

THE WORD AND WORK

"A monthly magazine set to declare the whole counsel of God."

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Talking Things Over

G. R. L.

FALSE HUMILITY

"Come on, Peter, walk with me on the water!"

"Oh, no, Lord! I could never do that! I'm a mere man and a dreadful sinner at that. Oh, if You would just *make* me walk on the water, I might, but I know that I could never make myself do it."

If you want to know what really happened, read Matthew 14. Now to the point of our bit of fiction. We have made Peter to reply after the fashion of many a modern Christian. We are assuming here that Peter is sincerely expressing his real feelings and not merely making excuses; he really sees himself as incapable of walking on the water. Perhaps he remembers how bold he had been in declaring, "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended," and how he had gone on to deny his Lord. The Christian who has had a few experiences like this might easily fall into the false humility of our fictitious Peter on the water. He is just too weak and insignificant and fearful to believe that he can do anything for the Lord. He can't even make a firm request in prayer; he always leaves a loophole for the Lord's refusal by adding, "If it be Thy will." To this, Paul replies, "Be not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). But what about the rest of this situation?

"I WILL. . . .

For a long time, I was amazed at the boldness (or was it effrontery??) of the Psalmist. Consider such positive affirmations as these: "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee; I will sing praise to thy name." "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." "I will bless the Lord at all times." "I will meditate in thy precepts. . . I will delight myself in thy statutes. . . I will run the way of thy commandments. . . I shall keep thy law. . . I will keep thy precepts. . . I will never forget thy precepts. . . I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous ordinances." (Psalms 9:1,2; 18:1; 34:1; 119:15, 16, 32, 34, 69, 93, 106).

Is the Psalmist being realistic, or presumptuous? Israel has been criticized for saying, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8); and history proved her unable to live up to her

good intention. Peter was certainly presumptuous in declaring that he would never deny his Lord. But what about the Psalmist? Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he surely spoke truth; yet, how could it be?

“In my flesh dwelleth no good thing,” says Paul. “How to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:18). Any honest person will say “Amen” to this—and perhaps stop right there, in defeat. But the word of God doesn’t stop there. If we read as far as Romans 8:4, we find, “That the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk . . . after the Spirit.” It is clearly God’s intent that we should walk before Him in righteousness, free from all condemnation, and He has made provision so that we can do it.

“He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14). He knows well that there is nothing in us but total inability to please Him. So He breathes into this dust the breath of life—the Holy Spirit (this is what Romans 8 is all about)—and we are made to be a new creation. As a consequence, the same Paul who once said, “How to perform . . . I find not,” is able to go on and say, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). The same enabling power is available to every believer.

NOT I, BUT CHRIST

So then I can—through God at work in me (Philippians 2:13)—do the things that please God; and there’s no excuse for disobedience. There’s no reason why I should not say with the Psalmist, “*I will obey thy word.*” Any hedging at this point cannot be credited to humility. It may be unbelief that is afraid to trust the Holy Spirit to help. It may be ignorance that hasn’t been told of God’s gracious Gift. Or it may be a spirit of disobedience that doesn’t really want His hand to control my life.

Check yourself. Can you say, as does the Psalmist, “I will . . . I will . . . I will . . .”? Do you really feel comfortable making such positive statements of commitment in the presence of the Lord? If not, take your case to the great Physician. He knows what you need and how to supply it.

What Shall We Do About Nepal?

J. C. Choate

A few months ago we revealed to the brotherhood the amazing story of the beginning of the Lord’s church in the country of Nepal. That story concerned the conversion and work of Bro. Prem Pradan and others, and told of their struggle to preach the gospel to their own people. As a result of their work there are now more than five hundred Christians and eighteen congregations in that land of Hindu-

ism where it is against the law for one to change his religion. Several of the members, including Bro. Pradhan, have spent prison terms because of their faith but they are more determined than ever to serve the Lord. But to top it all off, all of this is being done without any foreign missionaries or any American dollars.

Because of this story, brethren keep asking what they can do to help. Some want to write these members. Some want to go and investigate them. Some want to send them money. And there is one congregation, and perhaps others, that want to send in American workers. Now before this story was reported—although a plea was made in behalf of Nepal a few years back—not a soul offered to go and not one congregation offered to send. But now that something of great importance is going on there, more than one wants to get his finger in the pie so as to claim the credit. This is very sad indeed.

Brethren need to realize that what has taken place in Nepal has been done without any outside help. Therefore, no American or any other foreigner can take the credit for it. Furthermore, the Government of Nepal will not allow foreign missionaries to enter to preach the gospel, but even if they would, why bother a person who seems to be making a great deal of progress without our help? Why is it that we think we have to go into such places and put our stamp of approval on it, and control it with our money, before we can recognize it as being the Lord's work? We should also realize that to bother these brethren at this time by constantly corresponding with them or by visiting them could result in their arrest and the destruction of the church in Nepal.

I did not begin the work in Nepal and I can take no credit for it. Neither can any other American. Neither are Americans needed there at this time inasmuch as it could result in more harm being done than good. I did write the story on it, and I hesitated to do it for the reasons already mentioned. But I did so because I felt that brethren everywhere would want to know about it and would rejoice with me in what was happening there. I also wanted us to realize that we do not have any lock and key on God's word, but wherever it goes it is possible for people to believe and obey it and be what the Lord would have them to be.

I ask you again therefore to leave these people alone. They have done a great work and they do not need outsiders to hinder them in this case. If we, however, rush in at this time we may do them great harm. If you want to help them, leave them in peace, and add to their strength by praying for them. That is what I am doing.

-In Firm Foundation

OF NESTS AND TREES

"We must teach Christians not to build nests in the trees of this world: for they are all marked for the axe" —S. Rutherford

"WITHOUT ME YE CAN DO NOTHING" (John 15:5)

The Work of the Church is Done at the Throne

D. M. Panton

The whole man ought to become one burning prayer to God! Importunity is the essence of prevailing prayer. We must get answers to our prayers—for the silence of God is one of the dreadful things of the earth!

The promises are colossal, and as sure as God Himself. Plead His own Word, and how shall God say nay? "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father" (Matt. 18:19). Answers are as wide as the will of God "If we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14).

Answers are limited by faith. "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). God is the sole manufacturer of opportunities; the only rescuer of the lost; the One alone inexhaustibly wealthy; the only occupant in all the universe of a throne of grace (Heb. 4:16); not a standing reservoir, but a flowing river of blessing, rich unto all that call" (Rom. 10:12). Therefore pray. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" (Ps. 94:9).

The Power of Prayer

It is a Person. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13, 14). Prayer that reaches God through Christ reaches Him as from Christ!

"All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore" (Matt. 28:18, 19). And therefore come. "Nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17:20). What a trumpet-blast from the lips of the son of God! Daniel's prayer was not finished (Dan. 9:21), before the angel touched him from the Throne. O beloved, pray!

The Preparation for Prayer

"Prepare your prayers," said Mr. Spurgeon, "by preparing yourselves" (1 John 3:22). We carry into the assembly the atmosphere we have made at home. We betray our lives when we open our mouths. Therefore, come from the throne of Grace, ere you go to the throne of grace.

Pray with holy hands, or God refuses His ear (Ps. 66:18). Pray without wrath, for God is silenced by injury to a brother (Mk. 11:25). Haunt the prayer meeting. Be much with God and God will be much with you.

The Form of Prayer

Pray briefly (Ecc. 5:2). One stone slung is better than a handful of loose gravel. Pray humbly (Lk. 18:13). "Pride," says McCheyne "is Satan's wedge for splitting prayer meetings to pieces."

Pray pointedly (Phil. 4:6)! Every prayer should be full of pointed phrase and definite petition. Pray scripturally (Lk. 11:1). To pray scripture is a safe way to pray according to the will of God. Take pains to avoid a self-made liturgy. Prayers cease to leave the earth when they get caught in ruts.

Pray believing and gratefully (Jas. 1:6-7). Faith and thankfulness (1 Thes. 5:18) are the wings of prayer, which lift it readily to the Throne. Pray together (Matt. 18:19). If the prayer of a righteous man avails much, shall not the prayer of a righteous host avail more (Jas. 5:16)?

The work of a church is done at the Throne. All other work is mere detail. "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Pray intensely (Deut. 4:29). It has been said that Satan can build walls around us, but no roof overhead. But we may add that lethargy builds a ceiling to its own prayers. The whole man ought to become one burning prayer!

The Heart in Prayer

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God" (Lam. 3:41). As a doctor will lay his ear against the heart to judge its beating, so does God. He inclines His ear, not to the lips, but to the heart (Matt. 15:8).

Keep praying throughout the meeting. Forget all others. Cultivate a deep consciousness of the presence of God. Impunity is the essence of prevailing prayer. Never stop praying (Lk. 18:1-8). At dawn pray with David; at noon, with Daniel; at midnight, with Paul and Silas; in sorrow, as Hannah; in sickness, as Job; in joy, as Christ; in childhood, like Samuel; in youth, like Timothy; in manhood, like Paul; in hoary hairs, like Simeon; in dying, like Stephen.

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1). "At night my heart was so full, I could only pour it out in awful silence (Whitefield).

The Objects of Prayer

Praise is a short cut to the heart of God. Be great and unselfish in your prayers: praying for all men (1 Tim. 2:1); for all saints (Eph. 6:18); for the unity of all believers (John 17:21); for all things (Rom 8:32).

Pray for Israel (Rom. 10:1); for the Gentiles (Lk. 10:2); for rulers (1 Tim. 2:2); for ministers (Eph. 6:19); for conversions (1 Tim. 2:1, 4); for personal enemies (Lk. 6:28).

Pray at once for pardon after known sin (1 John 1:9). Pray for the recovery of sick disciples (Jas. 5:16). Pray for world-wide revival (Acts 2:17; Zech. 10:1). Pray for the return of Christ (Rev. 22:20). Pray for your own share in rapture (Lk. 21:36). Pray that the Spirit may show you for what to pray (Rom. 8:26).

“With all prayer and supplication for all saints, praying at all seasons in all perseverance (Eph. 6:18). It is always safe to pray for others. None is too poor to give this gift, and none is so wealthy that he can give a richer.

The Fruits of Prayer

We must get answers, for the silence of God is one of the dreadful things of the world (Gen. 32:26)! Prayer is a field which is thrice reaped: (1) It sanctifies the suppliant. As God saves by a Lamb so He preserves by a cry (Lk. 18:7-8). And “praying will either make a man leave off sinning, or else sinning will make a man leave off praying.” (2) It enriches the suppliant. Our Lord wants us to overflow with joy because of answers received. “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24). (3) It will glorify the suppliant. “Pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matt. 6:6). Therefore, O beloved, pray!

Fred Schott is Unit Director at the East End Boys Club in Louisville, and he is a 1965 graduate of Portland Christian High School.

Casting in of Our Superfluity

Fred W. Schott

Several months ago in reading the book of Luke, when I came again to the story of the “Widow’s mite” I had a question concerning what the Lord said of the rich men who cast in of the “superfluity.” Of course, I knew what was meant concerning gifts made to the treasury, that a gift made from what was left after all other temporal things had been taken care of was not as precious to the Lord as the widow who “cast in all the living that she had.” The lesson concerning this is obvious.

The question I had, which I wrote in the margin, was, “What does this mean spiritually?” This haunted me for a while and I asked the Lord to show me what it meant to give of my superfluity in a spiritual sense. It wasn’t until just recently, at a point that I needed it most, that the Lord, at least to some extent answered my prayer.

How crafty our enemy is! Martin Luther spoke words long ago that we do well to listen to today:

If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

This speaks vividly to the matter of giving of our spiritual superfluity. One can hardly go out in public today without seeing or hearing some expression of faith in Jesus. Bumper stickers, posters, rings, necklaces, “One Way” signs, are seen everywhere. It is not unusual to hear someone respond to “Isn’t it a beautiful day?” with

"Praise the Lord!" Passersby on downtown streets are often asked, "Do you know that Jesus died for your sins?"

It is not my intention to say that these things are wrong or that God cannot work through these things, but to issue a warning. To say God cannot or will not work through such means would be to deny both God's sovereignty and the evidence. But a warning is very much in order here. What is the greater and more lasting witness or spiritual gift? A fleeting question or inquiry into the meaning of a cross or fish hung conspicuously around a neck or embroidered in a shirt or jacket; or the life of one perhaps in a difficult job, who day in and day out is a mirror to the glory of a risen Lord? What will speak more to the heart of an unbeliever? Someone who pursues him down the street confronting him with Jesus; or suddenly being faced with a transformation in the life of a friend, a friend who is now "a new creature," a friend in whose life the *Life* of the Lord Jesus is manifested? In both instances which is the hardest? Which demands the most commitment?

Of course, what we are speaking of here is an outward expression of what we feel. If things are out of order or out of whack here it gives evidence of a deeper contortion in our lives. I have always taken courage, especially when confronted with unbelief and doubt during my college days, from the man who cried out to Jesus, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!" The Psalmists also are a comfort to me. They are completely honest with God, giving vent even to doubt, distrust, and unbelief. "Will the Lord cast off forever? Is His lovingkindness clean gone forever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" (Psalm 77:7-9.)

It would be wonderful never to find ourselves in such moods and periods of spiritual depression. But a worse thing would be to deny them when in our human frailty they do come upon us. Or, perhaps even worse, to psychologically trick ourselves into thinking they are not there. It is my conviction that God would have us completely honest, even when we do not like our secret thoughts and feelings and questions. For it is when we are honest with Him that He, as with the Psalmists, never leaves us with our spiritual suffering longer than is good for us:

"Who is a great god like unto our God?

Thou art the God that doest wonders:

Thou hast made known thy strength among the peoples."

(Psalm 77:13-14.)

There are some very dear to me in the Lord and by whose fellowship I am strengthened, who have told me that the answer in such feelings and sufferings is to say "Praise the Lord!" It would be wonderful to always be able to say with sincerity, "Praise God!" or as James, to "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations." That certainly is our goal: to be so laid hold of by Jesus Christ that we can praise Him in everything that happens to us. But, the point I am struggling to make is that the way to achieve this goal is not when we find within ourselves voices of doubt

and questions of "why"—to drown them with psychological shouts of "Praise the Lord!" Rather we should fall to our knees and pour out our heart, all of it, to the Lord. It is in this position, one of being spiritually on our face before the Lord, that, as with the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:28-2:2), the Spirit can enter into us, set us upon our feet, and we can hear what He has to say to us. Then He can bring us to the place that we can say "Praise God!" in such a way that we would not have been able to say it before.

The Spirit counseled the church at Laodicea to "buy of me gold refined by fire." Fire often signifies in the New Testament trials, tribulations, and temptations. James again says that it is through these that our faith is "proved," a word similar to "refined." Paul told the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 5:10-15) to be careful how each man built on the foundation (Jesus Christ) which had been laid in his life. He mentions six building materials to be laid on the foundation: gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, and stubble. The order of value and worth as a building material is descending. The last three are materials that are consumed in a fire at low temperatures. If a building made of these six materials were to burn, the wood, hay, and stubble would be consumed, leaving only the gold, silver, and costly stones. This is exactly what Paul says will happen to them.

"Each man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is." Paul goes on to say that after the fires if "any man's work shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; (tribulations and trials) abide. . . he shall receive a reward," and if nothing remains but the foundation, that will be enough to save oneself, but there will be no reward. In other words, a person may labor diligently for years and if his structure is made only of wood and stubble and there is no gold and silver he will receive no reward. Again, if his work has been of his "superfluity" it will not merit a reward. This can certainly be said of a gathering of Christians or a Church as well as the individual.

But God, in His wonderful providence, has provided a means whereby we can prevent our work from being full of stubble—the fires of trials, temptations, and tribulations. But these only will do the job if we allow them to burn fully. An example of what I'm talking about happened to my wife and me recently. Sunday through Tuesday of a particular week had been extremely sweet. We felt God had very much used us in His work, we felt close to each other, and we felt wonderfully close to God. Then on Wednesday of that week, our little sixteen-month-old daughter spilled hot oat meal from a counter onto her forehead and arm. Fortunately the burns were not very serious, but in the first few hours following the accident when there was uncertainty as to how serious they were and especially watching such a little one cry and suffer with a pain that hung on for hours, the questions of why? why Lord? were in my heart. To have denied these questions would have been dishonest, even to have ignored them. Somehow to say "Praise God!" at such a time, especially with the feeling and aching in my

heart, seemed almost ridiculous. To have done so would have been to psychologically shout down the questions arising in my heart. Worse than that, it would have been to throw water on the fire that God was using to burn out some of the stubble that I had gotten into the structure of my life.

Even now I am not sure why God has allowed this to happen to my little one, but in facing my questions honestly He has brought me to the point of submission and acceptance of His will, and I have real peace surrounding this incident. More than that, He has used this to help me understand how deeply He has loved me. What my daughter suffered is nothing in comparison with what He allowed His Son to suffer for me. My ache at her suffering, due to love for my child, cannot compare to the ache God must have had as He watched the sufferings of His Son with a love the depth of which I'll never know until, perhaps, in Heaven.

I am convinced that what God would have in this day are disciples—disciples that will be content with Mary to sit at the Master's feet, disciples that will be keenly aware of the Spirit so that they can share in His concern and let God work through them, not falling into Satan's trap by creating their own concerns and "doing God's work"; disciples that will subject themselves to His fires without trying to douse them because they dislike and are uncomfortable with what they reveal to them about themselves, disciples who will as honestly as they can "cast in all the living that they have."

In the final analysis, for this we must depend completely on Him. We are incapable of conjuring it up within ourselves. Again, the Spirit counseled the Christians at Laodicea "to *buy of me* gold refined by fire."

By Manipulation — or By Faith?

John Smart

Before twin boys, Esau and Jacob, were born to Isaac and Rebekah, we read that "the children struggled together within her." The striving that began before birth continued for decades afterward, involving the parents as well as the sons in pathetic maneuverings.

God had told Rebekah plainly. "The elder shall serve the younger." It is a foregone conclusion that she informed Isaac of this. But somehow the word of the Lord had little weight with either parent in the years that followed. In earlier life God had twice spoken to Isaac, enriched him and pledged him a great future for his posterity. What more could he wish than the evident blessing of God in his early life and assurance of still greater things to come? And yet with all this in view, Isaac got out of step with God, gave himself up to self-indulgence and to a purpose contrary to God's will. Blessing in early life is no assurance for advanced years.

"Isaac loved Esau." Why? "He did eat of his venison." Paternal indulgence of Esau, it seems, and self-indulgence in his son's venison blurred Isaac's awareness of God. The divine purpose

regarding Jacob was obscured by his absorption with Esau. Self-indulgence blurred his vision. God's word of long before was forgotten while he pursued his own ideas. God designed the blessing for Jacob; Isaac would give it to Esau.

But Rebekah had her ideas too! "Rebekah loved Jacob" and she was not prepared to see the blessing pass from her favorite son. Had not God spoken otherwise? Certainly! Then began her maternal maneuvering to bring the coveted blessing upon the head of Jacob. As if deceit were necessary to secure God's promised blessing!

God had said, "The elder shall serve the younger." Why not let the matter rest there? All effort to work out blessing by dubious means is bound to bring a harvest of sorrow. Abraham took Hagar in order to give effect to God's promise of a son. He could not wait God's time and way. And with what result? Heartbreak in his own home and the tension-filled Mideast today.

Rebekah knew well God's intention to bless Jacob. But she realized that Isaac was preparing to bless Esau instead. He must therefore be stopped at any cost. She dressed Jacob to impersonate Esau and thus mislead the old, blind father. She put deliberate falsehood into Jacob's mouth. And so, thoroughly deceived, Isaac pronounced the blessing on Jacob. Rebekah got what she wanted, but at terrible cost. Soon afterward her beloved Jacob left home to escape Esau's wrath. Rebekah never saw him again!

The human heart is slow to learn that divine results are not achieved by man's manipulation. The political, business and social areas of life (and alas! the religious area as well) supply abundant evidence of how far man will go to achieve his aim in life. "It shall not be so with you." It is sad enough when men of the world jockey and outmaneuver each other to gain the goals they seek. But when Christians descend to such levels the last degree of futility is reached. Can the connivings of men ever achieve anything in the spiritual realm? Never!

But did not Rebekah's deceitful scheming bring the blessing of God upon Jacob? Not at all! The fulfillment of God's purpose was sure, and was not dependent on Rebekah's maneuvers. God was at work in spite of Isaac's indulgence and weakness on the one hand and Rebekah's manipulation and deceit on the other. God is always present and He is always at work. He had decreed long before that the elder should serve the younger. And so it came to pass. God entered into the picture and inspired Isaac to pronounce the blessing in faith—assured that it would be accomplished. "By faith" Isaac blessed both Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. The casual observer says that by mistake Isaac blessed Jacob. Not so, says God! His hand operated behind the scenes, moving Isaac at the supreme moment to bestow *in faith* what God had long since ordained for Jacob.

Faith, not human scheming, triumphed at last. It is always so. God wants to work in the life of every one of us. And His best work is done when all our maneuverings are put to rest, and we function before God in faith. His way is not merely the best way—it is the *only* way to real blessing.

—Editorial in *The Fields*

Questions Asked Of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



A group of our young people got together and decided on a certain program and activity. The church elders would not allow a part of it. Why should these few old men in the church be able to dictate to the younger people, who are also Christians?

This question seems to suggest a somewhat rebellious attitude toward the church leadership. In some cases, such rebellion may be provoked by the lack of vision, understanding, and/or faithfulness of the elders to their responsibilities. Unfortunately men do get appointed to this office who should never have been appointed, and some take a turn for the worse afterward. This is tragic and may involve the conscientious, Bible-trained Christian in a lot of soul-searching for the right course to follow. Even good, qualified, active men are not to be dictators (1 Peter 5:3), but should exercise wisdom so as to have the right influence.

I have noticed, however, that when a segment of a congregation finds itself under restraint in some way by the elders, one of the common reactions is: "Well, they are not qualified anyway," or "They are not doing their job," or "It's none of their business." This defense is often used when it simply is not true to any reasonable degree. A major problem today is found in the fact that growing multitudes (even in the church) are caught up with a rebellious attitude toward authority of almost any sort. Permissive child rearing and current philosophies tend to make every man a law unto himself (cf. Deuteronomy 12:8; Judges 17:6; 21:25). The flesh is such that few of us like to be told that we may not do this or that. No society can function for long without rules and rulers, however, and the church is no exception. True freedom consists of having righteous rules and rulers and of being in submission to proper authority. Moreover, God will hold us accountable for rebellion against that authority He has empowered, even whether or not we regard it as proper.

Most Americans have been conditioned to democracy and tend to accept as authoritative the choices of the majority. But the church is not a democracy! This may startle some, but it is a fact. Although some democratic principles may be used to some extent, we are sure to err if we think everything can be settled on the basis of a popular vote. For example, what God has revealed in His

Word is not open to politicizing, negotiation, or voting to see if or what part we shall accept. The church is a kingdom, headed by the King, the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13). This King is so unlimited in His sovereignty that He can even be called a benevolent dictator. The only authority anyone has in the church is that which derives from Him. Thus, we can dismiss the idea that if young people (or old people) make a decision that is all that is needed. Our concern must be for staying within the demands of the King.

Of course there has been a delegation of His power to human beings. The highest power conferred on men in the New Testament church was apparently apostleship. The requirements for apostles are such that we no longer have such general overseers of the church (Acts 1:21-22). The next highest power belongs to the elders of the local congregations (also referred to as presbyters, bishops, overseers, pastors, or shepherds). The qualifications for these are given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and are such as to require men of proven experience and spiritual stature. Such men are charged with tending, feeding, and overseeing—shepherding—the flock, watching in behalf of the souls in their charge (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17). This is a most awesome responsibility, and I, personally, have a high degree of respect and compassion for the elder who is trying to fulfill his responsibility. The lack of respect and appreciation sometimes felt (if not expressed) toward such overseers is very tragic and is a sad commentary on either the understanding or the Christian commitment of the “sheep.”

God's Word is quite clear concerning the attitude church members should take toward their elders. First, *obedience* and *submission* is required (Hebrews 13:17—“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them; for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account . . .”). Mere obedience can be mechanical and lacking in right feelings, however. A man can obey while in his heart he feels rebellion. The further requirement, therefore, is to *esteem them highly in love* (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13—“But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake”). Because of the very nature of their work on our behalf, their spiritual maturity and wisdom, and their high type of manhood, we should have the highest of love and respect for them. They are not to be dictators and must rule by example, but their viewpoint should be highly valued and their direction greatly desired.

Quite frankly, I believe that many of our young people and old people, preachers, youth workers, and directors, and church members of every calling need to restudy the responsibility of the member *to* the elders. God has said some things with respect to these shepherds of the flock that had better be heard.

Do you believe in miracles?

Most certainly I believe in miracles. One cannot lay serious claim to believing the Bible without believing in miracles. It contains a record of numerous miracles that God enabled men to perform and that Jesus the Son of God performed. My hope rests on one of the greatest of miracles, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Those men who would remove all that is miraculous from the Bible are destroyers of the Bible and of faith in God. I see no way a man can believe in the God revealed in that Bible without accepting the fact of miracles.

This does not mean that I believe everyone today who may claim to have performed a miracle in the power of God has done so or can do so. I have no doubt about the power of God, but I do not believe the Bible indicates He bestows such a measure of His power upon men indiscriminately or even very frequently. Moreover, I am not unaware of the desire of men for glory (cf. Acts 8:18ff) nor of the readiness of Satan to deceive. It is at this point—whether or not, or how frequently, men have such power from God—that most *Bible believers* have serious questions about miracles.

One problem is the definition of what is meant. Some so-called miracles are quite explainable in human terms. They represent the use of laws of psychology, the use of deception, or other such like explanations that take them from the realm of the miraculous. Again, some “miracles” really represent a misuse of the word. For example, the birth of a child may be marvellous, but it is not a miracle in the strictest sense. Even conversion, a new birth, is a wonderful event and is surely the work of God, but it does not require a miracle in the strict sense. God’s providence in the Christian life or His answers to prayer may mean that He directly intervenes on our behalf—demonstrating what is to us miraculous power. This can occur without human agency, however, and may often be of such a nature that we do not know whether a miracle has occurred. When God is at work the distinction between the usual and the miraculous breaks down.

The question really becomes: “Do men today perform miracles in the power of God?” I know of no passage (including Mark 16: 17-18) that requires this as a present necessity. The widespread concept that the primary use of such power in New Testament times was to confirm the word (Hebrews 2:1-4) is quite satisfying to me. Frankly, I believe the New Testament indicates the Lord is vastly more interested in other facets of our lives and character than He is in our performance of miracles. But I also know of no passage which says God absolutely will not confer this power on men today. God is free to do as He wills, and I have no intention of trying to forbid Him. In this light, then, it seems to me that Christians need to keep an open mind on the subject without being gullible or inviting deception.

PROPHECY

Edited by Dr. Horace E. Wood

Hooks in the Jaws

Daniel Fuchs

"I will put hooks in thy jaws." Ezekiel uses these plain succinct words twice: in chapter 29 verse 4 they refer to Egypt; in 38:4, to Russia. It seems as if these words have been literally fulfilled in the past decade. For centuries Czarist Russia fought for a warm-water port and failed. In 1967 Soviet Russia succeeded; and now the Russians have their base in the Mediterranean at Alexandria in Egypt.

For two decades now the strategic Mediterranean Sea has been a NATO lake. In its historic waters the self-sufficient U. S. Sixth Fleet has steamed unchallenged from the Bosphorus to Gibraltar, maintaining a deterrent to Soviet expansion in what is acknowledged as one of the most volatile areas in the world. Now there is another presence in that usually tranquil one million square miles of blue water—the Soviet Navy. Already a major threat to the Sixth Fleet, this bold Russian sea venture is a harbinger of the intentions of Number Two.

If Israel was the victor in the Six Day War in June of 1967, NATO must be listed as one of the prime losers. The Arab nations were clearcut losers. The Soviet Union was both loser and victor. Looking over the overall results, it can be concluded that the victors are few and losers many.

Egypt and its allies lost territory as well as men and equipment. They also gained an overlord in the guise of a guest—the Soviets—who have since replaced the lost hardware and placed themselves firmly in position in the Mediterranean. So firmly in fact that the Soviet naval force in the region is challenging the U.S. Sixth Fleet in number of ships. And the Soviets make no secret of their intention—to force the U. S. Sixth Fleet from the Mediterranean Sea.

Grover Heiman, "Mediterranean: Soviets Bid for Increased Naval Influence" in *Armed Forces Management*, January 1969.

That the "hooks in the jaws" of Egypt is the Nile River and its sources is quite evident from Ezekiel 29.

Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and, prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales. And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of heaven. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.

—Ezekiel 29:2-6.

"My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." The Nile River has always been the source of Egypt's wealth. Over 5000 years ago, the people of the Nile sacrificed a virgin every August by throwing her into the Nile to appease the god of the

flood. Every summer the river flowed from its source high in the African mountains 4000 miles away. As the annual rains increased the swollen waters each year, over one hundred million tons of rich volcanic soil filled the Nile Valley and made it the greatest agricultural wonderland in history.

This source of wealth was not enough for Abdul Nasser. For fifteen years he planned the huge Aswan Dam. The purpose of the Dam was to conserve and control the life-giving waters of the Nile. The plans for this dam were the keystones of Nasser's diplomatic duplicities. He played the United States, Britain, and France, against each other and then finally baited the hook that brought about the fulfillment—he offered the building of the dam to Russia. Now Egypt has the Dam and, as the editor of *Armed Forces Management Magazine* aptly stated, Egypt “also gained an overlord in the guise of a guest.” In January, 1971, the Aswan Dam, Egypt's national pride, was officially opened by President Podgorny of Russia and President Sadat of Egypt.

It now appears that the Russian scientists did not take into account the fact that the ecology of Russia and the ecology of Egypt are not necessarily the same. It actually seems as if Ezekiel 29:4 is being literally fulfilled: “But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.” Claire Sterling, in an article in *The Jerusalem Post Weekly*, describes what is happening:

Built without sluices, the dam is retaining all of the Nile's silt in the man-made Lake Nasser behind it. The clear water coming through the turbines is scouring the riverbed, undermining dams and bridges, and eroding the Delta coastline. It lacks the organic matter and natural fertilizers that made the Nile Valley the richest farmland on earth.

New irrigation canals are spreading the endemic bilharzia disease, and debilitating intestinal and urinary infection. Worst of all, Lake Nasser is losing twice as much as had been expected in evaporation and underground seepage. . . Now there will never be another flood in Egypt. The flood water runs into Lake Nasser and there the sediment sinks. Six hundred miles downstream the water flows so clear that you may stand on a balcony of the Hotel Semiramis in Cairo and see through to the river's sandy bottom. Any Egyptian, clutching at your arm to show you this, will unflinchingly add: “Terrifying, isn't it?”

It is. The Nile is the sole source of life in Egypt, and its annual flood was one of nature's exquisitely balanced wonders. Sometimes it brought too much water, engulfing villages, or else too little: and even in normal years about 30,000 tons flowed unused out to sea.

But the water wasn't wasted. Every drop laden with sediment that emptied into the Mediterranean strengthened the food chain nourishing marine life and maintained the exact balance of salinity needed: and every year the sediment added a little more to the Delta land it had formed in the first place.

Before reaching the sea the flood waters had three indispensable functions. They flushed away soil salts that would otherwise choke the plant life, they swept away the insidious snail carrying the bil-

harzia larvae, and they left behind a layer of soil-building and enriching silt.

Since 1964, when Khrushchev and Nasser opened the first stage of the dam, these have been the known consequences of ending the annual flood:

The aquatic food chain has been broken in the eastern Mediterranean along a continental shelf 12 miles wide and 600 miles long. The lack of Nile sediment has reduced plankton and organic carbons to a third of what they used to be, either killing the sardines, mackerel, and crustaceans in the area or driving them away. As a result 30,000 Egyptian fishermen have lost their livelihood. The 18,000 tons of sardines they used to bring in each year, a fifth of the national fish catch, have disappeared.

Claire Sterling "Aswan High Dam May Prove a Disaster"
The Jerusalem Post Weekly, March 2, 1971, p. 12.

This is indeed a literal fulfillment not only of Ezekiel's prophecy, which we have already quoted, but also of Isaiah's prophecy in **chapter 19**. Isaiah 19:3 says: ". . . the spirit of Egypt shall fail"—author Sterling in the above quotation writes that any Egyptian who sees what is happening to the Nile comments, "Terrifying, isn't it?" Isaiah says in 19:6, "brooks and defense shall be emptied and dried up." The author in another place says, "Erosion is eating into the Delta coastline . . . Alexandria, Egypt's second largest, is threatened, and a projected port to be built by the Russians . . . has been abandoned."

The fulfillment of these prophetic scriptures is both terrifying and comforting. It is terrifying to see how the nations "take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed" (Psalm 2:2). It is comforting for the child of God to realize that in spite of their counsel, our Lord is still in control. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision" (2:4).

Today a visitor to Israel may see the ruins of a temple where Augustus was actually worshipped. The story of Augustus is the beginning of the Roman Emperor worship. Later Caesars declared themselves to be "Dominus," the Lord; but Caesar was not the Lord. Late in his reign One Who is Lord was born in Bethlehem. Luke, the physician historian, begins the story of the Nativity, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed" (2:1).

"A decree from Caesar Augustus!" It was not his decree that caused our Lord to be born in Bethlehem of Judaea. Seven centuries before Augustus, Micah prophesied that the Lord Jesus Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. It was God's decree, and proud, powerful Augustus merely initialed it.

"There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus;" Presidents Sadat and Podgorny dedicated a dam. Yet, the One who overruled the ruler of Rome still overrules the history of man. We are moving closer to and looking forward to the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "Whom not having seen we love;" and we desire to show our love by obedience to the Word of God.

—In *The Chosen People*

The "Precious Reprints" this month and last were supplied by a long-time reader of W & W and personal friend of Brother Boll.

Precious Reprints

The Baptism of the Spirit and the Filling

R. H. Boll — 1935

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, like the baptism in water, is an initial, initiatory event, without which one is not even a member of the Body. This is seen from 1 Corinthians 12:13, where it is stated that "in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." At its first occurrence this was plainly seen. Those individual believers in Christ that received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, were thereby and thenceforth joined and welded together into one body, the church. "Does then every believer have to be baptized in the Spirit in order to become a member of the Body?" we are asked. Some brethren among us hold so. They believe that when one is baptized in water he is also at the same time baptized in the Spirit; and they plausibly point to the analogy of the typical baptism of Israel "in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10)—the two-fold element, water and the cloud; and in the cloud was the presence of God. Most, however, take it that the baptism of the Spirit was given at the beginning, and once for all; and that everyone as he is baptized into Christ enters into and becomes a partaker of that original baptism of the Spirit, and is thus incorporated in the One Body. That is to say the baptism of the Spirit is not given from heaven in each individual instance, but was given once for all, at the outset. Each believer, as he is added to the Body enters into the benefits of that original baptism. This is naturally set forth in the language of 1 Corinthians 12:13—"For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and *were all made to drink of one Spirit.*"

In keeping with this is the fact that the baptism of the Spirit, whether received directly or indirectly, is a thing that occurs once, and only once in any case, and is therefore once for all. We never read of anyone's being baptized in the Spirit repeatedly. No one ever received the baptism of the Spirit more than once. The baptism of the Spirit is never spoken of in the plural. Nor is anyone who had ever received the Spirit at all spoken of as being afterward baptized in the Spirit. Through the original baptism of the Spirit have all Christ's people received the Spirit and were made members of the One Body.

It is therefore quite unscriptural to speak of *Christians* being baptized with the Holy Spirit. In becoming Christians the original baptism of the Spirit on Pentecost becomes effective for each and all. But none that have become Christians are ever told that they are yet to expect to be baptized in the Spirit.°

The case is different with the filling with the Spirit. Though on the occasion of that first baptism and as a result thereof "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). The same people who had at first been baptized with the Spirit and were then "filled," were filled again (Acts 4:31)—and no doubt again and again, as the occasion required. But the "baptism" was once for all. Though in consequence of the baptism they were "filled," the two are not synonymous: the filling was oft repeated, the baptism never. "Be filled with the Spirit" is a command to Christians (Ephesians 5:18). But never are Christians exhorted to seek for the baptism of the Spirit. To adhere strictly to the language of Scripture in this matter will prevent misunderstandings, correct errors, and forestall harmful controversy.

*The case of the Samaritans in Acts 8 is clearly exceptional. There, for reasons known to Him, the Lord withheld the Spirit till apostles came down from Jerusalem. Some hold that Samaritans had the Spirit as all baptized believers have the Spirit, and that the apostles only imparted supernatural gifts to them. Others take it that the Samaritan converts had not the Spirit as yet in any sense, and that God made them wait for the apostles in order to show the vital unity connection of this new work with the original work at Jerusalem. Yet in this case we have not a new baptism of the Spirit. The distinguishing feature of the baptism of the Spirit is that it came direct from heaven, without intervention of human hands.

The Woman in Numbers Five

Mrs. Paul J. Knecht

This woman is not named. In fact no specific, personal case is given. But the lesson shows the dealings of God with a case of jealousy, justified or unjustified. Why the jealousy was not dealt with as wrong in itself (Proverbs 14:30; Song of Solomon 8:6) we are not told. The suspicious husband was permitted to have his wife tried. So far as the record indicates he did not have to submit any evidence of guilt, or reason, beyond the fact that he was suspicious, for bringing her before the priest. It was his God-given privilege (v, 11-14).

The husband was to bring an oblation of barley meal for her for a sin offering (v. 15). Then the priest was to set her before Jehovah. He was to take "holy water in an earthen vessel" and put dust in it from the floor of the tabernacle. Then he set her before Jehovah, i.e. "with her face toward the ark" (J.F.&B.), uncovered the hair of her head, signifying that she was out from under her husband's protection. Her husband was set against her, really, since he was her accuser. The priest put in her hand the meal-offering of jealousy.

She must have made a pitiable figure as she stood, drooping pathetically, her hair loose, with the sin offering in her hand, facing a distrustful husband, the holy priest, and Almighty God. (This writer is reminded of a young woman many years ago who was

heard to say to her husband, "I can stand hard things that come to us both, but if something comes *between* us I don't know what I would do." She found out in time and God stood by her. It can be a heart-breaking experience for a woman when a husband is against her.)

The priest held in his hand the earthen vessel with the "water of bitterness that causeth the curse." Innocent or guilty she had to say, "Amen, Amen," to the imprecations pronounced by the priest. The priest was to wave the meal-offering of jealousy before Jehovah, than take a handful of it and burn it on the altar. He was to write the curses in a book and blot them out in the water of bitterness and make the woman drink the water.

If she was innocent no harm would follow, but if guilty the water would cause her body to swell and her thigh to fall away and she would be a curse among the people. Apparently it was not fatal, but made her a ghastly warning to all others.

"This is the law of jealousy. . . And the man shall be free from iniquity," and the woman shall bear her iniquity" (vs. 29-31). It must have taken some faith on the part of an innocent woman to go through with such an ordeal, else fear itself would have overwhelmed her. Some husbands have a jealous, suspicious nature and some others do not care what their wives do. But in view of the fact that the man is free from iniquity it is reasonable to suppose that there had to be some circumstance to justify his suspicion, i.e. that in some way of which we are not told he had grounds for it.

But certain it is that it took God to determine the matter. It was a supernatural way of determining guilt. The priest did not have to listen to the prosecution of the case nor to the woman's defense or confession of guilt. God who saw into their hearts gave unerring and unaltering decision. How much better that was than some of the divorce court trials with their hurtful recriminations and vilifications. God doeth all things well. Hurtful things hurled back and forth or even given in private, one person's word against the other's, each testimony distorted, it may be by the attitude of the one giving it, make problematical, to say the least, the rendering of a true verdict no matter how honest and fair the judge is who must decide the case. If one party is innocent, and the other by his testimony gives the lie to that one's, who but God can know the true from the false? How good it is in any case to be in His hands.

We take a minute to wonder how a couple got along afterward if the woman was found innocent. Would she accept God's dealings and go on humbly in faith to a more blessed union with a husband whose confidence in her was restored or would she miss the blessing and grow bitter in resentment at having been tested? Surely the Lord in His infinite goodness could take care of that also.



But Suppose We're Wrong

Alex V. Wilson

II. ABOUT THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The Bible is infallible, but our interpretations are not. So Oliver Cromwell's appeal is still needed: "I beg you, by the mercies of Christ, consider that you may be mistaken!" Especially in the field of prophecy, this is sound advice.

Christians disagree about whether Christ's return for the church will be *before*, *during*, or *after* the "great tribulation," that period when the Beast will persecute God's people and God will pour out His plagues of judgment upon sinners. (From now on, we'll use the abbreviation "trib." to stand for the great tribulation period.)

Here are three basic passages about Christ's coming; their relationship to each other is where disagreement occurs.

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive . . . shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." (The time: not mentioned.)

Mark 13:24-27. "In those days, after that tribulation . . . shall they see the Son of man coming in clouds with power and glory. And then shall he send forth the angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds." (The time: "after that trib.")

Revelation 19:11, 14, 15, 20. "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations . . . And the beast was captured." (The time is obviously after the trib.)

The *pre-trib. view* thinks that Mark 13 and Rev. 19 refer to the same event, and that events will be in this order: 1) the catching up of the church, 1 Thes. 4; 2) the trib.: the Beast persecutes the "saints" (a group distinct from the church), and God sends plagues; 3) Christ's return with the church to destroy the Beast, Mark 13 and Rev. 19.

The *mid-trib. view* believes that 1 Thes 4 and Mark 13 both refer to the same event, and thinks the order will be this way: 1) the trib. begins, as the Beast persecutes the church; 2) then, *after* the persecution (its length is unknown but somehow shortened, Matt. 24:21, 22) but *before* God's last plagues of judgment (the 7 bowls of wrath), Christ will catch up the church, 1 Thes. 4 and Mark 13; 3) then the bowls of God's wrath are poured out on the

Beast and his followers; 4) then Christ and the church return to destroy the Beast, Rev. 19.

The *post-trib. view* believes that all 3 passages will take place at almost the same time, in one complex of events. I.e., Christ's catching up of His people will be followed right away by victory over the Beast. Here then is the order: 1) the trib. takes place: the Beast persecutes the church, and God sends His plagues upon the Beast's followers but somehow protects the church from those plagues (Rev. 9:4, e.g.); 2) after the trib. Christ comes, catches up the church to meet Him, 1 Thes. 4 and Mark 13, and then comes on with them to destroy the Beast, Rev. 19.

For anyone to whom these views are new, it may help to diagram them, making 3 time-lines. Then refer to these as you study major predictive passages such as Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, 1 Thes. 4:13-5:11, 2 Thes. 1:3-2:12, the book of Revelation, etc. Let us add here that each of these three views is held by devout, Bible-believing Christians.

Suppose the Mid- and Post-Trib. Views Are Wrong?

To say definitely that the church *will* go through some or all of the trib.—as consistent advocates of the mid- or post- trib. views must say—seems dangerous to me in light of Matt. 24:36-51 and some other similar passages:

Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. . . If the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect (vv. 42-44).

To take dogmatically a mid- or post-trib. position means that Christ will not come until the Beast rises to power, sets up the abomination of desolation (demanding that men worship him) and persecutes the church. But that would mean that Christ can't come in the immediate future. So we would cease to expect Him—at least right away—and might not be ready should He call us sooner than we think.

Suppose the Pre-Trib. View Is Wrong?

On the other hand, to say definitely that the church will *not* go through any or all of the trib.—as consistent advocates of the pre-trib. view must say—also seems dangerous to me. "Consider that you may be mistaken." There are a number of indications that the mid- or post-trib. views may be right.

First, in Matthew 24 (and Mark 13, its parallel passage) Christ gives a preview of history from His first coming until His "coming" to "gather together his elect" (vv. 30, 31), which will take place "immediately after the trib. of those days" (v. 29).. If the pre-trib. view is right, then the catching up (called the rapture) of the church precedes this just-mentioned coming of Christ; but Christ makes no suggestion of it! Why would He not mention an event of

such tremendous significance? To omit telling of the rapture in His major sermon on prophecy seems a glaring oversight! (Some say the rapture is mentioned in vv. 37-41, but those verses obviously refer to the same coming as v. 27 and vv. 29-31, do they not? The same terminology is used.) And when He told of the trib., why didn't He say, "But the church won't go through that terrible period"? And if the church is raptured before the trib., then why didn't He explain that the "elect" who will be gathered at His coming (v. 31) must be a group distinct from the church? That explanation would seem needed, for to the early disciples "the elect" simply meant the church, God's saved people (see Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:10). Since Christ didn't mention the rapture earlier in His message, is it not possible (to say the least) that His "coming" after the trib. to "gather together his elect" (vv. 29-31) IS the rapture, the same event Paul describes in 1 Thessalonians 4? Is it not significant that in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 Paul uses almost identical terminology to describe the church's rapture: ". . . touching the coming our of Lord Jesus Christ, and our (the church's) gathering together unto him."

Some folks say that Christ's coming mentioned in Matthew 24:27,30 could not be the rapture, because those verses (plus others such as Revelation 1:7) teach a visible coming of Christ, but at the rapture "only Christians see Him—it is a mystery, a secret." That quote is from *The Late Great Planet Earth*, but no Bible reference is given to support it. Is there any scripture that teaches the now-popular idea that Christ's return at the rapture will be invisible to the world? Acts 1:11 is sometimes cited (only Christians saw Him ascend), but it seems a very weak basis for the idea. His coming will be like a thief, but the point of comparison there is its unexpectedness, not its invisibility. Even the Day of the Lord will come like a thief (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10), but it surely won't be invisible!

Second, consider Luke 21:28, 36. "When *these things* begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh. . . but watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all *these things* that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." The command to watch at every season reminds us of what was stressed above: be alert at all times, be ready for Jesus' coming. Yet also notice that in both verses just quoted (plus v. 31) the term "these things" is used. What are the things referred to? Looking at the verses preceding v. 28, where the expression is first used, we see that "these things" are "signs in sun and moon and stars. . . for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (25,26). But Matt.24:29 tells us *when* these heavenly powers shall be shaken: "immediately *after* the trib. of those days." Putting things together, then, the order seems to be this: the trib., followed immediately by signs in the heavenly bodies (and when those signs start to occur, look up, for your redemption draws near), and then—after the heavenly signs—"they shall

see the Son of man coming" (Luke 21:27). We should pray for "strength to escape all these things" or for "strength to *pass safely through*" them (v. 36, RSV/NEB), but the point is that according to Matthew, those things occur after the trib.

An indication that the rapture of the church and the victory over the Beast may possibly take place one right after the other is found in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-2:12. For there Paul tells what will happen to Christians and the lost at Christ's coming. *Christians* will receive rest (1:7), Christ will be glorified in them (10), and they will be gathered together to Him (2:1). Don't those things happen at the rapture? But for the *lost*, His coming will bring affliction (1:6), vengeance and eternal destruction (8,9), and the overthrow of their leader, the Lawless One or Beast (2:8). Don't those things happen after the trib.? Thus Paul mentions two ASPECTS of Christs return (its effects on the saved and also on the lost), but he does not say they occur at different TIMES. He gives no hint that there will be any significant period of time between His coming *for* His people and *with* them. Also, if the rapture must precede the trib., why didn't Paul say "the Day of the Lord will not be, except the rapture come first"? That is what many people *assume* he *meant*, but what he really *said* was quite different: The Day of the Lord "will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed" (2:3). One writer, after quoting this verse, comments, "Now the truth comes out. The rapture will occur BEFORE the day of the Lord." But let us kindly ask, "Where in that verse is the rapture mentioned? Is the falling away (or "rebellion," RSV) the rapture? Is the man of sin's revelation the rapture? No. Since it does not say the rapture would come first, might it not be dangerous to assume that it must? As for the unexplained "restrainer" of 2:6,7, since Paul did not identify him/it for us, it is risky to say anything beyond the stated facts that he/it now restrains iniquity but later will be out of the way.

Looking at the book of Revelation, the pre-trib. view places the rapture at 4:1, the mid-trib. at 11:15-19 and also 14:14-16, and the post-trib. around 19:6-11. It is true that the words "church" and "churches" occur 19 times in chapters 1-3, and then not at all in chapters 4-20, but that in itself does not prove that the church is not on earth after chapter 3. For 12 of the 19 occurrences of the words refer specifically to the 7 churches in Asia, and those churches pass out of the picture after chapter 3. (The other 7 occurrences are in the refrain, "Hear what the Spirit says to the churches.") But in the following chapters terms like the following are used, which could easily refer to the universal church: "saints" (used 10 times), "those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus," those who "have been redeemed from mankind," "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Some believe the church cannot go into any of the trib. because that period (Daniel's 70th week) is for Israel (Daniel 9:24ff.). It is called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). They say God never deals with Israel and the church at the same time; He only

deals with one *or* the other. This idea will be discussed next month, D.V.

In summary, I believe we should not say the church **MUST** go through part or all of the trib., because maybe our Lord will come *today*. At the same time, we should not say the church **CAN'T** go through any or even all of the trib., because there are indications in Scripture that it may. **Be Prepared For Christ's Coming At Any Time, But Also Be Prepared To Suffer For Him Amid The Fiery Persecutions Of The Great Tribulation.** Whatever happens, Jesus' clear statement shows us our duty: "The gospel must first be preached unto all the nations" (Mark 13:10). May our study of these things not cause us to get uptight in endless discussions or bogged down with detailed charts (though they may aid our study), but stimulate us to holier living, more urgent prayer and more sacrificial service.



For further study:

Pre-trib.: *The Rapture Question*, by Walvoord; Zondervan.

Mid-trib.: *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, by Buswell, vol. II, pp. 362-538; Zondervan.

Post-trib.: *The Blessed Hope*, by Ladd; Eerdmans.

A well-known preacher and writer, speaking in Raleigh, N. C. four years ago, shared a page from his own life.

He Lifted Me!

Alan Redpath

It was a Saturday afternoon. While I was writing out my message to preach in Charlotte Chapel (Edinburgh) the next day, suddenly my hand started to wander all over the paper.

I could not control it. I found that I could not speak. I tried to stand up to call my wife, and I fell to the floor.

I knew what had happened. My daughter, who is now a missionary in Africa, was completing her nurse's training. She came to the study and I was put to bed with a severe cerebral hemorrhage which in nine cases out of ten is fatal.

It is all very well for us preachers to say from the pulpit, "You should never ask why. You should only ask, What have I to learn in this?" My brother, when you go through it you do ask why.

Full church, busy church, large congregations.. Apparently marked blessings. "Oh Lord, why has this happened to me?"

In a week I was able to speak a little. I recovered some movement. But I had lost all my inner defenses. Spiritually, mentally and physically I was reduced to childhood.

I could not pray. I could not read my Bible. It meant nothing

to me. All I could do day after day was to weep and weep and weep.

"Lord, I'm finished now. My ministry is gone." Never to preach again.

Worse than that, it seemed to me that the devil took the opportunity to fling every attack he could at me. I was tempted to impurity, tempted to foul talk and bad language. Things that had not come to my mind for thirty years were hitting me full force. And my beloved wife and our daughter at home suddenly found themselves with a husband and father whose boiling point was at an all-time low.

After months and months of this I remember that I said, "O God, please take me home. If I have to spend the rest of my life like a cabbage, don't let that be the last memory that my wife and children have of me. I'd rather be out of the way than to live like this. I'm useless to everybody. Take me home, Lord. I can't stand this attack of the devil anymore."

I have never seen a vision of Christ. But it did seem to me that at that moment a Voice that I knew all too well spoke to my heart.

"You've got this all wrong," the Voice said. "The devil hasn't a single thing to do with it. It was not Satan who did this. It was I, your Saviour. The kind of life you were living had to stop."

In the supposed successful pastorate of a busy city church I had substituted work for worship, orthodoxy for obedience, the Bible for God. And God had to say, "That's enough!"

Have *you* put work where worship ought to be? Have you lost your way in the Word? You still go through your Bible once a year, but does the Bible go through you? Does it penetrate?

Paul, the greatest missionary on earth, said one day that he counted all things as refuse that he might know Christ and the fellowship of His suffering and the power of His resurrection and be conformed unto His death.

It is *you* Jesus wants. Your trust, your surrender, your love.

On that day when God spoke to me like that, a whole flood of light came into my heart. Up to that time I had preached fifty three times on Romans 7:18: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." I have not dared preach on that text since then. The truth goes too deep. Jesus has shown me all over again that that is the kind of man I always will be but for grace. The only good thing about me will always be Christ.

When He broke me, and when I admitted it, when I knew I was rotten through and through and the case was hopeless, I cried to God in my desperate weakness, "Lord, save me!"

And He did!

*"From sinking sand He lifted me,
With tender hand He lifted me,
From shades of night to plains of light,
Oh, praise His name, He lifted me!"*

—In *The Alliance Witness*

Missionary Messenger

"Greater things for God"

Addie Brown,

Salisbury, Rhodesia,

June 15.

The dedication of the new church house at Tafara was held on Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p. m. I would say that at least 600 people attended. How I wish you and others from over there could have been here. The program was very well prepared in which several brethren, both black and white, took part. They asked my husband to give the message which was very good. In his message he mentioned the fact that one day the bricks and mortar in the building would crumble and decay, but the "living stones" that worshipped in the building would live forever—so the superintendent of the Township was there and he got up and said he wanted to correct one statement Mr. Brown made about "this building crumbling." He had watched him build this house and he *knew* it would stand for 2000 years, he felt it was so well built! The singing was beautiful. I wish you could have heard "How Great Thou Art" sung in Shona. It thrilled my soul, for I love that hymn. All the singing was in Shona excepting a couple of special ones, and every speech was given in English and Shona. It was a very good afternoon, and I believe everyone there would agree. Again I thank God for supplying the means and strength to accomplish this task. Many of you over there have sent time and again your gifts while Daddy Brown has worked hard at the job for over a year.

Elaine Brittell,

Livingstone, Zambia,

May 31.

Brother and Sister J. Miller Forcade and Sister McClain (who are caring for the 17 children in Salisbury, Rhodesia, while Brother and Sister Garrett Sr. are on furlough) paid us a short visit. I met them at the Falls, then we visited all the way up to Namwianga, spent two nights and a day there, then we visited all the way down to Sinda where they spent the night. Early next morning they visited Chief Musokotwane, then left for Rhodesia.

Every other Lord's day InaMusabwe goes with me to worship with Christians at Inhanda. We drive about 3 miles from the village. On Sunday, after services, we took six to the hospital. Lord willing, next month work will begin on a "Self-help" project to build a clinic at Chief Musokotwane's village. What a blessing this will be to 24 villages in this area. Thanks be to God for this great blessing! We pray the people may have better health, and also, somehow, may be helped with "spiritual food" as the Lord gives opportunity to reach them with the Gospel.

Bob is doing fine outside of a bad cold which we all have. Bob and Robert Gill and Bobby Jr. have been cutting trees and digging post holes for a fence at Mondoro. Robert Gill has certainly proved as helpful as you said he would. The week before last he was helping at the Children's Home while the Forcades went south to pick up their car at Durban. He's already teaching a lot of Bible classes.

Bobby Jr. is to leave to attend S.C.C. this August. We hope to come home sometime this year: whenever God provides the funds to buy the tickets. Because of devaluation air fares seem to have gone up. It will cost \$630 to send Bobby to New York City; where he will take a bus to Winchester or Louisville if he lands early enough to attend the Bible conference.

The possible disappearance of the United States as a world power will not take place until God has fulfilled His purpose in this nation.

The Place of the U. S. in the Prophecy of the End Time

The Apostle Paul asserted by divine guidance that God "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11). With this as a guiding principle, it would be well to take a look at what God has been doing and is now doing through the United States of America. This could give some indication as to the times in which we live and point the direction which the child of God should move. Three things seem quite evident:

1. The *evangelization of the world* for the formation of the Church is largely promoted from within the United States of America. Through James at the Jerusalem conference, it was stated that "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14). That people are the chosen of God to constitute the bride of Christ. In order to reach them, God has mounted a world-wide evangelistic movement. When these people hear the gospel they will believe. When the last chosen one has heard the gospel and accepted it, the bride will be complete and the Lord Jesus will come for His Church. God's purpose in this age will then be finished.

A knowledgeable missionary, familiar with missions on a world-wide scale, several years ago at the time the dollar was trembling, called for earnest prayer. His reason was that any calamity to that dollar could conceivably have global effect on missions, due to the fact that by far the greater proportion of missionary effort in men and money comes from the United States. If God is using this nation as the instrument to carry out His purpose in these days, it would

seem likely that He will sustain this nation until that purpose is fulfilled. But let us take heed. The completion of the Church could be very near, in which the fortunes of this nation (moving as they are) are already heralding the end of the age and the disappearance of the United States as a world power.

2. The *preservation of the chosen people of God* for that program which God will renew after the rapture of the Church, proceeds largely from the United States of America. In the same prophecy at the Jerusalem conference, James went on to say, "And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" (Acts 15:15, 16). This can only mean that once God is finished with the Church, He will turn again to Israel and will restore and rebuild that nation as He has promised to do in the Old Testament prophets. This further means that the people of Israel must be preserved, or there would be no people with which God could fulfill His promises.

The place of the United States in the preservation of this people is little realized, even by the average Christian. Almost two hundred years ago this nation came into being. It provided for the citizenship of Jews on the same level and with equal rights and privileges, along with all other people. As a result Jews have prospered in this land. No place of privilege or position has been denied to them because of their nationality. When central Europe turned into a holocaust for this people, it was the United States that aided in the subjugation of Hitler. When this people sought a homeland, it was pressure from the United States on the United Nations that brought the partition of the Mid-east to provide for the present state of Israel. Even though the second world war had ended, there still was no haven of refuge for the Jew in central Europe. Hundreds set sail in the Mediterranean, hoping to find a friendly harbor. But there was none. It looked as though that shipload of refugees would perish on the high seas. At last they cast anchor in the harbor of Haifa. Today, the rusting hulk of that ship can be seen protruding just above the waters.

It must also be said that the presence of divisions of the United States Army and contingents of the Navy within the Mid-east helps to preserve the balance of power in that area, and to sustain this nation scarcely 25 years of age. Were it not for the presence of military contingents from the United States, this little nation could be easily overwhelmed by Arab and Russian hordes. The appearance of the State of Israel, though small, after these 1,900 years, and the apparent determination to preserve this people, suggests that God's purpose for Israel long promised is about to be fulfilled. Since the United States is serving as the instrument in God's hands to carry this to completion, there is reason to believe that this nation will continue until God's purpose is finished. But let us take heed, for the time may be fast approaching when this purpose will be completed and God will be through with this nation as a national entity.

3. The *alignment of nations* into that international arrangement for the end of the age is being promoted by the United States of America. Again, the movement of thought set forth in Daniel 11: 36-45 should be carefully studied. There the four great powers of the end time appear. There is a great Western power, a great Southern power, a great northern power, and a great Eastern power. These constitute great blocs of nations bound together by political, social, and material interests. The United States appears to be acting as a sort of catalyst. Probably no nation is having such a wide effect on the rest of the world to move nations one way or another. From 300 to 400 military camps of some size are planted across the world. In all, both large and small in size, there are no less than 3,000 such camps around the world. The monetary and fiscal policies of this nation have their widening effect on other nations. This does not mean that these things evoke goodwill, but they do produce movement one way and another into national and international alignments. When the arrangement finally approximates the prophetic pictures, God will be through with this nation as a world power.

As one views the developing scene, in the light of prophecy, it makes him wonder how long it may be before the arrangements are finally complete. Since the promise of Christ's coming for the Church has always been held out to His people as an event that could take place at any moment, surely the events of the present hour in relation to the United States ought to give new stimulus to watch momentarily for His coming. In these days of crisis, our trust should not rest in a nation that may shortly disappear, but in Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

—Dr. Herman A. Hoyt, in *Salvation*

A well-known evangelist, now semi-retired, looks at a familiar text in Hebrews 6 and suggests twelve "accompaniments" of salvation.

Things That Accompany Salvation

F. Bertram Miller

A person is not a genuine Christian until he has been born again. Salvation is Christ Himself living out His own life in and through the individual by the life-giving Spirit of God.

The genuine Christian is a child of God "by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). He has been saved by God's grace and not by anything he has done. All has been changed and made new.

Spiritual deeds are the evidence of this transformation. "By their fruits ye shall know them," says the Word, and genuine Christians will set an example to non-Christians by their conduct.

No one can "work out" his own salvation "with fear and trembling" until he realizes that it is God who works in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure (see Philippians 2:12-13).

Hebrews 6:9 says there are certain accompanying evidences of salvation in the believer's life. The dictionary defines *accompany* as "to go with; to supplement; be together with; something else

added to it as a part of it." In music it is "a part played together with the main part, usually instrumental."

Biblically, things that accompany salvation are those which are near to salvation as a vital part of it. Other translations of the phrase refer to "things that belong to salvation, things that go with, or are attached to, or are conjoined with, salvation."

Regarding the evidences of salvation and the "things that accompany salvation," we note:

1. *Salvation is genuine regeneration.* It is a new beginning and a new being through "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Furthermore, because believers are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10), it is a life glorifying unto Him. Spiritual things of God once hated are now appreciated and loved. Praise His name!

2. *Salvation brings a new nature.* True Christians are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), of Christ's very nature. They are "made partakers of Christ" (Hebrews 3:14) and "his holiness (righteousness)" (12:10), for "Christ . . . is made unto us . . . righteousness" (1 Corinthians 1:30). As the great old hymn puts it: "Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne!" Only the great grace of our God makes this possible!

3. *Salvation brings new life.* Christ's own words verify this (John 10:28). John said he wrote so "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing *ye might have life* through his name" (20:31). "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11).

4. *Salvation brings new hope.* This is because Christ Himself is in us (Colossians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:8). We are "heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). This hope is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Hebrews 6:19; see also 1 Peter 3:15).

5. *Salvation gives a genuine experience.* It brings certainty. Out of the fulness of his heart Paul cried: "I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:10-12). All genuine Christians have this "know-so" salvation.

6. *Salvation produces a righteous life.* It results in righteous behaviour and deeds. Salvation affects one's life-style. It affects one's apparel and adornment and his daily habits: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as (Christ) is righteous" (1 John 3:7). Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:9-10) that women in particular should show modesty and prudence in their dress and be known by good works rather than by the wearing of gold or pearls or costly clothes.

Peter also taught the same (1 Peter 3:1-4). Often the secular press and lecturers say more about modern life-styles than religious and spiritual leaders say. We should think of the honor of God and seek to please Him and not be a stumbling block to any believer who is "weak in the faith" nor to any of the unsaved about us.

7. *Salvation brings with it the sealing by and with the Holy Spirit, as well as His witness.* Romans 8 gives us much truth relating to the person and work of the Holy Spirit of God and of Christ.

Verse 16 states: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Writing to the Galatian Christians, Paul said: "Because ye are sons (children of God), God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (4:6). Paul also spoke of the sealing work of the Spirit subsequent to regeneration: God "hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest (evidence, assurance) of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:22; see also Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; Hebrews 10:15; 1 John 4:13).

8. *Salvation is accompanied by perfect peace of heart and mind.* "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," wrote Paul (Romans 5:1). This results in "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). This is because "he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2:14 ff.). Only truly saved persons can and do have this perfect peace of and with God, the very God of peace, and with the Prince of Peace, our Saviour and Lord.

9. *Salvation is accompanied by praise and thanksgiving.* Peter tells us that we "should shew forth the praises of him who hath called (us) out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Paul exhorts us to pray "with thanksgiving" (Philippians 4:6) and to walk in Christ, "abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7).

10. *Salvation is enjoyable, not merely endurable* (Psalm 132:9). The psalms abound in expressions of joy, and David penitentially prayed (in Psalm 51:12): "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." Jesus Christ spoke of His joy remaining in His disciples to the full and prayed that His joy might be fulfilled in them (John 15:11; 17:13).

Paul prayed that God would fill the Romans "with all joy . . . in believing" (15:13), and Peter wrote: "Rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). Sinners may have some "happiness," depending on what happens, but only Christians have genuine "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:11).

11. *Salvation gives us a new destination.* As sinful people we were headed for eternal hell, doom, destruction, torment and judgment—and justly so. As believers we are headed for heaven itself, to be forever with Christ (Colossians 1:5).

12. *Salvation brings eternal glory.* Jesus said: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:22; Colossians 1:27). We have a foretaste of glory here in talking and walking with our Lord and in serving Him, but we await the glory with Him that shall follow, which was talked of at His transfiguration. Thus we have the accompaniments of salvation, those things that go along with it.

"Now the God of peace . . . make you perfect (complete) in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."

—In *The Alliance Witness*

We would appreciate receiving news of events in your congregation.