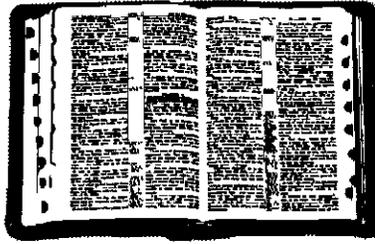


# SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" ----- John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" ----- Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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## EXPOSITION: TEXT and CONTEXT

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### THE MOON SHALL BE TURNED INTO BLOOD

Quoting from the prophet Joel (Joel 2:30-31), the apostle Peter said on Pentecost: "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (Acts 2:19-20).

Some take this language literally and they believe that the moon, among other things, will become real blood (or as blood) when the Lord comes again. But we need to recognize that Joel was using figurative language, denoting judgment. Similar or identical terminology is used several times in the Bible, signifying God's judgment.

Speaking of the judgment of Babylon, Isaiah stated: "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" (Isa. 13:10). Ezekiel spoke of God's judgment upon Egypt as follows: "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light" (Ezek. 32:7). Babylon was the agent used by God to execute judgment on Egypt.

Unless Judah repented Jehovah would visit her in judgment. The judgment is described: "The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" (Joel 2:10). Concerning the nations who reject the Messiah, Joel prophesied of their judgment in the following words: "Multitudes,

multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" (Joel 3:14-15).

Jesus, in describing the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, used the same kind of language (Mt. 24:29, Mk. 13:25; Lk. 22:25-28). Matthew's account states: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

The opening of the sixth seal in the book of Revelation depicted "a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth" (6:12). Cloaked in this figurative language is God's forecast of judgment on the Roman Empire.

By now, it has become obvious that the preceding terminology, involving the heavenly bodies, is used to denote God's judgment rather than some literal phenomenon of these celestial orbs. The symbolic language portrays the gloom and woe that settle over a people at the fall of their government, dignitaries, rulers and religious and social institutions.

The Expositor's Greek Testament states on Matt. 24:29: "It seems to me that in true prophetic Oriental style the colossal imagery of the physical universe is used to describe the political and social consequences of the great Jewish catastrophe: national ruin, breaking up of religious institutions and social order" (Vol. 1, p. 295).

Now, then, back to Peter's quotation of Joel. It has become evident that the darkening of the sun and the moon turning to blood is figurative language, referring to judgment. The blood, fire and vapor of smoke in verse 19 refer to bloodshed and burning of cities, during which time the billows of smoke ascend upward. The issue that remains to be settled is what is the great and notable day of the Lord of which Acts 2:20 speaks?

The great and notable day of the Lord has been variously interpreted. Some say it means the final judgment day, some say the destruction of Jerusalem, while others say it means the day of Pentecost. Though we are not able to prove conclusively to what event the

"notable day" refers, I am inclined to think Joel meant the destruction of Jerusalem.

As Matthew Henry said in his commentary, "this was the chief thing that Christ himself had foretold (Matt. 24) at his entrance into Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), and when he was going to die (Luke 23:29) . . . it put a final period to the Mosaic economy; the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law were thereby forever abolished and done away . . . it was the day of his vengeance upon that people for crucifying Christ, and persecuting his ministers."

R.L. Whiteside, commenting on Joel 2:28-32 that Peter quoted: "Verses 30 and 31 evidently refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation" (Reflections, p. 30). Adam Clarke commenting on Acts 2:20: "These are figurative representations of eclipses intended most probably to point out the fall of the civil and ecclesiastical state in Judea,"

Homer Hailey, writing on Joel 2:30-31, said: "So, the outpouring of the Spirit and His work for the redemption and salvation of man would result in judgment on those who rejected His message. The rejection of the truth of the Spirit by the Jews, and their persecutions of Christians, became the forerunner of God's great judgment upon Jerusalem by the Romans, A.D. 70. The destruction of Jerusalem, which fulfilled the prophecy, in turn becomes a prophetic type of the ultimate end of the world and of the judgment of God on the world of the ungodly . . ." (Com. on the Minor Prophets, p. 54).

In conclusion, let us always keep in mind that even though the language used to describe God's judgment was figurative, the judgment itself was real.

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# Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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## PEACE IN THE CONGREGATION

So often the work of a local church is greatly hindered by internal dissensions. Some congregations have a history of prolonged fussing and feuding over one thing or another. They have very little influence for good in the community, for they have become so lost in their own conflicts that they have lost sight of the fields "white unto harvest" and are completely taken up in biting and devouring one another (Gal. 5:15).

I have been to places for meetings where there was so much strife and ill-will that every lesson would have to be directed toward the church in an effort to settle such unnecessary squabbles. Sometimes brethren caught up in such disputes cannot even remember what started the trouble.

### At Peace or Dead?

Some brethren have boasted that they are at peace when in reality they are dead. The church at Sardis had a name that it lived but was dead (Rev. 3:1). One brother bragged that the congregation he attended had no friction. Another, who knew the congregation well suggested that it takes moving parts to have friction. There are congregations which expired long ago and just need someone to come and preach their funeral! The peace of the cemetery is not that of which we speak here.

### Things Which Destroy Peace

(1) **Being soon angry.** Some have explosive tempers which can be ignited with very little spark. Turn one of these men loose in a business meeting, or a hotheaded sister loose on the telephone, after they think they have been wronged and then run for cover. Things could get bad! Paul said to put off anger (Col. 3:8). An elder is not to be soon angry (Tit. 1:7). Solomon gave us the way to respond to anger. "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1).

(2) **Selfishness.** There are those who are determined to have their way at all cost. In matters of judgment, theirs must always prevail. In such matters, all will not agree. Someone must yield. Elders must not be "self-willed" (Tit. 1:7), but then neither should other members who sometimes demand that they have their way or else they will disrupt the peace of the church, divide it if possible and lure just as many members away as they can.

(3) **Desire for preeminence.** John wrote of "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence

among them" (3 Jno. 9). Some men are natural-born leaders. If you do not think so, just ask them! Some men and women are determined to run things or else they will not play. They do not want to be just a laborer in the vineyard - they must be a supervisor.

(4) **Self-justification.** It is difficult for some to admit wrong. A position is taken, wrong words are said or improper acts performed, and rather than confess the error and change the course of action, self-justification sets in. Then there is the Devil to pay. When we do wrong, we need the spirit of the prodigal son who came home and said, "I have sinned."

(5) **Ignorance.** Some disruptions in churches come about because of sheer ignorance of what the Bible teaches. Jesus said those baptized were to be taught to "observe all things" he had commanded (Mt. 28:20). God said "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge" (Isa. 5:13). Hosea said "My people are destroyed for lack of Knowledge" (Hos. 4:6).

### Things Which Promote Peace

(1) **Genuine love for the church.** Jesus loved the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25). The welfare of the church is of far greater importance than any one of us. The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" and ought not to be retarded in its work to satisfy the whims of immature, selfish and ignorant members. Those who really love the church will not want to see it suffer and bleed.

(2) **Sincere interest in the souls of others.** Not only are we hindered in reaching the souls of aliens when discord is present in the church, but we often fail in our responsibilities to each other as Christians. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Phil. 2:3-4). Many weak members and babes in Christ have been destroyed because of thoughtless disturbances caused by hard-hearted brethren who would rather argue than work.

(3) **Retaliation forbidden.** "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for is so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:19-21). Has someone in the congregation slighted you? Have you been shamefully mistreated? Then forget about "getting even." Leave that up to the Lord.

(4) **Try to understand the other person.** The prophet Ezekiel said he went to those of the captivity and "sat where they sat" (Ezek. 3:15). All of us are different. Our personalities, backgrounds, likes and dislikes, and daily circumstances vary. One may be in poor health at times, another distraught over family problems of which others are ignorant. There are babes in Christ who have not had time to grow to maturity. Some are weak and need patience and understanding. Each of us should give the other person the same understanding we desire for ourselves. The "golden rule" must be applied by Christians in their treatment of each other.

---

**“Able to  
teach  
others also”**

*Thomas Hughes*  
9208 Collingwood Rd.  
Louisville, KY 40299



real problem. The cause of Christ suffers when brethren cannot rise above pettiness. Let us strive to follow after things which make for peace, doing nothing through strife or vainglory. Brethren, don't let splinteritis destroy the work of God.

---

**“Able to  
teach  
others also”**

*Thomas Hughes*  
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**ATTENDING WITH INTEREST**

When we go from the first Law of the teacher to the second law of the learner we run smack into problems. It isn't long before we find out that the Learner must attend with interest to the material to be learned. That statement expresses why some learn and some don't. It also let's the teacher know his very first responsibility when presenting a lesson. If the learner has to be there with some degree of interest . . . what is incumbent upon the teacher to aid in getting that degree of interest?

In times past we have often had some very strong arguments presented that this is 100% the responsibility of the learner. Strange thing is that this argument usually comes from teachers who have great difficulty in getting students interested. A sort of Catch 22.

To me, this is one of the two most difficult of laws. The other being the Law of the Learning Process. These two are somewhat outside my pure scope of control. They are within the mind of the learner. I can influence the thinking but it is beyond me to control. I might like to, but God did not allow for that type of thing in the teaching/learning processes. Jesus came to this principle between a few of his miracles. What does Mark 8:17-18 say? Picking up part way through the 17th verse: "Perceive ye not yet? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not remember?" Here is the greatest teacher having learning problems with the students.

Basic to his questioning is the word perceive. What does it mean? Too many teachers have not a pure understanding of the word and how it affects their ability to get over to their students the major points of a lesson. To define perception we have to go beyond the mind and thought processes to the influence or stimulants that put it there. Most definitions include

the following: to attain awareness (understanding) through the use of and stimulation by the senses.

Please note that in the context of Mark 8 as we are between miracles, even then they had not perception about what had just taken place. They had forgotten again. Now is it strange that under some miracles the learners could use one or two senses. Yet in this forgotten miracle they could have used all five! Is this an accidental lesson? Hardly. Yet here it is that they, the disciples, had just completed a learning session wherein all the senses could have been used. Maximum effort for enforced learning. In this feeding of the multitude they used their eyes, their ears, their hands for touch, their mouths for taste and even fish has a smell! All five senses engaged in the lesson and so promptly forgotten. The role of the teacher is not an easy one. In this matter of perception, it is not new either. For we see the word within Proverbs 4:5-7. The exact word used here is understanding. Our term perceive is old middle English and French, with the per being for thoroughly and capere being to take more of. In modern terms we'd be more likely to use understanding or awareness. Just as in Isaiah 28:13 "But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept." Would that this were true today. There isn't near enough perception going around. Scarce as hen's teeth so to speak.

Perhaps that is the trouble, too much speaking and not enough stimulation of all the learning senses. Of course we'll cover this in the section on the learning process but to briefly state just one point: If learning takes place with sound in the ears at x level of understanding, it will take place at 6x level when sight is combined with sound. This is why you remember certain key points of a sermon. The preacher has noted a few key words and reference points on the board. He has helped us to remember. Some never use the board, never make a note of a key point and are upset when no one remembers what was the thrust of the message. There are many examples.

I have asked adult classes, ten minutes after the close of a sermon, to give the key point of the invitation, and the scripture upon which it was based. Out of twenty to thirty class members, including the preacher's wife . . . no answers! And this is just ten minutes after the lesson closed. Sure, we all heard it. Sure, we even saw the words on the board . . . but did we really move ourselves to active listening? To active hearing to active understanding? I doubt it.

Now leave the adult classes for a second and enter the world of the third grader or the eighth grader or the teen ager. How much interest are you as a teacher going to generate if your own effort is not 100% in preparation? If you have slacked up on Law no. 1 about the Teacher must know that which he is to teach . . . then you are working with a shortage of interest-provoking power from the word. And the class will find it out quickly.

When in the military some one screamed "TEN-SHUN!" Eyes snapped, heads popped, muscles tensed and full 100% concentrated effort was expected and even gotten. Now this is not the modern Army I am speaking of, not the post Nam group. Not even the

post Korea group. This was the old time of discipline. Which was a time of concentrated effort directed toward obedience. A command was given, it was obeyed.

We can't do that in schools today. Not even in Universities. Times and conditions have changed drastically. Even in a few decades. The old days will never return. Therefore, we have to be flexible enough to move with the winds of change and adapt ourselves to them. Since the Lord's army is composed of 100% volunteers and our discipleship has to be internally inspired, it must be a type of self-generated interest. It must be an internal motivation. Teachers must do their very best to stimulate to learning. Not to cast stumbling blocks in their path. I once quoted a publisher who stated something like this: "The number of people who put themselves out to attend classes of any sort are few. When material is presented in such a poor fashion, it fails to interest those few learners. It is not the fault of the material, excellent though it may be, it is the fault of poor presentations, stealing time from the few who are giving and not receiving." That's a botched up paraphrase I am sure, but it means we who teach have a great responsibility to stimulate the learners to come back again and again to learn more and more.

It's not an easy task. It's a very difficult role to fill. It has much to be said for it. "And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). That's recognition enough.

There's a bit of a cycle in learning-interest here. If the teacher hasn't had it, doesn't get it, doesn't keep after it, then he will never be able to impart this desire to his students. Strange that this is, the more you give (of this stimulation) the more you have. It's a whole lot like the oil in the cruse in I Kings 17:14.

We must keep the oil of learning flowing from teacher to student. God won't let it run dry there either.

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## MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

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### LET US RISE UP AND BUILD Leadership / Planning, Nehemiah 3

In our last study we introduced Nehemiah 3, by asking why God included a long list of nothing but names in his sacred text? We observed that there are at least 2 good reasons for their inclusion. (1) To demonstrate God's concern with people, and (2) to show His interest in the Work they do.

Now, we move to the heart of Chapter 3, **the need for planning**. In every phase of life we are either involved in planning ourselves, or we are functioning under the plans of someone else. That is, in every phase except in the name of religion, where we think that planning is totally unnecessary. The average congregation doesn't have the foggiest idea where it is going or what it wants to accomplish. How many sessions were held in the church where you attend "to determine what we are going to do this year?" Then, at the end of the year, evaluate what you have done and see if you came close or not? Without planning we can't determine if we have accomplished anything or not. Has anyone ever sat down and determined what he wanted a young person to do and to be spiritually at the end of his Senior year in High School? After all, that student has been in Bible class from the time he or she went into the pre-school class, and now he is finished with the Senior High Bible class. What do you want him to be spiritually? If we do not have some kind of goal in mind, how will we know if he has become what we had hoped? We blindly shot an arrow into the air and missed the target every time. Nehemiah 3 will enable us to learn about the three things necessary for doing God's work.

#### I. Cooperation.

The first factor needed for spiritual planning is cooperation. Nehemiah forged together 3 diverse groups into one cooperating unit to build the walls. Notice the 3 groups in Chapter 3: (1) the priests, even the high priest; (2) the nobles, or the princes; (3) the common people. These three groups had to unified if the wall was to be constructed. Listen with me to the conversation at a typical business meeting that Nehemiah is conducting. First, the priests say: "You can't expect us to build the wall, we are teachers," and "our gift is to offer sacrifice," so "we can't work on the wall." Then the nobles and the princes speak up: "Well, we can't work on the wall because we are the decision makers. We are supposed to call the plays and make the decisions." Finally, the people speak up, "Well, we aren't going to build the wall; that, is what we pay the priests to do."

Nehemiah took these three diverse groups and blended them into one unit so that each one worked toward the overall goal, completion of the wall, rather than serving his own personal interests. In Acts 4 we find people in the New Testament doing this very same thing as they sold their houses and possessions and gave the money at the feet of the Apostles. Each subordinated his personal goals to the goals of the group. In this case personal sacrifice was made for the good of the body. Ananias and Sapphira couldn't do this. So it is today if we fail to cooperate in the work God has given us to do. In God's wisdom, He determined that we could accomplish more together than we can as individuals, so He established a unified fellowship called the body, or the church. Then he taught us the lesson of inter-dependency by using the human body as an illustration. Just as we need the hand, the eye, the foot so none can say because "I'm not the eye, I 'm not of the body." and thus say that we don't need each other in the church. We live in a day of independence: "do your own thing," but we must submit to one another to the common goals. If there is a failure to submit, oftentimes small groups, cliques, or factions develop and the seed of division is not long in bearing fruit.

## II. Coordination.

In the 3rd Chapter, Nehemiah records 31 times the phrase "next unto him" or "after him." As we study a diagram of the city walls we can see the entire job laid out before us. Can you imagine the business meeting when this work was discussed? "I want to build by the Water Gate because I get thirsty when I work." Or, "I want to build by the Old Gate because it has so many memories." Or, "None of us want to work at the fish gate because of the smell." Nehemiah divided up the work and made specific assignments based on where each one lived. Each family was to work on the wall closest to where they lived. This was done for 2 reasons: (1) **Convenience.** Why spend all morning in traffic getting to where you were going to work? (2) **Concern.** If you worked on the wall closest to your home you would give it all you had, because no one wanted the enemy coming through his own back yard or door.

The difference between cooperation and coordination is great. A football team may be behind 68-0, so in the huddle every player has a plan. The quarterback wants to run a quarterback draw. The flanker wants a 50-yard pass. The fullback wants a run off tackle. All are excited and committed, but guess how many points you'd score? If we all decided how we were going to work, then each runs off in a different direction, we'd do little good in the kingdom. There is no coordination in this type of activity. "Stir an anthill and you'd have activity, but no coordination."

Coordination involves three principles: (1) **discovery** of spiritual talents, (2) developing spiritual talents, and (3) **deployment** of spiritual talents. **Discovery** means that we find our most infectious people and put them to work. Developing means that no one is born full grown in the body of Christ; each of us has to develop. "I can't teach", many say. "Well, have you ever tried?" "No." "Then, don't say you can't teach." What

you need is training, practice, and help to develop your potential. Finally, deployment. This is simply getting the right person in the right job and going to it.

## III. Completion.

Once we have cooperation and coordination, then comes the final aspect of spiritual work, **COMPLETION.** Notice in Chapter 3 you find more that 41 times, — "they repaired." The past tense of the verb, "repair." They finished what they started! Both then and now it is easy to see how wonderful it is as we observe a people who were given a task by God and worked on it continually until it was finished. In Luke 14:28 we find people who began a task but were not able to finish it. Why? Because they did not count the cost. The difference between the work of God and the work of man is that God finishes His work, while man's work is still incomplete. Consider the tower of Babel for a moment. God confused their languages and the text says "they left off building the city." How many half-completed towers does the Lord see in our lives, monuments to mediocrity. We actually plan for failure because we **DO NOT PLAN AT ALL.** The church at Sardis (Rev. 3:2) did not complete its work either and was going to lose its candlestick. Oh, it's fun to get all excited and start a new work, a new program, new bible study, a new visitation schedule, but what about the old one? So many of us are just like Sardis. We never finish what we thought at one time was important enough to start. Nehemiah saw his work of rebuilding the wall completed (Neh. 6:15). It was finished in 52 days!

In conclusion, planning takes 3 things: I. Cooperation, II. Coordination, II. Completion. In the Lord's work we must set a target then evaluate to see if we hit it or not.



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## Insight

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### FOUR GREAT FOUR-LETTER WORDS—HELP

In our very early years we must have help to survive. From that time on, the need for assistance from others never leaves us. As we grow we need help to learn how to care for ourselves. In our adolescent years we must have help to learn to become useful, productive members of society. When we are old we often need help again. And so it goes through life.

Since we all must have help at some time or the other, we are obliged to be helpful ourselves. It would be a thankless person indeed who took the aid and assistance of others all through his life and gave nothing in return. We must reciprocate such actions and return such favors. The Preacher, in Eccl. 4:9-11, sets forth the principle of our helping one another. "Two are better than one," says he, "because they have a good reward for their labor." There is always some hope when there is someone around to help.

**We should help one another.** In Heb. 10:24 we are advised, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." Such provocation to dutifulness is an act of helpfulness. Oh, we may be able to lift the load by ourselves, but how much easier becomes the task when there is someone to help (Gal. 6:2). The help provided for our fellows may range from a meekly applied restoration (Gal. 6:1) to outright chastisement (Heb. 12:5-6). But the help supplied will be out of love and concern for others and not in the spirit of self righteousness. And such help is offered without any thought of reciprocity, but with a view toward heaven both for oneself and the object to whom he extends such courtesy (Phil. 2:4).

**We should help bring someone to Jesus.** I am impressed with the fact that when Andrew heard Jesus speak, the Scripture says, "He first findeth his own brother Simon ..." and "... brought him to Jesus." It is a grand and glorious thought that we, impotent and imperfect, senseless and sinful, finite and feeble, can actually bring someone to Jesus! The admonition to help bring others is ever-present in the revelations of the divine record. Jesus' assignment to his apostles demanded it (Matt. 28:18-20). The early day disciples illustrated it (Acts 8:4). Paul's advice to preachers enjoins it (II Tim. 2:2). And we are all included within the scope of it (Jas. 5:19). In fact, the greatest help we can be to another is to bring him to Jesus.

**We need to help the cause of Christ.** We are engaged in the most outstanding conflict ever waged. Our strivings are for righteous ends, our purposes for the most noble aims; our designs are for the very highest good, for we seek to help the cause of Christ. And there

is no one among us who does not have his place to fill, his duty to perform, his work to do. "For the body is not one member, but many" (I Cor. 12:14). There is not time for petty jealousy, juvenile ambition, self-aggrandizement. There is only time to be about the Master's business—helping others to know Jesus, helping the weak who have fallen back into the world, causing others, by our example of good works, to want to join us in glorifying God and in seeking after Him. Every man is needed, everyone must help. We must raise His banner together—each sharing the burden, each sharing also the honor.

**Jesus is the great helper.** He came into world for that purpose (Matt. 1:21; Lk 19:10). Never was there succor like he gave, never was there a quality of aid which compares with that which he provided. What a Saviour! He "made himself of no reputation" to save us from our sins (Phil. 2:7). He "gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:5). He made it possible for his to be "holy and unblamable and unreprieveable in his sight" (Col. 2:22). There is no man who is not the object of his love, no person who is not the subject of his salvation (Titus 2: 10-11). Even to those who have not come, he yet holds out his hands of love, offering peace, forgiveness, rest. Hear the pathos, the longing, pitiful extension of himself as he cries out, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). What refreshing love! An ever-present help is he!

Let us follow the example of our Lord. Let us help. Let us help our brethren. Let us help the cause of our Lord. Let us help someone find Jesus. Let us be faithful to him who has so wonderfully benefited us, "so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper and I will not fear..." (Heb. 13:6).

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I. "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near" (1:3).

II. "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them" (14:13). III. "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame" (16:15).

Why is such a blessing here proclaimed? As verse 14 announces, "the war of the great day of God" is about to begin. It is imperative that the Christian be ready for the inevitable conflict. Throughout the book the great battle has been building and intensifying and growing toward a climax, and here it is — THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON! It is Rome versus the church, Satan versus Christ, and the allies of the devil versus the allies of God. This is "the war" of which there is to be no comparison.

To understand the hope of the Christian during this conflict one must back up to verse 12:

"And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east." To the Jewish mind the Euphrates River signified

military power and strength. In Isaiah 8:7-8 the prophet declares:

"Now therefore, behold the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, even the king of Assyria and all his glory, and it will rise up over all its channels and go over its banks. Then it will sweep on into the land of Judah, it will overflow and pass through..." Thus, the Euphrates symbolized military might, here given to represent the invading Assyrian army into Israel. In Revelation 16:12 we see that while the saints are in preparation for "the war," that God dries up the Euphrates. Now if the Euphrates River was synonymous with military power (and to the Jew schooled in Old Testament history it was), then what are we being told? Somebody's power is being dried up! Now a couple of questions are in order: (1) Who **dries up the waters?** God does! (Ex. 14; Jos. 3; 2 Kgs. 2) (2) For whom? God always dries up the waters for His people! So what do we have? This "drying up" is a work of God for His people, and it speaks of the putting down of military might. The drying up of the water is telling the first century saint that God is **going to intervene and "dry up" the military power of persecuting Rome.** Why? In order to prepare the way for the "kings of the east." Who are they? They are the same ones who will be walking through on dry land. Who is it that always walks through on dry land? GOD'S PEOPLE! The "Kings of the east" represent the redeemed of God (5:9-10). The premillennial notion that advocates that God is going to dry up the literal Euphrates River and 200 million Chinese will come marching through to do battle with His people has one great flaw: GOD DOESN'T DRY UP THE WATER FOR THE ENEMY. The Christian of John's day was facing a great military power that was set on destroying the church. But God intervenes, dries up the water i.e. He takes away their power, thus giving the saints a preview of victory.

Verse 16 gives the location of the battle-ground as Armageddon. Again one must be familiar with the Old Testament to get the significance. Here was the place where God defeated every army that came against Him in rebellion. And here it is given to represent the final battle ground between the armies of Satan and the Christian. Now I ask the question, if the battle is going to stand or fall on natural terms — who will be the victor? Why Satan of course. What gives the Christian hope is seen in the fact that God will step in, dry up the water, and His people will come marching through on dry land to victory.

Is this a literal battle? Why of course not. If verse 16 be literal then verses 13-14 must likewise be literal. If such be the case before the battle begins there must be some literal miracle-working frogs going about recruiting for the devil. Such is to silly too consider. This is a symbolical battle portrayed to offer the Christian assurance in a time when he needed to be assured. And so the Lord says, "Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments ..." We should always be ready for the coming of Christ, whether in national judgment (as portrayed here), or the final

judgment of all. We are admonished to "Keep our garments." Only those with pure garments, i.e. clean lives, will be presented to the Lord (Col. 1:22; 2 Pet. 3:14).

IV. "And he said to me, "Write, '**Blessed** are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb'" (19:9).

What a privilege it is to follow the Lamb. Chapter 19 is a vision of victory for the saint. Its message is: Hallelujah, Praise God! In verse 6 the reason is given for the praise, "For the Lord, the Almighty reigns." There is the why. Rome thought she reigned. She was the "iron army" that crushed everyone and everything in her path. But there was one king who stopped her cold. He is the KING OF KINGS and **He reigns**.

The church was about to be destroyed and now she is saved. Daniel said it long ago:

"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." (Daniel 2:44),

To celebrate the victory the picture is given of a wedding feast. The saints have overcome and rejoice in their praise to God. We too should join in praise to God. He is the creator, the sustainer of our life, and the giver of all that is good. Yet it seems at times like such an unbearable burden to get folks together to praise God. People, if we don't enjoy praising God now, then heaven isn't for us. For there we will praise Him forever and ever. Yes, Romes will come and go but the kingdom of our Lord will forever stand.

V. "Blessed, and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (20:6).

Here a blessing is pronounced on those who continued steadfast, who refused to give up or give in to the pressures of the day. They had had a part in witnessing the resurrection of the cause of Christ. The church had been bruised and persecuted but she survived and surpassed and is seen being raised to her rightful place. To the Christian who paid the price and remained faithful and true, "Blessed..."

Three rewards are here offered the saints who overcame: (1) the second death would have no power over them, (2) their special relationship as a holy priesthood unto God would be forever, and (3) they would reign with God for a thousand years. The number 1,000 refers not to time, but rather it speaks of the perfect and total triumph of the church. Again the Old Testament unlocks the symbol as passages such as Psa. 50:10; Deut. 7:9 show the number 1,000 was used to speak of completeness and perfectness. Here it speaks of the total and complete victory of God's people. To the ones who proved their allegiance • "Blessed..."

VI. "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book" (22:7).

Here is the same beatitude as in 1:3. The Christian then was faced with all manner of difficulties and

stress. He needed this book, and so do we. Brethren, we don't know what the future may hold. We've had it good as far as being allowed freedom to worship God. But what will life be like for our children? Our grandchildren? May I suggest that we spend time learning the message of Revelation and begin to teach that message to our children so that whatever the future holds the child of God can take comfort in knowing that his/her Father is in control.

VII. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gate into the city" (22:14).

The wise man concluded, "Behold, I have found only this, that God made man upright" (Ecc. 7:29). When we come into this world our robes are innocent and free from the pollution of sin. Eventually however, our robes become soiled and blemished with deeds of unrighteousness (Rom. 3:23), and we must do as Ananias instructed Saul in Acts 22:16, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins." In God's great scheme of redemption there is the (1) divine participation, and there is the (2) human participation as illustrated by Paul's statement in Eph. 2:8 where he says that we are saved "by grace" (God's part), "through faith" (man's part). Man must provide the faith in order to have the forgiveness. Such a faith is not an inactive faith but rather it is an active faith that leads one to be baptized in order to cleanse his robe (1 Pet. 3:21).

To the one who follows God's instructions is the promise of "the tree of life." However, please be aware that such a privilege can be taken away. Verse 19, "And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life ..." Therefore, it is imperative that we wash our robes and remain unspotted from the world in order to have right to "the tree of life." Conclusion

What a book! To have the comfort of knowing that whatever may happen; be it persecution, suffering, or various difficulties, the saint can take courage and have consolation in having the assurance that the God who created the universe is able to rule the universe and is able to achieve His ultimate purpose. God reigns and loves His people. WHAT A BLESSING!

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### WHY CHURCHES GROW

A book by the above title by Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr., Ph. D, was published in 1979 by Christian Communications, Inc. P.O. Box 238, Arvada, CO 80001. The sub-title is: "A Social Scientist Looks at Patterns of Growth in Churches of Christ."

Research reported in this publication began in 1973 with a mail survey of 2,000 randomly selected congregations. 48 of these were selected for in-depth study, 16 each in the top, middle, and bottom 20% in regard to net growth (conversion rate minus drop-out rate). Conversions of the children of Christians were not included.

The data were collected from church records; interviews with 48 "pulpit ministers"; 240 recent converts; 240 people someone had tried and failed to convert; 240 people who dropped out of church soon after baptism, and 513 members who did the teaching in these efforts.

Brother Yeakley (who serves as an elder in an institutional congregation) states that between the years 1945 and 1965 the churches of Christ were the fastest growing religious group in America. Then from 1965 to 1975, churches of Christ slipped to 12th in growth rate. In 1975, the typical congregation of around 160 members had 8 baptisms, 6 of whom were children of members. Half of these eventually dropped out. When the annual death rate is subtracted, the growth rate was less than 1%.

He estimated zero % growth rate in 1980, and flatly stated that if the trend continues, churches of Christ will be half their present size at the turn of the century and will disappear entirely in this country in the next generation's lifetime.

But what about the large institutional churches that we hear of that are baptizing 100 or more per year? Brother Yeakley mentions those groups which report very impressive baptism statistics. But he also mentions what we do not hear about. That's their "equally impressive drop-out statistics." He claims that some of these congregations that have been reporting over 100 baptisms per year for the past 5 years still have essentially the same total membership they had five years ago.

Congregations which seem to be growing are "really just swelling" with transfers from other congregation. 75% of members added in the typical congregation "come by transfer." Many churches showing remarkable increase in attendance have brought this about entirely by children brought in

through a bus ministry. Brother Yeakley apparently does not view such as real growth.

I think his analysis of this situation is worthy of our attention. First of all, from the standpoint of what does not affect growth. The age of the preacher is not a significant factor. What little statistical difference there was favored the older rather than the younger preachers. The educational level of the preacher did not turn out to be statistically significant. Organized social events did not appear to be a factor in church growth.

What did appear significant were: 1) balanced gospel preaching; and 2) close personal relationships. While Brother Yeakley emphasized that a generally positive approach in preaching was most productive, he also pointed out that "Just as surely as it is a preacher's duty at times to comfort the afflicted, it is also his duty at times to afflict the comfortable."

Regarding relationships among members, it was observed that when converts formed personal relationships with members of the congregation, they were more likely to remain faithful. When they did not form such relationships, they were likely to drop out.

A good springboard is there provided by which we might pounce on the liberals like "slick on okra" (I got that from Lloyd Nash). But my mood is a bit more reflective as I ponder such findings. I'm moved to address my brethren and myself in these conservative circles: May we not be warned by these alarming statistics?

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom. 2:1).

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### REDEMPTION (1)

Redemption is defined "to liberate by payment; to free from the bondage of sin." W.E. Vine defines "exagorazo" as "denoting to buy out. Ex. Especially of purchasing a slave with a view to his freedom." "Lutroo" (redeem; cf. Titus 2:14 "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity") this is the spiritual sense.

The grand central theme of the Bible is REDEMPTION. Redemption and blood are inseparably connected in the Scriptures. As a crimson thread there is an interweaving from the first example to the last. Paul emphasizes the significance of the blood of Christ to the Ephesians like this. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1: 3,7). Only as we appreciate the grand central theme of the Bible and view the overall presentation of it can we properly fit the bits and pieces. Limited perception is, no doubt, in part traceable to a failure to see the continuity of revelation. Hopefully, these articles can contribute to a more objective and comprehensive view.

With the sin of Adam, the world, every accountable man, woman, boy and girl, came under condemnation to thus stand in need of redemption. The act of sin is in evidence with Adam's disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden. "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Genesis 3:3), was ignored by Adam and Eve in favor of the serpent's statement, "Ye shall not surely die." The result of this was alienation, separation from God. Adam and Eve began to die. By the same disposition and action the same result has been the plight of all. "And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col. 1:21). The fact of sin from that time imposed a plight which was to ultimately be averted in Jesus Christ.

God, unwilling that man be without an alternative, having created him with will, the power of choice, envisioned the need for an option to provide free exercise of will. This posed a problem. How could divine law be upheld, justice vindicated, and at the same time, how could the rebellious heart of humanity be touched and man reconciled? Punishment alone was not the answer. What then? Only by an extraordinary manifestation of love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever

believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Such a demonstration would magnify divine law, demonstrate God's mercy and goodness, open the way of redemption and give free agency to human will. This would provide the option. Man could accept the way provided by God or reject it.

Thus redemption is "the eternal purpose of God," it is the "mystery of his will" kept secret until finally revealed "unto the apostles and prophets by the Spirit." "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3:5). God's purpose was to send Jesus in the fullness of time; establish the church; publish the gospel; redeem and reconcile all unto himself. Our initial effort in this series will begin the tracing of the eternal purpose of God from Adam through Moses.

We have come to refer to the first 2500 years of biblical history as the age of Patriarchy. One has to read but three chapters into the book of Genesis until he is given first hint of God's eternal purpose. The gospel, "good news of salvation", is glimpsed for the first time in Genesis 3:14-15. A "veiled" reference admittedly, but obviously envisioning divine purpose as the "germ" of every future prophecy concerning Messiah is recorded. The forces of evil would indeed bruise the "heel" of the seed of woman but in so doing a more severe wound would be inflicted to the "head" of the serpent. The "seed of woman" is a reference peculiar to Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). Thus we are projected to the ultimate expression of God's love and the consummation of his purpose in and through the death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God. Bruised in death, but in overcoming death, hell, and the grave through resurrection, a mortal wound is inflicted upon Satan and through the blood there shed, a way is paved and paid for the redemption of mankind. Here indeed is a pointing to the climax of a plan foreordained but hidden until consummated in Christ and revealed in the gospel. "But with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:19-20).

In complement to our understanding of the eternal purpose of God, be it remembered that during this first age of human history sacrifice was a positive institution. The first of record concerns Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-12). Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering, Abel brought of the firstling of his flock. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Why? Hebrews 11:4 says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Since "faith comes of hearing and hearing by the word of God" we conclude Abel offered according to God's direction (Rom. 10:17). In so offering his sacrifice was typical of the ultimate blood offering, the blood of Christ, and began a continuity in sacrifice pointing to it. Cain's was not so recognized and accepted. Fact is, every sacrifice from the first to the last of the Old Testament economy, as respects purging and sin was a pointing to Christ, to the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Herein is the peculiar sanctity of blood which obtains through the

Old Testament. The type is sanctified till the anti-type, the shadow till the substance materializes.

Growth of the human family brought the development of marked wickedness identified in the circumstances leading up to the flood (Genesis 6). God decreed the destruction of the unrighteous and the salvation of the righteous. Noah was saved by faith (Heb. 11:7) and obedience to divine instruction in the building of the ark. Peter refers to it as a salvation by water and makes it typical to the faith and obedience which leads to baptism for the remission of sins. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21).

The emphasis upon the purpose of God which underlies the first eleven chapters of the Bible gives way to the gospel in promise with the opening of the twelfth. Here the initial statements record the selection of a single family through whom God is to consummate his eternal purpose to redeem sin cursed mankind. With the promise to Abram, "I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2), God's plan develops through Abraham's seed. Type and prophecy revealed the budding of the plan that was to blossom in Christ and shed the sweet fragrance of love and mercy upon all. It is thus that the Old Testament helps to establish the New Testament.

From the call of Abram, one family of peculiar sanctity is the object of the inspired record. This does not admit the remainder of the human family without the knowledge of God for such is not the case. However, vanity and foolishness becoming the rule, there was produced a darkened heart and depravity became the rule of life (Rom. 1:19-22).

The life of the patriarch Abraham is fraught with tests of faith, the more memorable of which is the case of Isaac (Gen. 22:1-14). The command to offer the son of promise can but be viewed through our eyes as a supreme test of faith which brings a thrill to our hearts. We, through faith's eye, walk with Abraham to the designated place, pick up every stone in the building of the altar, select every stick of wood for the fire. Isaac's question, "where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" is faintly heard through the ears of faith. "God will provide" is the answer, and He did. In the sparing of Isaac there is a typifying of ultimate hope, resurrection, in figure (Heb. 11:17-19), along with continuity in the development of the promise.

Subsequent history involves us with Isaac, Jacob, Joseph's betrayal and Jacob (Israel) and sons in Egypt. Moses graces the pages of inspired history, a type of Christ, and deliverance from Egyptian bondage sees a family becoming a nation. At Sinai the Law is given, nationalizing the seed of Abraham, and the Israelite nation is born. This marks the end of an era of limited duration, Patriarchy, the father rule period. Nevertheless, an era in which a cardinal rule is stressed and exemplified in the God-man relationship. There is one overriding and underlying principle: obey and be BLESSED; disobey and be CURSED.

(to be continued)

## Overseas Preaching Report

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This time, I want to write concerning several subjects vital to preaching in overseas areas, and make three basic points. **First**, support of gospel preachers, Scripturally, IS on the basis of need. **Second**, churches of one nationality and race may send support to a preacher of another. **Third**, preachers' "need" may well include the responsibility to support others than those in his immediate family; others for whom he is responsible also fall under the authority of 1 Tim. 5:8.

**Point # 1:** I recently listened to a well-known gospel preacher state he questioned need as the basis of preacher support. His contention, primarily, was that need is not the way secular wages are determined—that in this area, these are paid on the basis of the job, its productivity, etc. He claimed the needs of the individual worker were incidental to deciding this wage. Perhaps, but surely unions would argue this point. Anyway, whatever be the basis of secular wages, NEED is the Scriptural basis for determining what the support of a preacher ought to be. See 1 Cor. 9:6-14 (especially verse 14), 2 Cor. 11:8,9; Php. 2:25,30; 4:15-18 and Acts 20:34 on this.

**Point # 2:** Churches of one nationality and race MAY send support to a preacher of another. Those congregations which supported Paul, for the most part, were composed of Gentiles. If we want to look at differences in race and nationality, it would be difficult to find any greater than existed between the Jew (Paul) and Gentiles (Philippian brethren). The Mosaic Law demanded a separation. Jewish tradition carried this far beyond the intent of the Law. In retaliation, the Gentile cut off the Jew and persecuted him. Yet Paul's support once and again came from Gentile brethren. See Php. 1:5-17; 2:25,30; 4:15-18.

**Point # 3:** A preacher's need may well include more than his immediate family. With increasing frequency, I am hearing that in matters of support, a preacher (especially a native preacher overseas) does not have a responsibility under 1 Tim. 5:8 beyond that of his immediate family. See Acts 20:34: ". . . them that were with me". Surely, if Paul would consider it his responsibility to take care of these when he was engaged in his tent-making, he would also consider it his same responsibility to do the same when he received support from churches. Or, do we want to contend he would let these others go hungry while he ate? That ought to be put to rest, along with the erroneous contentions in points 1 and 2.

**General Comments:** All of these criticisms of support, to my knowledge, have been directed at native preachers in nations overseas. We seem to set up a

special set of rules for these men that we don't apply to ourselves. Now note: I am NOT contending a preacher should or may take on a bunch of "dead-beat" dependents, then seek additional support because of them. I AM contending, if he has dependents, and they are legitimately his and living as they ought (2 Thess. 3:10 and Php. 1:27), a preacher has a RIGHT to provide for these; nay, an obligation to do so.

I will illustrate here by the Philippine concept of "pakikisama", but keep in mind I am discussing all nations, including the U.S. This has been attacked as if preachers in the Philippines are unscripturally seeking financial support beyond their legitimate needs as authorized under 1 Tim. 5:8. Properly understood, this "pakikisama" establishes the right of preachers to provide UNDER SOME CIRCUMSTANCES for the needs of others not members of their immediate families. 1 Tim. 5:16 is the guiding principle. Hear it: "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged;... ." I doubt any in the U.S. today would object to a preacher HERE taking the responsibility for a widowed mother, either his or his wife's. The Filipino concept of "pakikisama" translates, roughly, "plenty of faith and sympathy, and a desire to fulfill my RESPONSIBILITY (emp mine—whl) to help." In that nation, this obligates one to assist certain others. Failure here is taken as an indication of refusal to accept responsibility, and is a shaming thing. Under such circumstances, how much attention do we suppose the preacher will get when he tries to present the gospel of Christ? And particularly, listen for the hoots and laughing he generates when he tries to teach on 1 Tim. 5:8.

To be sure, there is a limit to this responsibility. I have already mentioned two Scriptures (see Php. 1:27 and 2 Thess. 3:10). Further, need would have to exist on a permanent basis as opposed to the temporary situations described in Acts 2, 4 and 6. Yet more, these enrolled for an extended period of time would have to be in a close relationship pre-existing the need. In practical application, this is not a whole lot different than the U.S. today. The primary distinction is, here, we would not go beyond family, and SOMETIMES, the Filipino would. This is not a firm, rigid guideline, but I believe just as we have little difficulty determining the limits of our responsibility, so they have no difficulty in deciding theirs.

Each society has its own customs, traditions and cultures. It functions on the basis of these. We can no more expect to spread the gospel of Christ while violating these, or creating situations where they are violated than we can be disregarding other responsibilities the Lord has given us (see 1 Cor. 9:22 on this also).

In sum: support of preachers, Scripturally, IS according to need; churches of one nationality and race MAY support a preacher of another; a preacher's "need" may include more than his immediate family. Brethren, let us not be silly. Scripture, not our preferences and prejudices ought to govern us, in support of gospel preachers overseas, as well as in all other areas and activities (Col. 3:17).

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Greenville, Texas 75402



### THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

In the rock founded city of Cesarea Philippi, our Lord said, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18-19). He went on to say, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The word "keys" has come in for its share of controversy back through the years. Some of the old time premillennial debaters such as A. S. Bradley believed the Lord referred to TWO keys. Since the Lord used the plural "keys" Mr. Bradley and others jumped to the conclusion he was talking about two keys. I have never been able to understand why "keys" plural would mean two, why not a half dozen? Mr. Bradley, in his debate with C. R. Nichol, argued for the two key position. This debate was conducted around the turn of the century (1906). Mr. Bradley said, "Now respected friends, my opponent all the way through his speech has used the word 'keys' and says I admit that Peter used the 'keys' of the kingdom on Pentecost. I don't admit any such thing, and he knows it. There were two keys, and Peter only used one 'key' on the day of Pentecost; and he will agree with me on this subject, too. Don't misrepresent me," He went on to say, "My friend would have you to believe that Peter used both keys on Pentecost. I have shown you that he used one key then, and that showed them how to enter the church, and the other key was to teach them how to live a Christian, that they might enter into the kingdom" (Page 21, 22).

The word "keys" or "key" seem to symbolize power. This word (kleis) is used metaphorically in the New Testament. There doesn't seem to be any particular significance in the plural form. For example, in Rev. 1:18, our Lord said he had the "keys" of death and of hades. In Matt. 16:19, he said he would give unto Peter the "keys" of the kingdom. About the only difference in these two expressions is that in one we find two prepositional phrases and in the other only one. In Revelation the Lord said he had the "keys" of both death and hades. In Matthew he promises Peter the "keys" of the Kingdom and that is all. If one wanted to be fastidious, he could argue the "two key" idea with more propensity in Revelation than in Matthew. For example, one could say the Lord used one "key" to unlock the door of death and the second key to unlock the door of hades. At least that would sound pretty good. The truth about the matter is that he used the

same key to unlock both, if one insists on using the word key to symbolize unlocking doors. When Jesus was raised from the dead, he used this power "key" or "keys" to unlock both the door of death and hades. It would be foolish to insist that he used the power of his resurrection to unlock one of these doors and left the other locked for some other power.

The word "keys" (kleis) is used figuratively and to insist that it means using a key to unlock a door, does injustice to the text and context. I would not deny that in a secondary sense this might be implied in the text, but to carry it far enough to insist on "two keys" is going too far! Actually if we insist on more than one key, we might as well argue for a dozen. Since the word symbolizes power, the idea is that Peter and the other apostles would have the power to reveal the remedial system under the guidance of the Holy Spirit which they received on Pentecost.

Speaking of keys, I have two keys to my house but they are just alike! I have "keys" to my house but that does not mean they are different. If one is going to argue the literal "key" syndrome, why not argue that all of the apostles were told to bind and loose (Matt. 18:18) therefore Peter was given twelve keys so he could pass them out to all the apostles and therefore they could all unlock the door of the church. This would be more logical than the "two keys" argument.

This word "key" is used more in the book of Revelation than anywhere in the New Testament. In Rev. 3:7, the Lord says he had the "key" of David. Here the singular is used. Thus the Lord let it be known that he had the Power and authority to open or shut. Since he came from the loins of David, he certainly has the key of David. In the text he talks about "openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth". This is similar to the Lord's statement in Matthew sixteen where he talks about "binding and loosing". He had the authority to lay down the terms of admission into his church. His authority is final.

In Revelation 9:1, John sees the fifth angel as he sounds, and there was given to him the key to the bottomless pit. It could not be denied that this angel had the power to open the pit. So again, we observe the significance of the word "key". In Revelation 20:1. we read again of the angel who had the "key" to the bottomless pit.

Wherever the word is used, the idea of power is in the context. To insist on a literal key and a literal door is carrying the figure too far.

It has been pointed out that if Peter used the keys of the kingdom to unlock the door of the church on Pentecost and they are not the same, he could be charged with burglary. The premillennial idea is that the church started on Pentecost but the kingdom will come later. Since most premillennialists freely admit Peter used at least "one" key on Pentecost, they have trouble finding the right key for the right lock and even more trouble locating the building and the "key hole".

## AFTER DEATH, THE JUDGMENT

Charles Boshart  
1017 S.W. 84th St.,  
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Hebrews 9:27, 28 states, "And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation."

The foregoing text teaches us that, just as men die once and then are judged, so Christ died once and shall appear a second time to judge. As human life, with all its works, comes to an end in death, and judgment necessarily follows, so Christ died once and judging necessarily follows. The end of human life in death and the following judgment are sobering events. Let's consider them based on these verses.

I. It is APPOINTED unto men once to die and after this the judgment.

The appointment to die is a divine appointment and it grew out of the consequences of man's sin.

God told Adam, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16,17).

But Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. Eve "took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6).

Now, among the trees of the garden to which the First Pair had access was "the tree of life" (Genesis 3:22). The fruit of this tree would counteract the mortal or dying tendencies of the bodies of Adam and Eve for of its fruit they could "eat and live forever" (Genesis 3:22). But God "sent him forth from the garden of Eden" (Genesis 3:23). He "drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim and the flame of a sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24).

Since the posterity of Adam and Eve have been born out of the garden of Eden and away from the tree of life, and have not had access to its death counteracting fruit, the appointed sentence of God has been enforced, "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

II. It is appointed UNTO MEN once to die and after this the judgment

The word "men" emphasizes mankind and shows the universality of the pronouncement. Rich men, poor men, the great and the small, the middle class and other classes, — there are no exceptions. The healing physician will one day find himself incurably ill. The "picture of health" will one day find himself fatally diseased. The amazingly strong will one day find himself wasting away. Because human nature cannot last. Because, "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecclesiastes 3:20).

*Please Renew Promptly*

One might, as in the case of King Hezekiah (II Kings 20) have his death delayed. But this was simply the prolongation of his life. It was not the cancellation of his death. For death is appointed "unto men."

III. It is appointed unto men ONCE to die and after this the judgment.

The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul, or reincarnation, is, therefore, specifically negated by this statement. For this doctrine calls for the soul to be reborn in another body to die again. And this rebirth and death may happen many times until that soul is purified and goes, finally, to a place of peace. But the Bible teaches that men die once.

Now, if men die once and that death is followed by a judgment then man's lot in eternity is determined exclusively by what he does now on earth. For there is no room made for intervening new and additional periods of probation. There is no second chance. Muff this one and you have had it.

I Peter 3:18-20 is often appealed to as evidence that some men have been given a second chance and that, therefore, others will be. Peter says, "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

The allegation is made that Jesus, after death and before his resurrection, preached to the disembodied "spirits" of the disobedient, i.e., those "in prison" or under divine restraint. And it is insisted that this preaching was done in order to allow them another opportunity for salvation.

But if this is the case, why was this preaching limited to the spirits of those who were disobedient "while the ark was a preparing?" Why should the alleged second chance be limited to them? This idea clearly makes God what Peter said he was not, "a respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), and cannot be true.

Peter does not say that these who heard the preaching were "in spirit" or disembodied and "in prison" or under restraint when the preaching was done but when he wrote. They had heard the preaching "when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah."

II Peter 2:5 refers to Noah as "a preacher of righteousness." That which God says or does through an agent, he is said to do himself. Matthew refers to that "which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" (1:22). Just so, Jesus preached to these before the flood through Noah. They had their chance then and they were not given another.

IV. It is appointed unto men once TO DIE and after this the judgment.

Dying is the result of the separating of the soul or spirit from the body. Genesis 35:18 states, "And it came to pass, as her soul was departing (for she died)..." And death is the state of the body apart from the spirit. James 2:26 says, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead." When the spirit leaves the body, it is

inoperative and without power to perform, hence dead.

It is worth noting here that the Scriptures do not say that the spirit apart from the body is dead. For death is a mortality event and is, therefore, characteristic of that which is mortal. The direction of Romans 6:12 is, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body ..."

The materialist Watchtower Witness or Seventh Day Adventist (or some other stripe of modern Sadducee) opposes this conclusion affirming that man is wholly mortal and denying that death is the result of the separation of an immortal spirit from a mortal body by insisting, among other things, that God is the only one who has immortality. He tries to support this with Paul's statement in I Timothy 6:16 where he speaks of God "who only hath immortality."

But in Luke 20:35, 36 Jesus spoke of those who had attained to "the resurrection from the dead" declaring "for neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels." The reason given why these "cannot die any more" is that "they are equal unto the angels." Hence, angels do not die and are, therefore, not mortal but immortal.

The statement of I Timothy 6:16, then, that God "only hath immortality" is not teaching that God is the "only" one who "hath immortality" but that "immortality" is the "only" property God "hath" in contradistinction to man who also has mortality,—a mortal body which will die.

That man's mortal body will die is not a depressing fact leading to despair. For the Christian has the hope of entering upon a better life, a hope that is accomplished through dying.

V. It is appointed unto man once to die and AFTER THIS the judgment.

Death is not the end. The men who are appointed to die do not decompose and disintegrate into nothingness. The men who die are to have experiences "after this."

Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." When men "kill the body", the body, of course, dies. But when men "kill the body", they are "not able to kill the soul." The soul, therefore, lives when the body dies. It is the soul, then, that has experiences of consciousness "after this."

Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21-23, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh,—if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose, I know not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake."

The apostle shows very clearly a distinction between himself and his "flesh." He uses the expression "to live in the flesh" and "to abide in the flesh." The flesh was not Paul but was where Paul lived and abided. And he had the desire to depart from the flesh (to separate the spirit from the body) and be with Christ. Paul realized that when he died this was not the end but that there were experiences of consciousness "after this" and "with Christ."

VI. It is appointed unto men once to die and after this THE JUDGMENT.

II Corinthians 5:10 states, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Jesus says, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matthew 16:27).

Clearly, the retention of our identity is demanded by these verses. Judgment comes after men die but it will come for deeds done in the body. It is, therefore, the person who did the deeds in the body who will be judged. We retain after death the identity we had before death.

Further, this judgment "according to our deeds" is complete. "For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Our brief earthly existence is sufficient time for the inner man to develop the character of his after life and establish the basis for reward or punishment.

Judgment, reader, is a moral necessity. If there is no judgment, then the righteous will have suffered more in this life for righteousness than the wicked in the next for their wickedness. Moreover, men are not adequately punished for sins in this life. Some who have wrecked the lives of others through abuse, murder, robbery, aggressive warfare, gross immorality, etc. have not only not suffered significantly for it in this life but have even prospered in this life up to the point of death. If justice is not to be outraged, there must be judgment and punishment after death. And the word of God says there will be.

It is critical that men make the most of life before death and the judgment. It is imperative that men give themselves and their lives to God before death and the judgment. It is necessary that men realize that the only period of probative opportunity is before death and the judgment. This is part of God's motivation to dignify our lives now by faith and obedience and serve eternal life there through grace and lovingkindness.

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## FUN AND GAMES

**Jack H. Kirby**  
**1325 Panlener**  
**Las Cruces, NM 88001**

In the recent David Harkrider—Kermit Webb debate in Denver (December 9 — 11), bro. Webb repeatedly voiced objection to gymnasiums and basket-ball courts in a church-owned building while at the same time affirming that "It is in harmony with the scriptures to come to eat a common meal in the church building."

Bro. Bill Dillon of the Bellview church of Christ, Pensacola Florida (reprinted in the Par Street church of Christ ANCHOR, Orlando, Florida, December, 1980), wrote an excellent article "How Far To The Country Club?". Bro. Dillon, according to the editor of ANCHOR, is "an institutional preacher". In his article, Dillon severely rebukes churches which he says could be better described as "country clubs" because of the spending of large sums of the "Lord's money" for gymnasiums, sunset rooms, lake repairs, and pool, horse, and rifle range expenses. He chides churches for their emphasis on "Fun and games".

In the October, 1980, issue of *CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH*, Editor Ira Rice devotes the entire paper to the condemnation of gymnasiums owned by churches and "Gimmick Christianity". Like bro. Dillon, he quoted from the 1935 pen of bro. B. C. Goodpasture of Gospel Advocate fame, wherein the social gospel was severely condemned.

Both Rice and Dillon condemned Ben Zickefoose and his "Gymnastics To the Glory Of God" presentation. Ben is a P.E. professor who teaches "Bible lessons illustrated with gymnastics". Rice asked, "If there is any difference in principle between kissing a pig, jumping a long string of Toyotas, and 'Gymnastics To The Glory Of God', we fail to see it." These other things were being done by a Pentecostal and a Baptist church. My answer is the same as Ira's—there is none!

As for me, I can see little difference in "fun and games" and "food and fellowship". Kermit Webb affirmed the kitchen but condemned the gym. Both are fruits of the social gospel concept, i.e. that the gospel and the church are to minister to the whole of man, both physical and spiritual, instead of just to the spiritual.

Webb's affirmation for the kitchen centered around the fact that God nowhere mentioned church buildings. Therefore, since God did not speak concerning these things, there could be no sin connected with their use, he concluded. He said, "1 John 3:4, sin is a transgression of the law. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the law. Rom. 4:15, Where there is no law, there is no transgression. . . . Since there is no command for a church building, there is no law that says you shall not eat in the church building." (Harkrider—Webb debate, 1980—Webb's second

speech). Taking this position, how can these brethren oppose anything being done in or on the church-owned property that does not violate civil law?

When you accept one departure, the others naturally follow. When men like Rice in the 50's and 60's advocated and promoted cooperative, institutional innovations, they let the gate down for all other departures. It would be amusing, if not so sad, to read from their pens today where they are trying to keep such innovations as gyms and exercise parlors off church-owned property.

We beg these men to come back to the Bible as their sole rule of faith and practice. We beg them to stop making arguments like Webb made from the silence of the scriptures. Identical arguments were made by J. Carrol Stark (Stark—Warlick debate, 1903), and by J.

B. Briney (Otey—Briney debate, 1908), affirming the use of instrumental music in worship to be scriptural. These all stand or fall together.

Brethren, why cannot we learn from history the end results of this attitude?

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P.O. Box 68, Brooks, KY 40109

## THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

"... They rehearsed all that God had done with them ..."—Acts 14:27

*Send all News Items to: Wilson Adams, 317 Trinkle Ave., N.E., Roanoke, VA 24012*

### PREACHERS NEEDED

**AIRDRIE, ALBERTA, CANADA**—A new work currently meeting in the city of Airdrie (near Calgary) is in need of a full-time preacher. This is a rapidly growing community and much interest has been shown in the gospel. We need someone who's strength lies in the area of personal work. Please write us for more information. Church of Christ, Box 254, Airdrie, Alberta, Canada,

**NEWPORT NEWS, VA**—The church here seeks a full-time man. Local support is available to the extent of \$250. Contact Bob Mallard at (804) 464-9495. Or write to 1925 Sunrise Dr., Virginia Beach, VA 23455.

### DEBATE

**KEITH SHARP**, 1800 Hairston Ave., Conway, AR 72032. On the evenings of March 2,3,5,6 I will engage a Baptist in public debate. My opponent will be Lyndon D. Whitlege, Pastor of the North Jacksonville Missionary Baptist Church of Jacksonville, AR. The debate will take place in the building of the Woodrow church of Christ southeast of Vilonia, AR. The propositions are as follows:

Monday: The Scriptures teach that national Israel will be restored to the land of Palestine.

Tuesday: The Scriptures teach that, when Christ returns, He will set up a material, thousand year kingdom on this earth.

Thursday: The Scriptures teach that a child of God can so sin as to be finally lost in hell.

Friday: The Scriptures teach that a child of God cannot so sin as to be lost in hell.

I will be in the negative each night but Thursday. I will be fortunate to have the assistance of my father H. F. Sharp as my moderator.

### COLUMBIA & ECUADOR SOUTH AMERICA

**SANTIAGO CASTRO**, 419 W. Wyoming Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45215. I am writing to inform the readers of STS of the Lord's work in South America. The church in Columbia began in 1978 when some of the American churches helped Carlos Restrepo move to Columbia to preach. Carlos learned the truth in the USA and it was his desire to go back to Columbia and start the church there. The church began to grow and now three years later the church in Bogota, Columbia has 100 faithful members. The people of Columbia show a great interest in the truth. The gospel is something new to them as most are Catholics. However, many are tired of Catholic tradition. Today the church is known not only in the city of Bogota but in many other cities of my country. The congregations in the cities of Cali and Manizales are beginning to grow but they do not have a full-time preacher. The problem is that

most all the Christians in Columbia are young and don't know how to teach other people. Carlos is the only one able to do the teaching and it is very difficult for him to keep traveling all over the country. So you can see the problem — thousands of people who want to study the Bible and only one teacher.

But the story does not end here. One month ago Carlos was invited by some to come to Ecuador to study the Bible. As a result of this four were baptized in the city of Guayaquil. My plans are to return to Columbia as soon as possible and to begin to help Bro. Carlos in the teaching. If anyone is interested in helping us in some way please write to Royce Chandler at 623 Woodett Rd., Nashville, TN 37211. Please keep praying for the work in South America and that God will give us the strength to increase the borders of His kingdom.

**CARL McMURRAY**, 3335 5th Ave., Sioux City, IA 51106. I am writing to recommend and raise support for Dennis McConaughy. Bro. McConaughy is 27, married, and spent four years in the Air Force and two years in one of the liberal preacher schools. Recently he took a stand against institutionalism. Because of this and his teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (he teaches that adultery is the only scriptural cause for divorce and remarriage and that only the innocent one has the right to remarry) he was asked to "leave" the work in Vermillion, S. Dakota,

Several months ago a new conservative congregation began in Sioux Falls, S. Dakota. They have asked Dennis to come and work with them and he has agreed. To my knowledge there are only 3 or 4 sound churches in the Dakotas. Surely you can appreciate the need for laborers in this area and understand how hard it is to get someone to leave family and home areas and come here. Here is one who wants to come. He is studious and able to teach. If you can possibly help him on a monthly basis the Lord would repay. If not, then perhaps you could help one-time to help him with moving expenses. You may contact Dennis at 2586 N. Maple, Apt. C, Fresno, CA 93703. Another reference would be Olen Holderby, 2249 N. Meridian, Fresno, CA 93703 (209-251-6117). For more information on the area contact Jarrell Kay, P.O. Box 834, Rapid City, SD 57701.

**ALBERT F. ROBINSON**, Box 12, Bowling Green, MO 63334. I labor for a small group which is not able to pay me any support. Other congregations are helping me with a total of \$850 per month. At the present I need another \$300 per month to meet my bills. If you could help at all please contact me. References furnished upon request.

**JACK H. KIRBY**, 1325 Panlener, Las Cruces, NM 88001. 1980 was a good year for us here in Southwest NM. Twelve were baptized,

and thirty three placed membership with us. During our meeting with Yater Tant we set an all-time attendance record with 124. During the year we exceeded our budget by some \$45 per week. We continue our Sunday morning radio program and our monthly paper, THE DEFENDER. We had home Bible studies with Chinese students here at New Mexico State University and as a result two were baptized. Five preachers received partial support from us in 1980. Also we began mailing tapes free to any who request them. The response to this has been overwhelming. During the year I held meetings in Wickett and Cedar Park, TX; Madrid, I A; and Tularosa and Santa Fe, NM. The Sante Fe work was just recently established. Four were baptized in these meeting.

We also encouraged the brethren in Clovis, NM to establish a conservative church there. This has been accomplished and the brethren are meeting in an office building at 210 East Grand. We are still striving to establish faithful churches in NM areas where none are presently meeting. If any reader knows of any Christians in Farmington, Carlsbad, Gallup, or Grants, please inform us.

Here at Las Cruces we are planning a spring lecture program April 6-10 using five young NM preachers. Our meeting place is on the corner of Solano and Panlener Streets, six blocks north of New Mexico State University. If you are looking for a place to move out of the cold • try us here in the Southwest. We will be looking for you.

**WILLIAM C. SEXTON**, 1937 Judson, Manhattan, KS 66502. As this year comes to a close we wish for brethren to know that we still meet at 1112 Pierre St. in Manhattan, two blocks south of the City Building. The congregation has seen a lot of change in the last twelve months experiencing almost a 100% turnover. We expected that mobility would be a factor in Manhattan, in that we are near Ft. Riley Military Base and K-state University. However, we did not expect the rapidity with which it has come. Although many have moved out of the area we are thankful that others have moved in. Most of them are capable and willing to spend their energy in the Lord's work. During the fast moving year we had two meetings. One with Bro. Herbert Knight and the other with Bro. Joe Griffin. Good was done in both meetings. Some contacts were made and we pray that spiritual fruits will be born in time. I have had to raise about 3/4's of my support from other places and we are thankful for those who have helped. Remember us when you pray, visit us as you travel, and inform us if you learn of people in our area. My phone number is (913) 539-0458. God bless you is our prayer.

**R.E. MORRE**, P.O. Box 932, Oroville, CA 95965. This is to inform the readers of STS that a congregation of God's people is presently meeting in Oroville at 1650 Robinson St. This work was established in 1979 and we presently have seven families, and seven single members who attend. It is our intention to hold strictly to God's word and try to spread the gospel in this area. We recently concluded meeting with Bro. Olen Holderby. The meeting was well attended and Bro. Holderby did an excellent job. When in this part of the Sacramento Valley stop and worship with us.

**JEFF KINGRY**, P.O. Box 26, Milton, VT 05468. Since Bro. Connie gave me space in STS to ask for support I have heard from several who have sent money to help with our needs. At the present, all of our support has been raised, much of it coming from brethren who sacrificed to provide it. Such is encouraging to me. One family who is providing a portion of my support is Bro. and Sis. E.L. Upham of Quitman, TX. Bro. Upham, a generous brother of over four-score years, wrote and sent monthly support because of the need he read about in STS. I was saddened to hear from Sis. Upham that he had fallen from a ladder while trying to remove egg that vandals had thrown at his house. Paralyzed for a week or more, he finally succumbed to his injuries and fell asleep in the Lord. Bro. Upham had written and told me that he had made arrangements with the congregation where he worshipped to continue my support even though he might pass away. The monetary sum means nothing to me — but his love and unselfishness that would prompt such a move is indeed touching. "Blessed are those who die in the way, blessed are those who love the Lord." Whatever I may do for the Lord, what I share with Bro. Upham in his devotion to God will never pass away. It is sometimes difficult to permit brethren to "anoint" us in this way, but the sweet smell of his sacrifice is known to God and should be known by his brethren.

We have enjoyed the fruit of two baptisms since my move to Vermont in September. We have survived two meetings another move to our own home, a round of sickness, the hunting season, and 48 degrees below zero weather. Anyone who would like to visit in Vermont and who loves the Lord has family here.

#### IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS	310
RESTORATIONS	177

(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)

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