

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

SEPTEMBER, 1998

**CHRIST
IS
COMING**

Maybe Soon

hard not to draw unsound inferences, that is, unwarranted conclusions. And we should seek to **DISTINGUISH definite Bible declarations** from such **mere deductions**--i.e., conclusions which are inferred but not specifically stated in Scripture. We may have much more certainty about the former than about the latter.

Thus we should never refuse fellowship to Christians because of disagreements based merely on inferences or deductions. This was a major conviction of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. In Thomas' great document, **Declaration and Address**, Proposition XI affirmed that "inferences and deductions" drawn from Scripture are not to be made "terms of communion [i.e. fellowship], but do properly belong to the [later] progressive edification of the Church." You don't have to get all your logic right before you can be saved. (That's good news!)

Christians naturally make inferences. They are inescapable, for the Bible often makes general statements without revealing the details. And it gives general principles without revealing all their specific applications. Thus we cannot help but draw conclusions based on reasoning and indirect statements. But when we reach differing conclusions as a result of this, we should be very tolerant of each other and not divide over such issues.

Don't get me wrong. Of course we should stand up for truth and refute dangerous errors. Scripture is clear about that. For example, an elder "must hold firmly to the trustworthy message...so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Tit.1:9). But here's my point: Suppose several people in the same area all trust in Christ for salvation, believe the Bible, and are committed to follow God's will as they understand it. Such are saved. But note that little phrase, "as they understand it."

Sadly, they understand God's Word differently. Some believe it requires us to take the Lord's Supper weekly; others don't. Some believe all Christians should speak in tongues; others disagree. Some believe in the millennium; others deny it. Some believe in eternal security; others think salvation can be lost. Yet all of them quote Scripture to back up their views! Obviously they can't all be right. Some are wrong because their conclusions are not based on all the passages pertaining to the subject. Others have a Biblical premise but draw faulty deductions from it, as we saw earlier. Etc.

We should realize two things about such unavoidable situations: (1) Prayerful, careful study is important. And such study should distinguish between clear Scriptural statements and mere logical inferences. The authority of the former greatly exceeds that of the latter. (2) If unity among true disciples of the Lord must wait until all such dis-

agreements are ironed out, it will never come! That's why Thomas Campbell insisted that inferences and deductions drawn from Scripture should not be barriers to fellowship. When a body of people are committed to follow God's Word, they should be able to have fellowship in Christ and cooperate in His service even though they disagree on the exact shape that their obedience to Him should take.

Unity in diversity: it isn't easy. But it sure beats the alternatives: disunity due to diversity (ugh!), or unity due to enforced uniformity (yuk!). But now, back to our main point: **Check out your inferences. Don't jump hastily to conclusions. Reach them by prayerful, careful study.**

(Now apply all this to prophecy: Read this month's articles on Imminence.)

[More on Calvinism]

Of course Calvinists are right in saying that the unconverted are dead in trespasses and sins. Eph.2:1-5 and Col.2:13 make that clear. **BUT** they wrongly infer that the unsaved can do nothing about their condition. The prodigal son was also "dead" (that is, cut off from any meaningful relationship with his father) when he was in the far country, yet he chose to return home and thus became "alive" again (Lk.15:24,32). In the same way, spiritually dead sinners can accept Christ's invitation, "Come to me, **all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**" He really meant those words.

Calvinists also are right in saying that "No one can come to [Christ] unless the Father...draws him," and, "No one can come to [Him] unless the Father has enabled him" (Jn.6:44,65). Christ Himself made those declarations. **BUT** He also said, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (Jn.12:32). Whatever is meant by being drawn to Him, it is available for all people. Some respond to it in faith. It's obvious that others resist it, for not all are saved.

Calvinism stresses that God must take the initiative in our salvation. And that is true. First, in **bringing salvation to us**, by Christ's death. Second, in **bringing us to salvation**, by the Holy Spirit's ministry of conviction (Jn.16:7-11). As Paul put it, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor.12:3). **BUT** when they imply that therefore the sinner has no freedom to believe and repent, their inferences again lead them dangerously astray. For Scripture says, "Whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Rev.22:17c). It's a free gift, provided for us at unthinkable cost. But we must choose to take it. And if we refuse, there is no one to blame but ourselves.

What the Bible Teaches about...

The IMMINENCE of CHRIST'S RETURN

Alex V. Wilson

We often hear or read of "Christ's imminent return." This doctrine is even a test of orthodoxy in some circles of believers, especially those to whom His second coming is precious. For it is related to the touchy question, "Might born-again believers go through the Great Tribulation?" So in this article and the two following it we want to examine the idea, and evaluate its meaning and Scripturalness.

Since equally devout Christians differ on this point, we shall quote here (and in the next article) from teachers on both sides. Thus we try to present their views fairly, in their own words, and avoid the danger of setting up and refuting a "straw man." David Reagan's article in this issue presents a view different from mine, to help you study both sides. The search for truth always gains when more than one viewpoint is presented.

A. DICTIONARY MEANING of "Imminent":

An imminent event is "hanging overhead, constantly ready to befall" (Oxford English Dictionary). "Impending; always liable to occur; over-hanging as if about to fall" (The Standard Dictionary). [Emphasis added.]

B. Though the Ideas and Terminology of Eager "WAITING" and Alert "WATCHING" are found repeatedly in Scripture, the Terms "Imminent/Imminence" are NOT Used in Scripture.

Therefore imminence is a theological concept (like "the Trinity" and "original sin"), and its meaning and application must be based on careful Bible study. It is *based on inferences drawn from Scriptures, rather than direct statements*. Since it is often based on such words as "watch, watching, waiting," etc., those Bible terms must be closely examined. No one wants to twist the meanings of these terms and thus reach unsound conclusions. To avoid this we should be as objective as possible, lest we approach the subject with our minds already made up. And we must beware of trying to make any passage say more than it really does, just to force it to agree with our system of doctrine.

It's important to clarify what we mean by a theological concept. My recent series of articles on interpretation and theology has dealt at some length with this idea. (Actually, you should read its conclusion in this issue before reading this article.) In particular we examined what Scripture says about man's sinful nature. Then we compared the

Biblical teaching with the theological term, "total depravity." We saw that Calvinists start with some Scriptural truths as a premise, but then reach false, unBiblical inferences or conclusions, which contradict God's all-embracing love, man's freedom and accountability, etc.

Here is one more example, before we turn to the question of imminence: The Bible nowhere STATES that the Holy Spirit is divine. There is no clear statement that says this in so many words. Yet the Bible TEACHES this doctrine! It does so by sound inferences from several facts: His attributes, His inclusion with the Father and Son in many passages (Mt.28:19-20, 2 Cor.13:14, Gal.4:4-6, Eph.4:4-6, etc.), His being made equivalent with God in Acts 5:3-4; etc. Thus the deity of the Holy Spirit is a sound theological concept. It is derived from valid theological Bible study: (1)comparing various Scriptures, (2)seeing what they say directly and also what they infer or imply indirectly, and (3)if possible, without forcing any passages, fitting these truths together in a pattern of truth.

Notice that we have seen an example of some faulty inferences (Calvinism), and of some correct inferences (about the Holy Spirit's deity). There's nothing wrong with making inferences; it's unavoidable. But it's very possible to make wrong inferences. That's why we say again: Take care; study with an open mind.

A Surprising Admission

Now let's turn to the field of prophecy. Here is our main question at present: **Are there any events which must precede Christ's coming for His people, or could it occur at any moment?** This question is important because it affects the answer to a 2nd one: Will the church endure, or will it escape, the persecutions by "the Beast" during the Great Tribulation? The view that we will endure that period is called post-tribulationism: it believes Christ will return for His people after that period of intense persecution. The view that we will escape it is called pre-tribulationism: it believes He will come for us before the Beast's reign, and thus we shall be absent during that time. These beliefs were briefly discussed in our study of Matt. 24, two months ago.

John Walvoord wrote, "Neither posttribulationism nor pretribulationism is an explicit teaching of Scripture. The Bible does not in so many words state either." [Think about that; it's important. He is saying that Scripture nowhere directly says, "Christ will come before the tribulation," nor, "Christ will come for the church after the tribulation."] In later editions of his book (The Rapture Question), Walvoord changed that statement to read, "Posttribulationism is an interpretation of Scripture which pretribulationists believe is contradicted by many

passages which **imply** otherwise." He admits that his view (plus the opposite view) is based on reasoning from inferences, not direct Biblical statements. Of course he believed that his reasoning was correct.

But post-trib teachers like George Ladd believed their reasoning was correct instead. Ladd pointed out that the pretrib view is **not directly taught** by God's Word, "nor is it an inference required by the Word, nor is it essential for the preservation of the highest spiritual values." It is "an assumption in light of which the Scriptures are interpreted." But another assumption, "that of a single coming of Christ to rapture the Church at the close of the tribulation has an equal if not stronger claim to support." [The emphases in all these quotations are mine.--AVW]

Having made this important distinction, we now move on.

C. EXPLANATIONS of the Concept of Imminence

"Since a person never knows exactly when an imminent event will take place, then he cannot count on a certain amount of time transpiring before the imminent event happens. A person cannot legitimately set or imply a date for its happening....An imminent event may take place within a short time, but it does not have to do so in order to be imminent. 'Imminent' is not equal to 'soon.'" (Renald Showers)

"Imminency is not meant to designate immediacy....All date setting is out of the question and unwarranted" (R. H. Boll, in the Boll/Boles Discussion, p. 321)

"Imminence is the combination of two conditions: certainty and uncertainty. By an imminent event we mean one which is *certain to occur at some time, uncertain at what time.*" (A. T. Pierson)

While these clarifications are helpful, they do not settle the main question, which is this: Could Christ's return occur during any day, or merely during any generation, since His ascension?

D. The BIBLICAL BASIS for the Imminency of Christ's Return:

[But don't forget: we have not yet decided on the exact Biblical meaning of imminency. We should do that only after considering the following Bible passages (and others related to the question), to make sure that our definition fits the Biblical data. Remember that the terms "imminent/imminency" are not used in Scripture itself. The next article will deal with this matter of definition.] Here are some major Biblical building-blocks of this belief. Study them before examining various interpretations of them. Ideally, the context of each passage should be considered too.

1. WAIT for His Return

a. "...awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7).

b. "...heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil.3:20)

c. "...to wait for his Son from heaven...." (1 Thes.1:10).

d. "...Christ shall appear a second time...to those who eagerly await him" (Heb.9:28).

Question: In order to eagerly wait for some event, is it essential or not for that event to be able to occur at any moment?

2. WATCH, because He will Come

a. "Watch therefore: [be on the alert/ keep watch] for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh ...The master would have watched [been on the alert/ kept watch] and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Mt.24:42-4, ASV/ NASV/ NIV)

b. "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour." (Mt.25:13 NASV)

c. "Watch" is used four times in Mark 13:32-37, ASV. Why watch? "Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." NIV: "Be on guard! Be alert!....Watch!" NASV: "Take heed, keep on the alert....Be on the alert!"

d. "Be on guard [Be careful/ Take heed to yourselves] that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times [be always on the watch/ watch ye] praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Lk.21:34-36, NASV/ NIV/ ASV)

Question: The term "watch" (which is used in the older translations: KJV/ASV) more accurately means "be alert," "be on guard," or "stay awake" (NASV/also the new translation by some Wycliffe Bible Translators, entitled God's Word). Can you stay awake, alert, and on guard due to some upcoming event, even if some other events will occur first?

3. "...LOOKING FOR the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." (Titus 2:13, NASV) "We wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing...." (NIV) Question: If, as many believe, our Savior will first rapture the Church and then 7 years (or 3-1/2 years) later He will come to "destroy [the Beast] by the splendor of His coming" (2 Thes.2:8), to which of these two phases does Titus 2:13 refer? That is, what specifically is our "blessed hope" which Paul says we are "looking for"? He defines it here as "the appearing of the glory" of Christ. Most Bible teachers agree that this glorious appearing is when He comes to defeat the Beast. If so, then Paul tells us to "look" for an event even though a number of other events will transpire before it.

4. "The Coming of the Lord IS AT HAND/ IS NEAR....Behold, the Judge is standing right at the door." (Jam.5:8-9, NASV/NIV) Comment: Only one step and He's inside! But He has waited there for over 1900 years, and might delay some more.

5. PRAYERS FOR CHRIST TO RETURN: "Maranatha" -- Our Lord, come. (1 Cor.16:22.) "Come, Lord Jesus." (Rev.22:20b.) Our Reply: Yes, oh yes, great Savior! Do come quickly, as You promised in that very verse! (22:20a, ASV/NASV)

Ponder these important Scriptures. Think them through. Pray over them. And consider what other passages also throw light on these questions: Are there any events which must precede Christ's coming for His people, or could it occur at any moment? And secondly, Will genuine Christians escape or endure the Beast's persecutions during the Great Tribulation? (Then read the following article.)

TWO DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS of CHRIST'S "IMMINENT RETURN"

Compiled by the Editor

Study the preceding article, & its Scriptures, before this one.

VIEW #1.

Christ could return ANY DAY--AT ANY MOMENT:

a. "Other things may happen before the imminent event, but *nothing else must take place before it happens. [You] should always be prepared for it to happen.... It could happen at any moment. The necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of imminency.*" (R. Showers; emphasis added by AVW)

b. "The imminence of the Lord's coming is destroyed the moment you locate between the first and second coming...any period of time whatsoever that is a definite period, whether 10, or 100, or 1,000 years. I cannot look for a thing as an imminent event which I know is not going to take place for 10 years to come." (Pierson)

c. "It follows from the very fact that Christ is certain to come, while the time of his coming is concealed, that His coming must be always imminent to his people. Since he has told us to watch for his returning and has not told us when he would return, we must expect him constantly." (Boll, in the Boll/Boles Discussion, p. 321)

d. "As for all the signs of the times, they existed in some measure from the first (see 1 Jn.2:18), and exist in remarkable degree now. And the Lord did not tell us to wait until the signs had all come to pass before we look for him, but 'when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; for the time of your redemption draweth nigh' (Lk. 21:28)." (Boll, 328)

e. "Regarding 2 Thes.2:1-12, my respondent fails to distinguish between the day of the Lord, which is the day of wrath and vengeance (1 Thes.5:1-10), and the coming of Christ for his saints, to save them from the wrath to come (1 Thes.1:10), which necessarily precedes, we know not by how long." (Boll, 359; AVW's emph.)

f. "If we are told to watch because we do not know the day nor hour, and to watch to avoid the possibility of being surprised by his coming, as if by a thief breaking into our house, does not that mean that Christ could come...at any time? Thus the coming of Christ...is imminent, in the sense that it can occur at any moment. By the very nature of this inference the coming...which is imminent must be a coming different from the coming in glory after the tribulation. For a coming that must wait the Antichrist and great tribulation...cannot be imminent in the sense that it can come upon us at any moment." (Lewis Neilson)

VIEW #2.

Christ could return DURING ANY GENERATION after His ascension, but Certain Predicted Events Must Occur First. We "Watch" for His coming by staying awake morally and staying alert mentally (for this is the meaning of the Greek terms often translated "watch"), and by Being Alert For Those Events Which Precede And Usher In His Return.

a. "The imminent return of Christ meant that the signs could be fulfilled and that He could return within the lifetime of any individ-

ual generation of believers." (Samuel Kellogg; AVW's emphasis in these quotes too, unless noted otherwise.)

b. **Imminent means Christ's return is "possible any generation."** (Charles Erdman)

c. **"The Scripture declares plainly that the Lord Jesus will not come until the Apostasy shall have taken place, and the man of sin (or personal Antichrist) shall have been revealed as seen in 2 Thes. 2 [vss 1-4]. Many other portions also of the Word of God distinctly teach that certain events are to be fulfilled before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This does not, however, alter the fact that the coming of Christ, and not death, is the great Hope of the Church, and, if in a right state of heart, we (as the Thessalonian believers did) shall 'serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son from Heaven.'" (George Muller of Bristol, England)**

d. **"At the very first there appears to have been a certain margin of time within which Christ's coming was not likely to occur. Thus the apostles and early Christians were commissioned to disciple all the nations, and to be witnesses...unto the uttermost part of the earth....But that work was relatively accomplished within that generation (Col.1:6,23)....We also learn that Simon Peter knew that he would have to die for his Lord [after getting "old"--AVW; Jn.21:18-19]....[Yet] we have seen that if any generation had an excuse to defer their expectation of Christ's return, it would have been that first generation of Christians; but they, instead of counting the day far away, looked for the Lord's return with peculiar fervency." (Boll, 324-5)**

[AVW's comments now: Of course Bro. Boll was pre-trib., but we include this quote here because it shows **Christ's coming was not imminent (in the any-moment sense) during the Church's 1st generation--yet they fervently "watched" for Him anyway!** This fits in with the post-trib. view: we can do the same today though there are still events to occur before He comes. If at that period He could not have immediately returned--for various events had to transpire first--then **AT WHAT POINT IN CHURCH HISTORY did "any-moment" imminency begin?** Some of the events foretold in Scripture have **even till now** not occurred (though many have). These facts strongly support the any-generation view. Yet don't misconstrue my point: note the statement a few lines above, "Yet they fervently 'watched' for Him anyway." Yes, and so may we!]

e. **"No reader can put his finger on the book, chapter and verse which clearly and definitely, without doubt, teaches that the coming of Christ is imminent, liable to happen at any moment." "Jesus taught his disciples that they should go 'into all the world and preach the gos-**

pel to the whole creation.' He said of the woman who used the precious ointment upon his body: 'Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.' (Mk.14:9) [Also see Mt.24:14 & Mk.13:10--AVW.]Since he knew it would take some time for his disciples to do this, he did not teach that his 2nd coming was imminent--i.e. liable to occur at any moment." (H. L. Boles, 406-7.)

f. Mt.24:42 (RSV) says "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." Comment: "'Watch' is correctly translated 'be on the alert' (NASB) and means to be watchful and careful....The command to watch is described in terms of two slaves in verses 45-51. The 'faithful and sensible slave' is happy when his master returns because he is alert and busy. But the cloddish slave has catnapped and gets caught in his pajamas instead of his work jeans. Every Christian must heed the warning. It is a matter of attitude and action....True believers always will be watchful, ambitious for God, and ready for His return, even though it is on the other side of the tribulation." (A. Katterjohn)

g. The NT terminology of watchfulness justifies an attitude of expectancy toward Christ's return, but not a belief in [any-moment] imminence. "If a delay in the [2nd coming] of at least several years was compatible with expectancy in apostolic times, a delay for the several years of the Great Tribulation is compatible with expectancy in current times." (R. Gundry)

h. "Jesus clearly indicates to the early disciples that His coming will be delayed for some time. The express purpose of the parable concerning the nobleman who went to a 'far country' is that the disciples should not think 'the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately' (Lk.19:11-27). 'While the bridegroom was delaying' also intimates delay (Matt.25:5). In the parable of the talents, Jesus likens His return to the lord who 'after a long time' came back from a far country (Matt.25:19)....We might suppose that the long period of delay required in the parables would be satisfied by 'a few years' [as Walvoord says]. But a few years is all the delay post-tribulationism requires." (Gundry, 37ff)

i. Christ gave the early Christians a number of commands and/or predictions which required time: the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations; the prediction to Peter that he would grow old; Christ's commission to Paul to go "far away to the Gentiles" and the assurance given him in Jerusalem that he would witness at Rome (Acts 22:21; 23:11); [plus the forecasts of the fall of Jerusalem, and of wars, false teachers, love growing cold, etc.--AVW]. Regarding these,

"Whether general or specific, long or short, the delays were delays and, by being stated, rendered the second coming nonimminent to the apostolic Church....[And] if 'watching' could not have connotated [any-moment] imminence in the apostolic age, it need not connote [any-moment] imminence now." (Gundry, 39f)

j. **General Predictability & Specific Unpredictability of His Coming:** Jesus plainly stated that no man can know the day or hour of His coming. And He said this "in immediate connection with His coming after the tribulation (Matt.24:36,42,43; Mark 13:32)....Jesus' emphasis on 'day,' 'hour,' and 'watch of the night' shows that we shall not know exactly. But the delineation of preceding signs, including especially if not exclusively tribulational events, shows that we will know approximately....We are to watch, both because we cannot know exactly and because we must be alert to the signs which will enable us to know approximately." (Gundry, 43)

k. "The elect will be gathered at Jesus' return right after the shortened tribulation (Mt.24:22,29-31). Some will be 'taken,' others 'left' (v.40). Meanwhile, the elect are to watch for that event by watching for the events of the tribulation leading up to it: 'when you see all these things [tribulational events just described], recognize that he is near, right at the door' (v.33); 'when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near' (Lk.21:28)." (Gundry)

l. "The true meaning of the command to watch is not to watch for Christ's return. Scripture does not use this language. Nowhere are we told to watch for the coming of Christ. We are exhorted, rather, in view of the uncertainty of the time of the end, to watch. 'Watching' does not mean 'looking for' the event; it means spiritual and moral 'wakefulness.'" (Ladd)

m. "Gregoreo" is the Greek word most commonly translated "watch" (especially in the older versions; see section D-2 in the preceding article, noticing that the NASV usually translates it "be alert"). It means "to be awake." Sometimes it is used literally: in Gethsemane Jesus used it when urging the disciples to stay awake and pray with Him (Mt.26:38,40,41). "In a number of places, the word is used of general spiritual alertness": e.g., Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Pet.5:8. "In all of these verses, 'gregoreo' is used of general spiritual vigilance without immediate reference to the 2nd coming of Christ.

"There remain 9 uses of the word in which God's people are exhorted to watch in view of the impending end." 5 times it is used in Christ's Olivet Discourse -- but His only "coming" mentioned in that major passage will occur after the Tribulation (Mt.24:29f)!

He never mentions any pre-trib rapture in this, His main teaching to the apostles about the future (Mt.24-5; Mk.13; Lk.21). Thus what He exhorted them to be watchful or awake about was His coming after the Tribulation! Likewise, Paul's only use of this command which is related to endtime events is 1 Thes.5:3-6, ending "Let us watch and be sober." But the watchfulness he urged those Christians to maintain was not related to some pre-trib coming of Christ but to the Day of the Lord, which the pre-trib view says occurs after He has snatched away the church. (Ladd, chap. 6)

n. Lk.12:36 KJV/ASV says, "Be like men looking for their Lord." [NASV/NIV say "waiting."] "The use of the word 'looking for' does not carry the necessary idea of an any-moment event, although it does connote a *complex* of events which might begin at any time. We may discover the meaning from its uses elsewhere. Simeon was a devout man who was 'looking for the consolation of Israel' (Lk.2:25). Joseph of Arimathea was 'looking for the kingdom of God' (Lk.23:51). Both of these pious Jews were living in constant expectation of a complex of events which would include the appearing of Messiah, the overthrow of the enemies of God, and the inauguration of the kingdom of God." (Ladd, 116)

o. "...When ye shall see all these things, know that it [or he--NASV] is nigh, even at the doors" (Matt.24:33). "It is to persons thus instructed that the charge is given to watch: they are not told to watch irrespective of signals, but to be ready to note them as they appear. 'What, then!' (it is said), 'are we to wait for signs, and not for the Lord himself?' But what does such a question mean? If the Lord has told us so to wait, it is thus that we should watch. To despise the sign is to despise the Word of the Lord who has promised it; it is to refuse submission to His authority." (S. P. Tregelles)

p. "Attention to signs predicted in the Word of God is a duty...it is the prescribed means to that watchfulness which should characterize the servants of Christ at His appearing." (B. W. Newton)

q. "Looking for the blessed hope..." (Tit.2:13): "We do not look for something in everyday life with less intensity because we know something else must happen first. Peter (2 Pet. 3:12,13) looked for "new heavens and new earth" even though that is not the next event in God's calendar." (Norman MacPherson)

r. If the pre-trib view is correct, it seems Paul would have changed 2 Thes.2:1-3 to read like this: Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed...for nothing needs to happen first. That day shall come BEFORE the rebellion

[or falling away] occurs, and BEFORE the man of lawlessness is revealed. Of course what he actually wrote was, "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed...for that day will NOT come UNTIL the rebellion [or falling away] occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed."

Also note carefully the opening words of this passage, "...the COMING of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being GATHERED to him." Compare that expression with Jesus' words in Mt.24:29-31, "Immediately after the distress of those days...they will see the Son of Man COMING on the clouds of the sky....And he will send his angels...and they will GATHER his elect from the four winds." Both Christ and Paul lump together our Lord's coming and His people being gathered. When will this occur? Let Christ answer that question: "After the tribulation" (Mt.24:29, ASV). Let Paul answer: After the falling away and the revealing of the Man of lawlessness (2 Thes.2:1-3, ASV). In other words, after the Great Tribulation. Both Christ and Paul say that something precedes the gathering or catching up ("rapture") of Christians to be with the Lord. Both predict the coming of the Beast and his Great Tribulation before Christ's coming/gathering His people. Antichrist will come, then Christ will come--and we shall be gathered to him (or caught up to be with him, as 1 Thes.4:17 puts it)! If that seems like heresy, please re-read 2 Thes.2:1-10. (A.V.W.)

REVIEW AND SUMMARY

Our Lord Jesus and His apostles foretold the following would occur before His return:

1) For His sake the apostles would "stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them" (Mk.13:9b). That had to happen before His coming for His elect (recorded in verses 26-27). Before long His forecast came to pass: Acts 25 records the first king by whom they were tried. But before that occurred, He could not "come at any moment," could He? 2) They would be "hated [not just by the Jews but] by all nations because of [Him]," and would be "persecuted and put to death" (Mt.24:9; compare Mk.13:11; Jn.15:20; 16:2). Some time elapsed before "all nations" hated them. Could Jesus have come during those months or years? 3) "The gospel must first be preached to all nations" (Mk.13:10). It would be "preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Mt.24:14; v. 3 shows that "the end" He spoke of was "the end of the age"--this present age). Worldwide evangelization must occur before His return.

While #1 and #2 have now been fulfilled, this preaching to all nations (literally, "peoples") still awaits completion. Let's do it!

[In case you wonder what Paul meant in writing "All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit," and "the gospel...has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven" (Col.1:6,23), it seems to me the NIV Study Bible's note gives a clear explanation. These statements are "hyperbole, to dramatize the rapid spread of the gospel into every quarter of the Roman empire within three decades of Pentecost (see...Rom.1:8; 10:18; 16:19 [& 15:19b]). In refutation of the charge of the false teachers, Paul insists that the Christian faith is not merely local or regional but worldwide."]

4) Peter would become old and be martyred (Jn.21:18-19). If so, the "rapture" could not occur while Peter was alive, for then he would never die! **5) The Lord commissioned Paul to go "far away to the Gentiles,"** and later assured him that he would reach Rome and testify for Him there (Acts 22:21; 23:11). Obviously He would not come for the church before those events occurred, for it would require Paul's being left behind! **6) The church in Smyrna would suffer persecution and some of its members be imprisoned. (Rev.2:10.)** Could Christ come at "any time any day" before that imprisonment took place? **7) The Lord told His people in Thyatira that He would bring suffering on the false prophetess "Jezebel" and her followers there. "Then," He said, "all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts...." (Rev.2:22-23).** Could He come before fulfilling that prediction of His?

8) Jerusalem would be made desolate; then it would be trampled on by the Gentiles for some time (Lk.21:20,24) before His coming (v.27). **9) The [final] "abomination that causes desolation" would be set up in the holy place (Mt.24:15,21; Mk.13:14).** That event will be the kickoff to the Great Tribulation. **10) The "lawless one will be revealed" (2 Thes.2:3,8-9) before the Day of the Lord will come.** And in the context of that passage, the Day of the Lord seems clearly to be the time of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him" (v.1) as well as the time of His destroying the lawless one "by the splendor of His coming" (v.8). Paul doesn't separate those into two widely-separated comings.

So ten or more events were predicted to occur during this age, before the Lord's return. He could not return before they came to pass. We gladly admit that most of them have now been fulfilled. But the point is that until they were, His coming was not "imminent" in the any-day, any-moment sense. And numbers 3, 9 and 10 are still not fulfilled. Can Christ come for us before they are?

William J. Rowlands wrote some pertinent comments about this: "These...propheesied events forbid the thought that the Church at Pentecost was looking for Christ to come without intervening events....And if we expect what they could *not* expect, our hope is different from theirs." Again: "If we state abundantly in our writings and preaching that which Holy Scripture nowhere states, we are building on a sandy foundation." In other words, since God's Word never plainly says it, how dare anyone **dogmatically** claim that there are no events which must precede Christ's return for His people? Since such a view is built only on inferences (mainly about watching/waiting), rather than on clear and definite statements, we need humility and open-mindedness on this matter. It (as well as the opposite view) should be taught tentatively, as a possible position but one that has difficulties too. Let's all be open-minded and keep studying.

Listen once more to Rowlands: "It has been said that the [pre-trib] teaching is the **general** teaching of Scripture. But how can doctrine be according to the whole trend of Scripture when its advocates cannot (when asked) show it clearly even in one verse?" Remember what pre-trib writer John Walvoord admitted? "**Neither** posttribulationism nor pretribulationism is an **explicit** teaching of Scripture. **The Bible does not in so many words state either.**"

Scripture does clearly declare that Christ is coming **after** the tribulation: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days...they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds...." (Mt.24:29-31). Post-tribs cannot absolutely, positively, without the shadow of a doubt prove that "the elect" in this passage means the Church--though in a number of passages it does. But at least there is a definite statement of a post-trib coming of the Lord. The pre-trib view lacks any such clear declaration of a coming before the reign of the Beast. To me (and Walvoord seems to admit as much), that position appears based almost entirely on inferences and implications. But the post-trib view fits its inferences together (along with the definite statements like the one just quoted) with far less difficulty, it seems to me. Study it for yourself, knowing I'll love you whether you agree with me or not!

Points Which BOTH VIEWS Can Heartily AGREE ON:

a. "The Christian life is to be lived in the light of Christ's coming. That constitutes the imminency of the Lord's return, according to the definition given of the word imminency.'" (Boll, 329)

Amen to that! Those holding either view agree there.

b. In 1897 A. C. Gaebelein "courteously admitted that Paul did not teach an 'immediate coming,' but that he 'did teach that our attitude was to be one of constant joyful expectancy, consistent only with the possibility of that coming at any moment.'" (R. Reiter)

Amen to that, too, if it also includes the possibility of other events occurring first. Most surely He will return: constantly rejoice in that certainty. Maybe it will be today--for the post-trib view held by myself and others may be wrong! And our Lord did say, "Be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Mt.24:44). But maybe we shall go through the Great Tribulation: review the many, many strong evidences for that possibility, presented above.

c. "You ask, Is the Church to go through the Tribulation? That is not the question. It is this: Is the Church ready? Are you ready, ready either for Tribulation or Rapture? If you are, that is all that matters. What difference does it make so long as you are ready? If you are to be in it, you cannot avoid it, and if you are to escape, you will not be in it." (Oswald Smith)

Amen. **Be Prepared!**--for either possibility. And Pray, as the first Christians did: "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!" If we all fulfilled both those duties, everything would be fine. "The King is coming!"--be jubilant!

[The main books quoted from in this article are: 1)Unfulfilled Prophecy: A Discussion on Prophetic Themes, by H. Leo Boles and R. H. Boll; Gospel Advocate, 1928. 2)The Blessed Hope, by George Ladd; Eerdmans, 1956. 3)The Church and the Tribulation, by Robert Gundry; Zondervan, 1973. 4)The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation? Edited by Richard Reiter; Zondervan, 1984. 5)Our Lord Cometh, by William J. Rowlands; Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony (England), 1939.]

Another view; compare them carefully.

SHALL WE ESCAPE?

David R. Reagan

The most controversial aspect of the Rapture is its timing. Some place it at the end of the Tribulation, making it one and the same event as the Second Coming. Others place it in the middle of the Tribulation. Still others believe that it will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation.

The reason for these differing viewpoints is that the exact time of the Rapture is not precisely revealed in Scripture. It is only implied. There is, therefore, room for honest differences of opinion, and lines of fellowship should certainly not be drawn over differences regarding this point, even though it is an important point.

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture

I believe the best inference of Scripture is that the Rapture will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation. The most important reason I believe this has to do with the issue of imminence. Over and over in Scripture we are told to watch for the appearing of the Lord. We are told to "be ready" (Matthew 24:44), to "be on the alert" (Matthew 24:42), to "be dressed in readiness" (Luke 12:35), and to "keep your lamps alight" (Luke 12:35). The clear force of these persistent warnings is that Jesus can appear at any moment.

Only the pre-Tribulation concept of the Rapture allows for the imminence of the Lord's appearing for His Church. When the Rapture is placed at any other point in time, the imminence of the Lord's appearing is destroyed because other prophetic events must happen first.

For example, if the Rapture is going to occur in mid-Tribulation, then why should I live looking for the Lord's appearing at any moment? I would be looking instead for an Israeli peace treaty, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the revelation of the Antichrist. Then and only then could the Lord appear.

The Focus Of Attention

This raises the issue of what we are to be looking for. Nowhere are believers told to watch for the appearance of the Antichrist. On the contrary, we are told to watch for Jesus Christ. In Titus 2:13 Paul says we are to live "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Likewise, Peter urges us to "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). John completes

the apostolic chorus by similarly urging us to fix our hope on Jesus at His appearing (1 John 3:2-3).

Only Matthew speaks of watching for the Antichrist (Matthew 24:15), but he is speaking to the Jews living in Israel in the middle of the Tribulation when the Antichrist desecrates the rebuilt Temple.

The Promise Of Deliverance

Another argument in behalf of a pre-Tribulation Rapture has to do with the promises of God to protect the Church from His wrath. As has already been demonstrated, the book of Revelation shows that the wrath of God will be poured out during the entire period of the Tribulation.

The Word promises over and over that the Church will be delivered from God's wrath. Romans 5:9 says that "we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him [Jesus]." First Thessalonians 1:10 states that we are waiting "for His Son from heaven...who delivers us from the wrath to come." The promise is repeated in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Supernatural Protection?

Some argue that God could supernaturally protect the Church during the Tribulation. Yes, He could. In fact, He promises to do just that for the 144,000 Jews who will be sealed as bond-servants at the beginning of the Tribulation (Revelation 7:1-8).

But God's promise to the Church during the Tribulation is not one of protection but one of deliverance. Jesus said we would "escape" the horrors of the Tribulation (Luke 21:36). Paul says Jesus is coming to "deliver" us from God's wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Likewise, Peter says that if God could rescue righteous Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah, then He "knows how to rescue the godly from trial" (2 Peter 2:6-9).

Escapism?

The pre-Tribulation concept of the Rapture has often been condemned as "escapism." I think this criticism is unjustified. The Bible itself says that Christians are to "comfort one another" with the concept of the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Is it a comfort to think of the Rapture occurring at the end of the world's worst period of war instead of at the beginning?

Regardless of when the Rapture actually occurs, we need to keep in mind that the Bible teaches that societal conditions are going to

grow increasingly worse the closer we get to the Lord's return. That means Christians will suffer tribulations whether or not they go into the Great Tribulation. And that means all of us had better be preparing ourselves for unprecedented suffering and spiritual warfare.

If you are a Christian, you can do this daily by putting on "the full armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13), praying at all times in the Spirit that you will be able to stand firm against the attacks of Satan (Ephesians 6:14-18).

If you are not a Christian, your only hope is to reach out in faith and receive the free gift of God's salvation, which He provided through His Son, Jesus (John 3:16).

--Condensed form chapter 10 of The Master Plan.

"HE'S COMING TOMORROW"

by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe

(Sometimes truths "come alive" much more when clothed as fiction or drama. Christ knew this, and so used parables. Thus we present the following article, though we know the Lord's return will differ in some ways from the events imagined here. Don't think of this as a doctrinal presentation. Instead, catch the spirit and challenge of it. It was written before 1900 by the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin. - the Editor.)

"The night is far spent; the day is at hand."

My soul vibrated for a moment like a harp. Is it true? The night, the long night of the world's groping agony and blind desire, is it almost over? Is the day at hand?

Again: *"They shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with the power and great glory. And when these things come to pass, look up and rejoice, for your redemption is nigh."*

Coming!--The Son of man really coming into this world again with power and great glory?

Will this really ever happen? Will this solid, commonplace earth see it? Will these skies brighten and flash, and will upturned faces in this city be watching to see Him coming?

So our minister preached in a solemn sermon; and for moments, at times, I felt a thrill of reality in hearing. But, as the well-dressed crowd passed down the aisle, my neighbor Mr. Stockton whispered to me not to forget the meeting of the bank-directors on Monday evening, and Mrs. Goldwaite urged my wife not to forget her party Thursday. My wife, as she came out, asked me if I had observed the extravagant outfit of Mrs. Rennyman.

"So absurd," she said, "when her income, I know, cannot be half of ours is, and I *never* think of sending to Paris for my things! I should look on it as morally wrong."

I spoke of the sermon.

"Yes," said my wife, "what a sermon!--so solemn. I wonder that all are not drawn to hear our rector. What could be more powerful than such discourses? My dear, by the way, *don't* forget to change Mary's opal ring for a diamond one. Dear me! The Christmas presents were all so on my mind, that I was thinking of them every now and then in church; and that was so wrong of me!"

"My dear," said I, "sometimes it seems to me as if all our life were unreal. We go to church, and the things that we hear are either true or false. If they are true what things they are! For instance, these sermons on the second-coming. If we are looking for that coming, we ought to feel and live differently from what we do! Do we really believe what we hear in church, or is it a dream?"

"I *do* believe," said my wife earnestly--(she is a good woman)--"Yes, I *do* believe, but it is just as you say. Oh, dear! I feel as if I am very worldly--I have so many things to think of!" And she sighed.

So did I; for I knew that I, too, was very worldly. After a pause I said, "Suppose Christ should really come this Christmas and it should be authoritatively announced that He would be here tomorrow?"

"I think," said my wife, "there would be some embarrassment on the part of our great men, legislators, and aldermen, in anticipation of a personal interview. Fancy a meeting of the city council to arrange a reception for the Lord Jesus Christ!"

"Perhaps," said I, "He would refuse all offers of the rich and great. Perhaps our fashionable churches would plead for His presence in vain. He would not be in palaces."

That evening the thoughts of the waking hours mirrored themselves in a dream.

I seemed to be out walking in the streets, and to be conscious of a strange, vague sense of *something* just declared, of which all were speaking with a suppressed air of mysterious voices.

There was a whispering stillness around. Groups of men stood at the corners of the street, and discussed an impending something with suppressed voices.

I heard one say to another, "What? *Really* coming? Tomorrow?"

And the others said, "Yes, tomorrow. On Christmas Day He will be here."

It was night. The stars were glittering down with a keen and frosty light; the shops glistened in the Christmas array: but the same sense of hushed expectancy pervaded everything. There seemed to be nothing doing, and each person looked wistfully upon his neighbor, as if to say, "Have you heard?"

Suddenly, as I walked, an angel-form was with me, gliding softly by my side. The face was solemn, serene, and calm. Yet, though I felt awe, I felt a sort of confiding love as I said:

"Tell me, is it really true? *Is* Christ coming?"

"HE IS," said the angel. "Tomorrow He will be here!"

"What joy!" I cried.

"Is it joy?" said the angel. "Alas, to many in this city it is only terror! Come with me."

In a moment I seemed to be standing with him in a parlor of one of the chief mansions of the city. A stout, bald-headed man was seated at a table covered with papers, which he was sorting over with nervous anxiety, muttering to himself as he did so. On a sofa lay a delicate woman, her hands clasped over a little book. The room was, in every way, a witness of boundless wealth. Gold and silver, gems, foreign furniture and costly pictures--everything that money could buy--were there. The man seemed nervous and uneasy. He wiped the sweat from his brow, and spoke:

"I don't know, wife, how *you* feel; but I don't like this news. I don't understand it. It puts a stop to everything I know anything about."

"O John!" said the woman, turning towards him a face pale and fervent, "how can you say so?"

"Well, Mary, it's the truth. I don't care if I say it. I don't want to meet-well, I wish He would put it off! What does he want of me? I'd be willing to make over-well, three million to found a hospital, if He'd be satisfied and let me go on. Yes, I'd give three million-to buy off from tomorrow."

"Is He not our best friend?"

"Best friend!" said the man, with a look half fright, half anger. "Mary, you don't know what you are talking about! You know I always hated those things. There's no use in it. I can't see into them. In fact, I *hate* them."

She cast on him a look full of pity. "*Cannot* I make you see?" she said.

"No, indeed, you can't. Why, look here," he added, pointing to the papers, "here is what stands for millions! Tonight it's mine, and tomorrow it will be all so much waste paper, and then what will I have left? Do you think I can rejoice? I'd give half; I'd give--yes, *the whole*, not to have him come for a hundred years."

She stretched out her hand towards him; but he pushed it back.

"Do you see?" said the angel to me solemnly. "Between him and her there is a 'great gulf fixed.' They have lived in one house with that gulf between them for years! She cannot go to him: he cannot come to her. Tomorrow she will rise to Christ as a dewdrop to the sun; and he will call to the mountains and rocks to fall on him--not because Christ hates *him*, but because *he* hates Christ."

Again the scene was changed. We stood together in a little low attic, lighted by one small lamp. How poor it was!--a broken chair, a rickety table, a bed in the corner where the little ones were cuddling close to one another for warmth. Poor things! The air was so frosty that their breath congealed upon the bed-covers as they talked with soft voices.

"When mother comes, she will bring us some supper," said one.

"But I'm so cold!" said the little outsider.

"Get in the middle, then," said the other two, "and we'll warm you. Mother promised she would make a fire when she came in, if that man would pay her."

"What a bad man he is!" said the oldest boy. "He never pays mother if he can help it."

Just then the door opened, and a pale, thin woman came in, laden with packages.

She laid all down, and came to her children's bed, clasping her hands in rapture.

"Joy! Joy, children! Oh, joy, joy! Christ is coming! He will be here tomorrow."

Every little bird in the nest was up, and the little arms around the mother's neck: the children believed at once. They had heard of the good Jesus. He had been their mother's only friend through many a cold and hungry day, and they doubted not He was coming.

"O mother! Will He take us? He will, won't He?"

"Yes, my little ones," she said softly, smiling to herself. "He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom."

Suddenly again, as if by the slide of a magic-lantern, another scene was present.

We stood in a lonely room, where a woman was sitting with her head bowed forward upon her hands. Alone, forsaken, slandered, she was in bitterness of spirit. Hard, cruel tongues had spoken her name with vile assertions, and a thoughtless world had believed. There had been a babble of accusations, a crowd to rejoice in iniquity, and few to pity. She thought herself alone, and she spoke: "Judge me, O Lord! for I have walked in my integrity. I am as a monster unto many; but Thou art my strong refuge."

In a moment the angel touched her. "My sister," he said, "be of good cheer. Christ will be here *tomorrow*."

She started up, with her hands clasped, her eyes bright, her whole form dilated, as she seemed to look into the heavens, and said with rapture,

"Come, Lord, and judge me; for Thou knowest me altogether. Come, Son of man, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded. Oh, for the judgment-seat of Christ!"

Again I stood in a brilliant room, full of luxuries. Three or four fair women were standing pensively talking with each other. Their apartment glittered with jewelry, laces, silks and every elegance of fashion; but they looked troubled.

"This seems to me really awful," said one, with a suppressed sigh. "What troubles me is, I know so little about it."

"Yes," said another, "and it puts a stop so to everything! Of what use will all these be tomorrow?"

There was a poor seamstress in the corner of the room, who now spoke.

"We shall be ever with the Lord," she said.

"I'm sure I don't know what that can mean," said the first speaker, with a kind of shudder. "It seems rather fearful."

"Well," said the other, "it seems so sudden--when one never dreamed of any such thing--to change all at once from this to that other life."

"It is enough to *be with Him*," said the poor woman. "Oh, I have so longed for it!"

"*The great gulf*," again said the angel.

Then we stood on the steps of a church building. A band of ministers were together. They were assembled from every kind of gospel-believing church in the county--reformed, independent, holiness, liturgical, pentecostal, "high" and "low".

"It's no matter now about these old issues," they said. "*He* is coming: He will settle all. Ordinations and ordinances and creeds are but the scaffolding of the edifice. They are the shadow: the substance is CHRIST!" And hand in hand they turned their faces when the Christmas morning light began faintly glowing. And I heard them saying together, with one heart and voice--

"Come, LORD JESUS! Come quickly!"

CARL KITZMILLER GOES HOME

by the Editor

After lingering at death's door for months longer than expected, our brother departed for the presence of his Savior on August 22. He was buried in Johnson City on the 25th.

Believing that words of appreciation are better said before rather than after death, last April I wrote brother Kitzmiller a letter. Here are some excerpts:

I wanted to express my gratitude and esteem for your labors for our Lord through many years, in many ways. You have labored long and hard in preaching and pastoral ministries. And your radio preaching has without doubt borne good fruit, much of which will be discovered only when we reach the Lord's presence.

Of course, I personally feel special appreciation for the writing you have done. Your years of being Word and Work's question-answerer have helped many people. Even on those occasions when I or others didn't agree with everything you wrote (and what's new about that?), we knew you had studied the matter carefully and fully and sought to be Biblical and balanced.

Also your Sunday school lessons have aided numerous people in their study of God's Word, and enriched their understanding. Thank you for undertaking that ministry for many years. We thank the Lord for Darren Johnson's willingness to try to fill your shoes (uh, no, not really, but--well, you know what I mean!) in that department. Thanks for recommending him. We expect that he too will do well and pray that the Lord will lead him to continue.

Carl wrote the S. S. lesson quarterlies from January 1963 through December 1967. He later resumed this ministry and carried it on from March 1975 through February 1999. (That's no misprint; he turned in lessons which will run that long.) He also wrote some lessons in 1961. His "Questions Asked of Us" column included 169 entries. He began in February 1970 and continued through November 1985. Occasionally in that column he re-ran questions and answers from Stanford Chambers' similar column years before. In the same way, in the years since Carl "retired" from the Answers column, I have from time to time re-run some of his earlier ones. They are still a blessing.

Put all those writings together, and they equal in volume a whole bunch of books! May God raise up other writers to fill the gap left by our brother's homegoing. And may he comfort Phyllis, Carl's wife for 51 years, and the children and grandchildren.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Ralph Avenue Church

Bill Smallwood reports: 1 baptism - 2 to place membership in June & July. We have had a visitor at every service during the month of July. The church is celebrating her 45th year of ministry. The men are meeting every Thursday night and are trying to go to every home in the Shively area. They knock on doors and hand out brochures.

Coming Home! (Martin & Susan Brooks & family)

On Aug. 19 we will fly to New York and then at 12:42 AM we are scheduled to arrive in Louisville, KY. I have enjoyed our time here and look forward to the Lord continuing to use us in Mozambique after a few months in the States.

Turkey Creek (Harry Coultas)

God has blessed beyond our expectations in the work here. There has been 1 baptism bringing the total responses to 23 including 2 memberships & 2 baptisms. God is preparing us for the fall revival with Nathan Burks Sept. 13-18.

CYE Report:

There was a total of 200 campers for the 3 weeks, and a total of 81 workers and 17 pre-campers who attended. There were 8 baptisms and about 20 or more rededications during the summer. Are numbers important? Every number represents a precious soul for whom Christ died, and an opportunity for worship, study, prayer and learning about the Lord and His plan for our lives.

Fallfest '98 . . . is scheduled for Nov.14th at Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana. This is our 2nd annual youth rally. Randy Gill will be the featured speaker and Full Access will conduct the entire worship service the next morning. For information contact Don McGee at P.O.Box 732, 301 E.Mulberry, Amite, LA 70422

Buechel

"From a humble beginning under a tent in 1913 to a modern brick building in 1959, the Buechel Church of Christ has been and continues to be a place of worship." In July 1997, I began as the part time minister for Buechel. Some were ready to close the doors because of low attendance. Some times there were less than 20 in attendance. Since then we have averaged more than 40. We have had two special days, first, a goal day where we had 59 in attendance and a friends day with 64 in attendance. **The members have gotten behind the work and have started inviting others to come.** The next Big Day after the Men's Leadership Conference will be **Homecoming Sunday (Sunday, Oct. 25th)** All former members are cordially invited to come and be with us. - **Bud Ridgeway**

Words of Life

Bro. Dale Offutt, Minister of the Sellersburg Church of Christ, has consented to preach the Word through the radio ministry. He has been a minister for many years and will bring a wealth of knowledge of God's Word to radio listeners. He began broadcasting Sept. 6th. for information write: **Words of Life** at

**P.O. Box 221, Sellersburg, IN.
47172 Welcome Bro. Dale!**

Maple Manor

Construction has begun! On Saturday, Aug. 8th, a small crowd gathered for a ground-breaking ceremony. The bank loan for \$750,000 is now a reality. Actual cost, include furnishings, will be in the neighborhood of \$800,000. We covet your prayers on behalf of our financial need for the interest payments as well as for everyday expenses. Everyone is invited to attend our 25th year Celebration with Open House on October 17th.

Goin' Fishin':

At present, Paul and Virginia Kitzmiller plan to return to Kinshema this fall. Paul is invited to use the Bible to teach English to public high school students. Keep Paul & Virginia in your prayers as they leave the comforts of home in America to live in a city and country incredibly different in culture and economics, for one purpose: To tell about Jesus' power to save!

Johnson City

Saturday morning, August 22nd, the prolonged illness of Bro. Carl Kitzmiller came to a blessed end. The faith by which he labored, suffered, and conquered was exchanged for sight. He leaves behind a rich legacy: a devoted Christian family, a network of precious friendships, a wealth of Biblical scholarship, and multitudes of lives that have been transformed through his 50+ years in Christian ministry. We, the beneficiaries of his labor, are saddened by our brother's departure, and our deepest sympathies go out to his family. But we rejoice that his labor was not in vain. Brother Kitzmiller labored on the

foundation of Jesus Christ with craftsmanship that endures. We can take courage in the promise of God given through His apostle, that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

West Monroe, Louisiana

On August 6th Opal and I celebrated our 48th wedding anniversary. We received 32 cards. Didn't know we had so many friends. Especially meaningful were several former PCS students. Thanks to all. Good memories are a great blessing from our God. To Him Be the Gl

Herbert Ingalls Departs for Glory.

Word came that Bro. Ingalls' body died on August 31. In recent years he has lived in Wichita Falls, TX. But for a long time he lived in DeRidder, La. There he was one of the main influences that led to the development of the Christian Youth Encampment, which has had a profound effect on countless people. He preached for years while supporting himself as a postman.

Lexington

During 1997, the Church of Christ World-Wide office forwarded over \$142,400 to missionaries in many lands around the world. Victor Broaddus, assisted by his wife Mae & others, has carried on this helpful ministry for many years. All funds sent for missions are forwarded. For information, financial reports, or other questions contact P.O.Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555

Correction

Some folks at the Goin' Fishing missions conference may have gotten the impression that the new edifice being built in Manila to house Central Bible College, plus the Filipino and Chinese congregations, will

cost a million dollars. That is not true, though the expense is indeed very high due to spiraling inflation in the Philippines. The Filipino & Chinese members have given generously, but more is still needed. Since the peso has devalued, that means that U.S. donations are worth more pesos than ever before. So it is a good time to give! And a worthy cause, too. Donations may be sent to "Church of Christ World-Wide" (see preceding item.)

New Deacon at Sellersburg

Clinton Dorman, who has served the congregation in various ways for a long time, has been appointed a deacon at Sellersburg. His spirit of serving has been demonstrated for many years at the Louisville Christian Fellowship Week: on Wed. nite he would type out & then xerox the names, addresses & tel.nos. of all persons registered during the week.

Calling all CYE Alumni

I am looking for anyone who has ever been associated with our youth camp at DeRidder, LA. Christian Youth Encampment (CYE) has been around since 1958, and I'm sure Word & Work's readership includes a number of alumni. I am looking for anyone who served as board member, director, counselor, cook, camper, etc. Contact Don McGee at P.O. Box 732, Amite, LA 70422 or via the internet: acoc@1-55.com

Eastern Hills Church of Christ

(1710 Wynn Joyce Rd., Garland, TX 75043) I noticed something in the last WW about cross cultural churches. I find it rather odd that we send missionaries to foreign countries to reach souls there, yet when those folks come to our country, we

want to start another congregation for them or let them find their own place of worship. I personally think it is sad and a disgrace when we will not allow more than one language to be spoken in our meetings.

By God's grace we have begun a Spanish speaking congregation at Eastern Hills. From time to time we have both languages spoken. One person speaks, and another translates. We are blessed with a young man who is bilingual and does a great job both in English and Spanish. Ben Hidalgo is his name. Pray for him. At present he has a good job, but he must shortly undergo surgery that will keep him off his feet for several months. He and his wife have a real love for the Lord, and are helping both congregations. My wife, Mary Lou, is not well. She has Parkinson's and has a hard time walking. --Eugene Mullins.

PCS Celebrates 75 Years

... by hosting its Diamond Anniversary "Kick-Off Banquet" on Friday, August 7th at the Holiday Inn in Clarksville, Indiana. There was a capacity crowd there of more than 300 people. Earl C. Mullins Jr. was the emcee. It was a great evening of celebrating all that God had wrought over the last 75 years. Many who were present were recognized for their role in the school. Also a video was shown commemorating the school's 75 years. This video is available by contacting the school's office (2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212) for only \$10.00. In connection with the Diamond Anniversary, a building project has been launched to enclose the two high school buildings. Anyone interested in donating to this project should contact the school.

99-09 Z:4

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