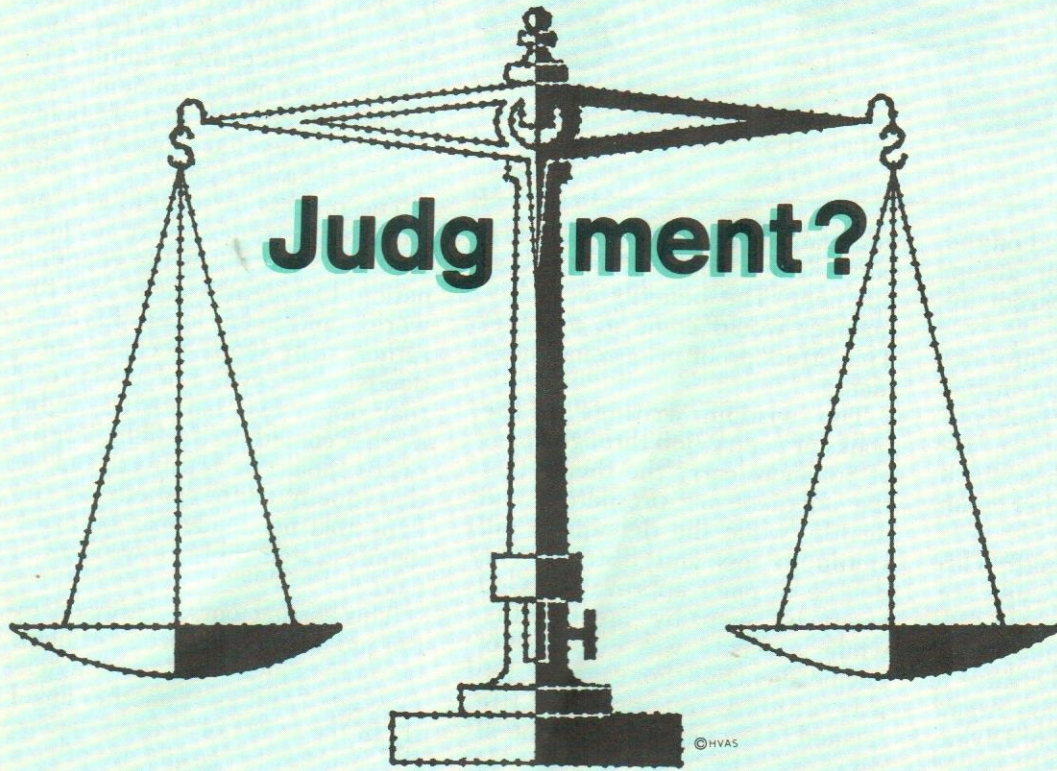


When Is

Judgment?

by Ray L. Straub



Judgment is a reality. Everyone faces it. Good behavior is of value because we must account for our actions. Reference to moral standards implies some form of judgment.

When does judgment take place? Are we judged at the moment we die? This would be true if our "immortal" souls go to heaven or hell as our life on earth expires. Or, does judgment occur at Jesus' Second Coming? Does it take place after His 1,000-year reign? Some suggest an "investigative judgment" began in 1844, when the "heavenly sanctuary was cleansed."

The *time* of judgment relates to the *nature* of it. What will judgment be like? What are the court procedures?

Many nations employ the Roman adversary system in their civil

courts. Opposing advocates provide whatever information they can to win a ruling in their favor. This competition has been an excellent stimulus to get information and provide persuasive argument in strenuous efforts to triumph in securing a favorable verdict.

Because we are familiar with this procedure, we tend to conclude that God's judgment will be similar. We envision that evidence will be presented to God, who will weigh it, ponder it, and render a verdict. This concept is suggested by the "investigative judgment" dogma. Jesus, High Priest, provides evidence in the Divine Courtroom concerning every individual, reading from a book the moral values of his deeds.

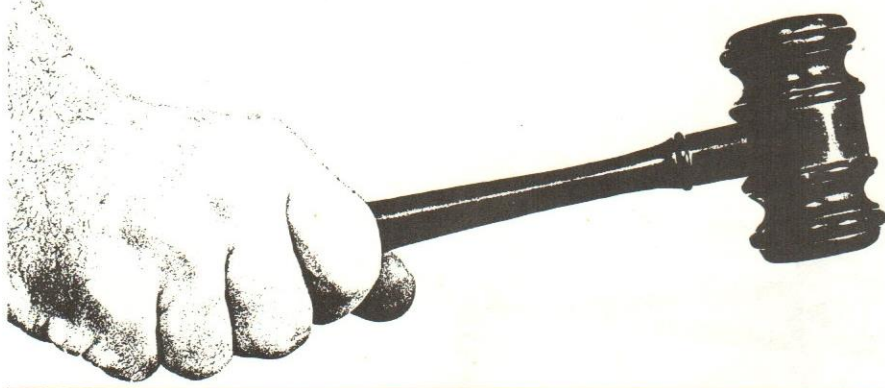
The Bible gives little detail on judgment procedure, but we know that God is not dependent upon

human practices which reflect human limitations. God does not need information presented to Him from another, nor does He need to ponder His verdict.

Matthew 25 contains three parables dealing with judgment. The first tells about 10 virgins and suggests that judgment is instantaneous. When the bridegroom came, those prepared joined the party while those ill-prepared were left behind. This parable does not allude to individualized attention in judgment.

The second parable implies that account will be demanded of each servant. Those who received talents must face an evaluation of their concerns and accomplishments.

The third parable finds the sheep, representing the righteous, separated from the goats which depict the rejected. Reasons why those among the sheep were placed on the right, and those



among the goats are placed on the left were given to each group. Again, there was no apparent individual attention given.

Despite the abundant information given about judgment in this chapter, there is no solid hint concerning procedure. We are informed about the *basis* upon which we will be judged rather than judicial *procedure*.

When will we be judged? This question is important because we must be ready for this event.

There is a type of judgment that has always gone on. Ever since a restriction was imposed on Adam and Eve there has been Divine judgment.

Humanity suffered the judgment of God back in Noah's day. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:5-8).

This passage speaks directly of ongoing judgment. There is no mention of a court before which evidence was presented. God had enough information to warrant salvation of Noah's family and the consequences suffered by all others.

Deuteronomy 28 lists a series of blessings that were promised God's people if they observed His

commandments. Also listed are curses which would afflict the disobedient. The benefits or consequences would come in *this* life. This offers proof of ongoing judgment.

The wisdom writings in the books of poetry (Job through Songs of Solomon) carry the theme that the obedient are prosperous and healthy while the delinquent fall victim to loss and distress. The degree of one's approval by God could be seen by his benefits, while adversity was evidence of Divine alienation. For example, Job was chided because his life seemed to demonstrate the kind of reverses which were proof of God's displeasure. Since these writings give limited but Biblical insight into God's dealings with humanity, we must conclude that judgment is continuous.

The prophecy related in Daniel, chapter 7, features the description of an impudent religious dominion which would "... speak great words against the most High ... and think to change times and laws ..." (verse 25). Ongoing judgment was predicted to fall upon this insolence "... to consume and to destroy it unto the end" (verse 26).

Judgment implies separation of righteousness from evil, or the righteous from sinners. This process of separation intensifies the problems of the wicked and glorifies the promises of the righteous. In this context Jesus announced, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39). It was wisely observed that the most hopeless of

this world are the satisfied. Those who purport to see all are blind and will so remain.

Jesus did not come "... into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). This truth is precious because it focuses upon the need Jesus came to fulfill. The world didn't need condemnation because it already had it. Being doomed, it needed salvation. That is what Jesus brought.

The process of separation Jesus introduced is described in John 3:29-21, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

This sorting out, occasioned by the judgment Jesus brought, helps us understand the first angel's message. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:6, 7).

The advent of the Gospel brought salvation and *conversion*. Conversion suggests a turning around. There is a distinction between the righteous and unrighteous because they are heading in opposite directions.

There are two more judgments coming. Continuing judgment accurately maintains every person's verdict, whether saved or lost, in the courts of heaven. God can declare it at any given moment. The verdict at death holds to the resurrection. The first succeeding judgment will reward the righteous with immortality, and the last judgment will bring execution to the condemned.

There is a great day of judgment (or separation) coming. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (II Peter 2:9). "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (II Peter 3:7). "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

When will this great day of judgment come? The Psalmist knew. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself" (Psalm 50:3-6).

The song's prophetic message is confirmed in the New Testament. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (II Timothy 4:1).

This picture does not provide a description of a forum for the dispensation of justice. Instead, it pictures a massive, instantaneous judgment of the living and dead during the event of Jesus' coming. For confirmation, note the following passages:

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound,

and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Some Biblical statements seem to conflict with the concept of mass judgment. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:15). "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" (II Corinthians 5:10).

These varying descriptions parallel those found in Matthew 25. The parable of the talents suggests that all must give individual account. The parables of the 10 virgins and of the sheep and goats suggest mass judgment.

Our minds, limited by time and space, cannot fathom the possibility of individual appearances for comprehensive evaluation and determination of the worth of the conduct of every person. Human logic most easily comprehends the Bible's suggestion of mass judgment. Nonetheless, God's children know better than to limit God's wisdom and power by their own conceptual capabilities. Dogmatism about Divine judicial procedure is hardly appropriate.

Ongoing judgment suggests continuing evaluation of human moral behavior along with Divine reaction to it. The great day of judgment at Jesus' return divides the righteous from the unsaved and rewards them with immortality. The reality of this judgment obliterates any notion that rewards of immortality and bliss come at death. How can those already in heaven or hell be judged again at

BEND A LITTLE

by Virginia Noble

**Hold no malice in your heart.
Keep you spirit firm, but meek.
Forgiving is an holy art.
Learn to turn the other cheek.
Trees that break in gales of wind
Are the ones that will not bend.**

the second Advent? The righteous resurrect to immortality when Jesus comes. The wicked are reserved for punishment (II Peter 2:9).

There is a third judgment which has unique characteristics and functions. It is described in Revelation 20:11-15, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

The judgment described here is called the "white throne judgment." It differs from the process of separation which takes place at Jesus' first coming, and the division of righteous from unsaved at His return.

1. When Jesus comes the righteous will be resurrected. The white throne judgment deals with the "rest of the dead" (Revelation 20:5). The unrighteous remain in their graves when Jesus returns. They come forth to face the great white throne after the millennium.

2. The white throne judgment takes place after Satan has been bound and thrown into a bottomless pit for a 1,000-year incarceration. He is released before the final judgment.

3. This is the only judgment involving the opening of "books." It is hardly necessary for God to log everyone's deeds in order to accumulate supportive evidence for His verdicts. The mention of "books" is an appropriate metaphor which reminds us of our

(Continued on page 22)

be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31, 32).

And again, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

To all present believers the word is, "Endure." To those who have not, as yet, taken Jesus as their personal Saviour, the message is one of open invitation to accept God's gracious offer while you can. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Corinthians 5:20).

The year of 1977 could well be the best year you've ever known. Will you allow God to make it so?

WHEN IS JUDGMENT?

(Continued from page 5)

accountability. At this judgment the unrepentant face their past.

Jesus assured, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). The word "condemnation" would more accurately be translated "judgment" (Greek: *krisin*). Since the righteous are spared judgment, it would follow that only the unsaved face the great white throne.

4. All that is connected with sin and death is destroyed at or

following the white throne judgment. This correlates perfectly with Paul's description of Jesus' millennial reign. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians 15:24-26).

Judgment is to be faced in several ways. God has been sitting in judgment since the creation of humanity. This ongoing judgment was brought into sharper focus when Jesus brought the good news that man may be relieved of his sinfulness. Believers who received the Light of God by their separation from sin brought condemnation to those who demonstrated preference for sin and darkness.

The completed division of saint from sinner will take place at Jesus' coming. The righteous dead will resurrect; the saved who live will be changed to immortality.

Following King Jesus' 1,000-year reign a final judgment occurs. The wicked dead are resurrected to face the sinfulness of which they failed to repent. The death of Jesus upheld the integrity of absolute righteousness and provided the way to truth and life.

2300 DAYS OR 2300 YEARS?

(Continued from page 10)

death. The little horn which waxed great developed from one of the four.

Alexander's death in 323 B.C. marked a time *previous* to the emerging of the four kingdoms, one of which gave rise to the manifestation of the little horn. Since the 2300 day desecration was caused by this little horn, it would logically occur at a date far later than 323 B.C. Any possibility that the 2300 days could have begun in 457 B.C. during the Medo-Persian kingdom is precluded.

Antiochus Epiphanes literally fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel 8

by taking away the daily sacrifice for a short period of time. The prophecy could not be a time period of literal years because the reference to "day" in this instance differs from all other usages of the Hebrew words from which "days" was translated in Daniel 8:14. This puts aside any prophetic significance assigned to 1844.

There is no basis to believe anything happened in heaven in 1844 for the plan of salvation was completed on the Cross when Jesus became the full atonement for the sins of all who seek forgiveness.

Don't Kick Him Down the Hill

by Walter E. Isenhour

A man may take the road that's wrong,

Or err a lot and blunder;

He may surprise his fellowmen

Till they look on with wonder;

And yet perhaps within his heart

There's good remaining still;

Then give to him a helping hand —

Don't kick him down the hill.

He may be like the poor old dog

That slips and sneaks about you,

Afraid of you and you of him,

And so he lives to doubt you;

Yes, doubts you care a straw for him,

But rather wish him ill;

Then show him that you are a friend —

Don't kick him down the hill.

When once a man is going wrong,

Or does a thing that's shocking,

He gets the world's cold "bill of fare,"

Along with lots of knocking,

And finds himself a moral wreck

With loss of faith and will,

I tell you friends, he needs a lift —

Don't kick him down the hill.

Many a man is in the rough

Who needs a little polish;

Howe'er, it seems that human hearts

Are set on his demolish,

Just thinking if they put him down —

Down lower, lower still —

They've done the world a favor great —

Don't kick him down the hill.

O, give the man a chance that's down

Who seems by all forsaken;

Perhaps he'll rise above the things

That have his manhood shaken,

Then climb to heights sublime in life

And noble places fill;

'Tis yours to help and bless and save —

Don't kick him down the hill.

Is the Resurrection Credible?

by Ray L. Straub

A visitor at a Bible conference requested a meeting with the ministers present. The preachers were puzzled but agreed to the meeting. The visitor presented himself as one who was searching for the "True Church." He asked, "Have any of you ministers resurrected someone from the dead lately?"

Even the talkative ministers, astonished, sat in silence. Finally, one asked meekly, "What prompts you to ask that?"

"Jesus had the power to resurrect," the stranger responded, "so did the disciples. The power seemed to remain with the early church, and I consider that it remains with the true church today." He continued pressing, "Have any of you ever resurrected anyone by the power of God?"

Little by little more ministers joined the discussion. They advised that the true church could hardly be identified by her ministers' ability to bring the dead back to life. No churches could boast such. Some other criterion for the selection of the true church was recommended.

How could ministers nowadays be expected to resurrect anyone? Of all of the miracles we see and hear about, none involves bringing back life to the dead. Anyone claiming to exercise such powers would immediately be pressed to provide abundant, well-prepared documentation. Stories of resurrections are not easily believed!

In terms of physical existence we regard death to be final. Little thought is given to any ministry that would attempt to change this, to regard death as a problem readily avoided or solved. Even though claims of some to have returned to life from death become more abundant, few fully believe it actually happens.

It is no wonder some doubt that even Jesus resurrected.

Do we have more than "blind faith" to support our belief that Jesus returned to life from the dead?

Assuredly we do!

The Acts of the Apostles was written by the beloved physician, Luke. Consider his profession. He is a scientist. He has an analytical mind, one that assimilates, sorts out and evaluates information cautiously and deliberately. Doctors can't afford to make mistakes. They are too costly! The accuracy of their conclusions (diagnoses) are of great consequence, seriously affecting people's lives. Luke's writings reflect a doctor's compassion, ac-

quaintance with problems relating to health, and concern for important details.

What does this physician's calculating mind say about the probability of Jesus' resurrection? "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

Let's contemplate the three words, "many infallible proofs." There were more than several. According to Hebrew law, lives could be terminated by the testimony of only two witnesses. Presently, the unimpeachable testimony of a single witness can establish a solid case. Luke was not concerned with marginal evidence. He was ready to cite *many* infallible proofs.

Let's ponder the word, "infallible." It means incapable of error. The wise use "infallible" cautiously. Few observations, conclusions, or accounts are incapable of error. Not much of this world is infallible. Luke contended that concerning the resurrection, there were more than a limited number of proofs. There were many, and they were infallible.

Admittedly, the King James Version shows much enthusiasm with its use of "infallible" proofs. Other versions simply state "many proofs." Some versions use "convincing" (NIV) or "ample" (NEB). The Greek, "tekmeerion" is defined "a sign, indubitable token, clear proof" in *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Zondervan, 1973); and "convincing proof" in the *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1973). The use of "infallible" may be strong, but it is not employed without basis.

Let's ponder the word "proof." There is an interesting contrast in meaning between "evidence" and "proof." Evidence suggests the presence of signs which serve as indications of an event or action. It bears witness. Proof is the cogency of evidence that compels the mind to accept a fact or a truth. "Cogency" is a collection which has the

power to compel or constrain.

There is a finality about "proof." It crowds out reservations, doubts, misgivings. It asserts actuality.

Doctor Luke intends to be understood! He insists the resurrection can be *proven*; that the collection of evidence is infallible, compelling the reasonable mind to accept the report as fact; and that such infallible proofs are many.

We understand Luke! He means for us to believe. He stimulates our faith and provokes us to search more deeply.

I Corinthians 15:5-8 lists several who saw Jesus after His resurrection. The risen Lord was seen by Cephas (Peter), then of the "twelve." On one occasion more than 500 brethren observed Him. Paul notes that of this number most remain alive.

Why should he indicate they still live? This great resurrection chapter affirms the importance of believing that Jesus arose from the dead. Were this not true Christianity would not only be useless, it would be miserable. Believing so strongly in the power of resurrection, citing the availability of numerous witnesses infers a challenge to those doubting to find one. It should not have been difficult. More than 250 of these brethren still lived.

Later Jesus was seen by James, then by all of the apostles, and finally by Paul himself. One cannot

WHEN

When thoughts stay subtle, deep, and nobly grand,

No spikes of greed or envy's piercing thorn
Will scar one's earthly course and he will stand
Above the soul who blows old rancor's horn.

When innocence of childhood's happy days
Can pillow dreams throughout a mortal's
life,

His sleep is sweet, he shuns the lawless ways
Of those who pipe the notes of Satan's fife.
Then it behooves each soul to guard with care
His moral sinews lest they warp and break
Beneath the strain of evil's tempting snare
And trailing paths become a muddy wake.

The wise pursue their goals and shun the
tools

That shape the destiny of wanton fools.

Virginia Noble

reasonably examine this list of witnesses and dismiss it as being unimpressive. It's convincing!

Jesus' resurrection is credible because He spoke of it Himself. These statements are easily found. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up . . . he spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:19-21).

These words were remembered during Jesus' passion. While He hung on the cross callous scoffers "that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross" (Mark 15:29, 30).

Not all expressions about His resurrection were metaphorical. He said plainly, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17, 18).

Jesus was honorable. Since He was not given to fantasy, He would hardly have hallucinated so repeatedly on such an important matter. He said He would resurrect from the dead, and He did just as He said He would.

The resurrection is credible because of the difference this event produced in the life of the disciples. Their walk with Jesus was often confusing. Many events and teachings found them bewildered.

On at least one occasion the disciples tried to protect Jesus from the demands of children wanting attention. Jesus allowed them to see Him because they represented a characteristic of members of the kingdom of God.

The twelve were caught in a storm. In desperation they called their slumbering Master and asked for help. Jesus calmed the storm and rebuked His disciples for lack of faith.

They attempted to exorcise a demon from a youth sorely possessed. The situation was desperate. The disciples failed. When

Jesus succeeded, they asked why they were unable to offer the needed help. They were informed that such a feat could only be the result of prayer and fasting.

Peter was told that his recognition of Jesus as the Son of the living God was a truth of a uniquely divine source. Shortly thereafter Jesus bluntly rebuked Peter for being protective of his Master, branding the attitude as Satanic!

When Jesus was persecuted, executed and buried, the disciples thought the Cause was lost. Further defense of their leader seemed futile. Survival became the more practical concern.

The disconsolate feeling was expressed by two men on the road to Emmaus, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). The disciples lost hope.

After the resurrection their attitudes were completely different. They spoke but few words without mentioning the resurrected Lord. Peter assured, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24).

What changed these men who were completely discouraged at Jesus' death? Suddenly they became evangelists who were willing to give up their lives in defense of the Gospel. They had been with the resurrected Jesus. Their new dedication and perseverance proved it.

The resurrection is certainly credible! No additional evidence is needed to substantiate it.

Nonetheless, the best proof has not yet been given. Eyewitness accounts offer the most supportive evidence. Each person of any age since the event may have firsthand proof that the Saviour lives.

He is available to our call. As Mediator between God and man, He stands by to serve in our efforts to be reconciled to God. He pleads our forgiveness, hears our pleas for healing, and communicates to those seeking guidance. He is a risen Saviour who lives in the hearts of all those who seek and serve Him. ◀BA▶

GOD'S GREAT SALVATION PLAN

"...FOREORDAINED
BEFORE THE
FOUNDATION OF THE
WORLD... MANIFEST
IN THESE LAST TIMES
FOR YOU" — 1 PET. 1:20

by Ira B. Hughes

The plan of salvation is God's plan, not man's, and there is no other way that we can be saved and become part of the family of God. In Acts 4:12 we read, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

There is only one way, and that is God's way, and His way is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

God's salvation is threefold. Christ was born of a virgin. He was crucified to put away our sin. Second, he appeared in heaven, in the presence of God, after His resurrection to save us from the power of sin (Hebrews 9:24). "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Third, he will appear again on this earth, the second time, as Lord of lords and King of Kings, to redeem us from mortality (Hebrews 9:28). "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

There are a number of things that we may know for certain. First, we know that God loves us. How do we know this? The BIBLE tells us so in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We know we are sinners for Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We all need the mercy that only God can give us.

We also know we are dead to sin when we live for God. Romans 6:2 asks this question, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

One of the greatest assurances we have is the knowledge that Christ died for us. In Romans 5:6-8 we read, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

It is a fact that we can be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Acts where the keeper of the prison asked what he must do to be saved we find this inspired answer, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

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Look Now for the Second Coming of Jesus

by Ray L. Straub



The Bible refers to the second coming of Jesus more than 300 times. This should remove all doubt concerning its importance! Christians should be well informed about the return of our Lord. The event deserves our constant attention.

Jesus, Himself, spoke of His return about 20 times. He assured, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Acts contains the narrative of His ascension. The disciples on the scene saw Him rise gradually. Two men wearing white clothing stood by them and advised, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you

into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). This declares the actual, bodily return of Jesus. He said He would go and return. The two witnesses affirmed it.

A review of some of Jesus' parables will give further insight. Luke 19:12-17 gives an illustration about the distribution of "talents." The opening verse of this parable reads, "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return." Even though this is a story, it suggests important truths. This nobleman represents Jesus. He has gone for a kingdom, and He will return.

Matthew 25 contains three parables, each dealing with future judgment. The first describes the experiences of 10 virgins who anticipated attending a wedding. It warns that the separation of the saved from the unregenerate will

come suddenly to the unprepared. The wise will remain prepared and expecting. When judgment arrives it will be too late to get ready for Jesus' coming.

The second parable tells us that we must profit from the abilities and energies God has given us. At Jesus' coming He will demand account, and then thoughts of getting busy will have come too late.

The third narrative describes the division of sheep from goats. It warns that we must give account of our treatment of unfortunates. Each of these three parables gives insight concerning the Divine criterion used to identify the righteous at Jesus' coming. We must have completed preparation through responsible exercise of our abilities and by demonstrating compassion toward the needy.

It was Jesus who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, and He will return. We must prepare

for His arrival. Having received a kingdom, He will come as King. He came earlier to be our Saviour, He went to heaven to serve as our Mediator, and He will return to reign as our King.

After Jesus predicted the devastation of the temple in Jerusalem, the disciples asked Him, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). The response was lengthy and detailed, enabling all to conclude that the disciples anticipated accurately. Jesus would come again.

Matthew 23 ends with an assertion by Jesus that He will return. Having expressed dismay over Jerusalem because her residents were so lacking in spiritual sensitivity, the Master foretold the desolation of the city. They would see Him no more until they would acknowledge, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39).

Matthew 26 lists events leading up to and including the Lord's Supper. "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples" (verse 26). He did the same with the cup. Verse 29 quotes Jesus saying, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Referring to these words, Paul advised, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (I Corinthians 11:26).

These two passages indicate that the Lord's Supper serves two purposes. It is a reminder of the passion of Jesus, and it points forward to the return of our Lord. We memorialize His death with a view toward His return.

It would seem inconsistent to observe the Lord's Supper and not believe that the same Jesus who suffered, died, resurrected and ascended will return to earth.

The second coming is mentioned in each chapter of both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians. It constituted a lively hope that was strongly believed, steadfastly retained, and widely taught during

Jesus' ministry on earth and following His ascension. It remains a notable teaching of the Bible.

Jesus warned, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only . . . Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:36, 42). In spite of these words, pseudo prophets strain for the attention of the naive who indiscreetly allow irresponsible predictions to delude them. None can foretell the time of

"There is a sign that addresses itself specifically to the return of Jesus. It is stated in Psalm 102:16, 'When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.'"

Jesus' return. The Bible plainly says so.

Some insist on a strictly constructed application of these verses. They insist, "I'll admit that I do not know the DAY or the HOUR, just as the verse says, but I know the YEAR. The Bible does not say that no one will know the YEAR."

The context disallows this rationale. Those who indulge in spectacular speculations, naming the year of Jesus' return, are out of tune with Jesus' own words concerning the event.

Matthew 24:43-51 cites Jesus' comparison of two classes of servants. The faithful will look after his daily responsibilities as though his Lord were returning momentarily. The other servant who says to himself, "My Lord is delaying His coming" will be surprised by his Master's early return because he will not be ready.

Why would a servant contemplate a delay of his Lord's return? That question deserves careful consideration. Could it be that this unfaithful servant became engaged in calculating dates, settling on one, and then awaited the

Lord's coming as per his own conclusions? Why else would he assert that the coming will be delayed? It is probable that the unfaithful servant made what he considered to be a Biblical estimate of his Lord's return and timed his work accordingly. The date arrived at was in error, finding the servant unprepared and worthy to be condemned.

An examination of the "signs" of Jesus' coming will be fruitful. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37-39).

Are these "signs" of Jesus' return?

When did this eating, drinking and marrying begin? Obviously, soon after creation! These are normal necessities to sustain life. They offer no definite indication about the nearness of Jesus' return. To the contrary, these verses warn that normal concerns will continue just as they always have until Jesus comes. They can command too much of our attention. This is precisely why Christians must remain alert.

Jesus also said there will be deceptions, wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes in increasing numbers (Matthew 24:5-7). This has provoked many to cite statistics to show that we have more deceptions, wars, etc.

The increase in frequency of these phenomena has been going on for centuries. They are worse now, to be sure, but they did not just START TO GET WORSE. Further, our ability to communicate better allows more comprehensive reporting of calamities.

What we do not know is how much more these adversities will increase and for over how long a time in the future. We know these tragedies will increase, but this does not indicate how long it will

(Continued on page 23)

the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:1).

The redeemed, the saints, will reign with Christ for a special period of 1000 years. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

The "first resurrection" spoken of here is the same as is described in I Thessalonians 4:16, 17. The dead in Christ rise and those Christians yet living will be caught up together with them to meet Christ. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Corinthians 15:51-53).

All those who rise from the graves to meet Christ, and those Christians yet alive who will undergo a change — all are counted as being in that "first resurrection" and they all will have part in a literal reign with Christ in His literal kingdom for a thousand years.

At the close of this time the kingdom does not end, but enters its final phase. With all the great work of the plan of salvation and redemption completed, Jesus turns the finished work over to God the Father. "For he must reign, til he hath put all enemies under his feet. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:25, 28). "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (verse 24).

Be Not Deceived by the "Rapture" Teaching

The great time of trouble may already be beginning. God's people will find the trouble all around

them and there will be great trials of faith. The Lord calls on us to "hold fast." "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11). "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Don't expect to be "caught away" before Christ comes. Take confidence in the Word of God and endure to the end. ◀BA▶

THE 1000 YEAR REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST

(Continued from page 4)

years). It is through a combination of Paul's and the prophecies in Revelation that we determine the Scriptural fact of the 1000-year period of Jesus' reign.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thessalonians 4:16).

"And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:4, 5).

This millennium period will be enjoyed by the immortal saints, as clearly stated in Revelation 20:6. These blessed overcomers will be resurrected at Jesus' return and will work with Him during these 1000 years of restoration to bring order to a chaotic world.

When Jesus perfects the Kingdom, He turns it over to God (I Corinthians 15:24-28). How

A Friend

by Mable Jo Baker

To those who seem unfriendly,
God grant me grace to be
So friendly, they will soon become
Much friendlier to me!
Perhaps a hearty handclasp,
Or even just a smile,
Will help unfriendly people
To remember — life's worthwhile!

long will His kingdom last? IT WILL NEVER END! His kingdom will be turned over to God, the Father, to be perpetuated throughout eternity. Jesus' rule will last for 1000 years, but the kingdom is eternal!

Expectant Hope!

All the information we need about the future and the Kingdom is given to us by our Heavenly Father. The prophetic message reveals the beauty of the coming Kingdom and some of the things that will take place in it. One of the most satisfying aspects of all is that we are promised a part in it.

That promise is conditional for it demands total righteousness and true living on our part. As Jesus will be the center of the kingdom, He must now be the center of our way of life or we may be excluded from His coming kingdom.

We may not have all our questions answered on the subject of the MILLENNIAL REIGN, but God, in Divine wisdom, gave us plenty to meditate upon! PROMISES! FACTS! INSPIRATION! These perpetuate our hope and desire for KING JESUS to come and deliver His people. HE WILL COME! JESUS PROMISED . . . GOD PROMISED. . . THEY HAVE NEVER FAILED YET! ◀BA▶

LOOK NOW FOR THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

(Continued from page 15)

be before Jesus comes to bring full redemption.

There is a sign that addresses itself specifically to the return of Jesus. It is stated in Psalm 102:16, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." This is a simply-stated prophecy, but it is most important. It gives a unique sign that points clearly and incontrovertibly toward Jesus' return to earth.

The rebuilding of Zion is a reasonably recent occurrence. It is not yet one hundred years since the first Jews were allowed to return to what was known as

Palestine. It is barely more than 25 years since Israel was established as a nation. She has since proven herself a power to be reckoned with. The Bible says plainly that the rebuilding of Zion is an indication that the Lord will appear in His glory. What an obvious and genuine sign! How apparent is this proof of Jesus' imminent return!

I Thessalonians 5 describes the attitude Christians must have while awaiting the return of our Lord. Verse 6 says, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

To watch means to remain spiritually aware. There are important developments taking place that assure us Jesus will return. The

return of the Jews to their homeland gives direct indication that soon Jesus will descend in the clouds of heaven.

The counsel to be sober has reference to abstaining from intoxicants. The language is metaphorical. It advises that we remain consciously alert. We should not be discouraged, downhearted, impatient, nor disinterested. Instead our love for the Christ of Calvary must continue to be vibrant, illuminating, communicating.

The "wine" of this world can deaden us to the realization of our spiritual needs. Our eyes should be sharply focused on Jesus who "was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for

him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). (BA)

MOTHERS

No name so sweet
In all the earth
Than that one
Who gave us birth!

No other name so
Sweet as — MOTHER!

God bless our mothers,
Every one so dear,
Theirs is the Christ-like love
That brings God's love so near.

—Edward M. Brandt

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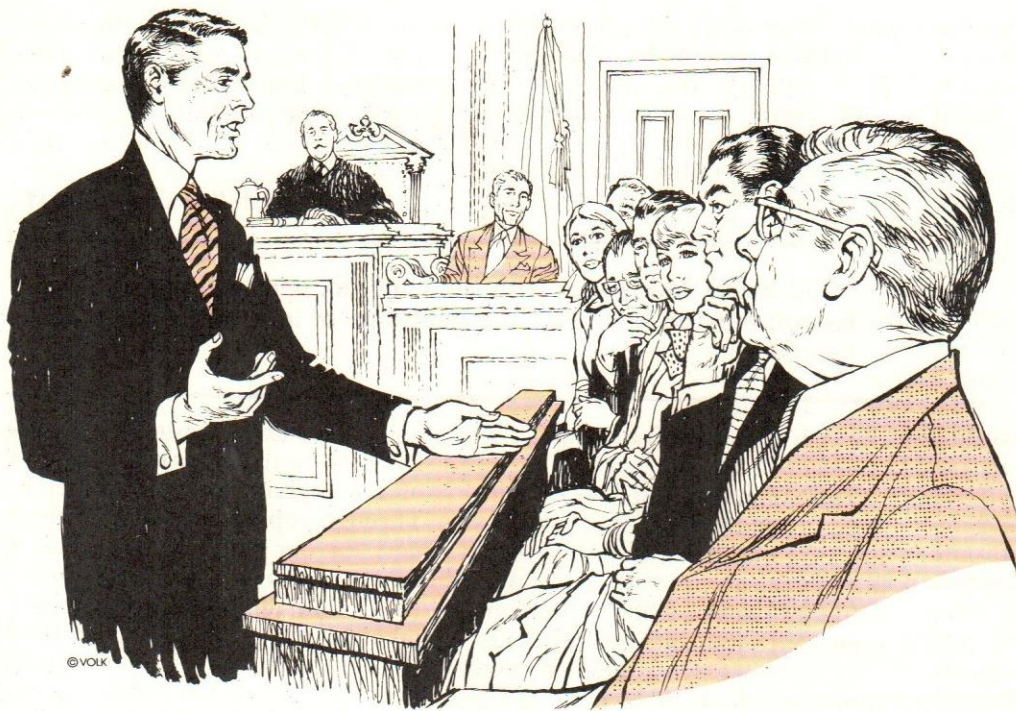
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by Ray L. Straub

Are You a Legalist?

Some read the Book of Romans and conclude that the Law of God has been abolished. It's sad that such an idea was ever proposed, because it has misled multitudes of sincere Christians. Romans teaches that law is an important part of a Christian's life.

When contemplating the place of law in the life of a godly person, it must be remembered that rules of conduct have their limitations. Law cannot bring salvation. It cannot forgive. It cannot provide everlasting life. It was never designed to regenerate. Because it cannot accomplish everything, traditional Christianity seems to want no part of it.

Many have been rigidly conditioned to feel a strong aversion toward anything that hints at "legalism." Consequently, those who claim to love God are repelled by what is actually an important characteristic of the divine nature.

"Legalism" suggests excessive attention or conformity to law. It is a relative term applied judgmentally by the user. When one person calls another a "legalist" he expresses his own opinion. The opinion may be well-founded, capable of support by good evidence, or it may be parroting a prejudice persistently imposed by many of traditional religion's erroneous teachings.

Failure to accept the role of law, with its limitations, along with an overdeveloped tendency to apply the label, "legalist," has confused many about the message Paul wrote to the Romans. Unless the head and heart are more responsibly controlled, mass Christendom will likely continue to stumble and bungle in its attempts to understand and explain the profound message Paul wrote. Select passages from Romans will be used to analyze the function and application of law in the life of the

converted, growing, committed child of God.

The theme of Romans is found in the latter part of chapter 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." Following the book's introduction which ends with the theme, Paul describes graphically the depravities of those who give themselves over to unrighteousness.

The wrath of God will one day be directed against the hell-bent sinner, and to this truth the pious say, "Amen!" However, "there is no respect of persons with God" (Romans 2:11). God's anger not only awaits those languishing in atrocities, but it will also reveal itself against *all* sinners; those who have sinned without law as well as those who have sinned while possessing, reading and studying the law. Those who said, "Amen" in response to the curses pronounced against the sins listed in chapter 1 must now do some self-

examining. It is appropriate to stop condemning those whom we think are more sinful than we, and it is time to analyze our own moral posture.

The gist of the message in Romans 2 is that it is not what we hear, possess or admire that counts most, but it is what we *do* that is most important.

Some teach that God pays little attention to the deeds of His Family. Such false assurance clashes with Romans 2:6-9, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in *well doing* seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, *and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness*, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil . . . but glory and honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good."

The Jew falls under criticism because he has excellent knowledge of the law, but he fails to observe it. "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" (verse 23).

The importance of a man's actions are accented when Paul suggests that even Gentiles have a law that is written on their conscience. Since both Jew and Gentile have law in some form, it is up to God to judge their deeds in reaction to law.

In Romans 3 Paul's outlook becomes grave. Our deeds are important, and they haven't been good. The law speaks to those who have sinned, and it pronounces our guilt. Attempts to reform and obey will all come up short. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (verse 23).

Mankind has fallen victim to a serious predicament of his own making. God, who is absolutely righteous, cannot be reconciled to evil. Wrongdoing cannot be brushed aside as though it had never taken place, which suggests that the entire human race is hopelessly alienated from a righteous and just God. No initiative of

man can remedy the problem.

In His abounding lovingkindness, God supplied the initiative. He "set forth . . . a propitiation through faith in his [Jesus'] blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,

gressed the law, and without the gift of God we would have been doomed. Jesus came to secure our pardon, not to obliterate the criterion which distinguishes right from wrong.

God wants fellowship with His

"God wants fellowship with His children, and law observance cannot provide this. This is a limitation of law, but it does not cancel it."

through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:25).

This complicated declaration informs us that through the righteous life of Jesus given in our behalf, adequate atonement has been made for our sins while at the same time God's demand for righteousness was met. God did not compromise with sin, and we can be reconciled to Him.

This is a beautiful truth which provokes us to love God sincerely and deeply. It also accents God's regard for law. Both sin and righteousness are defined and identified by law, "for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). The costly sacrifice of our Saviour was exacted precisely because God completely regarded the integrity of law.

Our reconciliation, necessitated because we were lawless, was made possible because Jesus laid down His perfect, sin-free life in sacrifice for us. Now we may claim it by faith. Intentions to reform do not clear away the punishment due for past sins. Once committed, only an act of mercy can erase them. Forgiveness and acquittal (justification) are acts of grace and mercy given us by God apart from administration of law.

Paul ends Romans 3 by asking, "Do we then make void the law through faith?" How should this question be answered? Traditional Christianity insists the answer is "Yes." Paul's contrasting response was, "God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

How does faith establish the law? We accept atonement for our sins by faith. The atonement was offered because we had trans-

gressed the law, and without the gift of God we would have been doomed. Jesus came to secure our pardon, not to obliterate the criterion which distinguishes right from wrong. God wants fellowship with His children, and law observance cannot provide this. This is a limitation of law, but it does not cancel it. Through repentance and forgiveness for our sins, we are made a new creature in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:17), and we partake in the very being of God (II Peter 1:4). All of this is God's manifestation of His righteousness apart from the law (Romans 3:21), but what changes come about when we become partakers of the Divine Nature? Christians should be able to answer this.

Is it God's nature to sin? Is it God's nature to play down the disciplines that elicit respect for the Divine and concern for humanity? Is it God's nature to suggest that the practice of righteousness is an exercise in futility? To the contrary, partakers of the divine nature will have the same high regard for moral law that prompted God to pay the highest price to atone for transgressors. This is how faith assuredly establishes law.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). These words give some the impression that since we are saved by grace, we are no longer beholden to the law of God. It is suggested that we were under the law when we were still under the old covenant. We have progressed to a covenant of grace, removing us from being under the law. Since we are no longer "under the law," they teach, we are no longer obligated to observe it.

Is Paul indicating that to be under grace instead of being under

(Continued on page 22)

why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). The "yoke" to which Peter referred was the Law of Moses which demanded circumcisions as well as many other observances which it had bound upon God's people.

The book of Hebrews supports Paul's contention that Moses' Law was abolished at Christ's death. Hebrews 9 describes the terms of the Levitical order under the Mosaic Law. Verse 7 speaks specifically of the fact that the high priest only went into the second sanctuary once each year on the Day of Atonement.

Verses 9-12 describe how this whole system of worship has to terminate at Christ's sacrifice on the cross. "Which is a symbol for the time then present, according to which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed *until a time of reformation*. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle . . . and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."

Jesus Himself alluded to the fact that the Mosaic Law was to be short lived. In His conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well He made a significant statement. He suggested that Moses' Law is already in the process of being negated. Under its provisions for the Levitical Order, Jerusalem was the center of worship. Jesus stated, "Woman, believe me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain [Samaria], nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father" (John 4:21).

Following that prophetic statement, Jesus then provided insight into the manner of true worship of God. "But an hour is coming, and

now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers" (John 4:23). Jesus indicated the spiritual nature of true and acceptable worship of God.

The New Testament treatment of Law might be summarized briefly. It uses the term *law* in a variety of ways. It teaches that Jesus truly abolished Moses' Law at His death on the cross.

It genuinely establishes the need for observing the great moral law summarized in the Decalogue. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ initiated a transition in the observance of this Law. He magnified it, made it honorable and taught its observance. Jesus Christ became the channel through whom God reconciles sinners unto Himself. Therefore, the New Testament clearly teaches that salvation is extended to all mankind through God's free gift of grace in Christ Jesus. ◀BA▶

Scripture texts are quoted from the *New American Standard Bible*.

ARE YOU A LEGALIST?

(Continued from page 4)

the law dismisses us from the need to obey law?

Romans 6 teaches straightforwardly that even though we are not under the law, we should NOT BE SINNING. "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (6:15). He explained this by pointing out that we are servants who *choose* a master. Either we choose sin, which leads to death; or we choose to obey and live righteously. We can't serve sin and God at the same time. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (verse 18). "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness" (verse 20).

There is nothing complicated about this language. Either we serve sin, or we serve righteousness. Serving one, we are free from the other. None serves both sin and righteousness.

Which of these two is served by those who are *not* under the law? Those serving righteousness are not under the law because they regard it. This means that to be "under the law" is to be under its condemnation.

What is sin? "Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness" (I John 3:4, RSV). The person who ceases to sin stops transgressing law. Further, those who are not under the law are those who obey God's rules and perform deeds of righteousness. To be out from under the law's condemnation is to escape the punishment of the lawless.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4).

The interpretation commonly given in response to reading this verse is that we have become dead to law — all of it, whether ceremonial, moral or spiritual. Those "married" to Christ have no further need for laws, some contend.

The key to correctly understanding this verse is in accurately identifying the law Paul had in mind when he spoke symbolically of our dying to it. "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work *in our members* to bring forth fruit unto death" (Romans 7:5).

Which law works in our members to bring forth fruit unto death? "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law *in my members*, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the *law of sin which is in my members*. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but *with the flesh the law of sin*" (Romans 7:22-25).

The law we become dead to is

the law of sin that works in our members. It is this law from which we find deliverance through Jesus. Becoming dead to this law, we can be "married" to Christ.

This explanation is beautifully confirmed in Romans 7:12-14, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But *sin*, that it might appear *sin*, working death in me by that which is good; that *sin* by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under *sin*."

It is carnality, not the law, that is denounced. Sinful tendencies in humanity are exposed. Paul did not blame the spiritual, just, holy, good law of God for his difficulty. He recognized that it was his own carnal nature that had to be dealt with. To remove law would have brought about no improvement in Paul's nature or that of anyone else who has not found deliverance through Jesus.

Romans 8:1 offers reassurance, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, *who walk not after the flesh*, but after the Spirit." When one is delivered from the law of sin and death, he is delivered from compulsive sinning. He is no longer in rebellion against God. His new condition is described in Romans 8:4, "That the *righteousness of the law* might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Our lawlessness comes to an end. We do what is right. Carnality has been removed from us — put to death, and we embrace and obey the just, holy, good, spiritual law of God.

The book of Romans does not advocate license to sin through removal of God-given rules of behavior. It upholds forgiveness for past lawlessness by God's grace and the practice of righteous, obedient living. Those experiencing such are partakers of the divine nature.

◀BA▶

The Glory of Faith

by Roy Z. Kemp



It has been stated that it was much easier for our forefathers to have faith in God because their lives were so much simpler, so less complicated. Such is a fallacy. Our forefathers were pioneers, facing death daily as they trekked westward to establish new homes in wild, new territory. Their forefathers also faced death on the small boats that brought them to this new country, and in the strange, wild land where they first settled.

Our children — and their children — will face rough, hard ways in the new, strange, unknown worlds that will be their homes on some distant tomorrow — should the day of judgment be held back until they face the new worlds. Their ways will not be easy. Life has never been easy, simple, uncomplicated. And it will never be easy to face the problems of the unknown.

We read in Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of thy father." The living God will be the God of our children and their children, just as he is our God and was our forefathers' God. God is eternal. He was, He is, and ever shall be. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy" (Psalm 16:11).

Jesus had a lowly birth. He knew hard toil, poverty; and when He was about His Father's work He had no place to lay His head. He knew pain, sorrow, loneliness, grief, betrayal, unjust accusations, abuse, mockery, suffering, and finally a cruel death. The life of Jesus was not an easy one, nor was it simple and uncomplicated, but it was a life of faith.

Faith can be tested in any hour of crisis, but the fire of the testing will permit faith to glow with new splendor. A strong faith is one of life's greatest blessings. Jesus expects us to have strong faith.

"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 8:26).

The disciples of Jesus were rebuked by Him because their faith grew weak. But the woman in the crowd who touched the hem of His garment in faith was praised and rewarded for her great faith (cf. Mark 5:24-34). The faith of Jesus permitted Him to restore sight to the blind, speech to the mute, healing to the lame, hearing to the deaf.

We must each live by faith. Faith must be cultivated so that it will increase and we will thus be lifted higher toward God. Good thoughts, clear thinking, perceptive vision, faithful service — all will help our faith to grow and give us a newer consciousness of the nearness of God.

Faith that is real is the belief in the ultimate triumph and great power of God's will and purpose. The faith we have in God should mean more than the faith we have in ourselves, in others, in our work, or our country. The virtue of faith is that it must operate on different levels.

Faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ will allow miracles of ac-

• "Make every minute count!" How tedious this plea! Let the idealistic "minute-packers" be guided by such wearisome advice. It's not seriously regarded by most of us. It hardly hurts anyone to waste some time now and then, and surely God doesn't mind. He understands that we can't always be 100% pure intensity!

Many find it difficult to fully appreciate the torrent of advice given in magazine articles, sermons, and other forms of counsel who seek to enrich our lives by erasing the non-productive time periods we carelessly let slip. We dutifully nod affirmatively, but our hearts aren't in it. Our consciences have been alerted often enough toward the necessity of getting up early, getting going promptly, having notebooks, reading material or knitting needles constantly at our side so there will be no wasted moments or thoughts.

Who said our moments of doing nothing or puttering are a waste? Plenty of us enjoy them. Let the super active press and scramble. They have permission, but the rest of us hardly enjoy being nagged about making better use of our time.

On the other hand, since efforts are likely to be expended somehow, they should be productive. Dissipating our energies costs, and when we spend we should get something in return. The release of an abundance of energy doesn't assure accomplishment. It's not the *amount* of effort one gives, it's how well *directed* it is that counts.

These words are not directed toward cramming more effort into every moment. Instead, we look to the Bible to seek advice on how we can make whatever efforts we have to give more profitable.

The Christian speaks of stewardship. This outdated, seldom-used term refers to management. How was he placed into this position?

Each of us has a certain number of days to live, people we befriend, resources to accumulate and expend, talents to exercise along with



by Ray L. Straub

other manipulative powers. It's all ours to manage.

It is a rather common error in the attitude of many Christians that God has but little claim to their time. They feel they can best use their efforts to earn money with which they can buy the time of others. A direct application is their feeling that they pay the pastor's salary, and having done so the pastor should carry on with evangelizing, visiting prospects, the ill, the discouraged; the pastor takes care of the church facilities, the church's business, and generally performs all duties that tend to interrupt another's profit-making.

With the "professionals" around, the donor's obligations are reduced to earning a comfortable living plus a responsible church donation and that's adequate stewardship. But, it isn't.

Our Christianity is not what we're identified with — a productive or nonproductive church staff. Being Christlike is serving. Discipleship is not only supporting an ideal; it's living it. When time is needed, there is no adequate substitute.

While it's hard to get excited about making every moment count, it is not being super pious to suggest that the lifetime in which we may accomplish something is short. Generally, there is time for only one profession, one mate, training for one specialty, and many places on earth are seen only once. While relaxation may be therapeutic, hard work is also wholesome.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 shares with us the wise preacher's understanding of how to make good use of our lifetime.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Earlier interpretations of this verse pointed to the manner in which rice is planted. A field was flooded and seeds were thrown into the

water after which cattle and oxen would stomp them into the mud. Others consider this referred to the Nile of Egypt when its flow filled the riverbanks. Seed would be flung into the river, and as the waters receded depositing silt over the seeds, new plants would spring up to produce a harvest.

The verse seems to have less to do with seed than with bread. It addresses itself to the wisdom of leaving alone unanswered questions and devoting oneself to duty and pursuing fulfillment. The analogy speaks of performing the thankless, unrecognized deed.

"The Christian uses his time well when he can give responsibly without regard to receiving."

Bread cast on the water momentarily floats, becomes saturated and sinks to be devoured by fish or other creatures who know nothing of the source of their bounties. Only God knows the connection between benefactor and the benefitted. That should be enough.

It's a waste of time to restrict efforts to direct investment. One should be able to give of his resources without immediate and calculated returns. The Christian uses his time well when he can give responsibly without regard to receiving.

The verse also suggests that one needs to work while he can because he never knows how soon he will need help. The parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16:1-12 tells of a manager whose employment is being ended. The outlook is bleak. What will he do? He hardly wants to dig ditches or beg.

He reasons that he needs to develop a wider circle of loyalties, and he accomplishes this by going to his employer's debtors and forgiving a sizeable portion of their accounts payable.

His method lacked integrity, but his vision showed wisdom. It's time

to cast bread upon the waters. Our opportunity to do so may soon be restricted.

Further wisdom concerning the expenditure of our lives follows in verse 2, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." The combination of "seven" followed by "eight" suggests completion with something added.

Giving a portion to seven advises that we pursue diverse interests. It's unwise to "put all our eggs into one basket." Where possible, farmers diversify, planting a variety of crops, so that if the revenues from one sags, others may do better. The person who has developed several capabilities can find satisfaction from a variety of activities.

Interests and goals change from one point of our lives to another. More people, aged 20, consider they may be a senator or a president than those who are 60. Ideals fade and practicality takes over. Our varied interests will keep the entire lifetime rich and productive.

Giving a portion to seven is finding the means to be unselfishly useful all of our lives. The portion to eight takes us beyond this life. The verse advises that we think through our plans for this entire life *and* the life to come.

Paul wrote this message in I Timothy 6:17-19, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Ecclesiastes 11:3 deals with the inevitable. "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." For some rain brings a welcome benefit; for others it may be catastrophic, but in neither case can it be prevented.

"And if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there

it shall be" (verse 3b). This may refer to the consequences many of us suffer, whether of our own making or not. Tragic accidents take away loved ones, cripple others, deplete finances. Some fallen trees cannot be removed. Some occurrences cannot be reversed or significantly altered. The fallen tree can refer to death. That's permanent.

All go to the grave to await either the Lifegiver or destruction. The wise prepare for the time that the tree falls.

Good management suffers when one is over cautious and precise. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Some take this message, profound as it is, and overextend it. They hesitate until the "time seems right." "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

St. Gregory suggested the "winds" may refer to "evil" and the "clouds" to the "righteous." He wondered if many Christians were not shy about evangelizing because they were intimidated by abounding wickedness while at the same time, others fail to bear fruit because they never look beyond the society of the redeemed.

Whether or not this analogy was intended, it is applicable. The Christian is intimidated, causing him to resort to fantasy. He knows he should donate, but he fears future depression. He dreams about God's making him more prosperous so he can afford to give. He knows that he should be friendly to visitors, but he's shy, doesn't want to be embarrassed and humiliated. He thinks he'll wait until he has time to take a Dale Carnegie course on winning friends and influencing people. He knows he should attend more Bible studies at his church, but soon his work will ease off and he won't be quite so exhausted in the evening.

How many of us wait for the right time, and drop spiritually into the world of make-believe? Dedication to duty must displace

the stammer of unanswered questions.

There is great virtue in recognizing God as our partner. We do what we can and commit the rest to Him. He receives our efforts and multiplies their value.

Jesus told a parable emphasizing this consociation. It's found in Mark 4:26-29 and deals with a man who planted a seed. While he went about his day-to-day affairs — sleeping, waking, working — the seed sprouted, grew and eventually developed a full ear of corn. The sower didn't know how it was done, but as soon as the ear of corn matured, the gardener promptly harvested it.

Beautiful in its earthy simplicity, this story encourages us to work with God; do what we can and leave the rest to Him. It's our duty

to perform; it's God's duty to take care of the unanswered questions.

The wise preacher observed that humanity knows not how the various tissues of the unborn develops in the mother's womb, nor how breath comes into the life of the newborn offspring. God sees to that.

The good advice given: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

The young need ideals and inspiration so their efforts will be enthusiastic and properly directed. All need a variety of interests, abilities and experiences so there will be adequate stimuli to keep us

(Continued on page 24)

The Christian and Fasting

by Bruce Boote

One could ask, "Why should the Christian fast?" There is some definite reasoning for doing so.

Jesus said in the great commission to His disciples they were to teach all nations to observe all things that He had commanded them (Matthew 28:19, 20). Jesus also said that those who heard His sayings and did them built their houses on a solid foundation (Matthew 7:24).

One of Christ's sayings was "moreover when ye fast" (Matthew 6:16). This quote is from His Sermon on the Mount and is mentioned in conjunction with His discourse on prayer. Thus we learn that fasting is a doctrine of Jesus Christ. For what purpose should one fast? Here are four points to consider:

1. To increase faith. In Matthew 17:19-21 Christ instructed His disciples how to obtain the necessary faith to cast out a demon.

2. To humble one's self as David did (Psalm 35:13).

3. For wisdom in making important decisions (Acts 13:1-3). Here is an example of the early church fasting before ordaining men to the ministry.

4. To overcome temptation. Christ fasted in the wilderness to obtain strength to overcome the temptations of the devil (Matthew 4:1-11).

What is fasting? Fasting is abstaining from food and drink for the purpose of drawing closer to God (Deuteronomy 9:9, 18).

How long should one fast? This depends upon a person's state of health and the depth of the problem. The commanded fast of the Levitical law on the Day of Atonement was for a 24-hour period (Leviticus 23:27-32). This would appear to be a good average guide, but individual circumstances could lengthen or shorten the period.

When fasting one should avoid the error of telling others what he is doing (Matthew 6:16, 17); it should not be for strife and debate (Isaiah 58:4-10). The acceptable fast to God is outlined in Isaiah 58:6-10.

By fasting we learn how much we depend on our daily bread, and how physical we are. It is a humbling experience.

Finally, remember Jesus said "when you fast," not "if you fast."

as food, shelter and the comforts of life all come from God. God is the fountain of these and all other blessings, the source of all that is good and true, and is the giver of every perfect gift. Let us pray that we can be more like the Master and remember that the world we live in is not ours but that it belongs to God.

While we are in the world and not of it, we must make our belief in God a living reality. ◀BA▶

MAKING GOOD USE OF TIME

(Continued from page 8)

productive through advanced years. If health, location or other circumstances thwart some intentions, sufficient interests keep the forward look in the aging eye. One never knows whose effort God will accept and use, perhaps that of the youth, perhaps that of the elderly, perhaps both.

God has given everyone some time. It is no more easily managed than funds. It takes attention, dedication, and a good sense of values.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:11-14).

Good management of time is to be active in fulfilling our duty, whether it is recognized and immediately rewarded or not. Our efforts should flow into a variety of directions so that unforeseen circumstances do not close all of our options. A main concern is that our preparations include eternity.

There are inevitable reversals, but one cannot withhold activity because they might arise. Doing nothing is a much bigger mistake

than the occasional error. With God as our partner, the answered questions will find their perfect solution, and our energies can be directed toward doing God's work while time remains. ◀BA▶

HOW BEST TO HELP OUR NEIGHBORS

(Continued from page 10)

with the affairs of this life" (II Timothy 2:4).

The power of prayer varies with the holiness of the person praying. God hears us rather than our prayers. Unless our sympathies, attitude and conduct are sharply severed from Sodom and closely identified with God, our prayer will be as useless as Lot's, rather than as effective as Abraham's. It may be fervent, but it will not be effective.

It is here that we gain the strength for our service. The secret of our power with God over the worst of cities is our renunciation of all the cities of the world. It must be said of each of us what was said of Abraham: "By faith he sojourned . . . as in a strange country, . . . For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:9, 10).

The Psalmist gives us the reason why the righteous are so powerful in a city: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (Psalm 34:15).

In the Battle of Britain in 1940 the Royal Air Force saved London from the German bombers and so Great Britain from defeat. After that success, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, said: "Never did so many owe so much to so few." He could have said this with even fuller truth about the intercessors for the country.

Because God answers it, prayer has so much power that we can do nothing greater than pray. So we intercede that God will delay the reckoning with evil. This will give our neighbors the vital opportunity to repent. ◀BA▶

YOUR GOD IS ABLE!

(Continued from page 17)

Forgive you, completely, irrevocably and forever.

Strengthen you, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Help you, through Christ, in every trial and need.

Bless you, in abundance beyond measure.

Fulfill His promises to you, with integrity.

Exceed your greatest expectations, in love.

Uphold you, no matter how weak you think you are.

Keep you from apostasy, through His Spirit and Word.

Protect your entrusted charge, until Christ comes.

Save you, personally, for His kingdom.

Grant you eternal salvation, through Christ.

Refashion you, into the likeness of Christ.

Present you before His throne, without spot or blemish.

Reward you, with glory and eternal inheritance.

Believe the Word!

A Christian has taken the stand that God's Word is true! He not only believes in God; he *believes God!* God's Word is *the* standard by which he determines to live. Analyze how much of the Bible *you* really believe. Have you been *impressed* with the Scriptures in this article? Have you been *inspired* by the "*dunamai*" which God is, has and offers? Can you base your life on His "*dynamite*" power? Do you *believe* those Scriptures? And, will you allow them to *change* you and your life? They all deal with God's *ability* to predestinate you into His forever realm!

Is God *able*? OF COURSE He is!

Is *your* God able? NO DOUBT about it!

Are *you* going to "make it"? SURE you are!

YOU better believe it! ◀BA▶

*Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

Emotionalism:

Is

It

Really

Praise?

by Ray L. Straub

Whenever there is strong promotion of a style of worship the responsible person must examine it. Our faith in God should produce the best qualities mankind has to offer. A reason we have the Bible, and need it so urgently, is because it recounts numerous incidents involving the willfulness and waywardness of those claiming to represent the true God. The wise avoid pitfalls by learning from the mistakes of others.

Those involved in the charismatic movement (modern pentecostalism) give indication that the spectacular "results" of their collective praise provides evidence of a higher spiritual experience. Their worship service formats supposedly are more devoted to exalting, glorifying and praising Jesus. They speak of supernatural manifestations to confirm God's acceptance of their method of giving praise.

Further, they are most satisfied when an intense degree of emotionalism is the predominant part of their service. They sense the "presence of God" in the ecstatic experience — not necessarily their own, but at least experienced by someone. To sit peacefully through more than a few services of a subdued nature involves more tolerance than inspiration.

Quite naively, the charismatics generally consider the questioning

of their attitude and experiences an affront to the Holy Spirit! "What person," they wonder, "can claim to be spiritual and yet question the genuineness, divine acceptance, and spiritual superiority of their religious demonstrations!" If a pentecostal is reading this now, he has probably already concluded that the author, this publication, everyone who enjoys reading it, the church which publishes it — and any number of others connected with it — are all working against, if not blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Indeed this author has been timid about questioning what seriously needed to be questioned about pentecostalism because of the unfounded warnings by charismatics.

This article seeks to examine specifically if the pentecostal movement reflects the expertise in praise which they claim. Is it preferred that one go to them for instruction in how to glorify God, receive the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" and continue with their mode of worship to reflect genuine praise and thanksgiving? They think so. Do you?

Let it be affirmed that God expects and categorically deserves our unending praise! The charismatics are right about this!

It is in God, the Creator, that we live and move and have our being, as Paul testified to the Athenians.



"But by the grace of God I am what I am," wrote this apostle to the Corinthians (15:10). Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and those reflecting this virtue will habitually be glorifying God for salvation, inspiration and hope. Psalm 67 repeats the phrase, "Let all the people praise thee" no less than four times.

The psalmist sets the tone for praise: "Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is *comely*." Another version uses "becoming" for "comely." Amen!

To whom is this praise becoming? Surely God finds pleasure in it. In our attempts to do what is right, nothing could be more consistent than offering praise to our loving heavenly Parent.

Should praise also be pleasant and comely to our fellowman, even those who are not accustomed to our manner of offering praise? One would think so! It seems inconsistent in the atmosphere of praise to a God of love that our behavior would be puzzling, undignified, crass, loud, and unnerving!

Imagine a ten-year-old child who has just received what he had been begging his parents for over a period of many months — a bicycle. He discovered it at a time when his parents had eight guests from out of town visiting in their home. In his enthusiasm the young man breaks into the living room where an enjoyable visit is in progress. He shouts, "Thank you, Father. Thank you, Father" over and over, getting louder and louder, beginning to cry. Soon he drops to his knees and stretches out both arms all the while shouting, "Thank you," etc.

If such an incident can be envisioned, it gives stimulus for prolonged reflection. One would not wish to totally fault the young man. He had reason to be grateful. It would be expected that he would express his gratitude, and he would naturally be enthusiastic.

Despite rationalizing much of the behavior of this ten-year-old, we are still left with the impression that his expression of gratitude

hardly represents an ideal. He was overly dramatic. He absorbed more personal attention than his need to express praise and gratitude warranted. Further, to the guests, he undoubtedly betrayed a lack of taste, an inability to correctly express his pleasure, and a lack of personal worth compensated for by demanding that everyone's eyes be focused on him while he performed his ritual of praise.

While the example given cannot represent a complete parallel of our relationship to God inasmuch as God is worthy of worship while earthly parents are not, it reflects accurately the manner in which our worship affects others. The psalmist feels it should be comely. Charismatics feel that proper decorum in worship is too restrictive.

Interestingly, the psalmist links praise and worship with singing. A quick review of the Psalms, such as 138, will indicate this. The singing of these psalms was done in organized fashion. At times they were sung by the congregation in unison. Sometimes a leader would sing a lead part with the choir responding and there might have been responsive chants between two groups. These songs were the means through which praise was appropriately given.

In contrast, songs and choruses in charismatic meetings are used only as a springboard to move into ecstatic personalized expressions of praise. The song is not the expression, but it is the inspirational vehicle. The emotional nature of music with its rhythmic, poetic and metered verse, and the use of volume for emotional expression, is perfectly suited to incite ecstasy, which is a positive form of emotional hysteria.

Offering praise is an emotional experience. Lacking emotion, it is drab. To qualify as praise, it must be directed to some outside source, namely God. Even though emotional, it has conscious direction. When genuine, it is a gift that must be offered to someone.

Herein lies the difficulty with the repeated ecstatic experience.

There is a point at which focus is lost, and the person praising is no longer *giving*, but he is *receiving*. There can be no argument about the personal thrill, joy, well-being, affectionate nature of the ecstatic experience. But, it is not necessarily an expression of praise, and in fact need not necessarily be essentially religious! By its nature it is self-enhancing. The ecstatic charismatic has "something," but the experience of itself in no sense qualifies as being biblically encouraged. It is not necessarily an expression of praise, and there is no biblical evidence to endorse such a claim.

Paul gives counsel concerning praise. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another *in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). While the word is not present, it is reasonable to presume that Paul had praise in mind when suggesting the various kinds of songs. What this counsel also includes is the exercise of wisdom in each of the expressions of worship listed.

The closest biblical description we have of modern pentecostalism is found in I Corinthians 14. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified" (verses 15-17).

This passage poses a problem. Obviously, some had developed a practice by which they expressed praise that was perplexing to those unaccustomed to their antics. Ideally, even the unlearned should be able to appreciate the thanksgiving, enabling him to say "Amen." This is the biblical manner of offering praise.

"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath

a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. *Let all things be done unto edifying*" (I Corinthians 14:26). Here is an important key to understanding the value of praising God. It glorifies Him and edifies the congregation. The unsavory behavior of children even in expressions meant to offer gratitude, do not glorify the parents. Even though there can be no doubt that we *intend* to praise God, it is possible that our *methods* offer poor witness and could stand improvement.

Careful attention must also be given to our willingness to do what God commands. There is little to be gained from praising God if we fail to regard Him *as* God. The Psalms which offer repeated calls to praise the God of salvation also offer repeated urgings to obey God's commands. Psalm 119 demonstrates this.

Where the charismatics are strong on their expressions of praise, they are often weak on their understanding and concern about God's Word. Their Christianity is generally built upon personal experience. There is a lack of hunger for meaty Bible study.

Loyalty to God is a virtue, if in reality it is loyalty to *God*. There are many experiences held by countless individuals who will not give them up. Because they are precious and memorable doesn't make them biblical or godly. Victories in the sports arena, on the stage, in the wilderness, and many other places are ecstatic and unforgettable, but that does not mean God was in them.

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46) asked Jesus. The question is beautiful in its simplicity! "Lord" is another word for "master" and suggests that one is a slave. A slave does what his master commands. That is the nature of man's relationship to God. Jesus pronounces a futility upon the exercise of intoning the names and titles of deity when there is insufficient attention given to obedience. We praise God correctly when we recognize His sovereign power over our lives.

It is not what others expect of us, how loud we shout, how emotional we get, how forward we are, how much we verbalize, or what attention we garner that determines the quality of our praise. It does matter that it is totally focused on God, that it bears positive witness to those worshiping with us, and that

it carries with it the resolve to uphold His will. The emotional expression may be more spectacular but lack the quality of the praise of the more restrained. Our praise is recognition of God's perfection. It commends Him to others, and complements our relationship with Him. ◀BA▶

One Last Look

by Arne Pedersen

Living can be an exciting experience when we approach each day with a perceptive attitude toward what we hope to accomplish for the day. It is extremely important to protect ourselves from idleness.

To spend days, weeks, and months of aimless inactivity provides fertile ground for problems. Leisure time, of course, is of a great importance, but when our living is limited to only the direct environment of our rocking chair our life trudges on without much purpose.

As Christians we have many duties. There are many needs to be fulfilled within and without the church realm. God expects a fair share of our time and effort to carry out His commissions. Also our friends and family require our active companionship.

One of the biggest problems with idleness is that it creates an atmosphere for reminiscing into the past. As one reflects about the days gone by, Satan causes some to compare the present life with the excitement of the worldly, pernicious events that happened before accepting the Lord.

This reminds us of the scriptural account of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18 and 19). God had been gracious enough to bring Lot and his wife and two daughters out of the cities of sin to spare their lives while He destroyed the wickedness that existed there. They were instructed not to look back to the sin they had left, but Lot's wife turned slyly for that last look, and she became a pillar of salt.

This story is a good example of the danger of looking back to our sinful ways. The thoughts of leaving their home and the excitement of the impending holocaust to come to the cities was enough to cause Lot's wife to look back. What it cost her for that "one last look"! The price remains high for those who seek to return to their sinful past.

Jesus said in Luke 9:62, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." What a striking lesson this narrative teaches! If we look aside or back while trying to plow a straight line we soon find the rows are crooked. In comparison, when we look back to our sin while trying to hue to the line of righteousness we certainly cannot expect a very respectable outcome. Whatever field of life we are in we must look straight toward the Lord who is, as the song goes, "shaping our lives by His blessed example."

Our life is important to God, and He has provided a wonderful escape from the burden of sin that was ours. Let us not destroy this sacrifice that was so freely given. Let us not risk that "one last look"!

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26).

The Advocate Responds

to Your Questions

by Ray L. Straub

TWO BIRTHS

Isaiah 66:7 mentions a man child who was born before his mother's pain came, and Revelation 12:1, 2 speaks of a mother who is in pain before her child's delivery. Please explain the significance of these different experiences.

Interesting request!

Both of these texts refer to the coming of Jesus. Because the experiences differ, each passage represents a different appearance.

Note excerpts which give the message of the verses that follow Isaiah 66:7, "Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children . . . Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her" (Isaiah 66:8, 10). A sudden birth is described here, which suggests the abrupt emergence of a nation. This would refer to the second coming of Jesus. He will quickly establish His kingdom.

Revelation 12 speaks in symbol of the birth of Jesus as a babe nearly 2 millennia ago. Faithful Simeon who was just and devout was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). His sentiments represented those of many who patiently awaited the Messiah, their Deliverer. Pain was experienced before the delivery, representing the first advent.

The woman experiencing pain before delivery represents Israel before and at the time of Jesus' birth; and the woman having pain following delivery represents Israel at Jesus' return to establish His kingdom on earth.

THE MILLENNIUM

What takes place during the 1,000-year reign of Christ?

Our basic concept of the millennium is described in a prophecy given in Daniel 2. A metallic image described here represents civilization from Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, through the succeeding three world governments, followed by several co-existing kingdoms. A small stone, formed without hands, struck the statue's feet, causing the structure to

shatter into small fragments. A wind came and carried them away, and the small stone grew until it filled the whole earth.

This small stone represents the kingdom of Christ which will fragment the kingdoms of earth and eventually rule the entire globe. This process goes on during Jesus' 1,000-year reign.

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20, 21).

The New English Bible refers to this "time of restitution" as "universal restoration." Jesus informed His disciples that in the "regeneration" they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

Isaiah 2:2-4 says that the Lord's kingdom will be established above other kingdoms of the world. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (verse 3). Jerusalem will be the seat of the next world government, and from there the law of God will be promoted, taught and enforced.

Despite the authoritative character of Jesus' reign, it will be an age of peace. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 4:4b). Even the animals will lose their aggressiveness: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 65:25). Obviously, the political climate will reflect the peaceful nature of the King of kings, and it's a time to which the saints of God look forward.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thou-

sand years" (Revelation 20:6). This passage suggests that the resurrected, immortalized saints will perform an important duty in the new age.

During the 1,000-year reign, Christ will preside over the universal restoration. Nations of this earth will be overcome by or blended into the kingdom of our Lord. Immortalized saints have part in the great teaching ministry of this new kingdom.

For more detailed information, write for our booklets, "The 1,000-Year Reign of Christ" and "The Destiny of the Earth."

WATER WITCHING

I Samuel 15:23 says, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," and Galatians 5:20 identifies witchcraft as the work of the flesh. I face the need to have a new well dug, and considering these passages, I feel it would be wrong to use water witching. Do you agree?

Water witching is a process by which a person uses a "divining rod" to find water underground. This rod, usually a small branch of a hazel tree, is "Y" shaped, and its user carries it with a prong in each hand and the bottom of the "Y" pointing forward. As its carrier approaches a spot immediately above water, the point of the rod goes downward, signaling the location of water underground. Clothes hangers bent into the shape of a "Y" have also been used.

Witchcraft usually entails the use of evil spirits or powers, often for divining. Because those involved in "water witching" wish to get away from any implication suggesting witchcraft, they prefer to call their divining rods "dowsing sticks" and the practitioners are called "dowsers." The craft is called "water dowsing."

Attempts made to find water by dowsing would hardly make use of evil spirits and therefore would not be included in the prohibitions against witchcraft mentioned in the verses cited in the question.

On the other hand, there is no scientific basis for the practice of water dowsing even though its ardent dowsers have been with us for centuries and will continue. If there is doubt about its being Scripturally allowable, it would be wise not to employ it. The experts doubt that it works, anyway.