

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.

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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THE PROMISED SEED OF ABRAHAM

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12: 1-3).

The promise that God made to Abraham was repeated to Isaac, the promised son of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 26: 4). It was repeated to Jacob the chosen son of Isaac (Gen. 28: 3, 4; 13, 14). The same promise was made to Judah by Jacob (Gen. 49: 8-12; Heb. 7: 14). Finally, the promised seed was made to the house of David, the tribe of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah. Matthew 1: 17 tells us that there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and this is the line of the promise seed.

The Holy Spirit by prophecy and fulfillment tells us who the promised seed is in whom all families of the earth would be blessed. Nathan the prophet told David, "and when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. 7: 12-13).

The prophecy said that David's seed would "build an house for my name" after David's death. The church is called the house of God (1 Tim. 3: 15). And God would establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. David's seed would be seated on the throne to reign until the last enemy was destroyed (1 Cor. 15: 24-26). This refers to the same people and the fulfillment is at the same time and the same place. The church and the kingdom refer to the same people.

Jesus Christ is that PROMISED SEED of prophecy to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and to the house of David. The New Testament tells us so (Rom. 1: 3; Gal. 4: 16). The fact that he was the son of David was not disputed while Christ lived (Matt. 22: 41-46).

This was a promise God made to Abraham, and repeated to Isaac, Jacob, and to Judah and to the house of David, that the promised seed in this line would bless all nations of the earth, and this seed would sit upon the throne of his father David and rule in his kingdom forever. This one seed is Christ (Gal. 4: 16). God has but one nation of people, and they are in this seed who is Christ. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3: 29). This refers to the people of God. The church is that one body of people in Christ who are referred to as "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The authority of Christ is complete (Matt. 28: 18). He is "the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1: 22, 23). Moses said Christ would be a prophet—a law giver—like he was, and all who did not hear him would be destroyed from among the people (Acts 3: 22, 23). All the prophets from Samuel and those who spoke afterward foretold of this (vs. 24).

God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and made the promise that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12: 3). He promised him a land for his seed (Gen. 12: 3, 7; 13: 15; 22: 18). "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child" (Acts 7: 5). His faith in the promise of God caused Abraham to act as if he had children (cf. Rom. 4: 16-22).

Christ died to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2: 14). This "peculiar" people are all those purified unto him as his own possession. They are his people, all of his people. They are a "chosen generation" — an elect race. They are built up a spiritual house on the elect foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2: 4-9). They are called a "royal priesthood." Christ is High Priest and every saint a priest, composing a royal or kingly priesthood. They are called a "holy nation," who were not a people, but now are the people of God. (1 Pet. 2: 9).

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" QUOTE

"Disciplining children is a lot like taking out the garbage. If you don't do it, you have no right to complain later if something smells."

—Ann Landers

UNQUOTE "

Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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Brooks, Kentucky 40109



EDITORIAL STEW

Here is my annual mixture of bits and pieces, none long enough for a full-fledged editorial, but all of them things I want to say.

Potlucks and Shorts

Over the years it has been a joy to get together with other Christians on Sunday afternoons during a gospel meeting, or on other occasions, to share good food, laugh together, and generally just have a good time. I believe that early Christians had such occasions for they "broke bread from house to house" and "ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2: 46). Our Lord enjoyed being in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus as well as other social gatherings.

But I have come to look upon some of these with less enthusiasm than in the past. Such occasions often become painful reminders of how some of the Lord's people are being fashioned after this world. More and more are showing up in shorts or other casual attire which are not decent. At one place, after a sermon on "Modesty" one of the Bible class teachers appeared at a potluck in shorts. He was joined by another man in the same sort of attire. For the benefit of those among us who now speak of "long shorts" and "short shorts," I believe we would have to say these were of the "short" variety of "shorts." What is even of more concern is the fact that such folks seem to have no trace of blush nor give any indication that they have any idea this might be out of place. Brethren, "we are drifting."

Evolution and the Mississippi River

Mark Twain was a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi for a time and in his book "LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI" commented on how much the river had been shortened by cutoffs in his lifetime.

"Therefore, the Mississippi between Cairo and New Orleans was twelve hundred and fifteen miles long one hundred and seventy-six years ago. It was eleven hundred and eighty after the cutoff of 1722. It was one thousand and forty after the American Bend cutoff. It has lost sixty-seven miles since. Consequently its length is only nine hundred and seventy-three miles at present.

Now, if I wanted to be one of those ponderous scientific people, and 'let on' to prove what had occurred in the remote past by what had occurred in a given time in the recent past, or what will occur in the far future by what has occurred in late years, what an opportunity is here!

Geology never had such a chance, nor such exact data to argue from! Nor 'development of species,' either! Glacial epochs are great things, but they are vague-vague. Please observe:

In the space of one hundred and seventy-six years the Lower Mississippi has shortened itself two hundred and forty-two miles. That is an average of a trifle over one mile and a third per year. Therefore, any calm person, who is not blind or idiotic, can see that in the Old Oolitic Silurian Period, just a million years ago next November, The Lower Mississippi River was upwards of one million three hundred thousand miles long, and stuck out over the Gulf of Mexico like a fishing rod. And by the same token any person can see that seven hundred and forty-two years from now the Lower Mississippi will be only a mile and three quarters long, and Cairo and new Orleans will have joined their streets together, and be plodding comfortably along under a single mayor and a mutual board of aldermen. There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact" (Mark Twain, *LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI*, p. 120).

Gathered Together Praying

It was a sad time for the church in Jerusalem. The wicked Herod had vexed certain of the church and had James, the brother of John, killed with a sword. Peter had been arrested and imprisoned. What would become of him the brethren did not know, but they knew where to take their cares. They called a prayer meeting at the house of John Mark's mother. When Peter was released and came to join with the disciples he found many "gathered together praying" (Acts 12: 12). Men ought always to pray and not to faint. Prayers should be without ceasing knowing that the effectual fervent prayers of righteous people avail much.

In that context I exhort our readers to earnestly pray for Phyllis Key, wife of David Key, who operates Religious Supply Center. Phyllis is battling a malignancy of the liver. She is truly one of God's noble women. While this is under way, their niece, Leah Key, daughter of Charles and Annetta Key of the Hebron Lane congregation, is undergoing treatment for a brain tumor. She will soon undergo bone marrow transplant. She is a devout young woman with a radiant personality.

Also, I learned this morning (October 17) that Julian R. Snell, long-time friend and author of a column in this paper, has suffered a heart attack and is in Parkview Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. He preaches for the Downtown church in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee. At present it is expected that by-pass surgery will be necessary.

I am sure there are many who stand in need of the prayers of the righteous. I just wanted to make these known to you and ask you to speak with the Almighty about it in your private chambers and when you gather with others to pray.

Thanks to Donnie V. Rader

Faithful friends are truly a blessing from the Lord. That is where you turn for help in times of trouble. I am

much indebted to brother Rader for his able work the past few months. What started out to be a three month's work through the summer, turned into a much longer period of editorial work for him. He has done his work well and all who read and hold an interest in the work of this paper are in his debt for his devoted service. I am mending from back surgery though still under some restrictions and limitations for a few weeks yet. Still, I hope to edit the January issue and be back at my post for awhile to come.

In January we will begin a series of five articles by Donnie V. Rader reviewing the book, *Rethinking Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage*, by Jerry F. Bassett. This book is well-written and is being widely circulated. We believe error is taught in this book and have asked brother Rader to write this review. Watch for it.

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THE NATURE OF CHRIST (2)

Hoyt Houchen

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PHILIPPIANS 2: 5-8

Perhaps this is the main text upon which a discussion of the nature of Christ while He was upon earth hinges. It is believed by some that the phrase in verse 7 of the passage, "but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant," means that Jesus gave up His deity or His divine attributes and became only a man when He came to earth — that He was divested of His nature.

First, to determine what Jesus gave up when He descended to earth, we must consider the context of this entire passage. The thought of these verses is introduced by Paul when he urged his readers to be of "one mind" (of the same mind), "doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself (Phil. 2: 3-5). The key word is HUMILITY. These first few verses introduce what follows. Nothing was to be done "through faction or vainglory" (vs. 3), "but in lowliness of mind" (vs. 4). The emphasis in these verses is an attitude or disposition of HUMILITY. When this is realized, what follows is much easier understood. Christ serves as the example of humility; "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (vs. 5). What was the mind of Christ? Obviously, it was humility. He serves as our perfect example (1 Pet. 2: 21-23). Paul now proceeds to show HOW Jesus humbled Himself.

The humility of Christ is seen in the fact that "existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God, a thing to be grasped" (vs. 6). The word "form" (Gr. *morphe*) relates to one's appearance — his visage. "In his preincarnate state Christ possessed the attributes of God, and so appeared to those in heaven who saw him" (A. T. Robertson, op cit, Vol. 4, p. 444). Jesus took the "form" (Gr. *morphe*) of a servant. He was still God but now He has the appearance, the characteristics of a man — a servant is no different in nature from a king, but his role is different. So it was with Jesus. The role of Jesus changed, but not His nature. While with God before His incarnation, Jesus did not count His equality with God as "a thing to be grasped." The word "grasped" (ASV) is from the Greek word *harpagmos*, "robbery" (KJV). Jesus did not regard the visage of His role as something to be "grasped." J. B. Lightfoot comments that He "did not regard it as a prize, a treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 111). So, Jesus was willing to give up His heavenly appearance and role of splendor

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and glory to take upon Himself the appearance and role of a servant. Thus His mind (attitude), disposition of humility, is clearly illustrated to Paul's readers.

Christ Jesus "emptied himself (vs. 7). The word "emptied" is the Greek word *ekenose*, first aorist active indicative of *kenoo*, a verb from *kenos*, "empty." The *kenosis*, the doctrine that concerns the emptying of Christ has been a subject of debate among theologians for years. Of what did Jesus empty Himself? A consideration of the context in which "he emptied himself has already shed light upon the question (see preceding paragraph). Also, some other passages which we believe to be parallel, supply us with additional help. His humiliation is set forth in 2 Corinthians 8: 9, where Paul writes: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." He became poor; He condescended, lived among men and was deprived of an earthly home while He ministered here (Lk. 9: 58). Although this was a contrast in roles, He retained His deity and divinity. Jesus prayed in John 17: 5: "And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." These passages are good commentaries on how Jesus emptied Himself (Phil. 2: 7). Of what did Jesus empty Himself? He emptied Himself of riches and glory. Arndt and Gingrich give as the meaning of *kenoo*, "make empty" in verse 7: "*he emptied himself, divested himself of his privileges* (op. cit. p. 429).

Some in-depth commentaries provide additional information upon our subject at hand. J. B. Lightfoot states: "He divested Himself, 'not of His divine nature, for this was impossible, but 'of the glories and the prerogatives of Deity. This He did by taking upon Him the form of a servant'" (*Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 112).

Benjamin B. Warfield wrote the following on this text: "So far is Paul from intimating, therefore, that Our Lord laid aside His Deity in entering upon His life on earth, that he rather asserts that He retained His Deity throughout His life on earth, and in the whole course of His humiliation, up to death itself, was consciously ever exercising self-abnegation, living a life which did not by nature belong to Him, which stood in fact in direct contradiction to the life which was naturally His. It is this underlying implication which determines the whole choice of the language in which Our Lord's earthly life is described. It is because it is kept in mind that He still was 'in the form of God, ' that is, that He still had in possession all that body of characterizing qualities by which God is made God, for example, that He is said to have been made, not man, but 'in the likeness of man, ' to have been found, not man, but 'in fashion as a man'; and that the wonder of His servant-hood and obedience, the mark of servant-hood, is thought of as so great. Though He was truly man, He was much more than man; and Paul would not have his readers imagine that He had become merely man. In other words, Paul does not teach that our Lord was once God but had become instead man; he teaches that though He was God, He had become also man: ("The Person of Christ," *Interna-*

tional Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 4, p. 2339).

The comments of R. C. H. Lenski on the Philippians passage are also noteworthy: "All grades of Kenoticism are answered by the fact of the *immutability* of God, of the one essence which is identical in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. All Kenoticism which subtracts attributes from God reduces deity to the nature of creatures. From a creature an attribute may be withdrawn and still leave the creature. To withdraw even one attribute from God is to destroy God. The God, for instance, who is no longer omnipotent, is no longer God. The revelation of Scripture regarding God is the truth that his every attribute is his essence or being itself which reveals one side of that being. All that we call attributes of God is not a plurality, is not divisible in its reality, but is the one unity — God... A Jesus who is devoid of one attribute of deity is no more the Son of God than a Jesus who had only one nature while He lived on earth, was not at all the logos, was only Joseph's natural son" (The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, pgs. 772=73).

Supplemental to Lenski's statements are the comments of Colin Brown, editor of *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. "If Christ be divested of essential divine attributes, it is difficult to see how the doctrine of his divinity could still be maintained... it would make him, as the Arians believed, something less than God, but more than man" (Vol. 1, p. 549). Then he concludes: "Neither the gospels nor Phil. 2 present the picture of the abandonment of any divine attributes. They do, however, show Jesus clearly accepting the status and role of a servant (Phil. 2: 7; Mk. 10: 45; Lk. 22: 27; Jno. 13: 4-16; 15: 20; Matt. 10: 24). The motive or guiding principle in all Jesus' actions was love, humility and obedience to the Father, as Phil. 2 shows:" (Ibid. p. 549). We believe these comments well summarize the meaning of Philippians 2: 5-8.

Neither does Philippians 2: 5-8 nor any other scripture teach that Jesus was divested of His deity or His divine attributes and became only a man when He came to earth. His role was different, but His nature remained the same. A principle of biblical hermeneutics is that a passage must be interpreted in harmony with other scriptures; thus the Bible becomes its own interpreter. In the article that follows, we shall examine other passages which deal with the nature of Christ.

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ACCEPTED OF HIM

(2 Cor. 5:9)

Donnie V. Rader

P.O. Box 9
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DEAR SANTA

Dear Santa,

I hope this letter gets to you before you have made all your plans for your Christmas eve visit in our homes.

Though I am not one to complain, I do feel that at times you get a little carried away with your spirit of giving. Don't get me wrong, what you have given to me, my family and friends is greatly appreciated — at least on my part. However, don't you think that in the last few years you have overdone things just a bit? I have wondered if it would be better for some of these children if they were given a little less.

One of the things that prompts me to write this letter is watching my children and others open gifts during the Christmas season. I have observed children opening presents you have left for them in the homes of grandparents, aunts and uncles and friends as well as those you left in their own homes. All of this add up. I have been bothered as I watched children open one gift and cast it aside, without knowing what it was, so they could tear into another present. They sit in a maze of paper, ribbons, boxes, toys and candy having no idea what all they have been given.

I fear that what you are doing could lead the children of today to *materialism* or at least the spirit of *ingratitude*. Those of us who love God and his word want our children to set their affections on things above (Col. 3: 2) and not think that life consist of our possessions (Luke 12: 15). I want my children to be thankful for what they have (Eph. 5: 20). I pray that I can help teach them to be content, even if all they have are the basic necessities of life (1 Tim. 6: 8). I hope they never reach the point that they expect more and more to be given to them.

Surely, you are old enough to understand that it doesn't take much to make children happy. In reality it is not an abundance of toys and things that satisfies them. Many children have as much fun with the boxes you bring the toys in as they do the expensive toys themselves.

Maybe you have forgotten what you used to bring those of my parent's generation. It wasn't much, but they were excited. You gave them an apple or orange, some stick candy and, on a big Christmas, *one* toy. Yet, they were happy. For them, that was a big celebration. When my generation came along you felt we had to have far more than our parents had. I remember on some of

the best years you brought things that came from yard sales, yet repaired, cleaned and painted to look like new. I also remember some gifts being hand made. What we had on Christmas day we thought was a lot—and it was.

For some reason, however, you think that my children and others of their generation must have more than we received — which is far more than their grandparents ever got. I wonder what you will be bringing their children. If it continues to increase, I image you will need a bigger sleigh and more reindeer.

Yes, I want my children and others to have plenty, Yet, I begin to worry a little when new toys are quickly forgotten because they are lost in a mass of playthings in the toy box or because they are soon replaced by another new toy.

Presents are like money. The more we have the less we appreciate them. Those with less seem to enjoy what little they have more than those with a lot. One writer said that our children are a lot like our stomachs. They don't need all that we can afford to give them.

This may be too late to help much this year. If so, think about my warning. Maybe by the next year you can do better. Please don't ruin the children by flooding them with material things.

One last thing: when you make your list or check it twice you may want to make a note that I've been good this year.

Love,

Donnie

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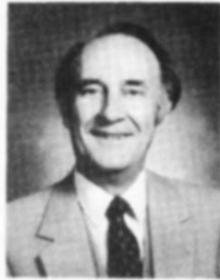
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WOMEN AND SONGLEADING

QUESTION: *Our preacher's wife occasionally starts a song on Wednesday evenings. It is usually a new song that we're trying to learn. Some of the brethren feel she is wrong to do so. When confronted with our beliefs, she replied that if she is asked to start it by the songleader, she is not usurping authority. Please print your views. Some of the brethren here think it's okay and some do not.*

ANSWER: For a woman to begin a song at the request of the songleader is no different in nature than for a woman to answer a question in the auditorium class at the request of a male teacher. Both actions are in harmony with God's word. Paul wrote, "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (ASV). The Phrase, "nor to have dominion over a man" is a preferable rendition of the King James Version, "nor to usurp authority over the man." This passage prohibits a woman from teaching over man, thereby exercising authority over him. Merely starting a song under the above described circumstances hardly puts one in the role of domination.

On the other hand if a woman began to take control of the situation, correcting mistakes, offering suggestions, etc., even though seated, she has seized control, and for all practical purposes, she is in the same position as if she were standing before the assembly in the place of the male songleader. Let the women be in subjection, as also saith the law (1 Cor. 14: 34).

A woman's deportment and demeanor are to be one of submission and quietness. R. C. H. Lenski states that *quietness* equals "without herself talking, without placing herself on an equality with the men conducting the service and doing the talking" (Commentary on First Timothy, p. 562). This same principle would be applicable to leading the singing.

A man may not grant permission to a woman to do what Paul says, "I permit not." If a man granting permission precludes a woman from having dominion over a man, then a woman could preach, lead the public prayers, teach a class of men, serve as an elder or deacon, preside at the Lord's table, direct the singing, and never violate Paul's divine injunction in 1 Tim. 2: 12. Paul did not say, "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, unless she gets permission." This kind of rationale would permit a wife to rule

over her husband in the home providing he gave her permission.

Obviously, a woman would need permission to begin a song on behalf of the songleader or else she would be out of place. But this is also true of a man who would usurp the prerogatives of the songleader. For a woman to have to start a song for a songleader is rare, but sporadically such may be warranted. In the final analysis, she is doing only what God has authorized and that is —singing. However, it seems to me that a congregation wanting to learn new songs could invite a brother adept in singing from another congregation and teach them some new songs, rather than always depending on a sister to begin unfamiliar songs.

If a woman starting a song causes dissension, good judgment tells us to forgo the practice. Peace is more important than the exercise of a liberty to begin a song.

A BURNING FIRE

(Jer. 20:9)

Jim Deason

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Culleoka, Tennessee 38451



GOD OWNS IT ALL

My earliest remembrances of Bible class go back to a small one room church building where we pulled curtains across the back of the auditorium for classrooms. There in humble surroundings I was taught by people who loved the Lord and who loved me. Those early lessons were most impressive. Lessons about Abraham and Noah, Daniel and David, were taught in earnestness and made an impact for good upon my young mind.

One of the more memorable lessons that I learned revolved around a song that is seldom heard today. The song is entitled, "He's Got The Whole World In His Hands". The message of the song is that God controls it all because He owns it all. That's an important lesson for all of us to learn.

The Lord said, "For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all it contains" (Psa. 50: 10-12). David said, "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Psa. 24: 1). Indeed, God does have the whole world in His hands.

Is it not true that the one who owns something has the right to control it? Is it not also true that we have no rights over that which belongs to someone else; except those rights that the owner might delegate to us? This is why the Bible calls us stewards. A steward is a manager, someone who has been put in charge of that which belongs to another and who is held accountable for its proper use. Since God owns it all, everything we are and

have belongs to Him. He has the right to control that which is His and delegate such responsibility as He chooses. Again, He has the whole world, including you and me, in his hands.

OUR BODIES BELONG TO THE LORD. Although this is true in general, there is a special sense in which the body of the Christian belongs to the Lord. It is "a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price..." (1 Cor. 6: 19-20). God lays claim to what belongs to Him and commands that we present our "bodies a living and holy sacrifice..." (Rom. 12: 1). We are not free to use our body as we see fit but must subject ourselves to the will of Him who owns it as one who will be held accountable for its use.

OUR TIME IS THE LORD'S. God is not governed by the limitations of time like you and me. Time means nothing to the Him (2 Pet. 3: 8) except as an extension of His patience. But it means a lot to us. Our time is limited (Job 14: 1; Psa. 90: 10; Jas. 4: 14). Since God has given us time, He lays claim to it and commands us to make the most of it (Eph. 5: 16). Jesus, while in the flesh, felt bound by the limitations which time placed upon Him and said, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work" (Jn. 9: 4). I am afraid that many of us are bad stewards of the time which God has entrusted to us. The vast majority of our time is spent in the pursuit of material security and temporal happiness while the work of the kingdom is neglected. My brethren, it should not be so!

OUR ABILITIES BELONG TO THE LORD. God has given to us the abilities which we possess (Rom. 12: 6-8). The purpose of the parable of the talents (Matt. 25: 14-30) is to make us aware of the fact that He claims our abilities for use in His kingdom and holds us accountable for it. Pity the man who neglects to use his ability in God's service.

OUR MATERIAL POSSESSIONS AND MONEY BELONG TO THE LORD. God "richly supplies us with all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6: 17). He claims authority over the things that we have by instructing us in the use of them (1 Tim. 5: 8; Eph. 4: 28; 1 Cor. 16: 1-2; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19). Our money and the things it can buy are meaningless except for how they can be used to advance the cause of Jesus Christ.

Many of you, like myself, have been taught these principles from childhood. But knowing that God owns it all and living with these principles embedded in our hearts are two different things. It is vital that we understand that God has the world in His hands. Only then can we begin thinking in terms of "stewardship" rather than "ownership". Only then will we begin thinking in terms of "using" instead of "possessing". Only then will we begin to think about and prepare for that day in which we shall stand before the Lord and give an account of our stewardship.

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DEATH AND THE PREACHER

The preacher is probably subjected to the vagaries of death more than any other person. Undertakers, medical personnel, and other professionals may have to deal with death, but they may not become as closely and emotionally involved as does the preacher.

Generally, the preacher is called before, during, or after death because the deceased or the family want it that way. And so, the preacher must not only try to comfort and support the family, but deal with his own grief.

This writer has stood at the door of death with the dying many times, and tried to look through their eyes and hearts into eternity. I have watched the ravages of cancer, heart disease, third degree burns, and other terminal maladies squeeze the last breath out of fleshly bodies, and be reminded, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death..." (Eccl. 8: 8).

Sometimes the preacher must try to suppress his own emotions in order to lead grieving loved ones through their own personal tour of Gethsemane. But there have been times when I asked myself if I were becoming hardened to the atmosphere of death.

In the course of one funeral service, I had three different family members request that I make my remarks as short as possible, so that they would have time to get back home and go to work on Monday morning. They planned the funeral for Sunday, so that it would not interrupt their social and secular appointments.

On another occasion, some of the family members were feuding and not speaking to each other. They agreed to help with the singing at the funeral home, but wouldn't go to the cemetery. Before the echo of my "Amen" faded away at the grave side, the nearest remaining relative allowed that they had better get home and do the milking. Not one tear did I see shed at that funeral. Like Jehoram, that poor soul "departed without being desired" (2 Chron. 21: 20). But at least, the undertaker and I saw to it that he had a decent burial (Eccl. 6: 3).

But then, I'm called upon to conduct memorial services for a dear friend, or sit before the corpse of such an one, and I'm reminded that you cannot altogether harden your heart in the presence of death.

But, how does the preacher deal with the death of a dear friend, or one of his own family? The same way he has

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admonished and exhorted others to deal with it. he practices what he preaches—life is short, death is certain, each must give account of himself unto God, there is hope in Christ and the resurrection, and comfort to be found in God's word.

But now comes the real test of faith. When the doctor tells the preacher that tests show a malignant cancer, and that further tests will determine the extent of the malignancy, what does the preacher do? He does the same thing he has counseled others to do on numerous occasions—he heads for Gethsemane and prays. And, he has the added consolation of knowing that others will watch and pray with him, and not fall asleep as did the Savior's disciples (Mt. 26: 40).

All my life I have preached that preachers are just common folks, and no different from anyone else when it comes to moral standards, death, and the judgment. Sure, the specter of death at one's door can instill a sense of urgency as to time and message that may benefit the preacher as well as the hearers, but really there is no dramatic change in direction or outlook, if the preacher has been practicing what he has preached to others. Now comes the challenge and opportunity to test his own faith, and draw upon those resources of strength and hope which are boundless in nature and free to all who ask (Rom. 10: 12).

Like other common folks, the preacher "himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Heb. 5: 2), but he has no monopoly on the privilege of prayer or offering "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2: 5, 9). And, I have seen preachers and others who displayed commendable faith, strength, and attitude when wrestling with the enemy of death.

And, we would be "of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15: 19), were it not for the "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53: 3), and the hope of the resurrection through Him (Rev. 1: 18).

Let us mark the Savior's footprints as they cross the brook Cedron, and lead into Gethsemane, for we may need to take that trail sooner than we think.

Hearken, ye of Adam's race,
Rest your soul and slow your pace,
Turn aside and cross the brook into
Old Gethsemane on Olive's breast;
When the flesh is worn and weak,
Entreat the Galilean meek—
He'll give you strength to climb
Your mountain, and beyond the
Pain and tears—eternal rest.

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FAMILY REUNIONS

There are several kinds of reunions. Some in the military like to get together every few years with their wartime buddies. There are also high school and college reunions, usually measured in decades. These are all quite popular and show how people who have been together in some common cause or situation like to get together and renew old times.

Then there are family **reunions**. In many large families these are usually annual events. These are very pleasant to be sure and relatives and friends will travel long distances to be together one more time. How wonderful such times can be.

In 1984 Barbara Adams was trying with a sense of urgency, along with Wilma Adams, to arrange an annual Adams family reunion. She died in March of 1985 with the plans incomplete.

In July of 1990, Wilma Adams, also with a sense of urgency attempted to set plans in motion for an annual Adams family reunion. She died before the month was over. Her plans were left behind incomplete.

Thomas Icard, my late brother-in-law, loved the Adams family. Like Barbara and Wilma he adopted the family as his very own. Although he did not make any plans for a reunion, he would have loved the idea and would have heartily jointed in to make it a success. He never got such a chance because he died in September of 1989. No plans had been completed.

Ironically, however, though unplanned, each of these dear family members provided the occasion for our family to have a total of three reunions. **We had our reunion.** But, oh what a price to pay!

There is yet another reunion which I want to mention. The Bible speaks of a place called Heaven, where the redeemed of all ages will be gathered together some day. There all our faithful loved ones will see each other again. Not only will we see Jesus, our Lord, but we shall also see our loved ones in Christ as well. What a great day that will be after resurrection and judgment!

As time grows shorter, as those dearest to us have gone on before, Heaven takes on even greater significance and we begin to yearn earnestly for that Heavenly reunion. God's family will have a reunion that will last forever. With Isaiah of old we say "how long" (Isa. 6: 11) and also with the martyred saints under the altar we say "How long, O Lord, holy and true... ?" (Rev. 6: 10).

We sing a song which says "it won't be very long, 'til this short life is o'er" but now it seems so far away. There is another song which helps us even more which declares "each step I take just leads me closer home." How wonderful that at the end of each and every day God's people are a little closer to that great and glorious reunion in that city foursquare.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22: 20).

THE WORK IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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In December, my wife and I will return to preach in Czechoslovakia. We returned to America the last week in May of this year after having spent just over eight months there. As the time for our return draws close, I would like to share some information concerning the work there and make some observations about the work.

At the time of this writing 13 Czechs have been baptized. Studies continue with numerous others. A number of the current contacts have been made as a result of the Czech Christians interest in helping spread the Word. While this proper and natural manifestation of growth was anticipated, it is still quite heartwarming.

There were some aspects of the work that were quite surprising. One unpleasant surprise was the proliferation of denominational and cultic influence. Charismatic and ecumenical ideology is very wide-spread. I truly believe that I spent more time discussing the work of the Holy Spirit than evidences or Catholicism. Also, the Mormons, Adventist, and Jehovah's Witnesses are well organized and typically evangelistic. Institutional churches are involved in some efforts there, but, to this point, have not been particularly effective, especially in Bohemia and Moravia.

The intelligence and study habits of the Czechs was a more pleasant surprise. They are surprisingly well read in many areas, including philosophy. In an early study with a young man who has since been converted I was asked to compare and contrast the Genesis flood account with the Epic of Gilgarnesh, an Akkadian flood legend. The studies are often quite lengthy because of their enthusiasm. Many are also willing to do a great deal of reading between studies. On one occasion, after having asked a young man to read several chapters in Matthew, he replied that he would probably read the entire book. Also, they are critical listeners, ready to challenge what is presented. In addition to manifesting

the attitude of the Bereans (Acts 17: 11), it makes them less susceptible to the inevitable false teachers.

Since our return I have been contacted by a number of people who are interested in the work and want my thoughts on the best way they could be involved. Now I would like to put in print some of the things I have articulated in the discussions. I do not claim to have all of the answers. Some of the conclusions that I have reached have resulted from mistakes I have made or helped make. I also hasten to acknowledge that these observations are matters of judgment. Also, I am presupposing an interest in only scripturally authorized activities in the reader.

I commend the interest that many are expressing financially, with words of encouragement and prayer, or in actually planning to go. I hope this interest will be an enduring one. The part of the world under consideration has a population of around 400 million people. Many years of work and many laborers are needed. To this end, I offer the following thoughts.

In Czechoslovakia the work is in the process of "spreading out." Some of the people who have been baptized in Prague are actually from other cities in Bohemia and Moravia. Work needs to be done with these people in their home towns. Mike Morrow who has recently returned from several months there is planning to return in January to do this. Anyone interested in helping Mike in this work can contact him through me. Also, anyone planning to go to Czechoslovakia should at least consider locating in one of these areas.

The type and length of trip that will be profitable has also been an area of interest to many. I would like to preface my thoughts on this with a couple of comments. First, as suggested earlier, this is essentially a matter of judgment. Also, theoretically, any trip can be of some value. With this background accepted, I offer the following.

In most cases, trips of a couple of months or less will be of limited value. I am led to this conclusion by a combination of considerations. The culture shock is drastic enough that it takes some time to adjust sufficiently to truly communicate with the indigenous population, even those who speak English with some proficiency. Obviously, this time factor lessens the effectiveness of a very short trip. Also, while as a whole the people are open and receptive, conversion has been a protracted process. Few have been taught in less than three or four months. So the question becomes who will "follow up" with these folks and when will it occur? We went to Prague initially in part because we thought that we had a pool of contacts waiting to be worked with. These contacts were made during a short trip made earlier in the year. However, we were able to develop studies with only a couple of these people and neither was converted.

What about a broad distribution of Bibles and materials? Of course there is value in placing the Truth in the hands of people who have not had previous access to it. However, the tangible results of this have been very limited. Early in our work in Prague we tried this type of approach. Even with us living there and giving a local address we did not receive even one response from

someone we met during a general distribution of literature. Our success came from more personal contact with the people.

Previously, I stated that this described "most cases." What would cause the exception? One circumstance that creates a different situation is a person having prior contact with people in a specific area. If a person goes into an area like this and stays working with these people it may well be profitable. It helps to solve both the communication problem and the problem of spending too much time traveling. Also, I believe that it may be worthwhile for a person planning to move to Eastern Europe to go first to help them make good decisions.

Questions have also arisen concerning the value of trips that involve staying only a few months. I would preface my thoughts by acknowledging that ideally, capable men would determine to go to these places for a number of years to work. Having acknowledged the axiomatic, what is the value of a shorter stay? I offer two lines of reasoning to vindicate the legitimacy of this approach. The first is that the problems I suggested previously concerning short visits can be reasonably handled in a stay of a number of months. Also, the work that has been done thus far has been accomplished with workers staying a year or less, with the notable exception of the Young's, who have been there just over a year. Most of the doubts about the value of a stay of a year or less come from trying to apply basically valid generalizations about work in Europe to the central and eastern countries. The differences in the situations encountered in the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands, and those encountered in the formerly communist countries are too basic for the generalizations to legitimately apply. The people in Czech, Romania, etc. have been denied access to the Truth. Western Europe has not. Establishing credibility is a problem for gospel preachers in many

foreign works. However, in the Central and Eastern countries it is not. To this and other comments about short stays I would add that it is easier to be critical of others judgment from a comfortable house with no plans to go.

So what is needed in reaching these people? Christians who are willing to sacrifice and go; men and women who will do the work and be supportive of one another; people who are willing and capable of adapting to the culture of the country and respecting and loving the people; churches and individuals are needed that will sacrifice to send and support these people are the answer. (Surely some of the work on the building will wait.) All Christians are needed to offer the prayers and words of encouragement necessary to spread the gospel to this part of the world.

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