

"I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth" (Psalms 57:9-11).

The Advocate of Truth

*Echoes From
the Past -
Happy New
Year*

*The Mysteries
of God*

*A New Year's
Message*



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About the cover: This photo was sent to us by Sister Denise Gonzales from California.

A SHORT MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR

By Bond Tennant

The Israelites were under the leadership of Moses when they came out of the land of Egypt. Because of his great ability to do a difficult job, his name is respected and associated with these people. Moses is also known throughout the Christian world as a godly man. He is recorded in the pages of history as an unquestioned leader.

As we enter into this new secular year, let us also recognize that, we too, have marvelous leadership, for the Lord Jesus Christ has promised His presence will be forever with us. The Apostle Peter tells us, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7).

There is only one possible way which can cause us to fall by the wayside in the wilderness of this life. That way is for us to take our eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ. A song writer caught this wonderful truth when he wrote:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth
Will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water. However, when he began to watch the rolling waves, his attention was not focused on Jesus, and he began to sink into a watery grave. "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:28-31).

Yes, it is comforting to know that we have a Guide and Leader whom we can follow with confidence and assurance. Someone said, "I don't know what is in the future, but I know the Lord holds the future, and I'm in the Lord."

In traveling, sometimes we trust ourselves to travel over roads and bridges which have supporting columns anchored deep down in the earth or water. We believe in their strength without a doubt. We walk our normal road of life without fear. We can trust our eternal well being to

our Lord Jesus Christ.

The leadership of Moses was interrupted because of his death, but the leadership of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be interrupted. He has conquered death, and He cannot die.

During 2009, let us have unwavering faith and confidence that our Lord Jesus Christ will guide us, if only we are willing to be led.

God Is Faithful

It has been said that the distress of a crumbling civilization today is caused by broken promises. Human promises are not always intentionally broken. Circumstances may arise which make it impossible to fulfill them. In spite of what many think and believe, man is not in control of his destiny. Man cannot foresee the future, and he cannot judge his present ability accurately. Therefore he often finds it impossible to do what he has promised. This is not true with God.

Concerning God, the Apostle Paul writes that "...he is faithful that promised" (Hebrews 10:23). We can depend upon God to keep His promises. He does not change His mind. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). There is no need for God to change His mind. He can foresee every eventuality that may arise, and He is able to meet it! God is faithful to His promises, and He is abundantly able to fulfill them.

At certain times, we may have been disappointed in our friends, our neighbors, our business associates, our fellow workers in the factory or office! At times we may even have been disappointed in some of our own brethren in Christ. These experiences are discouraging, but God permits them for a purpose. He wants us to lean more fully upon Him rather than trusting in the arm of the flesh.

To realize that God is permitting these experiences for good helps us to bear up under trial. Even so, we may feel our weakness at times, and courage may falter. We need to be on guard lest we become weary in well doing. We would certainly fail if we were left to fight our battles alone. However, God's love will not permit this, for His promise is, "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD" (Psalm 31:24).

HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

The following article is reprinted from the January 22, 1979 *Advocate of Truth*. It gives good admonition especially for the time in which we live.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

There is a sense in which the point of time which marks our passage from one year into another is unimportant. But there is another sense in which it has profound significance. The Bible speaks of divisions of times being for "seasons, and for days, and years." As I thought of the coming of the secular New Year there came to my mind thoughts about another year, how fast it went by and how much has been happening, that I quoted the above verse to myself and wrote this article.

As we meditate upon these words, let us consider first, The Divine Presence, "I am with thee"; second, the Divine Possession, "I am thy God"; third, The Divine Promises, three in number.

The Divine Presence. I am overwhelmed with joy when I call to mind many incidents recorded in the Word containing these words, "I am with thee." It is declared that God was with Moses and Abraham and Joseph and Daniel. Our risen Lord, in giving the Great Commission, gave this promise to those who were true to the Commission, "...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20).

As time rolls on, some of our earthly friends may prove untrue, but our Lord says, "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Earthly props may fail, but we have Him. Praise His Holy Name! Through the many trials of life, Henry Martyn, David Livingstone, Judson, Morrison, and Carey all testified of joy through the presence of the Lord. He will be with us if we obey Him.

The Divine Presence does not mean that the road will always be smooth, or that trials will never come our way. It means joy and victory in spite of trials. Would we have



had Pilgrim's Progress if John Bunyan had not been imprisoned? Would we have had some of the Pauline epistles with all their sweetness if Paul had not written or dictated them in prison? Sometimes the presence of the Lord is especially real in the hottest furnace. Was not that especially true of the three Hebrew children? The king came down and looked into the fiery furnace and said to the men who had cast the three Hebrew children into it, "How many men did you cast in?" They answered, "Three, O king." The king said, "...Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25).

Stocks and bonds may become worthless; trials may come. What of it? Such things need not take from us the consciousness of the Divine Presence. Listen to Peter. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:7).

The Divine Possession. "I am thy God." "...The LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God" (Genesis 17:1). The Hebrew brought over into English is this, "El-Shaddai," the all-sufficient God. It is interesting to note the different occasions on which God said, "I am thy God." Times change, seasons change, the years roll on, but He, the Everlasting One, knows no change.

In Devonshire, England, there was an old farmer whose homestead had belonged to the family for three generations. At last the old man had come on what he called evil times and had to sell out. The auction took place. Everything was sold. The old man came back into the farm kitchen when the auction was over. He sat down on an old box and looked around at the empty farmhouse. As he looked around he said, "Thank God, there is one thing they have not sold. The auctioneer has over-

looked it--the most precious thing." That was a little card with silver lettering that hung up over the mantelpiece, "Thou remainest." All else is gone: "Thou remainest."

Well do I remember the testimony of an old man, given on Silver Heights Campground, New Albany, Indiana. His devoted companion of many years had fallen asleep in Jesus. He recognized this fact in his testimony, and added, "He remains." Moody gone! Torrey gone! Ironside gone! He remains!!

In the second century they brought a martyr before a king, and the king wanted him to recant and give up Christ and Christianity; but the man spurned the proposition.

"But," the king said, "if you do not do it I shall banish you."

The man smiled and answered, "You cannot banish me from Christ: for He says He will never leave me nor forsake me."

The king became angry, and said, "Well, I will confiscate your property; take it all from you."

And the man replied, "My treasures are laid up on high; you cannot get them."

The king became more angry and said, "I will kill you."

"Why," the man answered, "I have been dead forty years; I have been dead with Christ; dead to the world; my life is hid with Christ in God, and you cannot touch it."

In whom was the confidence of this martyr? He had heard God's voice saying, "I am thy God."

The Divine Promises. Many great and precious promises are found in the Word. Three of them are in the verse quoted from Isaiah.

"I will strengthen thee." We are not going to travel far into the New Year without learning that the secret of strength is the consciousness of weakness. When we are weak, then are we strong. William R. Newell, the well-known Bible teacher, spoke in the Coliseum meetings in St. Louis on II Corinthians 12:9, "...my strength is made perfect in weakness..." Then he called for a time of prayer. One brother prayed; "Lord, we'll furnish the weakness if you'll furnish the strength."

"I will help thee." David is quoted in Hebrews 13:6, "...The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The Lord was not only David's helper and Paul's helper; He is our helper. A good word for the New Year is this: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Another good verse for this occasion is Psalm 18:39, "...thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle..."

"I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." When Peter was about to sink, the Lord Jesus Christ "...stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). Think of the lame man at the gate Beautiful. "...Peter...took him by the right hand, and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength" (Acts 3:6,7). This promise of support is a good New Year's promise. It is repeated in Isaiah 41:13, "...the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

We come back to the first words of our key verse. "Fear thou not." Fear is the child of doubt; faith is born of God. Fear ends in failure; faith leads to victory. When the alarmed servant said to Elisha in dismay, because a host compassed the city, "...Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Elisha, with strong faith in God, responded, "...Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (II Kings 6:15,16). We are to face enemies during the coming year. Our Lord says, "Fear not, my Almighty power is pledged to take care of the situation."

"Be not dismayed." The margin of the American Standard Version reads, "Look not around thee." Our eyes are not to be upon our environment. Peter began to sink when he looked at the waves. Neither are we to look back. "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). "...No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). To look within may not be too good. Too much introspection may lead to morbidity. Look up, look to God, be not dismayed.

A happy new year is in store for us if we take to heart this great verse out of Isaiah's writings. It is loaded with inspiration.

However calm or rough the voyage of life may be during the next twelve months, a firm reliance upon Almighty God will keep our hearts calm. The story has been told of a rough passage which a certain vessel had in coming from England. When the tempest had risen to fury, the passengers were overcome with fear. Some cried, some prayed, some grew livid and speechless. But one, and he a lad, went about the cabin as fast as he could, speaking encouragingly to every despairing soul. At last someone inquired, "Why do you feel no fear?" "Because," replied the youth, "my father is the pilot on this ship."

The events of the coming year are hidden from our view, but we have no fear: our trust is in God Almighty who says: "I am thy God."



The Mysteries Of God

By David DeLong

We are told in Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” People can only know about God and His ways through the revelation that He provides to them, especially through the pages of the Bible. But His purpose for that revelation, as the above verse implies, is so that the people will obey Him. Furthermore, in Psalm 25:14 we read, “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.” Covenant relationship with the Lord is a total mystery to most of the world, and even to the majority of professing christendom it is not well understood.

God’s covenant with mankind has always been about the keeping of His law, especially the Ten Commandments (see Deuteronomy 4:13). The Old Covenant involves man’s attempts to keep God’s law perfectly, something which he could never do (see Hebrews 7:11). The New Covenant involves Jesus’ keeping God’s law and having His righteousness imputed to His believers (see Matthew 5:17-19; Romans 4:5-8). Now we keep God’s commandments, not to establish our righteousness, but to qualify for the inheritance of God’s kingdom. (I hope to explain this more fully in the next issue of the Advocate.)

It is the Lord’s will for people to understand the secret things (mysteries) of God which He has plainly revealed in His Word. Amos 3:7 informs us, “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” As we have indicated, the Lord has *already* revealed many of His secrets to us in the pages of the Bible. If someone doesn’t understand these revealed secrets, it is many times because he or she is not willing to study the Word, or she/he is not willing to obey the Lord. Let’s look at an example of this from the Bible.

In Matthew 11, verses 1-24, Jesus sent out the twelve apostles on a preaching tour, spoke about John the Bap-

tist, and upbraided some of the cities which refused to repent, among other things. Then, in verses 25,26 He proclaims: “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

Why were certain things hidden from the multitudes (“wise and prudent”) and revealed unto Christ’s disciples (“babes”)? We get the answer to this question in Matthew 13:10-16: “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”

What a tremendous insight our Lord gives us with these words! Brother or Sister, if you have been privileged with the understanding of God’s revealed mysteries, praise Him for it! Please hold fast to this understanding and don’t ever let it go. Proverbs 23:23 says, “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.” Why is it that multitudes in today’s world do not understand the truth of God’s Word? Is it because “their

ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed”? Those who are misled by man’s traditions usually don’t even consider the possibility that they are living in error. The “might makes right” mentality may be at work here. If you feel because you are in a small minority of truth-seekers that you don’t count for much, please consider the Apostle Paul’s encouragement: “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (I Corinthians 1:26-29).

The Lord expects much from those to whom He has revealed His mysteries. In I Corinthians 4:1,2 Paul writes, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” What was true for the Apostle Paul and his co-ministers is also true of us in varying degrees. Every believer is a minister of Christ in some capacity, even though he or she may not actually be ordained. The Body of Christ is a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6), and as such, it offers spiritual sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15,16; Titus 3:14), and intercedes for others (I Timothy 2:1-3). Therefore, every believer needs to be a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, including sharing these mysteries with others.

Let us now look at some of the mysteries of God as given in the Bible. Going back to Matthew chapter 13, verses 3-52, we are shown seven parables by Jesus about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The first is the parable of the sower. It speaks to us about the Word’s reception in various people’s lives. Only in the person who bears fruit is the reception of the Word of any consequence (see also John 15:1-8). Fruit-bearing is a mystery to the world, including many people who claim to be Christians.

The second parable is about the tares of the field. It refers to the harvest of the earth when the reapers (angels) gather the tares (children of Satan) for burning, and gather the wheat (children of the kingdom) into God’s barn (probably the New Jerusalem). The New Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven (Revelation 21:2,3).

It is made of pure gold and is transparent like clear glass (Revelation 21:18). As a matter of fact, it looks like a “sea of glass” it is so large (12,000 furlongs foursquare--Revelation 21:16). Overcomers are on the sea of glass (New Jerusalem) when the seven last plagues are poured out on the earth (Revelation 15:2,6) The final judgment for the children of Satan is the lake of fire. All of this is a mystery to the vast majority of mankind.

The third parable refers to a grain of mustard seed sown in a field (the world--Matthew 13:38). Though it is the least of seeds, it grows into a tree and lodges the birds in its branches. That the kingdom of heaven is to be on earth, and not in heaven, is a great mystery which is not understood by most people. This parable seems to be another version of Daniel’s vision about Christ’s kingdom--the stone that “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:34,35).

The fourth parable is about leaven hid in three measures of meal. Leaven, as a symbol, appears to be used in Scripture in a sinful sense. It can be false doctrine (Matthew 16:12), or “malice and wickedness” (I Corinthians 5:6-8). It was a woman who hid the leaven in the meal. We know that a woman can represent a church (Revelation 12:1,2). But how does sin have a part in God’s kingdom? It doesn’t. However, the apostate church (the woman rider of the beast and her associates--Revelation 17; 18:4) has mixed falsehood with truth, and many people are caught up in this “leavened” system. May we be true to our calling and show these people that they are to “come out” of Babylon.

The fifth parable is about a treasure hid in a field, which field a man purchases after finding the treasure. An interesting thing in this parable is that the man hides the treasure after it was originally hidden and found. The treasure is quite possibly Israel which the Lord wanted for His “peculiar treasure” (Exodus 19:5). Israel, as a whole, had been hidden in the world after being taken captive by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. It was hidden again when the Israelites were exiled in A.D. 70 by the soldiers of the Roman general Titus. When Jesus came to earth, He of course came to the Jewish people. He declared, “...I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). Thus, those of Israel who received Him (and those who will receive Him in the future) are “found” in a spiritual sense. This brings the man (Jesus) great joy, and He sells everything He has (His life) to buy the field (the world which had been claimed by Satan--see Mat-

thew 4:8,9). Not many understand the significance of Israel in God's plan.

The sixth parable is about the pearl of great price. A merchant man (Jesus) found this pearl (most likely the church of God), sold all He had (His life), and bought the pearl. We read in Acts 20:28b about "...the church of God, which he (Jesus) hath purchased with his own blood." May our witness be such to others so that they can understand this mystery, and be allowed to become a part of the church of God.

The seventh parable is about a net cast into the sea. The net catches every kind of fish, and when it is full, it is drawn to shore. The good fish are placed in "vessels", but the bad fish are cast away. This parable is similar in some respects to the parable of the tares of the field. There is a separation of the "wicked from among the just". In both parables the angels are the ones who do the actual separating. The wicked ones are then cast into a "furnace of fire". This judgment is almost universally unknown by the inhabitants of planet earth. Only after Jesus comes back to earth (in the second advent) will He send His angels to do the separating (Matthew 24: 30,31; 13:40-43, 49,50; 25:31-46). The unjust are then sentenced to the lake of fire. There are no people in a burning "hell" today. But this is a deep mystery to almost everyone in the world.

These seven parables of Jesus seem to cover practically all the mysteries of God revealed in the New Testament. However, for anyone wishing to study further into these mysteries, a partial list has been provided. There is: the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:3-19; 1:9,10; Colossians 4:3,4; 1:25-27; Galatians 2:20; Romans 16:25); the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19); the mystery of iniquity (II Thessalonians 2:7); MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT (Revelation 17:5-18); the mystery of godliness (I Timothy 3:16); the mystery of Israel's blindness (Romans 11:25; II Corinthians 3:12-18); the mystery of the resurrection/translation of the saints (I Corinthians 15:51-53); the mystery of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33); the mystery of the Godhead (Colossians 2:2,8,9); the mystery of the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 2:7,8); the mystery of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks (Revelation 1:20).

We await for the day as prophesied in Revelation 10:7, "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets." Until then, may we be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God, for multitudes have never heard.

Thinking "Inside" The Box

By Shellon Williams

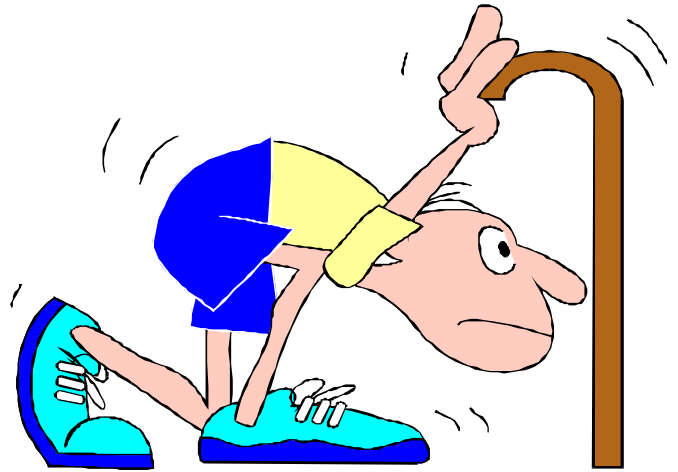
Life isn't always what it seems; or, is it? Have you ever wondered what makes this statement true or not? Could it be that as humans we are taught to think "big," analyzing everything we hear, see, or read? And even further, we question the laws of our very existence: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22).

In life there will always be the advice to think "outside" the box, never accepting things for what they are (even if they stare you in the face). But why? Could it be that we are nothing more than just devices, programmed to feel, think, and somehow expect things to be more than what they are? And if so, who is the programmer? "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Speaking about the "fringes" that the Israelites were to make in the borders of their garments, the Bible says, "And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring" (Numbers 15:39). In other words, do not seek after your own (or any other man's understanding, but trust in the Lord through faith for every answer. We also read, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

The knowledge we gain in this world will always threaten to alter the fact that, in the end, things are only more when we perceive them to be. Life is what it seems. (If it walks, talks, and looks like a duck, then what is it?) Please understand that it is not always best to look "outside" the box but, instead, look at the box for the size it really is. Believe me, it is a whole lot bigger than one could ever imagine.

Eight Growth Stunters



1. "Because I have been planted, I will grow."
Growth is not automatic! Every plant must have nourishment, the right kind, and in the right amount.
"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever..." (II Peter 3:18).

2. "My family disagrees with my decision."
Family ties can be helpful. However, they can also be paralyzing. The Apostle Paul said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Philippians 3:13). Paul's family had given him the best they knew, but we can be sure that they were not eager to hear about his decision to leave the Jewish traditions and follow Christ. Paul's mind was set. He said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (verse 14).

3. "I don't want to disappoint my friends."
I Corinthians 15:33 says, "Be not deceived: evil communications (companionships) corrupt good manners." Friends can either help or hinder us. The wrong friends can be bad influences. They can pull us in the wrong direction.

4. "I like easy, no-think answers."
God gave us minds to use, to ponder deep, spiritual truths from His Word. We must be like the new believers of Berea in Paul's day. "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). We must read the Bible to know what we believe and why. If we are too easily satisfied, we cannot keep learning.

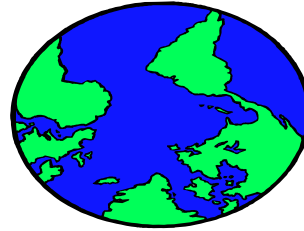
5. "I keep making the same mistakes over again."
Learn from your mistakes! We stunt our growth when we resist the lessons that we could learn from our mistakes.

6. "I like the easy way."
Some people say, "Go with the flow." But the "flow" may not be going in the right direction. The Bible says, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

7. "The hurt is too deep, I can't forgive."
We hurt ourselves when we hold resentment, anger, or a feeling that someone hurt us. Unforgiveness is spiritually deadly. Jesus said, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). When we refuse to forgive, we hurt ourselves.

8. "I want to keep my options open."
In Jesus' parable of the sower, some seed fell among thorns--the cares, riches and worries of this world--and could not grow. Too many options stunts growth.

Men Who Turned The World Upside Down



"A certain disciple...named Ananias."

Have you ever heard of him? Perhaps you are thinking he wasn't very important. But there you're wrong. Let me tell you why.

You will remember that when Saul, later called Paul, was on his way to Damascus, he was most wonderfully converted by the Lord Jesus Christ. Like any new-born baby Saul needed some Christian to help him.

Now there was one Christian in Damascus, whose name was Ananias, and he was the man chosen by the Lord to help Saul. Here's what we're told.

"And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight" (Acts 9:10-12).

At first Ananias was reluctant to accept the assignment, and he answered, "...Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (vss.13,14).

We would gather from this response of Ananias that he looked upon any such visit to the house of Judas as being like that of a lamb to a lion's den! "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (vss.15,16).

Hearing this explanation, "Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost" (vs. 17).

Years later, recalling this incident when before the Jewish council, Paul said: "...one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews

which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:12-15).

Paul never forgot Ananias, and whenever appropriate he referred to him and his part in his being brought to God.

Each link in a chain is important, and Ananias was a link in the chain that brought Saul of Tarsus from the place of fierce opposition to the church to the place of fervent support of the church.

Think, then, of Ananias' contribution.

He was the first Christian to make contact with Saul after his conversion. How much depended on that initial contact! But Ananias proved himself worthy, and he was a great help to Saul.

Ananias was divinely instructed to communicate some more information about God's will for Saul. Saul had been appointed by God to be an apostle to the Gentiles and to his own people, the Jews.

Ananias was probably the one who baptized Saul (see Acts 9:18 and 22:16).

Ananias was the one who introduced Saul to the other believers at Damascus. In Acts 9:19 we read, "...Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus."

Have you heard of D.L. Moody? I'm sure you have. Do you know the name of the man who led him to the Lord? Probably not. Do you think that man was important? I should say so! But he has been forgotten. Edward Kimball, however, was an important link in the chain that brought D.L. Moody to Christ and to a life of service for God.

Perhaps you have thought to yourself at times that you can't do much for God. Yet the question is not ability but availability. Are you available for God to use?

God spoke to Ananias, and though at first Ananias offered excuses, he put himself at God's disposal.

"Behold, I am here, Lord."

That's what God wants you to say.



THE APOSTLE PETER

The first reference to Peter in the Scriptures is when Jesus called him to be one of His apostles (Matthew 4:18). He and his brother, Andrew, were in the fishing business, and Jesus said unto them, "...Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (verse 19). This record states that he was "called" Peter. Mark 3:16 tells us that it was Jesus who surnamed him Peter. In the Greek text it is **Petros** which means a piece of rock.

The significance of Peter's name was used by Jesus to teach an important point of truth (Matthew 16:13-19). This was some time after Jesus began His ministry. Jesus had become very well known, and He inquired of his apostles as to who the people thought He was. They answered, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

This was far from being an unfavorable report. It indicated that the people seemed agreed that Jesus was a prophet sent by God, even though they did not agree as to His exact identity. But Jesus was not satisfied, so He inquired further, "...whom say ye that I am?" It was in reply to this that Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This was Jesus' true identity, and He was pleased. Therefore He said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto

thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven..."

This observation has been misused in an attempt to exalt Peter to a position of prominence and authority among the apostles which Jesus did not actually give to him. The expression, "Upon this rock I will build my church," has been mistakenly applied to Peter as though Jesus had constituted him the foundation of the church. It was Peter's confession as to the true identity of Jesus to which Jesus referred to as "this rock." Here the Greek word is **Petra**, which means a large rock, or boulder, unlike Peter's name, which means merely a piece of rock.

Also the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" are not what many have supposed them to be. Peter is not the doorkeeper of heaven. In the first place, it was the "kingdom of heaven" that Jesus mentioned, not "heaven." In Luke 16:16 we read that "The law and the prophets were until John," and that since then "the kingdom of God is preached..." The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are synonymous. Please read Matthew 13:31-33 and Luke 13:18-21.

Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, "But

woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13). To "enter" the kingdom of heaven, to live and reign with Christ, it is essential to accept Jesus as Redeemer and Lord; and the scribes and Pharisees did all they could to turn the people away from Jesus and to prejudice them against Him. Therefore, they "shut up the kingdom of heaven."

But in contrast to this, Peter was given "keys" to "unlock" the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles.

We get an intimate look at Peter at the time Jesus walked out on the waters of Galilee, rescued His disciples, and calmed the sea (Matthew 14:22-31). The apostles saw Jesus approaching their ship, and they were fearful. But Jesus said, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

Peter's nature did not allow him simply to remain in the ship and wait for his Master. He cried out, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Jesus invited Peter to come, but when he found himself surrounded by the wind and waves, his faith failed and he began to sink. Jesus rescued him and said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" This experience surely must have been a great source of strength for Peter later on in his ministry.

Peter was loyal to his Master. This was true even at the close of Jesus' ministry when Peter seriously disagreed with the course He was taking. Jesus announced to His apostles that He was going to Jerusalem, where he expected His enemies to put Him to death. Peter objected, saying, "...Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Responding to this Jesus said to Peter, "...Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me..." (Matthew 16:22-23).

Explaining this rebuke, Jesus said to Peter, "...thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." In other words, in trying to dissuade Jesus from surrendering to His enemies, Peter was expressing a human viewpoint. To him it was unthinkable that Jesus, who had done no wrong but instead had unselfishly served the people, should be put to death. He did not yet realize that it was necessary for Jesus to die in order to redeem the world from sin and death.

In the Upper Room, when Jesus partook the Passover supper with His disciples for the last time, He said to

Peter, "...Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Peter replied, "...Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." Then Jesus prophesied, "...I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (Luke 22:31-34).

Peter meant it when he said that he would be willing to die with Jesus. Later, when his Master was about to be arrested, Peter drew his sword and demonstrated his willingness to do everything in his power to prevent Jesus from surrendering to His enemies. Jesus commanded him to put away his sword, which was another rebuke to this faithful disciple (Matthew 26:52).

But despite this thwarting of his efforts to prevent Jesus' arrest, Peter followed Him to the judgment hall of the high priest. The record states that he "...went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end" (Matthew 26:58). In this, we see a wonderful spirit of devotion. Perhaps Peter thought that by being nearby there still might be something he could do for his Master. Perhaps he could even save Him from what now seemed to be inevitable.

Apparently Peter did not realize that he was likely to be recognized as one of Jesus' disciples and thus be placed in danger. When he was recognized, he denied that he knew Him. Fear is the motive usually ascribed to this denial, although the record gives no motive. Some have suggested that Peter endeavored to conceal his identity in the hope that he might have an opportunity to rescue Jesus from the cruel hands of His enemies.

But regardless of his motive, Peter realized that his denial had been foretold by Jesus, and that it was wrong (Matthew 26:69-75). He "wept bitterly," the record states. Remorseful for his own wrongdoing, he also now realized that he could do nothing to prevent the death of his Master, so he was overwhelmed with sorrow.

In one of Jesus' appearances to His apostles after His resurrection, He engaged in a revealing conversation with Peter (John 21:15-19). "Lovest thou me?" Jesus inquired of Peter. Upon being asked this question the third time, Peter replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Perhaps here Peter's mind went back to the Upper Room, where Jesus had prophesied his denial, and realized that his Master was indeed able to read his heart.

Yes, Peter did love Jesus despite the fact that his efforts to save Him from the cross had been thwarted and that Jesus had referred to him as "Satan." Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus had said to Peter that when he was "converted" he was to strengthen his brethren. And now Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." It might seem strange that Peter, who accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah, who had served with his Master in preaching the gospel of the kingdom, who had been empowered to perform miracles, should still need to be "converted."

While Peter was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, he did not understand that it was necessary for Him to suffer and die as the world's Redeemer. Doubtless Peter realized that if a man did wrong he should suffer for it, but his human reasoning told him that those who do only good should not suffer. This is why he endeavored to prevent Jesus' death. While his experience in connection with this futile effort would help to prepare him for "conversion," he did not fully understand this matter until he received the Holy Spirit. Then he knew why it was necessary for Jesus to die, and he quoted a prophecy from the Old Testament relating to the death and resurrection of Jesus. He said, "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:25-27).

Later, when Peter himself was imprisoned and threatened with death, we find him submissive to the divine will that he slept while chained to guards within the prison (Acts 12:4-6). This was the "converted" Peter, who now knew that in the divine plan for the recovery of man from sin and death, suffering for righteousness' sake is necessary.

And now this "converted" Peter was equipped, both by experience and by revelation, to "strengthen" his brethren in this essential aspect of the Christian life. One of his services along this line is found in his first epistle. In the opening chapter of this letter, he refers to the prophetic testimony concerning the "...sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (I Peter 1:11). In this epistle, Peter explains that the followers of Jesus have the privilege of sharing in this foretold suffering.

Peter wrote, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a

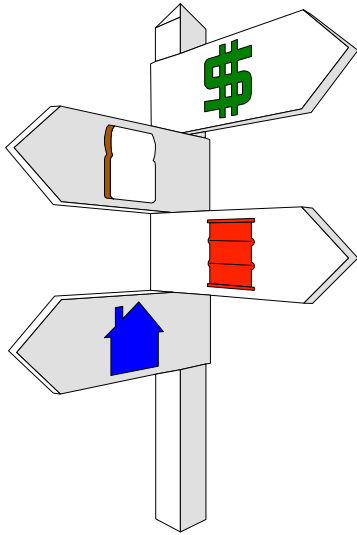
spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5). He also wrote, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (verses 19-21).

In His discussion with Peter after His resurrection, Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (John 21:18). John adds, "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me" (verse 19).

This is generally understood to mean that Jesus foretold Peter's death by crucifixion, this thought being taken from the expression, "Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands." Tradition has it that Peter was crucified head down. This may or may not be so, but we do know that Peter was symbolically crucified, in the same sense that Paul wrote of himself in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

To "stretch forth" the hands could also well represent the thought of surrender to another. While Jesus surrendered to His enemies and allowed them to put Him to death, this was but a reflection of His surrender to His Heavenly Father, whose will it was for Him to die as the world's Redeemer. Peter also surrendered himself to God and understood that the divine will for him also was that he should die a sacrificial death. This sacrificial death was contrary to the desires of his flesh.

It was by such a sacrificial death that Peter was able to glorify God, even as Jesus had foretold. Peter could have had this in mind when he wrote, "...what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?" The lesson from this is that glory does result from suffering for righteousness' sake. Therefore, God is glorified. To follow the example of Jesus is to glorify God.



THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

If you have any items of interest that you would like to submit to this segment, please send them to The Church of God Publishing House, PO Box 328, Salem, WV 26426-0328.

The following article appeared in *The Advocate*, published in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Slump scares survivalists

*By Samantha Gross
Associated Press writer*

Burskirk, N.Y.--A few years ago, Kathleen Breault was just another suburban grandma, driving countless hours every week, stopping for lunch at McDonald's, buying clothes at the mall, watching TV in the evenings.

That was before Breault heard an author talk about the bleak future of the world's oil supply. Now she is preparing for the world as we know it to disappear.

Breault cut her driving time in half. She switched to a diet of locally grown foods near her upstate New York home and lost 70 pounds. She sliced up her credit cards, banished her television and swore off plane travel. She began relying on a wood burning stove.

"I was panic stricken," the 50-year-old recalled, her voice shaking. "Devastated. Depressed. Afraid. Vulnerable. Weak. Alone. Just terrible."

Convinced the planet's oil supply is dwindling and

the world's economics are heading for a crash, some people around the country are moving onto homesteads, learning to live off their land, conserving fuel and, in some cases, stocking up on guns they expect to use to defend themselves and their supplies from desperate crowds of people who didn't prepare.

The exact number of people taking such steps is impossible to determine, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the movement has been gaining momentum in the last few years.

These energy survivalists are not leading some sort of green revolution meant to save the planet. Many of them believe it is too late for that, seeing signs in soaring fuel and food prices and a faltering U.S. economy, and are largely focused on saving themselves.

Some are doing it quietly, giving few details of their preparations--afraid that revealing such information as the location of their supplies will endanger themselves and their loved ones. They envision a future in which the nation's cities will be filled with hunger, desperate refugees forced to go looking for food, shelter, and water.

"There's going to be things that happen when people can't get things that they need for themselves and their families," said Lynn-Marie, who believes cities could see a rise in violence as early as 2012.

Lynn-Marie asked to be identified by her first name to protect her homestead in rural western Idaho. Many of these survivalists declined to speak to the Associated Press for similar reasons.

These survivalists believe in "peak oil," the idea that world oil production is set to hit a high point and then decline. Scientists who support that idea say the amount of oil produced in the world each year has already or will soon begin a downward slide, even amid increased de-

mand. But many scientists say such a scenario will be avoided as other sources of energy come in to fill the void.

On the PeakOil.com Web site, where upward of 800 people gathered on recent evenings, believers engage in a debate about what kind of world awaits.

Some members argue there will be no financial crash, but a slow slide into harder times. The powers that be, they've determined, will be largely powerless to stop what is to come.

Determined to guard themselves from potentially harsh times ahead, Lynn-Marie and her husband have already planted an orchard of about 40 trees and built a greenhouse on their 7 1/2 acres. They have built their own irrigation system. They've begun to raise chickens and pigs, and they've learned to slaughter them.

The couple have gotten rid of their TV and instead have been reading dusty old books published in their grandparent's era, books that explain the simpler life-style they are trying to revive. Lynn-Marie has been teaching herself how to make soap. Her husband, concerned about one day being unable to get medications, has been training to become an herbalist.

By 2012, they expect to power their property with solar panels and produce their own meat, milk and vegetables. When things start to fall apart, they expect their children and grandchildren will come back home and help them work the land. She envisions a day when the family may have to decide whether to turn needy people away from their door.

"People will be unprepared," she said. "And we can imagine marauding hordes."

So can Peter Laskowski. Living in a woodsy area outside of Montpelier, Vt., the 57-year-old retiree has become the local constable and a deputy sheriff for his county, as well as an emergency medical technician.

"I decided there was nothing like getting training myself to deal with insurrections, if that's a possibility," said the former executive recruiter.

Laskowski is taking steps similar to environmentalists: conserving fuel, consuming less, studying global warming, and relying on local produce and craftsmen. Laskowski is powering his home with solar panels and is raising fish, geese, ducks, and sheep. He has planted apple and pear trees and is growing lettuce, spinach, and corn.

Breault said she hopes to someday band together with

her neighbors to form a self-sufficient community. Women will always be having babies, she notes, and she imagines her skills as a midwife will always be in demand.

For now, she is readying for the more immediate work ahead: there's a root cellar to dig, fruit trees and vegetable plots to plant. She has put a bicycle on layaway, and soon she'll be able to bike to visit her grandkids even if there is no oil at the pump.

Whatever the shape of things yet to come, she said, she's done what she can to prepare.

COMMENT

The above article graphically describes signs of the times as set forth in God's Word. There is not only one cause of the slump. Many factors are involved. Many just do not understand that the slump and other happenings in the weather, etc. are pointing to the end of this age. Therefore, some are taking drastic steps thinking that the things that they do will increase their chance of survival.

Jesus said, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places" (Matthew 24:7).

What profit is planting a garden or orchard if famines and pestilences are widespread? No doubt conditions will become worse. In verse 8 He said, "All these things are the beginning of sorrows."

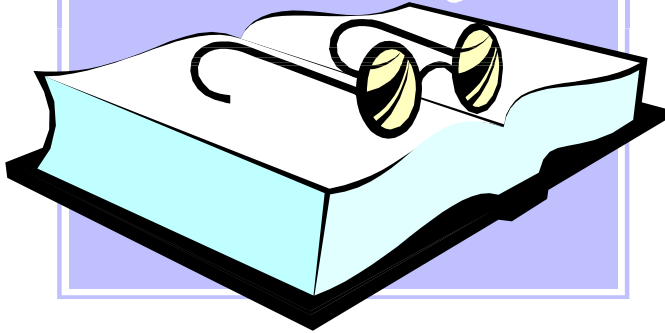
In Luke 21:26 Jesus said, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." This is evidently a more intense fear than any of the mentioned survivalists felt because their hearts did not fail them for fear.

The point to remember is that God watches over His own, and He will not forsake His children in these chaotic times. "The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied" (Psalm 37:18-19). "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (verse 25).

The only way to prepare to survive with any certainty is to be ready when Jesus comes to catch away His own to the New Jerusalem.

BIBLE

Study



Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Can one be certain that he is saved?

ANSWER: Many people go through life without any certainty as to whether or not they are saved. Many even hold that one cannot be certain about this matter. Many others, while questioning the fact of their salvation, are not sure that they shall be kept from final separation from God and from His judgments (plagues) because of sin.

I have been asked: "Are you saved?"

I have heard testimonies: "I am saved!"

What is meant by statements like these?

These assertions are comparable in meaning to freeing a person from some dangerous or unfavorable situation or condition. **SAVED** is a general word with broad application. **SAVED** refers to the help which is offered when a person has been subjected to the transgression of God's Law.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). It is referring to the help given by the Saviour, Jesus Christ, when a person has already been subjected to the gift of God, eternal life. This plan of being **SAVED** came about before the creation of the world. We read, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Timothy 1:9).

The lack of certainty as to the future is the cause of

much, yes, very much, of the world's economic distress. Assurance is of inestimable value in all phases of human life. So also in the spiritual life of all who are **SAVED**, it is a most important place. Fortunately, God's Word has not left man in the dark in this important matter. "Now know I that the **LORD** saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand" (Psalm 20:6).

All doubts and uncertainties as to whether or not one is **SAVED** can be traced to one of three causes. It might be due to man's proneness to consider his own feelings. While emotions have their right place in the life of one who is **SAVED**, they have nothing to do with the fact of salvation. Uncertainty might also be due to a feeling that one is not good enough to be **SAVED**. Salvation never depends upon the goodness of man. It depends upon the goodness and love of God and man's acceptance thereof. Finally, uncertainty may come from man's reasoning about salvation. As soon as man begins to reason, he is off the ground of faith. As faith is God's only condition placed upon man to be **SAVED**, there must be uncertainty when, because of reason, doubts take the place of simple faith.

When a man who is known for his truthfulness promises that he will do something, his word is accepted and his fellow men act in full assurance that he shall do as he has said. God, the Father in heaven, is known for His truthfulness. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it?"

or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19). Therefore that which God says in His Word can be accepted without the least hesitation on the part of man. God's Word must always be the basis for knowledge about being SAVED. In speaking of salvation, God uses very definite and clear terms which need no interpretation, but sometimes a reemphasis is needed because man's preconceptions blur their clarity.

One of the most definite statements concerning man's present possession of salvation came from the lips of Jesus. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Notice that the statement begins with the double "verily" which means that the Lord wants to show you the necessity of strongly emphasizing that which follows because of man's slowness to rest in the assurance that it is true. Then, in the words "I say", Jesus declares Himself as the authority for that which is said. The statements that follow must necessarily be accepted as the direct Word of God, and true. To question them is to question the truthfulness of God and His Son.

Concerning everyone that believes, Jesus said that He has eternal life. He does not say that he might or even receive it at His return. He did not say that he might or even shall receive it at some future time after death. It is a present possession of ALL who believe. As this life, of a child of God, rests in the grave, this eternal life cannot leave him. It is not mortal as is the physical life. It is impossible now to have eternal life because one must die or be changed at the first phase of Christ's advent. It is impossible now to have eternal life, but we must be born again of the Spirit of God. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

This one statement should suffice, but it is followed by another. The one who believes shall not come into judgment. The judgment for his sins fell on Jesus on the cross and therefore no judgment awaits the believer. One who shall not come into judgment must be SAVED now. There is even a third statement declaring the present SAVED (life). It is an accomplished fact.

In view of these statements, attested to by the Son of God Himself, there can be absolutely no question what-

soever as to the present salvation of every one who believes. The only question that can possibly raise a doubt in any person's mind is, have I believed? To believe means to depend upon God and to count on Him to do that which He has promised. It is to depend upon Jesus as the propitiation for one's own sins. It includes a change of mind as to sin (transgression of God's Law) and a confession that one is a sinner and needs to be SAVED. It is an intensely personal matter between God and His Son and the believer. Certainly, no one needs question whether or not he or she has believed.

In viewing the greatness of salvation, it was seen that it could not be measured by measures applying to creation, but only by the infinite terms applying to God.

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13).

"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

QUESTION: Will you please explain I John 3:9 which reads, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"?

ANSWER: In order to understand this beautiful passage, it is necessary to read the whole 3rd chapter. "Whosoever abideth in him (Jesus) sinneth not..." (vs. 6). To abide in Christ Jesus means to be in subjection to Him and obey Him implicitly. Sin is breaking God's commandments. To be born of God is going to be at the first resurrection. Please read verse 2. At the present time, Jesus is the only one that cannot sin because He is born of God (resurrected). "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not" (I John 5:18a). This again can only be Jesus Christ.

However, you and I are begotten of God right now if we have been born again in the name Lord Jesus Christ. We could sin, but we call on Jesus Christ to keep us from sinning. "...He that is begotten of God (a new creature by water birth) keepeth himself" (I John 5:18b). Until we are born of God, we might sin, but we do not want to sin. We want to keep His commandments. (I John 5:1-2; I Peter 1:3).



Kenya, West Africa

This is a photograph of the new church building in Nyaibate, Kenya.





Church members are pictured here before the roof was completed.



Here we see the church choir in front of the unfinished building.

LESSON I

PAUL AT ATHENS

Scripture Reading Acts 17:15-34.

Golden Text: Acts 17:30.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

1. Who did Paul ask to join him at Athens? Acts 17:15.
2. While Paul waited at Athens, what did he see that bothered him? Acts 17:18-21.
3. With what did Paul charge the men of Athens? Acts 17:22.
4. What did Paul find on Mars' hill? Acts 17:23.
5. Name seven ways Paul described God or our relationship to Him. Acts 17:24-31.
6. When the people heard of the resurrection, what did some do, and what did others say? Acts 17:32.
7. Who were the two mentioned that believed the words of Paul? Acts 17:34.

2. What was the occupation of Paul and Aquila? Acts 18:3.
3. On what day did Paul go to the synagogue? Acts 18:4.
4. Of what did Paul testify? Acts 18:5.
5. What did Paul say to the Jews when they blasphemed his words? Acts 18:6.
6. Whose house did Paul enter, and was he a believer? Acts 18:7.
7. Who was Crispus, and what happened to many of the Corinthians? Acts 18:8; I Corinthians 1:14.
8. What did the Lord say to Paul? Acts 18:9.
9. How long did Paul stay in Corinth? Acts 18:11.



BIBLE NAMES

Unscramble these Bible names

- lume
- padrole
- xeno
- umose
- laege
- sinew
- gordan
- melca
- tan
- evirp

LESSON II

PAUL AT CORINTH

Scripture Reading: Acts 18:1-11.

Golden Text: Acts 18:10 (first part).

"For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee."

1. Paul leaves Athens and goes to Corinth where he meets Aquila. Tell three things about the man Aquila. Acts 18:1-2.

LESSON III

PAUL'S JOURNEY CONTINUES

Scripture Reading: Acts 18:12-28.

Golden Text: Acts 18:23.

"And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples."

1. What did the Jews do to Paul in Acts 18:12-13?
2. What was the reply of Gallio? Acts 18:14-15.
3. Who was punished by the Greeks? Acts 18:16-17.
4. Where did Paul then journey to, and who did he take with him? Acts 18:18-19.
5. Did the people at Ephesus want Paul to leave? Acts 18:20.
6. What did Paul do in Galatia and Phrygia? Acts 18:23.
7. Describe Apollos. Acts 18:24-25; Titus 3:13.
8. When Apollos spoke in the synagogue, what did Aquila and Priscilla do? Acts 18:26.
9. By what means were the people shown that Jesus was Christ? Acts 18:28.

LESSON IV

PAUL AT EPHESUS (Part 1)

Scripture Reading: Acts 19:1-12.

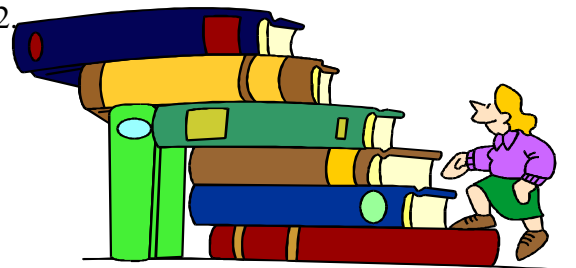
Golden Text: Acts 19:11.

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul."

1. What did Paul ask the disciples at Ephesus, and what was their reply? Acts 19:1-2.
2. The disciples had been baptized unto John's baptism. What did it mean to be baptized unto John's baptism? Acts 19:3-4.
3. What did the disciples find it necessary to do in Acts 19:5?
4. What happened when Paul laid his hands upon them? Acts 19:6.

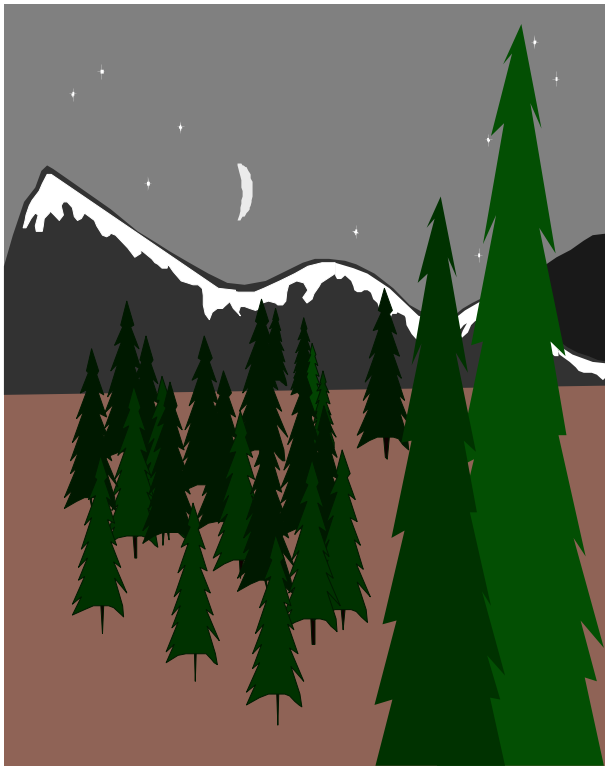
NOTE: Tongues means languages. When it says they spoke in tongues, it means that they could speak in different languages. They would be able to minister and speak to many people in Asia.

5. What did Paul speak about in the synagogue, and for how long? Acts 19:8.
6. When the people did not believe and spoke evil of Paul, what did he do? Acts 19:9.
7. How long did Paul work with these disciples throughout Asia? Acts 19:10
8. What did God do through the hands of Paul? Acts 19:11-12.



ANSWERS TO BIBLE ANIMALS

- Across: mule; swine;
 leopard; dragon;
 oxen; camel;
 mouse; ant;
 eagle; viper.



A LESSON IN THE WOODS

By Arlene West Krenz

Davey was pushing his toy truck over little roads that he made for it behind the old farmhouse where he lived. "Brum-brum!" Davey tried to sound like a big truck. He looked up as his older brother came by.

"Where are you going, Ronnie?" Davey asked.

"I have to pile the wood in the woodshed, and then I'm going to the woods," Ronnie answered.

"I don't see why you like to go back there," Davey said. "I've been back there, and I haven't seen anything interesting."

"I know you haven't," said Ronnie. "You are always noisy, and we have to be quiet to see and hear things in the woods. I'll tell you what, Davey. If you will help me pile the wood, I will take you with me and show you how to see the birds and animals."

"I'd like that," said Davey. He put his toy truck away and ran to help Ronnie. Soon the wood was

piled and they were on their way to the woods.

"Shh! You must be quiet now," Ronnie warned his little brother as they neared the small grove of trees at the back of their farm. "You will frighten everything away." But Davey was not quiet. He kept right on playing and talking.

Soon Ronnie stopped. "We are in the middle of the woods now," he said. "Did you see or hear anything as we came through the trees?"

"No," Davey answered.

"Do you know why?" Ronnie asked.

"Because there is nothing here," Davey said.

"No, Davey," Ronnie said gravely. "We didn't see anything because you were noisy. Now, let's try being quiet and see what happens."

Ronnie and Davey sat down on a mossy log. They sat still and waited. They heard the wind rustling through the trees, the music of the tinkling brook, and the sweet singing of the birds. Then Ronnie nodded at a tree nearby. Davey looked and saw a pretty little squirrel peeking at them. The squirrel ran down the tree to search among the fallen leaves for acorns. He stuffed the acorns in his cheeks and ran back up the tree.

Ronnie and Davey sat on the log a long time. They saw many interesting things. When it was time to go home, Davey was quiet most of the way. He was thinking of all the nice things he had seen and heard in the woods. "Ronnie," he said finally, "you were right about being quiet in the woods. I will be quiet there from now on. Think of all the things I have been missing."

"You have been missing things somewhere else, too," said Ronnie. "Can you guess where?"

Davey shook his head.

"In Sabbath school and church," Ronnie told his little brother. "There are many interesting things to see and hear there, if we watch and listen. Suppose you try it and see. It would be a nice surprise for Mother and Father, and I know it would please Jesus. Will you try?"

Davey did try, and he was surprised at how much he had been missing at Sabbath school. He became one of the best-behaved boys in Sabbath school, and his mother and father were proud of him. I think Jesus was pleased with Davey, too.

Do you suppose He is pleased with you?

"CHANGE A LETTER" BIBLE PUZZLES

1. Find the prophet who wrote the book after Jonah.

Add one letter, and you have Lot's sister (Genesis 22:23).

2. Find the second book of the New Testament.

Cut off one letter, and you have a sacred box carried into battle (I Samuel 4:3).

3. Find the mountain where Aaron died (Numbers 20:25).

Add two letters, and you have the place where Moses saw the burning bush (Exodus 3:1).

4. Find a good woman who blessed baby Jesus (Luke 2:36).

Add one letter, and you have the son of Joseph (Luke 3:24).

5. Find a city of Egypt mentioned in Nahum 3:8.

Add one letter, and you get a town where the priests lived (I Samuel 22:19).

6. Find a blue stone in Exodus 24:10.

Change the first letter, and you have another Bible king (Joshua 10:3).

7. Find King Saul's grandfather in I Chronicles 8:33.

Add a letter, and you have an ancestor of Jesus (Luke 3:27).

8. Find the city where Abraham lived (Genesis 11:31).

Cut off one letter, and you have the name of a city in Assyria (I Chronicles 5:26).

9. Find the king who killed John the Baptist (Mark 6:18).

Cut off one letter, and find what David became when he slew the giant Goliath.

KNOW YOUR CITIES

1. Who built the first city? (Genesis 4:17).

2. From what city did Abraham come? (Genesis 11:31).

3. What wicked cities were destroyed by fire and brimstone? (Genesis 19:24).

4. From what city did Andrew and Peter come? (John 1:44).

5. In what city did Jesus perform his first miracle? (John 2:1-11).

6. The Lord Jesus mourned over what great city? (Matthew 23:37).

7. Saul became a Christian on the way to what city? (Acts 9:1-3).

8. In what city did Cornelius live? (Acts 10:1).

9. The walls of what city were destroyed without being attacked? (Joshua 6:1,20).

10. What Egyptian treasure cities were built by Israelite slaves? (Exodus 1:11).

THAT'S WHY I LOVE HIM SO

Let's thank God for the little hills,
For creeks and rivers, too;

For trees to give us pleasant shade,
For skies of brightest blue.

Let's thank Him for the pretty flowers,
For animals and bees;

For fishes in the sparkling brook,
And birds up in the trees.

God loves the pretty things He's made,
He loves me, too, I know;

He gives me everything I need--
That's why I love Him so.



God's Praises

By David DeLong

*O blessed peace, to view the vast abode
Of stars and planets, all in place,
The perfectness of endless space,
Which show to us God's love and grace,
His mercy, and His mode.*

*When night descends on eboned wings,
And fills the forests, vales, and hills;
When moonlight shimmers on the rills,
My heart, in wild elation thrills,
And of God's praises, sings.*

