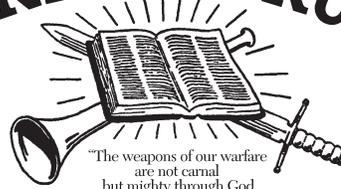


The SWORD and TRUMPET



“Blow ye the Trumpet and warn the People.”

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.”

“Take the Sword of the Spirit which is The Word of God.”

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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MAY 2008

No. 5

THE SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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When convictions come through reading the Word, preaching, or praying, we take the necessary steps to maintain that relationship. ***There's nothing legalistic about obedience to Scripture.*** No person is forced to comply to God's standard. It needs to come from within. Our response when approached about a Biblical standard will be obedience. Jesus said, "He that has my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." If you are loyal, you are not selective about the church requirements, because Jesus can see the deceptive heart.

If it is only outward form, when tests or trials come, the fervor will be gone. You will only be a dressed-up hypocrite.

Don't give up or compromise in the work. You have been bought with a price and there is no greater way to express that appreciation than to show loyalty to the One who made the purchase and to His body, the Church. Can you be counted on to be loyal to your congregation? ■

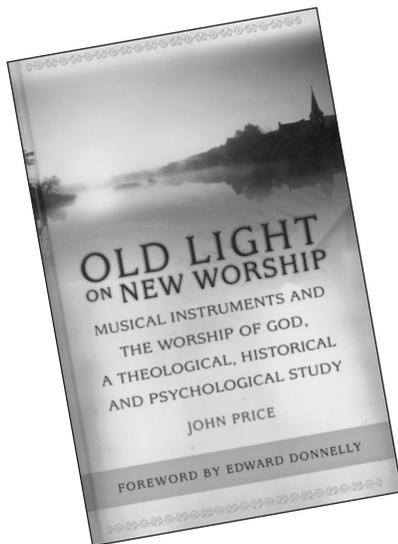
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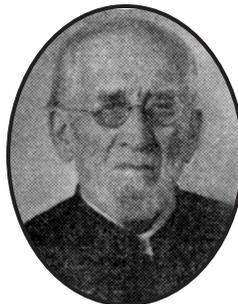
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Person of the Month:

John S. Mast

(1861-1951)



John S. Mast was born November 3, 1861, to John M. and Rebecca Stoltzfus Mast near Morgantown, Pennsylvania. John's Amish parents were very devout. It was here in the Morgantown area that John spent his entire life.

As a boy he spent his days on his father's farm or in school. In 1878, at the age of 17, John went to the private school of Miss Bertolet in Morgantown.

At the age of 18 John was baptized and joined Conestoga Amish Mennonite Church in Morgantown.

Until 1882 the Conestoga Church met in homes, but in that year, when Mast was 21, he had the privilege to help in the building of the congregation's first church house.

Three years later, at the age of 24, John married Christina Zook. God blessed the Masts with three children, but sadly, two of them died as infants, leaving only one surviving child, a son. God granted John and Christina fifty-one years together as man and wife.

In May of 1894, Brother Mast was ordained to the ministry in his home church at the age of 33. He served that congregation for the rest of his life. John's first sermons were in German but after 1920 he preached in English. Early in his ministry Mast acquired two theology books, one in German and one in English. These study tools helped enrich his preaching.

Being interested in conference, he attended his first Eastern A. M. conference in 1898, held in Walnut Creek, Ohio. John was then 37 years old.

In the early part of 1900 Brother Mast began a wide Bible conference ministry, preaching in every A. M. church in Ohio, as well as many Mennonite churches.

John was busy with other activities besides his work, the church, and his Bible conference ministry. In 1906 he was appointed to serve on a committee that was planning for a mission work in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Then in 1907, he was elected as a delegate to the Indiana-Michigan Conference from the Eastern A. M. Conference.

In 1908 he was elected and ordained as bishop. His churches were scattered throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. In the twentieth century, at that time, there were no fast cars or interstates to speed you on your way, but John Mast faithfully visited and served these churches, as well as his home congregation. Putting it simply, he loved his work!

During the years of 1911, 1912, 1929, 1932, and 1934, Brother Mast served as assistant moderator for conference. In 1921 and 1933, he was the moderator. Also, in 1912, Mast, along with others, encouraged the merger of Eastern A. M. Conference with Ohio Mennonite Conference.

Brother Mast also did evangelistic work in both the U. S. and Canada. In 1921, while he was holding meetings at Eastern Mennonite School, 125 confessions of faith were made on the last night of the crusade.

In 1927 John Mast was elected by General Conference to be its moderator for one term.

As busy as he was in the broader church, Brother Mast was very committed to his home church. God gave John an alert mind, which he used to read widely. He introduced new

(continued on page 3)

Excellent or Mediocre

by Tim Myers

The Christian Day School movement has been around for at least a generation, spanning three or more in some communities, long enough to become something of a fixture. Today many of those who had the vision and drive to start schools are gone or too old to be actively involved. Do succeeding generations have the zeal to keep it going and growing?

I admit that the movement has not been without its difficulties. Some teachers have not always been what they should have been, and there have been students or parents who have proven to be problematic. There have been issues which have grown to involve the whole church in controversy.

Not everyone is convinced that we need our own schools. The state provides for the education of our children. We pay double when, in addition to paying our taxes, we fund our schools out of our own pockets. We lack the resources that highly trained educators bring to the public school systems and the infrastructure made possible by the deep coffers of the state. Administering our own system of schools demands tremendous amounts of time and energy.

Is the effort worthwhile?

I believe that individually and collectively we would answer that question with a resounding "YES!" Our families and churches have been blessed and strengthened. We see young people coming out of our schools with a deep appreciation for the Anabaptist faith, prepared to serve the Lord in many different capacities. Our schools can provide a good education based on Biblical truth and solid scholastic principles.

Patronizing the public system is becoming less and less feasible. As our culture becomes more ungodly, the focus of public education runs parallel to it. Not only are God and His principles ignored, but in many cases there is also downright hostility toward Biblical Christianity. All religions

are considered equally valid, and any faith that dares to be critical of another is labeled as intolerant and dangerous.

The stakes are high. There is no area where our families and churches are more vulnerable than in the education of our children. Children are trusting and impressionable, and what is implanted in the school-age mind will have a huge impact on the rest of life.

We need our own schools, and if they are to be successful, they will require three things: our support, qualified personnel, and high scholastic standards.

Our schools need our support.

The school is not just a cooperative of concerned parents; it is a ministry of the church. Patrons should feel a special responsibility to the school, but the whole church should support it. It may be difficult for young families to meet the financial obligations of the school on their own, so for others to help is certainly in the spirit of 2 Corinthians 8:13, 14: *"For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality."*

There should be a willingness to pitch in and do whatever it takes to keep the school functioning well. That may involve administrative work on a board, or working on the facilities.

Even more important, though, is to demonstrate an attitude of support, a humble determination to come together to make the school work. This is put to the test when it seems that the teacher has it in for Johnny, or Mary is mistreated by her classmate. Problems will arise, but need to be handled in the order of Matthew 18.

A school board member told me of an

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undercurrent among the student body of his school which scorned learning and scholastic achievement, and ostracized those who did their best. That must be avoided at all costs. We must create a climate in our schools in which pupils view learning positively, and consider it a privilege.

Parents lay the foundation for their children's attitudes with their own. Learning should neither be disdained, nor considered worldly. When students are learning things which are beyond the educational level of the parents, the parents should encourage them. A good education will enhance one's ability to serve the Lord and to function well in all of life.

***Our schools need
qualified personnel.***

The search for teachers seems to be perennial. Among a recent gathering of people representing conservative Anabaptist churches from all over the United States, it soon became apparent that many schools need teachers for the coming year.

The church can help fill that need by how it relates to teachers. Teaching should be viewed as an honorable profession, something real men and real women do. And in order for people to make a career of it, and invest in preparation for it, there needs to be an equitable pay scale.

While there is room for VSers and short-term teachers, the educational experience will likely suffer if the school depends solely on such to make up its staff. Let us raise up from among our churches those who can serve in this pivotal role, and provide what it takes for them to do their job.

***Our schools need
high scholastic standards.***

Children need to be taught God's truth from His Word. Based on that truth they should have a solid knowledge of math, science, and the social studies. It is especially crucial that they are skilled in the language arts—the ability to use languages to exchange ideas in an articulate manner. We should be going beyond a bare minimum.

I was sharing with a friend, who is also involved in a winter Bible school, about the scholastic weaknesses of many students. "I am afraid," I said, "that our Christian day schools are too often doing a poor job."

"Amen, Brother!" was his response.

I know that there are many exceptions to that observation. But when high school graduates can barely read, and cannot write a coherent paragraph, there is a problem.

The examples mentioned in this column are from many different areas. I am pointing fingers at no one. My concern is that we would not be content with mediocre schools.

If we want our churches to produce strong men and women who can have the impact that the Apostle Paul had, that Menno Simons had, that Daniel Kauffman had, then we must first have strong families, and as a close second, solid schools.

We embrace Christian Day Schools because they can assist us in bringing up our children "*in the admonition and fear of the Lord.*" I challenge us to strengthen them. ■

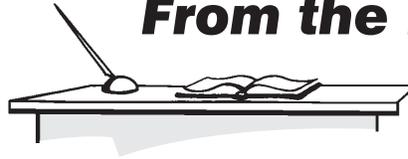
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JOHN S. MAST . . . cont'd.

programs such as Sunday school, Bible meetings, Bible conferences, sewing circle, evangelistic meetings, and summer Bible school. He also encouraged the church's youth chorus and approved the founding of a literary society. He was innovative in his preaching. He did not follow the norms of his day but spoke from a text rather than from a chapter or subject. He used written notes while preaching. He was also the first in his group of churches to preach on assurance, and early preached on the Second Coming of Christ. Though the aforementioned items may have caused a stir in some circles, he was a good preacher. The Lord gave him a good voice and the ability to speak distinctly. He read the Word of God well and exposed it for its hearers, making practical applications from the text. His delivery was forceful.

Probably Brother Mast's most lasting
(continued on page 13)

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Terah and His Tragic Detour

by G. R. French

Terah, the father of Abraham, was born 222 years after the Great Flood. Noah and his son Shem were still alive. It is possible that Abram and his father met Noah and listened in amazement as he described the horrors of the flood and their miraculous escape in the ark.

But let's dig a little deeper into the mystery of Terah's life. Was he a godly man like his son Abraham? What caused him to decide to leave Ur and go to Canaan if he was not? Yet why did he never reach Canaan? Why did he get stuck in Haran, and what were the consequences? Let's see if we can find some clues to these questions.

Was Terah a Godly Man? Why Did He Decide to Leave Ur and Go to Canaan?

The Bible never specifically says that Terah was called to leave Ur. However, suddenly in Genesis 11:31, we see Terah packing up and getting ready to make the trip to Canaan. What does this mean?

Keep in mind Terah's godly heritage. He almost certainly knew of God's covenant, not only with Noah, but with Adam and Seth as well. If so, Terah had to know that the idols of Ur were powerless. They were pitiful substitutes for the God of Creation.

Abram's call must have stirred the memories of his father—and a determination to

go with his son. "Look at me—fooling around with these little worthless stone gods! What has happened to me? I must do something. I'm not going to let Abraham go to Canaan alone!

"Son," he said, "I'm also leaving Ur. I'm going with you to Canaan."

How Did Terah End Up in Haran?

After Terah and his family had traveled about 450 miles, they came to the junction of two roads. One led west across the Euphrates River, and then south toward Canaan. The other led about 150 miles north to Haran. The Bible doesn't tell us why Terah chose the road to the north. It simply tells us that "they came unto Haran, and dwelt there" (Genesis 11:31). The Hebrew word translated *dwelt* in the KJV, means "to sit down." Haran was not on their road to Canaan. In fact, it was in the wrong direction. It was also famous for its worship of the moon-god. But for some reason Terah took the detour to Haran, and then he "sat down"—"settled down" in Haran.

What Was the End Result of "Settling Down" in Another Pagan City?

When Terah got stuck in Haran it meant the end of his spiritual journey. The Bible makes clear that "the grace of God that

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bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11), and that included Terah. But grace can be frustrated, refused, set aside, neglected.

Jesus' parable of the four soils illustrates this. The scattering of seed across various kinds of soil is a picture of God's grace manifested to everyone—planting the truth in the minds of all who will hear, creating holy desires to influence people toward God. God is generous with His grace!

However, the four soils all responded in different ways. Only one was "good." It was "good" because it "kept" the truth—believed it, concentrated on it, walked in the light of it (see Matthew 13:12-23).

Terah is like another one of the soils in Jesus' parable. He heard the Word, but he did not "keep" it; he neglected the grace God manifested to him. He had the best opportunity of anyone in his generation to understand the truth and receive it in faith. He heard the voice of God, started out to seek Him, got more than halfway to his destination, but in the end he gave up on the journey and "sat down in Haran"—sat down with the men of the city to smoke their hookah pipes, swap yarns, and follow them to their pagan temples.

Sadly, tragically, he never left Haran. He never arrived in Canaan, for the Bible tells

us that "Terah died in Haran" but "Abraham went forth to go into the land of Canaan" (Genesis 11:32).

Is there evidence that Terah really did turn back to his idols, or is this mere speculation?

Several hundred years later, after the Israelites had conquered and settled the land of Canaan, Joshua called the people of Israel together and pled with them not to forsake God. Listen to his words: "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river Euphrates in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: AND THEY SERVED OTHER GODS" (Joshua 24:2, 14, 15)!

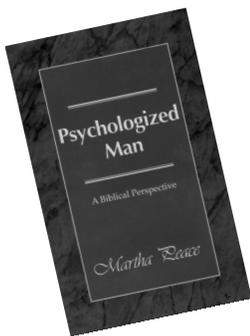
Terah chose a detour toward Haran, and died separated from the God of his fathers.

In the Middle East today, you can see the ruins of Ur and the site of Haran. If you kick around among the crumbling stone walls you might find bits and pieces of the little moon-gods that have eyes to see but see not and ears to hear but hear not.

Somewhere in the dust of that ancient city are the ashes of Terah. And if you listen closely, you may hear a voice calling from the distant past, "Get thee out of thy country . . . unto a land that I will show thee!" ■

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

MAY 4, 2008

Resetting Priorities

Haggai 1:1-15

In last Sunday's lesson Daniel was praying to God on behalf of his people, in preparation for their returning home to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon. In today's lesson we discover that they had been back in their homeland about 16 years and had started rebuilding the temple. (See Ezra 1, 3, and 4. Note especially 4:24 as it relates to the theme of today's lesson.) However, they had stopped work on the temple and put their energies into personal pursuits. Then Haggai shows up with a message from the Lord.

(Don't confuse this Darius of Haggai 1:1 with the Darius of Daniel's day. This was a different king which accounts for the apparent time discrepancy.)

Haggai went directly to the leaders with his message: the governor, Zerubbabel, and Joshua the high priest. He knew that however the leaders responded would affect the people's response. God's message was simple and clear. Their priorities were skewed. They were allowing personal pursuits to take precedence over the things of God. Their attention was focused on their fine houses, their crops, their personal interests and comforts—to the detriment of God's house.

In consequence of their spiritual lethargy, God was reducing their crops and inhibiting their personal comforts. In spite of increased efforts they were becoming poorer and less satisfied. And they failed to see the connection between that and their failure to complete the temple, the house of God. When people

get out of tune with God they are incapable of understanding His ways. So God sent a prophet with a wake-up call. Haggai's message awakened them to reality. God was trying to get their attention. His message was "Consider your ways," pay attention, and evaluate what is taking place. Then do something about it. They were encouraged to gather materials and "build the house."

The leaders and the people "obeyed the voice of the Lord their God" through God's prophet, Haggai. This was quite in contrast to their failure to heed God's prophets in the past, warning of punishment if they did not return to Him (see 2 Chronicles 36:15-17; Jeremiah 25:4-9). This time there was a different, a submissive attitude: they feared the Lord. They had experienced the fruits of disobedience and were now anxious to obey and follow His directives.

When God saw their cooperative spirit He sent another message through Haggai, a message of comfort and assurance: "I am with you." Then, with the assurance of God's blessing and presence they came together, leaders and people, "and did [the] work in the house of the Lord . . . their God." In 23 days Haggai turned the people from spiritual lethargy to spiritual fervor (see 1:1 and 15).

This lesson shows how easy it is to allow priorities to become misplaced. It shows how good things, legitimate things, can crowd out the better things. It carries a strong message to God's people of all time that involvement in His work is of greater significance and importance than the pursuit of personal interests. And it serves as a wake-up call to all of us to stop and examine our priorities, and then

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make whatever adjustments may be necessary. The people of Haggai's day did just that, and God blessed them. He waits to bless us too.

For thought and discussion

1. The historical continuum is helpful in understanding these lessons. Be sure to get a clear picture of the time line of events encompassing these lessons.
2. What does Haggai's message tell us about priorities, i.e. personal pursuits vs. the work of Christ's kingdom? Discuss.
3. Notice the means God used to get Israel's attention. How does He get the attention of His people today? Discuss.
4. This text bears out the maxim that "as go the leaders, so go the people." Leaders, take note!
5. Obedience to God brings its reward. Be sure to understand this principle in your personal life.

MAY 11, 2008

Following a Dedicated Leader

Nehemiah 2:1-18

The next three lessons are taken from the Book of Nehemiah and focus on rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, problems from their enemies, and spiritual renewal under the leadership of Ezra. (A reading of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah will give you excellent background for these lessons.) In today's lesson we focus on Nehemiah's concern for the city of his fathers, his journey to Jerusalem with the king's blessing, his evaluation of the situation, and the presentation of his plan to the leaders of the people.

The exiles had been back in Jerusalem maybe 90 years and the new temple had been in use around 70 years. However, the wall of the city was still lying in ruins 160 years after its destruction by Neb-

uchadnezzar's army. The will of the people, and perhaps resources, had run out. Nehemiah, in the court of Artaxerxes at Shushan, heard of this state of affairs from his brother and others who had recently come from Jerusalem. It grieved him. So he went to the Lord in prayer.

This situation so affected Nehemiah that it showed on his countenance. And the king noticed. When asked what was wrong, Nehemiah breathed a quick prayer to God and explained his problem. The city of his fathers lay waste—the wall in ruins, the gates destroyed by fire. Though far from Jerusalem, Nehemiah held his ancestral city in high regard. It deserved better than to lie in ruins. It was the city of God's house.

Nehemiah had not spent his time wringing his hands. He had developed a plan and when the king inquired as to his intentions he was ready. It certainly speaks highly of Nehemiah's character as well as his position that King Artaxerxes accepted his plan, gave him an extended leave of absence, a blank check for supplies, and an armed guard to accompany him to Jerusalem.

In verse 10 we get an intimation of the problems that would plague Nehemiah's project. Their neighbors were not enthused with the proposed plan to strengthen Jerusalem (next Sunday's lesson).

Nehemiah's first task upon arriving in Jerusalem was to survey the situation. To arouse no suspicion, he set out at night on an inspection tour of the broken-down walls. He wanted to get an accurate picture of the task before him, develop a plan, and only then present his case to the rulers of the city.

Notice the diplomatic way Nehemiah presented his proposal to the city fathers. He acknowledged the distressful situation and then encouraged rebuilding to reestablish the city as a vital entity and remove the reproach under which they had become accustomed to live. He then explained how God had worked things

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out and of King Artaxerxes' cooperative spirit.

In response to Nehemiah's careful and thoughtful presentation, the rulers responded favorably: "Let us rise up and build." They were ready. Once they had lacked resources, motivation, and leadership. Now that these were in place, they were ready to move forward. They had caught the vision of what could be accomplished with cooperation. And they had no doubt caught the vision of the potential glory of their resurrected city. This was all because one man, with God's help, showed determination.

For thought and discussion

1. List the characteristics of a good leader as displayed by Nehemiah. Where do these qualities come from? A good item for class discussion.
2. What are some lessons to be learned from Nehemiah in regard to encouraging cooperation for a project?
3. Thank God for visionary, insightful, and dedicated leaders. He raises them up in every generation, to meet every need among His people.
4. What had gone wrong that the city walls lay in ruins for so many years? Does last Sunday's lesson offer any clues?
5. Under what conditions should we accept help from the "king" today in furthering God's work? Discuss.

MAY 18, 2008

"So Built We the Wall"

Nehemiah 4:1-15; 6:15

Last Sunday's text closed with the people saying, "Let us rise up and build" (2:18). Chapter 3 details the division of labor around the perimeter of the wall. In our text today we find the key to the success of the project in spite of the opposition they faced. There was common purpose, a spirit of cooperation, and

strong, resourceful leadership. Nehemiah would not be deterred by the threatenings and ridicule of their enemies. He had determination, ability, and ingenuity. He was in Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding the wall of the city and would allow nothing to keep the project from moving forward. (Read also Chapter 6.)

Sanballat and his friends' response to the rebuilding of the wall is typical of those who have no part in the project. First, they expressed anger. Then they tried ridicule. When that failed they turned to threat. But nothing worked because they failed to acknowledge, until the work was done, that "this work was wrought of . . . God" (6:16). They were attempting in human strength, in human ways, with human methods, to thwart the work of God. It never works. Man cannot overthrow a work when God is in it.

But that doesn't mean that God's people don't become discouraged or disheartened. Threats are discouraging and can easily affect morale. Wisely, Nehemiah turned to God and petitioned Him for help. He presented the situation as an insult to God and asked Him to deal harshly with their enemies—those who provoked God and discouraged the workmen. So the work went on. In the face of threat, Nehemiah posted watchmen around the clock to warn of attack.

When it became known to Nehemiah that their enemies were planning a sneak attack (v. 11), he armed the workmen and set half of them to guard the ones carrying on the work (read verses 16-18). His strategy provided additional incentive because he placed the guards over their own families and charged them to protect "your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your homes." He also called on them to "remember the Lord" and not be afraid of those who wished them harm. Nehemiah was a man of vision and bravery. He had complete confidence in God and in himself.

Even when their defensive strategies became known to their enemies (v. 15),

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Nehemiah did not allow his people to let down their guard. They simply returned to their tasks with renewed vigor and at the same time maintained their watchfulness. The result was that in the brief span of 52 days the wall was completed, because “the people had a mind to work.”

In Nehemiah we have an outstanding model of leadership. He was fearless because he had the Lord on his side. He was a man of vision and possessed that uncanny ability to see around obstacles and find solutions to every dilemma. He was humble (5:19), not taking credit to himself nor elevating his own achievements. And he was an inspirer of men. When the work faltered, it was he who inspired them to take hold again and move forward. He maintained the vision and worked tirelessly toward the goal. Perhaps verse 6 says it best. The people worked willingly and eagerly because under Nehemiah’s leadership they realized this was a cooperative project. Everyone was involved. Success was their common goal.

For thought and discussion

1. There are a number of important facets of this lesson: cooperation, leadership, dependence on God, how to face discouragement, etc. Spend some time looking at these and applying them in practical ways to your personal or church situation today.
2. Marvel again at how God endows men with leadership skills to meet the need of the hour. Think of other men God called and enabled for specific tasks.
3. Think of times God helped you overcome fear or discouragement through the help of others. What were the main ingredients that led to success?
4. We can all learn lessons from Nehemiah’s personal character and leadership skills. Identify some areas where you need the most help.
5. When it’s all said and done, who gets the glory for a successful project—the leader, the workers, or who?

MAY 25, 2008

Spiritual Renewal

Nehemiah 8:1-18

The rebuilding of the wall was completed and now it was time to turn attention to other things. Notice that it was at the request of the people that attention was turned to spiritual matters. No doubt they had been influenced in this direction by their observance of Nehemiah’s closeness with God and his godly character. Now they were hungry for a closer relationship to God, the One to whom they realized they were deeply indebted for the many blessings they had experienced in their recent project of rebuilding the walls of their city.

Ezra’s coming to Jerusalem is explained in Ezra 7:1-10, which also explains and describes the purpose of his coming. He arrived some dozen years before Nehemiah. His was a spiritual ministry. The *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* says of him: “His influence shaped Jewish life and thought in a way from which they never altogether departed.” In today’s lesson we see his collaboration with Nehemiah in leading the people back to an understanding and practice of the Law of Moses.

The events in today’s text take place only one week after the completion of the wall as noted in 6:15. Here was a popular mass movement of the people, requesting religious instruction. Men, women, and children gathered as one man, stood patiently and reverently, and listened attentively all morning to the reading of the Law. Ezra had assistants who helped interpret the Law and explain its principles and applications.

When the people heard and understood the Law, they wept in sorrow for their sins. They realized they were not living up to the standards God expected from His people. However, Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites stilled the people and told them to “hold your peace, for the day is

holy” (Numbers 29:1; Deuteronomy 16:10-15). Rather, they were to celebrate by eating, drinking, and sending portions to those in need. It was to be a day of worship and rejoicing in remembrance of God’s blessing.

On the next day they discovered in the Law where the “Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths” in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt (see Leviticus 23:41-43). So they went out and gathered branches and made booths “every one upon the roof of his house” and wherever else they could find room (v. 16). These people were serious about obeying the Law of God. They were wholehearted in their desire to regain His favor. The result was a celebration the likes of which had not been seen in Israel since the days of Joshua.

Several things are necessary for spiritual revival to take place. There must be an awareness of need, a desire to change, and action to bring about change. These were all present in today’s text. In verses 1 and 9 we see an awareness of need. Verses 3 and 6 show the desire of the people to do something about their condition, and verses 12-18 show the action the people took in obedience to God’s Law.

There was an excellent spirit of cooperation between the people and their leaders in this experience of spiritual renewal. As we read on to the end of the Book of Nehemiah we see that this was an ongoing movement. And God was certainly pleased with the intensity and thoroughness with which they corrected their failures and turned to Him with open and obedient hearts. And that is the essence of revival.

For thought and discussion

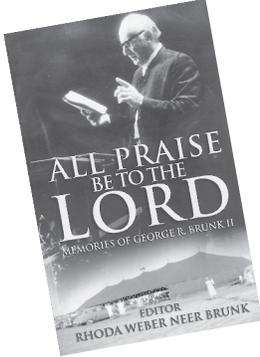
1. What are the steps which lead people away from God and His Word? Discuss with your class.
2. Describe the qualities of strong leaders. How do leaders differ from the throng?

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**“All Praise
Be to the Lord”**

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3. What are some essential elements in leading a wayward people back to God? Discuss.
4. What does this passage tell us about the value of corporate worship? Who should be involved?
5. What were the purposes of the Jewish festivals? Do they have any parallels in the New Testament Church? ■

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

Mom Hangs Herself After Abortion

A 31-year-old lady from Cornwall, England, hanged herself after aborting her twins. Her suicide note read, “I should never have had an abortion. . . . I told everyone I didn’t want to do it, even at the hospital. I was frightened, now it is too late. I died when my babies died. I want to be with my babies: they need me, no one else does.”

Her mother commented, “I believe this is what led Emma to take her own life—she could not live with what she had done.” The secular world is catching on that there are effects of sin. —Source: *The UK Telegraph*

* * * * *

Kosovo Declares Its Independence

The long-troubled Balkans region has finally seen a seemingly-inevitable culmination of its century-long political, ethnic, and religious wars. A grab bag of ethnicities and religions (Christian, Muslim) contributes to tensions.

Yugoslavia was a kingdom cobbled together after World War I. It was composed of the modern countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. After WWII (in which the Soviet Red Army expelled the Axis forces), Yugoslavia became a Communist State. In 1991 at the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Yugoslav Republics of Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Macedonia declared their independence from Yugoslavia, leaving only Serbia and Montenegro.

The Serbian province of Kosovo is composed largely of Albanian Muslims (90%). In 1999, the U.S. bombed Serbian forces in the province of Kosovo because of ethnic cleansing against Albanians. After that war, the UN took over administration of Kosovo on

an interim basis. Serbia and Montenegro announced their mutual independence from each other in 2006.

Now, Kosovo has finally declared its independence from Serbia. The U.S. and a number of EU countries have recognized Kosovo’s independence and formation of a sovereign state. However, Russia, China, and Serbia have explicitly refused to recognize it.

Protesters partially torched the U.S. embassy in the Serbian capital of Belgrade. This has prompted the U.S. to evacuate all non-essential embassy personnel.

—Source: *TIME Magazine, Wikipedia, BBC*

* * * * *

Google Sponsors New Race to the Moon

“More than three decades after the last Apollo astronauts roamed the lunar surface, disparate universities, open-source engineers, and quixotic aerospace start-ups are planning to start their own robotic missions to the earth’s barren cousin.

“The return to the moon is part of the Google Lunar X Prize, a competition sponsored by Google with \$30 million in prizes for the first two teams to land a robotic rover on the moon and send images and other data back home.

“At Google’s headquarters here Thursday, 10 teams from five countries announced their intention to participate in the competition.”

—Excerpt from “Google Sponsors New Race to the Moon” in the *International Herald Tribune* (2/22/2008) (<http://tinyurl.com/3y3dyz>)

* * * * *

India Sees Rise of Wedding Sleuths

Many marriages in India are now being arranged via matrimonial services. (When I was in India this past fall, I was amazed at

the incredible amount of advertising of matrimonial services I saw on billboards, in newspapers, etc.) Because of the big dowries sometimes involved, there is a rising number of frauds in which grooms grossly misrepresent themselves and then after marriage, take the money and run. This has led to the rise of “wedding detectives” who scout out potential mates and make sure that they are who they say they are. One wedding detective in New Delhi says that about 30% of her investigations turn up lies and undesirable circumstances.

—Source: *Washington Post*

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Iran Pressures Afghanistan With Bombs, Refugees

Iran has turned up the heat toward its neighbor Afghanistan. They have stepped up their supplying of arms (including mortars) and bomb-making materials (including plastic explosives and sophisticated armor-penetrating devices used against tanks and armored vehicles) to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

They also deported 130,000 Afghan refugees living in Iran, setting off food and housing shortages in Afghanistan. After Afghanistan pleaded with Iran to not deport the rest of the one million Afghan refugees in Iran, they stopped—it is not known what *quid pro quo* Afghanistan paid to obtain this.

Finally, Iran has stepped up its purchasing of influence by distributing large wads of cash to tribal leaders throughout western Afghanistan.

—Source: *TIME Magazine*

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China Pressures Sudan

In stark contrast to China’s ardent protection (with its diplomatic power, including a U.N. Security Council veto) of most rogue regimes (such as North Korea, Iran, Serbia, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, etc.) that challenge the West, China has finally relented to international pressure and is joining in pressuring Sudan to end the genocide in the Darfur region.

—Source: *New York Times*

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Fidel Castro Resigns

Eighty-one-year-old Fidel Castro resigned as the president of Cuba. He handed over the reins to his seventy-six-year-old brother Raul Castro. Analysts are hoping for a gradual liberalization of Cuban policies under Raul because of his support for slow China-style economic liberalization. —Source: *International Herald Tribune*

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Archbishop of Canterbury Calls for Sharia Law in the UK

In a shocking move, the head of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has called for Islamic Sharia law to be set up in the United Kingdom as an optional law and court system in parallel with standard British law. The country has reacted with shock to the suggestion, which legal experts (and indeed any common person with common sense) have decried as not only reprehensible, but also impossible due to practical considerations. For instance, when someone steals something from you, go to the Sharia courts and get his hand chopped off—the standard punishment for thieves under Sharia. It would be impossible in such cases to determine whether a case should be decided under Sharia law or British law.

This statement of support is a dramatic development in the continuing Islamization of Britain. Islam is growing at a rapid pace with over 1.8 million Muslims in the UK. The 7/7 suicide bombings of buses and subways in London (which killed 52 and injured 700) were carried out by naturalized British citizens.

—Sources: *The London Evening Standard*, *Wikipedia*

* * * * *

Religious Police in Saudi Arabia Arrest Mother for Sitting With Man

“A 37-year-old American businesswoman and married mother of three is seeking justice after she was thrown into jail by Saudi Arabia’s religious police for sitting with a male colleague at a Starbucks coffee shop in Riyadh.

“Yara, who does not want her last name published for fear of retribution, was bruised and crying when she was freed from a day in prison after she was strip-searched, threatened, and forced to sign false confessions by the Kingdom’s ‘Mutaween’ police.

“Her story offers a rare firsthand glimpse of the discrimination faced by women living in Saudi Arabia. In her first interview with the foreign press, Yara told *The Times* that she would remain in Saudi Arabia to challenge its harsh enforcement of conservative Islam rather than return to America.

“Her ordeal began with a routine visit to the new Riyadh offices of her finance company, where she is a managing partner.

“The electricity temporarily cut out, so Yara and her colleagues—who are all men—went to a nearby Starbucks to use its wireless internet.

“She sat in a curtained booth with her business partner in the cafe’s ‘family’ area, the only seats where men and women are allowed to mix.

“For Yara, it was a matter of convenience. But in Saudi Arabia, public contact between unrelated men and women is strictly prohibited.

“Some men came up to us with very long beards and white dresses. They asked, ‘Why are you here together?’ I explained about the power being out in our office. They got very angry and told me what I was doing was a great sin,” recalled Yara, who wears an abaya and headscarf, like most Saudi women.

“The men were from Saudi Arabia’s Commission for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, a police force of several thousand men charged with enforcing dress codes, sex segregation, and the observance of prayers.

“Yara, whose parents are Jordanian and grew up in Salt Lake City, once believed that life in Saudi Arabia was becoming more liberal. But on Monday the religious police took her mobile phone, pushed her into a cab, and drove her to Malaz prison in Riyadh. She was interrogated, strip-searched, and forced to sign and fingerprint a series of confessions pleading guilty to her ‘crime.’

“They took me into a filthy bathroom, full of water and dirt. They made me take

off my clothes and squat and they threw my clothes in this slush and made me put them back on,’ she said. Eventually she was taken before a judge.

“He said, ‘You are sinful and you are going to burn in hell.’

“‘I told him I was sorry. I was very submissive. I had given up. I felt hopeless,’ she said.

“Yara’s husband, Hatim, used his political contacts in Jeddah to track her whereabouts. He was able to secure her release.

“‘I was lucky. I met other women in that prison who don’t have the connections I did,’ she said. Her story has received rare coverage in Saudi Arabia, where the press has been sharply critical of the police.”

—Excerpt from “Religious police in Saudi Arabia arrest mother for sitting with a man” from *The Times of London* (2/7/2008) (<http://tinyurl.com/yw3xta>).

* * * * *

Recommended Reading

“Putin’s Iron Grip on Russia Suffocates His Opponents” in *The New York Times* (<http://tinyurl.com/24pj7e>).

“Unknown ingredient—The mysterious death of a foster child puts mother seeking to adopt him in jail” in *WORLD Magazine* (<http://tinyurl.com/27kz4k>).

“Stealth Treaty” in *WORLD Magazine* (<http://tinyurl.com/36baer>).

Feedback: hansmast@hansmast.com

JOHN S. MAST . . . cont’d.

contribution as a pastor was the fact that his solid preaching produced solid convictions in the hearts of two generations of his hearers. He kept the unity of the congregation through transition and change but remained a man of principle. His life encouraged others to “fight the good fight” and keep the faith until the end. His concern for the life of the church was with him until the Lord took him home.

John S. Mast died January 3, 1951, at the age of 89. He was buried in Pine Grove Cemetery near the original Mast homestead.

—Gail L. Emerson

Pastors on Hell's Hit List

by Steve Gallagher

One of the many reasons I completely trust the veracity of Scripture is that it tells the utter truth about its characters. One such person is Solomon—whose story is chock-full of meaning for pastors under the malignant surveillance of the devil.

Life could not have been more promising for young prince Solomon and yet, before it was over, he was so miserable that he “hated life” (Ecclesiastes 2:17). He fell so far from grace that he eventually built demon-infested temples for the worship of idols, right within view of the Holy of Holies.

The Bible clearly states that it was Solomon's foreign wives who led him astray (1 Kings 11:4). However, I don't believe it was sexual lust that led to his downfall. A closer look seems to indicate that the devil used the same ploy on him that he is successfully using with many pastors today.

Like many ministers, Solomon began his career with a love for God and a sincere desire to further His kingdom. Not long after Solomon became king, the Lord appeared to him in a dream asking him what He could do for him. When the young monarch humbly requested wisdom to lead His people, he was given tremendous insights into the spiritual realm where the great purposes of the Almighty are formed and initiated.

Solomon's humility and godliness posed a particularly dangerous threat to the wily serpent's kingdom. The devil knew that such a man would be a mighty weapon in the hands of God. It was vital that his testimony be destroyed. Every leader of Hell must have been involved in the plot to bring him down.

Satan surely must have noted that Solomon inherited two traits from his father: a driving ambition and an inordinate attraction to women. It is not surprising that the enemy's first line of attack would be in the realm of sexual temptation.

It seems clear—from the things he wrote in Proverbs—that the young king learned the dangers of sexual sin through experience. He apparently resisted those snares and emerged from this period of his life with the conviction that pursuing sexual sin would eventually destroy a man. “Now

then, my sons, listen to me,” he wrote. “Keep your way far from [the house of the adulteress], or you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one” (Proverbs 5:7-9).

Eventually the devil (“the cruel one”) was forced to concede that Solomon was too intimate with God—too spiritually solid—

to fall for such blatant temptation. He clearly needed a new plan, one which would require patience.

In the bloody sport of boxing, the novice will flail away at his foe hoping to land a lucky knockout punch. The cagey fighter, on the other hand, understands the importance of attacking the opponent's body. He will wear the other guy down by using relentless body shots. It may take a few rounds, but eventually the other boxer will become exhausted from the pummeling to his midsection and will start dropping his hands. It is then that he becomes vulnerable to the knockout punch.

Likewise, the enemy knows that a knockout punch is not going to work on a man who is walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

“I DON'T BELIEVE IT WAS SEXUAL LUST THAT LED TO HIS DOWNFALL. A CLOSER LOOK SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT THE DEVIL USED THE SAME PLOY HE IS SUCCESSFULLY USING WITH MANY PASTORS TODAY.”

PAGE 14

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Pastors who spend time seeking the face of God and soaking in His Word live very protected lives. The devil understands that the way to destroy these men is to wear them down spiritually—get them disconnected from their Source of spiritual strength.

But how can he accomplish this? I believe Solomon's story provides a clear illustration of how the enemy uses the very thing the man brings to the Lord—his labor for God's kingdom—to lure him away from the One he is supposed to be working for.

When Solomon was handed the kingdom by his father, he was given a clear mandate to build a house for the Lord.

For seven long years the young monarch thought of little else. Like so many in ministry today, he relentlessly pushed himself and those who worked for him to accomplish his life's great work. The fact that God filled the Temple with His presence seems to indicate

that—at least at that point—He was pleased with Solomon's efforts and the motives which compelled them.

But somewhere along the line I believe the young king strayed off course. Even though his motives remained pure during that building project, he developed bad habits such as using (selfishly overworking) people to accomplish his goals. The elders of Israel later complained of "hard service" and "a heavy yoke" (1 Kings 12:4). Like so many who enter ministry, a godly mandate can gradually become replaced with self-ambition. Workers and church members become objects to be used rather than people to be served.

One of the unfortunate side effects of this kind of ambition is that it causes tremendous stress. Let's face it, even the minister who is content to wait on God is going to deal with some level of stress in our day and age. But when a minister puts undo pressure upon himself and others to accomplish goals or time frames of his own making, everyone suffers.

Even if he is faithful to his devotions, his

prayer life will tend to become dry and lifeless. Just when he needs God's strength the most, he discovers that he has allowed busyness to leave him spiritually barren.

Even worse, some ministers become so persistent in their prayers for God to bless their work that the Lord will eventually give them what they are demanding: the curse of a granted prayer. "He gave them their request," wrote the Psalmist, "but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalm 106:15 KJV).

Solomon completed the task of building the Temple but immediately threw himself into other projects: "I enlarged my works,"

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TOO SPIRITUALLY SOLID—
TO FALL FOR SUCH
BLATANT TEMPTATION.
THE DEVIL CLEARLY
NEEDED A NEW PLAN."

he would later write. "I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself. . . . Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not

withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor" (Ecclesiastes 2:4-10). Did you notice how many times he used the words *myself* and *I*?

How many of us can testify to the powerful temptation to use ministry to gain a sense of personal accomplishment? It is common knowledge that men derive much of their fulfillment in life from their work. There is nothing wrong with that up to a point. However, ministers are held to a different standard. As servants of God, we must be exceedingly careful that we don't stray into doing work that is ostensibly for the Lord when, in reality, it is actually for Self. Solomon apparently forgot the words he had penned during better times: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1).

In the midst of his driving lust to achieve more and more, he began accumulating wives "and the pleasures of men—many concubines" (Ecclesiastes 2:8). I'm sure that sexual lust played a part in this. It's

nearly impossible to curb sexual passion when you are also being driven by a lust for other things. However, I tend to think that his accumulation of 700 wives had more to do with pride (acquiring the most horses, chariots, gold, etc.) and business pragmatism (making political connections) than simply a desire for variety in his sex life.

In a similar way, pastors who become spiritually depleted through overwork and the lack of a meaningful prayer life are terribly vulnerable to being set up by the enemy. A spiritually weakened minister in our day faces an overwhelming temptation to investigate, dabble in, or even to immerse themselves in Internet pornography (or some other form of sexual sin). It only takes a lust-driven man a few short nights of surf-

ing the 'Net to experience the undressed bodies of hundreds of women.

The enemy is always happy to destroy the reputation of anyone who has put himself in the position of representing God. However, when he is able to weaken and topple a truly godly man, all Hell rejoices. Just as Heaven has her trophies of grace, so too Hell has its trophies of disgrace.

Let us all serve the Lord with all our hearts, zealously working and fervently praying, that we might be made dangerous weapons in the hands of a mighty God! But as we do so, let us take great care to keep ourselves on the doorstep of Heaven, out of reach of our cruel enemy. ■

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Sermon of the Month



Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expositional sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by "snail mail" or email to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrump@verizon.net.

New Birth, New Creature

by Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

"It is the spirit that quickeneth." —John 6:63

The Holy Ghost testifies, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This testimony is true. For

FIRST, HE LOVES AND WORSHIPS A NEW GOD. The natural man is a god to himself, and he has many other gods as well. Whether it be self-righteousness, self-gratification, the world, wealth, family, in what-

ever form it appears, "other lords have dominion over him" to the exclusion of the one true and living God. The nature of the human mind is such that it must love and worship some object supremely. In his state of innocence, Jehovah was the one and supreme object of the creature's love and adoration. Seduced from that state of sim-

ple and supreme affection by the tempter's promise that if they ate of the fruit of the tree forbidden of God, they should be as gods (Genesis 3:5), in one moment they threw off their allegiance to Jehovah, renounced Him as the object of their supreme love, the center of their holiest affections, and became gods to themselves. The temple was ruined, the altar was thrown down, the pure flame was extinguished, God departed, and "other lords" entered and took possession of the soul.

But what a change does grace produce! It repairs the temple, rebuilds the altar, rekindles the flame, and brings God back to man! God in Christ is now the supreme object of his love, his adoration, and his worship. The idol *self* has been cast down, self-righteousness renounced, self-exaltation crucified. The "strong man armed" has entered, cast out the usurper, and, "creating all things new," has resumed His rightful supremacy. The affections, released from their false deity and renewed by the Spirit, now turn to and take up their rest in God. God in Christ! How glorious does He now appear! Truly it is a new God the soul is brought to know and love. Never did it see in Him such beauty, such excellence, such blessedness as it now sees. All other glory fades and dies before the surpassing glory of His character, His attributes, His government, and His Law. God in Christ is viewed as reconciled now: enmity ceases; hatred has passed away; opposition grounds its weapons; hard thoughts of His Law and rebellious thoughts of His government subside; love kindles in the soul, and, in one precious Christ the one Mediator, God and the sinner meet, embrace, and blend. Truly, they become *one*. God says, "Thou art mine." The soul responds, "Thou art my God—other lords have had dominion over me, but henceforth, Thee only will I serve, Thee only will I love. 'My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upheld me' (Psalm 63:8). 'One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the

LORD, and to enquire in his temple' (Psalm 27:4)."

God in Christ is his Father now. "I will arise, and go unto my Father" (Luke 15:18) is the first motion of a renewed soul. "Father, I have sinned against . . . Thee" is the first confession rising from the broken heart. The Father hastens to meet and embrace His child, and clasping him to His bosom exclaims, "This my son was dead, and is alive again" (Luke 15:24). Reconciled, he now looks up to Him truly as his Father. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). "Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me" (Jeremiah 3:19). Does God speak? It is the voice of a Father he hears. Does God chasten and rebuke? It is from his Father, he feels. Are his hopes disappointed, his plans crossed, his cisterns broken, his gourds withered? "My Father has done it all," he exclaims. Blessed Spirit of adoption! Sweet pledge and evidence art Thou of the new creature.

God in Christ is now the object of confidence and trust. Trust in a reconciled God and Father was no mark and portion of his unrenewed state. It was then trust in *self*, in its imagined wisdom, strength, and goodness. It was then trust in the arm of flesh, in second causes. Now the soul trusts in God: trusts Him at all times and under all circumstances, trusts Him in the darkest hour, under the gloomiest dispensation, trusts Him when His providences look dark and lowering, and God seems to hide Himself. It even trusts Him "though He slay me" (Job 13:15) . . . Oh, how safe he feels in God's hands and under His government now! His soul, his body, his family, his business, and his cares are completely surrendered, and God is all in all. Reader, this is to be born again.

SECOND, THE REGENERATE SOUL POSSESSES AND ACKNOWLEDGES A NEW SAVIOR. How glorious, suitable, and precious is Jesus to him now! Not so formerly. Then he had his saviors, his "refuges of lies" (Isaiah 28:17), his many fatal

confidences. Jesus was to him as “a root out of a dry ground: he [had] no form nor comeliness” (Isaiah 53:2). It may be that he denied His deity, rejected His atonement, scorned His grace, and slighted His pardon and His love. Christ is all to him now. He adores Him as the “mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace” (Isaiah 9:6), as “over all, God blessed for ever” (Romans 9:5); as “God . . . manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16); as stooping to the nature of man, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; as offering Himself up as the “propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2); as dying, “the just for the unjust” (1 Peter 3:18). His righteousness is glorious as justifying from all things (Acts 13:39); His blood is precious as cleansing from all sin (1 John 1:7). His fullness of grace is valued as supplying all need. Oh, how surpassingly glorious, inimitably lovely, and unutterably precious is Jesus to a renewed soul!

Truly a new Saviour! “Other lords” he has renounced; “refuges of lies” he has turned his back upon; “false Christs” he no longer follows. He has found another and a better Saviour—Jesus, the mighty God, the Redeemer of sinners, “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4). All is new to his recovered sight; a new world of glory has floated before his mind. Jesus the Lamb is the light and glory thereof. Never did he suppose there was such beauty in His person, such love in His heart, such perfection in His work, such power and such willingness to save. That blood which was trampled underfoot is now precious. That righteousness which was scorned is now glorious. That name which was reviled is now as music to the soul, even a “name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9).

Jesus is his only Saviour. Not an allowed confidence has he out of Christ. The covenant of “dead works” he has renounced. The Spirit, having brought him out of and away from it, has led him into the covenant of grace, the substance and stability and glory of which is Jesus. On the broad basis of Immanuel’s finished, atoning

work he rests his whole soul; and the more he presses the foundation, the more he leans upon the cornerstone, the stronger and the more able to sustain him does he find it. True, he feels a self-righteous principle closely adhering to him all his journey through the wilderness. When he prays, it is there; when he speaks, it is there; when he labors, it is there; when he reflects, it is there. He detects it when suspicion of its existence would be most at rest. But in the sober moments of his judgment, when prostrate beneath the cross and looking up to God through Jesus, this principle is searched out, abhorred, confessed, and mourned over; and with the eye of faith upon a suffering Saviour, the language of his expanding heart is, “Other refuge have I none, Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.”

THIRD, NEW AND ENLARGED VIEWS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MARK A REGENERATE MIND. Having received the Holy Ghost as a Quickener, he feels the need of Him now as a Teacher, a Sanctifier, a Comforter, and a Sealer. As a *Teacher*: discovering to him more of the hidden evil of the heart, more knowledge of God, of His Word, and of His Son. As a *Sanctifier*: carrying forward the work of grace in the soul, impressing more deeply on the heart the Divine image, and bringing every thought and feeling and word into sweet, holy, and filial obedience to the law of Jesus. As a *Comforter*: leading him in the hour of his deep trial to Christ; comforting, by unfolding the sympathy and tenderness of Jesus, and the exceeding preciousness and peculiar fitness of the many promises with which the Word of truth abounds for the consolation of the Lord’s afflicted. As a *Sealer*: impressing upon his heart the sense of pardon, acceptance, and adoption; and Himself entering, as the “earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:14). Oh, what exalted views does he now have of the blessed and eternal Spirit—of His personal glory, His work, His offices, His influences, His love, tenderness, and faithfulness! The ear is open to the softest whisper of His voice; the heart expands

to the gentlest impression of His sealing, sanctifying influence. Remembering that he is “a temple of the Holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 6:19), he desires so to walk—humbly, softly, watchfully, and prayerfully. Avoiding everything that would grieve the Spirit, resigning every known sin that would dishonor and cause Him to withdraw, the one single aim of his life is to walk so as to please God, “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11).

[Next], it would be an imperfect enumeration of some of the strong features of the new creature did we omit to notice the growing nature and tendency of the vital principle of grace thus implanted in the heart of the regenerate. Nothing more strikingly and truly proves the reality, we would say the *divinity*, of the work within than the growing energy and holy tendency that ever accompany it. It is the property of that which has life in itself to increase, to multiply itself. The seed cast into the earth will germinate. Presently will appear the tender sprout; this will advance to the young sapling, and this in time to the gigantic tree with its overshadowing branches and richly laden with fruit. Obeying the law of its nature, it aspires to that perfection which belongs to it. It must grow. Nothing can prevent it but such a wound as will injure the vital principle or the cutting of it down entirely. The life of God in the soul of man contains the principle of growth. He that is not advancing—adding grace to grace, strength to strength; fruitful in every good word and work; increasing in the knowledge of God, of his own heart, of the preciousness, fullness, and all-sufficiency of Jesus; and in Divine conformity growing up into Christ in all things (Ephesians 4:15)—has great reason to suspect the absence of the Divine life in his soul. . . . But the spirit we are now considering is that of a man truly “born again.” “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ

Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark . . .” (Philippians 3:12-14). O holy resolve of a regenerate man! Here is the springing up of the well of living water in the heart. Here is the turning of the soul to God. See how the fountain rises! See how the flame ascends! It is the mighty energy of God the Holy Ghost drawing the soul upward, heavenward, God-ward!

Let not the Christian reader close this chapter with a burdened heart. Let no dear child of God write hard and bitter things against himself as he reads this last sentence. Let him not come to any hasty, unbelieving, doubting, and God-dishonoring conclusions. What are *you* to yourself—worthless, vile, empty? What is *Jesus* to you—precious, lovely, all your salvation, and all your desire? What is *sin* to you—the most hateful thing in the world? And what is *holiness*—the most lovely, the most longed for? What is the *throne of grace* to you—the most attractive spot? And the *cross*—the sweetest resting-place in the universe? What is *God* to you—your God and Father, the spring of all your joys, the fountainhead of all your bliss, the center where your affections meet? Is it so? Then you are born again; then you are a child of God. Cheer up, precious soul! The day of your redemption draws near. Those low views of yourself—that brokenness, that inward mourning, that secret confession, that longing for more spirituality, more grace, more devotedness, and more love does but prove the existence, reality, and growth of God’s work within you. God the Holy Spirit is there. . . . Look up then, reader, and let the thought cheer you: that soul never perished that felt itself to be vile and Jesus to be present. ■

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The Broken Beauty of Marriage

The Good Marriage in a Relationally Traumatized World

by Dr. Daniel D. Zink

Marriage is supposed to be tough. It is also a lot of other things—most of them good. It is exciting, fulfilling, sustaining, encouraging, enduring, and so forth. But it is tough. Some might prefer I chose a different word, a more comfortable word such as “challenging,” “stretching,” or even “difficult.” But wouldn’t choosing comfortable words be an effort to soften the blow, to make gentle with the hard truth? I think so, because if we are honest, marriage is tough.

We are seven sentences into this article and I expect that most readers want to argue with me. Most of us have a strong preference to believe that marriage is anything but tough, so who wants to listen to something different? Who wants to think that marriage is supposed to be something other than a mysterious merging of two children of God to share emotional and physical completeness and pleasure as well as to raise godly offspring while together advancing God’s kingdom? I know marriage has glorious purposes and can be lived out in glorious ways. And I hope that all couples do just that. But the chances that we will experience glorious marriage relationships and missions are diminished if we look for, expect, and seek only positive or comfortable things in our marriage relationships.

Having a glorious and fulfilling marriage is most likely when we embrace the tensions inherent in marriage, when we embrace marriage as good and hard—a hard that is good—intertwining the two until we know that one cannot be sustained without the other.

Marriage is supposed to be tough. But for what purpose? God uses marriage to

grow us. As marriage exposes, flays, and keeps us unsettled, it creates the necessary context for us to grow. It takes difficult times and difficult things for us to grow and to be pressed to do the hard work needed to change. I mean really grow—not only spiritually, but also emotionally, resulting in a wholehearted, whole person, deep maturity.

Most of us do not date, get engaged, and get married expecting marriage to be challenging. Our central motivation to marry is the perks of marriage. Most of us assume that although marriage might be hard for many—including the kind of hard that results in failed relationships and broken marriages—it will be different for us. We usually assume that the difference will look like smooth sailing on tranquil seas with smiling faces and happy hearts for years to come. After all, marriage is a God-created, God-given, unique relationship. But there is a dark side to this wide-eyed, marriage-is-only-good attitude that we maintain while turning a blind eye to the challenges and struggles that are inherent in marriage.

A major problem in marriages today is the lack of connection between spouses. This limited connection is due largely to a lack of self-awareness regarding the inner emotional life. This low connection, low emotional content style of relationship occurs because so many have learned to play it safe in relationships. They do so by not honoring feelings, not trusting, and not talking about these things. As a marriage counselor, I observe many marriages—some strong, others not. A common factor in these marriages is that spouses struggle to be a couple. This

struggle flows from their difficulty to be clear with each other about their own hearts, from their inability to talk about what they feel, and to trust each other in the process. Couples often come to counseling expecting information to fix the relationship when what they need is greater emotional self-awareness and to be clear to themselves and each other about their hearts. What they need is the courage to face their fears in order to address their feelings. It is then that they grow toward the maturity that enables them to respond with freedom, thoughtfully and lovingly, instead of

reactively. If we recognize such a problem in ourselves, we open the door to finding a way toward fuller and richer marriage relationships. Pursuit of the good marriage must be built on conscious efforts to become aware of those times when

we are not attending to our own feelings, to see when we are not trusting, and then to exercise the courage to talk about these things with our spouses. Good, rich marriages are built by turning “don’t” feelings and their compatriots into their opposites—do feel, do trust, and do talk.

How do we pursue good marriages in a relationally traumatized world? There are no simple answers to this question, and we must proceed with caution. We too easily make the mistake in this information-centered society of presuming that good marriages will be achieved if we have correct and ample information. We need to realize that becoming “marriage experts” does little to establish good relationships. Marriage experts are most expert in what their spouses do wrong. This tears down the marital relationship rather than building it. We must look more deeply than the information level for guidance and growth in marriage.

Each person’s relationship with God is fundamental in maturing him or her into a person who sees below the surface, who

sees life more fully. Growing in relationship with God is not primarily about gaining information and becoming “God experts.” Growth in relationship with God is having a continual, honest, whole-hearted experience in which God’s love for us and our love for Him becomes clearer. In this way, a relationship with God prepares spouses for progression in their marriage relationship.

The best place to begin is for husbands and wives to share more of their feelings with each other. Many may protest that they already do that. But perhaps this

sharing is not what we think it is. It may not include the kind of depth that builds connection over time. One sign that our sharing is not deep enough is if it generally revolves around anger at other people or each other. Anger is the easiest feeling to talk about and requires little

awareness of what is stirring deeper within. For example, perhaps you are angry with your co-worker about something. What else do you feel? Fear? Shame? Guilt? Betrayal? Abandonment? Injustice? Have there been other times when you felt like this? When was the first time? The most recent time? The most difficult time? What damage, if any, to your heart does this reveal? What legitimate, but perhaps unmet, longing does this highlight? Exploring such feelings together will take many couples to a depth of sharing that has been lost in logistics, business, and thoughtless avoidance of feelings and discussion of them.

If the best place to begin is sharing more feelings, an important condition for this sharing is greater self-awareness in each spouse. This is not easy. It runs directly counter to typical marital attitudes and behaviors. Most of us are certain that our marriages would be nearly perfect if our spouse would just get his or her act together. All spouses try to fix

(continued on page 23)

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Counseling From the Word

Straight Talk About Spanking

— A Biblical Perspective on the Meaning of “Rod” —

by Todd Stiles

If you’ve heard it once you’ve heard it 1,000 times—“Spare the rod, spoil the child.” But is that really in the Bible? Well, yes and no. Technically, that exact phrase is not in the Scriptures. But the principle is found in Proverbs 13:24: “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” Other verses support the same principle, such as . . .

. . . “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to *himself* bringeth his mother to shame” (Proverbs 29:15).

. . . “Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

Without a doubt, the “rod” is an effective tool for making sure our children grow up biblically, spiritually, and emotionally healthy. Nothing works like the “rod.”

But to what does the “rod” refer? What exactly is meant by this word? Is this an exact reference to a tool we use to physically punish (i.e., spank), or is it an overarching umbrella for child discipline?

In the Old Testament, “rod” has two primary meanings: one of correction/ judgment and one of protection/comfort. For instance, it was the “rod” of God that was David’s comfort in Psalm 23, but it was also the “rod” of God that was used to protect him from injustice at the hands of his enemies in Psalms 2 and 89.

Not as strong but just as interesting is

the fact that the word *rod* also pictures authority in the Old Testament, as in Moses’ rod and Aaron’s rod. No doubt a “rod” was the staff of authority for a shepherd, his tool to correct/judge as well as protect/comfort.

Oddly enough, the word *rod* is only found six times in the New Testament. Of these six references, four of them are about judgment, one deals with authority, and the other is a simile for comparison purposes. None refer to any parent-child relationship. In fact, the New Testament more commonly uses words such as *nurture*, *train*, *discipline*, and *admonition* when referring to the parent-child relationship.

So what’s a parent to make of all this? When the entire usage of the word *rod* is considered, a clear principle stands out: It is the role of the parent to exercise his or her biblical authority for the express purpose of correcting and protecting their children. The “rod” is the verbal and biblical symbol—the word picture—of all those elements summarized.

To be sure, a parent may use their “rod” and spank when appropriate. But it is for the purpose of correction, not because the word *rod* means we have no other option than to whip a child into subjection. Extreme literalists often argue that the word *rod* leaves us no other option but to spank. Yet, the very same reasoning can be

used to show the exact opposite. For instance, does the use of the word *rod* in Psalm 23 leave no option but to comfort with the same tool we used to correct? Are we bound by the Bible to use the “rod” when our child is scared or nervous just as we would when he or she is disobedient? After all, didn’t David use the same exact word to talk about how God comforts him? Should we, then, approach our fearful child, who just woke up from a bad dream, with the paddle? Of course not!

Furthermore, to assume the word *rod* always means we must spank is to overlook the use of synonyms in Hebrew poetry. Synonyms were used often in Jewish poetry to emphasize a point or drive home a conclusion. Such is the case in most of the references in Psalms and Proverbs, where “rod” is associated with a number of various elements in discipline, such as *rule* (Psalm 110), *correction* (Proverbs 23), *chastening* (Proverbs 13), as well as *whip* and *bridle* (Proverbs 26).

A better and more literal interpretation would be to see the word, as it is used in the Bible, as an umbrella term that encompasses one’s responsibility (in this case a parent) to properly correct and protect his/her child.

To correct and protect—this is the essential meaning of discipline as pictured by the “rod.” When we discipline our children, we at times correct them through means of a spanking, perhaps a verbal rebuke, or even a loss of blessing/ privileges. These are scripturally-supported avenues for stopping wrong behavior and encouraging proper behavior. However, we also discipline our children when we teach and instruct them prior to bad behavior, such as in sexual matters or issues of addiction. This, too, is discipline, and stems from the “rod” of the parent. Correction and protection combined form a “rod” that “drives foolishness from the heart of a child,” “delivers his soul from death,” and “produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness.”

Is there biblical freedom to spank? By all means, yes! Is there biblical freedom not to

spank? Of course. (I honestly must admit those types of cases are rare! I believe you’re taking chance with discipline to rule out a biblical spanking.) The whole of biblical counsel is to accept your God-given authority and correct and protect your child. While not always enjoyable, this “rod” of discipline is their best shot at becoming an adult the rest of the world can tolerate. ■

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THE GOOD MARRIAGE . . . cont’d.

each other. They have a mentality that says, “If I can believe you are the problem, I do not have to think about my contribution, disappointments, or pain in this relationship. I don’t have to be honest. I don’t have to feel or trust or talk. I don’t have to exercise the courage to face my fears.” But grace applied exposes this attitude and requires us to recognize our needy sinfulness. Grace drives us toward self-awareness.

How do we pursue a good marriage in a relationally traumatized world? Ultimately, the key is honesty. Deep honesty pays attention to what one feels, and speaks those feelings. This honesty resists the pull of fear which draws us toward being numb, blind, and silent. It courageously asks God for the courage needed to remain honest. In the process, our good marriage looks the way God said it could—we know each other deeply and accept each other anyway; we are naked, without shame (Genesis 2:25). ■

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Five Future Judgments

by Delmas I. Gehman

We live in a world that does not like to think of judgment. Throughout the Bible, the concept of judgment and accountability to God our Creator is abundantly evident. There have been many times in the past when God spoke prophetically and pronounced judgment on sin and evil. Because the people did not take heed, it came to pass just as God said it would.

We think of the Flood in Noah's day and how, for 120 years, Noah gave evidence of this impending judgment. Yet the people did not heed it and God moved in judgment.

Most people around us do not want to hear about the absolutes of the Word of God. They do not want to hear about judgment because it immediately speaks of personal responsibility and that there will be a time of reckoning with the God of heaven for how we have spent our life here.

It is commonly thought by many, even by some people whom we know well, that there is coming a day when the Lord will just end it all and then all men will stand before the judgment bar of God, wicked and righteous alike at the same judgment. This is unfortunate and it is not to our credit. I cannot find support in the Bible for that teaching.

Rather, as we want to see from the Scriptures, there are a number of distinctly specific judgment events that are still future. These are specific events in God's prophetic timetable when God will call people into account and will sit in judgment.

I. Judgment Seat of Christ

II. Day of the Lord

III. Judgment of Israel

IV. Judgment of the Nations

V. The Great White Throne Judgment

I. The Judgment Seat of Christ

This is a judgment of believers only and

is a separate event from the Great White Throne Judgment. As I understand it, the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place sometime very shortly after the Rapture of the church and takes place in heaven while the seven-year Great Tribulation period is going on down on earth. It will take place prior to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Corinthians 5:9-11).

The context surrounding this Scripture passage is what happens when believers die. Paul says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We labor that we may be accepted of Him—that we may be wellpleasing unto Him, whether present or absent.

It is evident that *"we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ."* I said this is a judgment of believers only. How can I say that? *Who are the "ALL" who must appear?* Who is Paul writing to? To Christians, of course—so all Christians must appear before this judgment seat. He is writing to those who, when absent from the body, will be present with the Lord.

We are to labor for Christ in view of the necessity of giving account to Him for how we have labored for Him. The judgment is a giving account of the work we have done for Christ after we have become Christians. Our work will be judged as to whether it was *good or bad*. If we look at the meaning of the words, we learn it is not in the sense of *good or wicked* but rather *good or worthless*.

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord”—Paul says he is impelled by the terror of coming before the Lord and needing to give account of a wasted life, or that his work would be worthless, and so he worked to persuade men.

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10). It is presumptive for me to decide whether my brother will receive reward or not. My concern should be that I myself am a good steward of the Gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 we have the concept of Christians being stewards of the Gospel. *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God”* (1 Corinthians 4:1-5). It is clear that we have an accountability to God for what He has entrusted to us: the mysteries of God, the Gospel message. As stewards of the mysteries of God, we are accountable to work so that others may be led to the Gospel and may also partake of these mysteries.

First Corinthians 3:11-15 gives the concept of a building. The foundation of this building is Jesus Christ. We are laborers together with God—calling others to Christ. We have the picture of various building materials of differing values. Wood, hay, and stubble all will be consumed by the fire, while gold, silver, and precious stones will survive the fire. The question is, “Am I building with materials that will survive the fire?” If my work abides, I shall receive a reward.

Some have taken this and taught that you can do what you want—your wicked works will be burned up, but you will be saved. In other words, you can’t lose your salvation. Is that what Paul is speaking of? What is the word used here? Is it **works**? Every man’s **works**? Is that what it says? No, it is **work**, every man’s **work**. This is not speaking of *righteous works* or *wicked works*. Rather it is speaking of our **work** in the Lord. We can get some help on what this **work** is by going to 1 Corinthians 9:1 and 1 Corinthians 16:10. *“Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? **are not ye my work in the Lord?**”* (1 Corinthians 9:1). *“Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the **work** of the Lord, as I also do”* (1 Corinthians 16:10).

It is speaking of our **work** of bringing others into the kingdom. If I meet someone and lead him to the Lord and he abides faithful, I will be rewarded for that. If he falls away and is unfaithful and dies that way, then I will suffer loss, but I myself will be saved. A number of places in the New Testament we have the various rewards that may be given to the Christian for faithful service. *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:8). In James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10 the reward is called a *crown of life*. Peter calls it a *crown of glory* that fadeth not away, in 1 Peter 5:4. Paul describes it as an *incorruptible crown* in 1 Corinthians 9:25. The prospect of standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the terror of giving account to the Lord, should cause us to be busy, giving out the Gospel at every opportunity! There is no idle time in the Christian life! There is no time to sit back and be lazy!

The question will be something like “What have you done for the Lord since you have become a Christian?” I think 2 John 1:8 is pertinent to this discussion. *“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those*

things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (2 John 1:8).

We must remember that salvation is by grace through faith. This is not earning our salvation. Rather, it is a reward for those who are faithful stewards of that which has been given to them as a free gift in the first place! **“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”** (Hebrews 6:10). In Revelation 4:10, 11 the twenty-four elders have already received their rewards: their crowns. They in turn cast them before the Lord in thanksgiving, ascribing all worthiness to Him and to Him alone!

II. The Day of the Lord— His Coming in Power and Great Glory

When we look at the picture given in Revelation 19, of Christ coming in power and great glory, Christ is coming this time as Judge and the mighty General of the armies of heaven! It says in verse 11, *“In righteousness he doth judge and make war.”* The “armies of heaven” include the church, clothed in fine linen, clean and white! Jude refers to this very time when he speaks of Enoch: *“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him”* (Jude 14, 15).

We see the Lord coming to fight against the gathered military might of the nations, along with the Antichrist and the false prophet who are empowered by the devil himself. At this time the devil is taken and cast into the bottomless pit for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-3).

In the Book of Daniel we have a picture of a Judge, God Almighty, sitting in judgment in this particular time frame of the Day of the Lord, at the end of the seven-

year Great Tribulation period.

“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire” (Daniel 7:9). *“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened”* (Daniel 7:10). *“Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom”* (Daniel 7:22).

Judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High. In this judgment, according to Daniel, this horrible king (the Antichrist), who seems to have the upper hand in the whole world, is slain and his body given to the burning flame. Revelation 19 says the beast and the false prophet were taken and cast into the lake of fire, the eternal flame.

At this time of Christ coming out of heaven, He will touch down on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem. He will be coming to rescue Israel, who is being pushed into the last corner of Jerusalem by the Antichrist.

Zechariah 14 paints a picture of Israel at her wit’s end and then Christ coming out of heaven to fight for her. Joel 3 paints a graphic picture of the Lord roaring out of Zion in this Day of the Lord context. At this time the Lord will fight with the sword which proceeds out of His mouth, against the nations which are gathered around Jerusalem to destroy Israel. The armies of the nations will be decimated and Christ will then proceed into a purification process for Jerusalem and the temple. He will reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem for 1000 years, with a rod of iron, as shown in Revelation 20:1-6 and other related Scriptures.

III. The Judgment of Israel

We have the Judgment of Israel in

Ezekiel 20:33-38. As I understand it, the time frame is shortly after or closely connected with the Day of the Lord, and precedes the Millennial Reign of Christ. God will judge Israel in the wilderness of the people. He will plead with them face to face. It means He will pronounce sentence or pass judgment on them. He will cause them to pass under the rod (as a rod of correction). By this work of judgment, He will bring them into the bond of the covenant. He will purge out the rebels from among them. To purge out is to make a choice and select and purify. Those of Israel who are still in rebellion against the Lord in that day will not enter the land—they will be purged out.

“For my name’s sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another” (Isaiah 48:9-11).

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (Zechariah 13:9). God will bring them through the fire and two thirds of them will die. One third of them will be brought into this new covenant with the Lord; they will have a changed heart.

In Romans 11:25-27 we receive further enlightenment as to how this will be when God saves Israel. *“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away*

ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Romans 11:25-27). When the rebellious of Israel have been purged out, then the Word of God will be fulfilled, *“And so all Israel shall be saved. . . .”*

Sometimes we meet folks who misunderstand God’s plan for Israel. They seem to think that somehow God will save them whether they want to be saved or not. *Nothing could be further from the truth.* In these Scriptures we have mentioned, and many others, it is clear that those Jewish people who call on Jesus Christ in repentance and accept Him as their Messiah, are the ones who will be saved. All who rebel will be purged out and will not go on into the millennial kingdom.

IV. Judgment of the Nations— Sheep and Goats Judgment

The judgment of the nations, commonly referred to as the sheep and goats judgment, is found in Matthew 25:31-46. This judgment is not the last judgment of the great white throne which occurs 1000 years and a little season later. When is this judgment? When the Son of Man shall come in His glory (v. 31). It is closely associated with the time when our Lord arrives on this earth in power and great glory. It brings to a close the *times of the Gentiles*. It precedes and is preparatory for the millennial kingdom.

Where does this judgment take place? Matthew 25:31 says, *“And then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.”* So the judgment is on earth, not in heaven, and follows very closely His coming to earth in power and great glory. This is a fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy: *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth”* (Jeremiah 23:5).

The picture is similar to that of Daniel 7 and I believe comes very shortly after the account of Daniel 7. It is part of the cleanup operation to prepare for the

Millennium.

Who is being judged at this judgment? *All nations.* “*Before him shall be gathered all nations*” (v. 32). All nations could be translated “*all Gentiles.*” The Greek word *ethne* is primarily used in Scripture for non-Jewish races. The context indicates that “*all nations*” are in contrast to “*these my brethren.*” “My brethren” in the passage are neither sheep nor goats. Jesus’ brethren were the Jewish people. *All nations* are the people of the nations that have survived the Great Tribulation period spoken of in the previous chapter, Matthew 24. It seems very fitting, since this judgment brings to a close the *times of the Gentiles*, that God would very distinctly pass judgment on the Gentiles, those who have oppressed His people down through history, in relation to how they have treated Israel.

Remember, the armies of these Gentile nations have already been judged when Jesus Christ came down out of heaven to fight with the sword of His mouth. So this is the people of the Gentile nations who are left, who were not part of the armed forces.

He will separate the nations into two groups as a shepherd does—sheep and goats. Sheep are docile creatures who follow their master and obey his voice. Goats are ornery creatures that do what they want to do. The sheep are on His right, the place of privilege, and the goats are on the left, the place of rejection.

It is interesting how works seem so very prominent in this judgment. The King speaks of ordinary works like feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick. The righteous will say, “Lord, when did we do that?” He says if they did it to the “least of these my brethren,” they did it unto Him. And to the goat group He says just the opposite, because they did **not** do these things to the “least of these my brethren,” they did it **not** to Him.

What is this? Salvation by works? Does doing good automatically make you a

recipient of eternal life in this judgment? Many in our day would like to think that. As we search the Scriptures, we understand that salvation can never be by works. Salvation can only be by grace through faith. Are these people who are called the blessed of the Father *saved*? It seems so. The question remains, “If they are not saved by works, then what does this mean?”

Throughout the New Testament, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed as having works resulting from that faith. These are Gentiles who have survived the Great Tribulation period. In this time Satanic activity will be at its diabolical peak and anti-Semitism will also be at its worst in world history. In Matthew 24 it is evident that the Jews will be hounded to the death during this terrible time of Jacob’s trouble. Anyone who shows an act of compassion toward a Jew during this terrible time will be a marked person. The only reason you would help a Jew in this terrible time is if you were a believer in Jesus Christ. Those who have befriended the Jews, now hear those blessed words, “*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*”

Oh, what blessed words. *That is indeed a very blessed place to be!* To be blessed of the Father! These saved people go into the millennial kingdom in their earthly, physical bodies.

But, oh, the terrible fate of the cursed, the ornery goats, those who rebelled against God and had no compassion for the brethren of our Lord Jesus! These shall go away! Away into everlasting punishment!

But the righteous shall go into the kingdom of the Father! This judgment corresponds to the separating of the wheat and the tares in the kingdom parables. As I understand it, the wicked here will be resurrected at the Great White Throne Judgment to meet their final doom. And the righteous who go into the millennial kingdom will either die or be translated. Just as in Noah’s day, all adults who went into

the new world were righteous, so it will be in this time of the judgment of the nations.

As I understand it, the judgment of the nations and the judgment of Israel fit into the time frame of Daniel 12 somewhere between the 1260th day (end of the tribulation) and the 1335th day. Daniel spoke of the period from 1260 to 1290 days for the purification of the temple, and the 1335th day—a time of judgment and purification.

V. The Great White Throne Judgment

The Great White Throne Judgment is distinct from all other judgments. It is found in Revelation 20:11-15. Notice the setting: This judgment comes after the glorious one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. It is also after a little season following the millennial reign when the devil is allowed to have sway again and draws a great crowd of people after him. In Revelation 20:7-10, just before this judgment, Satan will make his third and final attempt to take over.

He tried by making a proposition to Jesus in Matthew 4. He failed! He will again try to overcome the Lamb through his own hand-picked man, the Antichrist. He will fail! Here in these verses, he will make one last attempt as commander-in-chief of the armies of all who are against God. Praise God, we can say with certainty and with finality, by the authority of the Scriptures, **HE WILL FAIL!!**

In verse 10, he is cast to his eternal doom in the Lake of Fire, “where the beast and the false prophet are.” After 1000 years they were still there in torment. So much for the idea that when someone is cast into the Lake of Fire it is a little bit of burning and then it is all over. They will be tormented forever!

In Revelation 20:11-15 we see a great white throne. This throne is distinguished from the other thrones in Revelation by its size and its color. Who is being judged? It is the dead, small and great. Who are these dead? If we go back to verse 5, these are the “rest of the dead.” In other words, the

wicked dead. So this is the judgment of the wicked dead. There will be no righteous at this judgment. This is what is previously referred to in Daniel 12:2 as the *resurrection to everlasting contempt*. Also the *resurrection of damnation or judgment*, John 5:29, and the *resurrection of the unjust*, Acts 24:15.

The dead were judged according to what was written in the books, according to their works. God has record of all their evil deeds. Were it not for the grace of God, we would go there.

For the wicked there is no getting around this judgment. Death and Hades will give up their dead, and the sea will give up the dead that are in it. This is the second death. Oh, the finality of judgment! Today many have their bodies cremated when they die, some even scattering the ashes over the ocean, in an attempt to thwart God’s plan for bringing them to judgment. God will not be mocked. He will bring those bodies together from wherever they are, the sea or the land, and have them stand before Him at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Those who have part in the first resurrection, the righteous ones, on them the second death has no power. Praise God, He has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11).

God is righteous and He will judge righteously. If we know the Lord, we do not need to fear. But we want to continue to stand in a reverential awe, realizing what we have been delivered from, and realizing that we dare not give up. We must remain faithful; a crown of life is waiting for the faithful! ■

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Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

This column welcomes the submission of original hymns. Please send hymns, as well as applicable information about the author and/or composer to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

In Holy Reverence, Lord, We Come



by Teasley/Heatwole

Lyrics: “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.” With these words Jesus began the famous prayer that we have come to know as “The Lord’s Prayer.” However, it is clear from the context as well as the content of the prayer that it was not a prayer that Jesus Himself prayed, but an example of how His disciples should pray. This prayer is often recited verbatim, but what Jesus probably intended was that this prayer be used simply as a model. In other words, the main points of this prayer should make up the outlines of our individual prayers: adoration, supplication, confession, and worship. “In Holy Reverence, Lord, We Come” is a hymn of adoration that could be thought of as a development of the first sentence in “The Lord’s Prayer.”

Just as Jesus chose to begin the afore-said prayer with an expression of worship, it is also appropriate for us to begin our church services with hymns of praise. This hymn is specifically tailored for the opening of a service (notice verse one), although its message is appropriate for any occasion.

In addition to being a full-time minister for most of his life, Daniel O. Teasley managed to write quite a few gospel songs and a book called *The Double Cure: Or Redemption Twofold*. Among his songs

that are still relatively popular are “Glorious Peace” and “I Know in My Heart What It Means.” This particular hymn is just a little out of character with his normal style of writing, in that it is written in the more traditional hymn format, without a refrain that repeats after each verse.

Music: To complement this traditional, three-verse hymn of worship we have a fairly traditional and contemplative musical setting by a young Mennonite composer. Samuel Heatwole was born in 1988 in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He has always lived in the Shenandoah Valley until two years ago, when he received the call to serve as schoolteacher in Puerto Rico. He graduated from Berea Christian School in May of 2006 and took up the role of teacher the following August. Samuel has always enjoyed music. It was always a class that he enjoyed in school. At home, he would often make up songs and never grew tired of learning new songs. When Samuel was about fourteen years old, he started composing his own music. It continues to be a relaxing pastime for him.

This hymn should not be sung too hurriedly. Depending on the phrasing of the words, the fermatas may be omitted to preserve continuity of thought. ■

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

In Holy Reverence, Lord, We Come

DANIEL O. TEASLEY

SAMUEL HEATWOLE, 2006

1. In ho - ly rev' - rence, Lord, we come Be - fore Thy throne this hour, To
2. Our lives and all are in Thy hands, Our times are known to Thee; Thy
3. Al - might - y Fa - ther, God of love, Our hopes are clear and bright; We

wor - ship at Thy hal - lowed feet, To sup - the - wine of
grace has of kept us e - through the - nal, past, Thy And lov - ing - arms have
drink of life's e - ter - nal fount, And bask on - Zi - on's

joy so sweet, Great God of love and pow'r.
held us fast, And shall e - ter - nal - ly.
sun - lit mount, Where hea - ven seems in sight.

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Comfort Zone

by Mark D. Avery

During my grade-school years, the furnace in our home was upgraded from an old wood and coal burner to a fancy new gas furnace. One outstanding convenience of the new furnace was the thermostat mounted on the living room wall. A small dial on the thermostat indicated room temperature while a sliding lever on its side was used for adjusting the temperature. A small section of the thermometer dial was shaded slightly darker than the rest of the dial. That section was identified as the “comfort zone.” The assumption was that as long as the temperature stayed in that range, most

people would find the home to be comfortable. While our comfort zones may vary, most of us enjoy temperatures where we feel comfortable.

People enjoy living in a certain comfort zone. We enjoy spending time with people whose basic beliefs, attitudes toward living, and daily practices of life are similar to our own. Much of our time is invested in these kinds of relationships. We find it easy to enjoy living when we are immersed in our comfort zone. Most of us, however, find many occasions that dictate being out of our comfort zones.

Christians live in a society that very often conflicts with the principles of God's Word. Rather than facing those conflicts, we often find it easier to stay in our comfort zones and away from the people who need to know Jesus. It is true; some people do not want to hear about Jesus. Some get angry, hostile, or rude when Christians try to witness to them. Others are more open to a Christian witness, especially if it is supported by a consecrated lifestyle, and many sinners still know what that is. Yet unless we get out of our comfort zones and into our communities, we will never find the people who are open to our witness.

The Bible teaches us that we are in the world, but we do not belong to the world. That is to say, we live amongst the people of the world, but we do not subscribe to or live by the principles and motivations of the world.

Living in an urban setting may make getting out of our comfort zones as convenient as getting outside of our houses. Simply going outside may give us opportunities to visit with a neighbor. No, not every visit will include an opportunity to witness, but it does provide an opportunity to build a relationship.

Unless our neighbors find Jesus as their personal Saviour, they are lost and headed for hell. That thought confronts us with our responsibility to stand in their way and point them toward a better hope. Again, not every conversation turns into a prayer meeting. Yet, unless we get out of our comfort zones, we have little hope of helping our neighbors go to heaven. That thought may help us be a little more comfortable, even outside our comfort zones. ■

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Something Begun

by Paul Erb

“Not that I . . . am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Philippians 3:12, RSV).

C. Morse Ward, addressing the National Association of Evangelicals at Cleveland, paid tribute to the evangelistic methods of John Wesley. “Miracles of holy living appeared,” he said, “because John Wesley impressed upon his converts when they came to Christ that something had just begun. Unlike most other evangelists, he did not chiefly stress the truth that something was finished.”

It is most important that beginners in the Christian life realize that they are only beginners—that a process of growth has been begun which is lifelong. Only failure can follow any concept that standing or going forward during an invitation, shaking an evangelist's hand, signing a card, or

kneeling to ask God's pardon is what is involved in being a Christian.

There are a thousand ways to begin the Christian life, but however begun, it must go on to a gradual maturation. It is spiritually and psychologically impossible to learn at one time all that is involved in living a Christian life. Knowledge comes slowly and living is experience; and experience is a process in time.

The new convert is often in an ecstasy of joy because of release from the burden of guilt. It is a delight to look up to God without fear, and to face life with a new confidence and assurance. The Spirit's witness in his heart that he has passed from death unto life puts shine into his eyes and lightness into his step. He sings with a smile, “'Tis done, the great transaction's done.” He thinks he is virtually in heaven already.

No one would want to take away one iota of this newborn Christian's joy. This is no time for a wet blanket of discouragement. And yet someone needs to do him the good turn of explaining to him that there is a long road between the wicket gate and the Celestial City. There will be tests and trials and temptations. There will be disheartening and dark hours. There may be doubts and anxious questionings.

There will also come the realization that Christianity is a way of living. The new life must produce new habits and attitudes. It must be expressed in the fruit of the Spirit as contrasted to the works of the flesh. It can make no provision for lusts and passions. It must learn new delights and satisfactions. It acquires new efficiencies of service and witness. Both by way of denial and action it achieves holiness unto the Lord.

This is the reason we cannot be satisfied with the shallow kind of evangelism which

secures commitment and then leaves the convert to his own resources. Instruction and encouragement and fellowship and guidance are needed. The new Christian must be led on to something more than he gets on his conversion night. God's provision for the Christian is the church, with all it can give of nurture and exercise, of discipline and care.

This is the reason, too, why the argument concerning the relative importance of evangelism and Christian education is foolish. It is not a choice of one or the other. We need both: an evangelism educationally oriented and an education evangelistically oriented.

The new convert has not arrived; he has well started. He has not arrived with something completed; he is on the way with something begun. ■

—Submitted by John Forry from *Don't Park Here*.

Developing a Gracious Personality

Maintaining Respect for Authority

by John M. Sensenig

Maintaining respect for authority requires conscious effort and commitment. In the world around us it is evident that respect for authority has been lost, especially among youth. This spirit is displayed by a mistaken view of freedom, destruction of property, and resistance to any type of governing rule.

Respecting those in authority is a God-given command. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordi-

nance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans 13:1, 2). These verses clearly state that God is the supreme authority and all other authority is under Him. Respect for God's authority is closely related to respect for church, parental, and civil authority; thus we cannot express disrespect for our fellowmen and expect to maintain respect for God's authority.

Maintaining respect for authority helps us to form good relationships with our superiors. Constantly chafing under authority destroys peace and joy, but a

spirit of submission greatly helps us relate properly to those in authority.

Fostering respect for authority helps us to leave a consistent witness. Youth is an important time to learn this respect. Many worldly young people disdain authority, but the voluntary submission of godly youth is a clear sign of self-denial that speaks loudly to the ungodly. Many people around us still notice and appreciate when youth respect authority, and may we never let them down.

Patterns set during youth will define character later in life. Constant opposition to authority sets a course in life that is very difficult to change.

But learning to respect parents, church leaders, and civil officials in youth will definitely aid in reducing confrontations later in life.

What happens if we fail to maintain respect for authority? First of all, we fail to give God His rightful place in our lives. God has entrusted authority to men as His way of governing on the earth; thus, when we resist earthly authority, we are actually resisting God's authority. Also, disrespect for authority drastically hinders our Christian witness and produces a distaste for Christianity.

David is a good example of one who showed respect for authority many times. One outstanding account is when he spared Saul's life at Engedi. After David had cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, his heart smote him. "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD" (1 Samuel 24:6). David recognized that even though Saul was not acting in a respectable manner, Saul still deserved respect for who he was—the Lord's anointed.

Sometimes we may feel that civil authorities have gone too far and are controlling too many details. However, we must remember that God still calls us to

respect those in authority even if they do not act in a respectable way.

How can youth maintain respect for authority? We must ask God for help when tempted to say or do something disrespectful. Associating with friends who have a healthy respect for parents and for church authority is important. This will

help us to maintain respect for authority and will strengthen any weakness we may have in this area.

Finally, if we maintain respect for authority, God's blessing will be upon us, and our relationships with others will be much smoother. Jesus, as a youth, was our perfect

example. He respected His parents and "was subject unto them." As a result, He "increased in wisdom . . . and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:51, 52). May we, by God's help, maintain a healthy respect for authority in a disrespectful world. ■

—Reprinted by permission from *Home Horizons*, October 2006.

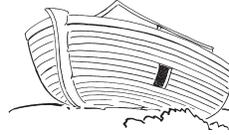


BEGINNING ISSUES . . . cont'd.

These are only a few of the questions and problems that arise when we try to reinterpret the Bible to fit man's ideas and explanations by advocating a local flood. What's important is not so much whether I think the Flood was global or local in extent, but rather, since the Bible teaches it was global, that I am willing to believe God for what He says. Even so it would seem rather incredulous to believe something if it clearly could not be harmonized with reality, but that is not the case here. The earth clearly shows the evidence for a global watery catastrophe (even demands that explanation) just as the Bible describes. But the key remains that we build our thinking around the unchanging Word of God, and when the two don't harmonize, it's my thinking that needs to change. ■



Beginning Issues



The Genesis Flood: Was It Global? (Part 2)

by John Mullett

In last month's article I mentioned the Bible reserving *mabbuwl* (Hebrew) and *kataklusmos* (Greek) for use only when referencing the great Flood of Noah's Day. I also mentioned the fact that the New Testament writers and Jesus clearly believed it to have been a global flood in the way they referenced it in comparison to future judgment. Among the problems those who advocate a local event must face is the implication that judgment for sin (clearly what the Flood was for) was not universal. Yet when referencing the Flood in passages such as Matthew 24:37-39 and 2 Peter 3, the comparisons made by Jesus and the New Testament writers to future judgment clearly reference a universal judgment.

There are a number of other things marking the uniqueness of the Flood, not the least of which was Noah's preparation for the Flood. If it were a local event why would Noah need to build such a large vessel? It appears Noah was warned by God of the Flood well in advance (possibly up to 120 years) but even in the time it would have taken to build the ark Noah could have traveled a significant distance from that locality. Again, if it were a local flood, why take all the animals on the ark? The birds and animals could easily have repopulated the locality of the Flood from the surrounding areas afterwards, or they, like Noah, could easily have migrated out of

the area in plenty of time before the Flood; complete extinction would not have been a threat at all. All the work and preparation that went into the planning and building of the ark would seem like total foolishness if the Flood were not global.

What's more, the Bible clearly notes that the waters covered the highest mountains by a minimum of 20 feet (Genesis 7:19, 20), and since water seeks its own level, this would not be possible in any local event. Many have objected that there isn't/wasn't enough water to cover some of the earth's highest mountains (of today), but there are answers for that as well. The pre-Flood mountains may well have been (it's even likely that they were) lower than the post-Flood mountains of today. Psalm 104 may reference the raising/forming of the post-Flood mountain ranges.

Today a number of scientists are speculating of "a flood of biblical proportions on Mars" because of some of its geological features, when we have yet to find the first drop of liquid water on that entire planet. Meanwhile, about 75% of the Earth's surface is covered by liquid water, and if you were to level out the Earth's surface by raising the ocean basins and lowering the mountain ranges there is enough water to cover the entire planet to a depth of about 1.7 miles. It's not so much a problem of feasibility as it is a problem of what we want to believe. *(continued on preceding page)*

Why I Do Not Own Television

by Dale R. Eby

What one sets before his eyes impacts the way he lives. What goes in the eye-gate and the eargate affects what we think, what we ponder on, and finally, even the course of life.

It is with this belief that the church wisely takes a position about viewing and owning television. Deuteronomy 7:26 says, "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing." This passage refers to the idols of the heathen, yet it challenges and warns us about what we bring into our homes.

When television was invented, it was impossible to see how it would influence society. Now we can see how drastically it has changed society. I see TV as an abomination, a curse. Let me share with you four reasons why I refuse to own or use television:

The consumption of time. My date book shows plenty of good and godly things I want to and should do, as God gives life. When I read verses like Ephesians 5:15, 16, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil," I cannot help but realize the use of time is important. Television has become more than a way to relax. It has become an addictive instrument and one of mankind's biggest time wasters; as someone noted, "Most of man's inventions have been time savers—then came television." We are given only so much time each day. We decide how to use it.

"Preachers, deacons, S. S. teachers, and others have lost their appetite for God and His Word due to the time spent with television" (source unknown). I

recall reading in the *Dundee Observer*, our local newspaper, that April 24-30, 1997, was being declared National TV Turnoff Week. If our society sees that television has become an obsession and a time waster, how much more should we as people of the light avoid it!

The passivity it creates in its viewers. To be passive is to accept without objection or resistance. When a person is bombarded with information at a high rate of speed, it is nearly impossible to properly evaluate everything. Television's success comes largely from its ability to lull the viewer into passivity. Without time for meditation on what one sees and hears, one finds his life guided by externals rather than by internals and the Holy Spirit's still, small voice. The Bible instructs us to make judgment calls, to stand against the evil tide, to be other than passive people. First Corinthians 2:15 states, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." An active, discerning mind is a God-given safety device.

The God-defying content that dominates the media. In Falls Church, VA, PTA members kept their eyes fixed on television programs through the hours children would commonly be viewing them. They observed 185 programs for 114.5 hours, saw 281 assaults, 117 killings, 19 robberies, 16 kidnappings, 10 murder conspiracies, 3 arsons, 3 extortions, 3 jailbreaks, 1 lynching, 1 bombing, and 1 suicide. Prejudices; stereotypes; disrespect for the elderly, leaders, and parents; sexual promiscuity; fantasy; and drug and alcohol abuse were presented as the acceptable norm.

The commercials and the news also

carry this objectionable content. The Bible strictly tells us to turn from these harmful things and to turn to what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Philippians 4:8). We will not succeed in achieving God's spiritual goals if we fill our minds with foul content. If we allow our "mindset" to shift to this pastime, it will surely affect our "heartset." Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

The health and social impact for the viewer. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). A unique experiment was conducted at the University of Alberta. Twenty chickens were exposed to TV 24 hours a day, for two and a half months. The chickens got blind, so they staggered and wandered about in a daze. Mrs. Jean Lubber, a professor of zoology at the university, found that the chickens, when exposed to continual tele-viewing, developed glaucoma, a hardening of the eyeball, which often results in blindness.

According to one of Spain's leading pediatricians, television is damaging the brain cells of millions of children throughout the world. The sight modulation of most children under the age of five is not equipped to cope with the dazzling brightness and vibrations of television programming. Tests have shown that a child's brain cells and vision can be permanently impaired if he is exposed to television at an early age. It is said that the damage to the cells is both structural and chemical. The changes these cells undergo negatively affect the child's normal intellectual development.

The Washington Times interviewed Michael Medved, author of *Hollywood vs. America*, who reported that he

believes television teaches people to be impatient, restless, dissatisfied, and depressed. Clearly, television impacts the health of the populace.

Michael Medved reports that the largest portion of people's free hours is spent in watching television, so social interaction rates lower than this chosen pastime. Work and school are typically less important than watching television for many school-age children and youth. God has made us social beings. We are in need of encouragement, instruction, and the balance we receive from others. While it may be easier to be passive and let others think for you, is that fulfilling the purposes we are created for? Healthy interaction with others is the primary way we discover the world God has made and learn how to deal with people, God's most-loved creation.

Heavy television watchers are likely not doing the following activities very well, according to The American Academy of Pediatrics:

1. Asking questions
2. Solving problems
3. Being creative
4. Exercising initiative
5. Practicing communication skills
6. Playing interactive games with other children or adults (helpful for developing patience, self-control, cooperation, and sportsmanship)

—from "Caring for Your School-Age Child"

Communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ successfully calls for social skills, creativity, and for much initiative. We have a job to do and we must do it with all our might. We cannot afford to let the god of television keep us from it.

This evil influence is a curse, an abomination; if we submit to the bondage of television we will become more like the world than like our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot afford the price of television. Can you? ■

—Reprinted by permission from the *Calvary Messenger*, February 2008.

Why We Buy Things We Don't Need

by Bob Putman

Ever read a book that made you mad? I was intrigued by the title of Pamela N. Danziger's *Why People Buy Things They Don't Need*.

You might want to look at what Danziger says about Madison Avenue's clever ploys. These people study your weaknesses, then use them to raid your earnings.

Danziger spent the past 20 years researching why Americans spend as we do. We purchase kitchen gadgets, home textiles, computer software, candles and aromatherapy products, gardening items, and a host of other discretionary products. In fact, we fork out about 30 percent of our income for stuff we don't need. Why this madness?

According to Danziger, 14 "justifiers" underlie our motivation to spend money on unnecessary items. "When marketers do the hard work of providing the justifiers for their customers, it is amazing how this bolsters product sales. Justifiers overcome objections and compel the consumer to buy," she writes.

How do we justify spending hard-earned cash on unneeded purchases? On the basis of one or more of the following reasons:

- **Quality of life**—The product will improve our education/knowledge, health, spiritual life, emotional satisfaction/security, social success.
- **Pleasure**—The experience of shopping in an exclusive place makes us feel better.
- **Beautify the home**—We get a feeling of identity and worth from our home's appearance.
- **Education**—The more education we have, the more we crave. And then we apply it in the excitement of research-

ing our major purchases.

- **Relaxation**—The longer we stay in a store, the more we spend, especially on relaxation products.
- **Entertainment**—We buy or rent things to reduce boredom and generate excitement. Or we seek an environment that helps us experience shopping as entertainment.
- **Planned purchase**—We build anticipation for buying something unneeded by researching and planning for the purchase.
- **Emotional satisfaction**—We spend, seeking emotional comfort, the fun of having the latest and greatest, or to express our identity.
- **Replacing an existing item**—Replacing a worn-out item often serves as a catalyst for an extended spending spree on coordinated items.
- **Stress relief**—We turn to relaxation products/equipment, nostalgia- and tradition-themed items to deliver comfort.
- **Hobbies**—We collect for the joy of ownership and the thrill of the hunt. If one family member collects, usually others do also.
- **Gifts**—When buying gifts for others, we often buy a more expensive one for ourselves.
- **Impulse purchase**—We gain a feeling of power and entitlement from making an impulse buy.
- **Status**—While few of us admit it, we buy things that will be visible to others, in order to impress them.

Do any of these justifiers sound familiar? They should. Advertisers spend billions each year to push these buttons in your psyche. For the most part these reasons to spend are simply nonsense.

Danziger states: “The justifiers give consumers the illusion they are acting rationally in purchasing, but in reality, they remain driven by personal desires and emotions. When marketers really understand how their products play into the hearts and emotions of their customers, the judicious use of justifiers in marketing communications stacks the deck in the marketer’s favor and gives consumers permission to buy.” In other words, they pull your emotional and psychological strings and a-spending you go.

Armed with these clues to how marketers snag you, how do you declare war against Madison Avenue manipulation? A few suggestions:

- \$ Whenever you see an advertisement on TV, talk back to it or mute the sound. Point out the commercial’s hidden lie to your children, spouse, or friends.
- \$ Look up verses on “content” and “contentment” in the Bible. You might want

to begin with 1 Timothy 6:6-8 and Philippians 4:11-13.

- \$ If you’re wired for impulse buying (see it; like it; buy it), pray while you shop. And exercise the most noncommercial spiritual fruit—self-control.
 - \$ Meditate on your motivations. What do you get out of shopping and spending? Does it improve your mood, strengthen your confidence, energize your emotions? Should it?
 - \$ For long-lasting satisfaction, invest your extra money in helping people and working to help your church or synagogue.
- You don’t have to be a victim of your own indulgence or Madison Avenue’s manipulation. You were chosen for a better life. So shop wisely, shop well, and shop only when necessary. ■

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Are You Loyal to YOUR Church?

by Luke Martin

To be loyal is to be faithful, to defend and support, and to be devoted to. It is to be committed to, ready to sacrifice for, and ready to respond. If you are truly loyal to a cause you will not give up but will support it no matter what the cost. Our loyalty (faithfulness) will not be affected by circumstances, poverty or wealth, peace or persecution, sickness or health. Our abilities and position will make no difference to our loyalty. In Luke 16:10, Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” The faithful have surrendered their lives and are giving attention to God because their lives depend on Him

to supply the strength to overcome the trials we face in life.

As we understand the role of a servant, one is to submit his will to his master. His goal is to please his master at all times. He is available, has no personal rights, and is surrendered to the cause of the one who owns him.

The highest calling in your life is that of a servant of Jesus Christ. Standing as an attendant servant is the highest honor given to man.

***Are you loyal to the church
as the body of Christ?***

The church, the body of Christ is

made up of all those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and are submitted to Him as the head of the church. Colossians 1:18 tells us, "And he [Jesus Christ] is the head of the body, the church." As the Head, Jesus gives direction to His body, the church. The body is under His authority. The church is a living and divine organism and only those who honor the Head can be part of the body. **To be loyal to the church is to first of all be loyal to Christ.** Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Those who follow are committed to imitate their leader. When we are committed and loyal in following Christ, and are a part of His body, the church, we will submit ourselves at all times. In your baptismal vows you promised by God's grace and the aid of the Holy Spirit to submit yourself to Christ and His Word and to faithfully continue in them until death.

***Are you loyal to the church,
your local congregation?***

What does it mean to be loyal to the congregation that you are a part of? ***Are you committed, supportive, ready to sacrifice, ready to respond, and devoted to your congregation?*** If so, you will do all you can to support and be involved in the activities of the church. You will be there when the doors are open, ready to do your part in whatever way you can, whether in preaching, teaching, praying, singing, encouraging, or whatever God calls you to do. It will be done humbly and honestly without display. It will be coming from a heart of love for others, in true compassion reaching out and sharing without the least intent of getting credit. You will lay down self and your own plans to be available. You will do more than only what you are asked to do. You will be involved in the programs and missions of the church, remembering that prayer is one of the most important ways to be loyal

and involved. You will abide by the standards at all times in your work, play, and worship. If your view of the church has been reduced to that of a social club, and membership to it requires no deeper commitment than that, you will not be a supportive member, and when things don't go your way you will probably leave. ***If the choice is made to become disloyal because the standard is too high for the carnal man to accept, there is nowhere else to go to find security, hope, and peace.*** Can it be said of us that we are loyal when we are strangers at prayer meeting and Sunday evening services?

In our pilgrimage there are spectators, those who are observing your life. They of the world seem to know what is expected of a Christian. They will see if you are loyal or if you are a hypocrite and not what you profess to be. If you profess to be a Christian and are not loyal to Christ and the church, you give occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme. They will not see the peace, love, and unity that Christ gives. Jesus in His prayer said, "That they all may be one, as thou Father are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Our unity and loyalty is to bring glory to Christ. Jesus also said, "By your love one for another all men will know that you are my disciples."

Loyalty is not legalism.

Jesus' teachings have been counter-cultural from the time He presented the Sermon on the Mount. In His teachings He introduced a code of ethics that needs to become the standard for His followers. Without the Spirit within, it is only a religious act and people begin thinking that performing certain external duties makes them acceptable with God. The loyal person understands you enter into a relationship not merely as a duty, but as a desire—not as a "have to" mentality, but a "want to" mentality.