

The Advocate of Truth

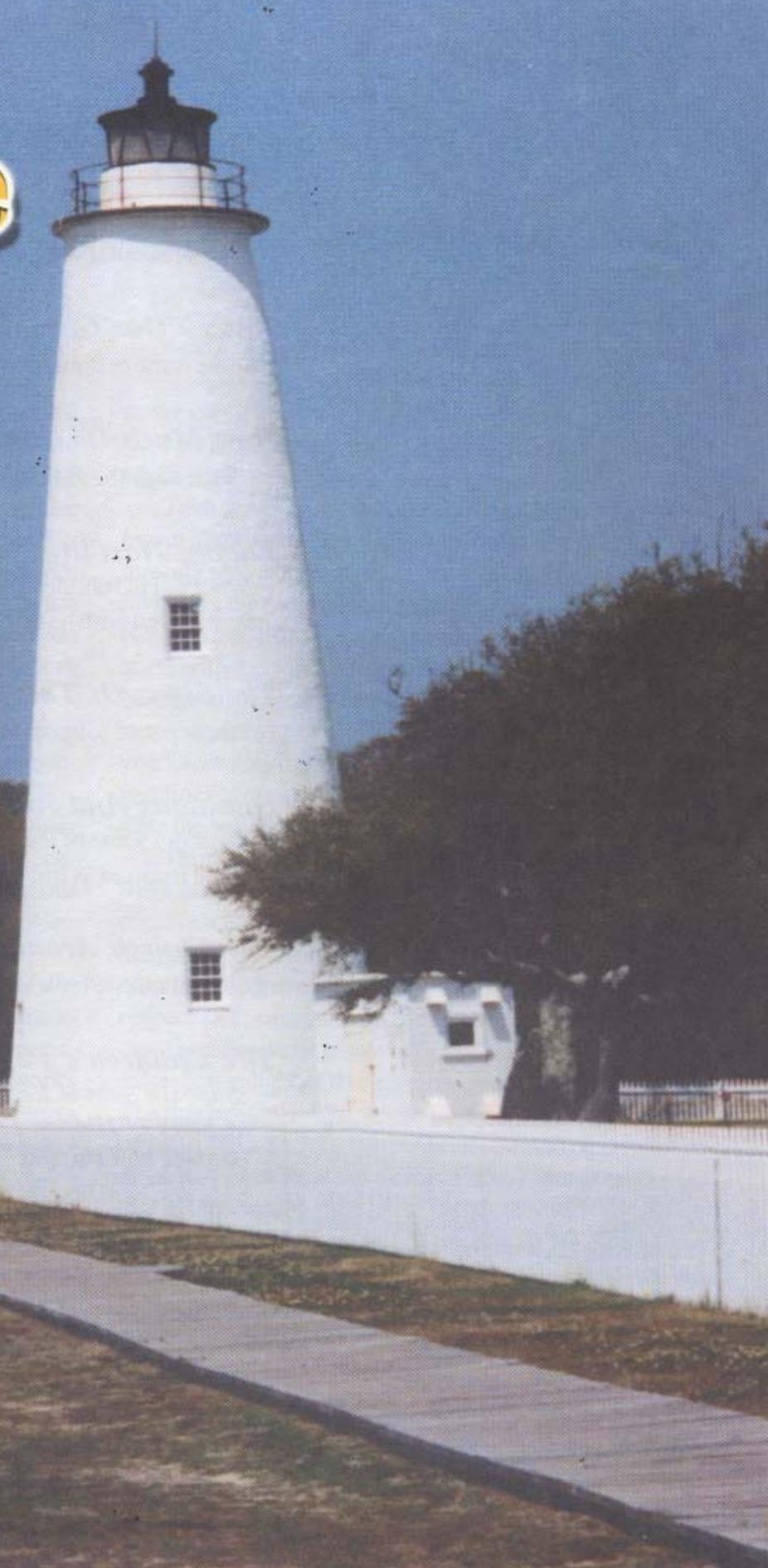




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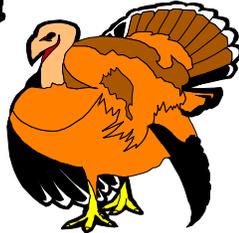
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TRADITIONS

By Carol Buechner



A tradition is a custom or practice which is observed or done and has been passed down from generation to generation. It can be something as simple as a practice that your family has established and does on a regular basis. For example, whenever someone in your family has a birthday, it is a tradition to have a birthday meal with special little favors and other activities. These are just fun things that your family does that bond your family and you look forward to doing, especially when it comes your turn to being the recipient.

In the United States there are some traditional holidays that are celebrated which bring to memory the greatness of our country. For example, there is Memorial Day. This is a time to remember those who have given their lives for the freedom of our country. It is a day to decorate the graves of those who have gallantly served our country. It is a day for picnics and parades and other activities.

Another traditional holiday is the Fourth of July in which our country celebrates our freedom. It is a time to get together with friends and families, have picnics, parades, display the American flag, and watch fireworks displays. It is certainly a time to be thankful that we live in a country in which we have religious freedom and so many other freedoms that other countries do not have.

Then there is Thanksgiving that Americans celebrate every November. This is a time for families to gather together to enjoy feasting and remembering how our country began and the struggles that the early Pilgrims had in building our nation and the great sacrifices that were made

so we can live as we do today. We can give thanks to God for His blessings in establishing this great nation in which we live.

Take time to pause and reflect on what the Bible has to say about tradition. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). This is a warning statement because it starts with the word beware which means to be on guard, be careful, be cautious or be wary of. Be careful because man can damage you, beguile you, defile you, or trick you into believing what the beliefs or the customs or the practices of men or of the world are rather than following after the beliefs of Christ.

Think back to the holidays previously mentioned. Is there any problem with celebrating them and having a conflict with them Biblically? No, because these holidays are not based on anything from the Bible, they are only ones that have evolved from recent history and show our respect and praise to God for His blessings.

There are some major holidays that need careful consideration in light of the warning given in Colossians 2:8. The first holiday is Christmas. The Bible explains the birth of Jesus in Luke 2:1, 4-8: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.... And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem... To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they

were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." If you were to continue reading Luke two, you would read of the angels appearing unto these shepherds announcing the birth of the Savior. This was followed by "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (v. 13-14). This is the simple way that the Bible relates the birth of Jesus. There is no mention of a date for the birth of Jesus. So where does the date of December 25th come from? Where does the Christmas tree come from, with the gifts, the celebrations, and all of the other things that are connected with Christmas? It is for certain that the date of December 25th is never mentioned in the Bible. As a matter of fact, December the 25th is supposed to be the birthday of Nimrod, one of the most wicked of ancient Babylonians. If you were to study the origin of the Christmas tree and many other of the traditions connected with Christmas, you will find them connected to pagan ceremonies. Some may say that it really doesn't matter about the origin of all of these things now because it is such a heartwarming experience now to celebrate the Lord's birth. But, the question is, can God be pleased with it? His Word plainly states that He doesn't want you following the traditions of man and there is no question about the celebration of Christmas being based on man's own planning. Simply being a true follower of Jesus every day of your life is a celebration of His birth and life.

As God observes man celebrating His Son's birthday, which He has not sanctioned in the Bible, with overspending, pagan decorations, riotous parties, etc., what would His reaction be? How could He be pleased? All of this comes from man's planning because it certainly is not in the Bible. Think back to the verse in Colossians 2:8, which says that you are to beware of the philosophy and vain deceit of man that takes you into the world and not after Christ. Churches are packed for Christmas services but are not packed again until Easter services. So doesn't that tell you that there is not sincerity in this celebration? Perhaps attending church on Christmas makes people feel that they have done all they need to do.

Before reading any farther, think about the word "pa-

gan" because it is associated with so many of the holidays celebrated today. What does it really mean? Pagan refers to a person who has no religion. The word heathen comes up when thinking about paganism and it means a person that is regarded as one serving many gods, uncivilized, unenlightened and irreligious.

There is another traditional holiday that needs some attention. Think about the celebration of Easter. Does it conflict with the Bible? Start by considering if it comes from the Bible. Is there any scriptural reference in the Bible that would point to such a celebration? In Matthew, chapter twenty-seven, you can read of Jesus being scourged, having a scarlet robe put upon Him, having a crown of thorns placed upon His head, and then He was mocked. Jesus was taken to Golgotha where He was crucified and died. Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in a new tomb and rolled a stone to the door. The conclusion of the death of Jesus is found in Matthew 28:1-6: **"IN THE END OF THE SABBATH, AS IT BEGAN TO DAWN TOWARD THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK,** came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." This concludes that Jesus rose from the grave before the end of the Sabbath and not on Sunday as many claim. From this claim man has again manufactured something that is not in the Bible and that is Easter, with the claim that Jesus rose on Sunday. Along with Easter, man has manufactured Good Friday, which is not Biblically based. The Bible states that Jesus was in the tomb for three days and three nights. This cannot be when counting from Friday to Sunday. As with Christmas, there are many pagan practices that go along with the celebration of Easter-sunrise services, Easter eggs, baskets and so much more. Again this holiday brings a time of excessive spending, eating, partying and other such self-fulfilling activities. Again, do you think God is pleased to have His Son put into such a celebration that He has not sanc-

tioned in His word?

Jesus did institute a commemoration for man to practice concerning His death. It was instituted the night Jesus was betrayed. The Bible describes the actions of Jesus. "And supper (Passover) being ended...He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John 13:2,4-5). ..." Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28). This instituted "The Lord's Supper." This is to be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month. This is determined by the new moon nearest the Vernal Equinox. Fourteen days are counted from this time and that is the time when it is to be taken. It is taken in the evening, the beginning of the fourteenth day. However, man has made his own polluted commemoration and called it Easter. Man has also changed "the Lord's Supper," which is to be taken only once a year at the date specified. Man has changed this into what is called "Communion" and it is taken nonchalantly once a month in church or whenever a church group decides it should be done. This clearly goes against the Bible's instruction. Taking "The Lord's Supper" without proper preparation is a serious matter. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Corinthians 11:27-30). Partaking of the emblems of the blood and body of Christ in a casual manner without proper spiritual preparation is dangerous and goes against the Word of God.

Consider one other celebration that is practiced by many in the United States. It is Halloween. It comes from All Hallows' Eve, occurring on the evening of October 31. It comes for the Christian feast of Hallowmas, All hallows, or All Saints' Day. It is believed that Halloween originated among the ancient Druids, who believed that

on that evening Samhain, the Lord of the dead, called forth hosts of evil spirits. Great fires were lit on Halloween for the purpose of warding off those spirits. Others believed that the spirits of the dead revisited their earthly homes on that evening. It may seem like an innocent evening of fun for children but is it something that should be encouraged with the reference to ghosts, goblins, spirits and the likes?

The warning has been given in Colossians against the traditions of man. God's Word in the Bible is complete in itself. Therefore, those things that man does that are not in the Bible is adding to the Word of God. What does the Bible say about this? "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. ADD NOT UNTO HIS WORDS, LEST HE REPROVE THEE, AND THOU BE FOUND A LIAR" (Proverbs 30:5-6). "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandment of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). If you are practicing anything that is not directly written and approved in the Bible, it is considered adding to what God has stated and it is wrong. The above verse plainly states that God will reprove you. Reprove means to disapprove, censure, condemn and convict. Then you will be considered a liar. This means one that does not speak the truth, a deceiver, a misleader and false witness. You cannot please God under such circumstances because you are rejecting God by your actions. There is an example in the Bible of such action. God had instructed Saul to destroy the Amalekites. They were to "utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (I Samuel 15:3). The result: "but Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly" (I Samuel 15:9). Drastic action was taken by God because of Saul's disobedience. "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (I Samuel 15:22-23).

Obedience to God's word is absolutely necessary but when you add to God's word or change it, it is considered rebellion and you will be rejected by God. This is an extremely serious situation.

Moses taught the Israelites many times to keep God's instructions because he knew how important it was to do so. "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel (insert your name here), and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shall bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:1-9). Moses' instructions were to concentrate on knowing God's word and to keep them. The Israelites knew this but many times they strayed from what they had been taught and followed other gods and did things that were not pleasing to God. They suffered much pain and ill effects from their deviations from God's instruction. You may be thinking that this was meant only for Israel but God also means it for you today. Just as Moses explained you are to keep what is written in God's Word. Instructions are never given to follow anything else. Therefore, if a tradition is one developed by man and is not supported by the Bible, it is wrong to follow.

Following traditions of man is following the word. The Bible has something to say about this. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any

man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:15-16). Think about following the traditions of Christmas and Easter. Are they Biblical or of the world developed by man? Since there is no support for such practices in the Bible, it would certainly be concluded that it would be wrong to keep them.

As a child of God, it is your duty to follow God's Word in all you do. Take into consideration what is written in I John 2:3-6: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." This states that you love God by keeping HIS commandments and not the commandments of man. Following anything other than what is written in the Bible is living a lie and the Bible tells you that Satan is the father of lies.

If you were to research the origin of Christmas and Easter, you would discover that both holidays are completely doctrines of man and not God. You would discover the many pagan influences and practices involved in the celebrations. You can't have it both ways. You can't say you keep God's commandments and what is written in the Word, but you also want to keep man's traditions, too. This makes you a hypocrite. A hypocrite is someone that pretends what he or she is not. Jesus spoke plainly about this matter in Matthew 15:7-9: **"YE HYPOCRITES, ... THIS PEOPLE DRAWETH NIGH UNTO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND HONORETH ME WITH THEIR LIPS; BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN THEY DO WORSHIP ME, TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN."** There is no doubt that you can't follow the commandments that man has devised because Jesus plainly states that your worship of God would be in vain. Vain means it is worthless, of no effect, fruitless, unprofitable and futile. The above scripture states that you are wasting your time in your worship of God if you are keeping commandments compiled by man.

Moses had to remind the Israelites of their responsibility to God and so are you reminded again of what you

must do. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in ALL his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God..." (Deuteronomy 10:12-13,17, 20-21).

Traditions can seem so innocent and harmful but may not be so. One of God's commandments may need to be carefully considered for practices of traditions. "Remember the Sabbath day, TO KEEP IT HOLY. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11). God established the Sabbath day as a day to be kept holy and a day for rest from worldly work. Perhaps your family

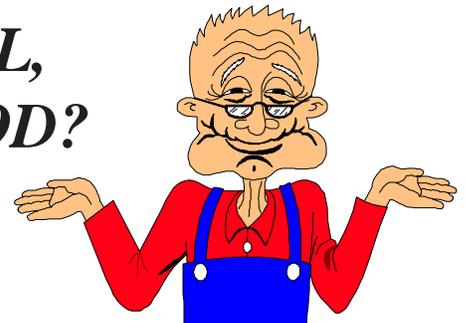
has had a tradition that has been carried on for many years, but maybe it is time to evaluate it to see if it goes against God's command. He states that the Sabbath is not a day to labor but one of rest. God is to be the focus. If there is something that is done on the Sabbath that causes you or someone in your family to labor as they would during the other six days of the week, it is going against God's command. It could be that the lenience toward the keeping of the Sabbath is allowing excuses and tolerance to become easier than actually confronting and changing what needs to be changed in order to keep the Sabbath as God intended for it to be done. Are the youth of today being taught the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy or are they being allowed to do things that should not be a part of the rest of God? How will they respect the Sabbath as an adult? Will it be just another day without much thought for what God would want done on His Sabbath? Perhaps you should take some time to see if you have any areas of your life where traditions are replacing God's ways.

Carefully contemplate one more scripture: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9). Are you keeping covenant with God by obeying His word and His word only?



IS THINE EYE EVIL, BECAUSE I AM GOOD?

By Moises Torres M.



There are good persons around us who are always willing to help others when they need it. Unfortunately, there are also people who are not able to see this benefit and judge the good actions with an "evil eye."

The Lord Jesus illustrates this human tendency in his parable of the laborers:

In Matthew 20:1-16, the Lord describes a householder

who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And he hired some of them and agreed with them for a penny a day and sent them into his vineyard. Brethren, he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace and hired them also and told them: Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is RIGHT I will give you. And they went their way. He also went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and

found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why stand ye there all the day idle? They say unto them, Because NO MAN HATH HIRED US. And he saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is RIGHT, THAT SHALL YE RECEIVE.

This parable continues saying that when even was come, the laborers were called to receive their salary, "beginning from the last unto the first" (which was one in purpose). And those who were hired in the eleventh hour received a penny each one, and because of this the first thought they would receive even more but they also received every man a penny. Then they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying: "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? IS THINE EYE EVIL, BECAUSE I AM GOOD? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

If we look superficially on this matter we could think that the householder was unjust, but if we look with the eyes of the Spirit we would see all the benefit and goodness that the Lord of the vineyard did to all the laborers.

They were in a hopeless and sorrowful situation. Nobody hired them and they probably did not have a single penny to take food to their families. Then suddenly they receive from the lord of the vineyard the benefit of a job and a hope of life to make a living. The good man did not make any difference and considered them all equal because they were in the same hopeless situation and need. So, he offered them the same job and the same salary, and not worrying about the number of hours they would work, he only told them: "Whatsoever is right I will give you." Ego-tism caused those men to murmur against the good man, they looked only at the material benefit and could not see farther because of their EVIL EYE.

We need to develop a good eye to consider our neighbors and brothers in the same level in their adversities and needs. We must consider the "first and the last" equal as the householder did. Let us learn from this parable to share our treasure of mercy and goodness with a good eye.

JESUS - OUR GLORIOUS CONQUEROR

Jesus is the conqueror of sin's dominion. Sin began when Adam and Eve disobeyed a generous and loving God in the beginning of human history. When sin came, it brought tears, pain, heartache, and sorrows that have constantly plagued man.

Psalm 49:6-7 is so true: "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Man needed someone to help him, but there was none who could help. Then came the beautiful promise to Joseph: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus came to conquer our sin problem. He became "the lamb of God" to take away sin. The Apostle Paul

wrote, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many" (Romans 5:12,15). Paul also wrote, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

He took our punishment. He died to break sin's dominion. He rose again the third day! We are provided freedom from sin.

Jesus is the conqueror of death and hell. Jesus clearly declared, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell

and of death" (Revelation 1:18). At the crucifixion of Jesus, it looked like Satan had won. They laid Jesus in a borrowed tomb. It was indeed finished. But our Lord, the conqueror, took the keys away from Satan. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Our glorious Savior tasted death for every man and went to the grave, but it could not hold him. Those who have placed their faith in Christ and His victory can proclaim Him as their mighty conqueror and Savior. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory" (I Corinthians 15:52-55).

Jesus is the conqueror of my heart. I knew the scriptures were so. I was a sinner! Because this was so, I needed a Savior.

In Sabbath School, I heard the scripture faithfully taught by God's servants. Therefore, I understood that the Son of God had come to be my Saviour!

My heart became tender as I considered His love for me! No great and notorious sins were charged to me. I never took drugs nor drank alcohol. I did not gamble. I never robbed nor murdered. I was just as guilty though. I needed a Savior.

I heard His gentle invitation, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26). I knew He was worthy of my love and devotion. He gave an invitation to me: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). How could I refuse? He took me as I was and conquered my heart with love.

Oh, I first was afraid! But, knowing Him, I follow Him from a motive of love.

"Thanks, O mighty Conqueror, for loving me."

Jesus is the conqueror of a world sold under sin. We live in a world that needs redemption. Our world bears the scars of its sins of population. The Apostle Paul writes of "the redemption of the purchased possession" in Ephesians 1:14. God's plan will be finished and a new heaven and a new earth will experience the bliss of redemption's restoration. "Nevertheless we, according to this promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13).

He keeps asking us, His servants, "What in the world are you doing?" Surely, He will conquer!

A little boy received a world globe as a present. He was asleep one night when his parents decided to borrow it to look up a place on the globe. As the father took the globe from his son's darkened room, the child awakened asking, "Daddy, what are you doing with my world?"

Our glorious conqueror who returned from the grave triumphant over His enemies has plans for a redeemed world.

This glorious conqueror, our Lord Jesus Christ, will continue to be victorious. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (I Corinthians 15:25).

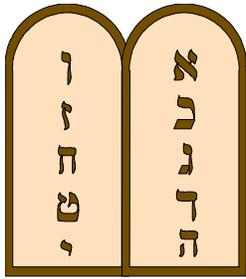
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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34).

As children of God, we realize that a great work is ever before us! It is a life work, a life battle against a mighty foe entrenched in our flesh. The powers without are strong indeed, but the civil war within is by far the most to be dreaded. If we become in any measure intoxicated with the spirit of the world -if we give way to self-gratification, love of ease, pleasure, a little indulgence of any of the old dispositions of envy, malice, pride, vain-glory, vaunting of self, highmindedness, wrath, strife, or any such thing - even a little, Oh, how great is the peril to which we are exposed!

HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE GOD?



By Siegfried Maywald



How much do we love God? The answer is found in our obedience and faith to God and to His Word. Obedience in faith is the test.

Scripture tells us that God spoke on various occasions. He spoke to Noah and told him to build an ark. Noah believed God although there was no evidence that it ever had rained on earth. He trusted in what God told him and acted thereon (Genesis 6:13-22 and 8:15-17). He spoke to Abraham, and Abraham believed God in faith when asked by God to leave his home. He did so not even knowing where God would lead him (Genesis 12:1-9). He spoke to Moses and told him to lead the people out of Egypt (Exodus 3:1-10). Job pleased God because he continued to faithfully believe in God although he lost all of his possessions (Job 1). God now speaks to us through Jesus Christ, His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). His Word gives us guidance and direction and sets the standard to which we have to abide.

Now the question is do we trust and believe in the Word of God or that of man about God? Do we believe that God's word is the truth and nothing but the truth, or do we accept and trust in the interpretations of men's ideas about what the prophets and Jesus said in the scriptures? Many people maintain the statement that they believe in the true Word of God. They proclaim that their faith is strictly based on Biblical principles only. Yet, when fully examined, one discovers that they adhere to and teach many of the traditions and customs of man, which are not only in stark contrast, but also in direct opposition to the Word of God. They deny for example Jesus' own words in regard to His only given sign as being the true Messiah. They claim that Jesus spoke the truth and that His word is truth, yet disregard His own words as recorded in the scriptures. In John 8:43, Jesus asks the question: "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye can-

not hear my word."

A spiritual blindness befalls those that hear and deem to know everything, but they are unable to understand and retain the Word of God as recorded in the scriptures. They believe in and are witnessing assumptions of man's wisdom and interpretations of so-called prophets which seem to know more than God's Word reveals. These people reject sound doctrine and heap to themselves teachers after this liking. They turn their ears away from the truth and listen to fables (II Timothy 4:3,4). But Jesus said in John 14:23, "... if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

In John 17:17, we read: "sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." He also said: "... If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). So why do people not listen to what He said? We either believe and trust that God spoke the truth or we do not. If we accept one statement of Jesus as the full truth, then likewise we must accept His other statements as the full truth also. We cannot choose scriptures and interpret them to our liking. If we act in this manner, nothing can be taken as absolute truth, and all scripture is brought into question. Therefore, we must accept His Word and believe in all that Jesus said. His Word is the truth, and He does not lie!

In John 5:24 and 46-47, Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.... For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not this writings, how shall ye believe my words?" That is why Jesus warns us in Matthew 7:21-23 when He said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of

heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Why does God reject these people who have done so many wonderful works in His name? It is because, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). Proverbs 14:5 tells us, "A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies." In Psalm 12:2 we read that, "They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." These people lie and deceive in the name of Jesus Christ. People are told and tempted to believe that those lies are relatively harmless or may even be useful at times. The celebration of Christmas is a perfect example of this. God does not overlook those lies which deceive and distort the truth of His Word. Each of those sins of deception originates from our worldly attitudes.

In John 8:31, Jesus said to those Jews who believed on Him, "..., If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." In John 15:7, Jesus also said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Jesus Christ is the source of all truth. He sets the standard for what is right and what is wrong. He guides us and reveals deception. He shows us the narrow way that leads to eternal life. In this way, Jesus does not give us the freedom to do what we want, but He does give us the freedom to choose to believe and trust in what He sets out as the standard for what leads to eternal life. In Proverbs 1:33, we read: "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Psalms 31:23 records, "O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer."

We may ask the question: Do children always hear the word of their mother or father? Are their minds sometimes corrupted with other things? As Christians, we do not always hear the Word of God either! Our minds likewise wander at times toward other matters, but still God loves us with an everlasting love and with lovingkindness. He draws us to accept and believe in His Word.

God's admonition in Proverbs 2:1-2 and 3:23 is: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;...Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." Yes, we receive blessings when we abide by His Word and when we do not let mercy and truth forsake us, but abide by them in our hearts. If we do so, we will find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man, but we must trust in the Lord with all our heart; and lean not unto our own understanding. Read Proverbs 3:2-5 and 3:13. "For the Lord shall by thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken" (Proverbs 3:26). Just like children are admonished to listen to the instruction of their earthly father, so shall we likewise listen for the instructions of our eternal Father. "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law" (Proverbs 4:1-2).

What laws are we not to forsake? In Matthew 22:35-40, we read of a lawyer who asked Jesus a question. "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." This includes everything that Jesus had instructed us to do. Our faith is revealed through our actions and interactions with people. You can fool some people most of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time. God cannot be fooled anytime! His eyes and ears are everywhere and behold all that we do and say. That is why we should always remember to humble ourselves like David did in this prayer in Psalm 51:1-12: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward

parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

Confession must come from the heart in sincerity. We must repent of our sins and ask for God's mercy and grace to forgive and guide us in our relationship to Him and with one another. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." In I John 3:18-22, we read: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3:15-16).

The verse gives us an example of what real love constitutes. Real love involves action and is not a feeling only. It involves selfless and sacrificial action toward others without the thought of receiving anything in return. We strive to perfection. No one who abides in Jesus Christ makes a habit of sinning continually. We as Christians do not obtain a complete perfection in this life, but that does not mean that we should deal lightly with sin. If we were to do so, we would not only offend God, but we would act in a destructive manner to ourselves. We should always remember that we have an Advocate with the Father when we sin, which is Jesus Christ (I John 2:1-2). He always helps us to overcome sin. The point is that we as believers strive to diminish our old patterns and ways of sin by replacing them with the "new man" which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him and grow in understanding of Jesus Christ's love and grace (Ephesians 4:24). We read in Isaiah 28:9-10: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." That means we have to dig deeper into the Word of God to gain a better understanding and grow in knowledge beyond the basics of the doctrines of Jesus Christ. This is a slow process and hardly achieved instantaneously, but involves time and effort on our part.

May God bless you in your effort to abide and grow in the understanding of His will and purpose which He has predetermined for all that listen and heed His advice.

FACING HOSTILITY

A LESSON STUDY

"In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us" (Nehemiah 4:20).

Read Nehemiah 4:6-8; 15-23.

We see from this lesson that Jerusalem is surrounded on all sides by hostile neighbors who have joined together

against God's people. Jerusalem, in ruins, posed no threat, even though the Temple had been reconstructed. However, once the wall and gates were restored, Jerusalem would again be a fortified city.

Nehemiah recounts the efforts of some of their enemies to discourage and shake their confidence in com-

pleting the wall. "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stones wall" (Nehemiah 4:1-3).

Nehemiah responded to these insulting questions not by shouting back at his mockers, but by praying to God while the Jewish builders kept on working. The work had to go on despite the demoralizing threats from Judah's enemies, and it did continue, for Nehemiah notes, "...the people had a mind to work" (Nehemiah 4:6). Finally the wall had reached half its full height, which made their foes very angry. Since Jerusalem was completely surrounded by the enemy, they had neither friends nor means of escape in any direction. When the enemy conspirators observed the great progress made in restoring the wall, they formed an alliance" ...to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it" (vss. 7-8).

How did Nehemiah and the Judeans deal with this formidable plot against them? They took the same action that is available to each one of us: they prayed to God! No military action was necessary on the part of the Judeans, because God had brought the enemies' lot to nothing. The people rallied around the strong leadership of Nehemiah and trusted that God would care for them.

"And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons: and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place

therefore, ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us" (Nehemiah 4:15-20).

As the Apostle Paul instructs us, we must put on the whole armour of God as we fight against the world, the flesh, and the Devil in order to be prepared for any onslaught from these enemies. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

We need to be girded with truth, and to have on the breastplate of righteousness. Our feet should be shod with the readiness of the Gospel of peace, and we must be ready to quench flaming arrows from Satan with the shield of faith. With the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit we will be ready to face any hostility. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Contributed

THE UNCHANGING ONE

Through the yesterday of ages,
Jesus, Thou art still the same;
Thro' our own life's checkered pages,
Still the one, dear, changeless Name!
Well may we in Thee confide,
Faithful Saviour, proved and "tried."

Gazing down the far forever,
Brighter glows the one sweet Name;
Steadfast radiance, paling never!
Jesus, Jesus! Still the same.
Evermore Thou shalt endure,
Our own Saviour, strong and "sure."

Frances Ridley Havergal



THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

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

WORKERS' HEARTS FEEL A GLOBAL STRESS

**Researchers say faster pace,
lack of security take a toll**

**By Nancy Cleeland
Los Angeles Times**

The longer hours, faster pace and security typical of many new jobs is taking a toll on worker's hearts, according to a growing body of occupational health research.

Studies in Europe, Japan and the United States have linked increases in cardiovascular risks and disease to a global punch for greater productivity. Researchers say the damage is cumulative and will become more apparent and costly over time.

"I think we're dramatically underestimating the impacts of these changes," said Peter Schnall, an epidemiologist and clinical professor of medicine at the University of California, Irvine's School of Medicine.

"There are enormous health effects, but they don't make it into the calculations."

The latest research in the field, presented last month at an international forum in Newport Beach, California, hints at the potential scale of the problem.

U.S. and Japanese workers who put in more than 50 hours a week had markedly higher rates of hypertension, a precursor to heart disease. In Belgium, stressful jobs - defined as highly demanding with the little decision making authority - appeared to elevate the blood pressure of

workers even as they slept.

China's embrace of rapid economic change has been accompanied by surges in cardiovascular disease that have overwhelmed urban hospitals. And in one small Norwegian town two years ago, the mere rumor of a plant closure was enough to raise overall blood pressure for months.

"Just think about globalization, what that can mean to millions of people around the world. These rumors are everywhere," said Tge Kristensen, who directs Denmark's occupational health program.

The link being made between shifting corporate employment practices and heart disease reflects a larger interest in the health effects of stress, which began showing up in occupational health journals in the 1990s.

But after continuing painful shifts in global work arrangements, the answers remain frustratingly vague. "Clearly something is going on," said Steven Sauter, who coordinates research on stress for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health - part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "In the United States, we don't have the firm data we need to understand it."

Organized by the decade-old International Commission on Occupational Health, the forum was dominated by talk about the need for bigger, more imaginative research projects and for hard data on the long-term economic benefits of stress education.

There is one problem: Stress is a subjective term that doesn't lend itself to hard numbers, especially when comparing across cultures and social classes.

John Howard, the director of the national institute, said work stress hasn't gotten the attention it deserves.

"Sometimes employers don't understand that workers are their real asset, especially in a service economy," he said. "If we're going to keep improving productivity, we have to make sure that we keep workers healthy."

COMMENT

This really is a sign of the times! Jesus told us that men's hearts would fail for fear because of what is coming upon the earth. Globalization is affecting everyone whether they realize it or not.

Stress is increasing because of the greed and ungodliness of men.

Real relief from stress can only be found in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ overcame stress. Following are only six ways in which He did this:

1. He knew who He was. He said that He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He said that He was the Good Shepherd. If you do not know who you are, there will always be people who try to tell you.

2. We must be dedicated. We must know whom we are trying to serve. With Jesus, this was a settled matter. He said, "...I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). By knowing whom we are trying to please, we will not become victims by giving in to others' demands.

3. We must be organized. Jesus knew what He was to accomplish. He said, "...I know whence I came, and whither I go..." (John 8:14). Unless we plan our lives and set priorities, we will be pressured by what people think is important!

4. We must concentrate on our agendas. During Jesus' life, many people tried to get Him detoured from His planned agenda. The people of the city of Capernaum wanted him to settle down in their city. However, He responded: "..., I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent" (Luke 4:43). We must focus on one thing at a time. Concentrated effort increases our productivity and harnesses stress effectively.

5. To help relieve stress, practice meditation. Prayer and quiet times with God are great stress relievers. Jesus knew and practiced this principal. In Mark 1:35, we read: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

6. Recreation also helps to relieve stress. Let us take

time to enjoy life. The old proverb that says, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" is not exactly true. All work and no play will eventually kill Jack. Jesus urged his disciples to "..., Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). Rest was so important to God, that He commanded that no work be done during the seventh day which is the Sabbath.

AFGHANISTAN

EDITOR CONVICTED OF BLASPHEMY

KABUL - A women's magazine editor has been sentenced to two years in jail after being convicted of blasphemy for publishing anti-Islamic articles, including one challenging a belief that Muslims who convert to other religions should be stoned to death. Ali Mohaqiq Masab was arrested October 1 after his magazine argued that giving up Islam was not a crime that should be punished by death.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO....

Be friendly and outgoing.

Put themselves in others' shoes and consider the feelings of others first.

Be generous with their time and talents.

Pitch in to help get the job done, willingly and eagerly.

Show a genuine interest in others and in what they have to say.

Pursue their interests they love, be creative and speak up.

Extracurricular activities help to boost self-esteem and foster friendships.

From Parade magazine



Questions and Answers

Question: What are some of the facts that prove that the Bible is inspired of God?

Answer: The Apostle Paul tells us that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (I Corinthians 3:19). One of the ways in which this is so is through the Word of God. The Lord used many different men throughout the past to write the Bible...The contents of the Bible as a whole give testimony that it is inspired of God. The contents of the Bible express wisdom along historical and scientific lines far in advance of the times which they (the writers) were living. The prophecies of future events are the only ones recorded which have consistently proven true and continue to be fulfilled in this day and age.

During the time in which various books of the Bible were being written by God's "holy prophets," various views on astronomy were being expressed and written. However, the modern telescope has proven all the ancient astronomers to be completely in error. With the Bible, this is not so!

Anaximenes taught that the world was the shape of a

flat disc floating in air. Leucippus taught that it was like a drum. Pendar said that it stood on pillars, while others claimed that it sat upon the head of Atlas. There were those who even taught that the earth stood on the head of a huge elephant and that earthquakes were the result of the elephant moving. Pythagoras tried to prove that the earth was a living, sentient being. They believed that volcanoes were the result of the earth vomiting.

The fallacy of all these crude notions of the past have been exposed by the telescope, spectroscopy, and around the world travel by sea, land, and air. However, the Bible written during the same period of time is found to be in harmony with the latest scientific truths.

Many years before Columbus conceived the idea, which was rank heresy in his day, that the earth is round and does not sit upon pillars or any of the physical foundations, the prophet Job wrote concerning God that He "hath the earth upon nothing," and Isaiah wrote that God "sitteth upon the circle of the earth." Please read Job 26:7 and Isaiah 40:22. When applied to a planet which is round and held in place by gravitational power, expressions of this sort have much meaning!

Also the first chapter of Genesis presents the brief

story of creation. Despite the brevity of this record, it is being recognized more and more by these learned men of our time as scientific, and geologically correct. This contrasts with all the other ancient writings which pretend to see the work of creation. Let us quote from a tract published by Dean C. Dutton, Ph.D., of Oklahoma State University. "In the first chapter of Genesis, we have the story of creation, which Yale's greatest geologist says "is in perfect harmony with geology", and of which Harvard's greatest geologist says, "The order of creation as given in Genesis is faultless."

The Bible is also prophetically reliable. Undeniable proof of the credibility and authenticity of the Bible is given to us by both ancient and modern history. Numerous instances of its prophecies which have been fulfilled have been recorded. No one can point to a single city, kingdom, or dynasty that has survived a divine pronouncement of doom thereupon by any ancient biblical prophet.

Jesus upbraided certain unworthy cities of His day. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been down in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Matthew 11:20-23).

Even nature favored these Galilean cities! According to one writer, "there were no such trees and no such grains anywhere in Palestine as in the land of Gennesaret." Oranges, figs, and grapes grew there in great abundance. Its savor was pure and refreshing; its air was balmy and sweet. There was no reason on earth why such prosperous cities as these should ever pass away. The inhabitants of these cities must have regarded the prophecy of Jesus as idle words.

Where are Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin today? Desolate heaps of ruins mark the spot of two of

them. The third has disappeared so completely that now not even its exact former site can be definitely determined. However, the neighboring city of Tiberias, one that Jesus did not pronounce a woe upon, was not destroyed.

Let us consider the ancient city of Samaria, which was built by one of Israel's king's son after the rebellion of the tribes. Omri, its king, did more to provoke the Lord to anger than had all his predecessors. See I Kings 16:25. Then came his son, Ahab, who even surpassed his father. Under his rule, and that of his wicked wife, Jezebel, religious freedom was taken away from the Israelites. They were even compelled to worship false gods. This made the people sink to a very low ebb of morality.

Divine judgment was pronounced upon Samaria by the Prophet Micah because of the great infamy of the inhabitants. "Therefore will I make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof" (Micah 1:6).

What happened to Samaria? A history of Syria and Palestine says: "Samaria is but a heap of stone. Her foundations discovered, her streets plowed up. She is now covered with cornfields and olive gardens. Samaria has been destroyed; her rubbish has been (put) into the valley, and her foundation stones lie scattered about on the face of the hill."

Let us put complete confidence in God's Word! "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts" (Psalm 119:99-100)

Question: What does the word, Selah, mean?

Answer: The word occurs seventy-five times in the Psalms and three times in Habakkuk. It is derived from a Hebrew word which means to be silent. It signifies to pause in the singing. It is to direct the singer to pause or be silent while the instruments played the interlude.



Myanmar

This is our new congregation in Mindat, Myanmar. At the top of the next page Elder Kawl Lian Thanga (right) is studying doctrine with Brother Nai Kay Ha (left). At the bottom of the second page, Elders Kawl Lian Thanga and Khen Cung are visiting our church in Maiquai.





LESSON I

his death? II Chronicles 32:33.

THE INVASION OF JUDAH

LESSON II

Scripture Reading: II Chronicles 32:1-33.**Golden Text: II Chronicles 32:21 (first part).**

"And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria."

NOTE: Hezekiah is now king of Judah as you have learned in the last several lessons. He began his reign with a great reformation. He cleansed the temple, and the people have once more kept the feast of Passover, that had not been kept since the days of Solomon. Now let us study about the invasion of Judah by the Assyrians.

1. Who was ready to come against Judah? II Chronicles 32:1.
2. What did Hezekiah do when he saw the king of Assyria had come? II Chronicles 32:2-5.
3. What did he tell the people after they had been gathered together? II Chronicles 32:6-8.
4. King Sennacherib of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem. Read II Chronicles 32:9-16, and then tell some of the blasphemous things he said against Hezekiah and God.
5. What else did he do against King Hezekiah and the God of Heaven? II Chronicles 32:17-19.
6. Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah prayed to the Lord for help. Did they receive an answer to their prayer? II Chronicles 32:20-23.
7. What happened to Hezekiah, and what did he do concerning this? II Chronicles 32:24-26.
8. Read II Chronicles 32:27-30 and tell about Hezekiah's wealth and power.
9. Where was Hezekiah buried, and who reigned after

MANASSEH, KING OF JUDAH

Scripture Reading: II Chronicles 33:1-25.**Golden Text: II Chronicles 33:9.**

"So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel."

NOTE: We have just finished studying about Hezekiah who was king of Judah from 726-697 B.C. He reigned 29 years and was a righteous king. Now Manasseh, his son, is beginning to reign in his place. Let us see if his son will continue to rule as well as his father has done.

1. How old was Manasseh when he began to reign, and how long did he reign in Jerusalem? II Chronicles 33:1.
2. Did he do good in the sight of the Lord? Read II Chronicles 33:2-6, and tell some of the things he did to provoke the Lord to anger.
3. What further did he do in II Chronicles 33:7-9?
4. Did the Lord speak to Manasseh and the people? Did they hearken to Him? What did the Lord cause to happen to Manasseh? II Chronicles 33:10-11.
5. Did Manasseh seek the Lord while he was in affliction? Did the Lord hear his supplication? II Chronicles 33:12-13.
6. After this, what did the king build? Did he command Judah to serve the Lord again? II Chronicles 33:14-17.
7. Where was Manasseh buried when he died, and who reigned in his stead? II Chronicles 33:20.
8. Amon was twenty two years old when he began to reign. How long did he reign, and did he do good in the

sight of the Lord? II Chronicles 33:21-23.

9. How did Amon die, and who reigned in his stead? II Chronicles 33:24-25.

LESSON III

JOSIAH'S GOOD REIGN

Scripture Reading: II Chronicles 34:1-14.

Golden Text: II Chronicles 34:3 (first part).

"For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father:..."

NOTE: In our last lesson we learned that Amon was king of Judah. He reigned two years. He was a wicked king and was finally slain by servants. Josiah is now ready to succeed Amon at the age of eight.

1. How old was Josiah when he began to reign, and how long did he reign in Jerusalem? II Chronicles 34:1.
2. Did he walk uprightly before the Lord? II Chronicles 34:2.
3. What good thing did he do at the age of 12? II Chronicles 34:3-4.
4. In what other cities did he do away with idolatry? II Chronicles 34:6-7.
5. Whom did he send to repair the house of the Lord during the eighteenth year of his reign? II Chronicles 34:8.
6. What did these men give to Hilkiah, the high priest in II Chronicles 34:9-11?
7. Did the men work faithfully? Who were the overseers? II Chronicles 34:12-13.

LESSON IV

HILKIAH FINDS A BOOK OF THE LAW

Scripture Reading: II Chronicles 34:14-33.

Golden Text: II Chronicles 34:30 (last part).

"...and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord."

NOTE: Josiah began to reign in Judah when he was eight years old. At the age of twelve he began to make reforms. He destroyed idolatry and has just begun to repair the temple of the Lord. Let us study further about his reign now.

1. What did Hilkiah, the priest, find in II Chronicles 34:14?
2. To whom did Hilkiah give the book? Then to whom was the book delivered? II Chronicles 34:15-16.
3. Shaphan read the book before the king in verse 18. What did the king do when he read the words of the law? II Chronicles 34:19.
4. What did the king command his servants to do? II Chronicles 34:20-21.
5. To whom did Hilkiah and those who had been appointed by the king go? II Chronicles 34:22.
6. What did the Lord say He would bring upon this place? II Chronicles 34:23-25.
7. What were they to tell the king of Judah? II Chronicles 34:26-29.

FIGURE - IT - OUT PUZZLE

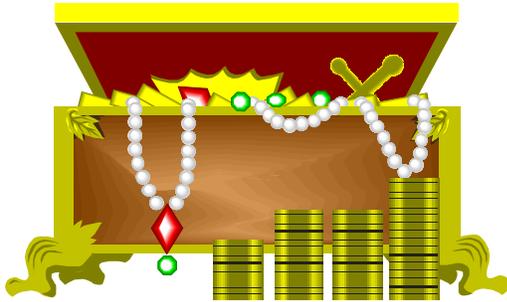
How old was Joseph when his brothers sold him?

Start with the number of years Moses led the Hebrews in the wilderness (Numbers 14:33).

Subtract the number of chapters in the book of Jude. Divide by the number of crosses on the hill where Jesus died.

Add the number of chapters in the book of Ruth. Now, how old was Joseph when his brothers put him in the pit?

(Answer found also in Genesis 37:2).



HIDDEN TREASURE

The game had started on Monday. Now it was Friday and Joyce still had not found the hidden treasure.

Sitting on the front step of the little house where her grandmother lived, Joyce went over in her mind again all the happenings of that first evening. "Perhaps," she said to herself, "there is some clue that I have overlooked."

First of all she had been sitting at the dining room table doing her home work. Granny was sitting in the low rocker mending socks. Joyce brushed her curls back from her eyes and sighed deeply. That was when Granny had spoken to her.

"Now what is it, child you are a-sighing for? Are you overtired from your play?"

"No, Granny," Joyce answered, "I am not really tired. I just do not like arithmetic very well, and there are so many problems to do yet. Annabelle gave me her new book to read, and I am afraid it will be too late to read any of it when I finish this."

"I have been meaning to ask you, lassie--ye have not been neglecting your Bible reading, have you? I know with your school work and all, it is easy to pass it up."

"I guess I have not been very faithful about it," Joyce said thoughtfully, nibbling on the eraser of her pencil. "I do mean to read it every night. But sometimes I forget, and sometimes I have something else to read."

"No other book should ever take the place of your own dear Bible. It is the food for your soul. But I will not bother you more about it now. You have your problems to do."

Joyce applied her pencil once more to her arithmetic, and Granny's needle went faster than ever, in and out, in and out of the hole in the sock.

The hands on the face of the clock were pointing to nine when the problems were finally done. Putting her

paper and book away, Joyce went to hug her grandmother and kiss her goodnight. For two years now she had lived with Granny, and Joyce loved her dearly. The old woman looked up now with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Would you like to play a game with your old Granny, child?"

"I would love to, Granny. What kind of a game?" There was a matching sparkle in Joyce's eyes. Granny's games were always fun.

"You are so fond of mysteries - how about a treasure hunt?"

"You mean it, Granny? A real treasure hunt?"

Joyce threw her arms around her grandmother and hugged her so tightly she made her gasp for breath.

"The treasure, my little one, is hidden in this old house. Sure and ye will have to be mighty spry to find it. Ye shall have the first clue at the breakfast table in the morning. Now off to bed with you, child. You need your rest."

Joyce kissed her grandmother, hugged her again for a special good-night, then hurried up the stairs to her room. All the while she was getting ready for bed, she kept thinking of the treasure. Could there really be pirate gold, she wondered hidden in this old house? But Granny had said that this was just a game. So, no doubt, the treasure was something different from gold. She wished with all her heart that morning would come.

Just as Joyce fell asleep, she remembered what Granny had said about reading the Bible. "But she would not want me to get out of bed and read it," she said sleepily to herself. "I will do it the first thing in the morning." In another minute she was sound asleep dreaming of pirates's gold hidden under the basement floor and of a dangerous looking man who stood by her when she lifted out the rusty chest.

Tuesday morning dawned cold and rainy. Joyce pulled the covers tightly around her chin and thought how nice it would be to sleep another hour. She could hear Granny moving around in the kitchen below. Then she remembered. Granny had promised her the first clue at the breakfast table.

Like a flash Joyce was out of bed and hurrying into her clothes. She cleaned her teeth, brushed her hair and washed her face. She firmly flew down the steps to the kitchen.

"Sure as it is bright and early ye are, a coming to breakfast," said Granny with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Granny, the treasure! You did not forget about the treasure hunt?"

Instead of answering her, her grandmother looked at the table. By Joyce's plate was a small roll of paper. Giggling with excitement, Joyce grabbed up the paper and unrolled it. It was a real treasure map all right, with a picture of a skull and crossed bones in one corner. The lines of the map were faint. Over them, in the center of the map was a small heart drawn with ink. Under the heart these words were written in small letters:

"Start the search in -
Something treasured,
Something old,
Richer far than silver or gold."

Joyce said the words over and over to herself as she ate her breakfast. Suddenly an idea came to her.

Jumping up from the table she stood on a kitchen chair and lifted a small bud vase from a shelf overhead. Many times she had heard Granny speak of the vase as being one of her treasures.

But there was nothing in the vase. Granny's eyes smiled at her over the rim of her coffee cup, but she did not say anything.

Running here and there through the house after breakfast she pulled out drawers, climbed up to look on high shelves and even got down on her hands and knees and looked under the beds. But she found no trace of a treasure. All too soon it was school time. Unwillingly, Joyce put on her wraps and gathered her books in her arms.

"Perhaps," said Granny, as she said good-bye to Joyce at the door, "You had better forget about the treasure for a while, lest it keep you from your studies."

"Do not worry, Granny. I will find the treasure yet," Joyce called back, as she waved and hurried down the street.

After school in the evening she began the search again, but no treasure came to light. Tuesday morning she found this verse by her plate at breakfast:

"No need for pick and shovel here
Just a knowing heart and a listening ear,
A love for One who loves us still
In spite of either good or ill."

"Just thought I had better warn ye, child," laughed Granny as Joyce read the words, "lest ye start digging up the cement floor in the basement." Joyce laughed, but the words of the little rhyme puzzled her more than ever. Tuesday she spent most of her time just thinking there did not seem to be another place to search in.

Wednesday brought another clue:

"Thy Word have I hid in my heart-"

"Granny's reminding me about the Bible reading," Joyce thought silently, as she read the words. "Even a treasure hunt should not keep me from doing it." She promised herself, "Tonight for sure I will find time to read it."

Thursday's verse said only: "It is treasure you would have,

Look where treasure can be had."

"But I have looked," said Joyce to her grandmother. I have looked just everywhere and I just cannot find it."

"Everywhere, child, but where the treasure is," said Granny with a smile as she prepared to wash the breakfast dishes. Thursday evening brought no better results.

Now it was Friday. The clue that morning had been a single red rose in a small white vase at her bed. Joyce read the note quickly, and her heart pounded with joy as she read that the lovely string of pearls that belonged to her own mother were to be hers. Granny kept the strong box in the desk.

Suddenly it was all clear to Joyce. Granny wanted very much for her to read her Bible and really enjoy reading it. The Word of God was the treasure Granny was speaking of. The lesson went deeply into Joyce's heart.

Kneeling by the side of her bed she asked God's forgiveness for not reading His Word. She prayed that she might never again let anything keep her from her daily Bible reading. Then a very happy girl skipped down the steps to tell Granny that she found the treasure at last.

"The pearls are valuable, child, and very lovely" said Granny as she fastened them around Joyce's neck. "But their real value will be that they will always remind you of how precious the Word is in your own life." Then Granny gathered her favorite grandchild close in her arms.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" Matthew 6:19-21.



FORWARD WITH CHRIST

Forward with Christ comes the challenge today,
Forward with Christ, forward with Christ!
He marks the path and will lead all the way,
Forward, then forward with Christ.

God ever lives and His truth marches on,
Forward with Christ, forward with Christ!
Darkness may threaten but His is the dawn.
Let us go forward with Christ.

Taking His message of love as we go,
Forward with Christ, forward with Christ!
Into a world wrapped in sorrow and woe,
We must go forward with Christ.

Forward with Christ, forward with Christ!
Trust Him to lead though the path may be dim;
Following on, into the dawn -
Forward, then follow on with Him.

Carlton Buck