

COUNSEL

**WILL IT BE
HEAVEN IN 2007?**

HEZEKIAH (PART 2)

FACETS OF FAITH

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

THREE CONVERSIONS

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE?

THE TRUE MEASURE OF MAN— PSALM 8

LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES—SARDIS

MEN AND WOMEN AROUND THE LORD (PART 4)

January — February 2007

Theologians differ on what John saw according to Revelation 21 and 22. Some view John's vision as the Millennium period, while others understand that he is telling us of the eternal state. This writer has concluded that what John saw and recorded in these closing chapters of the Bible is the eternal state. Without going into the various reasons for and against such an interpretation, the following is beyond question.

John saw something.

The word for "saw" is one used to describe seeing something for what it is, with full understanding. John really saw the things he described. This is the same John who wrote with great care words like, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14) and "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24). Or "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)" (1 Jn 1:1-2).

The eternal state for the church.

Even if John is describing the conditions on earth during the Millennium, he is at least also describing what will be the eternal state for the church. The dual metaphor of the beautiful bride and glorious city will be our state and home forever.

It is going to be a "holy" city. We know no city like that on earth now. But this one will have the characteristic of purity—"as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). A great voice out of heaven said of this city, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). This will be the perfect unbroken fellowship God's people have longed for on their pilgrim journey through this world. It will be the fulfillment of His desire as well and the bride is now found practically to be "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). In this holy city "there shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22:3).

Sorrow too shall be forever gone.

Here is John's witness, "And God shall wipe away all tears [Newberry, every tear] from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). There will be the complete removal of sorrows of the past. God will "wipe away all tears" so that their sorrow will be forever taken away. Many have borne deep sorrows in this life. Their load has been heavy. Their days of laughter have been few. But one day God will take all that away and compensate every child of God for their days of sorrow. Not only will He eliminate the effect of the sorrows of the past, He will also extinguish the possibility of sorrow in the future. We do not have the capacity now to handle

such unclouded days, but then we will. Sorrow will be no more.

An eternity of ministry.

Heaven will not be an idle place. We will enjoy serving Him unhindered by sin (Rev. 22:3). The bride-city will have "the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Rev. 21:11). The word light means 'a radiating light' and clear as crystal means literally "crystalizing". That is, we will be actively radiating and shining out the glory of our God. What a staggering thought! Our service for eternity will be declaring the glory of God! Likely such service will be linked to our faithfulness here and now. What a motivation to serve Him with all diligence in that which He commits to us.

Will it be this year?

We all could be there this year. We do not know. Some went to be with the Lord last year. We cannot fathom the joy that is their's now. We may miss them, but the Lord's words of comfort to us is to keep busy "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Such business will be good for us while we wait for the grand reunion.

For the rest of us, this could be the year we will meet our loved ones and the Lord. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

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CONTENTS

Will it be Heaven in 2007?....2
Editorial

Letters to the 7 Churches
—Sardis.....4
Roy Hill

What Are the
Signs of An Apostle.....7
Donald Norbie

Facets of Faith..... 8
Malcom C. Davis

Hezekiah (Part 2)10
Richard Catchpole

Men and Women
Around the Lord (Part 4).....12
Dr. Boushra Mikhael

True Measure of a Man.....15
Keith R. Keyser

When Things Go Wrong.....17
Author Unknown

Three Conversions.....18
Doug Kazen

Letters to the Seven Churches — Sardis



Temple of Artemis

Revelation 3:1-6

“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

The city of Sardis was located about 30 miles south-east of Thyatira and around 40 miles from Ephesus. It had a commanding position on a mountain at the head of the valley of the River Pactolus. Apart from the valley it was surrounded by mountains and was ideal as a fortress site. It became the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. It was commercially important and earned its money from wool and the ability to dye the wool which process was apparently a Sardisian discovery. There were two temples to goddesses in the city. One was in honor of Cybele and the other erected

er regained its past glories its people espoused luxury and decadence. As far as the assembly was concerned there were no “Balaams”, nor “Jezebels”, nor “Nicolaitians” in their midst. In fact scarcely anything happened and the assembly, like the city, was living on its past reputation. They had a name to live but were dead.

Introduction, v. 1a

The introduction to this letter is very short and simply reminds us of the character of the Lord Jesus as the One who had “the seven spirits of God and the seven stars”. The “seven spirits” are not seven separate indi-

Scarcely anything happened and the assembly, like the city, was living on its past reputation. They had a name to live but were dead.

to glorify the name of Artemis. Both goddesses were identified with wild animals and with sexual impurity of an extremely violent nature.

The area was devastated by an earthquake in 17AD but the city was rebuilt by Tiberias and while it nev-

vidual spirits but, as in other parts of Scripture, one Holy Spirit in all His fullness and manifold resources. The seven stars are the angels of the churches and this phrase has been explained earlier in this series of articles.

Commendations

Unusually in these letters, there is no fulsome commendation of anyone or anything in the assembly or even associated with it. The Lord simply found little to commend in their ministry and service. This is a solemn challenge to individuals and assemblies today.

Verse 4 does, however, have a guarded commendation. In spite of the general declension in the assembly at Sardis there were still a few who had *“not defiled their garments”*. Their personal devotion was undiminished and their love for truth unabated—they had not defiled their garments; their character was unstained. It is the Lord’s good pleasure that they walk with Him in white, symbolic of purity. In His assessment they are worthy ones.

Are we giving
our service our
very best shot or
is second best
good enough
for our personal
satisfaction?

Condemnations, vv. 1b – 2

Obviously, there were ongoing works in the assembly and the Lord fully knew them. “I know what is happening” is the thought. What the Lord recognized was that like the city, so the assembly was maintaining an existence by relying on its past reputation. The popular word was that the church was alive and active. Perhaps there was a full list of meetings of different sorts but in reality the fire had

gone out. It was form over substance. They had *“a form of godliness but were denying the power thereof”* (2 Tim. 3:5). Their vital witness was dead and they were giving Satan and the world so little trouble that they were left entirely to themselves. They were not worth attacking!

Similarly, in verse 2, there is further condemnation. The Lord declares that not even one of their works was perfect (up to standard)

The assembly was standing on the brink of a final blow to its testimony and faithfulness, but the Lord encourages the faithful and exhorts the failing not to allow this to happen.

before God. We need to be reminded, perhaps, that all our ministries are subject to ongoing scrutiny which compares them against the divine standard. Are we giving our service our very best shot or is second best good enough for our personal satisfaction? It is not good enough for the Lord.

Instructions, vv. 2-4

The city of Sardis had twice fallen to invaders because of slackness

on the watch. Here, the assembly is encouraged to be watchful lest it too be taken over. They had become careless in watchfulness presenting to an alert enemy the possibility of successful attack. They are told that the things that remain must not be allowed to die. The assembly was standing on the brink of a final blow to its testimony and faithfulness, but the Lord encourages the faithful and exhorts the failing not to allow this to happen. These things

need to be strengthened. The practice of truth needs to be buttressed against all who would attack or seek to diminish it. The position of the assembly was critical but even in these circumstances some good may be found, whether persons or practices, and these should not be allowed to perish in the general malaise, but strengthened for God and the good of the testimony.

Many saints today may find themselves in fellowships where some





Synagogue

of the characteristics of a New Testament church witness have been abandoned. Their exercise should be to work hard to retain and maintain that which is left and promote it to the glory of God. Otherwise, what remains may die.

the inferior to move into the good of the liberty truth brings. Some now dismiss these truths in a cavalier fashion and hold them lightly, if at all. The second instruction is to hold fast. Keep the remaining truths at all cost; hang in there! Finally, they are

The truth had come at a price and had been paid for dearly by the brethren and sisters of an earlier day. With great courage and no agenda for self they had left the inferior to move into the good of the liberty truth brings.

There are now three further instructions: remember; hold fast; repent. They are to remember what they heard and especially the circumstances in which they heard it. Faithful men had taught them, perhaps even with tears and a real burden for the good of the testimony, the truths of church practice and the doctrines of the faith. This teaching had been received, as was the case for instance in Thessalonica, 'in much affliction'. The truth had come at a price and had been paid for dearly by the brethren and sisters of an earlier day. With great courage and no agenda for self they had left

to repent. An appreciation of truth always brings repentance. Allied with this is a warning that if they do not do so they will be surprised at the rapidity of divine judgment.

Conclusions, v. 5

To the overcomers (those who are the Lord's and have taken a stand for Him) there are given three promises. First, they will be clothed in white raiment; secondly, their names will not be blotted out; and thirdly, their names will be confessed by the Lord before His Father. In verse 4 these same people walked with Him in

white, which I understand to refer to their purity of character and faithfulness down here. The promise in verse 5 relates to their reward up there. In glory they will be lavishly arrayed in white raiment much as was the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration—garments indeed of beauty and glory, and a fitting recognition of their work.

The Book of Life is referred to many times in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament. It would appear that at the time the earth was founded God wrote up in advance a book containing the names of all human beings who would live on earth from then to the dissolution of the world. Believers are assured that their names will never be blotted out of this book. Unbelievers, however, on their deaths have their

names blotted out. It is salutary to remember that some 150,000 names are blotted out each and every day!

The final promise is lovely. It is that each overcomer will be individually introduced by name to the Father by the Son. What a glorious prospect and such an encouragement to strengthen the things that remain. With God's help we shall be up to the challenge!

Roy Hill
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What are the SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE

Paul's authority as an apostle came under attack by some who disliked his teaching. In his defense he pointed to his labours and suffering for the gospel's sake. In conclusion he pointed to the miracles God had worked through him. *"Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance in signs and wonders and mighty deeds"* (2 Cor. 12:12 NKJ). These three terms describe the character of the miracles. They were a sign from God, caused wonder and were a display of power. Apparently the ability to perform such works was limited to the apostles and thus they could be identified.

Early in His ministry Jesus chose twelve men to travel with Him and to be part of His inner circle. *"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness, and all kinds of disease"* (Matt. 10:1). Later, when He sent forth the seventy, they came back rejoicing that the demons were subject to them (Luke 10:17), but they did not have the authority of the twelve. Others who worked with the twelve seemed also to have some of their authority at times, such as Stephen (Acts 6:8).

These miracles were signs of God's approval and of the validity of the messenger. Peter on the day of Pentecost in his preaching said, *"Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know"* (Acts 2:22).

The message and the messenger were validated by God through these miracles. Such approval does not have to be repeated. *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"* (Heb. 2:3-4). Today we have the record of their witness.

These men were willing to die, rather than to deny the truth of their message.

To require miracles today is to question the veracity of the record of their witness. These men were willing to die, rather than to deny the truth of their message. John could write, *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness..."* (1 Jn. 1:1-2). This witness has been borne by the apostles and confirmed by the miracles which they did by the power of God. And so, historically, with the passing of the apostles, miracles such as they did ceased.

This is not to deny that miracles do happen at times in answer to prayer. James exhorts Christians to pray for the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).

Recently a Christian woman we know, was diagnosed with a large

tumor and surgery was to take place. Prayer was made for her and when another examination was made prior to surgery, the tumor was gone. The doctors were amazed! This is not the same as one having the gift of healing, who claims to be able to heal all kinds of illness. When Paul prayed three times for a physical ailment to be removed, the Lord refused. He was told God's grace was sufficient for him (2 Cor. 12:9). We do not order God to do things; we must always pray in His will.

The Bible warns that the devil is a master of deception and can counterfeit miracles to deceive people. Jesus predicted, *"For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect"* (Matt. 24:24). Paul wrote later, *"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders"* (2 Thess. 2:9). John writes of this coming evil one, *"And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast..."* (Rev. 13:14). The Scripture warns believers to beware of those who will claim to do signs and wonders in the last days. Cling to the Word of God; the message has been authenticated and can be trusted (Isa. 8:20).

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Facets of Faith

Faith sees the invisible, just as hope does, and is simply waiting for all the “*exceeding great and precious promises*” of God to be realized in time and history.

The Meaning of Faith

In his helpful book *Bible Answers to Questions about Christian Faith & Life*, Derek Prime defines faith as follows:

“Faith is both a decisive act and a sustained attitude. It begins as an act, by which we abandon reliance on ourselves to merit salvation, have a firm conviction as to the truth of God’s promises of mercy in Jesus Christ, and depend sincerely upon them. After this, faith becomes a habit of our life.”

This article is perhaps more concerned with faith as a sustained attitude and habit of our lives than as a decisive act, but the two aspects are really inseparable. The decisive act leads directly to the sustained attitude and habit, and true faith involves many other spiritual attitudes

and qualities of Christian character taught and exemplified in Scripture. It is the main aim of this article to explain these qualities of Christian character in relation to faith, so that it may become clear both how fundamental faith is to Christian life and character as a whole, and also how inseparable those true qualities of character are from true Christian faith. But, first, here are seven ways of defining Christian faith viewed primarily as a decisive act by means of which we receive God’s salvation:

1. Belief in the truth of God revealed to us in the Person of Jesus Christ His incarnate Son.
2. Acceptance of the gospel of God concerning Christ preached to us.
3. Obedience to the Word of God revealed to us by the Spirit of God.
4. Commitment to do the will of God revealed in the Word of God.
5. Trust in the person of Christ Himself as our only all-sufficient Saviour.
6. Reliance on the work of Christ alone as the basis of our salvation.
7. Confession and practical acknowledgement of the lordship of the risen Christ over our lives from that moment onwards.

The Manifestations of Faith

1 **Obedience in a Christian is faith submitting to the revealed will and Word of God.** “*The obedience of faith*” is spoken of in Romans 16:26. Paul and Peter both speak of those who “*obey not the gospel*” (2 Thess. 1:8, 1 Pet. 4:17). Also, the Greek word for ‘unbelief’, (*apeitheia*) is often translated ‘disobedi-

ence’. Unbelief in the truth of God revealed in the gospel is culpable, evidence of a stubborn refusal to be persuaded in the face of clear testimony to Christ. Abraham is perhaps the supreme example in Scripture of a man whose faith led him to obey the word and call of God despite the apparent impossibility of that word being fulfilled. But his faith and obedience were fully vindicated and rewarded with promises of blessing through his miraculously-conceived and later divinely-preserved son, Isaac. Where there is no obedience, there is no true faith.

2 **Peace is faith resting in the person and work of Christ at Calvary as a pardoned and justified sinner saved by God’s grace alone on the basis of Christ’s shed blood.** The redeemed believer rests where God has rested, in the finished work of Christ, His beloved Son. Peace with God, thus obtained, leads to the experimental knowledge of the peace of God garrisoning our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus from all fear and worry in this life, and ultimately to the present experience of the presence of the God of peace with us continually (see Philip- pians 4:6-9). Where there is no peace of heart, there is no true faith.

3 **Joy is faith singing in worship as a redeemed sinner about our beloved Saviour and heavenly Bridegroom and all the blessings of salvation in Him.** God’s joy is His expressed delight in His Son and in His redeemed

people. Christ's joy, fulfilled in His resurrection, was to do His Father's will and to bring many sons to share His glory as a result of His suffering on the cross. Joy in us is our spontaneous expression of a deep inner delight in God born of an implicit trust in Him, that He cannot and will not ultimately fail us in spite of our present difficulties and sufferings in this life and consequent delight in our fellow saints. Joy is independent of our circumstances, whereas happiness is not. Joy is rooted in God and often thrives in circumstances of persecution and other afflictions. It is evidence of spiritual triumph and victory in Christ. Rejoicing in the Lord is also the secret of practical unity in local assembly life and of strong Christian character. Where there is no spontaneous Christian joy, there is no true faith.

4 Love is faith behaving like Christ in this evil world, showing God's own love and compassion to the unlovely around us, just as He did to us in our sin and need. Faith working through love is the only thing that counts for anything before God in a Christian's life (Gal. 5:6). Our love is derived from God's Holy Spirit indwelling us since conversion (Rom. 5:5), and is His fruit in our lives and characters (Gal. 5:22). In fact, our whole ability to love like God is derived directly from God; 1 John 4:19 states that, "We love, because He first loved us" (RV). Our love is in response to His great love proved to us at Calvary, and should be likewise sacrificial. Where there is no selfless Christian love and compassion, there is no true faith.

5 Grace is faith giving sacrificially for others around us in

need as faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God encapsulated in His supreme gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Saviour. Our grace of giving is in loving and grateful response to God's own grace towards us, and should be in direct proportion to it. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15) should be the spirit in which we give. Where there is no generous giving, there is no true faith.

6 Hope is faith waiting for the ultimate fulfilment of all the promises of God in Christ at the resurrection and rapture of the church. The close relationship between faith and hope is seen in the fact that the Greek words for "hope", *elpis* and *elpizo*, are sometimes translated in the KJV translation as "faith" and "trust(ed)". Faith sees the invisible, just as hope does, and is simply waiting for all the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God to be realized in time and eternity. Where there is no evidence of hope in Christ, there is no true faith.

7 Patience is faith enduring manfully and steadfastly all the sufferings and trials of the Christian life as strangers and pilgrims on the way through this wilderness world to our Promised Land in heavenly glory. For James 1:3 says that, "the trying of your faith worketh patience", so we should count it all joy when we fall into manifold trials. Sterling Christian character can only be formed effectively by this means under God's sovereign hand. Impatience, bitterness, and anger are signs of immaturity and stubborn refusal to acknowledge God in the trials of life. But what sweet graces of character result from simple acceptance of

Joy in us is our spontaneous expression of a deep inner delight in God born of an implicit trust in Him, that He cannot and will not ultimately fail us.

them and cooperation with God in learning the lessons He means to teach us through submission to His will in allowing them. Where there is no patience in suffering, there is probably no true faith.

The Motivation of Faith

Faith, like hope, is a quality that exists in time and this life, unlike love, which is God's essential and eternal nature. But faith lives and behaves in the sure and certain hope of the glory of God at the second coming of Christ for His own. Then simple faith in Christ will give place to sight of the Lord in His immediate presence in His Father's House. And surely, "Oh, how will recompense His smile, The suffering of this little while!"

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Hezekiah Part 2

2 Chronicles 29:20-36

In 2 Chronicles 29:1-19 we have an account of the initial steps that Hezekiah took in his desire to bring the nation back to God. That section ends with a sanctified priesthood (v. 15) and a sanctified temple (vv. 18-19), but as commendable as that was, much more needed to be done, and in the latter part of the chapter Hezekiah again takes the initiative in seeking to promote the service of God.

The commitment he displayed

The priests being sanctified, the house cleansed, the vessels prepared, Hezekiah turned his attention to the service of the house of God, *“Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD”* (v. 20). Hezekiah was the king, and he

The commands he issued

It was Hezekiah who took the initiative and in verse 20 he gathered the rulers of the city and went to *“the house of the Lord.”* Notice where they went and the lesson that in days of true revival there will inevitably be a return to the house of God, the place where God has been pleased to set His name.

Next, attention was turned to the offerings and we read that Hezekiah *“commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the Lord”* (v. 21).

The offerings were presented to the Lord: *“And they brought seven bullocks and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering”* (v. 21). In verse 22, the animals were slain for a burnt offering and their blood sprinkled upon the altar, though they were not actu-

ally offered until verse 27. Before the burnt offering, seven goats were killed and offered for a sin offering (vv. 23-24).

consecration to the will of God. The truth of Hebrews 9:14 shows the One who *“offered Himself without spot to God.”* The sin offering focuses attention on what He did. *“While we were yet sinners Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8), the one who took our place in bearing the just penalty belonging to us as sinners.

While that is but a brief summary of these important offerings, the primary lesson we desire to observe is the fact that as we think of their typical lessons, they suggest that in days of revival there will be a return to the cross and to the work of Christ. Revival will always bring the people back to that.

It is instructive to notice who the offerings were presented for. While in verse 21 we read *“for the kingdom,” “for the sanctuary,”* and *“for Judah”* thereby embracing princes, priests and the common people, others are included in verse 24: *“the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.”* Although division had come in between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and although no representatives of the northern kingdom of Israel were present, Hezekiah nevertheless viewed them all as one before God, and the sacrifices on the altar was the one common ground of their acceptance with God.

Doesn't it suggest that the cross, when it is rightly understood, will preserve believers from the differences and divisions that have wrought such havoc within Christendom?

We know there were divisions at Corinth and it is not without significance that in the opening chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul brings them

Days of revival will have this two-fold effect, manifesting those with a willing heart and exposing those who are negligent in regard to divine service.

led by way of example. That should surely recall to our minds the words of 1 Peter 5:1-3 where the apostle in addressing elders exhorts them how to act as *“being examples to the flock.”* The example that Hezekiah set was two-fold, first in what he did, and secondly in the way he did it. The verse says *“he rose early,”* giving a note of diligence and urgency to the way in which he acted.

The burnt offerings and the sin offerings, in their typical significance present to us two aspects of the death of Christ. Though only touching on the surface of their teaching we might suggest that the burnt offering speaks of Christ's sinless perfection—what He is, and His total

back to the cross (1:17-18).

But there is something more, before the burnt offering was offered on the altar, Hezekiah *“set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by His prophets”* (vv. 25-26). They were going back to the pattern divinely appointed for the temple service, *“the commandment of the Lord by His prophets”* (v. 25).

Here is yet another feature that will mark days of revival: a return to the Scriptures and the divinely appointed pattern of gathering for the people.

Now they come to the actual offering of the burnt sacrifice and verse 27 says, *“when the burnt offering began the song of the Lord began.”* In verse 28 the whole congregation worshipped and we are told, *“all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.”* But even when the offering was ended, the worship continued (vv. 29-30). We could hardly read these verses without being reminded of the words of Hebrews 13:15 *“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”* But the primary lesson we want to lift from these verses is yet another feature that will mark days of revival, a return to the Lord.

The consequences he witnessed

In verse 31 we read, *“Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD.”* The expression *“and Hezekiah answered”* is perhaps a little unexpected, after all he has not been asked anything in the preceding verse. There we read

of the Levites worshipping, and the idea in verse 31 is simply that this was Hezekiah’s response, his answer to the worship of the Levites, to encourage them to continue in their ministry of bringing sacrifices into the house of the Lord.

Following the encouragement given to the Levites, we see in the closing verses something of the consequences and outcome when revival occurs. There are willing

The primary lesson we desire to observe is the fact that as we think of their typical lessons, they suggest that in days of revival there will be a return to the cross and to the work of Christ.

hearts among the people: *“And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings”* (v. 31). There is a wealth of sacrifices; as to the burnt offerings (v. 32), seventy bullocks, one hundred rams, two hundred lambs; then as to sacrifices that were not burnt offerings (v. 33), six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep. Do not miss the fact that every offering was divinely counted. There was a wide variety of sacrifices: thank offerings (v. 31); burnt offerings (v. 31-35); peace offerings and drink offerings (v. 35). These all have spiritual significance: thank offerings convey thoughts of appreciation and gratitude; burnt offerings speak of devotion and commitment; peace offerings are typical of rest and fellowship; and drink offerings express rejoicing and gladness. These are delightful conditions amongst the people of God.

But while those days of revival touched many hearts and manifested

their zeal to serve God, they also exposed deficiency on the part of others, *“But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests”* (v. 34). There were too few priests, maybe some resided in the country and had not heard of the

movement at Jerusalem; others had perhaps returned to Jerusalem but not yet had time to consecrate themselves. But the language does seem to suggest that many had been negligent, lacking exercise in the service of God, and that is inferred in 30:15. Days of revival will have this two-fold effect—manifesting those with a willing heart and exposing those who are negligent in regard to divine service. Where would we stand if such days came? Could we honestly say it is something we would welcome?

The chapter concludes with a reminder of the abundance of the offerings that were brought, and it is instructive that not until then do we read, *“So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order.”* The language infers that these conditions should not have been the exception but in divine purpose was intended to be the regular experience of the people of God.

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Men and Women Around the LORD PART 4

PUBLIC MINISTRY

We have been studying the character and behaviour of men and women who surrounded the Lord Jesus at His birth and who welcomed Him at His presentation at the temple. We have seen how they were devoted to the true God, Jehovah and how they were in anticipation of the arrival of Messiah who was to bring about redemption of Israel, the consolation of Jerusalem and the ushering in of the kingdom of God on earth.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

We now move forward thirty years in time, where the Savior begins His public ministry. Here we are introduced to the Lord's forerunner.

John was a man of great personal strength, exceptional spiritual power but with a true servant's heart. He was born a priest and could have joined the ranks of the priesthood in Jerusalem. There he could have enjoyed an easy and secure lifestyle. Yet we see him growing and becoming strong in spirit: *"and was in the desert till the day of his showing to Israel"* (Luke 1:80). Thus he preferred

a much rougher type of life in the wilderness, having camel hair for his apparel and a rather unusual diet. (Matt. 3:4). Are we willing to endure such hardships for the sake of Christ or are we too attached to our affluent lifestyle?

John knew that his mission was to introduce Christ to the nation. Thus he testifies to the Jews sent

nation that this is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin—not only of Israel but of the whole world. Here John displays knowledge of his own mission as well as that of the Saviour of the world. As a pious Jew at the time, John must have been thrilled to see a fulfillment of the prophecy of Abraham, the founder of the nation, when he spoke to his son Isaac

Are we willing to endure such hardships for the sake of Christ or are we too attached to our affluent lifestyle?

to him by the priests and the Levite in Jerusalem that he himself was not the Christ. When pressed to tell them who he was, he quotes Isaiah's prophecy about himself: *"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord"* (John 1:23). Thus he takes his proper place as the servant declaring that Christ was preferred before him and that he is not worthy to loose Christ's shoe's latchet (John 1:27).

Then came that momentous day when John, seeing Jesus coming unto him, declares in the ears of the

at Mount Moriah, *"God will provide Himself a lamb"* (Gen. 22:8).

Furthermore when John sees the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending from heaven and abiding on Jesus, he bore witness that He is the Son of God. Thus confirming the deity of Messiah, a concept that eluded the religious leadership of the nation at the time and still does (John 1:34).

In keeping with his servant spirit, John confesses Christ as the Bridegroom who has the right to the bride, while he himself was content to be

the friend of the Bridegroom. Thus John would rejoice to see Christ increase even though he himself will decrease (John 3:28-30). What a lesson to all servants of Christ to learn, that our Master must always take the place of preeminence, while the servant must fade away more and more into insignificance.

THE DISCIPLES

The disciples were followers of Christ chosen by the Lord Himself to be with Him. The purpose of choosing them was to equip them for the enormous task they had ahead of them after He would depart this world. The Lord selected men who would hear His words, behold His works and witness the manifestations of His glory. They were to go out and bear witness of Him to a world that would reject and crucify Him. To be able to do so meant that His light would penetrate into their inner being and that they would receive the impress of His image upon them. Therefore they could go and declare in divinely inspired yet human language what they had witnessed of: *"eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto [them]"* (1 Jn. 1:2).

We first notice a remarkable variation in their personalities, backgrounds and mental and spiritual abilities. This was necessary for it is obvious that no one single person—no matter how spiritual or godly—could have taken in the full image, or apprehended the infinite reaches of the person of the Lord. The truth revealed in the Saviour needed several chosen witnesses for the adequate forthtelling of His holy character and His majestic glory. Hence we have four Gospels, twelve disciples and numerous followers.

But we are amazed at His choices.

He chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. He did not choose His disciples out of the circles of the educated and the highly refined people of Jerusalem. With one exception, all the disciples were Galileans, from a region despised by the haughty Judeans. They were drawn from the ranks of practical life, most being fishermen, which added to their native robustness. These group of simple men had no dreamers or visionaries among them. They has never been subjected to the confusing influence of schools of thought or academic circles, yet they were sober-minded, honest people and in quietness they worked eating their own bread (2 Thess. 3:12).

Not being versed in the artificialities of the culture, they were often described as *"unlearned and ignorant"* (Acts 4:13). This, however, was only according to the standards of the rabbinical schools and had nothing to do with their spiritual understanding.

Ironically, this was not a loss but

They were to go out and bear witness of Him to a world that would reject and crucify Him. To be able to do so meant that His light would penetrate into their inner being and that they would receive the impress of His image upon them.

a gain to them. They may have been unsophisticated, yet they had healthier minds which were unpoluted by theories that pervert the truth and having been removed from the influence of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, they had simpler, purer spiritual eyesight and a firmer single-mindedness.

Take for an example Andrew and (likely) John, who had been two disciples of John the Baptist. Those young men were searching for the Messiah, but they joined themselves to the Baptist because they might have perceived in him a prophet sent by God after 400 years of silence. They heard his testimony that he was not the Christ and when he pointed out to them the *"Lamb of God"*, they left John and followed Jesus. After spending a day with the Master at His abode (we have no details of what they saw or heard there), they conclude that they *"have found Messiah"* as Andrew testified to his own brother Peter (John 1:41). His very words, *"we have found Messiah,"* indicate that they had been searching for Him. Finding Him at last was the reward for their keen anticipation and longing.

Philip of Bethsaida, having been called by the Lord Himself, uses very similar language *"we have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write"* (John 1:45).

Does this not betray an anticipation of His coming as well as knowledge of the Scriptures by this *"simple and unlearned"* fisherman?

What a testimony we now hear from the mouth of an Israeli in whom is no guile. The once skeptic Nathaniel says, *"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Is-*

rael" (John 1:49). It is so remarkable that these words spoken by those men were uttered after such a short encounter with the Lord. Did their hearts burn in them as they listened to His words? Did they perceive in Him the One whose glory was that of the only begotten of the Father? And what joy and rejoicing must have filled their hearts as they realized that their long-awaited hope was now standing in their midst in the person of the Son of God?

Three years of faithful earthly ministry are now passed. The cross is ahead of Him with all its horrors. He is taken to Calvary to be numbered

work is finished, He commits His spirit into the Father's hand and dies, according to the Scriptures.

What should happen to that holy body that was never tainted by sin? Would it be allowed to suffer a disgraceful burial in a communal grave with the sinners? God forbid. How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?

NICODEMUS AND JOSEPH

We get to meet two righteous men, ordained by God for this solemn task of burying the Savior's body. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, first came to the Lord Jesus by night. He learned first hand from the Savior

the holy body. As to his character, the evangelist describes him in various terms. He is called "a rich man" (Matt. 27:57; Isa. 53:9), "Jesus' disciple" (Matt. 27:57), "an honourable counselor," (Mark 15:43) and "a good and righteous man" (Luke 23:50).

Joseph did not consent to the counsel and deed of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23:51) but most interestingly, like the entire pious remnant, "he waited for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43). Here we see him bravely beseeching Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. He offers his own sepulcher that was hewn in a stone, in which was never a man yet laid, to bury the Lord's body.

It is obvious that those two men were born into the world to perform this task. Risking their position in the Sanhedrin and their worldly possessions—even their lives—they stepped out to honour Him whom the sinful nation had rejected. They then disappear from the pages of the Scriptures, perhaps to be lost in the ranks of the new church. Were they there in the upper room to see the risen Redeemer? We can only assume so. With what joy they must have greeted the very same One whom they had laid down in the tomb, now living in the power of an endless life!

What courage, what commitment and what an example for us to learn from. Are we willing to stand by Him and for His cause in this day of His rejection by the world?

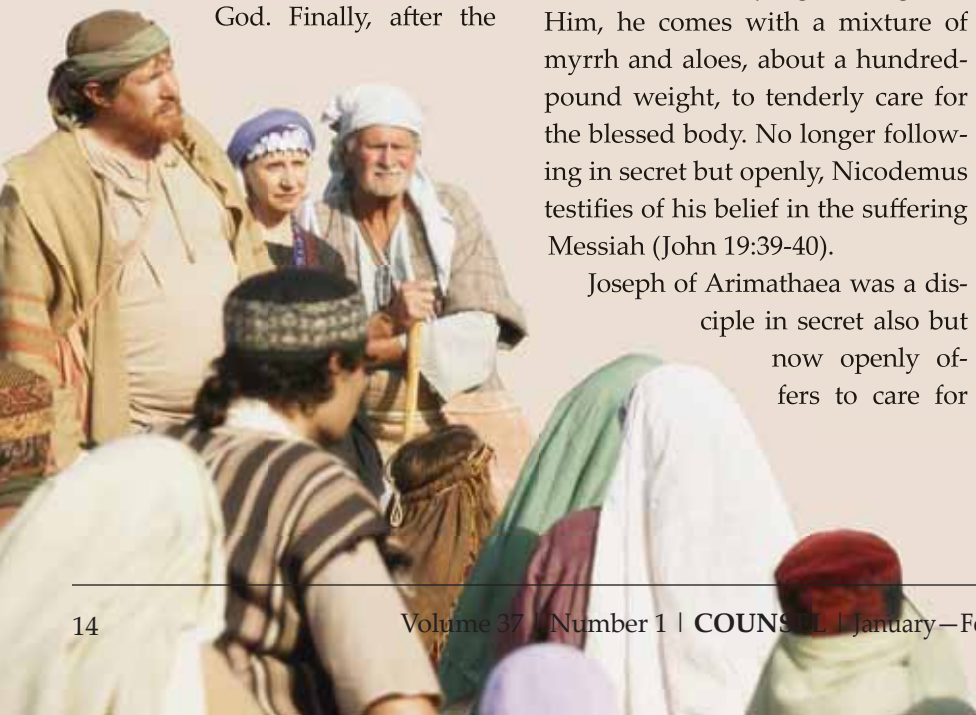
Oh my Savior crucified,
Near thy cross would I abide,
Gazing with adoring eye
On Thy dying agony.
R. C. Chapman

It is obvious that those two men were born into the world to perform this task. Risking their position in the Sanhedrin and their worldly possessions—even their lives—they stepped out to honour Him

among the transgressors, to be crucified in the midst of two thieves. Three hours pass by of ridicule and taunting by wicked men that surrounded the cross. Then came the three hours of darkness. In silence, the Sin-bearer suffers at the hand of His God. Finally, after the

about His own mission; how He was the Son whom God gave because of His love for the world (John 3:16). Later on, Nicodemus stands in defense of the Lord against the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-51). Now in defiance of their judgment against Him, he comes with a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred-pound weight, to tenderly care for the blessed body. No longer following in secret but openly, Nicodemus testifies of his belief in the suffering Messiah (John 19:39-40).

Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple in secret also but now openly offers to care for



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The True Measure of Man: Psalm 8

Human beings have a tendency to go to extremes; there is no better evidence of this than in their estimation of themselves. Some people think that man is the measure of all things. Other thinkers downplay the importance of humans, esteeming the species as just another class of animal, on the same level as a whale or a chimpanzee. Shakespeare summed up these extremes, famously putting these words into Hamlet's mouth: "What a piece of

tion which begins and ends this psalm, enclosing it as a jewel in a setting, determines its theme as being neither the nightly heaven with all its stars, nor the dignity of man, but the name of the Lord as proclaimed by both."² Another adds: "It is like a jewel enclosed by, and encased in, two golden clasps. The Psalm concludes in the same spirit of worship with which it began."³ In the first and last verses the excellency of the name of the Lord is brought out.

mans. What is more, in vanquishing His enemies He employs the "foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and...the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:26). The praises of the most diminutive bring Him glory in the face of the opposition of this fallen world. As one Old Testament scholar comments:

"The sound of the children is concrete evidence of God's fortress on earth. The continuity of the human race is God's way of assuring the ultimate glorification of an earth populated with a new humanity (Hab. 2:14). The sound of opposition is silenced by the babbling and chatter of children. What a contrast! What a King!"⁵

If man is to rightly understand his place in the cosmos, he must first consider the character of his Creator.

work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?"¹ In contrast to man's see-sawing self-analysis, God rightly balances man's true significance in the eighth Psalm.

Unlike the humanistic viewpoint of modern times, the Psalm commences by focusing on God. If man is to rightly understand his place in the cosmos, he must first consider the character of his Creator. This lovely hymn begins and ends with the same phrase, causing one commentator to remark: "The exclamation

He is Yahweh (or Jehovah), the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God (Ex. 3:14). Furthermore, He is Adonai, the Sovereign Master of the Universe. His name, which speaks of His authority, is said to be "excellent" or according to many authorities, "majestic."⁴ It is great and worthy of praise. What is more, His glory is "set above the heavens" (v. 1). This opening sentence tells man that God is superior to anything in His creation.

The Bulwark of Children's Praise

The next sentence affirms the Creator's incomparable power and wisdom through His usage of the "mouth of babes and sucklings." The same God who made the heavens and earth cares for the smallest hu-

When the temple authorities questioned the actions of the children who were lauding the Lord Jesus, He defended them by quoting this verse. The chief priests and scribes were supposed experts on praise, but they completely missed their opportunity to adore and celebrate the Lord of glory. In simplicity, the children uttered their straightforward appreciation of Christ, thereby engaging in "...perfected praise" (Matt. 21:16). Adults can become so sophisticated that they miss the obvious value of the Lord Jesus, while the babes perceive His worth.

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God

When David meditated upon the heavens, he marveled that the Creator

would take interest in such a small entity as man. Considering that there are a few thousand stars visible to the naked eye, it is not surprising that he was awed by the celestial spectacle.⁶ With the aid of modern telescopes, scientists now say that there are an estimated two hundred billion stars in our galaxy alone.⁷ Theories regarding the number of stars in the

the psalm speaks of these things in the past tense, the current state of man's rule over the earth bears little resemblance to the idyllic scene envisioned by the sweet singer of Israel. Hebrews 2:8 draws attention to the apparent discrepancy in these words: "...in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not

from the painful effects of sin—in other words, it will cease to groan. What is more, man will have his proper place: humble before God in human smallness, yet glorified with God through Christ. Human significance will be revealed in that the Son of God became a man, died for humankind, and rose again to glorify them. He did not relinquish His humanity after the crucifixion. Instead, the Lord Jesus entered into heaven as a perfect, glorified man. He is the forerunner of many glorified men and women who will one day reign with Him from heaven (Rom. 8:29-30; Heb. 2:10; 6:20).

Adults can become so sophisticated that they miss the obvious value of the Lord Jesus, while the babes perceive His worth.

universe offer figures that are incomprehensible to human minds. Whether with the naked eye or through the aid of technology, a consideration of the immensity of the cosmos logically leaves men feeling very small. The same evidence points to a very large Creator (to put it mildly). Thus, man is seen to be small when compared with the God who made the vast cosmos.

Paradise Lost and Regained

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" David asks. Since God is so great, one might assume that He would have nothing to do with such a small creature as man. Speaking of the Hebrew word (*enosh*) that is used in this verse to refer to man, the Hebrew scholar Franz Delitzsch commented: "it describes man from the side of his impotence, frailty, and mortality..."⁸ Nonetheless, the Almighty visits him in blessing. He "crowned him with glory and honour... and madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." Although

yet all things put under Him." How does one explain this dichotomy? Because it describes the contrast between what God desired Adam to accomplish and the man's failure to do this because of the Fall. Adam failed to develop the world into a God-honouring paradise. Even worse, he brought the planet into the bondage of sin, making misery and groaning the normal condition of the globe.

In contrast to the disastrous disobedience of the first Adam, the Lord Jesus—whom Scripture dubs the "Last Adam"—brings about a program of glorification for the earth (1 Cor. 15:45). Whereas, the first head of the human race unleashed the destruction of sin, Christ releases the imprisoned creation from its slavery through redemption. By dying the Lord Jesus ruined "him who had the power of death" (Heb. 2:14). Additionally, He set the stage for the ultimate prosperity of the planet. The Lord Jesus will reign over the earth until all is brought under the direct rule of the Father. During this Millennium reign, the globe will be freed

Psalm 8 gives us the balanced view of humanity. In and of themselves, men are nothing great—how much smaller do they appear when compared to their Almighty Creator! Nevertheless, they have incalculable worth because they are created in the image of God with the purpose of ruling over the earth. They are not important because of their accomplishments. In fact, their works only created the disaster that has defiled this planet. Nor are they valuable because of their wisdom and technological advancement. Human ingenuity has only made it more efficient to slaughter people through greater firepower, nuclear bombs, and bio-chemical weapons. Neither does their significance stem from their artistic and cultural development. Modern art, music, and literature are saturated with moral filth, human perversion, and rebellion against the Lord. All of the things that men trumpet as being indicative of human greatness, actually turn out to be powerful evidence of human wickedness.

The value of humans to God is seen in that He gave His Son to suffer and die in order to ransom them.

Through the redeeming and glorifying ministry of Christ their potential will one day be realized in the very scene of their fall. All of God's intentions for His creation will be fulfilled. He will be victorious, and humans will be blessed.

End Notes

1 From Hamlet (II, ii, 115-117), see <http://www.enotes.com/shakespeare-quotes/what-piece-work-man>

2 Alexander Maclaren, *The Expositor's Bible: Psalms*, Electronic ed., Rio, WI: Ages Software

3 J.M. Flanigan, *What the Bible Teaches: Psalms*, Kilmarnock, Scotland: John Ritchie Publ., 2001, 36.

4 See ASV, NAS, ESV, RSV, NIV; NET has "magnificent" in the text and "awesome or majestic" in the margin.

5 Willem VanGemeren, *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*, Electronic ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan

6 The estimates of scientists vary; see <http://curious.astro.cornell.edu/question.php?number=258>; <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v19/i2/stars.asp>; http://www.phys-astro.sonoma.edu/courses/a231/how_many_stars.html

7 http://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/ask_astro/answers/980317b.html; for estimates of the number of stars in the universe see http://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/ask_astro/answers/970115.html & <http://www.cnn.com/2003/TECH/space/07/22/stars.survey/>

8 Keil & Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms*, electronic edition, available at www.e-sword.net

Keith R. Keyser
Reading, P. A.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Do not spend your time in fretting;
Spend it, rather, in forgetting
Little things that wound you so.
Do not let the whole world know
That you'd rather sit a-grieving
When you might be out relieving
Pain and care. Rise up, be true!
Just find something good to do.

When your days are full of sighing,
Don't give up, but keep on trying
Some good cause to help along,
You will soon forget the wrong
That the dismal days are bringing,
If you time your work to singing.
When your skies are dark in hue,
Just find something good to do.

When your life seems full of trouble,
Pain and care will always double,
If you talk about your woes;
Also will your skies disclose
Brighter tints upon the morrow,
When the lessons taught by sorrow
Help instead of hinder you.
Just find something good to do.

Spend no time in dull repining;
Everywhere the sun is shining.
And the future ways are bright;
If we truly see aright.
Life is what we make it, truly,
And 'twill seldom go unruly
If the right course we pursue—
Just find something good to do.

— Author Unknown

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil.3:13-14)

Three Conversions



The Lord uses a variety of ways to awaken the soul. The important issue is that the awakened soul must find Christ.

The stories of three individual conversions to Christ are given in Acts chapters 8, 9 and 10. Studying and comparing these is very instructive. In chapter 8 we learn of an Ethiopian government official brought to Christ. In chapter 9 a notably zealous and renowned Israeli, Saul of Tarsus, is arrested by the Lord, and saved. In chapter 10, a Roman army officer is converted to Christianity. The stories of conversion are very different. We are reminded that the manner of

Noah had three sons; Shem, Ham, and Japheth. After the flood these three sons became the fathers of three great segments of the human race. Ham's descendants came to be associated with African peoples. Shem was the father of Israel. Japheth is associated with the remaining Gentile peoples. The Ethiopian is evidently a descendant of Ham. Saul of Tarsus, being a Jew, came

to each and every segment of the human race. God leaves no people outside of His grace; so that heaven will be peopled with a throng that comes from every kindred and tongue and people and nation.

God leaves no people outside of His grace; so that heaven will be peopled with a throng that comes from every kindred and tongue and people and nation.

conversion is not the most important aspect of salvation. The Lord uses a variety of ways to awaken the soul. The important issue is that the awakened soul must find Christ.

from Shem. Cornelius, the Roman officer, was evidently of Japheth. These conversions, therefore, remind us that the gospel message reaches out, with equal urgency, and with equal blessing

The three converts were all very sincere, and religious individuals while still in the darkness of sin. The Ethiopian had come to Jerusalem to worship, and was reading Scripture (which he admittedly did not understand) when Philip joined his chariot. Saul of Tarsus was so dedicated in his zeal for the religion of the Jews that he was willing to participate in the murderous martyrdom of Christians. Cornelius, meanwhile, was in the habit of being very charitable and praying to the God of heaven always. But, although sincere and deeply religious, each of these men needed salvation of their souls. Without Christ, they were hopelessly dead. So it is today: mere religion is not salvation. One may

be religious to the point of extreme dedication, and still be lost.

If we recognize that Ananias, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, was used of God relevant to Saul's conversion, we can then say that each of these men were reached, and delivered from sin, in part through the efforts of a spirit-guided and godly saint. Philip got a call from God to go and meet the chariot of the Ethiopian. Ananias was prompted by the Holy Spirit to converse with a man who had a frightening reputation as an anti-Christian. Peter was prompted, again by the Holy Spirit, to set aside his legalistic prejudices and carry the gospel to the household of one whom Peter by nature would think a heathen, whom he could not associate with. Each of these servants of the Lord—Philip, Ananias, and Peter—responded to the promptings of the Lord, and were used to reach a soul. The same remains applicable today. The Spirit of God uses the ready and available Christian to carry the gospel to souls who are ready to respond to the glorious message. Often, inconvenience, or fear, or prejudice, must be overcome on the part of the messenger if the message is to be delivered to the person waiting to hear it.

The results of these three conversions were clear and glad-some in each case.

The Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing. Saul of Tarsus had his eyes opened, and his ears unstopped, to hear and to understand the reality that Jesus lives. Cornelius, and those with him who accepted the gospel

Savior who has become Lord of the life of the convert.

It seems that Christians today are getting away from telling, joyously, how they were saved. Saul of

Conversion ... is much more than merely a human professing to open their heart to the Savior.

message, were baptized, both by the Holy Ghost and into Jesus Christ. Thus, evidence of new life in Christ was found in each new convert. So it still is: by the fruits the convert is known. Christ changes lives. Joy comes where uncertainty and sorrow had abided. Peace comes to the restless soul. Empty religion is replaced by the reality of a living Savior.

Conversion. It is much more than merely a human professing to open their heart to the Savior. It is much more than signing a declaration or kneeling at an altar.

It is, rather, a life-changing experience whereby eternal life is breathed into a sinful soul. Fruit in that life proves the reality of salvation. If any man be in Christ he is, indeed, a new creation. For that person, old things have passed away. All things have become new. True Christianity is much more than religion.

It is the reality of a living

Tarsus never tired of repeating the story of what happened to him on the road to Damascus. Nor should we. Unfortunately, we hear too few today telling the story of how they were rescued from sin and brought to Christ. A revival of personal testimony would be a powerful tool in gospel presentation. There is an old song that says in part: "I was there

One may be religious to the point of extreme dedication, and still be lost.

when it happened, and I ought to know." Indeed, we should know and we should be happy and eager to tell how we came from death to life! The Spirit of God had great purpose in setting before us these three very different stories of conversion but, as we look at these stories, and compare them, we see remarkable principles, and similarities. Three very different men each found Christ, and lived to prove it.

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A Glimpse of Glory

I have caught a glimpse of glory
Never seen by mortal eyes,
Just beyond the blue horizon
Of evening's transient skies;
But the ear of hope has heard it
And the eye of faith can see
Sound and sign of heaven's nearness
Just beyond mortality.

I have caught a glimpse of glory,
Of that bright eternal day,
When the mists of Time have lifted
And we lay aside this clay;
Then shall be the consummation
Of our longing and desire,
For we'll sing the Song of Ages
In the resurrection choir!

I have caught a glimpse of glory
Just beyond the brink of Time,
And I travel toward the sunrise
Of a better land and clime.
Soon I'll trade this earth for heaven
And inside some golden door
I shall greet the ones I've cherished
Safe with Jesus evermore.

—Author Unknown