among the saints in Acts 2:42 where we read, **"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"** and again in the context of Acts 2:46 we read, **"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."** No doubt

verse 42 could refer to the Lord's Supper but verse 46 is referring just to fellowship. The unmistakable truth that we see in both of these verses as well as the verse in question is simply the close fellowship that the saints had one with another.

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I think it is possible that the breaking of bread in verse seven is referring to the Lord's Supper by the local church. In all probability this was the beginning of the first day of the week starting after 6:00 p.m. Saturday evening. Here we see the early Christians beginning to meet on the first day of the week referred to as the Lord's Day. Probably prior to this the Christians met with the Jews in the synagogue to worship and then at 6:00 p.m. they would start their Lord's Day worship. This shows that the early Christians observed the first day of the week, Sunday, as the Lord's day, not the seventh or Saturday.

The real problem here for some is the subject of closed communion. No doubt Paul was not a member of this local church, so the question is: "Could or did Paul observe the Lord's Supper with this church?" There is no Scripture in this chapter, nor is there any historical evidence that I know of, which says that Paul observed the Lord's Supper with them. In fact we see otherwise as shown in verse eleven where a different meal is spoken of. The word "eaten" which is the Greek that is never used in regards to the Lord's Supper as seen in I Corinthians 11:20-22, and it would seem that Paul did eat at this meal.

I believe the breaking and eating of bread by Paul was probably the normal practice of the common love feast eaten later after the observance of the Lord's Supper. It would not be against the observance of the Lord's Supper in the practice of closed communion, only the members of the local assembly participating, if the Apostle Paul preached at such an assembly any more than it would be for one of our local churches today to observe the Lord's Supper and have a visiting

preacher to preach for us and then have a meal after the services.

Whether this breaking of bread was the Lord's Supper or not, in no way gives permission for any outside the membership of the local assembly permission to observe the Lord's Supper in a church they are not a member of.

GARNER SMITH



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Acts 20:7 declares: **"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."**

The context and setting of this verse strongly suggests that the disciples assembled on the Lord's day for worship and that the observance of the Lord's Supper was incorporated into their service that lasted long into the night. I personally believe that this is a reference to the Lord's Supper, however it was not uncommon for the ancient Christians to share a meal together on the Lord's Day while they were gathered together.

TOM ROSS



Todd Bryant
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"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Act. 20:7).

I'd like to have more insight to the purpose of this question. The simple answer is "yes." I believe **"to break bread"** here does refer to the Lord's Supper. This verse in no way commands us to commemorate the Lord's Supper on every Sunday, however. I do think that most of our Sov-

ereign Grace Baptist churches today don't have the Lord's Supper near often enough. Many of our churches only have the supper when a new member joins which is sometimes only every few years. Others have the supper once a year. The Lord (through the inspiration of the Apostle Paul) said **"as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."** (I Cor. 11:26). We should have the Lord's Supper regularly to keep in remembrance the death of our Savior. How often depends on each local church. The lack of observing the Supper might be the reason that many of our churches have lost their use for gospel preaching. We should not, however, have the supper so often that it simply becomes repetitious.

TODD BRYANT

Forum #1

Continued from page 250

vine amanuensis or penman of this epistle, we are not so certain; it does not bear the name of any in the front of it, as the rest of the epistles do, and there has been some dispute among the learned to whom they should ascribe it. Some have assigned it to Clemens of Rome; others to Luke; and many to Barnabas, thinking that the style and manner of expression is very agreeable to the zealous, authoritative, affectionate tempter that Barnabas appears to be of, in the account we have of him in the Acts of the Apostles; and one ancient father quotes an expression out of this epistle as the words of Barnabas. But it is generally assigned to the apostle Paul; and some later copies and translations have put Paul's name in the title. In the primitive times it was generally ascribed to him, and the style and scope of it very well agree with his spirit, who was a person of a clear head and a warm heart, whose main end and endeavor it was to exalt Christ. Some think that the apostle Peter refers to this epistle, and proves Paul to be the penman of it, by telling the Hebrews, to whom he wrote of Paul's having written to them, II Peter 3:15. We read of no other epistle that he wrote to them but this. And though it has been objected that, since Paul put his name to all his other epistles, he would not have omitted it here; yet others have well answered that he, being the apostle of the Gentiles, who were odious to the Jews, might think fit to conceal his name, lest their prejudices against him might hinder them from reading and weighing it as they ought to do."

TOM ROSS



The Crucified Life

Continued from page 249

and it alone is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes in Jesus Christ. Without the Cross, Paul had no gospel. And there is no salvation in Greek philosophy or Jewish law, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Left to himself, Paul with all his pride of race and pious performances (Phil. 3:4-7) was a wretched man with the corpse of his sinful self clinging to him (Rom. 7:24). But he was more than conqueror in Christ who loved him.

2. PAUL CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.

Jesus himself had spoken of the union of the believer with Him, like that of the branches with the vine, deriving life from the vine and bearing fruit because of that life-giving union (John 15:1-6). Paul felt the truth of Christ's wonderful image to the full. He died to the law as a means of salvation (Gal. 2:19); he died with Christ from the elements of the world as a means of grace (Col. 2:20); he died to sin and pictured that death and the new walk with Christ, by baptism: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto 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" (Rom. 6:4). Baptism to Paul symbolized the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, Paul's own death to sin and resurrection to a new life, and the resurrection of the body after death. If we died with Christ, we are also raised together with Christ (Col. 2:20; 3:1). Paul does not think of baptism as the means by which this mystic union is obtained, but as the beautiful picture of the inner experience of the death to sin, and of the new life in Christ already secured. *No-blesse oblige*. Baptism is like the soldier's uniform, the *sacramentum*, the sign of the oath of fealty. The baptized man should lead the baptized life of cleanness and of loyalty. He wears the badge wherever he goes, and should never disgrace the uniform, which he wears. He has been buried with Christ. He has been raised with Christ. But baptism is merely the outward sign of the inward experience of one who has been crucified with Christ. When Jesus was nailed to the Cross, in a mystical and yet true sense Paul was nailed there also. Paul's sins helped nail Christ to the Cross. Christ hung on the Cross for Paul, and Paul hung on the Cross with Christ. Paul felt the call to go all the way with Christ to the Cross. Not that there is any virtue in our own sufferings, as the Roman Catholics argue. We do not remove our own sins by persecution of the flesh. But in a real sense we go out with Christ to the Cross and take our stand with Him there, without being ashamed of Him or of His Cross. We go out to

Christ outside the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13).

3. CHRIST LIVING IN PAUL.

Paul is so identified with Christ that "no longer do I live, but Christ is living in me." The old man of sin has died, and the new man in Christ has taken possession of Paul, the whole of Paul, not just certain compartments. There are no secret chambers in Paul's life to which Christ is not welcome. He has given to Jesus all the keys of his life. This complete surrender of Paul's will to that of Christ has cost him a struggle. He has carried on a fight with his own body to win this victory (I Cor. 9:27). He has had to keep with him the consciousness of the dying of Jesus for him, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in his own body (II Cor. 4:10). There has been in a mystical sense the transfusion of the life-blood of Jesus into Paul's body, that he may live the life that is in Christ Jesus. We must not misunderstand Paul's use of such mystical language of union with Christ. He has no idea of loss of personality or of responsibility, but he means that he has put Christ in control of his own will to such an extent that he can truthfully say: "Christ lives in me." He lives therefore a Christ-filled life. What a glory it would be if all nominal Christians could say that! Gone would be selfishness, love of sin, lives of sin. What a change would come in the church life and the church work. Deficits and debts would no longer exist. Men would indeed take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus, that Jesus was reproducing Himself in us, that we were in reality the children of God, with some of the likeness of our Elder Brother even here on earth. If we are to be like Him in Heaven, the picture ought to be recognizable even here.

4. PAUL CARRYING HIS OWN CROSS AFTER CHRIST.

Paul knew the teaching of Jesus about taking up one's own cross and following the Master. "And I, in my turn, fill up the remainder of the tribulations of the Christ in my flesh in behalf of his body, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). Jesus met His own Cross bravely, even with foreboding and shrinking, and yet with a certain eagerness, at times, to have His baptism of blood (Luke 12:50). He "for the joy placed before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2), and the Master calls us all to follow His example. So Paul took his turn and his share of suffering for Christ with God's people. Each one of us has his own load to carry. One has only to read Paul's graphic account of his own experiences in the ministry, to see how fully he bore his share of the crosses of life: "persecuted on every side, but not straitened; at a loss, but not utterly lost; pursued, but not left behind; cast down, but not perishing: (II Cor. 4:8). Once more hear Paul: "In toils more abundantly, in prisons more frequently, in stripes superabundantly, in deaths often;

by the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one; thrice did I experience shipwreck, a night and a day did I spend in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own race, in perils from Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in toil and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II Cor. 11:23-27). The only help he received when he cried out to the Lord was: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness." Once the Galatians welcomed Paul as an angel of God, and would have dug out their eyes for him, and then they came to count him as nothing, and to spit out at him in disgust. For my part, I am glad we do not know what was Paul's stake in the flesh. Each of us can find comfort in enduring the crosses in his own life. Each of us can claim Christ's promise of grace sufficient to bear them for Christ's sake. Christ has made the Cross the symbol of glory and of triumph for all time.

5. PAUL'S GLORY IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

Jesus felt to the utmost the agony and shame of the Cross as He died for the sin of the world. And yet He went on to the Cross and held Himself to it by the Father's help, in spite of the momentary outcry in Gethsemane. Paul felt the sharp recoil of the cultured Greeks from the Cross as foolishness, and of the Pharisaic Jews as a stumbling-block. The idea of a condemned and crucified criminal, as the Messiah of Jewish hope, was repugnant to all the rabbis. And yet Paul, who once shared the attitude of the Pharisees, came to know nothing among the Corinthians, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). Already some of the Judaizing Christians were belittling the Cross (Gal. 6:12), to make a fair show in the flesh, just as some preachers today are ashamed of the Cross of Christ and ignore it for a purely social message, or even ridicule it, and yet call themselves ministers of Christ. Let all such men hear Paul: "May it not happen to me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world stands crucified to me and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

Christ without the Cross would have been a mere example without redemptive power. Christ glorified the Cross, and Paul glories in the Cross of Christ as the sole ground for exaltation. With Paul the Cross involves the Incarnation and the Resurrection. The mere act of dying could not save men. But this is the Son of God, who left His estate with the Father and humbled Himself to man's estate as the Son of Man; who went all the way to death, even the very death of the Cross (the most shameful of all deaths). But the Father, because of this voluntary humiliation, lifted Jesus Christ to a higher exaltation. In Heaven He is now the Risen

Lord Jesus Christ, with both His deity and His humanity. But for the Cross, Jesus could not be our Saviour and Redeemer. And Paul is linked in his life with the Crucified and Risen Lord. So are we all, if we have surrendered our hearts to Jesus Christ. He is our Head, and we are members of His glorious Body. That is dignity enough for any one.

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 11-1-2003 to 11-30-2003

Beginning Balance	\$911.97
RECEIPTS	
TOTAL	911.97
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	272.00
Postage	21.70
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	293.70
.....	\$618.27
Bank charge	-10.00
BALANCE	\$608.27

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$371.52
RECEIPT	
.....	
Total	371.52
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	120.00
Total Expenditures	120.00
.....	
ENDING BALANCE	\$251.52

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 11-1-2003 to 11-30-2003

Beginning Balance	\$2,935.67
RECEIPTS:	
Arthur D. Richardson, Cedarville, WV	100.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	23.28
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	1,160.00
Berea M. B. C., Mansfield, OH	50.00
Berea M. B. C., Westpoint, TN	150.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	100.00
Bible B. C., Sullivan, IL	130.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne WV	300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	125.00
Cedar Grove B. C., Millport, AL	50.00
Central Avenue B. C., Tampa, FL	25.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	20.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace M. B. M., Marion, IL	25.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	45.00
Helen Milem, South Point, OH	100.00
Hillcrest B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
John Otis, Agra, KS	50.00
Joseph Jurzec, Lake-in-the-Hills, IL	25.00
L. H. Farrell, Kenner, LA	100.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM	100.00
Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	100.00
Morris St. B. C., Hobbs, NM	300.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Ocoonita M. B. C., Keokee, VA	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Aztec, NM	25.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	75.00
Rose Marie Hocutt, Vernon, AL	25.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Galena, OH	150.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Raleigh, NC	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	200.00
Wendel D. Beall, Cedarville, WV	100.00
Subscriptions	84.00
Dividing checks	375.00
Anon.	180.00
Sub Total	\$5,152.28
TOTAL	\$8,087.95
EXPENDITURES:	
Wages	3,920.00
Printing	546.40
Postage	808.52
FICA taxes	281.53
Dividing checks	375.00
Total Expenditures	5,931.45
.....	2,156.50
Bank charge	-19.35
ENDING BALANCE	\$2,137.15

THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

Readers of the BBB are urged to submit religious news items which they may read in their local paper or some other publication. In sending these please give the name of the publication as well as the date it was printed. We will not be able to print all which are submitted, but we welcome any item you may feel we should read. Send them to The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855-0039.

N.J. JUDGE UPHOLDS TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE IN COURT

By Pete Winn

TRENTON, N.J. (EP)—A New Jersey judge dismissed a case Nov. 5 in which homosexual activists demanded the creation of same-sex marriage, the second time in recent weeks that a state court has upheld traditional marriage.

In a 71-page opinion issued in *Lewis v. Harris*, Mercer County Superior Court Judge Linda Feinberg rejected the idea that the New Jersey Constitution guarantees a right of same-sex "marriage." She concluded that the definition of marriage is an issue best left to Garden State lawmakers.

An alliance of attorneys from the Center for Marriage Law, the New Jersey Family Policy Council and the Alliance Defense Fund participated in the case.

Alliance Defense Fund Chief Counsel Ben Bull applauded the ruling, saying the judge's decision upholds thousands of years of legal and cultural history.

"Judge Feinberg properly followed her role in applying the law instead of making law," Bull said.

Len Deo, executive director of the New Jersey Family Policy Council, was pleased with the decision—which applies only to New Jersey but will/could certainly exert a moral effect elsewhere.

"We've said all along that legislators and judges both have constitutionally proper roles to play," Deo said. "Judge Feinberg's decision definitely affirms the foundational principles of marriage. We must save marriage from falling victim to a political agenda driven by a minority wanting to impose its will on the rest of the state, and the court affirmed that, especially for us in New Jersey."

Last month, an Arizona state appeals court panel similarly ruled that there was no basis in the Arizona Constitution for marriage to be redefined.

Glenn T. Stanton, senior analyst for marriage and family at Focus on the Family said it is "absolutely remarkable" that the ideal of marriage—a permanent state-sanctioned relationship between a man and a woman—has been upheld by two state courts in less than a month.

"Seldom has marriage enjoyed such strong support and clear definition in the courts," Stanton said. "This bodes well for its continued protection." (*CitizenLink Daily Update*)

CHIEF JUSTICE ROY MOORE REMOVED FROM

OFFICE IN TEN COMMANDMENTS CASE

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (EP)—After less than a day of testimony and arguments, Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore was removed from office Nov. 13 for refusing to obey a federal court order to move his Ten Commandments monument from the rotunda of the state courthouse. The court rejected Moore's argument that he was upholding his oath when he refused to comply with the court's mandate in the case.

Alabama's Court of the Judiciary unanimously imposed the harshest penalty possible after the one-day trial in which Moore said his refusal was a moral and lawful acknowledgment of God, according to the Associated Press.

The chief justice, who had been suspended with pay since Aug., was halfway through his six-year term.

Moore spoke to supporters outside the courthouse after the decision was handed down.

"I have absolutely no regrets. I have done what I was sworn to do," he said to the applause of the crowd.

"It's about whether or not you can acknowledge God as a source of our law and our liberty. That's all I've done. I've been found guilty," he said.

Moore could appeal to the Alabama Supreme Court. If his removal stands, Gov. Bob Riley would appoint a new chief justice to finish the term, which expires in 2006.

The governor issued a statement saying he was "disappointed and concerned that the federal courts continue to attempt to remove references to God and faith from public arenas. All of us must, however, respect the workings of our legal system and trust that it remains the best in the world."

Moore's trial began on Nov. 12 with a prayer at the request of his attorneys. The prayer was led by Chief Judge William Thompson. Some 200 people crowded into the courtroom, just two floors above the rotunda where the 5,300-pound Ten Commandments monument stood for two years.

A day later, Judge Thompson said the court had no choice but to remove Moore from office. "The chief justice placed himself above the law," he said.

Other judges on the panel also offered their reasons for the decision. "Whether we agree or not with a court's decision, at the end of the day, when the courts resolve controversies, we respect those decisions," said Attorney General Bill Pryor, a conservative Christian who prosecuted Moore in the case.

After the panel's ruling, Moore said he held no animosity toward the court. But, he said, unless the states stand up, "public acknowledgment of God will be taken from us. In God we trust will be taken from our money and one nation under God from our pledge."

The chief justice testified he was fulfilling his duties and promises to voters when he refused to follow the court order and said he did nothing to violate judicial ethics.

"To acknowledge God cannot be a violation of the Canons of Ethics. Without God there can be no ethics," Moore, 56, testified.

He had also reiterated his stance that, given another chance to fulfill the court order, he again would refuse to do so. When one panelist, Circuit Judge J. Scott Vowell of Birmingham, asked Moore what he would do with the monument if he were returned to office, the chief justice said he had not decided, but added: "I certainly wouldn't leave it in a closet, shrouded from the public," AP reported.

In closing arguments, Assistant Attorney General John Gibbs said Moore's public refusal to obey a court order "undercuts the entire workings of the judicial system."

"What message does that send to the public, to other litigants? The message it sends is: If you don't like a court order, you don't have to follow it," he said.

Moore's attorneys disagreed. "There won't be a mass refusal to follow courts," said attorney Mike Jones. "In fact, I might suggest there might be more respect for a judiciary led by a man with faith and conscience."

During the trial, Jones asked Moore why he didn't move the monument as the court had ordered.

"It would have violated my conscience, violated my oath of office and violated every rule of law I had sworn to uphold," Moore said.

Moore has been vague about what his plans would be if he were removed from office. AP has reported that speculations are "rampant" that he might run for Senate next year.

U.S. BISHOPS CONSIDER QUESTION OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CATHOLIC POLITICIANS WHO SUPPORT ABORTION

WASHINGTON (EP)—Roman Catholic bishops in the U.S. are considering how to keep church members accountable in the political realm. The bishops said Nov. 10 they are considering whether to recommend sanctions for Catholic politicians who favor policies contrary to church teaching on abortion and other issues, according to the Associated Press.

A task force of bishops will consider the idea of church punishment and develop guidelines on how church leaders should respond to Catholic lawmakers who do not uphold church values in their work.

One member of the task force, Bishop Joseph Galante, said some dioceses already impose a ban from church property on elected officials who support abortion. Abor-

tion has long been a practice diametrically opposed by the Catholic Church.

Galante also said that under church law, Catholics who have a direct role in an abortion can be excommunicated. He said that a task force of theologians will have to decide whether a Catholic politician who votes for abortion rights consequently helps facilitate the procedure and should therefore be excommunicated.

The Vatican and U.S. bishops have long called on Catholic legislators to consider their faith when they vote. No date has been set for the American guidelines to be completed.

"I'm tired of hearing Catholic politicians saying 'I'm personally opposed to abortion, but I don't want to impose my moral judgments on anyone else,'" Galante told AP. "Politicians make moral judgments all the time. That's a weaseling out of something."

POLL: 24 PERCENT OF U.S. HAS 'NO IDEA' WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT DEATH

VENTURA, Calif. (RNS)—About three-fourths of Americans believe in heaven and hell, but almost one-fourth say they have "no idea" what will happen after they die, a recent Barna poll found.

Researchers with the Barna Research Group found that 76 percent of respondents believe heaven exists and 71 percent believe there is a hell.

Forty-six percent of respondents said they would describe heaven as "a state of eternal existence in God's presence" while 30 percent said it is "an actual place of rest and reward where souls go after death." Fourteen percent said heaven is "symbolic," 5 percent said they did not believe in life after death, and 5 percent were uncertain.

Thirty-nine percent of respondents said hell is "a state of eternal separation from God's presence" while 32 percent said it is "an actual place of torment and suffering where people's souls go after death." Thirteen percent said hell is "just a symbol of an unknown bad outcome after death." Sixteen percent said they were uncertain or did not believe in an after life.

Just half of 1 percent of U.S. adults said they expect to go to hell when they die, while 64 percent predicted they will end up in heaven.

But researchers found that many were not so sure of their post-death destination. Twenty-four percent said they have "no idea" what will happen after they die.

(*Western Recorder*, Nov. 4, 2003).

JUDGE: MOM CAN'T TEACH CHILD HOMOSEXUALITY IS WRONG

DENVER—A Christian mother is appealing a judge's decision that prohibits her from teaching her daughter that homosexuality is wrong.

Cheryl Clark, who left a lesbian relationship in 2000 after converting to Christianity, was ordered by Denver County Circuit Judge John Coughlin to "make sure that there is nothing in the religious upbringing or teach-

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Bible & The Newspaper

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ing that the minor child is exposed to that can be considered homophobic.”

Dr. Clark filed her appeal with the Colorado Court of Appeals two weeks ago.

Her former lover, Eley McLeod, was awarded joint custody of the child, an 8-year-old girl who is Dr. Clark's daughter by adoption.

The case has raised red flags among some Christians, who say the decision infringes upon the mother's right to freedom of expression and religion.

While custody cases involving homosexual parents are becoming more common, the Denver decision goes beyond previous court orders, said Matthew Staver, president of Liberty Counsel, a public-interest law firm based in Orlando, Fla.

“We've seen cases around the country where the court will order one parent not to say anything negative about the other spouse's lifestyle, but this goes much further than anything we've seen,” said Mr. Staver, whose firm specializes in constitutional issues involving marriage.

Mr. Staver said he filed a friend-of-the-court brief last month with the Colorado Court of Appeals at the request of Dr. Clark's attorney and that the order effectively prevents the mother from practicing her religion in her daughter's presence.

“The mother is a Christian, and that's a major part of her lifestyle,” he said. “She could be prohibited from reading her daughter Romans 1 and anything in the Bible on sexual fidelity in marriage, going to Bible study, or listening to a sermon on marriage or fidelity.”

Mr. Staver said he has acted as a spokesman for Dr. Clark, a physician, and her attorney, who have avoided speaking directly to the media. Miss McLeod's attorney, Gina Weitzenkorn, said the case has been put under seal and would not comment.

A spokeswoman for the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, a homosexual rights advocacy group, declined to comment, saying she was unaware of the case.

Judge Coughlin, who issued his ruling April 28, did award Dr. Clark sole responsibility for the girl in the area of religion, although with the caveat about exposing the child to anything “homophobic.”

He also said the two women “will never be able to agree regarding the religious upbringing of the minor child.”

Mr. Staver pointed out that the judge gave no similar orders to Miss McLeod regarding remarks or teaching about Christianity or Christians. “It's a real one-way street on this,” he said.

In his order, the judge said there was “a great deal of strife” between the two women. Dr. Clark had argued that Miss McLeod should not have joint custody because she was not interested in the adoption while it was taking place and that it was never their intention that she would act as a parent.

“Eley never adopted this child. It's an egregious situation because the court is giving custody to someone who is not related to the child and has not adopted the child,” Mr. Staver said.

The girl spent more than seven years as part of Miss McLeod's life, however, prompting Judge Coughlin to rule it would be in the best interest of the child for joint parenting to continue.

If his ruling stands, it could affect Christian parents across the nation, said Mr. Staver. “These things progressively build on one another, so we're trying to stop this before it goes any further.”

POLL: MANY IN U.S. MORALLY OK WITH ABORTION, PORN & UNMARRIED SEX

Ventura, Calif. (RNS)—Most Americans see nothing wrong with gambling, cohabitation and sexual fantasies, according to a recent survey.

Barna Research Group also found sizeable numbers of Americans who considered abortion, pornography and other activities “morally acceptable.”

“Most of the people we interviewed believe that they are highly moral individuals and identify other people as responsible for the nation's moral decline, researcher George Barna said. “Until people recognize that there are moral absolutes and attempt to live in harmony with them, we are likely to see a continued decay of our moral foundations.”

The group surveyed more than 1,000 adults, asking about 10 activities. The percent of adults who found the activities morally acceptable were:

- *Gambling, 61 percent.
- *Living with someone of the opposite sex, 60 percent.
- *Enjoying sexual thoughts about someone, 59 percent.
- *Abortion, 45 percent.
- *Having sex with someone of the opposite sex outside of marriage, 42 percent.
- *Pornography, 38 percent.
- *Using profanity, 36 percent.
- *Getting drunk, 35 percent.
- *Homosexual activity, 30 percent.
- *Illegal drug use, 17 percent.

(*Western Recorder*, Dec. 11, 2003).

LAWYERS: ‘UNDER GOD’ CASE COULD HAVE LASTING IMPACT

By Kristen Campbell

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The Supreme Court's recent decision to consider whether the 1954 addition of the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance has religious leaders weighing the possible impact of a court ruling—either way—on religious liberty in the country.

The challenge of Michael Newdow, an atheist who objected to recitations of the pledge at his daughter's California public school, received national attention in 2002 when the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Congress violated the First Amendment when it added the words “un-

der God.”

In taking the case, the court will engage in a debate older than the nation itself.

The ramifications of its decision would affect the law in almost every state, according to Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the Washington-based American Center for Law and Justice.

The struggle to articulate and safeguard the nation's ideals of religious liberties has never been easy. But in recent years, as Americans have asked judges to define and protect rights constituents believe are articulated in the First Amendment, the battle seems to have grown more emotional.

In the end, some of the war's spoils may not amount to much.

Charles Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center in Arlington, Va., said he expects the Supreme Court to overturn the appeals' court decision unanimously.

“It seems to me highly unlikely to impossible that the court will reverse decades of thinking by justices, even though there is no Supreme Court case upholding the pledge,” Haynes said.

“CEREMONIAL DEISM”

“There are many cases that have dicta, or have expressions of opinion by justices about the pledge, about other references to God, such as ‘In God We Trust’ or ‘The Star Spangled Banner.’—Generally, these have been cited as ceremonial deism. And in some cases, justices have even said they have lost any religious significance they might have had.—They are no longer really religious expressions as much as they are sort of historic affirmations of our national identity and so forth.”

Haynes said he finds the situation ironic.

“Religious people, in my view, win little when they win the right to keep religion as long as it isn't meaningful,” he said. “Efforts to push for acknowledgment of God or religion by the state often end in doing more to harm authentic faith or religious expression than to enhance it.”

REFERENCE TRACED TO LINCOLN

But Sekulow said, “It just would be a sad day for this country if we have to remove a phrase that actually arises out of President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.”

In his dedication of the Pennsylvania military cemetery, Lincoln said: “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Lincoln's use of religious rhetoric during a time of national crisis is far from unusual.

“When the nation feels very threatened, when there's high anxiety about the state of the nation and enemies from within and from without threatening the nation, there is always, really, in our history a kind of return to this affirmation of the United States as a

nation under God to somehow assuage the anxiety, to somehow recover our strength,” Haynes said.

Such motivations may have played a part in adding the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance in the first place.

In the midst of Cold War concerns about political enemies some lawmakers described as “godless communists,” the Knights of Columbus encouraged Congress to amend the pledge to include the words “under God.”

In 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower approved the change and stated, “From this day forward, the millions of our schoolchildren will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural schoolhouse, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty.”

If the Supreme Court affirms the decision rendered by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, other national expressions of religious sentiment would undoubtedly be challenged, Sekulow and Haynes agreed.

“The political fallout would be profound,” Haynes said. “There would be such a backlash in the country.”

(*Western Recorder*, Nov. 4, 2003).

GRASSROOTS PETITION FILED IN PLEDGE CASE

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The Supreme Court was given last week more than 700,000 reasons to keep the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Representatives from Grassfire.net, a conservative grassroots organization, delivered petitions to the Supreme Court signed by citizens nationwide who want to preserve the pledge's traditional wording.

“The effort to remove ‘under God’ from the pledge strikes a blow to the very heart of our American understanding of freedom,” said Keith Fournier, president of the Common Good Foundation, a Christian activist group.

“Our American rights and liberties are endowed by a creator. . . .(‘Under God’) must remain part of our national language,” he said.

Next year, the high court will consider the case of Jeffery Newdow, a California atheist who does not want his 9-year-old daughter to hear the pledge in school.

The Supreme Court's decision to hear the appeal caused an outcry from conservative groups who fear the phrase will be removed. Church-state groups, meanwhile heralded the decision.

Rob Schenck, president of the National Clergy Council, said he believes “the Constitution exists for one purpose, and that is to secure the rights given to us by our creator.”

“Only God can give permanent rights to human beings, and only God can take them away,” he said.

(*Western Recorder*, Nov. 4, 2003).

SURVEY: COLLEGE STUDENTS IGNORANT OF CONSTITUTIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS

WASHINGTON (RNS)—America's undergraduates are mostly ignorant about the

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First Amendment's proclamation about freedom of religion, a survey shows.

A survey released Nov. 20 by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education found that 30 percent of students over-all named freedom of religion when they were asked to name any of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment.

But when asked to specify which freedom is addressed first in the amendment, 10 percent of public college students and 5 percent of private college students correctly said freedom of religion.

"These survey results are disheartening, but they unfortunately are not surprising," said Alan Charles Kores, president of the foundation.

Far more students overall—73 percent—mentioned freedom of speech when asked to name any specific right guaranteed by the First Amendment. Twenty percent cited right of assembly and association and 6 percent mentioned right to petition.

The foundation seeks to preserve the liberty of students on college campuses and has defended students whose religious rights it believes have been abridged.

The survey polled 1,037 students from 339 colleges and universities. The findings had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.8 percentage points.

GLEANINGS HERE AND THERE

SHANGHAI, China (EP)—An activist and historian in China's unofficial Christian church has been sentenced to two years in a labor camp on charges related to writings in his diary, according to the Associated Press. Zhang Yinan, arrested more than a month ago while attending a friend's wedding, was driven away from the Lushan County Detention Center in the central province of Henan on Monday, according to Bob Fu, president of the China Aid Association, based in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania. In sentencing Zhang, police cited passages in his prayer journal that expressed hopes for the destruction of Chinese government bodies, Fu said. Police said such passages constituted "anti-Party, anti-Socialist" writings, Fu said. Chinese law permits police to sentence people to up to three years in labor camps without trials, AP reported. China's officially atheistic Communist authorities allow worship only in state-monitored churches, whose clergy, teachings and congregations are tightly controlled. While the official Protestant church claims 10 million followers, up to five times that number are believed to worship in unofficial Protestant congregations that reject government controls and are subject to routine official harassment and arrest. Several other activists in the unofficial church have reportedly been detained over recent weeks amid a campaign by authorities to destroy meeting halls used by unofficial congregations in the eastern province of Zhejiang.

Q. Did you answer a question recently concerning the meaning of the letters BCE? I need the information but cannot locate the column. — F.S., via e-mail

A. I didn't, but I can. BCE stands for "Before the Common Era" and is expected to replace the traditional B.C., which means "Before Christ."

Our modern calendar was developed in the Middle Ages by Christian monks, who decided to start numbering years with the birth of Jesus (Biblical scholars have since decided that Jesus actually was born around 4 B.C., but that's another column). They called the first year 1 A.D., and the years before his birth B.C.

The problem is that the monks' calendar has become fairly universal, even among people of other religions.

Christianity being not the only religion on Earth, the political correctness police have been pushing for the change. References to A.D., or anno Domini (the year of the Lord), would change to CE, for Common Era.

(Tina Beaumont-Clay, *Knight rider News* via *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal*, Nov. 23, 2003, p. 9C).

MAJOR INCREASE IN PROFANITY ON TV

Foul language on television shows has increased dramatically on nearly every network and time slot—including the so-called "Family Hour" from 8 to 9 p.m. (10/24 *Sword of the Lord*). Foul language, including curses or intensives, offensive epithets, scatological language, sexually suggestive or indecent language, and censored language increased by 94.8 percent during the Family Hour between 1998 and 2003. (*Calvary Contender*, Dec. 2003).

MARRIAGE AMENDMENT IN CONGRESS

A Federal Marriage Amendment was recently introduced in Congress, which states: "Marriage in the U.S. shall consist only of the union of a man and woman. Neither this constitution or the constitution of any state or federal law shall be construed to require that marriage status or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon unmarried couples or groups." (*Calvary Contender*, Dec. 2003).

MOTHER TERESA'S CATHOLICISM NOT ENOUGH

Pope John Paul II has given high priority to making Mother Teresa a saint, and blessed her Oct. 19 in a beatification and Mass attended by 300,000. But faith in Jesus Christ alone makes one a saint. If you're not a saint before death, you can't become one after death. Letters reveal Mother Teresa's inner struggle and feelings of abandonment by God. (11/3 *Chr. News*) She wrote: "I want God with all the power of my soul—and yet between us there is terrible separation." And again: "Heaven from every side is closed." And her sad lament from the heart: "I feel that terrible pain of loss, of God not wanting me, of God not being God, of God not really existing." Mother Teresa was a universalist who

did not believe that Jesus Christ was the only way to Heaven. (*Calvary Contender*, Dec. 2003).

STANLEY 'CLARIFIES' STANCE ON FEMALE PASTORS

Popular Bible teacher and former Southern Baptist president Charles Stanley ridicules the SBC's mandate that wives should submit to their husbands and he doesn't support its ban on female pastors (10/30 *Ala. Bapt.*). He said he was led to Christ by a quiet female evangelist, not by a fiery female pastor (see 7/15/00 CC), and added, "You just can't draw the line and say, 'You can't do so-and-so.'" [Note: After a Texas paper reported that Stanley "disagrees" with the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message, he told Baptist Press (11/6 *Ala. Baptist*) that he is "absolutely" supportive of the BF&M and its stances on the role of women, but thinks a clarifying amendment was needed. He makes a distinction between "pastor" and "preacher," saying the

latter can be a woman.] (*Calvary Contender*, Dec. 2003).

MARION, Ill. (EP)—A federal judge has denied a request to ban a Texas pastor from delivering a secular, anti-drug speech to public school students in Marion, Ill. U.S. District Judge James Foreman issued an order Nov. 17 allowing Texas-based evangelist Ronnie Hill to speak at local schools, said Robert Marsh, who fought the assemblies in court. The judge's order blocked Hill's supporters from distributing invitations to the church revival where Hill was speaking. The first of Hill's addresses was held Nov. 17 at a Marion elementary school. Other assemblies were planned the next day at local junior and senior high schools. Marsh said he has filed a motion for a permanent injunction that would ban religious figures from addressing Marion students and limit students from distributing religious material in school.

Mini-Edition

By Joseph Harris
Chairman of Biblical Studies
Southeastern Baptist College, Laurel, Mississippi



DON'T BE SURPRISED!

An old saying tells us that life is full of surprises, but some things should not catch us by surprise. And especially those events that give a forerunner of their happening. When the ungodly seem to win a victory over morality and purity, some Christians seem surprised. Their surprise almost surprises me.

Consider the latest allegation of child abuse against Michael Jackson. Whether true or not, is anyone really surprised? Surely not! If I were to be surprised at anything, it would be with the parents of the children who are allowed near him without a security guard. Parents who would allow their child to visit him have mush for brains. Would a parent allow his or her child in the same cage now with the tiger that attacked magician Roy Horn in Las Vegas recently? Any parent thinking straight would not take a chance with an animal predator, yet apparently some parents turn their children over to human predators.

Who is surprised over the news that the highest court in Massachusetts just had the gay marriage ban repealed? A homosexual "couple" (Ain't no such thing) can now apply for a marriage license. Massachusetts is a hotbed of homosexuality and homosexual sympathizers. Remember, this is the home of Barney Frank, the queer representative of the fourth congressional district of Massachusetts. And don't forget their illustrious senator, Chappaquiddick Ted, that moralizing Kennedy who left Mary Jo Kopechne to die trapped in his car submerged in water, while he swam to safety, then waited nine hours to report

the accident. With elected officials like the aforementioned men, who could possibly be surprised at anything that might come out of Massachusetts.

Was anyone surprised with the recent removal of Judge Roy Moore as Chief Justice of Alabama? Why be surprised when God and His commandments have already been removed? The natural step of progression is to remove God's man. And remove him they did. The nine member Court of the Judiciary, presided over by Judge William Thompson, voted to remove Judge Moore. The only surprising thing about this event was that Thompson led the court in prayer at the beginning, asking God to bless the proceedings of the court. This is laughable....asking God to bless the removal of the very man who has tried to keep God's blessing on the people by honoring God's laws. Insanity rules.

Then there was Madonna and Britney's throaty kiss on air (which I did not see, but heard about). Why was anyone surprised at this vulgar display of filth, I mean, just because it was on "regular" TV and not on pay TV? X rated programming has been on the television for 25 years since the advent of pay TV as found on HBO, SINemax and other purveyors of pornography. Why be surprised when it switches over to "mainstream" TV? This is nothing more than the natural course of events. Nevertheless, their lesbian kiss was mild compared to some other airings on "regular" TV.

Some are "surprised" at the deaths still occurring in Iraq. Why? We are still at war. War produces death. Deaths will continue as long as there is resistance. I

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am not belittling the deaths of our soldiers or acting callous toward the families of the deceased, but am just placing the situation in perspective. The media will go to the end of the world to report a small number of deaths in Iraq since it fits their anti-war philosophy, yet we don't hear a peep about the slaughtered innocent babies in the abortion genocide or the innocent thousands of Iraqis killed by madman Hussein's rule of terror. What common sense thinker is surprised?

Do not be surprised or shocked now at the latest FCC statement concerning the public use of a very offensive and vulgar, filthy word that will now be allowed on the air on radio and TV. This word is one of the ultimate four letter words, beginning with "F" and unless the FCC, the so-called protector of the airwaves, somehow regains sanity, you will be hearing the word. Like I said, do not be surprised. The FCC has failed the American public for years and this is just one more step into debauchery. This is a sad day when language, which was once unacceptable, is now welcomed. What has changed? Not the world; it's still filthy. People and their tolerance level have changed. God help us. We may not be surprised, but we should be ashamed.

LEGALIZED PLUNDER

That's what the 19th century French economist and statesman, Frederic Bastiat in his book, *The Law*, called government taxation: legalized plunder. I call it Robin Hoodism: taking from the haves and giving to the have-nots. Bastiat wrote the book in 1850, around the time of the French revolution, as France was becoming a socialist country. Apparently, Congress has not read his book.

The new drug prescription plan, just voted into existence, is a vote of confidence for socialism, with government enlarging her borders of plunder, delving deeper into her experimentation in socialized medicine (Hillary should be ecstatic). The recent Medicare drug prescription program birthed in Washington (with our "representatives" attending as midwives) is one birth that we will all one day wish *was* covered by Medicare because of the trillions it will end up costing. It is the most expensive vote buying travesty in history, thanks to the Republicans in their drunken sailor spending mode. We honestly can't blame this on the Democrats. The Democrats are certainly for this sort of socialized mega spending in principle, but they opposed it only because it was not their idea for which they could receive credit and because the price tag was not big enough (imagine that). Hats off also to President George Bush for pushing this piece of thievery onto we the people. He

also has his eye on votes. His true colors as a politician are miserably showing. Fortunately, he outshines his predecessor in morals and ethics and now, unfortunately, in spending. Our pockets have not just been picked. This time, they have taken the whole pair of pants. This is also a wake up call reminding us there is no majority in Washington opposed to big government.

Socialism does not work. It denies the existence of human individuality and human depravity. When government takes from those who have, to give to those who have not, the cycle has to continue. If wealth could be distributed equally among all tomorrow, the next day some would be broke.....and need more again from those who have. The have-nots have not because they keep not. Once again, the Bible rings true: the poor we will have always.

As we look to government to provide our all, such as medicine, food, shelter, etc. we need to be reminded that in order for government to provide all, it must be big enough to do so. What most do not seem to realize is that a government big enough to give everything to all is also big enough to take it all away. That includes liberty as well as material goods and services. In order for government to provide anything at all, we the people must first give. The more that government provides, the more we give..... and give up. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society will pale in comparison when measured up against this Frankenstein built by our law makers. It won't be obvious now, but the years will reveal the truth when pay day arrives. It is like recklessly using credit cards, then wondering why you have \$500.00 less per month in your checking account because of having to pay minimum payments.

Notice who will really benefit from this sham. (1) Politicians will be re-elected as the saviors of the retired, elderly and whoever else can cash in. (2) Drug companies will reap huge benefits. After all, when insurance, whether government or private is paying, the price of pills goes up. (3) Private companies will cut back on retirement benefits, since now the government has a wonderful medicine "insurance" plan for their employees. The estimated cost is \$400 billion. Triple that amount and we might be in the ballpark of the actual cost in 10 years. One eminent university health professor said there would be concerns long term about how to finance it but, "We'll probably figure out a way." Probably figure out a way?? What kind of insane logic is that? That's good. Go into debt first, then figure out how to pay for it.

Sadly, this is just one more reminder that we as a nation have taken our eyes off God. We look to the government for provision instead of looking to God. We depend on our military for protection instead of the Mighty One who fought for

Israel in the Bible. When we spend ourselves broke and begin to feel the pains of poverty and want, maybe then we will look to the Creator and sustainer of the universe, confess our sins of atheism and pride and throw ourselves upon His mercy to receive His blessings.



CAN THE CHURCH BE A PRODIGAL (BRIDE) SON?

Luke 13:11-32

By Ray Bennett

This rich parable is generally used for evangelistic purposes, and we in no means mean to imply that such usage is wrong or out of place. But I suggest that the principles learned and applied to the younger son in this parable may be applied to the Lord's church. Remember that the local church is the Lord's church, i.e.: the Bride of Christ.

To some who will read this article, this concept will be immediately and off handedly rejected, but I would urge you to consider it anyway. To borrow from a comment made some years ago by the late Pastor Cockrell, "I'm not asking you to *buy* it, but *listen* at (to) it." If you have a serious problem with the local church doctrine being advocated in this ministry, you will have a difficult time understanding how these principles apply to the church.

In the remaining space we'd like to present a quick listing of seven principles, from the younger son, that should be both a challenge, but especially an encouragement to the church. It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will open your heart and mind to these precious truths.

1. The son *started out* as a son, he didn't become a son *after* his experience. This teaches a previous and intimate relationship. You cannot lose what you never had in the first place.

2. The son was over anxious to enjoy his inheritance, before he *should* have gotten it and before he was mature enough to handle it. Too many churches, and church leaders, want to have the blessings of the Lord before God says they are ready.

3. In seeking his *own* way, and his *own* pleasure, he squandered his blessings, and the friends he made were false and transitory. When we use the world's methods to win our people, the world's methods will take them away from us, and then we can never regain them.

4. He *didn't* repent until he saw the depth of his situation. Whether it be for salvation, restoration of the truth once held in your church, or just conviction concerning the commands of God, you will never repent until God has shut you

up to the depth of your situation.

5. His repentance issued in a true self-evaluation and realization of his own unworthiness. Be it revival or even the everyday work of the church, there will be no restoration of God's power until, or unless, there first be a true self evaluation and recognition of our own unworthiness, and therefore, dependence on God's grace and power.

6. The father was *already* waiting for the son's return. Now *that's* assurance! The true son will come! This is the promise of John 6:37 and Ephesians 1:3-4. God, the Father, is ready to forgive, even before you can finish your prayer of repentance. Jesus, the Son, is ready to forgive his wandering Bride, as soon as she sees and repents.

7. His repentance incited both joy and restitution.

There are a lot of churches in the North East with a rich, rich heritage of church truth, but have left that truth and their candlestick, their authority, and their power has been removed. Yet some of these churches still exist and function from the original and proper organization. Is it too late for these churches, as it has been shown to be for so many throughout church history? Some of these churches and some of the 'split off' churches that came about because of the original apostasy, still hold to many of the truths of the Bible, even though they seem blinded to church truth.

Who am I to say? But I suggest that biblical passages such as Jeremiah 3:1 and Hosea 3:1-5 offer valid and blessed hope of restoration for the repentant church. *But repentance and a return to the truth are the key!*

This is my prayer, that God will grant repentance and revival to the churches of the North East (Psa. 85:6). Will you pray with me?

THE UNOBTRUSIVE STRANGER

By Bill James

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further." (Luke 24:28). I had never thought a great deal on this verse until I read the testimony of a young man in the *Voice of the Martyrs*. He said God used this verse in his conversion. When he was questioned about it he told how he was deeply impressed with the politeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It appears that he was brought up in harsh surroundings where such a virtue was rarely seen. I was amazed that this passage, this simple statement, would be so mightily used of God in regeneration. Since the time that I read this account I've felt I should look more closely at this verse of Scripture. This message is the product of those

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Gleanings

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meditations.

Luke chapter twenty-four records the conversation between our Savior and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. It tells us how the disciple's hearts burned within them as the Risen Savior unfolded to them the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Himself. As they came near the village Christ indicated that they would pass on beyond them somewhere. At this point they did not recognize Him but they urged this unobtrusive stranger to abide with them overnight. By unobtrusive we mean He did not impose Himself without being asked. Was Jesus Christ this way? Was He not unobtrusive, polite, modest, courteous, unassuming, and non-presumptuous? Was this not absolutely typical of the meek and lowly and harmless Savior? He was always tender with a bruised reed or a smoking flax. He would neither break the one nor quench the other. He did not come to break lives but rather to mend them. He was full of compassion toward needy people we are told. Therefore, we are not at all surprised that He would not presume or impose Himself upon the generosity or hospitality of these two disciples. Think of it! Would it not be presumptuous and certainly less than modest for a stranger to just walk in uninvited to the place where they were staying that night? Should He have invited Himself? Should we have expected them to just somehow understand if he did? Would we not ourselves resent such boldness and presumption? When Christ "made as though he would have gone further" there is no deceit here but only courtesy. Our altogether lovely Savior is not only mighty in deed and word but in manner as well (vs. 19). Our Lord Jesus Christ has staggering power but He never abuses it. He does not force Himself into our lives without we desire Him and welcome Him to do so. He stood at the door of the Laodicean Church and knocked and asked if there were any there who would desire to sup with Him. He enters nowhere but where there is genuine interest in His blessed company.

Note the words, "**they constrained him.**" They entreated Him most earnestly. The constraint here is not a physical one but one of obvious interest and desire. It is like, Please stay with us. Had not their hearts burned within them? It had only whetted their appetites for more of the same. They found it all irresistible. I think there is something very important that we need to address here. Are there not Scriptures and examples of this obvious expression of interest and desire which God looks for and indicates His determination to reward? Consider Christ's teaching on importunity. He spoke of a neighbor who came to his

friend's house late at night needing food for some unexpected visitor he had. He certainly convinced his friend that he was genuinely needy and got his request even though he had interrupted their sleep. (Luke 11:5-13) Did not Christ teach us to be importunate? Does not our desire need to be apparent and sincere? Will he not make Himself a guest with all who, like the two disciples of Emmaus, constrain Him to abide with them? God certainly knows the sincerity of our interest and promises that all who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. Is your desire compelling and convincing?

It was when Christ was a welcomed guest that further manifestation of His glorious self was given to them. We need not expect more when there is a neglect of what we already have. A wise parent does not continue to shove food to a child who still has uneaten food on his plate. In our text, Christ's identity was wisely withheld until it was timely and appropriate to do so. This method left all these things powerfully impressed upon their minds hereafter. In this way they were made to feel shame for their previous unbelief and to experienced a more convincing proof of His resurrection. You will remember that Joseph wisely withheld his identity from his brethren. In doing so they recognized their fault and experience what they were not likely to ever forget. Our text reminds me of Jacob's experience at Bethel. He said, "**Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.**" This method certainly wrote this experience indelibly upon his mind. He still referred to it many years later when blessing Joseph's two sons.

Were the two disciples of Emmaus impressed and profoundly affected by this event? It is very obvious that they were. It appears to me they left so abruptly for Jerusalem that they hardly finished their meal. How far was it to Jerusalem? Verse 13 tells us it was sixty furlongs. Since there are eight furlongs per mile the distance was about 7 ½ miles. They had already walked this and the day was far spent yet they without hesitation or reluctance return. They were so affected, so excited, and so revived that they couldn't wait a minute longer to bear the good news. They had gone from serious discouragement and defeat to overwhelming enthusiasm in such a short time. This is precisely what assurance of the resurrection of Christ did for all the disciples and is a strong testimony to its reality. They were so confident of it that they later suffered greatly and gave their lives. The Emmaus disciples had news to bear that couldn't wait. They remind me of the attitude of the four lepers at the age of Samaria, who found the great spoils left by the Syrian besiegers. They were so excited and they said one to another, "**We do not well: this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.**" (II Kings 7:9) The hearts of these two dis-

ciples had burned within them as they feasted on Christ's words. Now they knew Him as He broke bread with them and off they go to share their great joy with the other disciples. Christ had already first appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9), then some of the women (Matt. 28:9), and then Peter. (Luke 24:34) Now these go and inform the others. (Luke 24:36-43) Then the group have a visit from the risen Saviour Who shows them His hands and His feet and invites them to handle Him. He eats fish and honeycomb in their

presence. He shows Himself alive by many infallible proofs.

The unobtrusive stranger was the incomparable risen Savior. He still manifests Himself to such as crave His presence though we know Him not now after the flesh. (John 14:21-23) Is He welcome in your heart? Would you sup with Him? Why should He enter where He is not welcomed heartily? O to love Him more!

Studies in Esther 2:1-20

By Jeff Short

Mantachie, Mississippi

In the first chapter of Esther, we have found four notable providential events. The first is the unknown occasion for the feast of Ahasuerus. The second is the unusual request for the queen to appear. The third is the surprising rebellion from the king's commandment. And, the fourth notable event is the daring advice of the king's counselors.

All of these events worked together to bring about the purpose of God. All of these events came together and were the means for the removal of Queen Vashti from her place of honor in the kingdom. She was divorced from the king and put out of the palace. Note that these events came about providentially, without any intervention, as far as some sort of phenomenon or miracle. They worked together to effect God's purpose because now the way was made open for the promotion of Esther.

There is no doubt from this book of the Bible that Esther is God's chosen vessel here to effect the deliverance of the Jewish people from those that would destroy them. The way is made open and God has done it without any miracle and without any unnatural occurrence, just the normal, ordinary events. Even the wicked desires on the wicked king's heart can be used for the glory of God, as amazing as that is.

We are tempted here to try to reconcile how that God can work through wicked men and yet they are still responsible for their own actions. I do not pretend to be able to explain all of the deep mysteries of God. He says, "**The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law**" (Deut 29:29). This is part of that knowledge the Psalmist said is "**high, I cannot attain to it**" (Ps.139:6). It is hard to understand but is a matter of faith that we believe and see the hand of God in all of these events. We see His glory resulting from them.

"After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had

done, and what was decreed against her. Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so" (Esther 2:1-4). In the opening of this chapter, we see that after some passage of time king Ahasuerus reflected upon the things that had happened. He missed his wife. He really did have a great affection for her, which is why it so remarkable that he did what he did in the first chapter. He seems to regret the former course of action. **"After these things...the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased."** He remembered her and what she had done and what had been done against her. He was regretting what had happened.

It was in this state of mind that the king got into a depression. The king's servants became concerned about it. **"Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king."** It seems these servants were trying to distract the king somewhat from his present thoughts and hoping to replace the queen.

They sought to find a woman of equal or greater favor in the king's eyes, so he would forget about the former queen and what his counselors had counseled him to do. They were concerned that if the king continued to dwell on this he may determine that had he not listened to his counselors, he would still have his queen. They feared reprisal, being put out of the kingdom. They began to hatch a scheme to replace the queen and keep themselves in the king's favor.

They advance an unusual method for procuring a new queen. **"Let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of**

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Studies in Esther

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his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hegai the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them." They determined that officers should be appointed by the king. The officers would go throughout all the 127 provinces of the kingdom and gather out all the "fair young virgins." They were to look for all the beautiful, single women and bring them into the king's house. Then out of all of those women, they said, "Let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti."

All of the women that were brought would become concubines unto the king. As I understand it, in the custom of the Persian Empire, the king would have a primary wife and many secondary wives. The primary wife, whom was Vashti before she was removed, was the queen. The many other women would be concubines and would legally be married to the king, but seen as secondary wives. Once they were made a concubine to the king, they remained such all of their life, unless, as with Vashti, they might be divorced and put out.

This arrangement was essentially slavery. They would be brought in and not permitted to leave or marry anyone else. They had to be there and be ready for anytime that the king may call on them. Who knew if he would ever call on some of them more than once?

However, this was the process by which they were going to choose the new queen. "The thing pleased the king; and

he did so." The counsel again, of the wise men, pleased the king. In this, the king shows his character. He lived to gratify the flesh. He does not really seem to regard the law of God. He just looks at this process as something that will be pleasurable to himself. He willingly went along with it and greatly anticipated the prospect of it. He was a seeker of ungodly pleasure.

"Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter." We are introduced here to Mordecai the Jew. It is very interesting to note the Mordecai in Ezra 2:1-2, "Now these are children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city. Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel." This is likely the same Mordecai mentioned in Esther. This passage is referring to those that left Babylon when they were released from the captivity. They went up to Jerusalem for a time and then returned.

There were many Jews in the Persian kingdom. Notice what it says about Mordecai, "there was a certain Jew." We read in the book of Daniel about the three Hebrew children, which says there were "certain Jews." There were many Jews there, but there were 'certain' Jews that would not bow down to the idols. Mordecai was one of the 'certain' Jews in the Persian kingdom. O to God that we would have some 'certain' Christians in America today!

"And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter" (Esther 2:7). We are told here about Esther. Esther was her Persian name, which means "star." It signifies one that obtains or finds favor. Her Hebrew name was Hadassah, which means "myrtle." The verse relates that Mordecai brought her up and she was his uncle's daughter. "She had neither father nor mother." She had been orphaned at an early age and Mordecai had raised her up as his own

daughter.

The verse says of Esther, "The maid was fair and beautiful." This indicates that she was fair of form and beautiful of countenance. Esther was possessed of a very great physical beauty. She was also possessed of some very attractive qualities and a disposition that made her all the more beautiful. She was beautiful and modest. We read in the Proverbs about beauty without modesty is "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion" (Prov. 11:22). This is what beauty is without modesty. Esther had a great physical beauty and the quality of modesty and humility. She did not put herself on display nor was she obsessed with her physical appearance.

"So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her" (Esther 2:8-11). When the king's commandment went forth and the women began to be gathered from all the different provinces of the kingdom, Esther was one that was chosen. Esther was brought with the rest of the women into the custody of Hegai. Hegai, the keeper of the women and king's chamberlain, was the chief eunuch in the kingdom and over the house of women. This house is where all the king's harem lived. It was separated from the king's palace by a court.

She was brought there and "the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens....he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women." She found favor in the sight of Hegai, the keeper of the women, and was brought into the very best place. Notice that this favor was chiefly because of her beauty and demeanor. She received favor and was given things speedily and given maidens to attend to her and her needs.

"Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it." She did not reveal the fact that she

was a Jew and related to Mordecai. This shows us the disposition, or the character of Esther. She was not rebellious and self-willed. She was subject unto Mordecai, for he had raised her. She still honored him and remained obedient to him even as she went in to become one of the king's concubines and possibly the queen. She was humble and subject to Mordecai.

Notice the concern Mordecai showed for her, "Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her." He knew she was not going to return home. Once she went to the palace, she was at least going to become a concubine for life. The possibility of her becoming queen was probably pretty far from Mordecai's mind and Esther's also. She was a little orphan, Jewish girl with all of these beautiful women from all these different places throughout the kingdom. To think that she would be the one that would be elevated to the highest position seemed very improbable to her.

"Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;) Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name" (Esther 2:12-14). We notice here that each woman would get their turn to come before the king. During the course of a whole year, each of these women would go through various forms of purification. This involved perfumes, ointments and many cosmetic type treatments.

The process is spoken of, "Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house." Basically, each woman would come in unto the king and would spend the night. She would go back the next day. When a woman's turn came, "whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house." She was given whatever she wanted. Whether that would be apparel, perfume, ointment, ornaments, jewelry, necklaces earring, headdress, etc. Whatever she wanted to use to augment her beauty was

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Studies in Esther

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given her and she had her opportunity to go in unto the king. The next day she would return and would go into the **"second house of the women into the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain."**

Shaashgaz was the eunuch that was over the concubines of the king. After the woman's time was up, she would return to the second house where the concubines lived and legally she would be married to the king. It is interesting that once she had become a concubine to the king this house was where she was going to spend the rest of her life, unless for some reason the king would divorce her. **"She came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name."** These concubines kept in their house and would be called for randomly. Whenever the king was of a mind, he could call any one and they would have to come before the king. She may not be called very often or might never have been called again.

I read one writer that estimated there were 300 to 400 concubines to the king Ahasuerus. There could have been an even greater number. The king was only one man and a woman could not come unless the king would call her. Some would likely not come near him at all. This is much more slavery than any kind of marriage. However, that was what happened among the kings at that time and maybe even happens in some places today.

"Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him" (Esther 2:15-20).

Esther's turn comes around to go in before the king, as all the other women had before her. Notice that she **"required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed."** This shows us something about her character. It is her turn to come in before the king. Obviously, there was a competition going on. Each woman wanted to be the queen. They could get anything they wanted when it was their turn, but Esther required nothing. She did not try to embellish or ornament herself in any way. Here again we see her modesty and humility. She preferred her natural God-given beauty to the painted-up beauty of the world.

Esther **"obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her."** She had an extraordinary beauty that set her apart from others. The king **"loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all of the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti."** Esther was made the new queen. That orphan Jewish girl that had lost her parents and was reared by Mordecai, had become queen above all the other women.

"Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king." The king makes a great feast unto Esther the new queen. He seemed to have a great penchant for feasts and partying. In the first feast, he did everything according to the state of the king. These were very lavish and luxurious gifts. Again, he probably wanted to show his power and glory as king. He does not want to put forth anything that would be inferior but wanted to make a great show of wealth and power. The account is given of Mordecai, **"Mordecai sat in the king's gate."** He held some sort of position in the kingdom. Interestingly, Mordecai still did not reveal that he had any relation to Esther. She did not reveal she had any relation to him, which was by Mordecai's direction. Neither did Esther reveal that she was a Jew. Mordecai did not seek to capitalize on Esther's newfound position in order for personal advancement. He seemed to be content and urged her not to make her people know.

Esther continues to honor Mordecai. She did **"not shew her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him."** She was not self-willed or rebellious, nor had she sought to make fame and fortune for herself. She probably did not have a great desire even to become queen.

In conclusion, we note that it was the providence of God that advanced an orphan Jewish girl all the way to being the queen of Persia, the world power at that time. What a high position! What higher position could she come to in all the land than to be the queen of the king? It is also noteworthy that, in God's providence, she was made more beautiful than all the women in 127 provinces of Persia. There were probably some very beautiful women brought before the king, but in all of them, Esther was found to be more beautiful.

Esther did not seek to honor herself, but honor found her. God was working in preparing the vessels that He would use for His glory. Esther came to be queen, humanly speaking, for one reason, because she was beautiful. God had made her that way. What did she have to do with that? In large part, what do we have to do with the way that we look? In some degree maybe, but the natural features we have is the way God has made us.

God made her extremely beautiful. He could have made her very wise but she probably would not have become queen. He could have given her many different gifts. Perhaps she had others besides this gift, but He gave her this particular gift and she used it for the glory of God.

Esther's unique gift brings to mind that everyone of us is born with some sort of gift and ability from God. Esther did not try to augment her beauty with fleshly means. When she came before the king, she did not choose ornaments to make herself more beautiful. She just came in the natural beauty God had given her. Why had that beauty been given to her? It had been given to her to be used for the glory of God. You might think, "How could something like that be used for the glory of God?" But, in this case it certainly was.

Consider Esther, all the while she was growing up, could have been arrogant and

vaunted herself above all the other girls. However, we do not see that in her. She was modest and humble throughout all her life. One lesson to learn from this is whatever gift we have, we should not make the mistake of thinking that those gifts are simply for our own use. God calls men for preachers and teachers and gives them gifts and ability. They could take those gifts and use them in the world to make themselves very rich. However, we should not make the mistake of thinking that whatever it is that God has given us is to be used for our own purposes. They are to be used for the glory of God. Who would have thought that God would have made her so beautiful for an extremely important work she would do for the glory of God and deliverance of his people? But, it was so. Here we continue to see the providence of God manifested in the book of Esther.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

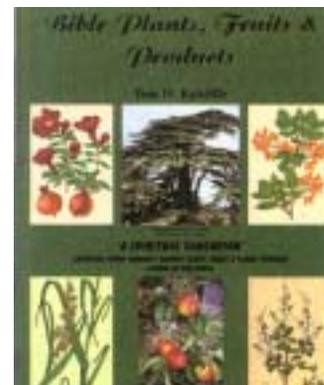
The Annual Area Fellowship Meeting will be held March 27th, 2004 at the Berea Baptist Church, Mantachie, MS. Services begin at 10:00 a.m. A noon meal will be served at the church. Afternoon services to follow the Noon meal. Brother Mark Minney is one of the scheduled speakers.

We are currently awaiting on additional ISBN numbers for Elder Cockrell's books. This has caused a slight delay in the publication date of the next book. The book "An Exposition of Matthew 24" will be available about two weeks from the date we receive the new numbers. List price for this book will be \$3.95. As with all of Elder Cockrell's books prepublication special pricing is \$2.50 plus \$1 P/H. On five or more the price is \$2 each plus postage.

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