



The Advocate of Truth



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**Telephone: 304-782-1411
Fax: 304-782-2248**

E-Mail: cogsevday@aol.com

Web site: www.churchofgod-7thday.org

**Del DeLong
David DeLong
Bond Tennant.....Editorial Staff
Gary Mills Managing Editor
Ludina Mills.....Children's Page Editor**

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Halloween

By David DeLong

It is thought that the festival of Halloween originated from the Celtic festival of Samhain, who was the Celtic lord of death (Satan). The Celts were peoples who lived over 2000 years ago in Great Britain, Ireland, and northern France.

The Celtic new year began on November 1, and the previous evening (October 31) began the festival to Samhain. These ancient peoples believed that Samhain allowed the souls of the dead to return to their earthly homes on this evening.

The Druids, who were the pagan priests of the Celts, ordered the people to extinguish their hearth fires. Then, the Druids built a new year's "sacred" bonfire of oak branches, offering sacrifices of animals, crops, and probably human beings. Each family then relit its hearth fire from the new year's fire of the Druids. Sometimes costumes of animal skins and heads were worn during the festival. Fortunes were told about the coming year through the remains of the sacrificial animals.

The Romans conquered the Celts in A.D. 43, and they incorporated the Samhain festival with a couple of festivals of their own. One festival was known as Feralia to honor the dead. The other festival was in honor to Pomona, the Romans' goddess of fruit and trees.

In the 800's A.D., the Catholic Church created All Saints' Day to be observed on November 1. The evening before became known as the festival of Halloween. Many pagan customs were also adopted by the people. One such custom was that of carving a Jack-o-lantern. Though today pumpkins are generally used for this purpose, in

olden times beets, potatoes, and turnips were used. An Irish legend teaches that a man named Jack was not allowed into heaven because he was miserly. At the same time, he was not allowed into hell because he had played tricks on the devil. So, he supposedly was to roam the earth, with his Jack-o-lantern, until Judgment Day.

--Taken from The World Book Encyclopedia, H, pp. 24-25.

In today's world, many justify the keeping of this pagan festival by saying something like: "What's wrong with the children having a little fun, like going 'Trick-or-treating'?" Well, this is probably what the Catholic people said during the Middle Ages when these pagan practices were adopted into their church. Let's see how the practice of Trick-or-treat first came about.

It is believed that evil men, such as possibly the Druid priests, went from castle to castle demanding a princess, or other maiden, to be delivered to them so that they could use her as a human sacrifice. If she was not delivered to them, these men would draw a hexagram in human blood upon the door of the castle. Demons supposedly, then, terrified those inside the castle.

Even if such a pagan practice, as Trick-or-treat, does not bother someone's conscience in today's "modern" world, the practice of Trick-or-treat is nothing more than teaching one's children that extortion is an acceptable way to get what you want. If an adult demands something of someone else under the threat of harm, he or she could spend a considerable time in prison. May we never honor a practice that originated in the mind of Satan!



THE APOSTLE PAUL'S TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS' RESURRECTION

By Bond Tennant

In his first letter to the brethren at Corinth, the Apostle Paul lists the evidences by which the fact of Jesus' resurrection had been established. He said that the risen Lord "...was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time" (I Corinthians 15:5-8).

As the apostle indicates, there were still many living in his day who had been personally acquainted with Jesus while in the flesh, and who had seen Him after He had been raised from the dead. The testimony of these faithful witnesses was all sufficient to convince new believers of the great miracle that God had wrought in raising the Master from the dead. However, there were some in the early church who doubted that anyone else besides Jesus could be resurrected, for the apostle inquires, "...how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (verse 12).

The Jewish sect of the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, and possibly some of this group had come among the early Christians. Perhaps they partially accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but were not willing to believe all that He taught nor all that the prophets had foretold concerning Him, including the resurrection. In combating this false viewpoint, Paul goes on to show how it would take away the whole foundation upon which Christian faith and hope were based. He reasons that it would mean that even Jesus himself, their leader and

Messiah, was dead, not alive. This would mean that all who had borne testimony of His resurrection were false witnesses (verses 13-15).

Paul further reminds us that if Christ is not risen, it means that we are serving a lost cause, and that our persecutions as His followers are meaningless (verse 17). The members of the early church risked their lives in being followers of Christ, but why thus stand "... in jeopardy every hour" if Jesus is still dead, and there is no resurrection hope for any of the dead? Why are we then "baptized for the dead," Paul asks, if the world, for whose eventual benefit we are now laying down our lives, are not to be helped thereby? (verses 29-30) True followers of Jesus are baptized into the likeness of Jesus' death in the hope of sharing in the likeness of His resurrection. There could be no likeness to a resurrection that has never occurred.

Those who are fallen asleep in Christ have "perished" if there is no resurrection of the dead (verse 18). This would mean that God's purpose in giving His Son to be man's Redeemer had clearly failed, for do we not read that "...God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" (John 3:16). How unmistakably Paul discerned, and how plainly every follower of Jesus should discern, that their hope, as well as that of the world, depends upon the raising of the dead. The apostle says that our assurance of God's ability to do this is in the fact that Jesus became "...the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20).

ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER 5:

THE FLYING ROLL

By Moises Torres M.

The Prophet Zechariah was given a vision of a flying roll, or parchment, which is described in chapter 5:1-4. In this vision of a flying roll, the Lord exposes the most prominent and common sins practiced in the land of Israel in the preliminary time to the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, which represented a mercenary, depressing, and advantageous religion, which did not let the righteous people dwell in that area in an atmosphere of peace and justice, as it happens in our days. We know that we live today in the midst of a mercenary, religious system full of advantage, lying, and materialism, and it was the situation of Israel in those days.

The Lord describes in these verses of chapter 5 (verses 1-4), a flying roll, or parchment, whose length thereof was twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. The Lord tells Zechariah the roll had a written curse that would reach the whole earth. This curse was written on both sides of the parchment. What was this curse, and who was it for?

“Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it” (verse 3). This curse was for thieves and for those who swear falsely.

“I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof” (verse 4).

NOTE: The size of the flying roll was just over 40 square meters. It was enough size so that everyone could see it and read it.

The curse was to whoever steals, and to all swearing falsely or committing perjury. This curse would come into their houses and consume even the stones and wood from them. This reminds us of the angel of death who came up in the midst of the houses of the Egyptians, to kill all their firstborn. This curse, written in the roll, was very great. It was going to exterminate all people who practiced these

sins. To steal from one's neighbor and swear falsely using the name of God, had become a very common thing that was taken very lightly. Stealing is a direct sin against our neighbor and swearing in vain is against God. This meant the breaking of the whole moral law of the Ten Commandments.

It is the same in our time. Many people rob their neighbor of what they want, and what they can. In one way or another, they steal his fame, prestige, use his name, take away his social and economic stability, especially those who steal one's peace. And to do this they use lies and slander which is to swear in vain, or use perjury. At the end, lies and cheating go together, and become the modus operandi of a mercenary religion practiced in Israel in those days, and also in our world today.

The world uses “truth” its own way to make its false transactions in many ways, and to be perjurers. The word “swear” in Hebrew means entering into a contract or making a statement, repeating it seven times. The number seven is a number that indicates fullness; and saying or repeating seven times a deal is like a seal of guarantee that you are saying the truth among the Jews. Currently, in the courts of many nations the Bible is used as a symbol of telling the truth. But the world is full of lies and falsehood, perjury, cheating; and even they use the name of God, or hide themselves behind the name of Christians, for their evil plot. All this was considered by God as idolatry in the days of Zechariah the Prophet, and in the same way God looks on it today.

This vision of the flying roll exposes the modus operandi of this mercenary and advantageous religion, which is practiced by means of theft and falsehood. The mystery of this evilness will come to its fullness with the man of sin. “And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:15-17).



The Eyes of the Lord

By David DeLong

The eyes of the Lord see everything that each person does on Earth. Though most people would find this situation to be frightening, I find it very comforting because I am never out of the Lord's care and protection. Some people may view the Lord as an earthly boss. When he or she is not perceived to be around, many employees try to slack off and do as little as possible. Many people just do not want someone checking up on them all the time.

In Zechariah 3:9 we learn something about the eyes of the Lord. This verse reads: "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." Turning to the next chapter, we learn in Zechariah 4:10: "For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth."

Revelation 5:6 further clears up this mystery of the eyes of the Lord. John records: "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." So, we learn that God's seven eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, Jesus possesses those seven eyes, and they are the seven Spirits of God running to and fro through the whole earth.

God's eyes, then, are His seven Spirits (or 7-fold Spirit) sent into all the earth. Why is the Holy Spirit interpreted as God's seven-fold Spirit? There are seven aspects of God's Spirit given in Isaiah 11:2: "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him (Jesus), the spirit of wisdom

and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD". Counting these aspects we find: 1.) Spirit of the Lord 2.) Spirit of wisdom 3.) Spirit of understanding 4.) Spirit of counsel 5.) Spirit of might 6.) Spirit of knowledge 7.) Spirit of the fear of the LORD.

God's eyes cover the whole earth and He knows at all times what is going on with every individual and every situation. This should also comfort us and not frighten us. If it frightens us, there is something that we are trying to hide from the Lord, but can't. A reason that the Lord scans the earth with His eyes was explained to King Asa in II Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him..." I want to be found with my heart perfect toward Him, don't you?

As the Lord's eyes searched the earth in ancient days, looking for someone whose heart was perfect toward Him, He found a man. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:5-8).

Not only do the Lord's eyes look for righteous people, but He will watch over their land and possessions, too. We read: "Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess

it; And that ye may prolong your days in the land, which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey. For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:8-12).

Habakkuk argued that God's eyes, however, are too pure to behold evil and iniquity. Habakkuk didn't understand when he, in verse 1:13, asked the question: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" The writer of Proverbs, chapter 15, verse 3 gives us this understanding: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Though the Lord does not participate in iniquity, nothing can escape His searching eyes.

The Lord directs his favorable attention to the righteous, but His unfavorable attention to the wicked. "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth" (Psalm 34:15-16). This is true of nations, as well as individuals: "He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah" (Psalm 66:7).

The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge (see Proverbs 22:12); and His eyes are upon the truth (see Jeremiah 5:3). But, one of the most precious of thoughts is that the Lord sees us even before we are born. Listen to these blessed words from Psalm 139:13-18: "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee."

The eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ, so full of compassion for His people, are very awesome and majestic in the description of them in the book of Revelation. We can see this in chapter 1, verse 14: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire". In chapter 19, verses 11-12 we read: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself."

When those eyes, as a flame of fire, searchingly cover the whole earth, may we stand their scrutiny, may our heart be found perfect toward the Lord, and may we always find comfort in those watchful eyes!

Self-Control

While it is true that no person can have self-control without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, there must be a cooperative effort upon the part of the person to obtain this fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:23, "temperance",



King James Version). Temperance, or self-control, is critically lacking in the world today, even among many people who claim to be followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. A lack of self-control can be seen in almost every part of

many people's lives, from overindulgence in eating and drinking, to wanting to be first in line, first in traffic situations, and first in just about everything.

Brother Bond Tennant wrote a good article in the December 28, 2015 Advocate of Truth titled, "Selfishness". In the article he wrote: "Just what is selfishness? It is the act of caring mostly for one's own comfort, advantage, and good fortune" (page 3, 4th paragraph). Selfishness is the very cause for people lacking self-control. Overindulgence is selfishness, as is being first in life over other folks. Jesus said in Matthew 19:30: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." This is Jesus's remedy for having self-control. Those who put themselves last, now, shall be put first by the Lord.

One of the greatest areas of self-control, that a disciple of the Lord must possess, is that over his or her emotions. Consider what the Lord tells us in Proverbs 16:32: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Please notice what is being said here. The Lord actually considers a person who can control his or her temper as being better than a mighty warrior who conquers a city! Not many in today's world are that self-controlled. The natural reaction is to "fire back" when someone has crossed us, annoyed us, or criticized us.

But notice how the Lord sees someone who lacks that type of self-control. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Proverbs 25:28). A city in that condition is opened up wide for the enemy to come in and take control. So, too, a person who "hath no rule over his own spirit" is open to letting demonic spirits wreak havoc in his or her life.

Going along with self-control over one's emotions is self-control of one's speech. The Lord informs us that it is impossible for a person to control the tongue alone. James 3:3-12 reads: "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and

setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."

But the Apostle Paul encourages us, with the help of the Holy Spirit to, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6). And, he cautioned Titus in chapter 2, verses 7-8: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

We all know that we need self-control in our dietary habits. This is a "touchy" subject because many of us have some problems keeping at a "normal" weight, and especially so as we get older. Being overweight is not always because of gluttony or being winebibbers, either. Many people, however, are judged because of their weight problems. Let us just say on this subject the admonition of the Apostle Paul: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31).

Gaining self-control is somewhat of a process, not always an overnight achievement. The Apostle Peter alludes to this in his second epistle, chapter 1, verses 4-8. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Isn't it comforting to know that our Lord

doesn't demand our perfection at a wave of the hand? Some of us will struggle with self-control all of our Christian lives.

Every believer needs to have temperance in their lives. For instance, Paul wrote to Titus: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience" (Titus 2:1-2). And this is a qualification for being a bishop (Elder, Pastor, Shepherd) in the Church of God. Paul also wrote to Titus: "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:7-9).

Self-control is absolutely needed of a good soldier so that he and his unit will not be put into jeopardy by his lack of temperance. Paul likens the follower of Christ to being a good soldier. In II Timothy 2:3-5 we find: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." This passage tells us to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Enduring hardness takes great self-control.

One needs to have this self-control in every area of life, including the physical (having a good diet, enough sleep, an exercise program); the mental (good study habits, a positive attitude, etc.); and the spiritual (daily Scripture reading, good prayer habits, occasional fasting, and power in witnessing).

Paul also likens the Christian to a fine-tuned athlete who is competing to win a race. He wrote in I Corinthians 9:24-27: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate (self-controlled) in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

As we experience the world's inhabitants spinning more and more out of control, may the Lord help us to be that witness to others of having temperance in all areas of life. Our children and other family members need to see it in us. Our brothers and sisters in Christ need us to set the example. Our neighbors will be witnessed to, and our daily associates will know, that there is truly such a person as a follower of Jesus Christ. But most of all, the Lord will be greatly glorified and we will gain the strength of character to be an overcomer, and not what the Apostle Paul warned of as being a castaway.



The Ten Virgins is one of my favorite parables in which the words of Jesus express the true identity to those in the Church of GOD. We have read these verses and we seem not to understand how Jesus is reaching out so that we can be prepared in fullness of readiness and be part of His coming. The five foolish virgins knew that the coming of the Lord would soon be. They had plenty of time to prepare and fill their lamps, but they took no thought of

the matter. Times of trials come into our lives unexpectedly. We are just not prepared in this life, for example, when our loved one has died, we lose our job at a time we are piled up with bills that need to be paid, or divorce hits out of nowhere. We are not prepared for these hardships. The foolish virgins rushed to prepare, but it was too late. The door was shut and their hope for salvation was lost. Jesus has given us a good example in spiritual readiness.

We need to listen to the Word of God and He will help comfort our hearts.

Matthew 25:1-13 informs us: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

The question remains: do we continue to follow the lives of the foolish virgins and continue to play with time, thinking we are spiritually prepared in the sight of the LORD and continue to lie to ourselves, or are we carrying enough oil for us to see the way toward the Lord and be as the wise virgins? The disciples were well supported by the Spirit of GOD and always spoke the truth to keep them in spiritual growth and to keep them from the world. As we read Romans 8:4-9, we find: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Jesus did open the door to the five wise virgins. Jesus saw their truth preparation as their lamps shined. They approached and they were well received because Jesus recognized their truth spirit. Jesus knew not the foolish;

he warns us in Matthew 25:13: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

Many have tried to come in and pretend to be followers and spiritual servants of God, but Christ Jesus has said that many are out there and will cry "Lord, Lord", but He will respond as in the above verse in Matthew 25:12: "But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Jesus Christ, and our heavenly Father, spoke much exhortation in the spiritual sense and they use the ten virgins as an example to warn us that we need to be sincere and not to play the imposter as Judas did with Christ. Please read Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

God is coming and we all talk about the many signs we see today in the world. Some still fail to recognize as our Savior, Christ Jesus. Let not the time be wasted to be in readiness with God and He will fight your battles as He did with many of His people Israel.

I Peter 1:3-5 reads: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."





Crowns

All of God's people are, or will be, wearing various crowns, whether they be literal crowns or symbolic ones. A crown represents an achievement gained, a position granted, or a victory won. For instance, we see King David gaining a crown when he and Joab defeated the city of Rabbah. "And it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out to battle, Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried at Jerusalem. And Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it. And David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there were precious stones in it; and it was set upon David's head: and he brought also exceeding much spoil out of the city. And he brought out the people that were in it, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem" (I Chronicles 20:1-3).

David gained his crown with an achievement gained and a victory won, but Queen Esther gained her crown by a position granted. In Esther 2:16-17: "So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti."

We will see in this article that God's people will obtain crowns for positions granted as well as for achievements gained and victories won. A word of caution may be in order at this point. Though crowns can be gained in several ways, it is ultimately the Lord who grants the crown

and it can be taken away. Jesus warned us in Revelation 3:11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

One of the crowns that we can gain in this life is that of children and grandchildren. Just recently our youngest daughter Anna, and her husband Liam, had their second child, both girls. I can testify to what Proverbs 17:6 says: "Children's children are the crown of old men..." We also have a son, daughter, and grandson out in California, as well as another son in Washington, D.C. I certainly feel like a king with these crowns that the Lord has given to me and my wife, Linda.

Another crown in this life is a good wife: "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband..." (Proverbs 12:4). Without Linda's help throughout the years, my life and ministry would have been far, far more difficult. I thank God for her dedicated and loyal service, both to the Lord and to me. We have moved a number of times since we were married, and most of the moves were for the ministry. My wife was ready and willing to move each time, with all the packing, traveling, and going to new places. She has helped me tremendously.

The Apostle Paul reported that ministering to other people brings a type of crown. In Philippians 4:1 he wrote: "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." These people are actually a crown of rejoicing as we can see from I Thessalonians 2:19: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

Another crown that we need to be successful in life is that of having God's wisdom. Proverbs 4:7-9 informs us: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and

with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

Only God's wisdom will be enough to get us through the twists and turns that the world, and the devil, put in our way. Something that we must always remember is that there is one, and only one, way to go--and that way is God's way, no more and no less. The person looking for the victory over sin in this life must gain the victor's crown by following the Lord's rules--what is contained only in the pages of Scripture. II Timothy 2:5 tells us assuredly: "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." The Lord's will, including His commandments--His rules if you will--instruct us to strive lawfully for the victor's crown. Anything more or less than this will disqualify us for gaining that crown.

There are a number of crowns for which we must strive lawfully. First, we are told that our crown is incorruptible. Paul said in I Corinthians 9:25: "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." We also strive for a crown of righteousness, as Paul wrote: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:7-8).

To those who have shepherded a flock of the Lord's people, the Apostle Peter assured: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Peter 5:1-4).

A crown that everybody can strive for is the crown of life. James wrote: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of

life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12). This crown of life was promised to the faithful saints of the Church of Smyrna, and it is also for the faithful saints of every age. Revelation 2:8-10 reads: "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

An amazing drama is found in Revelation, chapter 12, concerning God's people who struggle against Satan (see verse 9). The story begins with the congregation of Israel and ends with God's people (the Remnant) who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (verses 1-5).

The crown of 12 stars upon the woman's head represents part of the organization of God's Church. At first there were 12 tribes of the children of Israel, and later Jesus chose 12 apostles to lead the New Testament Church that He was organizing. Did you notice that Satan has 7 crowns upon his 7 heads as the great red dragon? This probably represents the high position that Satan holds as a ruler of wickedness in the earth. Ephesians 6:12 declares: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 2:1-2 also informs us: "And you

hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience".

Going back to our story in Revelation 12 we learn: "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (verses 13-17). Though Satan fought hard against the woman, God did not allow His Church to be destroyed. Today His people make up those "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Satan will be working through a beast which resembles him some as the dragon. Revelation 13:1-2 states: "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." This beast, having 10 crowns, also is given much authority by the dragon (Satan). Satan uses this beast to gain worship for himself (see verse 4). The beast blasphemes God and makes war with the saints. As we mentioned earlier in Revelation 3:11: "...hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Aaron, as God's High Priest, was required to wear a crown upon his head. This requirement is found in Exodus 29:5-6: "And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod: And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre." Aaron, of

course, represented Jesus as our great High Priest. Jesus is required to wear various crowns.

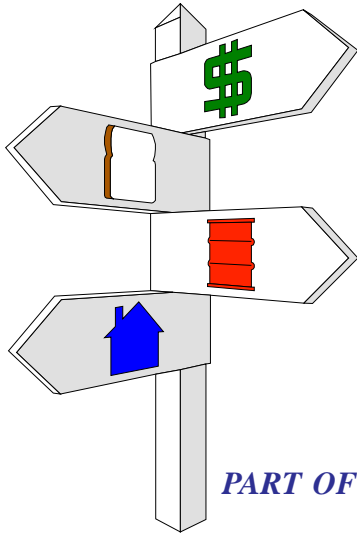
However, before He wears golden crowns, He wore a crown of thorns as a part of His great suffering for you and me. "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matthew 27:29). Before we can wear a crown of glory or a crown of life, we too must follow our Saviour in suffering for His sake (see I Peter 2:21).

When the Lord Jesus comes again, He will do so as the reaper of the saints. Upon His head He will wear a golden crown. Revelation 14:14-16 tells us: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."

Later, during the warring phase of His second return, Jesus will wear many crowns. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself" (Revelation 19:11-12).

Isaiah prophesied of a time when the Lord will be accounted as a crown for Israel. "In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate" (Isaiah 28:5-6). Isaiah again prophesied of a time when Jerusalem would be a crown. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth...Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isaiah 62:1,3).

Let us rejoice when we read the words of Revelation, chapter 4: "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne..." (Revelation 4:10).



PART OF DIPLOMACY?

The following is an article by Allan Turner entitled **At Rice, Kerry says religion part of diplomacy**. It appeared in the *Houston Chronicle*:

Speaking to a packed house at Rice University's Stude Concert Hall on Tuesday, Secretary of State John Kerry stressed the importance of galvanizing the world's religions as a force to battle bigotry, violence, poverty, corruption and degradation of the environment.

"My basic argument is straightforward," he said. "The more we understand religion, the better we are able to engage religion, the more effective our diplomacy will be... We don't make contacts for the sake of having interesting conversations, we do so to make progress on our foreign policy and security goals, to make America safer."

To that end, Kerry told the gathering sponsored by the university's Baker Institute for Public Policy, the state Department has endeavored to establish communication not only with religious leaders but with religious rank and file.

Within his first months in office in 2013, Kerry moved to create an office of religious freedom charged with establishing thousands of contacts with world religious leaders. In U.S. embassies around the world, staff has been encouraged to understand and reach out to religious groups.

Such contacts have proved valuable in providing information on Islamic extremists, government corruption in Nigeria and the growth of anti-Semitism in Europe. Meetings with Islamic leaders have addressed economic development along with refugee welfare and human rights; those with leaders in Uganda, ways of curbing female genital mutilation.

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.

Such emphasis on world religions – 80 percent of the world's people observe some religious faith – traditionally has been absent from U.S. diplomatic strategy, Kerry said.

"We don't advocate for a set of religious beliefs, or even belief over non-belief, but that doesn't mean that religion is irrelevant to our approach to world affairs," he said.

"Religion today remains deeply consequential, affecting values and actions of every walk of life on every continent. It's part of what drives some to initiate war, others to pursue peace, inspires some to organize change, others to cling desperately to old ways."

Kerry said it is imperative that the world's people have the right of religious freedom, and accused ISIS of "killing Yazidis because they are Christian, Shiites because they are Shia."

He denounced "rising" anti-Jewish feeling in Europe, saying that once started, prejudice is hard to contain.

"The last century saw much blood shed in the wake demagogues," he said. "We remain inalterably opposed to bigotry in all forms, including anti-Semitism. We will never weaken, never change."

Turning to domestic politics, Kerry lambasted presidential hopefuls for "smearing" the American Muslim community with the violent actions of extremists.

"Muslims have lived with us from the founding of our country," he said. "They have fought on our side in every war, made homes in every region – proudly in Houston – pursued a wide range of occupations. In other words, they're Americans."

Comment

Do you agree with Secretary of State John Kerry? It seems that religion has only made diplomacy more difficult when viewed from the eye of an average observer. There are also divisions and wars among religions as their

followers are carnal and have been deceived by Satan and his angels. Religion simply cannot aid in bringing about true diplomacy as directed by the United States. The false teachings in religions in the world are the ways of the carnal man. Proverbs 21:8 speaks of the way of man: “The way of man is froward (unruly) and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.” The religions in the world are not pure because they follow the dictates of Satan and do not have our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is true that religion remains deeply consequential, and it does affect the values and actions of every walk of life on every continent. He goes on to say, “It’s part of what drives some to initiate war, others to pursue peace, inspires some to organize change, others to cling desperately to old ways.” How can such a combination produce good diplomacy?

A SAFER GUN?

I read that high – tech ideals are helping to build a safer gun. Some gun makers are exploring biometrics, like an iPhone lock that opens with your fingerprint. Some rely on radio-frequency identification, or IFID, technology, proximity sensors similar to the system Mossberg’s company uses. Some use watchers to send a signal to the firearm.

The road to a safer gun has been long. Initial efforts encountered a public weary of the technology, but that has eased as iPhones, tablets and other smart devices have become common.

DIGITAL DRAWBACK

I read in **THE NEW YORK TIMES** an article entitled *So Much Work Is Going Digital, But Productivity Remains Stuck*. The following is a portion of that article:

“Your smartphone allows you to get instantaneous answers to the most obscure questions. It allows you to waste hours scrolling through Facebook or looking for the latest deals on Amazon.

More powerful computing systems can predict the weather better than any meteorologist or beat human champions in complex board games like chess.

But for several years, economists have asked why all that technical wizardry seems to be having so little impact on the economy. The issue surfaced again recently, when the government reported disappointingly slow growth and continuing stagnation in productivity. The rate of productivity growth from 2011 to 2015 was the slowest since the five-year period ending in 1982.”

ANOTHER DECEPTION

While looking on the internet, I saw a story that some in a small town saw an image of the Virgin Mary on a tree.

I forget the location and name of the town, but it added that the image gave the town new hope.

Comment

The subject of the supposed appearance of the Virgin Mary has been mentioned in this column several times before. We know that this is an example of a lying wonder. Many more lying wonders will be performed in the future. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (II Thessalonians 2:7-11). A child of God who loves the truth will not be deceived by any lying wonder.

NO REST IN IRAQ

Beside the war going on in Iraq with ISIS, I understand that many Iraqis stormed their parliament because of corruption. A news report stated that the protest deepens the political crisis threatening the nation. The report stated that the protest was a sign of the separation between the people and a ruling elite unresponsive to the aspirations of Iraq’s citizens.

Comment

It is difficult for Iraq’s government, no matter how elite it may be, to satisfy the people and fight against ISIS and the many other terror groups. Real peace and hope for all people, not only in Iraq, will have to await the time when the kingdom of God is established in the world. This is the time when, “...he (the Lord) shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness” (Psalm 9:8).

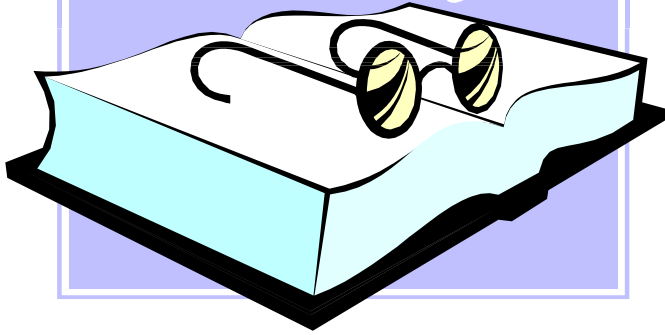
Also meditate upon the following two verses in Psalms:

“He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment” (Psalm 72:2).

“He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with dead bodies; he shall wound (break the leaders) the heads over many countries” (Psalm 110:6).

BIBLE

Study



Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Should children of God carry life insurance policies and sick and accident policies?

ANSWER: We believe that I Timothy 5:8 answers your question: "...if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." If we have those dependent upon us for support, we must do our outmost to provide for them, not only while we are here to help them, but also after we are gone, or are disabled and unable to help them.

QUESTION: What makes our Lord Jesus Christ the source of our salvation?

ANSWER: Many different titles are used in the New Testament to describe the person and work of Jesus. For example, in Hebrews 5:1-10 He is referred to as a "high priest" and as "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." And rightly you may say, "Since the Bible says this, I will accept it, but what does that mean?" Admittedly, this particular way of describing Jesus does not have ready meaning for us. But it is important that we understand it.

In Old Testament times, the priest was one called not only to speak to the people about God, but also to plead with God on behalf of the people he served. At times, he spoke words of condemnation, despair, and hope for God

to men, but more often he spoke for men to God. By and large, the priests were a dedicated, serving, teaching, ministering group of men.

But the analogy used in Hebrews is drawn with a particular and even more dramatic function of the priest in mind. Once a year the high priest went into the inmost sanctuary of the temple, the holy of holies, to ask forgiveness for the sins of his people. In this sense, the high priest was a mediator between God and man. He was the bridge between a holy God and a sinful people. The priest offered the sacrifices in temple worship and by this very act not only expressed repentance and desire for forgiveness on the part of the people but also reaffirmed their faith in God.

Just as the high priest of that day went before God for men, so Jesus became our high priest. But His function was even greater. Rather than taking a sacrifice of grain or some animal before God, He became the sacrifice Himself. Jesus knew no sin, no refusal to do God's will. He offered Himself, a perfect sacrifice, on behalf of sinful man. And this voice asking forgiveness and offering sacrifice on our behalf, is not just once for this year but for all time, forever.

The passage in Hebrews says that Jesus "...is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4, last part). This is such an important thing in God's plan that no one, not even the Son Himself, could take upon Himself the honor or the responsibility of becoming the high priest, the

sacrifice for all men for all time. He was appointed. He was called of God for this particular function. To be called did not mean that Jesus was compelled to be the one who spoke for us, the people, and the one to sacrifice Himself as the offering. He could have said, "I will not do it!" Surely, His temptations, His humanity, and His experience in the garden leave no doubt in our minds that He was seriously faced with alternatives.

So not only was He called of God for this function, but in love and obedience His answer was "Yes". Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9).

His suffering was physical, but it was also psychological and spiritual. Ultimately on the cross He had a feeling and sense of being deserted. He cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Suffering, He learned obedience, and it was only through suffering that He was brought to a total perfection to do what God could do through Him. Thus as one who lived the perfect life, He came to the point that He had to obey God in order to die the self-effacing death. He had to die the death centered on someone else's sin and for someone else's benefit. He had to give Himself totally for others, the perfect death. Thus, His life and mission were perfected, and thus He authored an eternal salvation for all who would believe Him and obey Him. This was in keeping with the purpose of Jesus, who was "chosen from among men . . . to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since He himself is beset with weakness" (Hebrews 5:1-2). Being human, He could see and know how difficult it is for you and me to make the right choices. He knew firsthand what it is to bear bodily harm and death. He knew what it is to have to go against the advice and best-intended directions of family and friends. He knew what it is to be misunderstood when he sought only to help. He knew what it is to feel God no longer cares.

There was once a boy named Jim. He was the bad boy of a small community who was blamed for most of the things that went wrong. He was often whipped at school, but he took the whippings without complaint and often without tears. One year a new schoolmaster came. An incident happened, and everyone pointed to Jim as the one to blame. He expected the usual beating. Jim

was surprised when the teacher said, "Now, let Jim tell his side." Jim, who had known very few tears in his life, began to cry. The teacher asked, "What is the matter, Jim?" He replied, "This is the first time anybody ever said I had a side."

Jesus does not become our convicter. The Book of John tells us plainly that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved. Anyone who has looked at himself honestly – away from God, afraid to die, not knowing what to do with life, feeling that there is no one on whom he can readily depend, using prayer only as a last resort – knows that he is a sinner. The Scripture simply reaffirms what all of us at one time or another know to be true: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Jesus says to God, "Let these sinners be forgiven and accepted because of me. Let these who will obey me and believe on me have hope and the power to live right." Jesus says to us, "You shall become children of God."

Jesus, then, through His priestly work became "the source of eternal salvation," for men in every generation from His day until the end of time. It is a salvation offered in every generation. We can be sure of our salvation for eternity as we believe Jesus and live in obedience to His will.

QUESTION: A friend of mine, who quotes passages from the Bible, says there is a Scripture that says "Weep and mourn at the birth and rejoice at the death." Is there really such a Scripture?

ANSWER: Of course, there is no such Scripture! The only Scripture that is at all similar to this is Ecclesiastes 7:1-2: "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart."

The book of Ecclesiastes gives the view of human life from "under the sun." Ecclesiastes 7:1-2 shows that unless there was something beyond the horizon of human reasoning it would be better to die than to be born. It would have been better not to have lived at all. See I Corinthians 15:19.



India

Some of the brethren praising the Lord. Apostle Yehoshuva is in the center.





Above: An anointing service. Below: More praise and worship time.



LESSON I

PAUL SENT TO FELIX (PART I)

Scripture Reading: Acts 23:23-25; 24:1-9.

Golden Text: Acts 23:31.

"Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris."

NOTE: We last studied that the Jews planned to kill Paul. Paul's nephew warned the chief captain of this plan. We will now continue to find what happens to Paul.

1. Where was Paul to be taken, and who would he see there? Acts 23:23-24.
2. The chief captain, Claudius Lysias, writes a letter to be sent to Felix with Paul. Why did Claudius rescue Paul? Acts 23:25-27.
3. Why did Claudius send Paul to Felix? Acts 23:28-30.
4. What happened to Paul when he reached Caesarea? Acts 23:33-35.
5. Who arrived in five days to accuse Paul? Acts 24:1.
6. What did Tertullus say to Felix in Acts 24:2-4?

NOTE: Tertullus was the appointed speaker for Ananias and the other elders.

7. Paul was called "pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition...and a ringleader of the ...Nazarenes" in Acts 24:5. What is meant by each of these labels which were put upon Paul?
8. What else was said to Felix about Paul in Acts 24:6-8?

LESSON II

PAUL SENT TO FELIX (PART II)

Scripture Reading: Acts 24:10-27.

Golden Text: Acts 24:14 (last part).

"...so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets."

NOTE: We were studying about Paul being brought before Felix, and his accusers have told that Paul is disruptive of the Jewish people. We will now continue the story.

1. What did Paul say to Felix when he was allowed to speak in Acts 24:10-13?
2. Of what did Paul confess? Acts 24:14-16. Are you guilty of those things to which Paul confessed?
3. What does the word resurrection mean? What did Paul mean by the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust? Revelation 20:4-5; John 5:28-29.
4. As Paul continues to speak to defend himself, what does he say about certain Jews? Acts 24:18-21.
5. What did Felix command the centurion to do with Paul? Acts 24:23.
6. Of what did Paul speak to Felix? What was the reaction of Felix to Paul's words? Acts 24:24-25.
7. Did Felix want to hear more from Paul and become a follower of Jesus? Acts 24:26.
8. How long had it been since Paul had come to Caesarea? Acts 24:27.

LESSON III

PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

Scripture Reading: Acts 25:1-27.

Golden Text: Acts 25:12.

"Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go."

NOTE: In our last lesson we learned that Paul was kept as a prisoner by the governor, Felix, for two years. Felix is now being replaced by a new governor, Porcius Festus, and we will learn what happens to Paul now.

1. After the first three days, where did Festus go? Acts 25:1.
2. Had the high priest and Jews forgotten their bitterness towards Paul? Acts 25:2-3.
3. What did Festus tell the Jews that they should do about Paul? Acts 25:4-5.
4. How long did Festus stay in Jerusalem before returning to Caesarea, and what did he do when he returned? Acts 25:6-7.
5. After Paul defends himself, what did Festus ask him? Acts 25:8-9.
6. Where did Paul say he should go for his judgment? Why? Acts 25:10-11.

NOTE: Caesar was in Rome. Read Acts 23:11 to remind us what the Lord said to Paul.

7. Who came to see Festus, and were they told about Paul? Acts 25:13-21.
8. Was King Agrippa interested in Paul's case? Acts 25:22-23.
9. Did Festus want to see Paul killed? Acts 25:24-27.

LESSON IV

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE AGRIPPA

Scripture Reading: Acts 26:1-32.

Golden Text: Acts 26:28.

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

1. Why was Paul happy? Acts 26:2-3.
2. What accounts did Paul mention in Acts 26:4-18?

NOTE: Again Paul took the opportunity to tell of his conversion.

3. Unto what did Paul say he was not disobedient? Acts 26:22-23.
4. What did Paul say was necessary in Acts 26:20? To what do you think "works meet for repentance" refers?
5. List three things of which Paul witnessed. Acts 26:22-23.
6. What did Festus say about Paul's great knowledge, and what was his reply to Festus' comments? Acts 26:24-27.

7. What did King Agrippa say about Paul's words? Acts 26:28.

8. Tell in your own words what Paul was trying to say in Acts 26:29.

9. What was Agrippa's opinion of Paul's alleged crime? Acts 26:31-32.

NOTE: King Agrippa said Paul had almost persuaded him to be a Christian. Yet King Agrippa was not willing to turn his life over to Christ. The decision was his and his alone. The same is true today. No one can prevent us from becoming a child of God except ourselves. What will be YOUR choice?

AND THE LORD SAID --

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" Isaiah 55:11.



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.

"Shhh! 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?

NAMES OF JESUS

In the Bible, Jesus is given many beautiful names and titles. Let us see how many we can find.

Here are the places in the Bible where the names may be found:

1. What two names did the angels give Jesus in speaking to the shepherds on the night of His birth? Luke 2:11.
2. What did God call Jesus at His baptism? Matthew 3:17.
3. What did Jesus often call Himself? Matthew 8:20.
4. What name did the two blind men give Him? Matthew 9:27.
5. What names did the Prophet Isaiah give Him? Isaiah 9:6.
6. What names did Jesus give Himself in John 14:6?
7. To what did Jesus liken Himself in John 6:35? In John 10:11?
8. To what two flowers is He likened sometimes in hymns? Song of Solomon 2:1.
9. To what heavenly bodies is He likened in Malachi 4:2 and Revelation 22:16?
10. What title of Jesus is made up of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet? Revelation 22:13.

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

By Maran B. Wilkinson

We know that Jesus always went to church on Sabbath. It was what He liked to do. When He was big, He read the Bible in church. But if He were little like you, right now, what do you think He would do? Answer the

question Yes or No.

1. Would Jesus walk into church in a noisy way?
2. Would He ever wiggle and whisper?
3. Would Jesus need a toy to play with in church?
4. Would He try to listen to the sermon?
5. Would He always sit with His step-father and mother?
6. Would He look around during prayer?
7. Would He be happy in God's house?
8. Would He be quiet and reverent?
9. Does Jesus want you to love God's house, too?
10. Will He help you to be quiet and good?

SCRAMBLED NAMES

1. Peter is known also as SOMIN and as CAEPSH
2. Peter once lived in TSHAEIBAD
3. Peter's brother was named ERDWNA
4. Peter's occupation was that of a RESIHNMFA
5. Peter's fishing partners were MAESJ and NJHO
6. Jesus said He would make Peter a HEFSIR OF NME

ANSWERS TO NAMES OF JESUS

1. A Savior, Christ the Lord.
2. Son.
3. Son of man.
4. Son of David.
5. Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
6. I am the way, the truth, and the life.
7. I am the bread of life. I am the good shepherd.
8. I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley.
9. The Sun of righteousness, I am the bright and morning star.
10. Alpha and Omega.

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MY GOD

Betty Whetstone

*My God is the Lord of the mountain,
His Spirit dwells along the high peaks;
He gives to my troubled soul comfort,
And the peace of His love my heart seeks.*

*I tiptoe along shadowed pathways,
Where ferns bless my knees with a stroke;
My soul finds a peace that's unequaled
As I rest at the feet of an oak.*

*My God is Lord of the valley,
Where rivers run silent and deep;
Our feet dance on flower-strewn pathways
As we seek His favor to keep.*

*Birds fill the valley with singing,
Pouring forth with all of their might;
And the Lord marks the fall of a sparrow,
And not one will be lost from His sight.*

*My God is the Lord of Creation,
And Creation is singing His praise;
For the wondrous things that He gives us
We thank you, Ancient of Days.*

*All the wonders He has created,
It needs only one more thing;
The rule of our Lord, the Creator,
And the peace only that rule will bring.*