## September/October, 2004

SSAR

Megilia

Greatness, power, splendor, glory, and majesty are yours, Lord, because everything in heaven and on earth is yours. –1 Chron. 29:11 GW



GERALD R. PAYNE

Ur mouths are like doors to our thoughts. Sooner or later our thoughts walk out (or perhaps fly out in a burst of anger) as words. your words you will be justified, and

And Jesus said, "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt. 12:37).

We show displeasure or irritation with screaming, nagging, criticizing, complaining, subtle barbs and murmuring. When we are guilty of angry outbursts we sometimes justify them. We say, "I have a good reason to be angry!" But if our offense was in the form of complaining, murmuring and subtle digs, we say, "I didn't mean it that way." Or, "You didn't understand me." Thus we excuse ourselves—or worse, we blame someone else for our faults. And if we are not careful to recognize this tendency in others, they will have us feeling guilty and discouraged. The Wise Man appropriately declared, *"Thoughtless words can wound like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing"* (Prov. 12:18 NBJ). Our words can destroy or they can heal. The Psalmist compared the uncontrolled tongue to a *"sharp sword,"* even a *"serpent"* (Ps. 57:4; 140:3)—not very complimentary!

The murmuring way of expressing anger is perhaps the most dangerous to our spiritual lives because we do not recognize it as readily as the more volatile outbursts. The damage is often subtle, a little at a time. But it wears down the spiritual wellbeing of those who come in contact with the murmurer. We can deal with what we know, but those sins we do not recognize (or admit) in ourselves live on and multiply. It seems that the last person to recognize the faultfinder or murmurer is the faultfinder or murmurer. That is why the Psalmist prayed, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life"* (Ps. 139:23–24 NLT). He wanted God to search his heart for hidden sins that lead to death.

Murmuring is negative comments when one is jealous, irritated, disappointed, impatient, or stressed, or feels "left out," mistreated, insecure or hurt. A murmuring spirit often jumps to wrong conclusions, distorts good judgment, and, left unchecked, often leads to rebellion.

If you think murmuring is not deadly for you and your family, let me remind you of the shildren

family, let me remind you of the children of Israel. They even blamed God for their situation and made plans to return to Egypt. When Moses was a long time in the mountain, they murmured and made a gold calf to worship. The Lord commanded that every man put his sword on his side, and go throughout the camp killing his brother, companion, and neighbor. *"About*  *three thousand men of the people fell that day"* (Ex. 32:1, 27–28). When Moses had sent men to spy out the land of Canaan, ten of them who had incited the rebellion against the Lord by spreading discouraging reports about the land were struck dead with a plague before the Lord (Num. 14:35–37).

## Jealousy leads to murmuring

Murmuring Is Deadly

Another time when the Israelites murmured, the cause was jealousy. We read, "Now Korah,...Dathan and Abiram,... took...two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly,...and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron," and complained. What was their problem? They were jealous and wanted a part of the leadership. In effect they said to Moses and Aaron, Why are you ruling over these people? They are just as qualified as you are! The Lord answered the question quickly and decisively: "The ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation....And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense." But the murmurers did not learn easily, because the very next morning "All the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord." So the Lord sent a plague that destroyed 14,700 complainers (Num. 16:1-49).

Did they finally learn to stop murmuring? Hardly. Only a short while later "...the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." And again the Lord sent punishment (Num. 21:5–6).

## **Murmuring today**

Paul, speaking of the Children of Israel who died for their murmuring, warns us: "...don't grumble as some of them did, for that is why God sent his angel of death to destroy them. All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were

written down to warn us, who live at the time when this age is drawing to a close" (1 Cor. 10:10–11 NLT).

Notice that both parents and children perished. Why? Was God unfair, or was the fault their own? When we murmur against our Church, the Church leaders, and the members of the Church, what are we teaching our children? Can we expect

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# I NOMINATE JESUS CHRIST

Are you disgusted with mud-slinging politics? Are you longing for a government that consistently acts in the best interest of all the people? Would you be interested in a candidate who is prequalified, pretrained, and whose platform has been preapproved by our great Creator?

Do you wonder who I am campaigning for? *I nominate Jesus!* Why? Let me give you just a few reasons.

# A Statesman

First of all, He is not a politician. He is a statesman.<sup>1</sup> Totally trained in the art and science of government, He knows what is good and what is better. Away back in Israel, God had a principle that he who rules over men should be *"just, ruling in the fear of God."*<sup>2</sup> Many of the kings of Israel and Judah did not meet this qualification, but when the time was right, God arranged that the ideal King be born.<sup>3</sup>

## Background

As a child, this King-to-be went through an initial period of training.<sup>4</sup> He had to learn right from wrong like any other child.<sup>5</sup> For thirty years He lived in obscurity, before embarking on a short career of teaching and healing.<sup>6</sup>

During all this time, nothing in the record indicates that Jesus took any steps toward political activism. Yes, He was born to be a King,<sup>7</sup> which is a political position. But He first had to be qualified and trained for the task.<sup>8</sup>

# 💦 Never popular

If you are looking for a popular candidate, one who will give you everything you want, my Candidate will not be your choice. In fact, when Jesus came the first time, He was extremely unpopular.<sup>9</sup> His enemies even crucified Him. God knew in advance that this would happen,<sup>10</sup> and He allowed it, but He did not allow His enemies to have the last word. Intervening almost immediately, He raised Jesus from the dead,<sup>11</sup> and took

# GOD's Word is behind it!

<sup>1</sup> "The government will be upon His shoulder....Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever." (Isa. 9:6–7).

<sup>2</sup> "The God of Israel said,...'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God'" (2 Sam. 23:3).

<sup>3</sup> "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ...He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; ...of His kingdom there will be no end" (Gal. 4:4; Luke 1:32–33).

<sup>4</sup> Mary and Joseph found Him in the temple "sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:46–47; 52).

<sup>5</sup> "Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good....Though He were a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Isa. 7:15; Heb. 5:8).

<sup>6</sup> "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues..." (Matt. 4:17; Luke 4:14–15).

7 "Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world'" (John 18:37).

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah, speaking for God, prophesied about Jesus, "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him....The Spirit will teach him to know and respect the Lord....He will not judge by the way things look or decide by what he hears. But he will judge the poor honestly; he will be fair in his decisions..." (Isa. 11:1–4 NCV).

9 "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11).

<sup>10</sup> David "...spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption" (Acts 2:31).

<sup>11</sup> "Him, [Christ] being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ...This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:23, 32).



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When you read the Bible...

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# MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

# WE BELIEVE ...

- in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

 in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

# THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5–6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

#### continued from page 3

Him to His own right hand,<sup>12</sup> where He was crowned with glory and honor.<sup>13</sup> He will remain there until the right time when the Father will send Him<sup>14</sup> and He will come with full authority to be King over all the earth.<sup>15</sup> When He returns, He will come with hosts of angels.<sup>16</sup> He is coming back to take control,<sup>17</sup> and He will be fully prepared for it.<sup>18</sup>



# Always truthful

Another reason I like my Candidate is that He is always truthful.<sup>19</sup> He speaks always and only the truth,<sup>20</sup> no matter what the result. He is not afraid of what people will think, nor does their opinion influence Him. He said when He came the first time, *"I do not receive honor from men"*.<sup>21</sup> Did they like Him or His message? That was not an issue even worthy of discussion.<sup>22</sup> He came to do His Father's will;<sup>23</sup> nothing else mattered. His assignment was to please God.



## A leader with authority

When Jesus spoke, He spoke the truth with authority. Those who heard Him were amazed.<sup>24</sup> Never had they heard one speak like He spoke.<sup>25</sup> When they tried to challenge Him,<sup>26</sup> He was always one step ahead of them.<sup>27</sup> Did they want to throw lies and falsehoods at Him? He would not even answer back.<sup>28</sup> Their worst accusation did not alter the truth one iota.

#### Of spotless character

You will be especially interested in the character record of my Candidate: It is spotless.<sup>29</sup> Bring in all the investigators you wish, scrutinize His records from any angle, put them through any process you can design, and the results will always be the same: without flaw, undefiled, spotless. No deceit or cover-up, no guile or lawlessness, not even a slight infraction. It is a record unexcelled in the history of the world. Open all the closets, and you will find not a single skeleton to be dragged out. This Candidate at the age of 30 already had earned this heavenly endorsement: *"This is My beloved Son."*<sup>30</sup> Consistently loyal, loving, gentle, true, selfless, unflinching in His obedience to His heavenly Father, the character of my Candidate stands every test.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Absolutely impartial**

Another quality you will like about my Candidate: He is no respecter of persons.<sup>32</sup> I mean, He is absolutely impartial, just, and fair. He will not stoop or bend to racism or any other ism. He will not favor anyone because of color or nationality. He is not swayed by good appearances. He recognizes no caste or status set by any standard of this world. When He looks at a person, He sees only one feature: the moral character.<sup>33</sup> While most people are impressed by one's pedigree, or resume, or trophies, or degrees, my



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<sup>12</sup> "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear." Christ... "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Acts 2:33; Heb.. 1:3).

13 "But we see Jesus, ...crowned with glory and honor..." (Heb.. 2:9).

<sup>14</sup> God will "...send Jesus Christ, ...whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20–21).

<sup>15</sup> "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth..." (Zech. 14:9).

<sup>16</sup> "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels..." (Matt. 16:27).

<sup>17</sup> "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ...He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth" (Rev. 1:7; Ps. 72:8).

<sup>18</sup> "Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, ...His reward is with Him, and His work before Him" (Isa. 40:10).

<sup>19</sup> "Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful'" (Rev. 21:5).

20 "...we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

21 "I do not receive honor from men." (John 5:41).

<sup>22</sup> "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44).

<sup>23</sup> "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work'" (John 4:34).

24 "...He taught them as one having authority," and "...the people were astonished at His teaching," (Matt. 7:29, 28).

25 "The officer answered, 'No man ever spoke like this Man!'" (John 7:46).

26 "...'Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?'" (Luke 20:2).

<sup>27</sup> "And Jesus said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'" (Luke 20:8).

28 "...When He was reviled, [He] did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23).

<sup>29</sup> "For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens" (Heb.. 7:26).

<sup>30</sup> "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matt. 3:17).

*<sup>31</sup>* "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29).

*<sup>32</sup>* "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" (Col. 3:25).

<sup>33</sup> "...the Lord is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3).

<sup>34</sup> "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:10). "But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?'" (Matt. 9:4).

<sup>35</sup> "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,...and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (John 5:22, 27).

<sup>36</sup> God provided others to help us "...till we all come ...to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11–13 NKJV).

<sup>37</sup> Christ... "had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man" (John 2:25).

<sup>38</sup> "But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?'" (Matt. 9:4). "But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls'" (Luke 11:17).

*<sup>39</sup> "Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband,' "etc.* (read the account in John 4:16–19). Jesus knew the facts even though she had not told Him.

<sup>40</sup> "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it" (Acts 5:1–2).

<sup>41</sup> Peter said to Ananias, "'Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.' Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things" (Acts 5:4–5).

<sup>42</sup> "Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth'" (Jer. 23:5).

43 "...He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29).

44 "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

<sup>45</sup> "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).





Candidate, like His Father, looks at the heart.<sup>34</sup> And His Father has given Him full authority to judge.<sup>35</sup>

Many candidates today respect people who have wealth. They like to surround themselves with the educated, people of station, and notoriety. My Candidate is looking for those who are most like Himself—holy, upright, pure, God-like.<sup>36</sup>

# Able to read the heart

How can He do it? How can He be so selective? My Candidate has one supreme advantage over any other ruler who has taken a position in an earthly government. My Candidate can read the heart. He can know what people are thinking without their saying a word. When He was here the first time, He did not need to have any reports from those around Him, because *"He knew what was in man."*<sup>37</sup> When others were trying to keep something from Him, He could read their minds.<sup>38</sup> If they were not truthful and were only telling Him part of the story, He knew the other part.<sup>39</sup> Nothing was truly hidden or concealed.

So when my Candidate takes office, He will not have to have one long court session after another. There will be no need for defense or prosecuting attorneys under His rule. There will be no lengthy trials by jury, or any lawyers stalling for time. Able to read the heart, He will be able to give instant decisions that will be absolutely fair and unchallenged. Even some of His apostles had that ability in the first century. The Apostle Peter could read the heart of Ananias and Sapphira and know that they were not being truthful.<sup>40</sup> Peter also had the authority to execute the penalty of the law and strike them dead—an action which brought immediate respect.<sup>41</sup>

## With absolute authority

My Candidate has another factor in His favor: He has absolute authority. He will not have to plead with people to reform and change their ways. He will deliver the new law and enforce it.<sup>42</sup> He has been given authority from the heavenly Father Himself, the Creator of the universes. When Jesus was here the first time, the people who heard Him were astonished, because *"He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."*<sup>43</sup> The people were accustomed to philosophers, or rabbis, or scribes who debated fine points of laws and ethics without arriving at any conclusion. They were not accustomed to one who would say firmly and conclusively, do this, don't do that. They were not used to One who had the authority to declare, *"I am the way, the truth and the life."*<sup>44</sup>

Jesus was definite in what He taught. He said, *"Blessed are the meek...Blessed are the pure in heart...Blessed are the poor in spirit...Blessed are the merciful..."* (Matt. 5:5–9). Each statement He made with equal authority.

When He comes the second time, He will more than speak with authority—He will *act* with authority. No waffling, no maybe this, maybe that. No compromising. No standards adjusted to the satisfaction of one group of people, and flavored differently for another. All will have to come to the same standard; all will be judged by the same rules.<sup>45</sup>

### No salary required

What kind of salary will my Candidate be looking for? I'm sure you're not prepared for this one, but He will not require any salary! No, He is independently wealthy. He has already been given a share of His heavenly Father's limitless resources, and when He returns to earth, the whole earth will belong to Him. He will even share His riches with those who have need!<sup>46</sup>

Nor will His campaign cost anyone. The political field today is centered around money, but Jesus will not need money to get elected. And once in office, He will not be working on a budget. Unlike any ruler before Him, He will have all the resources of His Father at His instant command.<sup>47</sup>

The result? Poverty will be utterly wiped out worldwide.<sup>48</sup> With the wealth of the world at His disposal and all resources equitably divided, there will be enough for all—and to spare.

#### The master reformer

Are you looking for reforms? Reforms in education? Reforms in government? Reforms in society? Never has the world had a reformer that could compare with my Candidate. He Himself will head the Reform Party, and with His fully trained associates will put an immediate end to all God-dishonoring talk, all crime, all bribery, all corruption worldwide.<sup>49</sup> All who resist will be eliminated. Whether on the stage or in the home, on the street or on the video production, if it isn't clean, moral and pure according to the new standards, it will fail.<sup>50</sup> Instantly.

How will this be done? No one knows, but perhaps the pornography producers will be struck down, the gambling machines will fail to operate, and the indecent films will go up in smoke. Those who abuse their parents, their children, or their spouses may die instantly unless they repent and submit to the new law. The pushers of illegal drugs may drop dead just by touching an illegal drug and those who use bad language may find themselves unable to speak. The would-be criminal may find himself suddenly face to face with an authority he cannot overpower—before he has had time to carry out his evil intent. Remember the angel with the drawn sword in his hand?<sup>51</sup> Those who promote sodomy and illicit sex may die in the act.

My Candidate has not disclosed His means, but whatever the means, He will turn the tide. Quickly and without apology. And He will not be taking any opinion polls. What He mandates will be firm; His laws will be unbreakable.<sup>52</sup>

#### Any second thoughts?

Are you having second thoughts about my Candidate? You must realize that there is no other way to change the present culture into a God-loving, God-honoring people. There is no way to break the pattern of centuries but to establish laws that allow no compromise with sin, and to deal absolutely and firmly with the transgressors.

My Candidate will not allow the sale of any product that does not meet His standard of quality. When He takes office, you can expect the departments of state to change immediately, each to be headed by one of His own pretrained and prechosen cabinet members. Everyone on His team will have full authority to execute His laws. No cover-up will be allowed, no deceit, no pettifogging, no bribery, no corrupt conduct of any kind.

What about organizations that campaign for special interest groups? What about those who are constantly feeling that their rights are challenged or abused? Each will be given an ultimatum: submit or perish.

My Candidate simply will not tolerate opposition. Certainly there will be plots against Him. People will be angered by His reforms. Good business people never want their money stream cut off. There will be plots against His life and against His authority, but none will succeed. Nor will He need expensive investigations to uncover the craftiness of His enemies. He will know instantly who are for and who are against Him, and those who resist Him will be powerless. <sup>47</sup> "For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10).

<sup>48</sup> "The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. 32:17–18).

<sup>49</sup> "The sinners in Jerusalem shake with fear. 'Which one of us,' they cry, 'can live here in the presence of this all-consuming fire?' The ones who can live here are those who are honest and fair, who reject making a profit by fraud, who stay far away from bribes, who refuse to listen to those who plot murder, who shut their eyes to all enticement to do wrong" (Isa.33:14-15 NLT).

<sup>50</sup> "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isa. 30:21).

<sup>51</sup> "Then ... he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he [Balaam] bowed his head and fell flat on his face" (Num. 22:31).

<sup>52</sup> "You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:9).



53 "Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise" (Isa. 60:18).

54 "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

55 "The Lord will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end" (Mic. 4:3 NLT). He "causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear in two; he burns the shields with fire" (Ps. 46:9 NLT).

56 "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

57 "Blessed be the Lord,...there has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised..." (1 Kings 8:56).

58 "He shall send Jesus Christ,...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" (Acts 3:20–21).

59 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:21).

60 "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).





## Promise: an end to violence and war

What kind of budget will my Candidate expect for His defense department, especially considering the recent heavy expense of terrorism defense? He will need zero; no defense budget whatever. Are you saying, "Impossible!"? Remember, my Candidate and His associates will have absolute authority. And with no more violence even heard of,<sup>53</sup> no wanton destruction, and nothing anywhere to hurt or destroy,<sup>54</sup> think of the resources that will be available for constructive purposes.

My Candidate also promises an end to war—all war, worldwide.<sup>55</sup> Just think of the benefit this promise alone will bring!



# His success is guaranteed!

One more point about my Candidate: His success is guaranteed. Everything that He has promised, He will do. No false promises and no false moves will He make, nor will He promise what He cannot perform. He will even do more than He has promised. Eye has never seen, ear has never heard, heart has never imagined what the heavenly Father has prepared for those who love Him.<sup>56</sup> And my Candidate is the Father's instrument for bringing these promises to fruition.

Politicians today often promise what will make them popular and get them votes, even though they know they have no power to fulfill it. No such deceit can ever be laid against my Candidate. What He promises, He will do.<sup>57</sup>

When will my Candidate be on the ballot? King David, looking far into the future, saw the time when Jesus would be seated at His Father's right hand in heaven. He would stay there until the time when He will be sent <sup>58</sup> to take the authority on earth (Ps. 110), making the earth His footstool.

"And the Lord shall be King over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9). "In that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one." No competition, no rivalry.

# Trained, proven associates

Do you aspire to holding office under my Candidate? He will be very selective of the people He allows in His government. He will not take anyone just because he or she happens to be good looking, or because he or she had a good position in the previous establishment. Let me repeat: My Candidate is looking for character, and character alone. Every one must have "overcome" just as He overcame.<sup>59</sup> Every one must have become pure as He is pure.<sup>60</sup>



## Where do you stand?

Will you support my Candidate? He is looking for more than a word or a cheer, or a donation. He is looking for a life conformed to His standards. He is looking for the reflection of His own character in your everyday life and mine. People today will call Him radical. Right wing or left wing, He follows none of them. He holds to a standard that their highest ideals cannot touch.

Here is the striking difference between my Candidate and all others. The candidates today must get the support of the people, because they are the people's representatives. Therefore they have to say and do what the people want. My Candidate does not depend on popular support. He says only what is right. Here is a fundamental weakness of democracy, that it is the expression of the will of the people. If the people want rottenness and filth, they can find leaders easily enough who will give them just that. My Candidate will allow only what is right, whether the people like it or not.

Will you vote for my Candidate? Let me tell you a secret: You can vote for Him, or you can vote against Him, but He will win anyway. He has been preappointed, preapproved, and He is on the way to taking the authority. If you want to live, you *must* give Him your full and wholehearted allegiance.

Why not get on His side now? Why not give Him the rulership of your life right now. Then when He comes and takes the Kingship of the earth, you can be part of His Kingdom forever, even for ever and ever! ◆

"In the Lord's name, I tell you this. Do not continue living like those who do not believe. Their thoughts are worth nothing. They have lost all feeling of shame, and they use their lives for doing evil. What you learned in Christ was not like this." – Eph. 4:17–23 NCV

Part Two

# Should Christians TAKE PART in POLITICAL ACTIVISM and DEBATE?

W any people today believe that Christians have a responsibility to use their influence wherever possible to promote Christian values and ethics. They maintain that if they do not take a leading role in politics, the very fundamentals of freedom may be threatened. Political and social trends require their diligent care and attention, else they are shirking their duty as Christians.

Those who support and encourage political activism believe that they are observing Jesus' command to be salt and light, to make a difference in the world for Christ. They feel that if believers remain silent and non-committal on political issues and the main supporters of politics are atheistic, soon atheism will dominate our culture and Christianity/Christian principles will disappear.

On the other side of the question are those who are convinced that mixing religion and politics is explosively destructive to both. If Christians can hold political rallies or

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campaign on political issues, then political leaders should be able to teach Sunday School and lead church services.

ecularism

What is the right position, according to the Bible? What does God want His people to do? Should a Christian become involved in politics in every possible way, with a view toward influencing the culture toward God, or should he or she leave government and those interested in it to run their own affairs and keep separate from any involvement, focused on applying Christ's principles in one's own circle of responsibility?

God, according to His Word, is concerned with how people live, how they behave, how they treat one another. These same issues are fundamental to politics. The difference is that the politician hopes to make changes for the better through the intervention of government, while Christians are dedicated to improving society by following the example of Jesus Christ and taking on His character on an individual basis, beginning with themselves.

# What does God say about His people being involved in politics and government?

# • Do not be [entangled] ... with the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4).

The Apostle Paul compares the Christian to a soldier on active duty. "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." Just as a soldier on duty does not get involved with civilian affairs, so the Christian must stay focused on his task and not be involved "with the affairs of this life."

# • Do not love the world or the things in the world.... The world is passing away, and the lust of it 9 (1 John 2:15, 17).

The present world (cosmos), which includes the political systems of this world, is destined to pass away.

# • You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength<sup>99</sup> (Mark 12:30).

Can one obey this command and be involved in the present political system? Or, from the opposite side, can one be involved in the political system and love God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind, and all his strength?

Can one be part of a system that allows the sale of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, and X-rated movies, and at the same time love God with all his heart?

# **Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean...** (2 Cor. 6:17).

Can one be involved in politics and not touch the unclean? Consider the hatred, intrigue, double talk, corruption, deceit, underhanded dealing, cover up, even outright lying in political circles. Do we wonder why God says, "Come out from among them and be separate"?

# • Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord 99 (Isa. 52:11).

God has a high standard for those who are serving in His cause, those who "bear the vessels of the Lord," His sacred Word. "Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord." He demands the highest respect. He does not want His sacred treasure placed on a par with the treasures of this world. His Word, His knowledge, His teaching, is holy, and those who handle it must keep away from anything unclean. They have a different goal and a different obligation. And God says to such, "Touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her."

As Christians, how can we support candidates of whose character we cannot be certain, and who approve conduct that God's law forbids?

Lacking Holy Spirit power as in the days of the Apostles, we have no way of knowing whether the candidate is truly qualified or not. We have no sure way of judging their integrity, or their intentions. And even the best candidate, having the best intentions and the best plans, still represents the people and is obligated to do what the majority of the people want, without regard to the principles of the law of God.

# WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

# What is our obligation today? As committed Christians, what are we to do to be good citizens?

**As Christia** 

- The Apostle Paul set the standard when he said, that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks [should] be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Tim. 2:1–2). We have a duty to pray for our leaders.
- Honor our leaders. We have a duty to honor and respect those in authority. Even though they may not espouse the principles of God, the office of government is honorable, and we are told to be subject to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1). The Apostle Peter gave advice here: "Honor all people. Love the Brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). God intended that there should be human governments under human direction, to give us laws so that we can live in a peaceable and secure setting.

Obey the laws. Government should be for the best interest of Christians. 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (Rom. 13:3–4). The Apostle Paul told us that we should obey the laws of our government, as long as they do not conflict with God's law. If there should be a conflict, we have the pattern of the Prophet Daniel, who was told by his government not to pray to his God. Just because the people passed a law that conflicted with his life, he was not changing his loyalties. His duty first was to obey God.

We have also the example of the Apostles, who were told not to teach in the name of Jesus. Their reply was, "We ought to obey God, rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Pay our taxes. We have a Christian duty to pay our taxes, even though the money may be spent for causes that we cannot espouse. Jesus set the example, when He said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). We must pay our taxes honestly, pay everything we owe, and leave the rest with God. The Apostle Paul said the same in Romans 13, "Render...to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:7). ◆

*Comments by L. T. Nichols in Ellington, Minnesota, November 11, 1900, immediately following the electing of McKinley as President* 

# Т

dody we see part of our nation rejoicing, the other part are mourning. It did not matter to us which way the election went. In either case, it would have been good for us. Even if we don't have more prosperity, that might be good for us. It would have been good for us if it had been McKinley and good for us if it had been Bryan.

Is not every form of man's government an unclean thing, whether Democrats or Republicans are at the head of it? You might have two rags, and one be more filthy than the other; still the other one would be filthy, not fit to clean your hands.

Can you rejoice in a government that licenses the sale of liquor and houses of ill-fame? A good reason for us to come out from them, as 2 Cor. 6:17–18 tells us, *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* 

Our talk about the governments must be from a spiritual standpoint, and not from man's standpoint; it must be from the way God looks at it....

I am neither Democrat nor Republican. A Republican hearing me talk about the Democrats, would think, "What a good Republican he is." A Democrat, hearing me talk about the Republicans, would say, "What a good Democrat he is." A Populist hearing me denounce both Democrats and Republicans, would be sure that I was a Populist. I have left them all. My rejoicing is in the Lord.

Yes, we should rejoice greatly and shout for joy, that the time is drawing nigh, when the coming King of kings will establish a just and righteous administration that will bring peace and prosperity to the people. We rejoice in a country that will not be like that of any earthly potentate, but one whose dominion shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Rejoice that the time draws near, and that we if faithful can be instruments in carrying out the grand and mighty plan of Jehovah.

# WHAT DOES GOD SAY?\_

# Consider...

an committed Christians take an active part in the political system? Is there anything wrong with running for office, holding office, supporting candidates, and promoting the cause of freedom through the political system? Aren't we as responsible citizens obligated to do our part to keep the right people in office, so that our liberties are protected and our right to serve God is respected by our government?

Consider the following points and ask yourself: Is it possible to be totally committed in one's loyalty to Christ and be part of the present political system?

# 1. CHRISTIANS ARE ALIENS.

The Apostle Peter says we are "sojourners and pilgrims." He says, "I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts..." (1 Pet. 2:11). The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 are all said to have embraced God's promises and "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb.. 11:13).

We are temporary residents; this world is not our home. We are citizens of our respective nations, and we are thankful for the protection of our governments. But our real citizenship is not here. The Apostle Paul says our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20).

# 2. Jesus, our Perfect Example, was non-political.

What did Jesus do about the government in His time? Did He take any steps to protest it, support it, change it, or correct its ills?

Was He campaigning for any of the officers of His time? We have no mention of any political involvement. One of His followers was a "zealot," but we have no record that he continued to be.

When the disciples asked Jesus about restoring the Kingdom and liberating them, He indicated that the right time had not yet come (Acts 1:4–5).

When Jesus was before Pilate and Pilate asked Him, "Are you a king?" Jesus replied, "Certainly I am a King." But what else did He say? "My Kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36). Jesus had nothing to do with the politics of His time. He knew the plan, that He would be going to heaven, and would be returning to take over the kingship.

# *3. Christians are servants of Christ.*

Can one be the servant of the people as an elected official in a political capacity and at the same time be serving Christ? Doesn't this create a conflict of interest? For at some point one will have to make a choice, whether to act according to the people he or she is pledged to serve, or according to the law of Christ.

The Apostle Paul said, "You serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24). To support the present system, which is contrary to Christ's standards, one must endorse the will of the majority, which is not God's way.

This was the problem of the Israelites long ago. They wanted to serve God outwardly, but they also wanted to worship idols, like the people around them. This created a conflict, and God was not pleased. Worshiping idols was a strong attraction, but they could not give their loyalty to idols and to God. The two systems were opposite.

A democracy is government by the people. It is the voice of the people. For this reason, politicians have an obligation to express the wishes of the people, and promote their interest. The will of the majority will never be the will of Christ, for the very fact that God's thoughts are not man's thoughts. The Bible says that the thoughts of God are as far removed from man's thoughts as the heavens are above the earth (Isa. 55:8–9). Those running for public office must represent the mind of the majority. One cannot support the will of the majority and support Christ.

# 4. God's thoughts are contrary to any human ideology.

The Republicans have one platform; the Democrats have another. Christians could possibly pick and chose from both sides and find issues they could support. But the underlying problem is again that of conflict. Christ did not endorse or follow any human ideology—can we as His followers? For this very reason Jesus pointed out that there are two roads, a broad, easy way leading to destruction, and a narrow difficult way leading to life (Matt. 7:13-14).

The pull of the majority is always away from CHRIST.

# WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

# 5. Christians are a minority; the government represents the majority.

If God required His people to be involved in government, would He not be asking them to fail? Our government being a democracy, its foundation is the will of the people or rule by the majority. If the majority of the people want promiscuity, if they want Hollywood entertainment and barnyard morals, they have the right to elect officials who will give them what they want. Politicians have an obligation to the people. Because God's ways are not man's ways, and because God's ways are not popular, those who are on God's side will not be able to go with popular opinion. This means there is no way a dedicated Christian can get elected-unless the majority of the people should turn to following Christ. But in the present culture, the pull of the majority is away from Christ. Christians are in the minority.

It is only common sense to recognize forces beyond our ability to control. No sane person would attempt to step onto a railroad track and stop the train. One does not camp at the foot of an active volcano and expect to be safe. There is a time to step aside and put powers beyond our control in God's hands.

# 6. CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO BE MASTERS OF CHARACTER, NOT MASTERS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE.

Is it possible to be successful in politics *and* be a master of character?

Christ has set a standard for His people that is demanding in the highest degree. He is looking for absolute integrity, perfect patience, humility, kindness, forgiveness, purity, and all the virtues that He demonstrated in His life. He knows that we will fail many times, but He has asked us over time to reach that standard (Eph. 4:13–15). But He does not ask us to stand against the tide of immorality, or change the direction of the present culture. He realizes this is beyond our ability. Even the Apostle Paul, possessing Holy Spirit power and the ability to influence others, did not try to influence the politics of his time.

# 7. Politics is self-promoting; Christianity is Christ promoting.

The difference is as contrasting as black and white. Politicians must promote themselves to get the votes of the people. How else can they be elected? To win the support of the people they have to keep in the spotlight, by radio, TV, or any means they can design. The whole purpose is to promote themselves and get people on their side.

Christians must be Christ centered. They are not campaigning for themselves but for Christ.

Loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength does not leave any place to promote ourselves, either inside or outside politics. The Bible says, *"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help"* (Ps. 146:3).

# 8. Politics is built on rivalry.

From the human standpoint, rivalry and competition have advantages. The bipartisan system in the United States adds stability to the political system. If there were only one party, there would be less check on the officials in government. With the contest open to both parties, each tries to outdo the other.

Christians campaign for CHRIST, not for themselves.

But the principle of rivalry is not godly. Christians are not rivals of one another; they are called to be *"workers together with God"* (2 Cor. 6:1). They are not trying to get ahead of one another or to be self-promoting, and they are forbidden to put another down to exalt self. The Apostle Paul says, *"Let each esteem other better than themselves."* 

Could any politician be elected on such a platform? (Phil. 2:3–4).

# 9. God is in charge.

Here is the greatest reason why Christians do not have to be concerned with the political system. God is in charge, and whatever happens in politics, He shall accomplish His pur-

pose and bring about the fulfilling of the Lord's prayer, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on C earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Right now the president we need is the president

we have. How do we know? Because the Lord allowed him to be elected. After the next election, whoever wins is the one God will have in that capacity. We do not have to be concerned because God is in control. It is only a matter of time, and Jesus Christ will arrive and take the reins of government worldwide. And then, *"The kingdoms of this world"* will become *"the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"* (Rev. 11:15). ◆

GOD's purpose cannot be thwarted. His will is supreme.

# Lesson Twenty THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Guided by the Spirit How did the Holy Spirit speak to

the Apostle Paul? Was it a voice in his ear telling him what to do? Or was it an impression on his mind?

We are not told how the Holy Spirit communicated. We would like to know. But however the voice came, Paul recognized it clearly as Divine direction, and he was ready and willing to follow it. There was never a question in his mind as to whether or not he should obey God's command. From the very first time that Jesus spoke to him, he was *"not disobedient to the heavenly vision"* (Acts 26:19). He knew that God had a grand strategy far beyond his limited ability to know or comprehend. Exercising his God-given responsibility, Paul chose to obey God's will.



# **ON WITH THE SECOND JOURNEY**

READ ACTS 16:10

# The Lord Is Leading

We think of Paul as the dynamic Apostle, a leader, one telling others what to do and where to go. He was traveling, teaching, planning what he would say and where he would say it.

Or was he? No, Paul was the worker. The Lord was leading.

Paul was not traveling for pleasure or for profit. He was traveling as an ambassador of God. It is not surprising, then, that God, through the Holy Spirit, planned the itinerary.

The four missionaries traveling across Asia Minor had plenty of time for thinking. Where would they stop and preach? What next? When would things begin to happen?

Can't we imagine Silas and Timothy getting anxious about the trip? Timothy had joined the party back in Lystra, and as far as we are told in the book of Acts, he had not yet heard Paul preach in a single town. There may be

> unrecorded events, but it seems that at this time the Lord wanted His message carried into Macedonia and Greece, rather than Asia. Perhaps the delay was prime training time for young Timothy, as he learned firsthand from Brother Paul about his own convictions, and the deeper principles that underlay Christ's life and teaching.

> Undoubtedly Timothy had joined Paul thinking he was ready for anything, but had he thought about the many days of weary trudging with nothing happening? When Paul and Barnabas had come to Lystra the first time, there was excitement, plenty of it. Was he also ready for all this uncertainty, this waiting for a word from the Lord? Can't we hear Paul saying, *"Be patient, my brothers. Remember, the Lord is leading."* Because God was giving the ultimate directions, Paul was pleased to obey.

IOTOS COURTESY OF TODD BOLEN IN ISRAEL





(above) Tower for defense on the acropolis which overlooks Philippi.

Excavations of ancient Philippi. Shops lined the forum on the east and south

Remains of a pagan temple dedicated to an Emperor about 150 BC.

(above) Rising 1000 feet, the acropolis overlooks Philippi to the south. The acropolis' fortifications gave Philippi an early strong defense as far back as the time of the Greeks.

Philippi was the first city in Europe to which Paul took the Gospel.



(above) The fertile valley and ancient Philippi as seen from the acropolis. These excavations show the layout of the city as Paul and Silas might have seen it.

# ON TO PHILIPPI

# READ ACTS 16:11-15

Leaving Troas, the group headed toward Macedonia, probably by sea, to the seaport Neapolis. Ten miles beyond Neapolis was the city of Philippi.

Luke calls Philippi the "foremost city of that part of Macedonia." Even though Thessalonica was the capital of the area, Philippi had a prestige all its own. Founded some four hundred years earlier by Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, the city kept an air of greatness. Philip of Macedon had had his eye on nearby gold mines. But what attracted Paul was not the prospect of gold, or the imperial air, but a handful of God-fearers who met regularly down by the river.

## Philippi had no synagogue

Because Philippi was a Roman colony, it had little Jewish culture. There was no synagogue. No building to meet in. No prestige or influence in the city to



The Gangites River, to the east of Philippi, is assumed to be the river where the missionaries found Lydia and the women worshipping.

count on. Nevertheless, Philippi grew into one of the strongest of the churches Paul founded.

1. With whom did the four traveling

missionaries meet on the Sabbath day?

Where did they meet? (16:13)

According to Jewish tradition, ten men were needed to have a synagogue in a city. Apparently Philippi could not support the required number, and so, for lack of a place to wor-

#### Bible Text: Acts 16:11–15

11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis,

12 and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.



Philippi, a Roman colony...

The city of Philippi in Macedonia was a miniature Rome away from Rome. Masters of organization, Rome ruled the world through her colonies, located at strategic points across the empire. In these Roman settlements, Roman citizens set up government as nearly like headquarters as possible. In these settlements they promoted the Roman way of life, the Roman government, and the Roman defense system.

What a suitable parallel to the Christian's relationship to this world. The Christian is a resident here, but not a citizen. The Apostle Peter said we are *"aliens, and exiles"* (1 Pet. 2:11). Paul said, *"Our citizenship is in heaven"* (Phil. 3:20 Moffatt).

As Christians, we are in this world, but not of it. We represent a different culture, a different government, a different way of life, a different philosophy, and a different goal.



#### One named Lydia

Among those who gathered at the riverside to worship God was a woman named Lydia. She was a businesswoman, apparently representing a textile firm (perhaps her own) from Thyatira. She was drawn to this group of women because she found there an oasis in a spiritual and moral desert. Even though she was well-to-do, she was not above meeting with humble people whose sincere faith was in God.

One outstanding quality of Lydia was her ungrudging, unselfish hospitality. Paul and his friends needed accommodations while they were in town, and she had the place and the means to share. Was it a wise or a safe move for a prominent businesswoman? What might her business acquaintances think? Was she putting her money interests at risk? She was not concerned. Her one motive was to provide the comforts of home to those she considered her new—Christian—family.

Lydia treated Paul and his friends with dignity and honor in an otherwise hostile city. Her home was theirs because the Lord had "opened her heart to heed the words spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14) and she wanted as much of his wisdom and instruction as she could get. Can't we imagine the enthusiastic discussions around the dinner table as Lydia and her household listened while Paul and Silas expounded the Scriptures? This was what Timothy had been waiting for!

#### Bible Text: Acts 16:16-22

16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."

18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

20 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city;

21 "and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."

22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods.



ship, a devout group of women congregated regularly by the Gangites River on Sabbath days. Perhaps the place was not official, but the people were sincere. Praying hearts have through the ages found many and varied places for worship: the field (Gen. 24:63); the shore (Acts 21:5); the prison (Acts 16:25), and here, the riverbank.

Can't we visualize these spiritually-minded Jewish women gathered by the river, reading the Scriptures and praying, when four brothers came along. Their names: Paul and Silas, Timothy and Luke.

We can be quite sure that before very long, Paul had taken the lead and was telling them about his miraculous conversion, and of his call to preach to Gentiles like them. Everyone knew very soon that Paul was enthusiastic and wholehearted. He had a Divine commission, and he would not miss an opportunity to speak for his Master.

Was this little group of women gathered by the riverside the reason for the call to go to Macedonia?

Yes, there was definitely a reason why the Holy Spirit had directed Paul and his company to Macedonia and Philippi.

The meetings continued for some time and all seemed to be going well except for a small problem with a young slave girl, who, mentally deprived, kept interfering with Paul's meetings.

# Healing the slave girl

READ ACTS 16:16-24

Day after day the young slave girl in Philippi continued to be an irritating problem. She would follow Paul and his company, crying out, *"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation"* (16:17).

While her words were true, we can be sure that the missionaries did not appreciate her testimony. Worst of all, she was the property of some wealthy slave master and was a source of *"much profit"* to them (16:16). This made her a valuable source of revenue for her owners, for under Roman law, she was entirely at their mercy.

Paul did not take immediate action. He did nothing "for many days" (16:18). Perhaps he knew that the situation was potentially explosive. But at last, it seemed that he had to take some action because her continual talk was detracting from their ministry. So, with one command, "in the name of Jesus Christ," he healed her.

# Uproar!

Paul's kindness in healing the girl backfired immediately. The Bible described her as having a *"spirit of divination."* Literally, this means she had a "python spirit." In Greek mythology, the python was a snake guarding the oracle at Delphi. If healing the girl took away her supposed contact with the gods, this may explain why her masters had reaped such profit on her. They had only a money interest in the girl, not a humane or social interest. And woe to anyone who dared interfere with their money stream!

The Bible says, *"the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil"* (1 Tim. 6:10). Who caused the upset? It was clearly Paul and Silas' healing of the girl, and so these men were captured and taken to the authorities. What was their crime? Simply this: *"these men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city."* The very suggestion that they were Jews was enough to condemn them in this Roman city. In short they were accusing Paul and Silas of instigating a riot.

They "teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans to receive or observe" (Acts 16:21). The distressed slave owners had to say something that could not be easily refuted, and so they brought the charge against the teaching of Paul and Silas—an intangible at the very least, and something they surely did not understand. Maybe the missionaries' words had an unlawful or illegal ring. Of course their Gospel was not a popular one; neither was Jesus'. But the multitude was clearly on the side of the magistrates, and not the missionaries. And so "the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods" (verse 22). It was fierce punishment without any semblance of a trial or any opportunity for them to defend themselves.

The Roman lictors, as they were called, intended to teach Paul and Silas a lesson. They were beaten without mercy.

- 3. When they had beaten them what was the next step in their punishment? (16:23)
- 4. What special charge was given the jailer? (16:23)

5. How did the jailer respond to that charge? (16:24)

Even imprisonment was not severe enough to satisfy the rage of these magistrates. The missionaries were treated as the most dangerous type of criminals. They were thrown into the inner prison, with their feet fastened cruelly in stocks.

Can we imagine how Timothy and Luke felt at this point? Were they prepared to see their brothers mistreated? Here was the first city where Paul had been allowed to preach, and now triumph had turned into tragedy. Why did the Lord allow it?

But Paul did not expect a warm welcome in every city. Nor did the Lord guarantee it.

6. What did Jesus predict about the persecution His followers would encounter? (John 15:20)



Campaign against Slavery?

Paul knew that slavery was wrong. He knew that according to God's law a man could not own other men and women and treat them as property. But it is noticeable in the Bible, and particularly in Acts 16, that no effort was made to correct this social evil. Paul dealt only with the spiritual issues.

Why? Isn't the Christian gospel a gospel for men and women and for their good?

Paul said on another occasion that he was sent "to preach the gospel." He was not sent to change the social system, or to make right the wrongs of human governments. He practiced what he preached, that we should not be "entangled with the affairs of this life" (2 Tim. 2:3).

Couldn't Paul have done immeasurably more good if he had worked against the social ills of his time, if he had used the power of God to break down slavery and forbid human mistreatment and social injustice of all kinds?

If Paul had directed his energies toward righting the social wrongs of his time, he could not have accomplished either it or the work God sent him to do. Christ had given him a specific mission: to obtain the prize Christ set before him—to teach and preach the Gospel, and Paul determined to fulfill that commission without being distracted. Had he become involved in the politics of his time, he would not have been Paul the great missionary and teacher who wrote a large part of the New Testament and whose example still benefits us today.

For the same reason, we today do not campaign against abuses or wrongs in our society and government. Where there is injustice and unfairness, we must bide God's time. When the time is right, He will take the situation in hand and correct it. In the meantime, we must focus on doing the work God has commissioned us to do, to live by His Word and show an example of Christ-like living to others.

#### Bible Text: Acts 16:23-25

23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.

24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.



The Forum at Philippi The large rectangular area is the forum, or city square, which was lined with shops. To this area the magistrates dragged Paul and Silas to accuse them.



This forum in Philippi measuring 300 by 150 feet was a paved area along the Egnatian Way.

(below) **The Egnatian Way**—a military route that joined Rome with the East and a much valued line of communication still visible today. Paul and his companions benefited greatly from these Roman roadways.



In spite of the dungeon, in spite of the pain and disgrace of having been beaten, and in spite of the severe discomfort of having their feet bound in stocks, Paul and Silas sang praises to the God who was keeping them—not knowing that very soon that same God would deliver them! Paul, we know, was ready to suffer for Christ's sake. And Silas? Apparently he was ready also. There was work to be done, and part of that work at this point was suffering.

We can be sure that Timothy and Luke suffered with them. Even though they were not in the inner prison, even though their backs were not bleeding, their hearts were bleeding for their suffering companions.

As the jailer took special care that night to lock these men in prison and clamp their feet in stocks, little did he realize that in a few hours these men—and all the men in his prison—would be free! And in less than 24 hours the jailer and his family would have these special missionaries in their home, be bathing their wounds, and giving them comfort and food! Little did that cruel jailer realize that these men were not locked in the prison alone, that the angel of God was watching over them, and that in a matter of hours they would be released from the intense suffering.

Even more shocking was the fact that this hard, calloused jailer would be himself listening eagerly to the message of the missionaries and joining their cause as a humble and contrite follower of Jesus of Nazareth!

Such is the power of the Gospel! • (*Next issue: Earthquake!*)

# WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

### MEMORY VERSE:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. –Matthew 6:24

# Γ

L his verse is only a small part of Jesus' most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. The whole sermon is Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew.

The people who had come out to hear Jesus that day knew about a servant. Most families in those days had at least one servant. If a person was not rich enough to have a servant, they or their families were probably servants themselves. Everyone knew what Jesus meant when He said no one could serve two masters equally.

Who would want a servant who tried to serve someone else too? Each master would be afraid the other master was getting the best work from the servant because the servant loved the other master more.

If a servant tried to serve two masters, she would not be

able to answer the call of one while working for the other. It wouldn't matter how badly she was needed.

There would be no one to do her work for one master while she was busy serving the other.

Jesus said we cannot serve both God and money. He knew people had to have money to live and that they had to work to earn money for food, clothes, and shelter. But what Jesus meant was that His people could not put money first and also give God first place in their lives. If money and having a lot of material things was most important, then money, not God would be the master.

Paul warned Timothy (1 Timothy 6:10) that the love of money was a root, or beginning, of all kinds of evil. God gave each of us talents and abilities. How we use these is our choice. We can use the gifts God gave us to honor Him, or we can use them to get money and worldly praise. God does not force us to serve Him, but He does ask, "Whose side are you on?" ◆



Heather was the best artist in her school. She wanted to be an artist when she was through school, or maybe draw pictures for children's books.

One day Heather's older brother brought a friend home. When Bruce

saw Heather's pictures on the wall, he was impressed.

"These are good!" Bruce said. "Would you draw a big picture for me to put on the door of my dorm room at college? I'd pay you."

"Pay me?" Heather was excited. She had never gotten paid for drawing before! "Sure! I'll draw a dog, or—"

Bruce laughed. "No. I know what I want." He pulled a sheet of paper from his pocket. It was a picture cut from a magazine. "Can you draw this, Heather?"

Heather looked at the picture. She felt her face getting hot. It was a picture of a woman with hardly any clothes on. Heather had seen pictures like this before, but she had never thought of drawing one!

"You're good enough to do it for me," Bruce encouraged her.

# **HEATHER'S DIFFICULT CHOICE**

Heather hesitated. She knew she could draw the picture. She could draw almost anything, especially if she had something to copy from. But this did not seem like the kind of picture she should draw. "It's—it's not what I want to draw," Heather said slowly. "I could do something else for you—"

Bruce put the picture back in his pocket. "This is what I want, but I should have known you couldn't handle it. I'll find someone else."

Heather watched as Bruce left. She wondered if she should feel sad at losing her first chance to earn money by drawing, but she didn't. She felt good inside.  $\blacklozenge$ 

#### PRAYER:

Thank You for giving me special talents, Lord. Help me to develop them to Your glory and service now, not just some day when I'm grown up. I may not always see the chances myself, so I need Your help and others' to point them out to me and to help me do what I should. Amen.

#### ACTION IDEA:

What is your best talent? Think of ways you could use it to serve God. Write down all the ways in your notebook. Choose one way and try to find a chance to use your talent for God that way this week.



# SMALL, BRAVE EXAMPLE

This story takes place in England. Boarding schools used to be common. Sometimes even very young boys and girls were sent there to get their education. The children would live at the school and go home only on holidays or vacation.

Are you ever afraid to pray because someone may be looking at you? Maybe at school, or in a group, or in a restaurant, are you tempted to skip your prayer of thanks to God because others may sneer or call you names? Take an example from little Arthur in this story. The wording is old fashioned, but it has a good lesson for all of us. -Editor's Note

t was little Arthur's first night at boarding school. The little schoolboys went quietly to their own beds, while the larger, among whom was Tom Brown, sat on one another's beds, recalling the various happenings of the day.



Little Arthur felt new and strange and hardly

knew how to act among so many boys. He took off his coat and looked at Tom, who was sitting at the foot of his bed talking and laughing.

"Please," he whispered, "may I wash my hands and face?" "Of course, if you like," said Tom. "That's your washstand



under the window. But understand that you must get more water in the morning if you use it all."

The talk and laughter went on. Arthur finished his washing and prepared for his night's rest. How nervous he felt as he looked around at all the boys! Some were in bed, sitting up with their chins on

chins on their knees. The light only a can-

dle—seemed to burn so brightly. It was a trying lonely moment for Arthur. But this time he did not ask Tom's permission. He knelt down by his bed and silently poured out his heart to the Lord, as he had done every night since he could remember. He could not think of going to sleep without saying his prayers.

Meanwhile, Tom was sitting on his own bed, unlacing his boots. His back was turned toward Arthur, so he did not see what was going on, but he looked up because of the sudden silence. Then some of the boys laughed as one big fellow picked up his slipper and threw it at Arthur. Tom saw the whole thing. Picking up the boot he had just taken off, he threw it straight at the head of the bully, who had just time to put up his arm and let his elbow take the sting.



"What's that for?" he roared, stamping with pain.

"Never mind what it's for," said Tom standing up. "If any fellow wants the other boot, he knows how to get it."

At this moment they heard the old verger coming, and all climbed quickly into bed. The verger put out the candle and with his customary "Good night, gen'l'm'n," shut the door behind him.

Several of the boys lay awake thinking of what had happened. Tom was among them. Thoughts of his mother came to his mind, and Tom remembered the promise he had made, never to forget to kneel by his bedside and pray before he should lay his head on the pillow. He cried softly long after Arthur had fallen asleep. How cowardly he had been! He had lied to his mother and more than that, to God.

And poor, little Arthur, had done what he himself had been afraid to do. Tom vowed that he would do anything he could for the newcomer; that he would cheer him and help him for the good deed he had done that night. Moreover, he resolved to write home to his mother and tell her how cowardly he had been. He knew it would be hard to begin praying in the morning. The boys would make fun of him and call him names. But he was determined to keep his promise to his mother, even though he had neglected it for so long.

Morning came. Tom got up, washed and dressed, and then before all the boys, he knelt down to pray. At first, Tom could hardly think. He listened for the whispers in the room, but

heard none. What were they all thinking about? Then Tom remembered his father's sincere prayers, and he, too, longed to talk with the God he used to pray to.

The bell was ringing when Tom arose from his knees, but he had won perhaps the greatest victory of his life. Two other boys besides Arthur and Tom had knelt down to pray to their heavenly Father.

For a few mornings and nights there was a sneer or a laugh when the boys prayed, but soon, one by one, all the boys except three or four were following Arthur's example. The brave, little lad had conquered! ◆





## ABOUT FOOD

- 1. What food did the Gibeonites use to deceive Joshua? \_
- 2. The children of Israel were given this food to eat in the wilderness.
- 3. God said people would eat so much of this food that it would come out of their noses.
- 4. John the Baptist is recorded as eating
- 5. Jesus made the disciples breakfast with \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. At the command of God, Ezekiel ate a roll (scroll) and it was sweet as \_\_\_\_\_.
- 7. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, newly arrived in Babylon, requested this food.
- 8. Elisha prophesied during a severe famine that the next day these foods would be sold for a very cheap price at the gate of Samaria.
- 9. The Israelites in the desert were nostalgic about these Egyptian foods.
- 10. Elijah promised the widow that her supply of this liquid would not run out (during the famine).
- 11. The spies returned from Canaan with samples of these foods.
- 12. According to the Lord's promise, Canaan was a land flowing with \_\_\_\_\_.

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1. For the kingdom of God is not \_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17)
- Many \_\_\_\_\_\_ shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord merry shall compare
- in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. (Ps. 32:10)
- 3. To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a \_\_\_\_\_ (Isa. 66:2)
- 4. The joy of the \_\_\_\_\_\_ is but for a moment. (Job 20:5)
- 5. The glory of young men is their \_\_\_\_\_: and the beauty of old men is the \_\_\_\_\_. (Prov. 20:29)
- But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not
   <u>for the flesh</u>, to fulfill the lusts thereof. (Rom. 13:14)
- 7. The word of the Lord was like a \_\_\_\_\_\_ shut up in his bones. (Jer. 20:8)
- 8. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of \_\_\_\_\_; and he knoweth them that trust in him. (Nahum 1:7)
- 9. The name of the Lord is a \_\_\_\_\_. (Prov. 18:10)

## ABOUT THE PROPHET ELIJAH

- 1. Who was King of Israel when Elijah was God's Prophet?
- 2. What two very precious items did Elijah ask the poor widow to give him?
- 3. Elijah and Elisha walked across the Jordan River on dry ground after Elijah did what?
- 4. On what mountain did Elijah demonstrate powerfully the greatness and faithfulness of his God?
- 5. Who took Elijah's place as a prophet of God?
- 6. What great miracle did Elijah perform for the widow of Zarephath that confirmed a second time the he was a prophet of God.



ANGEL ENCOUNTERS—WHERE? Where did each of these people meet one or more angels?

- 1. Gideon
- 2. Peter
- 3. Abraham (3 angels)
- 4. Shepherds (a multitude)
- 5. David (angel with a drawn sword in his hand)
- 6. Hagar
- 7. Elijah
- 8. Cornelius
- 9. Lot (two angels)
- 10. Mary Magdalene (two angels)
- 11. Joseph the carpenter
- 12 Joshua (angel with a drawn sword in his hand)



# Speed By Design

An you picture an animal the size of a human being running alongside your car as you drive down the expressway between 65 and 70 miles per hour? The cheetah has actually been known to reach 71 miles per hour! Did this animal realize it needed such speed to catch its prey and adapt its body accordingly? Did the cheetah just happen to survive because "nature" made so many mistakes (mutations) in its favor? Or did an all-knowing God *design* the cheetah for survival?

According to one scientific study, "the cheetah is distinctly different from all other cats, both in its anatomy and its behavior." If the theories of evolution were true, shouldn't it be like those it developed from?

Like most of the cat family, the cheetah is an excellent



hunter. But unlike most of them, it usually hunts during the day, and is therefore equipped with excellent eyesight. Sometimes it perches on high places to sight the right type of animal, then springs onto its prey. If it must chase, it usually





chases its prey at about half its maximum speed. When the cheetah is within a few hundred yards of the prey, it makes a lightning dash, swiping the hind legs from under the prey and pouncing on it.

The cheetah survives by its speed. At top running speed, it covers an amazing 23 feet per stride!

Did this amazing creature adapt itself because of its needs for survival? What did it do before it had all the features it needed for speed? Did only the speediest of its kind survive because they *chanced* to have *all* or *most* of the anatomy that made speed possible?

Compare a jet bomber and a railroad car. Isn't someone planning that one can dart very fast and the other can carry heavy cargo? If you were hired to design a jet bomber, would you use the same materials you would use if building a railroad car? Isn't intelligence needed to select the materials appropriate for each?

Look at the singular, highly designed features of the cheetah. The cheetah has:

- A streamlined, greyhound-like body, with light-weight bones, small collar bones and vertical shoulder blades to facilitate speed (*Was the cheetah able to select "light-weight" for his bones?*)
- A long heavy tail for balancing during high-speed leaping, also for quickly changing directions and breaking quickly from high speed (*How did Mr. Cheetah keep from summersaulting forward when he tried to stop—before he had such a tail?*)
- A flexible backbone that stretches and contracts like a spring, giving the cheetah the ability to bring its feet

When its spine bends downward, the cheetah's legs extend far out in front and in back of its body, allowing the cheetah to spring an amazing 23 feet per stride! very close together, then very far apart, in this way maximizing its stride (*Imagine a backbone that acts like a spring—without any designer*!)

- A small rounded head set on a long neck (Did the cheetah stretch his neck so often that his neck actually grew longer?)
- Eyes that have an elongated retinal fovea, giving the cheetah a sharp, wide-angle view of its surroundings. (Did the cheetah "see" its need for better range of vision and change the shape of its eyes to accommodate its need?)
- Dark tear marks beneath each eye, which may enhance its vision by minimizing the sun's glare.
- ◆ Extra long legs and complicated muscular systems that increase the rate and length of the stride and give the cheetah extra power for each spring. (*Did the cheetah design its own muscle system? Did you and I—with far more brain power than the cheetah—design our own?*)
- Oversized nostrils and lungs to provide quick air intake needed for rapid acceleration; the teeth are small to accommodate the extra large nasal passages (*Did the exhausted cheetah say, "I really need more air more quickly. I'll increase the size of my nostrils and grow bigger lungs and I can get along with smaller teeth"?*)
- ♦ An oversized liver, heart, and adrenals to facilitate a rapid physical response (*Did the cheetah decide on the size of its organs?!*)
- Special paw pads and non-retractable claws to increase traction. Even the pads of the toes are specialized. Very hard and sharply pointed anteriorly, they act as cleats when the cheetah breaks from a fast run or makes a sharp turn. (*We can put cleats in our shoes, but how did the cheetah figure out how to grow special paw and toe pads to serve its needs?*)

As a result of these features, cheetahs have the ability to accelerate very quickly. From a standing start, it is said that a cheetah can reach a speed of 60 miles per hour more quickly than many racing cars!

Cheetahs depend on their speed to kill their prey. And because they very often lose their prey to hungry lions and hyenas, once they have their prey at hand they devour it as soon as they can. They even know where to start to get maximum benefit fast—they consume the hind quarters of the prey first, because these have the largest concentration of protein—how did the cheetah learn this?

I would say that the cheetah is another of God Almighty's awesome designs! As said the Psalmist of Israel, *"Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well* I know it"! (Psalm 139:14 NLT) ◆

Sources of scientific data in this article: http://www.cheetahspot.com/ http://www.pbs.org/kratts/world/africa/cheetah/ http://www.awf.org/wildlives/65#news http://home.globalcrossing.net/~brendel/cheet.html http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/creature\_ feature/0003/cheetah2.html

# **CURIOUS FACTS:**

- ✓ Ancient people captured cheetahs and used them to hunt wild game. An emperor in India was said to have kept 1000 cheetahs.
- ✓ After the cheetah makes a sprint and kills its prey, it needs half an hour to catch its breath before it can eat! And she is so tired that she won't be able to hunt again until the next day.
- ✓ Baby cheetahs have a grayish puffy mane of 3" hair that makes them look bigger than they are. Looking bigger to a predator is a handy, built-in defense!
- ✓ Mother cheetahs systematically teach their young the techniques of hunting. At about eight months, when



the cubs have their full complement of adult teeth, she starts her teaching program. She does this by bringing live fawns or young gazelles back to her cubs to chase as the prey attempt to escape. These chase-capture-kill lessons go on for many months until the young cheetahs become proficient in hunting.

- ✓ Baby cheetahs have a strong odor. To help keep them from being found by predators while she is out on a hunt, the mother moves her litter of three to six cubs to a new location almost daily. This constant moving is her way of keeping them alive while they are an easy meal for a lion or hyena.
- ✓ The average territory of a male is about 38 square kilometers. The average female home range extends to over 800 square kilometers.





# The **R**APTURE

by Gerald R. Payne

# What do you believe about the socalled "rapture" as taught by many churches?

We believe in the rapture as taught by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, in harmony with many other Scripture passages. However this belief differs radically from the popular teaching of the rapture.

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds

# The BIBLE does not picture the righteous being raptured to heaven.

to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

The difference between Paul's statement and the popular belief is the fact that Paul says only that the resurrected dead, together with the living believers, will *"be caught up together...in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."* Meeting Jesus *"in the air"* conveys no idea of going back to heaven with Jesus, as is popularly believed.

The Apostle is saying that the living and resurrected believers will rise together to meet Christ as He comes to earth. There is no indication here or elsewhere in Scripture that He will immediately depart with them to heaven. On the contrary, the Bible tells us *"the righteous shall never be removed"* (Prov. 10:30). *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matt. 5:5). In the book of Revelation, the song of the redeemed is, "we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9–10). Again, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). Being "ever with the Lord" harmonizes with the statement of the Prophet Isaiah, who said, "It will be said in that day: 'Behold this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation'" (Isa. 25:9).

Six times in the 37th Psalm, we learn that the righteous will inhabit or inherit the earth, not heaven (Ps. 37:3, 9, 11, 22, 29, 34).

The Bible does not picture the righteous being raptured to heaven, Christ will come and save His people (Isa. 35:4). The Prophet Zechariah pictures a time when Jesus' feet will stand on Mount Zion, a place definitely on the earth (Zech. 14:4).

When Paul says that following the rapture that *"so shall we ever be with the Lord"* should we assume that the place of being with Him is in heaven—when the Bible tells us that Christ is coming to dwell among men (Zech. 2:10), to bring His reward with Him (Isa. 40:10)?

Following the rapture, the faithful will be ever *"with the Lord,"* but they will be with Him on earth, not in heaven.

# • Re: Judgment of the Earth

# How will pagans be judged on that day when all their lives they had a somewhat different image of the after life?

According to the Bible, God will judge by His law only those who have come under His law and agreed to serve Him. "As many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law [subject to the law] will be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12).

# Will pagans be judged?

When Christ comes all people will be judged, not according to what they have thought or believed or been a part of, but what they are willing to commit to at that time. One of the first efforts when Christ comes will be a worldwide program of evangelism, informing all people of the new regime, the new laws, and their obligations as individuals living under the new regime. Revelation 14 tells us that the proclamation will go forth, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev. 14:7). The alternative to this will be, simply stated, "Obey and live, disobey and die." Any who are not willing to submit to the new system will die. This will be a judgment of all people worldwide, and those who submit will form the nucleus of the new Kingdom, who will multiply and fill the earth with the glory of God (Num. 14:21; Isa. 11:9). These people will have to be taught the ways of the Lord, they will have to be, in the words of Zechariah, brought through the fire and refined as silver is refined and tried as gold is tried, to become truly the people of the Lord and to merit His eternal blessings (Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:3-8).

After they have had opportunity to be tested and developed, they will again be judged, this time according to their works (Rev. 20:11–14), before they will be granted a right to live in God's eternal Kingdom on earth.

At no time will the "pagans" be judged for what they believed or did prior to knowing of God and His plan. God does not require any to be accountable for a law to which they were not subject. Sin being the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), one is not counted a law breaker when not under that law (Rom. 5:13).  $\blacklozenge$ 



(above) Gerald and Ruby Balsdon with Gladys Sanders, Ruby's sister. Photos taken in 1972.

# **RUBY BALSDON**

We have just received word from Sister Jean Treharne of England of the passing of her aunt and our beloved sister and friend, Ruby Balsdon, of Swansea, South Wales,



England on September 14, 2004. Sister Ruby was blest to have lived within days of completing her 98th year.

Sister Ruby was a child of an original family contacted by our founder L. T. Nichols on his trip to England in the 1890s. Her personal commitment dates back to the 1950s when, seriously persuaded about her faith and her desire to live in Christ's coming Kingdom, she began an active correspondence with some of our members.

In the 1970s she visited the Church in Rochester with one of her sisters, and wrote regularly of her faith and her determination to apply that faith to her life. The article below is extracted from one of her letters.

She is survived by Gerald Balsdon, who was her devoted husband and loving, lifelong companion. Jean wrote, "Gerald has been marvellous and has visited Ruby every day since she became ill." She is also survived by a host of nieces and nephews.

# In the Service of the King of Kings!

I knew that the highest paid army in the world was the army of the King of Kings, so I enlisted in that army. I knew also there would be a battle to fight, and that I must obey the orders of our Great Commander.

As a soldier in the King's army, I realized that the most dangerous enemy was myself, and that as long as life lasts, the battle against self—against the evil within and also the evil without—would continue; for we cannot do what we please, or seek our own pleasures, or speak our own words. To be in Christ is to be a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17).

This indeed is a challenge, so may we go forth with determination and courage that there may be a place in God's Kingdom for us. How wonderful it would be, if we could say with St. Paul, *"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."* We can, if we follow his example as he followed Christ's, suffering the same conflict.

The old man must be conquered before the new man

can be put on *"which, after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."* Let us ever be on the defense, watch and pray and obediently march right on to make this—the very best of all professions—our one aim in life.

Christ offers us so much for doing so little.

Seeing that "all the victors in this battle have their names already inscribed in the Lamb's roll of the living" (NEB), how we should work that our names may be found written there. To think also that these special victors are given the wonderful promise of actually seeing the Great God! And "a draught from the watersprings of life will be my free gift to the thirsty. All this is the victor's heritage" (NEB).

Truly,

"Greater wonder there never could be That the God of creation has chosen me."

In thankfulness for this great privilege, let us be strong in the Lord and gain the victory! -Ruby Balsdon

#### Answers to Questions on Page 21

#### ABOUT FOOD

- 1. Moldy bread (Joshua 9:3–5)
- 2. Manna (Ex. 16:13–15, 31)
- 3. Quail (Num. 11:18-20)
- 4. Locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4)
- 5. Bread and fish (John 21:4, 9, 13)
- 6. Honey (Ezekiel 3:1–4)
- 7. Pulse, or vegetables (Dan. 1:11-12)
- 8. Flour and barley (2 Kings 7:1)
- 9. Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, fish and garlic (Num. 11:4–5)
- 10. Oil (1 Kings 17:7-16)
- 11. Grapes, pomegranates and figs (Num. 13:21–25)
- 12. Milk and honey (Ex. 3:8)
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#### About the Prophet Elijah

- 1. Ahab (1 Kings 16:33; 17:1)
- 2. Water to drink, and a cake of bread (1 Kings 17:8–12)
- (1 Kings 17:0-12
- Elijah struck the water with His mantle (2 Kings 2:8–14)
- 4. Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:20)
- 5. Elisha (1 Kings 19:19–21, 2 Kings 2:1)
- 6. Brought her son back to life (1 Kings 17:17–24)

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1. Meat and drink (Rom. 14:17)
- 2. Sorrows (Ps. 32:10)
- 3. Contrite spirit (Isa. 66:2)
- 4. Hypocrite (Job 20:5)
- 5. Strength, gray head (Prov. 20:29)
- 6. Provision (Rom. 13:14)

- 7. Burning fire (Jer. 20:9)
- 8. Trouble (Nahum 1:7)
- 9. Strong tower (Prov. 18:10)

#### ANGEL ENCOUNTERS—WHERE?

- 1. Oak (terebinth) tree (Judges 6:11-13)
- 2. Prison (Acts 12:6–7)
- 3. Tent door (Gen. 18:1-19:1)
- 4. Field (Luke 2:8–13)
- 5. Threshing floor (1 Chr. 21:15–16)
- 6. Wilderness spring (Gen. 16:6–8)
- 7. Juniper tree (1 Kings 19:1–5)
- 8. His house (Acts 10:22)
- 9. City gate (Gen. 19:1)
- 10. Sepulchre (John 20:11–12)
- 11. In bed, in Nazareth (Matt. 1:20)
- 12. By Jericho (Josh. 5:13–15)

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# We Will We Had



How much will we do for our Master, You and I in the vineyard today? What worth do we place on the Kingdom? How much are we willing to pay To share in its glories supernal, We who cling to this substance of clay? How much will we gladly surrender To dwell in its portals for aye?

The man whom we honor with tribute Was a stranger to this world and time; His heart in the heavenly country, He lived for the New World sublime. Our leader was bent on its glory, As day after day he sought more Of the wonders and beauties eternal That abound on the evergreen shore.

He was lost in his dreams of its glories, Its mansions of beauty so fair; And when he comes back he will see it— And feel what it is to be there. Inspired by the view from Faith's mountain His eye on the prize held in store, He gave all he had and, still dreaming, He wished he could give God yet more.

What of us as our footsteps push forward, As our longings mount up to the skies? May the hard roads ahead never daunt us, Our eye on the glorious prize! Praise God, who the plan has designed, Praise Christ our Redeemer and Friend, And to all who have gone in His footsteps Be honor forever, Amen.

And when we see Christ in His beauty, When the faithful all meet friend with friend; When the joys of the New World are opened, And the cares of this age have an end, And we enter His presence forever, All safe on that heavenly shore, Our sorrows and toils all forgotten, We will wish we had given Him more! –Contributed



By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. – John 15:8



# CHRIST HAS NO HANDS\*

Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today, He has no feet but our feet to lead men in the way: He has no tongue but our tongue to tell men how He lived: He has no help but our help to bring them to His side.

We are the only Bible the careless world will read, We are the sinner's gospel, we are the scoffer's creed; We are the Lord's last message, given in word and deed; What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?

What if our hands are busy with other work than His? What if our feet are walking where sin's allurement is? What if our tongue is speaking of things His lips would spurn? How can we hope to help Him, or welcome His return?

\*We are not implying that Christ does not have physical hands, only that He is depending on us to do His work on earth. –Editor.



# Murmuring Is Deadly

continued from page 2

our children to become responsible adults who respect their brothers and sisters in the Church, the Church leaders, or even God if we have no regular Bible studies or devotion in our homes, rarely pray and our chief interest in life lies with worldly advancement?

When we speak with disrespect about our brothers and sisters in Christ, we sow discord among the brotherhood and cause others to stumble. Death was the result of murmuring to all the Israelites who came out of Egypt, except for two loyal men, Joshua and Caleb. Will God think differently toward the murmurer and complainer today?

Sometimes we murmur against others because we think they are not as good as we are. Perhaps they don't speak well. Or perhaps we think we could do a better job, or we think we have better ideas. Let us remember Moses' leadership and his complaining followers. This is what they thought, and their complaining destroyed them. "Moses said,...your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord" (Ex. 16:8).

What should be our attitude regarding the murmurer? If we take Paul's advice seriously, we will practice being thankful in place of being discontented and unsatisfied. Remember that God detested the murmurers and destroyed them.

When Christ returns, murmurers will either perish, or stop murmuring. Why not stop murmuring *now*?  $\blacklozenge$ 

There is plenty of heavenly music for those who are tuned in to it.

**O**ne of the sweetest chords in the ears of the Master Director is, "I am sorry, I was wrong."

Every time we turn green with envy we are ripe for trouble.

When you read the Bible... do not just read a passage and move on. Stop and ask yourself these questions:

In this passage, is there any sin for me to avoid? any promise I can obtain? any command I should obey? any victory I can gain? any lesson I need to learn? any lofty thought I can ponder about God, or His plan for our planet?



Each líne has a treasure, each promíse a pearl that all, íf they will, may secure.