INDEX

A

B

Baptism According to Corinthians 11-12-78
Baptism (What the Bible Says About) 6-26-77
Biblical Benedictions
Bible Firsts 9-14-75

The Bible and Missions

Bible Trees

Bound to Give Thanks

C

The Calls of Christ 1-6-80

D

The Death Penalty (Revised) 10-88

Bible Doors 7-15-79

Discoveries of Peter

E

F

G

Giants 11-1-81

God Speaks at Calvary

Growth of a Soul

H

I

Ignorance is No Excuse

The Inability of Omnipotence

J

K

L

M

Moses, Servant of God		10-9-77

N

Nets	(Revised)	9-82

O

The Offices of Christ:	King	12-21-80
The Offices of Christ:	Prophet	12-7-80
The Offices of Christ:	Priesthood	12-24-80

P

People on the Run 5-31-81

Q

R

Raising the Dead

S

Seven Last Words

Steps in the Spirits Ministry

T

Tears (Revised) 9-87

Things That Work

The Four Twelves of the Bible 9-30-79

U

V

W

We Ought to Love

What We Have in Christ

ROBERT K. SPRADLING NOVEMBER 12, 1978 P.M.

"BAPTISM ACCORDING TO CORINTHIANS"

OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS, WE HAVE LOOKED AT MANY PASSAGES IN THE N.T. DEALING WITH THE SUBJECT OF BAPTISM. THE PRIMARY TEXTS ARE MATTHEW 28, ROM. 6 AND VARIOUS PASSAGES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS. AT OUR LAST SERVICE WE CONSIDERED SOME OF THE DIFFICULT VERSES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE SCRIPTURAL MODE OF BAPTISM. WHILE SEARCHING FOR A FRESH APPROACH TO THIS VITAL BIBLE DOCTRINE, I WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE RELATIVELY FEW REFERENCES IN THE EPISTLES TO BAPTISM. ROMANS 6:3-4, EPH. 5:4,5 COL. 2:12 AND I PETER 3:21 ALONG WITH GAL. 3:27 SUM UP THAT SUBJECT IN ITS ENTIRETY. THE CORINTHIAN LETTER HAS SEVERAL INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE REFERENCES TO THE SUBJECT AND THIS WILL BE THE BASIS OF OUR CONSIDERATION TONIGHT.

I. I CORINTHIANS 1:13-17

PAUL IS NOT MINIMIZING BAPTISM IN THIS PASSAGE, HE IS SIMPLY PUTTING MATTERS IN THEIR PROPER OR BIBLICAL ORDER. NOWHERE IN THE WORD OF GOD IS BAPTISM MENTIONED AS THE PRIMARY MISSION OF THE BELIEVER. OUR BASIC RESPONSIBILITY AS BELIEVERS AND IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, THAT IS, TO EVANGELIZE AND NOT TO BAPTIZE. BAPTISM IS A SECONDARY MATTER AND NOT THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THE GOSPEL. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES THROUGH THE TEACHING AND PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. BAPTISM COMES AFTER A PERSON KNOWS JESUS CHRIST IN A PERSONAL WAY. THEOLOGICAL ERROR ALWAYS TAKES SOME JUSTIFIABLE DOCTRINE AND PUTS IT IN A WRONG BIBLICAL ORDER. THESE WORDS WERE MENTIONED BY PAUL IN THE CONTEXT OF A CHURCH DIVIDED OVER PERSONALITIES AND SPLIT OVER DOCTRINAL PROBLEMS. IN THIS PASSAGE PAUL EMPHASIZES THE FACT THAT THE HUMAN AGENT OR PASTOR WHO BAPTIZES A CONVERT TO CHRIST IS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE WHEN COMPARED TO THE ONE IN WHOSE NAME THE BELIEVER IS BAPTIZED. PAUL WAS NOT SEEKING TO DRAW PEOPLE TO HIMSELF BUT RATHER TO CHRIST. CHURCH ORDINANCES ARE IMPORTANT BUT THEY ARE NOT A PRIMARY THRUST OF THE CHURCH. THE RECURRING THEME OF THIS PASSAGE IS THE PRIORITY OF PREACHING. PAUL WAS NOT BELITTLING BAPTISM, AS A

MATTER OF FACT, THERE WERE NO UNBAPTIZED BELIEVERS IN THE N.T. BUT PEOPLE WERE NOT FORGIVEN OF THEIR SINS ON THE BASIS OF FOLLOWING A CHURCH ORDINANCE! THE MESSAGE OF BAPTISM DID NOT CLEANSE BUT RATHER THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS. IN ONE RESPECT PAUL WAS VERY MUCH LIKE THE LORD, THAT IS, HE BAPTIZED VERY FEW CONVERTS, BUT LIKE CHRIST, DELEGATED THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BAPTISM TO HIS ASSOCIATES. (JHN4:1FF) THERE IS SOME INDICATION IN SCRIPTURE THAT PETER FOLLOWED THE SAME PRACTICE ([redacted]) PAUL MAKES IT VERY CLEAR THAT EVEN AN IMPORTANT RITE LIKE BAPTISM MUST TAKE SECOND PLACE TO THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. THROUGHOUT THE N.T. THIS IS OUR PRIMARY RESPONSBILITY. THE MAIN BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH IS TO PROCLAIM THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE WORK ON THE CROSS. NOTICE IN SUMMARY PAUL DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT BAPTISM IS FOOLISHNESS TO THE NATURAL MAN, AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT APPEALS TO THE NATURAL MAN AND THE FLESH IN SOME GROUPS; IT IS THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL THAT IS LOOKED UPON AS FOOLISHNESS. EVERY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION ADMINISTERS BAPTISM FOR VARIOUS REASONS BUT THE EMPHASIS OF THE WORD OF GOD IS ON THE PREACHING OF CHRIST.

II. I CORINTHIANS 10:2

THE USAGE OF THE TERM "BAPTIZE" IN THIS VERSE HAS AROUSED MUCH DISCUSSION. THOSE WHO OPPOSE IMMERSION AS THE SCRIPTURAL MODE OF BAPTISM FLEE TO THIS PASSAGE AS PROOF FOR THEIR DOCTRINE. HOWEVER, THIS IS TO IGNORE THE CLEAR TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE ON THE MODE OF BAPTISM. THE EMPHASIS IN THIS V. IS ON LEADERSHIP AND IDENTIFICATION. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE LEADING A LIFE OF SLAVERY AND WERE BEING IDENTIFIED WITH THEIR NEW LEADER MOSES. THE RED SEA EXPERIENCE MARKED THE LOSS OF IDENTIFICATION OF THE OLD LIFE IN EGYPT AND OF A NEW LIFE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE PROMISED LAND. THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT BAPTISM IS TO THE NEW BELIVER. IT IS IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST AN OUTWARD SIGN OF ONE'S ALLEGIANCE TO HIM AND OF HIS LEADERSHIP IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE. THE CLOUD IN THE TEXT SPOKE OF ISRAEL'S GUIDANCE BY THE LORD AND THE SEA SPOKE OF DELIVERANCE. THE CLOUD AND THE SEA SPOKE OF GUIDANCE AND DELIVERANCE WITH REFERENCE TO THE OLD LIFE. BY ONE THEY LEFT THE OLD LIFE IN EGYPT BY THE OTHER THEY ENTERED

INTO A NEW LIFE IN CANAAN.

III. I Cor. 12:13

IN MY JUDGEMENT, THIS VERSE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WATER BAPTISM. WATER BAPTISM DOES NOT PUT A BELIEVER INTO CHRIST. (GAL. 3:26) THIS SPEAKS OF THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ABOUT WHICH WE SPOKE OF THIS MORNING AND THE BELIEVER'S UNITY AND UNION WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST.

IV. I Cor. 15:29

ONE RELIGIOUS CULT USES THIS VERSE AS A BASIS FOR BAPTIZING LIVE PEOPLE IN A SUBSTITUTIONARY WAY FOR THOSE WHP HAVE DIED WITHOUT HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY OF BEING BAPTISED. THIS IGNORES THE CONTEXT OF CH. 15. PETTINGILL SAYS "WHY GO ON BAPTIZING MORE CONVERTS TO TAKE THE PLACE OF THE DEAD IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION?" THIS IS OBVIOUSLY THE MEANING OF THE VERSE. THIS PARTICULAR CULT TEACHES ... SOME EARLY BELIEVERS GAVE THEMSELVES OVER TO BE BAPTIZED ON BEHALF OF FRIENDS WHO HAD DIED WITHOUT BEING BAPTIZED. IT SPEAKS OF VICARIOUS BAPTISM. THIS PRACTICE OF VICARIOUS BPATISM WAS CARRIED ON BY HERETICS IN THE SECOND CENTURY OF CHURCH HISTORY. THE REASON WHY PEOPLE ADVOCATE VICARIOUS BAPTISM IS THAT BAPTISMAL REGNERATIONALISTS LOOK UPON BAPTISM AS A SAVING ORDINANCE AND SUGGEST THAT SCRITPRE TEACHES THAT LIVING PEOPLE BE BAPTIZED VICARIOUSLY ON BEHALF OF DEAD PEOPLE WHO LIVED AND DIED UNBBPTIZED AND UNBELIEVING. OF COURSE, THE OBVIOUS PROBLEM IS THAT THIS KIND OF BAPTISM OF THE LIVING FOR THE DEAD LACKS SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY. SALVATION AND BAPTISM IS SOMETHING WE CHOOSE TO DO AND CANNOT BE IMPOSED UPON US OR ACCOMPLISHED FOR US BY SOME OTHER PERSON. IF ONE BELIEVES THAT VICARIOUS BAPTISM IS WHAT IS MENTIONED IN THE VERSE IT WOULD OBVSIOUSLY BE AN ERRONEOUS PRACTICE IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH AND PAUL WOULD BE ARGUING AGAINST SUCH PROXY BAPTISM. HOWEVER, THE CLEARER ENTERPRETATION OF THE VERSE SUGGESTS THAT TO BE BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD MEANT TO BE BAPTIZED IN THE PLACE OF INSTEAD OF IN BEHALF OF THE DEAD. THOSE WHO WERE BAPTIZED TOOK THE PLACE LEFT VACANT BY THOSE WHO HAD DIED. THUS, EACH TIME ONE WAS BAPTIZED IN THE CHURCH OF CORINTH, HE TOOK THE PLACE OF ONE

WHO HAD LEFT A VACANT PLACE AMONG THE BELIEVERS IN THE CHURCH. THIS IS BY FAR THE MOST ACCEPTABLE VIEW OR THE BETTER INTERPRETATION OF THIS VERSE. THIS V. GIVES GOOD BASIS FOR THE BIBLICAL REASON FOR BAPTISM. THERE ARE SOME THINGS ONE MUST DO FOR HIMSELF, HE MUST RECEIVE CHRIST FOR HIMSELF, HE MUST BE BAPTIZED FOR HIMSELF, HE MUST STAND BEFORE GOD ON THE STRENGTH OR MERIT OF HIS OWN LIFE.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JUNE 26, 1977
P.M.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT BAPTISM

(RELATE SEVERAL HUMOROUS EVENTS CONCERNING BAPTISMAL SERVICES. BUCKFIELD, AND TWO EVENTS AT NORTHVILLE, THE PULLING OF THE PLUG AND THE CURTAINS THROUGH THE FAN.) RECENTLY I WAS STARTLED BY AN ARTICLE IN THE LEADING CHRISTIAN PERIODICAL CONCERNING A GROUP OF EVANGELICALS WHO MET NEAR CHICAGO AT WHICH TIME THEY DISCUSSED SEVERAL ISSUES, ONE HERALDING THE SACRAMENTAL QUALITIES OF THE CHURCH ORDINANCES. THE ARTICLE WAS A TIMELY REMINDER OF MAN'S INCLINATION TOWARD VIEWING THE SACRAMENTS OR CHURCH ORDINANCES AS BEING SACRAMENTAL IN NATURE OR OF IMPARTING GRACE TO THE RECIPIENT. THE TECHNICAL PHRASE IS THEY LOOK UPON CHURCH ORDINANCES AS "MEANS OF GRACE." DO THEY ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT A WAFER ON THE TONGUE OF A WORSHIPPER IS EFFICACIOUS AS FAR AS DIVINE GRACE IS CONCERNED? DO THEY ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT WATER SPRINKLED ON THE HEAD OF A PERSON BY A PRIEST OR RELIGIOUS DIGNITARY DOES ANYTHING TO IMPART GRACE TO THE RECIPIENT? I BELIEVE ALL OF THIS RELIGIOUS NONSENSE IS ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO AVOID TWO BIBLE WORDS - NAMELY, SINNER AND GRACE. SATAN HATES THESE TWO WORDS. THERE ARE JUST TWO CHURCH ORDINANCES. (1) BAPTISM (2) COMMUNION. BAPTISM HAS BEEN THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL OF DOCTRINES AND HAS BEEN THE VICTIM OF MANY EXTREMES IN CHURCH HISTORY. THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THAT UNLESS ONE HAS BEEN BAPTISED, HE CANNOT BE SAVED. FOR THEM SALVATION IS IN THE CREEK AND NOT CHRIST. ANOTHER EXTREME IS BY THOSE WHO SAY WATER BAPTISM IS NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL. IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT'S BAPTISM THAT IS IMPORTANT. BOTH OF THESE IGNOR AND OMIT MANY IMPORTANT PORTIONS OF THE WORD OF GOD. THE BIBLE DOES NOT TEACH THAT BAPTISM CONVERTS THE SOUL. HOWEVER, NOWHERE DOES THE BIBLE TEACH THAT BAPTISM IS OPTIONAL FOR BELIEVERS. BELIEVERS IN THE N.T. WERE BAPTISED AS A TYPE OF OBEDIENCE NOT IN ORDER TO GET SAVED BUT BECAUSE THEY WERE SAVED. CONCERNING BAPTISM, WE ARE NOT GIVEN THE LIBERTY TO FOLLOW OUR OWN TASTES OR CONVENIENCES OR OUR OWN OPTIONS WHEN IT COMES TO THE MODE. I HAVE OBSERVED WITH CONSIDERABLE INTEREST THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE QUICK TO MAKE A DECISION OR PROFFESION OF CHRIST IN A CHURCH SERVICE BUT VERY SLOW TO OBEY THE LORD IN FOLLOWING HIM IN WATER BAPTISM. SOMETIMES THOSE SAME PEOPLE WHO PROFESS QUICKLY LOOSE INTEREST IN THE

THINGS OF THE LORD AND THEIR REFUSAL TO BE BAPTIZED WAS INDICATIVE OF SOMETHING FAR DEEPER AND WRONG IN THEIR EXPERIENCE. PEOPLE OFTEN ASK IF BAPTISM ISN'T NECESSARY FOR SALVATION, WHY IS IT NECESSARY AT ALL? BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE THE SOUL BUT IT IS NOT LEFT UP TO US WHETHER WE WILL FOLLOW THE LORD OR NOT IN THIS MATTER. IT IS AN ACT OF OBEDIENCE. IN MY EXPERIENCE, BAPTISM HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT DOCTRINE. THE SECOND MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT IN MY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE, WAS MY BAPTISM. IT WAS NOT REGENERATING IN NATURE BUT IT WAS REJUVENATING IN BLESSING. THERE ARE MANY IMPORTANT AND VITAL PASSAGES IN THE WORD OF GOD ON THE SUBJECT OF BAPTISM. BUT FOR OUR STUDY TONIGHT WE WILL LIMIT IT TO THE BOOK OF ACTS. I HAVE OFTEN SUGGESTED TO CANDIDATES FOR BAPTISM THAT THEY READ THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS AND SEE THE EMPHASIS SCRIPTURE PLACES ON THIS VITAL AND IMPORTANT DOCTRINE.

1. Acts 2:38-41

SOME FOLKS LAY SUCH HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THIS V. AS TO SUGGEST THAT WITHOUT BAPTISM ONE CANNOT BE SAVED. THEY IGNORE THE FACT THAT THE WORD REPENT STANDS FIRST IN THE SENTENCE AND SUGGESTS A RADICAL AND COMPLETE CHANGE IN HEART AND LIFE AND THAT BAPTISM COMES AFTER THIS CHANGE. THE WORD "FOR" WHICH IS THE GREEK PREPOSITION EIS AND MAY LITERALLY BE TRANSLATED "WITH RESPECT TO, OR WITH A VIEW TO." HOWEVER, IT MUST BE KEPT IN MIND THAT THEOLOGY WILL DETERMINE THE INTERPRETATION OF THIS PARTICULAR VERSE. WHAT DOES EVERY OTHER V. ON THE SUBJECT OF SALVATION SAY? WE DO NOT BUILD DOCTRINES ON ONE SINGLE V. OF SCRIPTURE. ONE OF MY TEACHERS HAD AN INTERESTING REBUTTAL TO THE BAPTISMAL REGENERATION GROUP. HE SUGGESTS THAT THERE MAY BE A FEW VERSES WHICH SEEM TO LINK BELIEVING AND BAPTISM TOGETHER WITH REFERENCE TO SALVATION. HOWEVER HE POINTED OUT THAT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN THE WORD BELIEVE IS MENTIONED DOZENS OF TIMES AS THE SOLE BASIS OF SALVATION! I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE BOOK OF ACTS IS TRANSITIONAL IN NATURE AND NOT ESPECIALLY DOCTRINAL IN NATURE.

Jn 3:16; 5:24; 6:37

2. Acts 8:38-39

I AM AWARE OF THE FACT THAT CERTAIN PORTIONS OF THIS CHAPTER HAVE QUESTIONABLE MANUSCRIPT PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, OVER TOP OF THESE WE SEE THE PICTURE OF A SAVED MAN WHO WANTED AND WHO WAS WILLING TO BE BAPTIZED THIS V. IS VERY HELPFUL IN SUGGESTING THE PROPER MODE

OF BAPTISM. IT HAS BEEN MY CONTENTION FOR MANY YEARS THAT ANY PERSON COMING TO THE BIBLE WITHOUT THEOLOGICAL PREDJUDICE OR BIAS WOULD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT IMMERSION IS THE SCRIPTURAL MODE OF BAPTISM. THE PHRASE "THEY WENT DOWN BOTH INTO THE WATER....THEY CAME UP OUT OF THE WATER...." SUGGESTS IMMERSION!

3. Acts 9:18 -

SAUL OF TARSUS INDICATED THE OBEDIENCE OF HIS RESPONSE TO CHRIST BY SUBMITTING TO WATER BAPTISM. THERE IS SOMETHING VERY SIGNIFICANT ABOUT SAUL'S SUBMITTING TO THE CHRISTIAN RITE OF BAPTISM. IT INDICATED A COMPLETE CHANGE IN HEART AND APPROACH TO RELIGION.

4. Acts 10:43-48

NOTICE THE OBVIOUS AND CLEAR TEACHING OF v. 43. IT LINKS REMISSION OR FORGIVENESS OF SINS TO BELIEVING AND THE WORD BAPTISM IS NOT MENTIONED. THE REFERENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHAPTER 10 IS THE BAPTISM OF GENTILES.

5. Acts 16:33

THE WORD "BELIEVING" IN v. 34 LITERALLY MEANS "HAVING BELIEVED." VANCE HAVNER SUGGESTS THAT TODAY MEN ARE SHAKY ABOUT WHAT THEY BELIEVE, BUT HERE IS A MAN WHO WAS SHAKEN BY WHAT HE BELIEVED. AFTER HE HAD RECEIVED THE GOSPEL MESSAGE HE FOLLOWED THE LORD IN BELIEVER'S BAPTISM AS AN EVIDENCE OF CONVERSION.

6. Acts 22:16

HERE IS ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE VERSES WHICH ON THE SURFACE SEEMS TO LINK SALVATION WITH BAPTISM. HOWEVER, THE WORD "CALLING" IS AN AORIST PARTICIPLE AND LITERALLY MEANS "HAVING CALLED." THE WASHING IN QUESTION WAS THE RESULT OF HAVING CALLED ON THE LORD AND BAPTISM CAME AFTER THE CALLING. THE N.T. ORDER IS ALWAYS BELIEVE AND BE BAPTISED.

RKS A.M.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1975

March 1985 (BCC) .90

BIBLE FIRSTS

("A FOCUS ON FIRSTS")

(1) ONE OF THE CUSTOMS OF MY GRANDPARENTS HAD TO DO WITH THE SUNDAY DINNER. WHEN MOST OF THE EIGHT CHILDREN WOULD STOP IN TO VISIT ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, IT WOULD NOT BE UNUSUAL FOR MY GRANDMOTHER TO FEED 25, OR 30, OR MORE PEOPLE ON THAT DAY. HOWEVER, ONE OF THE DISTRESSING ASPECTS WAS THAT THE CHILDREN HAD TO WAIT FOR "SECOND TABLE." THE ADULTS WOULD ALWAYS EAT AT THE FIRST TABLE BECAUSE THERE WAS NOT ROOM FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN, WHILE THE CHILDREN WOULD WAIT UNTIL THEY HAD COMPLETED THE MEAL. THIS WAS NOT ALWAYS DONE, BUT ON OCCASIONS WHEN THE CROWD WAS LARGE THIS WAS THE PROCEDURE. IT WAS SHEER AGONY FOR A GROWING BOY. NOW THE PROCESS IS REVERSED - KIDS COME FIRST! MANY (2) PROFESSING CHRISTIANS TREAT GOD IN THIS FASHION. THEY ASK THE LORD TO WAIT "SECOND TABLE" IN THEIR LIVES. THE DESIRES WITH REFERENCE TO SELF, CAREER, AND FAMILY COME FIRST AND GOD RUNS A LATE FOURTH OR EVEN FURTHER DOWN THE LADDER. THIS PHILOSOPHY IS NOT NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY. IT IS SOMETHING CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN GENUINE FAITH. IN NO PAGAN RELIGION OF THE WORLD IS "GOD" TREATED WITH SUCH DISDAIN. THE BIBLE SUGGESTS THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL FIRSTS (3) WHICH BELONG TO GOD: (1) THE FIRST HOUR OF (PRAY) EVERY DAY - (MARK 1:35) "AND IN THE MORNING, RISING UP A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY, HE WENT OUT, AND DEPARTED INTO A SOLITARY PLACE, AND THERE PRAYED." (2) THE FIRST DAY OF EVERY WEEK - (ACTS 20:7) "AND UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, WHEN THE DISCIPLES CAME TOGETHER TO BREAK BREAD, PAUL PREACHED UNTO THEM, READY TO DEPART ON THE MORROW; AND CONTINUED HIS SPEECH UNTIL MIDNIGHT." BELIEVERS SOMETIMES FORGET THAT THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK IS THE LORD'S DAY - ALL DAY LONG! IT IS NOT THE LORD'S HOUR, OR THE LORD'S SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS, IT IS THE LORD'S DAY. THIS DAY IS SET ASIDE FOR REST AND WORSHIP OF GOD. (3) THE LORD REQUIRES THE FIRST PORTION OF OUR TIME. MANY BELIEVERS ARE TOO BUSY TO SERVE THE LORD. THEY NEVER HAVE TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE, WITNESS, OR BE FAITHFUL

IN THE SERVICES OF GOD. THE QUESTION COMES TO MIND "TO BUSY DOING WHAT?" (4) THE LORD REQUIRES THE FIRST OF OUR FINANCES - (I CORINTHIANS 16:2) "UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK LET EVERYONE OF YOU LAY BY HIM IN STORE AS GOD HAS PROSPERED HIM,..." MANY CHRISTIANS LOOK UPON THIS AS AN UNDESIRABLE DUTY. WHEN IT BECOMES A BLESSING AND A PRIVILEGE, IT WILL OPEN AN ENTIRELY NEW DIMENSION IN CHRISTIAN LIVING. (5) THE LORD REQUIRES FIRST PLACE IN OUR HEARTS - (COLOSSIANS 1:18) "AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH: WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD; THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PREEMINENCE." IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, THE WORD "FIRST" APPEARS IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, SEVERAL TIMES. FROM THE REPEATED USAGE OF THIS TERM, LET US ESTABLISH FOUR BIBLE PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING.

-Seek Righteousness First: - (First - Be Righteous)

I. SALVATION SHOULD BE THE PRIMARY DECISION IN LIFE - MATTHEW 6:33

Secondary thing in the primary Position = Lack of fulfillment satisfaction in

THIS VERSE IS IN A "WORRY CONTEXT." THE LITTLE PHRASE "TAKE NO THOUGHT" APPEARS REPEATEDLY IN THE CHAPTER. IN THE CONTEXT, GOD IS SAYING THAT MEN WORRY ABOUT THE WRONG THINGS! MEN ARE CONCERNED WITH THE EXTERNALS OF LIFE WHEN THEY SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE INTERNAL AND SPIRITUAL. THIS VERSE TEACHES THAT THE FORMULA FOR HAPPINESS IS GOD FIRST. THE FORMULA FOR MISERY IS ME FIRST. JESUS SAID THE GENTILES ARE SEEKING FOR CLOTHES, FOOD, PLEASURE, AND MATERIAL THINGS AS THE PRIMARY GOALS IN LIFE. JESUS WAS TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES NOT TO BE LIKE THE PAGANS. THE CONCERN OF A MAN SHOULD BE THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. JESUS TOLD NICODEMUS THAT HE MUST BE BORN AGAIN IN ORDER TO SEE THAT KINGDOM. THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE THE PRIMARY OF CONCERN OF EVERY PERSON THIS LORD'S DAY. THE WORD RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE TEXT IS A GOOD BIBLE WORD BUT GROSSLY MISUNDERSTOOD. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, NAMELY, OURS AND GODS. WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW WHAT GOD THINKS OF ALL OF THOSE NICE PEOPLE WHO THINK THEY ARE GOING TO HEAVEN BY BEING GOOD, OBSERVING THE GOLDEN RULE, KEEPING THE 10 COMMANDMENTS, OR WORKING

Good Doctor - (1) Patients first - not fees (yet fees are impt.)
Lawyer - Client " " checks
(Something lost - unconsciously)

THEIR FINGERS TO THE BONES IN A LOCAL CHURCH OR THEIR FAVORITE CHARITY? ISAIAH TELLS US EXACTLY WHAT GOD THINKS: "BUT WE ARE ALL AN UNCLEAN THING, AND ALL OUR RIGHTEOUSNESSES ARE AS FILTHY RAGS...." (ISAIAH 64:6) (PICTURE A LEPER WITH HIS BOILS AND SORES AND THE WRAPPINGS WHICH GO AROUND SUCH AS THE PICTURE OF THE TEXT.) GOD REQUIRES RIGHTEOUSNESS TO GO TO HEAVEN BUT NOT OUR OWN RELIGIOUS RIGHTEOUSNESS BUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS SON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. SAUL OF TARSUS STOOD AT THE SUMMIT OF RELIGIOUS RIGHTEOUSNESS. IF ANY MAN COULD HAVE MADE IT BY VIRTUE OF HIS RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND AND WORKS, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SAUL OF TARSUS. HIS ANALYSIS OF HIS SPIRITUAL CONDITION IS DESCRIBED IN PHILIPPIANS 3:9. "AND BE FOUND IN HIM, NOT HAVING MINE OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH IS OF THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH THE FAITH OF CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF GOD BY FAITH." RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES NOT BY WORKS BUT BY FAITH. THE CONTRAST IN MATTHEW 6:33 IS THAT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THINGS. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW YOUR SPIRITUAL CONDITION TODAY, ASK THIS QUESTION. IS THE THRUST AND PRIMARY CONCERN OF MY LIFE TO ACQUIRE THINGS OR TO ACQUIRE RIGHTEOUSNESS! THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION IN LIFE IS TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOUR - NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT AS THIS. WE ARE TOLD TO SEEK THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. THE BIBLE ALSO TEACHES THERE ARE TWO SEEKERS - I PETER 5:8 AND LUKE 19:10. THE TEXT SAYS THAT WE SHOULD THINK OF GDD FIRST, BUT IN FACT MOST OF US THINK OF HIM LAST IN OUR LIVES. GOD GETS THE LEFTOVERS OF LIFE'S RESOURCES. AFTER WE HAVE RUINED OUR LIVES WE THROW GOD CRUMBS AND EXPECT HIM TO PUT IT ALL BACK TOGETHER AGAIN. LIFE IS FILLED WITH VITAL DECISIONS NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS OUR LIFES VOCATION, MARRIAGE PARTNER, EDUCATION, BUT OVERSHADOWING ALL OF THESE IS THE MATTER OF PERSONAL SALVATION IN CHRIST - NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS DECISION. THE BIBLE SAYS SO. Seek Reconciliation First: (First Be Reconcile)

II. RELATIONSHIPS EFFECT OUR WORSHIP OF GOD - MATTHEW 5:24

THE TERMS IN THIS VERSE SUCH AS "GIFT AND ALTAR" SUGGEST THAT IT IS A JEWISH CONTEXT. THE SCENE IS ONE IN WHICH A WORSHIPPER BROUGHT A SPECIFIC SACRIFICE INTO THE TEMPLE AREA. SEE HIM MOVE THROUGH THE VARIOUS COURTS OF THE TEMPLE - THE COURT OF THE GENTILES, WOMEN, MEN, AND BEYOND THAT WAS THE COURT OF THE PRIESTS IN WHICH NO WORSHIPPER WAS ALLOWED TO GO. AS HE STANDS READY TO OFFER HIS SACRIFICE TO THE PRIEST, HE SUDDENLY REMEMBERS A BROTHER AND A WRONG DOING WHICH HAS AFFECTED THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN LIFE. IF HIS SACRIFICE IS TO BE ACCEPTABLE, HE MUST DO SOMETHING QUICKLY. HE MUST GO NOW TO HIS OFFENDED BROTHER AND MAKE RESTORATION AND RECONCILIATION. THE PURPOSE OF THE SACRIFICE WAS THAT IF A MAN HAD DONE SOMETHING WRONG TO DISTURB HIS FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, THE SACRIFICE WAS AN ACT OF FAITH TO RESTORE THAT RELATIONSHIP. MATTHEW SAW THE FUTILITY OF TRYING TO MAINTAIN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD WHILE IGNORING OUR RELATIONSHIP TO OUR FELLOWMAN, SPECIFICALLY A CHRISTIAN BROTHER. THE TEXT SAYS "GO...FIRST" THE SACRIFICE IS OF NO SIGNIFICANCE UNTIL RELATIONSHIPS HAVE BEEN CORRECTED. GOD WAS LOOKING UPON THE HEART OF THE WORSHIPPER AND NOT THE SACRIFICE WHICH HE BROUGHT. MEN WOULD DESIRE TO EMPHASIS THE OFFERING AND NOT THE HEART, BUT GOD DID JUST THE REVERSE. THE POINT IS VERY SIMPLE IF WE ARE NOT WILLING TO FORGIVE OTHERS, WHY SHOULD GOD FORGIVE US? THIS VERY SIN WAS ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL UNDOING. (COMPARE ISAIAH 1:11, 16-18). THE TWO WORDS "AGAINST THEE" IN VERSE 23 SUGGESTS THAT A BROTHER RIGHTFULLY HAS A COMPLAINT AGAINST US. IT IS TRUE THAT SOME FOLK WILL ALWAYS BE AGAINST AN AGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN. BUT WHERE OUR CONSCIENCE REMINDS US THAT WE HAVE WRONGED A BROTHER AND AS THE HOLY SPIRIT PROMPTS IN EACH CASE FOR US TO BE THE HONEST JUDGE, THEN IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GO TO THE BROTHER AND CORRECT THE PROBLEM. MANY OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE DO NOT REALLY BELIEVE THAT OUR RELATIONSHIPS EFFECT OUR WORSHIP. MATTHEW SAYS IT HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH OUR WORSHIP OF GOD. AS WE APPLY THE PRINCIPLES SET FORTH IN THIS VERSE.

STOP Criticizing

III. CRITICISM OF OTHERS IS USUALLY HYPOCRITICAL IN NATURE - MATTHEW 7:1-5

THE WORD "JUDGE" IN THE TEXT MEANS TO CRITICIZE. THE VERSE IS SAYING THAT THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD STOP CRITICIZING OTHER PEOPLE. IT IS TRUE THAT THE BIBLE DOES SPEAK OF CERTAIN KINDS OF JUDGMENT WHICH ARE APPROVED AND REQUIRED BY THE LORD. FOR EXAMPLE, THE (1) SELF JUDGMENT OF THE BELIEVER IN I CORINTHIANS 11:31. (2) LOCAL CHURCHES ARE REQUIRED TO DISCIPLINE MEMBERS. (I CORINTHIANS 5:5-12.) (3) CIVIL JUDGMENTS BY GOVERNMENT ARE REQUIRED. (ROMANS 13) THERE IS A LEGITIMATE JUDGMENT FOR BELIEVERS. JOHN 7:24 SAYS "JUDGE NOT ACCORDING TO THE APPEARANCE, BUT JUDGE RIGHTEOUSNESS JUDGMENT." THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN ISRAEL WERE MAKING JUDGMENTS OF OTHER PEOPLE BASED ON HASTY AND PARTIAL INFORMATION. THE LORD WAS TELLING HIS DISCIPLES TO BE FAIR AND GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO MATTERS BEFORE ARRIVING AT DESCISIONS. (5) AND OF COURSE THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF A FINAL JUDGMENT IN WHICH THE LORD WILL JUDGE SAINT AND SINNER. IN THE PASSAGE IN MATTHEW, THE LORD IS TELLING HIS OWN TO STOP BEING HARSH WITH A FAULT-FINDING ATTITUDE. THE VERSE SUGGESTS THAT WE SHOULD STOP POINTING OUT THE FAULTS OF OTHERS AND IGNORING OUR OWN FAILURES. THIS SIN IS VERY EASY FOR ALL OF US AND IT IS PROBABLY THE GREAT SIN IN CHURCHES. A CRITICAL SPIRIT OF EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY CAN TURN A [redacted] PERSON INTO A MISERABLE GROUCH WHOM NOBODY CAN PLEASE! THE LORD REMINDS US THAT WE ARE SELDOM FAIR IN OUR CRITICISM OF OTHERS. IF THE PERSON IS A FRIEND WE ARE PRONE TO GO TOO EASY, IF HE IS A FOE WE ARE PRONE TO BE TOO SEVERE. WE ARE PRONE TO STARE AND POINT OUR FINGER AT THE FAULTS OF OTHERS WHILE COMPLETELY IGNORING OUR FAILURE. FOR EXAMPLE, ARE YOU CRITICAL OF SERMON, SINGING, PROGRAMS, IN YOUR CHURCH? YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE UNLESS YOU ARE WILLING TO PUT A HAND TO THE PLOW AND MAKE THE SITUATION BETTER! IF YOU GO HOME ON SUNDAY AND GRIPE ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD, THIS IS THE WORST KIND OF SIN! THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THERE ARE NOT PROBLEM SITUATIONS IN EVERY AREA IN LIFE, BUT THEY DESERVE YOUR CONSTRUCTIVE EFFORT AND NOT YOUR

DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM. (I HEARD OF A PASTOR WHO HAD AN INTERESTING METHOD OF DEALING WITH CRITICISM. WHEN A PERSON WOULD COME TO HIS STUDY WITH SOME PARTICULAR GRIPE OR COMPLAINT, HE HAD A TAPE RECORDER WHICH HE WOULD TURN ON AND SAY TO THE PERSON GRIPPING - I AM GOING TO TRANSCRIBE YOUR COMPLAINT AND HAVE YOU SIGN IT AND WE WILL DEAL WITH IT IMMEDIATELY. IN 25 YEARS OF COUNSELING HE SAID THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE SIGNER!) THERE IS HARDLY A PERSON ALIVE WHO HAS NOT BEEN THE VICTIM OF SOMEONE'S MISJUDGMENT AND CRITICAL TONGUE. YET WE WHO HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF THIS VERY THING ARE PRONE TO PRACTICE THE SAME SIN ON OTHERS. JESUS SAID, STOP IT, IT'S WRONG.

IV. THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE THE LORD BEGINS TODAY AND NOT TOMORROW - MATTHEW 8:22

YOU REMEMBER THE OLD STORY ABOUT THE "HAS BEENS" AND THE "GONNA BES" AND THE "ISERS." IN THE STORY, A DISCIPLE OF THE LORD ASKED TO BE ALLOWED TO "GO AWAY" AND BURY HIS FATHER AND THEN HE WOULD FOLLOW THE LORD. IT DOES APPEAR AS IF JESUS IS UNREASONABLE IN HIS DEMANDS OF DISCIPLESHIP. HOWEVER, THERE MUST BE SOMETHING BENEATH THE TEXT WHICH WE DO NOT SEE. AT FIRST IT SEEMS AS IF JESUS' REQUEST IS UNDULY SEVERE. HOWEVER, AS A. T. ROBERTSON POINTS OUT THAT THIS MAN IS SIMPLY OVER CAUTIOUS. THERE IS NO INDICATION IN THE TEXT THAT HIS FATHER IS DEAD. THE PROBABILITY IS THAT THE FATHER HAS NOT DIED AND THE MAN IS SAYING THAT WHEN HIS FATHER IS DEAD HE WILL BE FREE TO FOLLOW JESUS BUT NOT BEFORE. IT WAS VITAL IN THE EAST FOR A SON TO FULFILL HIS DUTIES TO HIS PARENTS BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE WAS DONE. UNDOUBTEDLY THIS MAN WAS SAYING SOME DAY WHEN MY PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE PASSED, I WILL BE FREE TO FOLLOW THE LORD. JESUS IS SAYING THAT THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO SERVE GOD. IF WE WAIT FOR A CONVENIENT TIME TO SERVE THE LORD, WE WILL WAIT TOO LONG. (COMMENT REGARDING TED SEELYE AND HIS TAKING HIS SON TO SCHOOL. HE DID NOT FEEL MIDDLE-AGED BUT WAS FACED WITH THE FACT THAT HE WAS NOW HIS FATHERS AGE IN EELATIONSHIP TO THE TIME WHEN HIS FATHER HAD TAKEN HIM TO SCHOOL.)

TIME PASSES RAPIDLY. LIFE MOVES BEFORE US AND SOON VISION AND STRENGTH IS GONE. WHAT WE DO NOW IS THE TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP. TO AVOID AND NEGLECT THIS OPPORTUNITY OF TODAY IS TO RISK NEVER HAVING ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO DO IT. IN LIFE WE ARE ALWAYS BEING CONFRONTED WITH A MOMENT OF DECISION. GOD CALLS US TO HIGHER - MORE NOBLER THINGS, AND WE MUST DECIDE IN A SINGLE MOMENT TO DO HIS BIDDING. HOW MANY TIMES HAS GOD IMPRESSED UPON US TO MOVE UP TO HIGHER GROUND, BUT THE MOMENT PASSES AND NOTHING IS DONE. OUR LORD IS NOT TRYING TO DISCOURAGE ENTHUSIASTIC DISCIPLESHIP, BUT HE IS TRYING TO SHOW HIS DISCIPLES THAT CHRISTIANITY, AND ESPECIALLY CHRISTIAN SERVICE, IS NO EASY WAY. OUR OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE THE LORD IS TODAY. HE REQUIRES US TO COUNT THE COST AND TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY NOW. (I REMEMBER ONLY VAGUELY A STORY OF A MISSIONARY WHO WAS AN ONLY CHILD, WHO HAD BEEN CALLED TO A DISTANT LAND TO SERVE THE LORD. THE STORY RELATES THE HEARTACHE HIS ELDERY PARENTS AND HIMSELF WENT THROUGH AS HE BOARDED THE SHIP. THE QUESTION OF WHAT TO DO AND WHO COMES FIRST - FAMILY OR CHRIST. THIS IS REAL SACRIFICE IN SERVICE. IT IS THE KIND OF SACRIFICE AND OBEDIENCE FEW KNOW. (RELATE STORY IN JOHN JESS PAPER.)

WWW

What you are doing now for the Lord — Lesser in NOW 5.10

Noble

Whose One First... in your life?

Relate to ABC.
Experience — challenge of Missims... 10 yr. 50% Return

THE BIBLE AND MISSIONS

In the area where I was raised, missions is something about 5 ladies engage in about once each quarter, rolling bandages, sending some used clothing to missionaries and once each year the denomination gets our check for 50 or $60 and that if "missions" in the church. One of the favorite sayings in that area is that "charity begins at home--let the poor Africans take care of their own problems."

Pleasant Valley shared somewhat of that vision. The church was falling in, couldn't get a preacher, things were in bad shape. Little by little the missions budget began to climb--burden--you could feel the pulse of the church was "missions"--it became the conversation at and after meetings--now a prosperous church--missions is up and the pastor's salary has more than doubled and yet hundreds of dollars of repairs etc. Missions is the heart and soul of a church-- without it the church is a dead shell.
In the Gospel of Matthew there are three commands to you and me about missions:

I. PRAY-- Matthew 9:38
Text: There is something sad aboutthis picture.
1. people without a true shepherd
2. Fields ready to be harvested yet labors who are too busy at something else.

A. NOtice Christ's Attitude--Ours Should Be The Same
1. He saw
2. He was moved with compassion
3. He began to talk about--praying!

B. Prayer and Missions
Ideas from "The Bible Basis of Missions" by Robert Hall Glover.
1. Prayer is not an optunal, unimportant hit or miss thing. Prayer is a service--God moves when we pray! A missionaries success on the field might depend on our faithfulness in this area. Prayer is vital. Never say "I'll pray for you--to a missionary if you don't plan to do just that!
2. Why Is Prayer So Necessary?
The nature of the obstacles on the foreign field.
a. We can't imagine the power of moral darkness--can almost be felt. (Ever go into a room and "feel" someone is there--missionaries encounter restraints--only pryaer can give victory over these!
b. **Mr. Bailey in Southern Rhodesia and the snake. Jonathan Goforth: "When I came to England I met a certain saint of God. We talked about the revival in China , and she gave me certain dates when God specially pressed her to pray.

"BOUND TO GIVE THANKS" - "Real it story"

A thankful Christian is a thinking Christian. When we are unthankful, it is indicative that we are not thinking. To be a thankful person is certainly a blessing to us and to others. We spend a great deal of time and energy with our children teaching them to say "yes mam, and yes sir, "thank you etc. And yet many of us have forgotten the importance of this in the Christian life.

Anyone would be thankful, at least in a measure, if someone gave them a large sum of money, a new car, a new home, new clothes---we are thnakful for things but may I say these are not the most important things for which to be thankful. Look at the life of Paul:

1. Redemption--Col. 1:12-13
2. Deliverance--Acts 28:15
3. Ministry--1 Tim. 1:12
4. Brethren--1 Cor. 1:4 (Remember all the trouble they had caused Paul--yet thankful for them.)

I. CHOSEN TO SALVATION

This cuts the ground from under the natural man, he wants to do everything for himself--God says He chose us to salvation! (Chuck Senniff--hardest lesson)

Like all great doctrines, there is need of balance in viewing them--like the headlights on a car. The Bible teaches the soverignty of God and also the moral responsibility of man. Some folk make these great truths the "spearhead" of their doctrine and they go to the extent that the men did in the day of Carey and Judson--"If God wants to save the heathen He will do it without you."

This great truth is a family truth and should never be taken out of its Biblical context and it is never taughts without first the offer of the gospel!

Verses on Divine Calling: (Always for holy purposes)

1. John 15:16, ~~xxxx~~ "fruitful believers"
2. Eph. 1:4-- holy
3. Eph. 1:12--glory of God

The Bible never teaches election until the gospel has been presented to all and men decide for or against it.

(1) If men are saved--no credit
(2) If men are lost, they alone are responsible--God does not predestine some to Hell and some to Heaven.

Value of Divine Selection:

1. Exalts God--Man if not the end
2. Comforts the believer--Rom. 8:28 written to believers!
3. Cuts self-sufficiency from under man
   (McClain's talking with a moral man.)

Remember it is not that men can't be saved but they won't be

II. SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT

Many strange ideas about sanctification. Our only safe position, what does the Bible say? Experience will lead you astray. (Ivan French in a meeting--never one verse.)
Simple meaning:
"to set apart, to separate." "holy, holiness, saint"
In the O.T. ref. to setting apart of things for God such as houses, fields, tabernacle, Sabbath. Also of persons such as the firstborn, priests, people. (Belonged to God)
The Bible talks about sanctification in 3 tenses:

1. Past Sanctification --"by blood"
   Heb. 13:12-13-- At Calvary this makes us God's possession forever.
   Heb. 10:10-14-- Once for all, our standing not our state.
   Acts 26:18
2. Present Sanctification--by the Word

   Refers to the present work of the Holy Spirit in which we are being set apart from sin and nearer God in practical holiness.
   1. John 17:17
   2. John 13
   3. 2 Cor. 3:18 Luke 22:60

3. Future Sanctification
   1 Thess. 5:23

The thirsty soul seeks after God. Many folk are very sincere who get mixed up in all kinds of "holiness" movements.
The only safe Bible holiness is that which the Spirit gives.
**Story in Aldrich book.

III. COMFORT AND CONSOLATION

I am glad that Paul paints a bright picture after that early picture of Anti-Christ. I am thankful for the peace and comfort I have in Christ--for this we are bound to give thanks.

THE CALLS OF CHRIST

SOME PEOPLE CLAIM TO BE IN TOUCH WITH GOD TO SUCH EXTENT THAT THEY HEAR VOICES AND DO STRANGE AND WEIRD THINGS. FOR EXAMPLE, I AM READING COLSON'S BOOK INTITLED LIFE SENTENCE. IN ONE CHAPTER HE DESCRIBES HOW HE WAS LURED INTO A TRAP BY A STUDENT POSING AS A REPORTER. HE WAS HIT IN THE FACE WITH A PIE AND THE STRANGE STUDENT SAID JESUS TOLD HIM TO DO IT. THE CALLS OF CHRIST ARE NOT MYSTIC VOICES IN THE SOUL BUT CONCRETE FACTS RECORDED IN THE WORD OF GOD.

I. THE CALL TO COME TO HIM - MATTHEW 11:28

IN ONE PARTICULAR CONCORDANCE, IN MY LIBRARY, THERE ARE 32 DIFFERENT GREEK WORDS TRANSLATED UNDER THE ENGLISH WORD COME. THIS PARTICULAR CALL IS THE CALL TO SALVATION. ALL WHO HAVE COME SHORT OF GOD'S GLORY ARE INVITED TO COME TO GOD'S SON. THE TEXT INVITES PEOPLE TO CHRIST AND NOT RELIGION. RELIGION HAS A COMPLICATED WAY OF BURDENING THE SOULS OF MEN LEAVING THEM RESTLESS, UNSATISFIED, UNFULFILLED. CHRIST IS ABLE TO UNBURDEN THE SOUL AND TO GIVE REST AND PEACE. JESUS PICTURES MEN AS STAGGERING UNDER THE HEAVY BURDEN OF THEIR SINS. THEY ARE TIRED, EXHAUSTED WITHOUT STRENGTH CARRYING THAT HEAVY LOAD. (REMEMBER THAT STORY OF CHRISTIAN AND HOW HE LEFT HIS BURDEN AT CALVARY) SIN IS A HEAVY LOAD ONE WHICH MEN DO NOT KNOW HOW TO HANDLE. REST OF SOUL COMES ONLY WHEN CHRIST DEALS WITH THE BURDEN AND GUILT OF SIN! (RELATE MY CONVERSION EXPERIENCE) THE TERM YOKE WAS A COMMON EXPRESSION IN JESUS DAY BUT THE YOKE SUGGESTED BONDAGE AND NOT FREEDOM. JESUS YOKE IS THE WAY TO FREEDOM. ONE SIMPLE FACT STANDS CLEAR IN THIS PASSAGE, IF MEN AREN'T SAVED IT IS BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT COME TO HIM! THE LAST GREAT INVITATION OF THE BIBLE BEGINS WITH THIS SAME WORD - COME. (REVELATION 22:17: AND THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME. AND LET HIM THAT HEARETH SAY, COME. AND LET HIM THAT IS ATHIRST COME. AND WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.) THOSE WHO ARE THIRSTY AND HUNGRY OF SOUL ARE ASKED TO COME TO CHRIST.

II. THE CALL TO CONFESS HIM - MATTHEW 10:32

MANY PEOPLE WOULD BE GLAD TO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS IF THEY COULD DO SO PRIVATELY, QUIETLY AND UNKNOWN TO THEIR FELLOW MAN. IN OTHER WORDS, THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO FOLLOW CHRIST IF THEY DID NOT HAVE TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES PUBLICLY WITH HIM. JESUS CHRIST SAID THOSE WHO COME TO HIM MUST RUN UP THE COLORS TO THE MAST HEAD. CONVICTIONS AND CONFESSIONS GO TOGETHER. OPINIONS ABOUT RELIGION COST ONLY THE BREATH WITH WHICH THEY ARE GIVEN, CONVICTIONS ABOUT FAITH IN CHRIST COST BLOOD AND INVOLVES MORE THAN LIP SERVICE BUT COMMITMENT OF LIFE TO HIM. THE PERSON WHO IS UNWILLING TO PUBLICLY CONFESS CHRIST IS UNFIT TO BE HIS DISCIPLE. EVERY DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS CALLED DURING THE DAYS OF HIS MINISTRY HE CALLED PUBLICLY. CONFESSION OF CHRIST IS AN INTRICAL PART OF SALVATION. (ROMANS 10:9-10) (RELATE TO JIMMY CARTER AND CHUCK COLSON. AS LONG AS KEPT IN THE BACKGROUND NOTHING SAID)

III. THE CALL TO FOLLOW HIM - MATTHEW 8:22, 9:9

ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 16:24 THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST IS A CONTINUOUS MATTER.. WHEN WE START WE ARE TO KEEP RIGHT ON FOLLOWING. NOTICE THE REPETITION OF THE WORD ME IT IS TO CHRIST WE ARE CALLED IT IT TO CHRIST WE ARE TO FOLLOW. SOMETIMES WE SET OUR GAZE UPON A RELIGIOUS LEADER AND SEEK TO FOLLOW HIM ALWAYS TO OUR SPIRITUAL DETRIMENT. WE ARE CALLED TO FOLLOW HIM WHEREEVER HE MAY LEAD. RECENTLY I ASKED MY FRIEND J. WALSH WHY DR. SORG DID NOT STAY IN BANGLEDESH BUT INSTEAD WENT TO BRAZIL. J.'S ANSWER WAS SIMPLY HE WAS FOLLOWING THE LEADING OF THE LORD. THE PATH OF CHRIST'S DIRECTION LEADS THROUGH ALL KINDS OF EXPERIENCES IN LIFE BUT IT IS THE WAY OF MEANINGFUL LIVING. NO PERSON WHO SEEKS HIS OWN CAN KNOW TRUE CONTENTMENT. IF THE STATEMENT OF THE WESMINSTER CONFESSION IS CORRECT WHEN IT SAYS, "MAN CHIEF END IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND ENJOY HIM FOREVER." THEN THERE IS NO WAY THAT MAN CAN FIND FULFILLMENT APART FROM JESUS CHRIST. JIM ELLIOTT, ONE OF THE FIVE MISSIONARIES TO

ECUADOR ~~MARTURED~~ martyred BY AUCAS INDIANS IN 1956 SAID IT WELL WHEN HE SAID: "HE IS NO FOOL WHO GIVES WHAT HE CANNOT KEEP TO GAIN WHAT HE CANNOT LOSE." IT IS TRUE THAT IT DOES NOT TAKE MUCH IN ORDER FOR A MAN TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN BUT IT TAKES HIS ALL TO LIVE THE KIND OF LIFE CHRIST REQUIRES OF HIS OWN.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING SEPTEMBER 18, 1977
A.M.

SACRED SECRETS

(THE WORD "SECRET" REMINDS ME OF A STORY OF THREE MEN WHO WERE FISHING TOGETHER. RELATE PROBLEMS OF TWO AND THIRD WHO SAID HE COULDN'T KEEP A SECRET.) THE WORD MYSTERY OCCURS 27 TIMES IN THE N.T. IN THE OLD TEST. IT IS SOMETIMES TRANSLATED SECRET. SIMPLY STATED, A BIBLE MYSTERY IS A SACRED SECRET. IN THE BIBLE THE WORD "MYSTERY" IS USED NOT CONCERNING SOMETHING THAT IS HIDDEN BUT RATHER SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN HIDDEN BUT IS NOW BEING REVEALED. IN THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS OF THE EAST, SECRET RITES OR CELEBRATIONS WERE WELL-KNOWN AMONG THE INITIATED. SECRET SERVICES, SYMBOLISMS, OPEN TO A SELECT ELITE WAS COMMON PRACTICE IN THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS. THE MYSTERIES OF THE BIBLE REFERS TO SOMETHING THAT WAS BEING REVEALED NOT SOMETHING GOD WAS TRYING TO CONCEAL. A MYSTERY WAS SOMETHING THAT HAD ONCE BEEN HIDDEN FROM THE EYES OF MEN BUT IS NOW BEING REVEALED.

I. THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS - I COR. 2:6-8

PAUL SPEAKS OF A KIND OF WISDOM FROM GOD CONCERNIN SPIRITUAL MATTERS THAT THE LEADERS OF THIS AGE DO NOT ACCEPT. THERE IS A KIND OF WISDOM WHICH COMES THROUGH THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT AND NOT THE INTELLECT ALONE. THE NEWEST, WEAKEST CHRISTIAN HAS AT HIS DISPOSAL THE ILLUMINATING INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD INTO THE THINGS OF GOD AND THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT BELIEVERS SHARE THE SECRETS OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT INTO THE WORD OF GOD. ACCORDING TO 2:14 THE NATURAL MAN OR THE UNREGENERATED MAN DOES NOT WELCOME BUT INDEED REJECTS THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. PAUL POINTS OUT THE FACT THAT THE NATURAL MAN IS SPIRITUALLY BLIND AND DOES NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD ACCOMPLISHED AT CALVARY. WHEN A BELIEVER IS INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THIS MYSTERY IS CLEARED UP IMMEDIATELY! "BUT IF OUR GOSPEL BE HID, IT IS HID TO THEM WHO ARE LOST; IN WHOM THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HATH BLINDED THE EYES OF THEM WHICH BELIEVE NOT LEST THE LIGHT OF THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD, SHOULD SHINE UNTO THEM." (II COR. 4:3-4) MORRIS REMINDS US THAT THE MYSTERY IN QUESTION IS NOT JUST SIMPLY A PUZZLE THAT THE NATURAL MAN FINDS DIFFICULT TO SOLVE, BUT IN FACT IT IS A SECRET WHICH IS HE IS WHOLLY UNABLE TO PENETRATE.

(2:8) If they had known they were carrying out the plan of God, they would never have carried out the crucifixion— So great was their hatred for God.

MEN OUTSIDE OF CHRIST ARE IN THE SPIRITUAL DARK AND ARE WOEFULLY IGNORANT OF THE FACT THAT WHAT GOD ACCOMPLISHED AT CALVARY IS THE ONLY BASIS FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS. WHAT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE TO THE HUMBLE CHRISTIAN IS TOTALLY HIDDEN FROM THE WISEST MEN OF THE WORLD. WE LEARN OF THIS SECRET OR WISDOM THROUGH REVELATION IN THE WORD OF GOD AND NOT THROUGH HUMAN COMPREHENSION. PAUL USES THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST TO DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF HIS ARGUMENT THAT MAN IS SPIRITUALLY BLIND. THE RELIGIOUS RULERS WHO CRUCIFIED CHRIST THROUGH THEIR OWN REASONING FAILED TO RECOGNIZE HIS TRUE IDENTITY. IF THEY HAD KNOWN THAT THEY WERE PERFORMING THE PLAN OF A SOVEREIGN GOD THEN THEY CERTAINLY WOULD NEVER HAVE CARRIED OUT THE CRUCIFIXION. BUT ACCORDING TO HUMAN LOGIC, THIS WAS THE WAY TO RID THE WORLD OF A PEST WHO WAS THREATENING THEIR RELIGIOUS STATUS IN THE WORLD. EVEN TODAY, MEN SEEK THEIR WAY INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND BRAINS INSTEAD OF PREACHING AND THE BLOOD. AS A MATTER OF FACT, ACCORDING TO 1:21 THE WORLD IN ITS WISDOM FAILED TO KNOW GOD. THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW HIM IS BY FAITH IN THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST AT CALVARY. THIS IS INDEED A MYSTERY AND SOME MEN CALL IT FOOLISHNESS. HOWEVER, WHEREVER MEN ACCEPT IT BY FAITH THEIR LIVES ARE GLORIOUSLY TRANSFORMED BY THE SUPERNATURAL WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

OUTLINE

II. THE MYSTERY OF ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH - ROM. 11:25

THESE CHAPTERS ARE IN THE DISPENSATIONAL PORTION OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS. THE QUESTION HAS TO DO WITH ISRAEL'S FUTURE. (CF. 11:1) THIS QUESTION HAS TO DO WITH THE NATION OF ISRAEL AS AN ELECT NATION AND NOT PERSONAL ELECTION INSIDE THE NATION. GOD IS NOT FINISHED WITH ISRAEL. IN ONE SENSE OF THE WORD, AS A NATION IT HAS BEEN SET ASIDE, AWAITING A FUTURE AGE WHEN GOD WILL FULFILL EVERY PROMISE MADE TO THE NATION. (DURING THIS DISPENSATION ISRAEL IS THE TEAM OFF THE PLAYING FIELD, THE NATION OF ISRAEL IS ON THE SIDE TRACK, WHILE THE EXPRESSTRAIN CALLED THE CHURCH MOVES ALONG THE MAIN LINE.) IN THIS CHAPTER, PAUL IS SHOWING THAT THROUGH ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF AS A NATION BLESSING CAME TO THE GENTILE NATIONS OF THE WORLD. THIS BLINDNESS OF THE NATION WILL CONTINUE UNTIL A TIME CALLED, THE "FULNESS OF THE GENTILE", WHICH HAPPENS TO BE THAT PERIOD OF TIME IN WHICH GOD IS VISITING THE GENTILE NATIONS OF THE WORLD

Condemnation-1-3 Dispensation-9,10,11
Justification-4-5 Application-12-16
Sanctification 6-8

TO CALL OUT A PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN NAME'S SAKE, NAMELY, THE CHURCH. (ACTS 15:14) WHEN THAT BODY IS COMPLETE ISRAEL WILL ONCE AGAIN BE ON THE MAIN LINE. NOTICE THAT THIS TERM HAS TO DO WITH THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH AND SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE PHRASE "TIMES OF THE GENTILES" AS MENTIONED IN LUKE 21:24 WHICH HAS TO DO WITH THE PERIOD DURING WHICH JERUSALEM IS UNDER GENTILE WORLD DOMINION. THIS PERIOD BEGAN WITH NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND WILL TERMINATE IN THE SECOND COMING. THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES BEGAN ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST AND WILL TERMINATE AT THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. THE TERM "ALL ISRAEL" REFERS TO ALL JEWS WHO ARE ALIVE AT THE END OF THE 70TH WEEK OF DANIEL. IF I WERE NOT A CHRISTIAN AND HAD EVEN A SLIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF PROPHETIC TRUTH TO SEE ISRAEL BACK IN THE LAND AS A NATION WITHOUT SPIRITUAL LIFE, AS IS MENTIONED IN EZEK. 36:7, BUT BACK IN THE LAND AND READY TO FULFILL HER AGE LONG MISSION AND FUNCTION AS A NATION, IS UTTERLY AMAZING! ACCORDING TO MATT. 13:11 "HE ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO THEM, BECAUSE IT IS GIVEN UNTO YOU TO KNOW THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BUT TO THEM IT IS NOT GIVEN." MATT. 13 SPEAKS OF A PARENTHESIS IN ISRAEL'S LONG HISTORY. DURING THAT TIME A SPIRITUAL NUCLEUS FOR THE FUTURE KINGDOM CALLED "SONS OF THE KINGDOM" ARE BEING PREPARED. AT THE SAME TIME, GOD PERMITS A PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT OF EVIL IN THE WORLD UNDER SATAN'S LEADERSHIP. AT THE END OF THE AGE, EVIL AND GOOD WILL BE SEPARATED AT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MESSIAH'S KINGDOM IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. IN ONE SENSE OF THE WORD MATT. 13 EXPLAINS WHAT HAPPENS TO THE KINGDOM WHEN THE KING HAS BEEN REJECTED. MATT. 13 SHOWS THE KINGDOM TO EXIST IN MYSTERY FORM BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND COMING OF THE KING. THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE KING'S TWO COMINGS WILL BE ONE OF SEED-SOWING AND THE PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD AND EVIL. MATT. 13 PICTURES CHRISTENDOM DURING THIS AGE. BY CHRISTENDOM I MEAN ALL WHO PROFESS FAITH IN CHRIST REGARDLESS OF THE GENUINENESS OF THEIR PROFESSION.

III. THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY - II THESS. 2:7

THE WORD "INIQUITY" MEANS LAWLESSNESS. THAT PERIOD OF TIME WAS ALREADY WORKING IN THE DAYS OF PAUL. I AM SURE THAT LAWLESSNESS HAS BEEN A PROBLEM SINCE THE BEGINNING OF CIVILIZATION WITH MEN LIKE CAIN AND LAMECH WHO HAD LITTLE REGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE. HOWEVER, TO THE AVERAGE CITIZEN ONE OF THE PROBLEMS IN OUR

SOCIETY IS THE FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO PUNISH EVIL-DOERS. THERE IS A GENERAL FEELING ON THE PART OF MANY PEOPLE THAT THE LAWBREAKERS GO UNPUNISHED AND THAT LAWS ARE ESTABLISHED TO PROTECT CRIMINAL MORESO THAN THE INNOCENT. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT THE MOOD OF OUR GOVERNMENT IN THIS VERY AREA IS LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR LAWLESSNESS AND THE LAWLESS ONE. ONE FINDS IT HARD TO EXPLAIN HOW AND WHY THERE IS SUCH A PERMISSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD CRIME THE WORLD OVER. YET PAUL REMINDS HIS READERS THAT THIS SPIRIT OR ATTITUDE OF LAWLESSNESS WOULD INCREASE UNTIL IT CULMINATES IN SATAN'S LAWLESS SYSTEM. IT IS MY CONVICTION THAT WE ARE SEEING THE BEGINNING OF THE DEVELOPMENT OR ATTITUDE OF A LAWLESS SYSTEM, WHICH WILL BE ON FULL DISPLAY UNDER THE ANTICHRIST. THE PASSAGE BEFORE US SPEAKS OF A DIVINE RESTRAINER AGAINST EVIL IN THE WORLD. THIS RESTRAINT WILL BE REMOVED AT THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. THE REMOVAL OF THE CHURCH AND THE HOLY SPIRIT'S RESTRAINING POWER WILL USHER IN AN ERA OF UNRESTRAINED SIN. THE CHURCH IS THE SPECIAL OBJECT OF SATAN'S HATRED AND GOD WILL TAKE THE CHURCH OUT OF HIS REACH DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION PERIOD. ONE GETS THE FEELING THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN KINDS OF CRIME WHICH HAVE BEEN GIVEN UP. DETROIT HAS BEEN CALLED "THE MURDER CAPITOL OF THE WORLD," WITH APPROXIMATELY 2 MURDERS EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR. MOST OF THESE GO UNSOLVED. A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF CRIMINIALS GO UNPUNISHED. THIS IS NOT TO CONDEMN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS WHO SEEM TO BE WAGING A WAR AGAINST AN UNBEATABLE FOE, BUT RATHER TO POINT OUT THE FACT THAT LAWLESSNESS IS WORLDWIDE, THE DIMENSIONS OF WHICH WILL GET LARGER AND LARGER AS WE APPROACH THE END OF THE AGE. WITHOUT FACTS TO BACK IT UP, THERE IS A GENERAL FEELING THAT ORGANIZED CRIME IS SO MASSIVE IN OUR COUNTRY THAT WE NO LONGER HAVE THE POWER TO CURB ITS ACTIVITY. EVERY DISPENSATION HAS ENDED IN MAN'S APOSTASY AND FAILURE AND OUR DISPENSATION IS NO DIFFERENT FROM THE REST. SATAN'S MAN WILL STEP FORWARD ONTO THE STAGE OF HUMAN HISTORY AS THE MOST AMAZING PERSON, APART FROM CHRIST, EVER TO SET FOOT UPON THE EARTH. HE WILL BE AN EVIL GENIUS. THE WORLD WILL STAND IN AWE AND FULL WORSHIP OF HIM ACCORDING TO REV. 13:1-8. HE WILL POSSESS THE CHARACTERISTICS WHICH MEN ADMIRE. HE WILL BE IMPRESSIVE, INTELLIGENT, CLEVER, A POLITICAL GENIUS, ORATOR AND EVERYTHING THE WORLD OF MEN HAS DESIRED IN A HUMAN BEING. YET BENEATH THIS APPEALING EXTERIOR

WILL BE THE NATURE OF A WILD BEAST WHO KNOWS NO LAW BUT THAT OF HIS OWN SELFISH, DRIVING AMBITION. HE WILL BE THE MAN OF THE WORLD, WHO DESIRES ALL HUMAN BEINGS TO WORSHIP HIM AS THEIR HERO. HE WILL RISE TO POWER, ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL OUT OF THE WESTERN BLOCK OF NATIONS IN THE MIDST OF SOCIAL CHAOS, WHICH WILL PROVIDE A PLATFORM TO HIS RISE TO POWER. HE IS SATAN'S LAST DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH HIS COUNTERFEIT KINGDOM OVER HUMANKIND. THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE WORLD TODAY CONCERNING LAWLESSNESS IS THE BREEDING GROUND FOR A LAWLESS SYSTEM WHICH WILL SERVE HIS PURPOSE. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTICE THAT THE MYSTERY OF THE LAWLESSNESS WAS IN PROGRESS AT THE TIME PAUL WROTE THE THESSALONIANS. THE STREAM HAD ALREADY STARTED WHICH WOULD TERMINATE IN AN OCEAN OF UNBOUNDED LAWLESSNESS. THE LAWLESSNESS WHICH HAS BEEN GAINING MOMENTUM THROUGH HUMAN HISTORY WILL CULMINATE IN A MASS LAWLESSNESS OVER WHICH HE PRESIDES. THESE WORDS REMIND US OF THE TIME PRIOR TO THE FLOOD. IT WAS THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD WHO RESTRAINED SIN IN THE DAYS OF NOAH. GOD PREDICTED JUDGEMENT WOULD COME. THE REMOVAL OF THE CHURCH THE CHURCH IN OUR DISPENSATION WILL SIGNAL AN ERA OF LAWLESSNESS UNPRECEDENTED IN HUMAN HISTORY. I AM HAPPY TO KNOW THAT BELIEVERS WILL NOT BE ON EARTH DURING THAT TIME. I HAVE FELT FOR A LONG TIME THAT THE ONLY REASON THAT GOD HAS NOT MOVED IN JUDGMENT UPON THE SINS OF MANKIND IS THE PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD. THIS LEADS US TO OUR FINAL MYSTERY.

IV. <u>THE MYSTERY OF THE TRANLATED SAINTS</u> - I COR. 15:51-

HAL LINDSEY HAS DESCRIBED THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH IN CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE. HE SPEAKS OF A MASS EVACUATION FROM THIS PLANET IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY BEFORE ARMAGEDDON BREAKS LOOSE. THE WORD "RAPTURE" USUALLY MEANS OR REFERS TO THE EMOTION OF JOY IN THE HUMAN SOUL. BUT THE WORD RAPTURE IN THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES MEANS "A CATCHING OR SNATCHING AWAY, A CHANGE OR TRANSLATION." (EXPLAIN THE SITUATION CONCERNING THE THESS. CHURCH AND THE DISCOURAGED AND UPSET NEW BELIEVERS WHEN DEATH OCCURRED. THEY WERE TAUGHT OF THE BLESSING OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING AND WHAT IS IN STORE FOR BELIEVERS THEN. THE MYSTERY

PAUL TAUGHT THIS YOUNG CHURCH HAD TO DO WITH THE FACT THERE WOULD BE A GENERATION OF BELIEVERS WHO WOULD NOT DIE BUT WOULD INDEED BE TRANSLATED TO GLORY WHEN CHRIST RETURNS. THERE WILL BE AN ENTIRE GENERATION JUST LIKE ENOCH, WHO WAS NOT BURIED, DID NOT SEE DEATH, BUT RATHER WAS TRANSFERRED ALIVE FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN BEFORE JUDGEMENT OF THE FLOOD. (GEN. 5:24) THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT IN THE MINDS OF PROPHETIC SCHOLARS THAT THE FINAL STAGE OF HUMAN EVENTS PRIOR TO THE COMING OF CHRIST EITHER IS ALREADY SET OR IS BEING SET. LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF JOHN WALVOORD IN HIS LITTLE BOOK ENTITLED ARMAGEDDON:

"THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY OCCUPIES THE ATTENTION OF WORLD LEADERS. THE WORLD HAS NOW RECOGNIZED THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER IN THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO CONTROL THE TREMENDOUS OIL RESERVES OF THIS AREA. OLD FRIENDSHIPS AND ALLIANCES WILL BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS EUROPEAN NATIONS SEEK NEW ALLIANCES AND AGREEMENTS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES IN A CHANGING WORLD SITUATION. THE MIDDLE EAST WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE FOCAL POINT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS."

"RUSSIA IS POISED TO THE NORTH OF THE HOLY LAND FOR ENTRY IN THE END TIME CONFLICT. EGYPT HAS NOT ABANDONED HER DESIRE TO ATTACK ISRAEL FROM THE SOUTH. CHINA IN THE EAST IS NOW A MILITARY POWER GREAT ENOUGH TO FIELD AN ARMY AS LARGE AS 200 MILLION DESCRIBED IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION. OUR PRESENT WORLD IS WELLPREPARED FOR THE PROPHETIC DRAMA THAT WILL LEAD TO ARMAGEDDON. INTELLIGENT PEOPLE LIVING TODAY NEED TO EXPERIENCE A HAPPY, AND MEANINGFUL LIFE AS WELL AS PREPARE TO MEET GOD IN THE FUTURE." THIS PASSAGE IN I THESS. 4:13-18 ARE THE TWO PRIMARY PASSAGES WHICH DEA WITH THIS FINAL MYSTERY CONCERNING THE LORD'S WORKING ON EARTH. LET ME SUGGEST THERE IS ONE USAGE OF THE WORD MYSTERY WHICH HAS NOT BEEN TOUCHED UPON. IN THE LIGHT OF WORLD EVENTS AND THE LATENESS OF THE HOUR, IT IS A MYSTERY TO ME HOW ANYONE COULD BELIEVE THAT THERE IS AN INDEFINITE PERIOD TO PREPARE FOR ETERNITY. THE PROMISE OF THE BIBLE IS FOR TODAY.

FIVE WONDERFUL THINGS ABOUT SIN

Your response to this title is probably" You have been out in the sun too long without a hat!" You might well ask: " Do you know what you are saying? Haven't you seen the things sin does to the lives of men, women and children? Think of the wrecked homes, shattered lives, corrupted morals, vice, graft, thievery and all manner of debachery, yet I say there is something wonderful about sin? Yes I still say there is something wonderful about sin! (I have seen what sin can do in a home--house on the hill in Haymond Ky.) Here at Northville in a few months, broken homes, unhappiness and sorrow---yet something wonderful about sin--- I must be a person of twisted values

Someone will say, "Are sure we are talking about the same thing?" Let me describe what the Bible says about sin.

The Bible teaches that sin is first of all:

1. An act--- Rom. 3:23 (illus. of jumping an ocean.)
2. An intent, thought or impulse-- Matt. 5:27-28
3. A state or disposition--Jer. 17:9

The Bible teaches that sin is an offence against:

1. Sinner himself--Prov. 8:36 "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul..."
2. Society-- Rom. 5:12
   Adam's sin affected all mankind. We touch others--Father who drinks, family to suffer....
3. God-- "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in they sight...." Ps 51:4

The Bible teaches that sin began:

1. Universe--Satan
2. Race--Adam
3. Individual--Mark 7:21-22 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness deceit, lasciviousness, and evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all of these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

Bible says sin is indicated by various words:

"missing the mark, passing over a line, perversion from right, disobedience, rebellion, debt to divine justice lawlessness.

Sin is basically selfish in nature. Choice of self as the highest good and supreme end of life.

Satan, man of sin and rich fool are examples.

Contrast them with Christ.

The Bible Teaches us the extent of sin:

1. O.T. show the experience of all men--Isa. 53:6
2. Our Lord the sinfullness of all men.." If ye being evil"
3. N. T. writers-- 1 John 1:8
4. Best of men--1 Tim. 1:15

RESULTS: = DEATH
(1) SPIRITUAL - JN 5:24, EPH 2:1 (3) EVERLASTING (SECOND) REV. 20:14
(2) PHYSICAL - ROM 5:12

In the light of all of this I still maintain that I know 5 wonderful things about sin!

I. OUR SINS HAVE BEEN BLOTTED OUT AND WILL NEVER BE REMEMBERED AGAINST US. Isa. 43:25

1. "Blotteth out thy transgressions"

Blotteth is used in the Old Testament and is translated

1. Gen. 7:4 "I will destroy man from the face of the earth (blot out)
2. 2 Kings 21:13 "I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down."

But the primary idea is that of rubbing, or to strike. The image is that of an account book in which the debt is paid and the charge cancelled or blotted out!

"The Old Account Was Settled Long Ago"

Someone else paid the debt for you, but the pardon is of no effect to you unless you accept it. Philemon 18

"Remember" "to be mindful of

When God forgives He forgets--puts them away.

Calvary the place where our sins blotted out.

We can't do this: Even after conversion the scars of sin remain. (pull a nail out of wood but the hole is still there.

II. BLOTTED OUT AND A CLOUD BETWEEN THEM AND GOD Isa. 44:22 - a year or so flying to Charleston - FOG - Layers of Clouds

1. Same idea continued. God wipes the slate clean. Does not "impute" sin to our account. Rom. 5:13

Mr. Cazieer --he "imputed" the debt to my account. that is he "marked it down on the record." When the debt paid--the books were closed. God has a record in heaven. Man will give an account for every sin---- unless under the blood--the only place where sin is not against us--already judged!

NT idea Rom. 4:6-7 NT more than Covered - Canceled!

Birthouse Story - Placed on my account. You will never have anything to pay. - A gift

III. OUR SINS BEHIND GOD'S BACK --Isa. 38:17

The Bible teaches that God is omnicient. Nothing ever takes Him by surprise. Where is God's back?? A way of of showing that He has put our sins where He has determined not to see them. Where? Calvary.

Put all that behind me - things we do not wish to be remembered Neh 9:26

IV. OUR SINS ARE INFINITELY REMOVED FROM US-- Psa. 103:12

V. OUR SINS IN THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA -- Micah 7:19 - 757

All of these expressions are "in the language of appearance. All in language to show that the sin is removed from the sinner and will not be judged by thr Lord. Lev. 16 The primary idea of forgiveness.

The dimentions of Grace height width - depth length - Isa. 38:17

GOD Who Deals With Man's Sins

Where are your sins ~~this morning~~ Today? Either of one or two places:
1. Self
2. Saviour

ISA 53:6 "Put your faith where God Put your sins — On Christ!

Past Redemptions Point:

On the bank of the Niagra River a few years ago, on a piece of land extending inot the river, were the rapids began to swell and swirl most desperately preparatory to their final plunge, is a sign board which bears a most startling legend, "Past Redemption Point" because it is believed in the nieghboorhood that nothing can pass that point and escape destruction. One day a vessel was being towed across the river when the line broke, and it drifted helplessly down the stream, in full view of horrified onlookers on the shore. Just as she reached "past redemption point" a breeze arose caught her sail and eventually landed her on shore. So with us Calvary the breeze of God's mercy----let His grace reach you today.

WONDERFUL JOY OF SIN FORGIVEN —

This past week read of 2 men caught in 20th story of a Bldg. in Atlanta leaped to their death — men will do anything to escape the flames of fire.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 27, 1981

"THE DEATH PENALTY" Revised Oct. 1988

THE SIGNS AROUND THE BUILDING SAID "WARNING--HIGH VOLTAGE - KEEP OUT". THERE WAS ALSO A HIGH FENCE AROUND THE BUILDING. A MAN CLIMBED THE FENCE, BROKE THE LOCK, TAMPERED WITH THE EQUIPMENT, AND ELECTROCUTED HIMSELF. WHO IS TO BLAME, THE POWER COMPANY OR THE MAN? A PERSON LOADS A REVOLVER, THEN LOOKS DOWN THE BARREL TO SEE IF IT NEEDED CLEANING AND ACCIDENTALLY PULLS THE TRIGGER. WHO IS TO BLAME, THE MANUFACTURER OF THE HAND GUN OR THE MAN WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER? A PERSON STARTS HIS CAR IN A CLOSED GARAGE. HE SITS THERE FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME UNTIL HE SUCCOMBS TO CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING. WHO IS TO BLAME, THE MANUFACTURER OF THE CAR, THE BUILDER OF THE HOUSE, OR THE PERSON WHO STARTED THE CAR ENGINE? THE SIGNS ON THE BRIDGE ALONG THE WV TURNPIKE STATED "DO NOT STOP ON BRIDGE". DISREGARDING THE SIGN, A MAN WITH HIS CAMERA LEANS OVER THE RAILING TO TAKE A PICTURE, AND ACCIDENTALLY FALLS OFF THE BRIDGE INTO THE CANYON BELOW. WHO IS TO BLAME, THE DEPT. OF HIGHWAYS OR THE MAN WHO DISREGARDED THE SIGN? I HAVE STATED ALL OF THESE HYPOTHETICAL CASES TO STATE A SIMPLE FACT OF LIFE THAT THERE ARE PENALTIES TO PAY FOR CARELESSNESS, FOOLISHNESS, AND NEGLECT. THIS IS TRUE IN THE NATURAL AND PHYSICAL REALM, AND IT IS ALSO TRUE IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM. PEOPLE WHO BREAK OR VIOLATE GOD'S LAWS MUST PAY THE PENALTY. SOMETIMES THE PENALTY IS PHYSICAL DEATH. CRITICS OF THE BIBLE AND ENEMIES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH HAVE FASTENED UPON WHAT THEY CALL MORAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. THESE CRITICS LOOK UPON THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AS BARBARIC, CRUEL, AND VINDICTIVE. THEY POINT TO HISTORIC SITUATIONS SUCH AS GOD'S DEALING WITH THE CANAANITES AND AMALIKITES TO ILLUSTRATE THEIR POINT. GOD'S DIRECTIVE IN DEUTERONOMY 20:16-18 PROVIDES THE AMMUNITION FOR THEIR CRITICISM. LET US LOOK AT THE CANAANITES FOR A MOMENT. FOR YEARS, THESE GODLESS PEOPLE WITH THEIR SHAMELESS VICES TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT ALL LAWS OF DECENCY AND JUSTICE. THEIR

SHAMELESS IMMORALITY HAD CAUSED THE NATION TO PLUNGE SO DEEPLY INTO IDOLATRY AND SIN THAT THE ONLY CURE FOR SUCH GROSS SIN WAS THE SURGICAL REMOVAL OF THE NATION. ONLY GOD COULD MAKE SUCH A WIDE-SWEEPING JUDGMENT, AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT HE DID. ONE DREADFUL ASPECT OF SIN IS THAT IT PRODUCES WIDESPREAD EFFECTS AND DRAWS MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN DOWN IN THE WAKE OF DESTRUCTION. IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE CANAANITES TO PERISH IN INFANCY THAN TO GROW UP AS DEVOTEES OF IDOLATRY AND SIN. {SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT, WHEN MEN AND THEIR FAMILIES BOARD A SHIP FOR AN OCEAN VOYAGE, AND IF THOSE ADULTS ON BOARD TAKE TO WICKED VICE AND CORRUPTION TO THE POINT THAT NEGLECTS THE SHIP'S SAFETY TAKES PLACE, AND AS A MATTER OF FACT THE SHIP BEGINS TO SINK, THERE IS NO DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN WHEN THE SHIP IS GOING DOWN. THE QUESTION IS, WHO DO YOU BLAME, GOD OR THE MEN WHO WERE CARELESS ABOUT THE SAFETY OF THE SHIP? CONCERNING THE AMALIKITES, IT IS SIMPLY A MATTER OF RECORD THAT THESE PEOPLE WERE A BANDIT RACE WHO, FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, HAD RUN OVER WEAKER NATIONS, SLAUGHTERING, RAPING, TORTURING, AND PILLAGING FOR THE SHEER DELIGHT OF DESTRUCTION. THEY SCOFFED AT RELIGION, WORSHIPPED ONLY THE GODS OF STRENGTH, AND HAD FOR 500 YEARS LEFT A TRAIL OF BLOOD AND WRECKAGE BEHIND THEM. THEIR WARS WERE ONES OF AMBUSH AGAINST THE WEAK, THE AGED, AND THE HELPLESS. THEY TORTURED THEIR CAPTIVES TO DEATH BY HACKING OFF THEIR LIMBS, KNOCKING OUT THEIR TEETH, BREAKING THEIR JAWS, AND GOUGING OUT THEIR EYES. THEY BURNED AND DESTROYED CITIES FOR THE SHEER DELIGHT OF WATCHING THEM BURN, AND THEY JEERED AT ANY IDEA OF GOD. THE SIMPLE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THE SURVIVAL OF ISRAEL WAS AT STAKE WHEN GOD COMMANDED SAUL TO JUDICIALLY REMOVE THE AMALIKITES FROM ISRAEL'S BORDERS. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND HOW ANYONE COULD SUGGEST THAT GOD WAS CAPABLE OF IMMORAL ACTION IN SUCH JUDICIAL ACTIVITY. CONCERNING THE DEUTERONOMY 20 PASSAGE, DR. ALVA J. MCCLAIN SUGGESTS: "IF THIS COURSE OF ACTION SEEMS UNDULY HARSH, ITS JUSTIFICATION MAY BE FOUND IN THE UNSPEAKABLY DEGRADED PRACTICES WHICH ARE ASCRIBED IN HORRIBLE DETAIL IN LEVITICUS 18. THE

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JULY 15, 1979
P.M.

"BIBLE DOORS"

RECENTLY, AN ARTICLE IN THE EVENING PAPER CAUGHT MY ATTENTION BECAUSE IT DEALT WITH THE USAGE OF THE TERM IN OUR STUDY TONIGHT. A GANG OF THUGS IN ONE OF OUR METROPOLITAN AREAS CAUGHT AN ELDERLY LADY IN A REVOLVING DOOR AND BY APPLYING EXCESSIVE PRESSURE AND MOVEMENT TO THE DOOR HURLED HER THROUGH THE DOOR INTO THE STREET, CAUSING HER TO BE INJURED. THIS IS A STARTLING ARTICLE, THAT PERSONS COULD TAKE A SIMPLE OBJECT, LIKE A DOOR, AND USE IT AS AN INSTRUMENT TO INJURE AND MAIM THE ELDERLY. ALMOST EVERYONE HAS EITHER RUN INTO A DOOR, CAUGHT HIS FINGER IN THE CAR DOOR, OR SOMETHING OF THIS NATURE. I CAN STILL REMEMBER THOSE EARLY SHOPPING TRIPS IN DETROIT WHEN CINDY WAS VERY SMALL. THE REVOLVING DOOR AT THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT STORE BECAME QUITE A GAME. SHE LIKED TO GO AROUND AND AROUND IN THE REVOLVING DOOR. THE ONLY OTHER THING SHE ENJOYED MORE WAS RIDING THE ESCALATOR! THE BIBLE HAS A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT THE SIMPLE TERM - DOOR. WE WILL CONSIDER SEVERAL IN OUR STUDY TONIGHT.

(Manager at Kaufmann's - finger - door at escalator)

I. THE DOOR OF SALVATION - JOHN 10:9

JESUS WAS SAYING THAT WHAT A DOOR IS TO A BUILDING, JESUS CHRIST IS TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. JESUS CHRIST IS A PLACE OF ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM, THERE ARE NO OTHER SUBSTITUTES, THERE IS NO OTHER WAY. HE HAD THE ORIENTAL SHEEPFOLD IN MIND, WHERE THE SHEPHERD WOULD LIE DOWN IN THE OPENING OF THE SHEEPFOLD AND PROTECT THE SHEEP AND IN FACT WOULD BECOME THE DOOR. ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO GET INTO THE SHEEP MUST OF NECESSITY GO THROUGH THE SHEPHERD. IF A PERSON IS GOING TO BE SAVED, HE MUST ENTER HEAVEN'S PORTALS THROUGH THE WAY, NAMELY, JESUS CHRIST. IT IS A NARROW, SELECTIVE WAY, BUT IT IS THE ONLY WAY. THE WORD SAVED SUGGESTS THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A MAN TO BE SAVED FROM SIN IF HE COMES TO JESUS CHRIST. THERE IS A VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING RELIGIOUS AND BEING REDEEMED. THIS PASSAGE SPEAKS OF OUR ABILITY TO FIND SALVATION IN CHRIST, BUT IT ALSO SPEAKS OF SATISFACTION IN CHRIST. THE TERM PASTURE SPEAKS TO THE FACT THAT THE PERSON WHO ENTERS THE SHEEPFOLD BY WAY OF THE DOOR WILL EXPERIENCE PEACE AND JOY AND SATISFACTION IN LIFE WHICH IT IS NOT

POSSIBLE TO FIND IN OTHER AVENUES OF PURSUIT. EVEN THOUGH THE TEXT IS TALKING ABOUT THE WAY OF SALVATION, THIS CHAPTER SPEAKS OF THE SECURITY IN SALVATION THE BELIEVER POSSESSES. (CF. V. 27-29) THIS VERSE EMPHASIZES THE FACT THAT SATAN CANNOT UNTIE THE KNOT WITH WHICH WE ARE BOUND TO GOD. SOME FOLK ARGUE FOR THE RIGHT TO GO TO HELL WHEN THEY WANT TO, BUT THE WORD OF GOD REMINDS US THAT WE ARE BOUND TO HIM INSEPARABLY FOREVER. DR. A. T. PIERSON WAS FOND OF TELLING THE STORY OF TWO YOUNG MEN WHO WERE CONVICTED OF THEIR SINS TO THE POINT THAT WHILE LIVING ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS THEY DECIDED TO PAY THE COLLEGE CHAPLAIN A VISIT TO SEE IF THEY COULD RESOLVE THIS BURDEN OF GUILT AND SIN. AS THEY WALKED TO THE CHAPLAIN'S HOUSE, AND WHEN THEY CAME TO THE DOOR, ONE OF THE TWO DECIDED NOT TO GO IN. HE RESISTED EVERY FORM OF PERSUASION BY HIS FRIEND. THE ONE MAN WENT IN AND RECEIVED CHRIST AS SAVIOUR AND BECAME AN OUTSTANDING MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN AMERICA. THE OTHER MAN TURNED FROM THE CHAPLAIN'S DOORWAY AND FROM THAT POINT WENT ON TO DRINK AND GAMBLE, LIVE A LIFE OF SENSUALITY AND ULTIMATELY TO GO TO A FOREIGN COUNTRY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN A POLITICAL REBELLION AND BE SHOT. HE ULTIMATELY DIED IN HIS SINS. THE WHOLE COURSE OF LIFE CHANGED THAT NIGHT AS THEY STOOD BEFORE THE CHAPLAIN'S FRONT DOOR. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH EVERY MAN COMES TO THE DOOR OF SALVATION AND THERE HE MUST DECIDE WHETHER HE WILL GO IN AND FIND PASTURE OR STAY OUT AND PERISH. (Jn. 3:16)

II. THE DOOR OF SECLUSION - MATT. 6:6

THIS VERSE REMINDS THE BELIEVER THAT ONCE HE HAS ENTERED THE DOOR OF SALVATION THERE IS ANOTHER DOOR WHICH IS MANDATORY FOR THE CHRISTIAN. NOTICE THE VERSE DOES NOT SAY IF BUT WHEN WHICH SPEAKS TO THE FACT THAT BELIEVERS ARE EXPECTED TO PRAY. THE TERM "CLOSET" IS NOT NECESSARILY LIKE THE CLOSET WHERE YOU AND I STORE OUR JUNK - FIBBER McGEE! THIS WORD CLOSET SPEAKS OF A STOREHOUSE OR SECRET CHAMBER AND REFERS TO A PRIVATE OR SOLITARY PLACE WHERE CHRISTIANS MAY FIND THAT MOMENT OF UNINTERRUPTED FELLOWSHIP AND PRAYER ALONE WITH GOD. IN OUR DAY WHEN TERMS LIKE MEDITATION AND COMMUNION WITH THE LORD HAVE BECOME LOST ARTS EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS A PLACE OF SECRET PRAYER WHICH IS ABOVE ALL OTHER SOLUTIONS, THE ANSWER TO OUR PRESSURE PACKED GENERATION. EVERY

JOYFUL CHRISTIAN HAS A PLACE OF SOLITUDE WHERE HE AND GOD MEET BY REGULAR APPOINTMENT. (CF. PAUL, DANIEL, JESUS) (RELATE TESTIMONY IN PRAYER MEETING OF PEOPLE SAVED AFTER 6 AND 2 YEARS OF PRAYING. IF WE REALLY BELIEVE GOD ANSWERS PRAYER, THEN WE WOULD REALLY PRACTICE PRAYING. (COMMENT ON THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF A QUIET TIME EACH DAY.) (JIGS ROGERS AND PASTURE, EARL MCCORMICK AND PRAYER BASEMENT.) IF YOU ARE FAILING IN YOUR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE, THIS MAY BE THE AREA OF GREATEST NEGLECT EVEN MORE THAN BIBLE STUDY.

III. THE DOOR OF SERVICE - I COR. 16:9

DR. MCGEE QUOTED THIS VERSE DURING ONE OF HIS BROADCASTS THIS WEEK AS AN INDICATION OF THE WORLDWIDE OPPORTUNITY WHICH HAS COME TO HIS RADIO MINISTRY. PAUL SPOKE OF HIS GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE THE LORD. HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED UPON YOUR OPPORTUNITY AND HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED FOR THE OPEN DOOR WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN EACH OF US? ALONG WITH THE OPEN DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY THERE COMES ADVERSITY. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID THAT THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY SWINGS ON THE HINGES OF ADVERSITY. PAUL WAS MORE CONCERNED WITH OPPORTUNITY THAN HE WAS OPPOSITION. THE TEST OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT OUR ABILITY NEARLY SO MUCH AS OUR WILLINGNESS TO OVERCOME ADVERSITY. (REV. 3:7) GOD OPENS AND CLOSES DOORS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. WHEN WE PUSH THEM OPEN, WE WALK INTO AREAS WHERE BLESSING IS LACKING. IT IS DIFFICULT TO LOOK AT THE LORD'S WORK IN TERMS OF OPPORTUNITY AND NOT PERSONAL ADVANTAGE. (A FRIEND AND I SPOKE THIS WEEK OF ANOTHER FRIEND WHO SEEMS TO BE LOOKING FOR A PLACE OF PRESTIGE TO SERVE THE LORD. THERE IS A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE IN THE WORD OF GOD AND THAT IS, WE SEEK GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES IN ORDER THAT WE MAY DO HIS PLANS AND NOT MAKE OUR OWN PLANS AND ASK GOD TO BLESS THEM. IF PAUL HAD GONE ACCORDING TO HIS OWN DESIRES, HE WOULD HAVE GONE TO ASIA AND NOT EUROPE. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT GOD ORDERS OUR STOPS AS WELL AS OUR STEPS IN LIFE. (CF. ACTS 16:7) EVERY BELIEVER AND EVERY CHURCH SHOULD LOOK CAREFULLY AT GOD'S OPEN DOOR OF SERVICE. IF WE DO NOT STEP THROUGH, GOD WILL USE SOMEONE ELSE. GOD'S WORK WILL GET DONE WHETHER YOU AND I DO IT OR NOT, BUT IF WE DO NOT GET INVOLVED, WE LOSE THE BLESSING AND THAT SHOULD BE A MATTER OF GREAT CONCERN. BELIEVERS SHOULD BE MORE

Mel E.

CONCERNED ABOUT OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE THAN THE COMFORTS OF SERVICE.

IV. THE DOOR OF SEPARATION - MATT. 25:11

WE WILL NOT SEEK TO INTERPRET THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS, BUT RATHER TO APPLY THE TEXT OF V. 10. THE DOOR OF SALVATION IS OPEN TODAY BUT IT MAY NOT BE OPEN FOR VERY LONG. WHEN THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY TO BE SAVED IS CLOSED THERE IS NO SECOND CHANCE. THE CLASSIC ILLUSTRATION OF THIS FACT IS IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS AND THE STORY OF NOAH. ACCORDING TO GEN. 7:16 GOD SHUT THE DOOR TO THE ARK AND NOT NOAH. NONE COULD SAY THAT NOAH WAS PRESUMPTUOUS AND CLOSED THE DOOR TOO SOON, BUT RATHER GOD KNEW THE TIME AND SHUT IT ON SCHEDULE. IN THE TEXT BEFORE US, THE REFERENCE IS TO THE BRIDAL PARTY WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE READY WHENEVER THE BRIDEGROOM CAME. NO ONE WAS ALLOWED INTO THE STREETS WITHOUT LIGHTED LAMPS. LATE COMERS TO THE CEREMONY WERE NOT ADMITTED. IT WAS A CUSTOM AND WAY OF LIFE. THIS STORY REMINDS US OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PREPARED SO THAT WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM COMES MEN WILL BE READY TO MEET HIM. ALMOST EVERY PERSON HAS HAD THE SINKING FEELING OF BEING JUST A CUSTOMER OR TWO AWAY FROM A PARTICULAR NEED OR SALE ONLY TO HAVE THE DOOR SLAMMED IN HIS FACE BECAUSE TIME AND OPPORTUNITY RAN OUT. THE DEVIL HAS DUPED MANY PEOPLE INTO BELIEVING THAT TIME IS AMPLE, OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED CONCERNING SALVATION. IT IS THE SINCERE OPINION OF MANY BELIEVERS AROUND THE WORLD THAT WE ARE RAPIDLY MOVING TOWARD THE END OF THE AGE, THAT TIME IS RUNNING OUT AND IF MEN ARE GOING TO BE SAVED THEY MUST BE SAVED TODAY. (II COR. 6:1-2)

"GIANTS"

IT IS A FACT THAT PRESENT DAY ADOLESCENTS WEIGH MORE AND ARE TALLER THAN THEIR FOREFATHERS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE YOUNG MAN ENTERING THE ARMED FORCES IN WORLD WAR II WAS ON THE AVERAGE 2.3 INCH TALLER AND 10 POUNDS HEAVIER THAN HIS COUNTERPART IN WORLD WAR I. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE TALLEST MEN IN THE UNITED STATES ARE FROM TEXAS, OKLAHOMA, MISSISSIPPI, AND TENNESSEE. THE STATES WITH THE SHORTEST MEN ARE RHODE ISLAND, CONNECTICUT, PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK, MASSACHUSETTS, NEW JERSEY, AND NEW HAMPSHIRE; OR, BROADLY SPEAKING, PEOPLE ARE TALLER IN THE SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST AND SHORTER IN THE NORTHEAST. HISTORY RECORDS THAT PEPIN, THE FATHER OF CHARLEMAGNE, WAS ONLY 4½ FEET TALL, YET CARRIED A SWORD 6 FEET LONG! IT WAS SAID THAT HE WAS A SUPERB SWORDSMAN IN SPITE OF THE DISPROPORTION - WHICH SEEMS ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE. NAPOLEAN WAS BARELY 5 FEET, 2 INCHES IN HEIGHT, AND, AFTER ONE BATTLE IN 1796, HE BECAME KNOWN AS "THE LITTLE CORPORAL". LIFE EXPECTANCY IS 77 AND 72 YEARS. THE AVERAGE HEIGHT OF THE AMERICAN MAN IS JUST UNDER 6 FEET. IT IS NOT UNUSUAL TO SEE SEVERAL MEN IN THE 7-FOOT VICINITY ON A PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL TEAM. THE TALLEST MAN IN THE WORLD TODAY IS APPROXIMATELY 8 FEET TALL. WHEN THE TERM GIANTS IS USED, WE USUALLY THINK OF FAIRY TALES AND MYTHS AND STORIES LIKE JACK AND THE BEANSTALK. HOWEVER, IN THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF GENESIS, THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF MEN OF ABNORMAL SIZE.

I. THE GIANTS WHO CORRUPTED THE HUMAN RACE - GENESIS 6:4

THE WORD "GIANTS" IN OUR TEXT IS THE HEBREW WORD NEPHILIM AND LITERALLY MEANS "FALLEN ONES". LEOPOLD SUGGESTS THAT THE TERM MEANS ATTACKER, ROBBER, OR BANDIT. THE IDENTITY OF THE "SONS OF GOD" IN VERSE 2 PROPOSES A PROBLEM. THERE ARE TWO BASIC VIEWS CONCERNING THE IDENTITY OF THESE PEOPLE.

(1) ANCESTOR. MANY GOOD AND CONFIDENT SCHOLARS BELIEVE THAT THE SONS OF GOD HAD TO DO WITH THE GODLY LINE OF SETH INTERMINGLING WITH THE UNGODLY LINE OF CAIN AND BRINGING TO EARTH A RACE OF PERVERTED PEOPLE WHOSE ACTIVITIES ARE DESCRIBED IN THE DAYS BEFORE THE JUDGMENT OF THE FLOOD. THIS IS A VERY GOOD AND VALID INTERPRETATION, AND ITS NUMBER 1 PROPONENT IS C.I. SCOFIELD. (2) ANGELS. MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THE SONS OF GOD WERE INDEED ANGELS, FOR THEY ARE SO NAMED IN JOB 1:6 AND 38:7. THIS TERM "SONS OF GOD" IS ASCRIBED TO FOUR CLASSES

OF PEOPLE: ADAM, CHRIST, CHRISTIANS, AND ANGELS. IN ALL CANDOR, I HAVE PROBABLY BEEN INFLUENCED IN MY INTERPRETATION BY DR. A.J. MCCLAIN AND DR. JOHN WHITCOMB. WHITCOMB SAYS OF THIS VERSE THAT, LIKE THE ANTEDILUVIAN DINOSAURS OR TERRIBLE LIZARDS, WHO WERE CURSED IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM, THESE PEOPLE WERE THE HORRIBLE MONSTROSITIES OF A HUMAN RACE WHO HELPED TO FILL THE EARTH WITH VIOLENCE. THE CURSE OF GOD WAS UPON THE OFFSPRING OF THESE VIOLENT MEN, AND THEIR PHYSICAL TIES PARALLEL THE ENORMITY OF THEIR SINS. THIS MONSTROUS RACE OF MEN, WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE CORRUPTION OF THE RACE PRIOR TO THE FLOOD, WERE MEN WHO HAD ABANDONED ALL SPIRITUAL HERITAGE IN THE HUMAN RACE AND HAD FILLED THE EARTH WITH EVIL AND VIOLENCE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN II PETER 2:4-5 AND JUDE 6 AND 7, WHERE THE SIN MENTIONED IN CONNECTION WITH THE FLOOD IS COMPARED TO THE SEXUAL PERVERSION OF SODOM AND CONNECTED WITH STRANGE FLESH. IT, THEREFORE, SEEMS LOGICAL AND SCRIPTURAL TO SUGGEST THAT GENESIS 6 REFERS TO THE SAME ANGELIC SIN. THE CONTEXT SUGGESTS THAT THE RACE OF MEN WHO POPULATED THE EARTH P RIOR TO THE FLOOD WERE EVIL BEYOND DESCRIPTION, AND VERSE 11 SUGGESTS THAT CORRUPTION AND VIOLENCE FILLED THE EARTH! THE ONLY CURE FOR SUCH MEN WAS RADICAL SURGERY FOR AN INCURABLY SICK RACE. IN AN EVIL WORLD, ONE MAN IN CONTRAST TO THE REST OF THE GENERATION WALKED WITH GOD. NOTHING FROM PAST EXPERIENCE OR COMMOM SENSE COULD DIRECT HIS PATH, ONLY HIS FAITH IN GOD OVER AN UNTROD, UNCHARTED COURSE. THIS WAS ONE OF SATAN'S EARLY STRATEGIES TO RUIN THE HUMAN RACE IN THE EARLY DAWN OF HUMAN HISTORY. SEXUAL PERVERSION HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF SATAN'S PRIMARY WEAPONS TO DESTROY MAN'S MORAL AND ETHICAL WELL-BEING. IN LUKE 17:26, THE LORD LIKENS THE TIME OF HIS RETURN TO THE DAYS BEFORE THE FLOOD. IN OTHER WORDS, THE WORLD WILL BE RIPE FOR JUDGMENT. MEN WILL BE PREOCCUPIED WITH EVIL AND WILL BE VIRTUALLY INDIFFERENT TO THE THINGS OF GOD, MUCH IN THE SAME FASHION AS IN NOAH'S DAY

II. THE GIANTS WHO CURBED THE PROGRESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE - NUMBERS 13:30-33

THE SPIES ON THEIR 40-DAY EXPEDITION INTO CANAAN DEVELOPED WHAT SOMEONE HAS CALLED THE "GRASSHOPPER COMPLEX". THEY SAW A LAND RICH IN NATURAL RESOURCES BUT, INSTEAD OF CONTEMPLATING ON HOW THEY COULD CAPITALIZE ON THE RESOURCES, THE 10 EXAGGERATED THE OBSTACLES IN THE LAND. ONE OF THE FOREMOST OBSTACLES HAD TO DO WITH THE SONS OF ANAK. THE

WORD GIANTS IN VERSE 33 IS THE SAME HEBREW WORD IN GENESIS 6:4. INSTEAD OF REACTING IN FAITH, THE MAJORITY REPORT WAS A REACTION OF FEAR. IT IS ABSOLUTELY AMAZING THAT THESE PEOPLE WHO HAD FAITH TO SPRINKLE BLOOD FOR ATONEMENT IN ORDER TO COME OUT OF EGYPT LACKED FAITH TO BELIEVE GOD COULD TAKE THEM INTO THE LAND OF PROMISE. THEY HAD FAITH THAT GOD COULD REDEEM THEM BUT DID NOT HAVE FAITH THAT GOD COULD KEEP THEM. THE GIANTS IN THE TEXT SPEAK OF THOSE OBSTACLES WHICH INFLUENCE GOD'S PEOPLE AND KEEP THEM IN THE WILDERNESS INSTEAD OF THE LAND OF PROMISE. A ONE-MONTH'S JOURNEY BECAME THE AIMLESS WANDERINGS OF AN ENTIRE GENERATION. EVERY NEW TERRITORY WHICH GOD CHALLENGES THE CHURCH TO TAKE WILL BE FILLED WITH "GIANTS". LACK OF VISION, LACK OF RESOURCES, LACK OF COURAGE KEEP THE LORD'S PEOPLE OUT OF THE PLACE OF BLESSING.

III. THE GIANTS WHO CHALLENGED THE PEOPLE OF GOD - I SAMUEL 17:4

THERE ARE FEW BIBLE STORIES MORE MEMORABLE THAN THIS ONE. GOLIATH WAS OF THE STOCK OF ANAKIM WHO HAD BEEN DRIVEN OUT OF THE LAND BY JOSHUA, AND THEY PROBABLY TOOK REFUGE WITH THE PHILISTINES. (JOSHUA 11:21-22) I USED THE TERM GIANTS IN THE PLURAL BECAUSE GOLIATH HAD FOUR OTHER BROTHERS, AND THE FACT THAT DAVID TOOK FIVE STONES FROM THE BROOK INDICATED IN MY JUDGMENT THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO TAKE ON THE WHOLE FAMILY! (II SAMUEL 21:22) THIS CHAPTER REMINDS US THAT THE LORD'S VICTORIES ARE WON WITH UNLIKELY MATERIAL. (1) AN UNLIKELY WARRIOR - I SAMUEL 17:12 WHEN ONE LOOKED AT TINY DAVID, THE ODDS IN THE CONFLICT SEEMED ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE. GOLIATH'S ARMOR ALONE WEIGHED ALMOST 200 POUNDS WHICH PROBABLY EXCEEDED DAVID'S FULL WEIGHT. DAVID WAS NOT THE WARRIOR IN JESSE'S FAMILY; HE WAS THE LITTLE BABY BROTHER! HE WAS SMALL, UNTRAINED, INEXPERIENCED, AND NO MAN OF WAR. BY CONTRAST, HE WAS A SHEPHERD, POET, MUSICIAN. WHAT DID HE KNOW ABOUT PHYSICAL COMBAT? IN ALL OF THIS THERE IS A VALID BIBLE PRINCIPLE, THAT GOD USES UNLIKELY PEOPLE TO DO HIS WORK. (I CORINTHIANS 1: 26-29) (2) UNLIKELY WEAPONS - VERSE 4-7 GOLIATH MUST HAVE BEEN A FEARSOME SIGHT. EVERYBODY THOUGHT DAVID WAS GOING TO GET HIS "KILLING DONE" THAT DAY. AND NONE WERE WILLING TO ACCOMPANY HIM - NOT EVEN SAUL. DAVID'S PLAN OF ATTACK WAS WITH UNCONVENTIONAL WEAPONS. THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY ON THIS PASSAGE AS IT RELATES TO BELIEVERS IS II CORINTHIANS 10:1-2. (3) AN UNLIKELY WARFARE. DAVID WAS NO MATCH FOR GOLIATH, BUT HIS REASON FOR CHALLENGING

COMBAT WAS NOT FOR PERSONAL BUT RATHER FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH YOU AND I ARE IN COMBAT WITH A DEADLY FOE, AND WE DARE NOT MATCH WITS WITH SATAN. HIS METHODS OF LYING AND DECEIT ARE BEYOND US. THE WELL-ORGANIZED FORCES OF SATAN'S UNSEEN ARMY IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD COULD WELL OVERWHELM THE CHRISTIAN. (4) THE UNLIKELY WINNER - VERSE 15. TO SAY THAT DAVID WAS AN UNDERDOG IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT. DAVID WAS THE ONLY PERSON ON THAT BATTLEFIELD WHO BELIEVED AND EXPECTED TO WIN. NO ONE ELSE DID. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH, WHEM PEOPLE LOOK AT THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH, THERE IS A CONSENSUS OF OPINION THAT EVIL IS WINNING. EVIL IS LARGE, LOUD, AND SEEMINGLY INVINCIBLE. THE GOLIATHS OF THIS WORLD STRUT, BOAST, AND BLASPHEME GOD WITH NO APPARENT FEAR OF JUDGMENT. THE CHURCH ALWAYS GETS IN TROUBLE WHEN WE USE THE WORLD'S ARMOR TO FIGHT SPIRITUAL BATTLES. THIS STORY HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF COURAGE AND INSPIRATION FOR PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD FOR MANY GENERATIONS. THE GIANTS OF OPPOSITION ARE EVERYWHERE, BUT THE LORD'S PEOPLE NEED NOT FEAR.

" GOD SPEAKS AT CALVARY"

The last words a person utters in this life are usually the ones for which he is remembered. Apart from the words: " I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country," I cannot tell you one word that Nathan Hale ever said. I am sure that many of the speeches given by Albin Barkley, a former Vice President of the United States, can be remembered by his admirers, but I only remember those words he spoke the night of his death as he was delivering an address on a university campus. He quoted Psalm 84:10----."I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." With the speaking of these words he collapsed...passed away.

From the Cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ made 7 utterances which are among the most familiar of His words. We will look at them in the order in which they appear in the Gospels, not necessarily in the order in which they were spoken.

I. MY GOD, MY GOD WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?
Matthew 27:46

There have been some dark hours in human history. There have been some times when it appeared as if God's truth would fall at the hands of merciless men. Such was the case in Church History when nation after nation fell under the mighty sweep of Islam. In 732 A.D. the armies of Mohammed crossed the Pyrenees and boasted that St. Peters Cathedral in Rome would be turned into a stable for their horses. It appeared as if France and all of Europe would fall before the armies of Mohammed--- but then a man named Carles Martel and the Battle of Tours surpressed the oncomeing foe--- a dark time in the history of Christianity--its very existence at stake--but it was nothing compared to the hourx before us.

It is said of Martin Luther that this phrase so gripped his soul while he was meditating on the Cross one day, that he sat for a long while in his chair without food and motionless. When at long last he rose from his thoughts he was heard to exclaim in amazement: "God forsaken of God! Who can understand it? "

I am sure there are many mysteries about the Cross which human minds cannot fathom. But I do know that God does not forsake good men in the hour of their death, and if Christ were just a good man this statement would not make sense! The only possible answer to this cry is that Jesus was taking the place of the sinner!

I have seen good men die— God grant M. L. Ham

"He was being forsaken that you and I might be forgiven." (Sanders) This cry of our Lord reveals how much God hates sin...for it separates men from God. Even when God's son was on the Cross bearing the penalty of our sins he was "forsaken"... in order to pay the full penalty for your sins and mine in a moment of time. The song writer has explained it in the following fashion:

"Well might the sin in darkness hide, Isa. 53:6
And shut His glories in, 1 Pet.2:21
When God, the mighty Maker, died 2 Cor.5:21
For man, the creatures sin."

II. FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO.... Luke 23:34

The usual reaction of a victim of crucifixion was to curse and swear both at his executioners and at the crowd standing around watching. Yet listen to the words of Jesus even as the soldiers were in the process of nailing Him to the cross. There is no cursing, spitting, no accusations, no cry of injustice, no plea for mercy..... He is praying not for himself and deliverance but for his executionsers--not that they might be smitten in judgment but rather forgiven in mercy! In this reaction our Lord was demonstrating how He applied His own teaching---"pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Mt. 5:44 This is God's eternal answer to men who say that God does not love them... when in the name of religion the most outrageous crimein history is carried out---- love is the emotion displayed!

Some men have asked if this prayer was answered. Obviously, some did believe even at the hour of the crucifixion--the centurion. But the point of the prayer is that in every act of forgiveness two parties are involved--one must forgive/make it possible and one must accept. This prayer made forgiveness possible for every sinning man. It is up to man to accept such a gift!

III. TODAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE Luke 23:43

The scene at Calvary is that of 3 condemned men hanging on crude crosses. In one sense of the word, a picture of all humanity.

1. The Cross of Hate

Bitter of his situation--the character and person of Christ of no interest to him---save my from this situation. Men waht out of the misery of their sins...but not to a life of godliness and honor to God!

This statement reminds us that our Lord was indeed perfect humanity and also as deity here he resorts to the minute details of prophecy--Psalm 69:21

VII. IT IS FINISHED ---John 19:30

It is said of a great English statesman that his final cry was "so much to do, so little done." There are probably several ideas involved in what was finished on Calvary. The word finished has been translated to mean "payed in full." It is this aspect of Calvary we wish to stress today. In early literature I am told this word "finished" was used to designate a cancelled bill. Our Lord had payed the debt for your sins and mine.

" I hear the Saviour say, thy strength indeed
is small, Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in me thine all in all.
Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed
it white as snow.

Some will want to quarrel over the theology of this point. But our Lord loved sinners...thats why He loves you and me. Romans 5:8 "YET SINNERS"

The great sin of the Sadducees was that they loved their own kind. God requires the Christian to love those who do not love him. There is very little of this in Christendom today. We are nice to those who are nice to us and nasty to those who are nasty to us! We are either poor or good advertizement for our Lord--no in between.

V. WE OUGHT TO LOVE THE SECOND COMING--2 Tim. 4:8

This verse should awaken believers to the imortance of our attitude toward the coming of the Lord. 1 JN. 2:28 In most cases, the Second Coming of Christ is something that is feared or dreaded rather than loved! Rarely in my Christian experience have I heard a Christain say--" I long for the Lord's return." One big reason is the loss of the pilgrim spirit among believers---we are too settled in this world and its philosopies. We are perfectly content to live today with all of our conveniences and comforts to the point that the Saviour return is not important let alone loved!

Paul was sure of a reward for all persons who love the coming of the Lord. He knew that any Christian who sets his heart on this doctrine will be so affected in Christian life and service that he will qualify for rewards. (1 John 3:1-3)

Now our study comes back to our introductory point--if we love the Saviour we will love His appearing. [redacted] I remember hearing a story about a sea captain who returned to his home village after many months at sea. As the boat reached the dock there were the wives and families of the sailors standing, waving, weeping and obviously happy about the return of the ship. The captain looked around the pier for his wife but did not see her. When he made his way to their home his wife was sitting in the living room reading the evening paper. As he entered the room, she stood to greet him and said: "Welcome home dear, I've been waiting for you." There was nothing improper about the greeting but somehow it lacked in enthuiasim--she had been waiting but not anxiously waiting to the point that she went to the pier to get that first glance of the ship coming in toward the shore. I wonder if our attitude toward the Lor's return is not like this.

"IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE"

Paul uses the little phrase," I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren," to introduce some very interesting Bible truths. (We use to use it in seminary in a joking way.)

I. THE PERILS OF PREACHING--Rom. 1:13
1. The word "let" means to hinder.
Paul had hinderances in preaching the gospel:
a. External-- Thessalonia-- 1 Thess. 2:18
Acts. 17:5-Jason
Philippi--jail
Ephesus-- riot over Demetrius
Jerusalem
Lystra--stoned and left for dead.
(Reads like and adventure story--beatings and suffering all kinds of obstacles.)
2 Cor. 11:24 ff.
b. Internal
1. Thorn in the flesh
2. Bad eyes--Gal. 4:13-15
c. Infernal
Fickle companions like John Mark and Demas.
2. 2 Cor. 1:8-10
This situation was unique for Paul but in some measure it befalls all who follow in his train.
a. Just recently-- Walt Clase
Bob Munday--Security
Mrs. Correll-- beat him over the head.
Man at New Hope

II. BLESSING IN BLINDNESS--Rom. 11:25
1 Cor. 15:8 Now and the future blessing of the earth.

III. TRUTH ABOUT TYPES-- 1Cor. 10:1

IV. GREATNESS OF GIFTS--1Cor. 12

V. COMFORT OF HIS COMING--1 Thess. 4:13 ff.

We forget that some folk never hear the simple things we become use to or take for granted--Second Coming.
**Lady in the shoe store in Albion.

" THE INABILITY OF OMNIPOTENCE"

Last Sunday I spoke to you about our God who is able to do things. Today, let us look at some matters which or all-powerful God cannot or will not do. Our subject could just as easily be called "Four Things God Cannot Do." I am reminded that this one of the theological propositions discussed by theologians many years ago-- could God make a rock so big he could not lift it!

I. GOD CANNOT LIE--Titus 1:2

"That by two immutable things , in which it was impossible for God to lie..."

**Last Sunday evening after church. A discussion of Rev. 21:8 considerable interest and question. The usage of the term-- because we know the weakness of human kind. We know our fleeting interest in truth. For in reality, the work lie is connected with the word--"false." A liar is one who regards the truth lightly. - John 8:44-47 Prov. 6:16 — 2x "Lying" 17/19

Popular Principle

Jn. 14:6

Jn. 1:14

A. Why Cannot God Lie?

Bound up in His unchangable character. Heb. 13:5

We change with time and circumstances because we are coming inot grips with new truth. Sometimes we change for the worst--**Sanford.

"Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be...

Relative illus: Mother/Baby

James 1:17

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

B. Why Is This Meaningful To Us?

His promise of salvation. "the Scripture cannot be broken...." John 10:35

Our salvation, hope for all eternity rests on this very foundation. The God who promised it--can and will bring it to pass--He could do nothing else!

***Mr. Irwin--"How can we be sure the Bible is true?
Answer: It is the word of the God for whom it is impossible to lie.

II. GOD CANNOT CONDEMN THE RIGHTEOUS WITH THE WICKED--Gen.19:22

A. The Question of Destination Settled In This Life .

Misconception about the Pearly Gates. Peter. These are foreign to the Bible--the result of fable and joke.

**Personal Experience:

When did you receive Christ as Saviour? You settled your destination for eternity right there and then! As if God gave you a ticket to glory--your reservation is secure. The fear of Hell gone--or should be. An inheritance--1 Pet. 1:4-5

B. The Question of Position Is Settled.
One of the blessed truths from a careful reading of the Book of Ephesians is the usage of the little prepositon "in" "chosen in him, "accepted in the beloved" in Him, "in Christ"-- Eph. 2:10
There is a wonderful "in-ness" mentioned in this book.
F. B. Meyer suggests-- just as a sponge in the sea is in the water and the water is in it--so we in Christ and He in us. He is in the believer-- as sap in the vine.
We in Him--as stones in a great Temple.
Romans 8:1-- now
John 5:24 -- "shall not come"
This takes care of my past, present, future!
"Calvary Covers It All"
Notice however what this same Bible says about the unbeliever:
John 3:18 "already"-- right now! Lost now!
A condemned man in death row! The sentence of deaht on him-- the execution is all that awaits!
John 3:36 "abideth" Need--a pardon!
Sword of Dam.
How glad that I am as safe as God's son--Jesus Christ--flee to Him.

III. GOD CANNOT SAVE MEN APART FROM CHRIST-- Acts 4:12

Think of what this verse says and then think of what men say about salvation---
1. Belong to my particular religious group. My church.
2. Be baptized by certain church
3. Receive certain instruction from our church.
4. Or it is my opinion, I think as long as one is sincere.....how foolish!
Illus. of a compass going to sea--take my chances!

Problem:
If there had been any other way for men to be saved-- God would have used that way---if there were any other way--then Christ died in vain.

IV. GOD CANNOT OFFER YOU A SECOND OPPORTUNITY ONCE YOU ARE DEAD -- Luke 16:26
Don't ever forget this--do not let anyone deceive you with any other wreckless scheme or daydreams or wishful thinking! This may sound hard but the truth is often difficult to appreciate.
Let me remind you that the sweetest, kindest, most loving person who ever lived talked more about Hell than any other person in history. He warned men to flee that place!
A. No Person Has Ever Had That Second Chance:
Every person who ever enters Heaven's portals will be saved hereon earth. Not one exception to that rule.

B. No passage In the Bible To Offer Hope After Death.

The idea of a place called Purgatory were one has an opportunity for improvement— no a schread of proof in the Bible.
Heb. 9:27, James 4:14, 2 Cor. 6:1-2
Close with a story used many many times but it says exactly what I want to say...No Heaven
No Hell
No Hurry...Don Kulff. Since 14.

V. Cannot Provide a Better Time than Now

ROBERT K. SPRADLING

OCTOBER 9, 1977
A.M.

MOSES, SERVANT OF GOD

EXODUS 2:1-25

(SERIES)

MANY PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT MOSES, NOT FROM READING THE BIBLE, BUT THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF CECIL DEMILLE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, SOME OF THOSE SAME PEOPLE BELIEVE MOSES LOOKED LIKE CHARLTON HESTON! (IT IS A MATTER OF RECORD THAT CECIL B. DEMILLE WAS GREATLY INFLUENCED BY A PREACHER WHO PRAYED FOR HIM WHEN HE WAS A CHILD., "I SHALL NEVER FORGET THE FEEL OF THAT OLD PREACHER'S HANDS ON MY HEAD. I HAVE ENJOYED THE GREATEST HONOR OF LIFE, HERE IN HOLLYWOOD I HAVE MET THE GREATEST OF THE EARTH. BUT I HAVE NEVER HAD ANY THRILL AS GREAT AS THE FEEL OF THAT PREACHER'S HANDS ON MY HEAD. THAT HAD MUCH TO DO WITH MY INTEREST IN PRODUCING BIBLICAL MOTION PICTURES TODAY, WE ARE GOING TO READ AND STUDY MOSES ON MOSES! (REVIEW EXO.) THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DISCOVERED THAT SATAN IS A HARD TASKMASTER. SOMETIMES HE BINDS HIS SUBJECTS WITH SOFT PLEASURE AND THE WELCOME CHAIN OF GREED AND PASSION, BUT SOMETIMES IT IS WITH THE HARD, CRUEL CHAIN OF VIOLENCE AND OPPRESSION. ISRAEL WAS TO LEARN THAT ONE CANNOT BE FREED FROM PHAROAH'S POWER AND REMAIN IN PHAROAH'S COUNTRY. TO DO SO WOULD ONLY INVITE RENEWED SLAVERY. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE WAS TO MOVE THEM OUT OF EGYPT INTO THE LAND OF CANAAN, THE LAND OF GOD'S PROMISE. IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THIS MOVE ACCORDING TO GOD'S TIME AND SCHEDULE, A DELIVERER WAS NEEDED. TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SUFFERING THE OPPRESSION OF EGYPT, IT MUST HAVE APPEARED AS IF GOD WAS DOING NOTHING. HOWEVER, THEY MUST LEARN THAT GOD IS NEVER IN A HURRY. HE ACCOMPLISHES HIS WORK ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PLAN.

Leader

I. MOSES' FAMILY - v. 1-10

I AM IMPRESSED WITH THE WAY GOD WORKS. GOD USED THE VERY PLAN OF PHAROAH TO ACCOMPLISH HIS OWN REDEMPTIVE PURPOSE. HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE COMMAND OF PHAROAH TO CAST HEBREW MALE CHILDREN INTO THE RIVER, MOSES WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN RESCUED BY PHAROAH'S DAUGHTER AND TRAINED IN PHAROAH'S HOUSE. EDERSHEIM REMINDS US THAT THE PLAN WAS NATURAL IN ITS PROGRESS,

BUT SUPERNATURAL IN ITS PURPOSES AND RESULTS. MOSES WAS BORN INTO A HOSTILE, UNFRIENDEY WORLD.

A. HIS BELIEVING PARENTS

THE FAITH OF MOSES' PARENTS IS OBVIOUS IN THE TEXT BEFORE US, BUT SPELLED OUT IN HEB. 11:23 "BY FAITH MOSES WHEN HE WAS BORN, WAS HID THREE MONTHS OF HIS PARENTS, BECAUSE THEY SAW HE WAS A PROPER CHILD; AND THEY WERE NOT AFRAID OF THE KING'S COMMANDMENT." MOSES' PARENTS RECEIVED NO SPECIAL REVELATION CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS BABY. THEY DID NOT KNOW AT AN EARLY DATE THAT HE WAS GOD'S CHOSEN DELIVERER! THEIR FAITH IN GOD FOUND A WAY TO PRESERVE THE LIFE OF THEIR INFANT SON. THEY DEVISED AN ARK, LITERALLY A PAPER BOAT! HOWEVER, MOSES' SAFETY WAS IN GOD AND NOT IN A FRAIL BOAT. FAITH RAN SOME RISKS. THEIR FAITH WOULD NOT LET THEM FEAR THE POTENTIAL WRATH OF THE KING. THIS ARK HAD TO BE THE MOST FAMOUS CRADLE IN HISTORY. MOSES WAS THE THIRD CHILD IN THE FAMILY. MIRIAM WAS BETWEEN 12 AND 15 YEARS OF AGE AND AARON WAS 3 YEARS OLD. (THE ARK IS MENTIONED ONLY IN GEN. 6:14. HERE AS THERE IT WAS SEALED WITH PITCH TO KEEP OUT THE WATERS OF DEATH.) THE SECRET OF GREATNESS FOR MANY MEN HAS BEEN GODLY PARENTS. IT TOOK FAITH TO PLACE THEIR CHILD IN THE RIVER WHICH WAS THE VERY PLACE WHERE OTHER CHILDREN WERE KILLED. MOSES' PARENTS, LIKE MANY OTHER CHRISTIAN PARENTS, TURNED THEIR CHILDREN OVER TO GOD. I AM SURE MANY PARENTS WHO ARE MISSIONARIES AND CHRISTIAN WORKERS HAVE FELT THE SAME TUG AT THE HEART AS THEY HAVE LEFT THEIR CHILDREN IN THIS COUNTRY WHILE THEY RETURN TO A FOREIGN FIELD. FAITH FINDS A WAY TO DO THAT WHICH IS RIGHT.

B. HIS BRIGHT SISTER - v. 4, 7-9

VERY LITTLE IS SAID ABOUT THE PART MIRIAM PLAYED IN THIS DRAMA. HER ALERT SUGGESTION SEEMS TO BE VERY UNUSUAL FOR A 12 YEAR OLD GIRL! ONCE AGAIN, THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS SEEN IN SUCH A METHOD. THERE IS NO WAY PHAROAH'S DAUGHTER WOULD SUSPECT A CHILD SO YOUNG OF ANY KIND OF PLOT OR SCHEME. (HER WISDOM AND THINKING WAS PHENOMENAL.

C. A BENEVOLENT STEP-MOTHER - v. 5-9

IT WAS NO ACCIDENT THAT PHAROAH'S DAUTHER WENT TO THE RIVER AT THAT PARTICULAR SPOT, ON THAT PARTICULAR DAY. IT WAS NO ACCIDENT THAT THE BABY WEPT TO TOUCH THE HEART OF PHAROAH'S DAUGHTER. I FEEL CERTAIN SHE KNEW THIS WAS A HEBREW BABY. TO HAVE THROWN THE WEEPING BABY INTO THE RIVER, IN SPITE OF HER FATHER'S DECREE WOULD HAVE BEEN CRUEL AND PHAROAH'S DAUGTHER ACTED NOT AS AN EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL BUT AS ANY OTHER WOMAN. WHAT COULD BE THE HARM IN SAVING ONE SUCH SON. THROUGH THIS ACTIVITY, MOSES LIFE IS PRESERVED, HIS VERY OWN MOTHER IS PAID WAGES FOR CARING FOR HER OWN CHILD! MOSES IS GIVEN THE FINEST EDUCATION AVAILABLE IN EGYPT. ACCORDING TO ACTS 7:22FF MOSES WAS A STUDENT, STATESMEN, AND SOLDIER. WE ARE TOLD THAT NO COUNTRY ATTACHED VALUE TO EDUCATION AS DID THE EGYPTIANS. A CHILD STARTED TO SCHOOL SHORTLY AFTER BEING WEANED. HE LEARNED HIEROGLYPHICS, SCIENCE MATH, ASTRONOMY, CHEMISTRY, MEDICINE, PHILOSOPHY, LAW, ETC. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THIS ADOPTED SON RECEIVED THE FINEST TRAINING AVAILABLE IN EGYPT. HISTORIANS RECORD THE FACT THAT HE WAS AN OUTSTANDING MILITARY LEADER.

II. MOSES" DECISION - v. 11-14

ONCE AGAIN, WE LEARN MORE ABOUT HIS DECISION TO IDENTIFY WITH HIS PEOPLE IN HEBREWS THAN WE DO IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS. "BY FAITH MOSES, WHEN HE WAS COME TO YEARS, REFUSED TO BE CALLED THE SON OF PHAROAH'S DAUGHTER; CHOOSING RATHER TO SUFFER AFLICTION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD THAN TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF SIN FOR A SEASON; ESTEEMING THE REPROACH OF CHRIST GREATER RICHES THAN THE TREASURES IN EGYPT. (HEB. 11:24-26) KEEP IN MIND THAT MOSES WAS RAISED IN PHAROAH'S PALACE AND WAS TREATED AS HIS GRANDSON. WHEN HE RODE THROUGH THE STREETS IT WAS ALWAYS WITH A ROYAL ENTOURAGE AND MESSENGERS CRYING OUT BEFORE HIS CHARIOT, "BOW THE KNEE" WHICH PEOPLE DID WITHOUT QUESTION. IF HE SAILED ON THE NILE IT WAS IN A GOLDEN BARGE, AMIDST THE STRAIN OF PLEASANT MUSIC. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE WEALTH AND POWER OF EGYPT WAS AT HIS FINGERTIPS. MOSES' "NO" HAS TO BE THE MOST FAMOUS RENUNCIATION IN HISTORY.

A. IT WAS A STUDIED DECISION - "WHEN MOSES WAS GROWN"

MOSES WAS 40 YEARS OLD WHEN HE MADE THIS DECISION. IT WAS NOT THE IMPULSIVENESS OF YOUTH OR THE CRY OF YOUTHFUL EMOTION BUT RATHER IT WAS THE DELIBERATE CHOICE OF A MAN WHO HAD HAD THE PLEASURES OF EGYPT AT HIS FINGERTIPS AND WHO KNEW FULL WELL THE STEPS HE WAS TAKING AS HE TURNED FROM ONE OF THE MOST MIGHTY NATIONS IN THE WORLD TO IDENTIFY WITH A SLAVE NATION. MOSES COULD NOT WALK AWAY FROM THE FACT THAT HIS PARENTS WERE SLAVES. NO MATTER WHAT HE WOULD POSSESS THIS THOUGHT HAUNTED HIM DAY AND NIGHT. NO AMOUNT OF EARTHLY SUCCESS CAN SOFTEN OR SILENCE THE CRY OF A CONSCIENCE THAT REQUIRES MEN TO BE FREE. THIS WAS NO IGNORANT, WEAK WILLED PERSON, BUT A MATURE STRONG MAN, WELL-EDUCATED, WHO KNEW HOW TO USE POWER BUT WHO CAME TO THE FORKS OF THE ROAD WHERE HE MUST DECIDE. HIS OPPORTUNITY IN EGYPT WAS GREATER THAN THAT OF JOSEPH. HE COULD HAVE ASCENDED TO THE THRONE ITSELF! HOWEVER, MOSES KNEW HE COULD NOT BE CALLED "THE SON OF PHAROAH'S DAUGHTER" AND STILL HAVE PART "WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD."

B. IT WAS A SYMPATHETIC DECISION -"HIS BRETHREN.... THEIR BURDENS"

MOSES LIVED IN PHAROAH'S PALACE, BUT THE BLOOD OF HEBREW PARENTS COURSED THROUGH HIS VEINS. HOW COULD HE BE COMFORTABLE WITH EGYPT'S WEALTH WHEN THOUSANDS OF HIS KINSMEN BOWED BEFORE THE TASK MASTERS OF PHAROAH? MOSES WOULD NEVER HAVE PEACE IN HIS OWN HEART UNTIL HIS BRETHREN WERE FREE. IN THE KILLING OF AN EGYPTIAN, MOSES DEMONSTRATED THE FACT THAT HE WAS NOT READY TO BE ISRAEL'S DELIVERER. THE MOSES WHO HAD BEEN TRAINED IN EGYPT'S FINEST SCHOOLS MUST LEARN TO DEPEND NOT UPON HIS PHYSICAL ABILITY BUT UPON GOD'S POWER. SELFRELIANCE AND SELF-WILL WOULD NOT ACCOMPLISH THE WILL OF GOD. 40 MORE YEARS OF TRAINING WERE REQUIRED BEFORE MOSES WAS READY TO LEAD GOD'S PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPT. MOSES HAD TO LEARN THAT THE WRONGS OF EGYPT COULD NOT BE CORRECTED BY FORCE ALONE. EVEN IF HE COULD HAVE DELIVERED ISRAEL BY HIS OWN MILITARY ABILITY IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TEMPORARY IN NATURE. HE MUST LEARN TO BECOME THE MEEKEST OF MEN.

C. IT WAS A STARTLING DECISION -

ACCORDING TO HEBREWS, MOSES LOOKED AT THE GLORY

OF EGYPT AND BY FAITH LOOKED INTO THE FUTURE TO SEE THE GLORY OF HIS MESSIAH AND MADE A CHOICE HE WOULD NEVER REGRET. ONLY FAITH COULD ENABLE HIM TO SEE BEYOND OUTWARD APPEARANCES AND SURRENDER HIS POSITION IN PHAROAH'S COURT WITH ALL ITS TREASURES AND PLEASURES TO HIS LORD. SOMEONE MAY ASK IF THE DECISION WAS A GOOD ONE. HAD MOSES DECIDED TO REMAIN IN EGYPT HE MAY HAVE BEEN JUST ANOTHER ONE OF A LIST OF MEN LIKE RAMSES OR THUTMOS OR TUT OR A DOZEN OTHER NAMES WHICH WE BARELY RECOGNIZE AS THE NAMES OF EGYPTIAN PHAROAHS. AS THE LEADER OF GOD'S ANCIENT PEOPLE, FEW MEN HAVE RISEN TO THE PLACE OF NOTORIETY AS DID MOSES. HIS NAME IS REVERED IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

D. IT WAS A SPIRITUAL DECISION - "BY FAITH"

THERE IS NO WAY MOSES COULD HAVE DECIDED AGAINST THE PLEASURES OF EGYPT APART FROM FAITH. IT WAS FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISE THAT ENABLED HIM TO MAKE SUCH A CHOICE. IN A LIMITED SENSE, EVERY PERSON MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THE WORLD, SYMBOLIZED BY EGYPT, AND CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES. ONLY FAITH MAKES SUCH A CORRECT DECISION POSSIBLE. IF MOSES HAD LIVED IN OUR TIME HE COULD HAVE RATIONALIZED THIS IDEA OF STAYING IN EGYPT. SOMEONE SURELY WOULD HAVE SUGGESTED THAT HE COULD ACCOMPLISH MORE AND HELP THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL MORE BY STAYING IN EGYPT. SURELY IF HE ASCENDED TO THE THRONE HE COULD GIVE ASSISTANCE TO HIS NEEDY BRETHREN FROM A POSITION OF ADVANTAGE. HOWEVER, THIS IS THE COWARD'S WAY AND NOT GOD'S WAY. HE COULD NEVER ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN THE DELIVERANCE UNTIL HE WAS IDENTIFIED WITH HIS PEOPLE. WE DO NOT DO GOD'S WORK FROM AN IVORY TOWER.

III. MOSES' EXILE - v. 15-25

A. AN UNFAMILIAR LAND - v.15

CAN YOU IMAGINE THE SHOCK TO MOSES' SYSTEM AT THE AGE OF 40 WHEN HE WAS JUST BEGINNING TO MAKE MATURE JUDGMENTS AND HAD THE ABILITY AND BACKGROUND TO MAKE HIS MARK IN HISTORY TO FIND HIMSELF SUDDENLY EXILED TO ANOTHER COUNTRY. IN THE EYES OF MEN HE WAS A TOTAL FAILURE. HE HAD TURNED HIS BACK ON A PROMISING CAREER BECAUSE OF HIS RELIGIOUS CONVICTION AND NOW FOR

THE NEXT 40 YEARS HE MUST LIVE AMONG SHEPHERDS AND FLOCKS WHERE ONCE HE HAD LIVED IN THE SPLENDOR AND GLORY OF EGYPT. AT THIS POINT, MOSES DID NOT KNOW GOD WAS PREPARING HIM FOR THE EXODUS. THE SOFT LIFE WAS GONE, NOW HE MUST WORK AS AN ORDINARY PERSON IN A REMOTE PART OF THE WORLD. MOSES WAS NOT THE FIRST MAN TO BE RELEGATED TO SEEMING OBSCURITY BECAUSE OF A DECISION TO SERVE THE LORD. THE DESERT EXPERIENCE IS OFTEN PART OF GOD'S PREPARATION FOR GREATER THINGS. EGYPT WAS BEHIND MOSES. THERE HE HAD LEARNED THE LESSONS WELL, NOW HE MUST LEARN LOWLINESS, HUMILIATION AND SUFFERING; SOMETHING GOD ALWAYS REQUIRES OF HIS LEADERS. DISOWNED BY HIS OWN HEBREW PEOPLE AND PURSUED BY PHAROAH, HE MUST SETTLE AMONG NOMADS, TO WANDER FOR 40 LONG YEARS.

B. AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY - v.15-20

MOSES WAS A CHIVALROUS, COURAGEOUS MAN. THAT DAY, THOSE SHEPHERDS WHO HAD BEEN MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR REUEL'S DAUGTHERS GOT A REAL SURPRISE. MOSES' ASSISTANCE TO THESE WOMEN BROUGHT AN OPEN DOOR TO A PRIEST OF MIDIAN. THIS WAS ALL PART OF GOD'S PLAN FOR MOSES.

C. AN UNSYPATHETIC WIFE- v.21

THE WORD "CONTENT" LITERALLY MEANS WILLING. ACCORDING TO EXO. 4:24 ZIPPORAH WAS A VIOLENT WOMAN WITH A NASTY TEMPER WHO HAD LITTLE OR NO SYMPATHY FOR MOSES' RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS. WHEN SHE FIRST MET MOSES, SHE WAS OVERCOME BY HIS BRAVERY, BUT AS THEIR RELATIONSHIP DEEPENED HIS AIMS AND DESIRES IN LIFE WERE FOREIGN TO HER. SHE SEEMS TO HAVE LITTLE IN COMMON WITH HER HUSBAND OTHER THAN CREATING DIFFICULTY SHE WAS NOT IN SYMPATHY WITH MOSES' LONG-RANGE SPIRITUAL GOALS. (COMMENT REGARDING JOHN WESLEY) Taylor.

D. AN UNSEEN HAND - v. 24-25

MOSES WAS STANDING ON THE THRESHOLD OF A GREAT SEGMENT OF HIS LIFE. HE WAS GOD'S MAN IN GOD'S PLAN AND NO GREATER THING COULD BE SAID OF HIM THAN THAT HE WAS GOD'S TRUE SERVANT. JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL EXPRESSED THE SENTIMENT IN THIS WAY: CARELESS SEEMS

AVENGER; HISTORY PAGES BUT RECORD ONE DEATH-GRAPPLE IN THE DARKNESS TWIST OLD SYSTEM AND THE WORD TRUTH FOREVER ON THE SCAFFOLD, WRONG FOREVER ON THE THRONE, YET THAT SCAFFOLD SWAYS THE FUTURE,AND, BEHIND THE DIM UNKNOWN, STANDETH GOD IN THE SHADOW KEEPING WATCH ABOVE HIS OWN." ((OUR CHOICE IS NOT BETWEEN EGYPT AND CANAAN BUT IT IS A CHOICE BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND GOD. EVERY MAN MUST CHOOSE.))

ROBERT K. SPRADLING

P.M.
JUNE 1975
Revised Sept 1982

NETS

CERTAIN PEOPLE ARE OR HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY OBJECTS. (MACARTHUR - CAP AND CORNCOB PIPE, CHURCHILL - CIGAR AND V AS IN VICTORY SIGN, LINCOLN - STOVEPIPE HAT) IN THE SCRIPTURE CERTAIN OBJECTS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIFIC PEOPLE. ABRAHAM - A TENT WHICH WAS A SYMBOL OF HIS PILGRIM LIFE. (GEN. 13:3) MOSES - A ROD WHICH WAS A SYMBOL OF WHAT GOD CAN DO WHEN OUR GIFTS ARE GIVEN TO HIM. (EX. 4:2) JOSEPH - A COAT SYMBOLICAL OF A PROPER COVERING. (GEN. 37:3) SAUL - A SPEAR INDICATIVE OF THE FACT THAT HE WAS A MAN OF WAR AND GOVERNED BY THE FLESH. A CONSTANT THREAT AND DIFFICULTY IN HIS LIFE. DAVID - A SLING AND A HARP. BOTH INDICATING PROPER RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. ELIJAH - A CHARIOT AND A MANTLE. SOME OF THE MEN CLOSEST TO JESUS WERE FISHERMEN AND THE NET WAS SYMBOLICAL OF THEIR OLD LIFE AS WELL AS THE NEW MINISTRY TO WHICH JESUS CALLED THEM.

I. CARE FOR THE NETS- MATT. 4:18-22

DR. SAVAGE HAD AN INTERESTING OBSERVATION ABOUT VERSE 19. COULD IT BE THAT THE REASON WE ARE NOT FISHERS OF MEN IS BECAUSE WE ARE NOT FOLLOWING HIM? THE WORD "MENDING" IN V. 21 IS USED ELSEWHERE TO SUGGEST SPIRITUAL MINISTRY. SEE EPH. 4:12 AND GAL. 6:1. EVERY FISHERMEN KNEW THAT IN ORDER TO BE A PRODUCTIVE WORKMEN CARE MUST BE EXERCISED CONCERNING THE EQUIPMENT TO BE USED. FISHERMEN DID NOT SET OUT TO SEA WITH BROKEN NETS. I AM TOLD THAT FISHING WAS DIFFICULT WORK AND THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE WEAR UNDER ORDINARY CONDITIONS. BELIEVERS TODAY FACE A DIFFERENT KIND OF PROBLEM IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. IN MY JUDGMENT PROSPERITY AMONG THE LORD'S PEOPLE HAS HAD A HARDENING INFLUENCE IN PROVIDING SO MUCH COMFORT FOR CHRISTIAN PEOPLE THAT WE ARE PRONE TO BE CARELESS REGARDING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE. IN ORDER TO BE A FISHER OF MEN A CHRISTIAN WORKER MUST BE THROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH HIS BIBLE. SPURGEON ONCE SAID OF A POPULAR PREACHER IN SOUTHERN ENGLAND "HE PREACHES SOMETHING WHICH IS SOMEHOW LIKE THE GOSPEL." OUR CONFIDENCE SHOULD BE IN THE WORD OF GOD AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD NOT IN OUR OWN ABILITIES. BAXTER HAS WELL SAID "FAITH IN MONEY INSTEAD OF FAITH IN GOD HAS ENGENDERED A HARD HEADED MATERIALISM, AN EDUCATIONAL SECULARISM AND A HOLLYWOOD PROFANITY WHICH HAS WON AMERICA THE NAME OF

MODERN BABEL." THERE IS A WIDE SPREAD DEPARTURE FROM THE WORD OF GOD AND A SUBSTITUTE FOR OTHER THINGS IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. LISTEN TO THE FOLLOWING ACCUSATION AGAINST CHURCHES TODAY "LEGION MAY BE MY FAULTS AS A PREACHER, BUT FEW CAN EXCEL ME AS AN APPRECIATIVE HEARER. I AM ALWAYS PRE-DISPOSED IN FAVOR OF THE PREACHER. NO LISTENER HAS READIER EARS THAN MINE. YET DESPITE MY HUNGRY HUNTING FOR EXPOSITION OF THE WORD BY MEN OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT, IN NINE CASES OUT OF TEN I HAVE COME AWAY WITH SCARCE A CRUMB, SOMETIMES PAINED THAT THE PREACHER VAPORIZED AWAY THE RICH FORCE OF THE WORD AND OFTEN WONDERING WHY PEOPLE KEEP COMING TO CHURCH WEEK AFTER WEEK FOR SUCH PALTRY FARE OR VERBAL VACUITY." (J. SIDLOW BAXTER) HE SAID OF ANOTHER PREACHER "THE PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER, A FLUENT SPEAKER, DANCED AROUND HIS TEXT LIKE A SPEAR-BRANDISHING ZULU, UNTIL HE ORATORICALLY DANCED AWAY FROM IT, LEAVING US WONDERING WHY HE HAD COME TO IT." LISTEN TO ANOTHER SHOCKING STATEMENT BY BAXTER "THE SUPREME FACTOR IN THE FELLOWSHIP AND WITNESS OF A LOCAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS NOT THE VISITATION OF THE MEMBERS, BUT THE PULPIT. ANY DEGREE OF FAILURE THERE, AT THE CENTER, INEVITABLY REGISTERS ITSELF IN SPIRITUAL DEPRIVATION RIGHT AROUND THE CIRCUM-FERENCE. IT NEEDS TO BE SHOUTED LOUDLY AGAIN TODAY UNTIL IT ECHOS THROUGH OUR EVANGELICAL CHURCHES: THE PULPIT IS THE ORGANIC CENTER OF THE LOCAL CHURCH! GOING WITH THAT IS THE NEED FOR A NEW INSISTENCE THAT THE MINISTER SHALL READILY STUDY THE BOOK SO AS TO BE PROFICENT IN EXPOUNDING ITS BREADTHS AND LENGTHS AND DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS." MEN WHOM GOD CALLED TO THE TASK OF REACHING MEN WITH THE GOSPEL WERE ALWAYS PREPARED FOR THE TASK. (COMPARE MOSES AND PAUL) THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE NOT KNOWING SOMETHING ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD. IF WE DO NOT KNOW THE BIBLE IT IS OUR FAULT! DON'T BLAME GOD FOR IGNORACE OF THE WORD OF GOD! (RELATE EXPERIENCE WITH GORDON DUN-AWAY AND MY ADVICE THAT HE WAS NOT READY FOR CHRISTIAN WORK.)

II. CLEANSING OF THE NETS - LUKE 5:2-6

I AM TOLD THAT FISH DID NOT READILY SWIM IN DIRTY NETS. MOST OF US WOULD READILY AGREE THAT THE LORD USES CLEAN VESSELS MORE READILY THAN DIRTY ONES. THIS DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT HE DOES NOT SOMETIMES

USE EVEN TAINTED VESSELS. (CONTRAST THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS) SOMETIMES A MANS SPIRITUAL GIFTS WILL CARRY AND HIDE HIS OWN LACK OF PERSONAL HOLINESS. (RELATE THE STORY OF JACK SCHULER.) IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO BE RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL IN SERVICE FROM AN EXTERNAL POINT OF VIEW AND YET NOT BE SPIRITUALLY ON COMMUNION GROUND. I READ A PARAGRAPH RECENTLY THAT LEAPED FROM THE PAGE "YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY UNHAPPY ONCE, WHEN ~~THEY~~ WAS OVER, IF YOU HAD FLUNG YOURSELVES DOWN UPON A PRAYERLESS BED. AND YET IT MAY BE THAT YOU DO IT NOW WITH NEVER A THOUGHT THAT YOU ARE GRIEVING GOD. YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN MISERABLE ONCE, AND FULL OF GUILTY SHAME, HAD YOU BEEN CRUEL, DISHONEST OR IMPURE AND YET IT MAY BE THAT TONIGHT YOU SIN THESE SINS WITHOUT ~~ANY INWARD UNHAPPINESS~~ AT ALL." THIS STATEMENT BY G. H. MORRISON SHOCKS US BACK TO REALITY. IT CRIES OUT TO US TO BE SENSITIVE ABOUT CLEANSING. (PS. 51 AND I JN. 1:9)

III. CASTING OF THE NETS - JOHN 21:6-11

WE HAVE CONSIDERED THIS PASSAGE JUST RECENTLY AND I WOULD LIKE TO SUGEEST ONLY ONE IDEA AND THAT IS WE NEVER CATCH FISH UNTIL AND UNLESS WE MAKE AN EFFORT. PLEASE DON'T COMPLAIN TO GOD ABOUT SPIRITUAL DRYNESS AND DEADNESS IF YOU MAKE NO EFFORT TO WITNESS OF HIS GRACE. MANY CHRISTIAN REMIND ME OF THE CHILD SITTING ON THE CREEK BANK CRYING BECAUSE HE WAS CATCHING NO FISH WHILE ALL THE TIME HIS FISHHOOK WAS LAYING ON THE BANK SEVERAL FEET FROM THE WATER. IT NEVER OCCURRED TO HIM TO DROP HIS HOOK INTO THE POND! THER IS ONE PRAYER THAT SOME CHRISTIAN PRAY WHICH MUST MAKE GOD CRINGE IT GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS "DEAR LORD SEND SOME SINNERS INTO OUR CHURCH ON SUNDAY." THAT PRAYER MAKES AS MUCH SENSE AS A MAN SITTING ON THE LAKE IN A BOAT PRAYING THAT GOD WOULD CAUSE FISH TO JUMP OUT OF THE LAKE INTO HIS BOAT SIMPLY BECAUSE HE IS TOO LAZY TO MAKE ANY EFFORT WHAT SO EVER. A MAN LIKE THAT OUGHT TO STARVE TO DEATH LET ALONE FAIL IN THE FISHING BUSINESS! IF WE ARE GOING TO WIN MEN TO CHRIST WE MUST GO WHERE THEY ARE WITH PROPER EQUIPMENT DEPENDING UPON THE LORD TO BRING IN THE BOUNTIFUL CATCH. WHEN WE TRUST HIM, HE WILL HONOR HIS WORK IN THIS WAY.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 21, 1980

A.M.

THE OFFICES OF CHRIST: KING

JOHN 19: 13-19

THE GLORY OF EARTHLY KINGS IS A FADING, FRAGILE GLORY. NO KING HAS EVER RULED FOR AS LONG AS ONE-HUNDRED YEARS. SOME PHARAOHS GOT CLOSE, REIGNING INTO THE NINETIES. LOUIS XIV OF FRANCE RULED FOR 72 YEARS, THE LONGEST REIGN IN EUROPEAN HISTORY.

(RELATE EXPERIENCE IN CAIRO MUSEUM AND KING TUT'S THRONE AND COFFIN. ONE VIEWS 3,000 YEARS OF HISTORY, BUT KING TUT WAS NOT THERE!)

THE SHAH OF IRAN, WHO DIED THIS YEAR COULD TRACE HIS ANCESTRY ALL THE WAY BACK TO CYRUS THE GREAT, SOME 500 YEARS B.C. EVEN THOUGH HIS SON CLAIMS TO BE HEIR TO THE THRONE OF IRAN OR ANCIENT PERSIA, THEY JOIN THE PARADE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH WHO MARCH TOWARD THE GRAVE . THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS UNIQUE CONCERNING HIS KINGSHIP AND KINGDOM.

I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE RIGHTFUL KING OF ISRAEL -

MATTHEW 2: 1-2

ROYALTY DEPENDS UPON HEREDITY. ACCORDING TO II SAMUEL 7:10-16, GOD PROMISED DAVID A KINGDOM AND A THRONE TO BE ESTABLISHED FOREVER. IN OTHER WORDS, A DESCENDENT OF DAVID WOULD RULE UPON THAT THRONE INTO THE AGES. WHEN THE ROMANS DESTROYED THE CITY OF JERUSALEM IN 70 A.D., EVERY RECORD OF PRIESTLY AND KINGLY GENEOLOGY WAS DESTROYED WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE RECORD RECORDED IN THE BIBLE. ACCORDING TO THE GENEOLOGIES IN MATTHEW AND LUKE, JESUS CHRIST IS THE RIGHTFUL HEIR TO THE THRONE OF DAVID.

(THERE IS AN INTERESTING STUDY HAVING TO DO WITH AN OLD TESTAMENT MESSIANIC PROPHECY RECORDED IN JEREMIAH 22:29-30. IF JOSEPH HAD BEEN JESUS' BIOLOGICAL FATHER, JESUS WOULD HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE THRONE OF DAVID, BECAUSE THE PROMISE WAS THAT NO HEIR OF CONIAH WOULD PROSPER SITTING ON THE THRONE OF DAVID, AND JOSEPH WAS IN THAT LINE. AS MCCLAIN HAS WELL SAID: "THE ONLY SOLUTION IS FOR MESSIAH TO BE BORN OF A VIRGIN WHO IS A DESCENDENT OF DAVID, AND WHO MARRIED A MAN OF THE ROYAL LINE OF SOLOMON, MAKING THE HUSBAND HIS LEGAL FATHER.")

THE WISE MEN WHO CAME FROM THE EAST CAME LOOKING FOR HIM WHO WAS "BORN KING OF THE JEWS." JESUS CHRIST WAS THE RIGHTFUL KING OF ISRAEL BY BIRTH. HE WAS NOT APPOINTED BY MEN, VOTED ON BY THE PEOPLE, OR SELF-APPOINTED BY RIGHT OF CONQUEST. HIS RIGHT TO THE THRONE IS A DIVINE BIRTHRIGHT! THE MAGI WERE DIRECTED TO BETHLEHEM BY A SIGN IN THE HEAVENS. THEY CAME TO WORSHIP THE BABY BORN IN BETHLEHEM. JESUS' PARENTS, WHO WERE GODLY JEWS, WOULD NEVER HAVE PERMITTED SUCH OBEISANCE IF THE CHILD HAD NOT BEEN WORTHY, FOR HE WAS INDEED THE KING AND MESSIAH OF ISRAEL. ANOTHER WITNESS TO JESUS' RIGHT TO THE THRONE WAS THE ANGEL FROM HEAVEN. (LUKE 1: 30-33)
THE ANGEL PREDICTED THE SEX OF THE BABY TO BE BORN, NAMED HIM IN ADVANCE, SPOKE OF HIS GREATNESS, AND SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD, AND THEN ATTESTED TO HIS REGAL CHARACTER BY MENTIONING THE THRONE OF DAVID AND THE ETERNAL CHARACTER OF HIS KINGDOM. THE TERMS MENTIONED IN THIS TEXT HAD TO DO WITH DIVINE RIGHTS AS RELATED TO DAVID'S KINGDOM. THE PROPHET ISAIAH IN ISAIAH 9:6 ALSO SAW MESSIAH WITH THE "GOVERNMENT UPON HIS SHOULDER."

II. JESUS CHRIST THE REJECTED KING OF ISRAEL - MATTHEW 27:11,22,29

THE REJECTION OF CHRIST BY THE NATION OF ISRAEL CAME DURING THE DAYS OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY. HOWEVER, FROM THE DAY OF HIS BIRTH THERE WERE CERTAIN DANGERS AND ACTS OF HOSTILITY WHICH INCREASED IN INTENSITY UNTIL HIS CRUCIFIXION. AS A MATTER OF FACT, SCRIPTURE RECORDS HOW HEROD SOUGHT TO KILL THE YOUNG CHILD JESUS AND HIS PARENTS WERE REQUIRED TO FLEE TO EGYPT TO PROTECT HIS LIFE AND THEIR'S. THE WORD "WITHDRAWAL" OCCURS NO LESS THAN 10 TIMES IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW ALONE. REGULARLY HE HAD TO WITHDRAW FROM CERTAIN AREAS OF THE COUNTRY AND CERTAIN GROUPS OF PEOPLE IN ORDER TO PRESERVE HIS LIFE AND CONTINUE HIS MINISTRY. THE REJECTION OF CHRIST BY THE NATION SEEMS TO COME TO A HEAD IN MATTHEW 11, AND THE SHIFT FROM NATIONAL REPENTENCE TO PERSONAL FAITH IS OBVIOUS IN MATTHEW 11: 28-30. THE GREAT NAMES OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE ARE ABSENT FROM SCRIPTURE. A RELATIVE UNKNOWN GOVERNING IN A PROVINCE IN PALESTINE LEAPS TO THE FOREFRONT OF BIBLE HISTORY BECAUSE OF THE EVENTS OF A SINGLE WEEK IN HIS LIFE. PILOT SAID TO JESUS: "ART THOU A KING?" THE VERY MANNER IN WHICH HE SPOKE SEEMS TO SUGGEST A KIND OF DISDAIN AT THIS POOR, FRIENDLESS, WASTED PEASANT WHO CLAIMED TO BE A KING. HOW COULD THIS BATTERED AND BEATEN FIGURE CLAIM TO BE A KING? PILOT'S INQUIRY SEEMS TO SUGGEST "ARE YOU REALLY A KING? AND HOW CAN THIS BE?" THE CROWD SAID THEY HAD NO KING BUT CAESAR AND, THEREFORE, REJECTED THEIR TRUE KING. SINCE THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST, THE KING HAS BEEN IN EXILE. (LUKE 19:12-15) DURING THE TIME OF EXILE, GOD IS DOING SOMETHING ELSE ON EARTH. DURING THIS DISPENSATION, GOD IS CALLING OUT FROM THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD A SPECIAL GROUP OF PEOPLE TO MAKE UP THE BRIDE FOR HIS SON. (ACTS 15: 14-16) THE SCRIPTURE IS CAREFUL TO MAINTAIN AND RECOGNIZE DISPENSATIONAL DISTINCTIVES. THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL ARE DISTINCT ENTITIES IN GOD'S PROGRAM. (I CORINTHIANS 10-32)

SINCE THE REJECTION OF THE KING, ISRAEL HAS BEEN ON THE SPUR LINE, OR SIDETRACK. THE CHURCH IS ON THE MAIN LINE DURING THIS DISPENSATION. HOWEVER, WHEN THE CHURCH HAS BEEN COMPLETED, IT WILL COMPOSE THE SPIRITUAL NUCLEUS FOR THAT PERIOD OF TIME WHEN GOD ONCE AGAIN PUTS ISRAEL ON THE MAIN LINE. SOMEONE HAS SAID, GOD DOES NOT HAVE TWO TEAMS ON THE FIELD AT THE SAME TIME. DURING THIS DISPENSATION, THE CHURCH IS ON THE PLAYING FIELD AND ISRAEL IS ON THE SIDELINES. THAT WILL CHANGE WHEN THE KING COMES BACK TO RECEIVE HIS BRIDE AND TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM.

III. JESUS CHRIST THE RETURNING KING OF ISRAEL -

ON ONE OCCASION, PETER ASKED JESUS WHAT THEY WOULD RECEIVE FOR HAVING FORSAKEN BUSINESS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN ORDER TO FOLLOW JESUS. THE LORD ANSWERED THAT QUESTION AS FOLLOWS:

"JESUS SAID UNTO THEM VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT YOU WHICH HAVE FOLLOWED ME, IN THE REGENERATION WHEN THE SON OF MAN SHALL SIT ON THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY, YE SHALL SIT UPON TWELVE THRONES JUDGING THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL." (MATTHEW 19:28)

THE LORD SPOKE OF A FUTURE THRONE ON EARTH NOT A CROWN OF THORNS AND A CROSS OF HUMILIATION, BUT THE THRONE OF HIS "GLORY." THE WORLD HAS NOT SEEN THE LAST OF JESUS CHRIST. THE LAST TIME THEY SAW HIM, WAS ASSOCIATED WITH A CROSS AND A TOMB. THE NEXT TIME THE WORLD SEES HIM IT WILL HAVE TO DO WITH A CROWN AND A THRONE. GOD WILL NOT PERMIT HIS SON TO BE HUMILIATED BEFORE THE EYES OF GODLESS MEN. THERE WILL BE A TIME OF VINDICATION AND HONOR FOR HIS SON. IN ORDER TO ILLUSTRATE THE FACT OF THE KING'S RETURN WE WILL SELECT TWO PASSAGES FROM MANY HUNDREDS. DANIEL 2:44-45 THE SECOND CHAPTER OF DANIEL GIVES A DIVINE FORECAST OR PANORAMA OF GENTILE HISTORY. AS A MATTER OF FACT, IN LUKE 21:24, JESUS SPOKE OF A TIME CALLED THE "TIME OF THE GENTILES."

THAT PERIOD OF TIME HAS TO DO WITH HUMAN HISTORY AND GENTILE WORLD DOMINION. THAT IS TO SAY, BEGINNING WITH NEBUCHADNEZZAR IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND CONTINUING UNTIL THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, ISRAEL WOULD NOT BE FREE OF GENTILE DOMINANCE UNTIL DELIVERED BY CHRIST THE MESSIAH AND KING. THE RE-APPEARANCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL SEEMS TO COINCIDE WITH THE DECLINE OF GENTILE CIVILIZATION AND POINTS TO THE COMING OF MESSIAH. IN DANIEL CHAPTER 2, NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON, SAW AN IMAGE WHICH DEPICTS THAT PERIOD OF TIME, THAT IS THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES, BEGINNING WITH HIMSELF AS THE HEAD OF GOLD AND THE FOUR MAJOR KINGDOMS INVOLVED IN GENTILE WORLD DOMINION CULMINATING IN THE RE-APPEARANCE OF AN END-TIME NATION IN THE GENERAL AREA OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WHERE ANCIENT ROME RULED. THAT END-TIME WESTERN ALLIANCE OF NATIONS IS PICTURED AS THE TEN TOES ON THE IMAGE AS RECORDED IN VERSE 44. IN OTHER WORDS, GOD SHOWED DANIEL THAT THERE WOULD BE A SUCCESSION OF FOUR GREAT WORLD EMPIRES WHICH WOULD APPEAR ON THE STAGE OF HUMAN HISTORY BEGINNING WITH THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE AND THE FINAL STAGE OF THESE KINGDOMS WOULD BE INTERRUPTED BY THE SECOND COMING OF ISRAEL'S KING. THE IMAGERY OF A STONE AS IT REFERS TO CHRIST IS CLEARLY TAUGHT IN MATTHEW 21:41, I PETER 2:4. THE PHRASE "WITHOUT HANDS" SUGGESTS THE SUPERNATURAL ORIGIN OF THE STONE AND MOUNTAIN. THE PICTURE IS THAT OF CHRIST DESTROYING ALL GENTILE DOMINION OVER ISRAEL. THE SUPERNATURAL ORIGIN OF THIS KING AND HIS KINGDOM, WHICH WILL FILL THE WHOLE EARTH AND STAND FOREVER IS A STARTLING FACT OF BIBLE PROPHECY. THIS SAME EVENT IS MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IN REVELATION 19:16FF. IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, WE WILL INAUGURATE A NEW PRESIDENT INTO HIS OFFICE. THE PASSAGE BEFORE US SPEAKS OF THE INAUGURATION OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ON EARTH. THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON IS WITHOUT QUESTION. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE RETURNS TO EARTH HAS TO DO WITH HIS REVELATION AND NOT THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST INVOLVES A LONG SERIES OF EVENTS, THE FIRST OF WHICH WILL BE THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. PLEASE NOTICE THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON IN REVELATION 19. HE IS CALLED KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. EITHER THIS IS THE GROSSEST EXAGGERATION IMAGINABLE, OR IT IS A DESCRIPTION OF A KING WHOSE KINGDOM IS UNIVERSAL IN NATURE. ACCORDING TO THE PASSAGE IN DANIEL 2, THE THREE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS KINGDOM WILL BE: IT IS UNIVERSAL, INDESTRUCTIBLE, AND ETERNAL.

IV. JESUS CHRIST THE RULING KING OF ISRAEL - ISAIAH 9:6

THE THRONE OF ISRAEL IS VACANT TODAY. THE KING IS IN EXILE. HOWEVER, THE OLD TESTAMENT IS FILLED WITH VERSES WHICH SPEAK OF MESSIAH'S KINGDOM. THE PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SPOKE OF A GOLDEN AGE PERTAINING TO THE HUMAN RACE WHEN SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PERSONAL FREEDOM WOULD REACH HEIGHTS UNKNOWN TO THE HUMAN RACE. POETS, PHILOSOPHERS AND POLITICIANS HAVE ALL LONGED FOR AND SOUGHT TO BRING IN A PERIOD OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY, ONLY TO BE DISAPPOINTED AGAIN AND AGAIN. IN YOUR LIFETIME AND MINE, WE HAVE HEARD OF THE NEW DEAL, FAIR DEAL, NEW FRONTIER, GREAT SOCIETY, AND NOW A NEW BEGINNING. EVEN A CURSORY GLANCE AT THE OLD TESTAMENT WILL REVEAL THE FACT THAT ONE DAY ISRAEL'S KING WILL RULE IN ACCORDANCE WITH OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY. (COMPARE ISAIAH 2, ISAIAH 11). DR. CHARLES RYRIE IN HIS BOOK ENTITLED THE LIVING END USES THIS SEASON OF THE YEAR TO UNDERSCORE THE FACT OF OUR LORD'S COMING REIGN. DR. RYRIE MENTIONS THAT EVERY CHRISTMAS WE ARE MADE CONSCIOUS OF HOW ILLUSIVE PEACE IS ON THE EARTH. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT PEOPLE ARE MORE FRIENDLY AND GREETINGS AND GOODWILL ARE MORE COMMON AS CHRISTMAS DRAWS NEAR, AND SOMETIMES EVEN CEASE-FIRES TAKE PLACE ON CHRISTMAS DAY, THERE ARE STILL GRAVE PROBLEMS ON THE EARTH.

"ONE DAY THAT SPIRIT WILL PERMEATE THE ENTIRE EARTH AND NEVER LEAVE. CHRISTMAS SPEAKS OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE AND WHEN HE RETURNS IT WILL BE CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY AND EVERYWHERE."

THE PEACE FOR WHICH MEN HAVE LONGED FOR THE AGES WILL COME ONLY WHEN THE KING RULES ON EARTH, NOT ONLY IN SOCIETY BUT IN THE HEARTS OF MEN. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE PROBLEM JESUS HAD WITH ISRAEL WAS THAT THE NATION WANTED POLITICAL DELIVERANCE FROM THE OPPRESSION OF ROME, BUT NOT SPIRITUAL DELIVERANCE. THAT IS THE BASIC PROBLEM IN THE WORLD TODAY. MEN WANT POLITICAL BENEFITS IN THE WORLD WITHOUT SPIRITUAL CHANGE IN THE HEART. THE STORY IS TOLD THAT IT WAS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT LORD NELSON OF ENGLISH NAVAL FAME WAS KNOWN TO BE BOTH KIND AND COURTEOUS TO DEFEATED OPPONENTS. AFTER ONE PARTICULAR NAVAL VICTORY, THE DEFEATED ADMIRAL WAS BROUGHT TO NELSON'S SHIP. KNOWING NELSON'S REPUTATION FOR COURTESY AND HOPING TO TRADE UPON THAT FACT, THE ADMIRAL ADVANCED ACROSS THE DECK WITH OUTSTRETCHED HAND IN A GESTURE DESIGNED TO SHAKE HANDS WITH AN EQUAL. NELSON'S HAND REMAINED AT HIS SIDE AND HE SAID: "YOUR SWORD FIRST, AND THEN YOUR HAND." BEFORE YOU AND I MAY BECOME CHRIST'S FRIENDS, WE MUST FIRST BECOME HIS SUBJECTS. HANDEL SAID IT CORRECTLY WHEN HE SPOKE OF CHRIST'S SOVEREIGN POWER AS KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

##

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 7, 1980

A.M.

THE OFFICES OF CHRIST: PROPHET

LUKE 4:16-21

MOST OF US HAVE SUNG THESE WORDS:

"PRAISE HIM, PRAISE HIM,
JESUS, OUR BLESSED REDEEMER!
HEAVENLY PORTALS, LOUD WITH HOSANNAS RING!
JESUS, SAVIOUR, REIGNETH FOREVER AND EVER;
CROWN HIM, CROWN HIM, PROPHET AND PRIEST AND KING!"

THE SCRIPTURE SPEAKS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THREE ASPECTS: PROPHETIC, PRIESTLY AND KINGLY IN NATURE. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THESE THREE OFFICES WERE SERVED BY DIFFERENT PEOPLE BUT IN CHRIST ALL THREE ARE ACCOMPLISHED IN ONE PERSON. AS PROPHET, JESUS SPOKE FOR GOD TO MEN. AS PRIEST, CRHIST REPRESENTS MEN BEFORE GOD., AS KING, HE RULES FOR GOD OVER MEN. (OUR LORD'S FUNCTION IN THESE OFFICES INVOLVES MORE THAN MERE ECCLESIASTICAL TITLES. FROM TIME TO TIME, PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO CALL CLERGYMEN. SOME ARE CALLED POPES, ARCHBISHOPS, CANON, CARDINAL, CURATE, RECTOR AND VICAR. MOST OF THESE TERMS ARE FOREIGN TO CHURCH GOING PEOPLE UNLESS THEY ATTEND CHURCHES WHICH HAVE A HIGHLY ORGANIZED ECCLESIASTICAL STRUCTURE.) OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS WERE THOUGHT OF AS MEN WHO DENOUNCED ISRAEL FOR THEIR SINS AND PRONOUNCED JUDGMENT. YET, ONE OF THE PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF A PROPHET WAS TO GIVE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE TO THE NATION IN CONDUCTING AFFAIRS. SANDERS REMINDS US THAT PROPHETS ACTED AS THE CONSCIENCE OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL. THEY LIFTED UP THEIR VOICES AGAINST THE RELIGIOUS ABUSES OF THE DAY AND SPOKE GOD'S MESSAGE TO MEN WITHOUT REGARD FOR PERSONAL WELFARE, COMFORT OR CONSEQUENCES. THE PROPHETS DIAGNOSED THE MORAL SICKNESS IN ISRAEL AND PRESCRIBED THE REMEDY OF REVIVAL AND RETURN TO GOD. THEY SAW BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE HISTORICAL PROBLEMS TO A GLORIOUS DAY OF BLESSING IN FAVOR UPON THE NATION.

OF ISRAEL. THE TERM PROPHET CARRIES TWO BASIC IDEAS WITH REFERENCE TO FUNCTION:
(1) FORETELLER - IN THIS CAPACITY, THE PROPHET ENGAGED IN A PREDICTIVE OR PROPHETIC MINISTRY. HE WAS A FORETELLER OF FUTURE EVENTS AND IN THAT CAPACITY HAD FORESIGHT.

(2) FORTHTELLER - IN THIS CAPACITY THE PROPHETS' MINISTRY WAS PRECEPTIVE WITH INSIGHT A REVEALER OF GOD'S MESSAGE AND A PROCLAIMER OF THAT MESSAGE OF GOD TO MEN.

OUR LORD'S PREDICTIVE OR PROPHETIC MINISTRY ENCOMPASSES SEVERAL KEY PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE, NAMELY, PASSAGES SUCH AS MATT. 24-25 AND LUKE 21. HOWEVER, FOR THIS TIME WE LIMIT OUR CONSIDERATION TO THE FORTHTELLING ASPECT OF A PROPHET'S MINISTRY. WE WILL LOOK AT JESUS' PREACHING MINISTRY WHERE HE WAS FORTHTELLING OR PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE OF GOD SPEAKING FOR GOD TO MEN. (RELATE SURPRISE AT THE LIMITED AND SCARCITY OF MATERIALS CONCERNING THE PREACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS. RELATE READING "LISTENING TO THE GIANTS" AND "WALKING WITH THE GIANTS" WHERE THE NAMES OF SPURGEON, PHILIPS, BROOKS, JOSEPH PARKER, J. H. JOWETT, G. H. MORRISON, G. C. MORGAN, MACCLAREN, F. B. MEYER AND BROADUS.

JOHN A. BROADUS IS A NAME UNFAMILIAR TO MOST IN THIS AUDIENCE. HE LIVED ALMOST A CENTURY AGO AND DIED IN 1895. A. T. ROBERTSON, ONE OF THE GREAT GREEK SCHOLARS OF THE PAST 100 YEARS SAYS OF THIS MAN HE WAS ONE OF THE "WORLD'S GREATEST PREACHERS." "THE WORLD HAS NEVER SEEMED THE SAME TO ME SINCE BROADUS PASSED ON. FOR 10 YEARS I WAS ENTHRALLED BY THE WITCHERY OF HIS MATCHLESS PERSONALITY. FOR 3 YEARS I WAS HIS STUDENT, FOR 7 YEARS I WAS HIS ASSISTANT AND COLLEAGUE AND FOR PART OF THE LAST YEAR LIVED IN HIS HOME. NO MAN HAS EVER STIRRED MY NATURE AS BROADUS DID IN THE CLASS ROOM AND IN THE PULPIT. AT HIS BEST AND IN A CONGENIAL ATMOSPHERE BROADUS WAS THE EQUAL OF ANY MAN I HAVE EVER HEARD." OTHER MEN HAVE SPOKEN OF HIM AS "A PREACHER HARDLY SECOND TO ANY IN THE WORLD." HE WAS CALLED THE PRINCE OF THE PULPIT EVEN THOUGH MOST OF HIS LIFE WAS SPENT IN THE CLASSROOM. IN HIS BOOK ENTITLED "THE MINISTER AND HIS GREEK NEW TESTAMENT"

ROBERTSON DEVOTES THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE BOOK TO THE MINISTRY AND MEMORY OF JOHN BROADUS. IF MEN SPEAK IN SUCH GLOWING TERMS ABOUT THEIR FELLOW MAN, IMAGINE WHAT IT MUST HAVE BEEN TO HEAR JESUS PREACH AND TEACH. NONE HAVE EVER SPOKEN AS HE SPOKE. WITH THAT IN MIND, WE WILL LOOK AT JESUS, THE PROPHET, AND LIMIT OUR CONSIDERATION TO A SINGLE PASSAGE IN THE WORD OF GOD.

I. HIS ANOINTING - LUKE 4:14-18

THE PRACTICE OF APPLYING OIL OR PERFUME UPON PERSONS AND THINGS WAS AN OLD TESTAMENT PRACTICE. IT WAS MOST COMMON RELATING TO KINGS AND PRIESTS. ALTHOUGH, IN THE TABERNACLE BOTH FURNISHINGS AND PRIESTS WERE SET APART TO GOD FOR SERVICE WITH THIS KIND OF OFFICIAL ACT. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THE ANOINTING OF A PERSON TO BE KING SPOKE OF HIS LEGAL AUTHORITY OR RIGHT TO RULE. THE ANOINTING WAS A SYMBOLICAL ACT OF AUTHORITY. IN I SAM. 10:1 IT SAYS: "THEN SAMUEL TOOK A VIAL OF OIL, AND POURED IT UPON HIS HEAD, AND KISSED HIM, AND SAID, IS IT NOT BECAUSE THE LORD HATH ANOINTED THEE TO BE CAPTAIN OVER HIS HERITANCE?"

WHEN SAUL FORFEITED HIS KINGSHIP IT SAYS OF THE SAME SAMUEL: "THEN SAMUEL TOOK THE HORN OF OIL, AND ANOINTED HIM IN THE MIDST OF HIS BRETHREN: AND THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON DAVID FROM THAT DAY FORWARD." (I SAM. 16:13) IN BIBLE TYPOLOGY, OIL IS SOMETIMES A SYMBOL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THE ANOINTING SPOKE OF A SPECIAL ENDOWMENT OF THE SPIRIT AND SYMBOLIZED DIVINE APPROVAL AND AUTHORIZATION TO DO ONE'S WORK. IN THE CASE OF ISRAEL'S KING, HE IS CALLED "THE LORD'S ANOINTED" AND THIS VERY TERM BECAME SYMBOLICAL OF THE KING. THE WORD CHRIST IS THE NEW TESTAMENT EQUIVALENT TO THE OLD TESTAMENT MESSIAH WHICH SPEAKS OF THAT PERSON WHO BEARS GOD'S SPECIAL ANOINTING AS IT RELATES TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL, THE ULTIMATE AND SUPREME KING. ON AT LEAST FOUR OCCASIONS THE TERM ANOINTING IS USED WITH REFERENCE TO JESUS. THE TERM REFERS TO A SPECIAL ENDOWMENT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH SUPERNATURAL POWER IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT HIS OFFICIAL FUNCTION AS THE PROPHET OF GOD.

IN THIS PARTICULAR CONTEXT, JESUS WAS ENTERING UPON HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY AS IT RELATED TO HIS PROPHETIC OFFICE. (COMMENTS: THERE ARE TWO AREAS REGARDING THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY OF WHICH OUR LORD WAS THE SUPREME EXAMPLE.

(1) CALL - THIS IS A DISAPPEARING ASPECT OF THE LORD'S WORK WHICH IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE.

(2) ANOINTING FOR SERVICE - TO BE SURE, THERE IS AN OVERLAPPING OF THE TERMS ANOINTING AND FILLING. F. B. MEYER IN A BOOK WRITTEN TO LAYPREACHERS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY UNDERSTOOD THIS IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE SPIRIT'S MINISTRY WHEN HE SAID: "THERE IS ALL THE DIFFERENCE POSSIBLE BETWEEN DELIVERING A SERMON AND UTTERING A MESSAGE. HE SPOKE OF A LECTURER OR A PROFESSOR WHO IS ABLE TO TAKE FACTS AND INFORMATION EVEN EXPOSITION OF SCRIPTURAL TRUTH BUT HE POINTED OUT THAT THERE IS A VAST DIFFERENCE IN ACCUMULATING INFORMATION AND PASSING IT ON TO OTHER PEOPLE WITHOUT THE TRUTH GRIPPING THE HEARERS. MEYER GOES ON TO SAY THAT THE DIFFERENCE IS WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD GRIPS BOTH SPEAKER AND HEARER TO THE POINT DIVINE TRUTH IS DRIVEN INTO THE HEART TO CHANGE LIVES TO THE GLORY OF GOD. ONLY THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAN ACCOMPLISH SUCH RESULTS."

II. HIS AUDIENCE - LUKE 4:16, 22, 28-30

JESUS SPENT MOST OF THE FIRST 30 YEARS OF HIS LIFE IN THE TOWN OF NAZARETH OF GALILEE. IT WAS TO THAT AREA AND TOWN IN THE NORTHERN MOST PROVINCE OF PALESTINE THAT JESUS RETURNED TO BEGIN HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY. GALILEE IS A LOVELY PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK. IT IS THE GARDEN SPOT OF PALESTINE. FERTILE FIELDS WERE EVERYWHERE AND IT WAS A RELATIVELY DENSELY POPULATED AREA NOTED FOR QUICK TEMPERED, COURAGEOUS PEOPLE. JESUS RETURNED HERE TO ESTABLISH HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY AND TO PRESENT HIS CREDENTIALS AS MESSIAH. BENGEL HAD SUGGESTED THAT JESUS RETURNED TO NAZARETH TO REPAY A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE CITY WHERE HE HAD BEEN REARED TO MATURITY. JESUS BEGAN PREACHING IN THE SYNAGOGUES IN GALILEE, AS IS SEEN IN THE TEXT, BUT AFTER A TIME OF OPPOSITION THE DOORS CLOSED. HOWEVER, HE CONTINUED HIS MINISTRY ON HILLSIDES, SEASHORES, ALONG ROADS,

IN FIELDS AND IN PRIVATE HOMES. EVEN THOUGH WE ARE EMPHASIZING THE PREACHING MINISTRY OF CHRIST, IT IS INTERESTING TO OBSERVE THAT HE WAS EQUALLY AT HOME WITH ONE PERSON OR TEN THOUSAND. HE USED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD TO PEOPLE. THERE ARE NO LESS THAN 19 PRIVATE INTERVIEWS OF OUR LORD MENTIONED IN THE GOSPELS. THERE IS AN INTERESTING SIDELIGHT IN THE TEXT IN THE FACT THAT IT SAYS THAT JESUS WAS "BROUGHT UP" IN NAZARETH. A STUDY OF THE CONTEXT WILL REVEAL THAT HE WAS BROUGHT UP CORRECTLY. PART OF THAT UPBRINGING INVOLVED PROPER SPIRITUAL HABITS AS THEY RELATED TO THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE SABBATH DAY. THE WORD SYNAGOGUE LITERALLY MEANS "TO GATHER TOGETHER". IT WAS THE CENTER OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN PALESTINE. THERE WAS ONLY ONE TEMPLE IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM BUT THERE WERE SYNAGOGUES IN EVERY TOWN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. EVEN THE SMALLEST TOWNS HAD A SYNAGOGUE, THAT IS, IF THERE WERE AT LEAST 10 MEN IN THE TOWN. THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THIS FACILITY WAS TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION. IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM ALONE, HISTORIANS SAY THAT THERE WERE NO LESS THAN 450 SYNAGOGUES. JESUS REVEALED HIS CORRECT HABITS CONCERNING WORSHIP BY HIS ATTENDANCE IN THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE SABBATH DAY. JESUS RETURNED TO HIS HOMETOWN, TO A DIFFICULT AND PREJUDICED AUDIENCE, TO PRESENT HIS CREDENTIALS AS KING. THE STARTLING FACT OF THIS PASSAGE IS THEIR FAILURE TO RESPOND TO HIS PRESENTATION. TO BE SURE, VERSE 20 SAYS THAT THEIR ATTENTION WAS "FASTENED" ON HIM. THE BASIC IDEA HERE IS TO STRETCH OR TO FIX ONE'S ATTENTION UPON. THEY WERE FASCINATED BY WHAT HE HAD TO SAY AND WITH THE GRAVITY OF HIS DECLARATION BUT THEY COULD NOT GET BEYOND THE IDEA THAT HE WAS JOSEPH'S SON. IMPLICATION WAS HE COULD NOT BE WHAT HE CLAIMED TO BE BECAUSE THEY KNEW HIS FAMILY BACKGROUND. MCCLAIN POINTS TO THE FACT THAT THERE WERE TIMES WHEN THE GENERAL PUBLIC SEEMED TO BE ATTRACTED TO JESUS AND TO RECEIVE WHAT HE HAD TO SAY. HOWEVER, THIS WAS DUE LARGELY ON PART TO THE PHYSICAL BENEFITS BESTOWED UPON THE PEOPLE SUCH AS MIRACLES AND FEEDING. HOWEVER, THROUGHOUT THE WORD OF GOD THE FICKLE ATTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE BECAME OBVIOUS. HERE, IN SPITE OF WHAT HE SAID, HIS ORIGIN BECAME THE QUESTION AND THE CROWD WAS ANYTHING BUT FRIENDLY AND ACCORDING TO VERSE 28,

THEIR DISMAY TURNED TO HOSTILITY IN A SWIFT AND SHOCKING FASHION TO THE POINT THAT HIS AUDIENCE TURNED TO A LYNCH MOB! THEIR HOSTILITY SEEMED TO BE TRIGGERED BY JESUS' DECLARATION OF GOD'S OPENNESS AND FAVOR TOWARD THE GENTILES. WHEN JESUS SHOWED THAT GOD'S FAVOR WAS EXTENDED TO THE NEEDY, IRRESPECTIVE OF NATIONAL ORIGIN THAT WAS MORE THAN THIS JEWISH CROWD COULD TOLERATE. THEREFORE, THE OUTCOME OF JESUS' PREACHING WAS LITTLE APPRECIATION AND VIRTUALLY NO ACCEPTANCE OF WHAT HE WAS SAYING! THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE IN THE SYNAGOGUE WAS VIOLENT. WHAT SEEMS TO HAVE INFURIATED THEM WAS THE TWO-FOLD ILLUSTRATION GIVEN BY JESUS CONCERNING GENTILES. BY IMPLICATION, JESUS SHOWED THAT NAZARETH HAD NO SPECIAL PRIVILEGE BEFORE GOD, AND THAT GOD HAD NO SPECIAL OBLIGATION TO BLESS THEM. YET, THEY WERE SO SELF RIGHTOUS AND PROUD OF THEIR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE THAT THEY WERE WILLING TO KILL JESUS FOR MAKING SUCH A STATEMENT. HIS MESSAGE HAD TOUCHED THE NERVE OF THEIR INDIFFERENCE AND SPIRITUAL PRIDE. IN THAT CITY OF APPROXIMATELY 20,000 PEOPLE NOT ONE PERSON RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST. AN ENTIRE CITY FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THE IDENTITY AND WORTH OF THE MESSIAH. THEIR PROBLEM WAS SIMPLY RELIGIOUS PRIDE. THEY CONSIDERED THEMSELVES BETTER THAN OTHER PEOPLE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. THEY WERE, SO TO SPEAK, GOD'S PETS, SOMEBODY SPECIAL AND CERTAINLY NOT LIKE THE GENTILES. NAZARETH WOULD NOT RECEIVE THE MESSAGE OF JESUS BECAUSE IT CUT ACROSS THEIR PRECONCEIVED PREJUDICES ABOUT GOD. THEY WOULD NOT ACCEPT WHAT JESUS HAD TO SAY AND TRIED TO DO AWAY WITH BOTH MESSENGER AND MESSAGE. (RELATE TO MAN WHO WAS GIVEN A GOSPEL TRACT AND WHO REPLIED: "DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?" THE MAN GIVING OUT THE TRACT REPLIED: "IT WON'T MATTER WHO YOU ARE WHEN YOU STAND BEFORE GOD.") IN THE SYNAGOGUE THERE WAS AN ATTENDANT WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING OUT AND PUTTING BACK THE SACRED ROLLS OF SCRIPTURE. IT WAS ALSO HIS RESPONSBILITY TO KEEP THE SYNAGOGUE CLEAN AND TO ANNOUNCE FROM THE ROOF WITH THREE BLASTS FROM A TRUMPET THAT IT WAS TIME TO ASSEMBLE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, EVERY SYNAGOGUE SERVICE WAS DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS:

(1) TIME OF PRAYER, (2) READING OF SCRIPTURE WHICH

III. His APPROACH

AT TIMES AS MANY AS SEVEN PEOPLE READ, (3) THE TEACHING PART OF THE SERVICE. SINCE THERE WAS NO PROFESSIONAL MINISTER IN THE SYNAGOGUE, A PRESIDENT WOULD INVITE DISTINGUISHED PERSONS TO TALK OR TO LEAD A DISCUSSION. AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRELIMINARIES GIVES ONE THE IMPRESSION THAT JESUS' PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. ONE IS IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED FOR WHAT HE SAID. HAD HE REMAINED QUIET OR SILENT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS MIGHT HAVE PERMITTED HIM TO DO SOME OF THE THINGS HE DID BUT HIS DECLARATIONS CONCERNING HIMSELF, ISRAEL AND GOD WERE MORE THAN THESE PEOPLE COULD BEAR. EVERYTHING JESUS SAID ON THIS MEMORABLE DAY POINTED TO THE FACT THAT HE WAS MESSIAH. THE FULFILLMENT OF THESE PROMISES WHICH JESUS SAID WERE FULFILLED THAT DAY IN THEIR EARS HAD TO DO WITH MESSIAH'S KINGDOM. THE PREACHING OF THE "ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD" WAS GROUNDED IN HISTORY AND PROPHECY. ACCORDING TO LEV. 25:8-17 THE YEAR OF JUBILEE WAS A PICTURE OF A TIME IN THE FUTURE WHEN MESSIAH WOULD BRING GREAT BLESSING TO THE LAND. ISRAEL'S ORIGINAL WEALTH CAME FROM 3 SOURCES:

(1) THE FLOCKS AND HERDS THEY BROUGHT INTO EGYPT.
(2) THE QUANTITIES OF GOLD AND SILVER THEY RECEIVE FROM THE EGYTPIANS WHEN THEY LEFT EGYPT.
(3) LAND ACQUIRED BY DIVINE GRANT FROM GOD IN PALESTINE.

EVERY FAMILY IN ISRAEL EXCEPT THE LEVITES WAS GIVEN AN ORIGINAL ALLOTMENT OF LAND. TO THESE GRANTS WERE ATTACHED INTERESTING CONDITIONS SUCH AS THE TITLE TO THE PROPERTY CAME DIRECTLY FROM GOD AS THE ORIGINAL OWNER AND THEREFORE WAS INCONTESTABLE. "THE LAND IS MINE". (LEV. 25:23) THIS LAND WAS SECURE FROM ANY FUTURE TAMPERING. THE OWNER OF THE LAND WAS GUARANTEED FREEDOM TO USE THE LAND, THAT IS, HE COULD FARM IT, RENT IT, MORTGAGE IT, ABANDON IT OR EVEN SELL IT FOR A PERIOD OF TIME. HOWEVER, THE ONE THING THE OWNER COULD NOT DO WAS SURRENDER PERMANENT TITLE TO THE LAND FOR IT REMAINED FOREVER IN HIS FAMILY. GOD KNEW THAT UNDER ANY ECONOMIC SYSTEM OR FREEDOM EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO HOLD PRIVATE PROPERTY, THERE WILL BE SOME INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL BE UNWISE

AND UNABLE TO FUNCTION PROPERLY. THEREFORE, THE LAW GRANTED EVERY PERSON THE LIBERTY TO LOSE HIS PRIVATE PROPERTY TEMPORARILY BUT ALSO SAFEGUARDED THAT PERSON FROM STARVATION. HELP WAS EXTENDED TO THE POOR WITH REFERENCE TO HARVESTING GRAPES AND GRAIN WHICH COULD BE GLEANED BY THE POOR, THUS HELPING THEM AND AT THE SAME TIME ENABLING THEM TO MAINTAIN THEIR SELF RESPECT. (LEV. 19:9-10, DEUT. 24:19-22) UNDER THE MOSAIC CODE IF HELP TOOK THE FORM OF A LOAN IT WAS TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO INTEREST - LEV. 25:35-37 AND THE CREDITOR COULD NOT HOLD AS SECURITY ANY PERSONAL PROPERTY ESSENTIAL TO THE WELFARE OF THE BORROWER. ALSO, UNDER A SPECIAL SYSTEM INDEBTEDNESS WAS AUTOMATICALLY CANCELLED EVERY SEVEN YEARS. (DEUT. 15:1-3) THE GRAND SAFEGUARD AGAINST POVERTY WAS MANIFESTED IN THE YEAR OF JUBILEE. EVERY 50TH YEAR SLAVES WENT FREE, ALL DEBTS IN CONNECTION WITH REAL ESTATE WERE CANCELLED AND EVERY MAN COULD RECLAIM HIS ORIGINAL ALLOTMENT OF LAND WHICH HE MAY HAVE LOST THROUGH SALE, INDEBTEDNESS OR POOR MANAGEMENT. THEREFORE, THE LIBERTY ATTACHED TO THIS JUBILEE YEAR WAS LIBERTY FROM INDEBTEDNESS, PERSONAL BONDAGE, HUNGER AND PERSONAL PROPERTY. "THE LAW OF THE JUBILEE YEAR ONLY GUARANTEED A FRESH START FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, NOT ECONOMIC SECURITY IRRESPECTIVE OF HUMAN FOLLY. IT WAS A NOTABLE CONTRIBUTION TOWARD A SOLUTION TO THE AGE LONG PROBLEM, HOW TO STRIKE A PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN ECONOMIC LIBERTY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY." (A. J. MCCLAIN) THEREFORE, THE YEAR OF JUBILEE ALWAYS HELD UP HOPE FOR THE POOR. IT WAS IN THAT CONTEXT THAT JESUS STOOD AS GOD'S ANOINTED ONE AS THE ONE WHO WOULD BRING IN THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL. A CLEAR REFERENCE TO HIS MESSIANIC AUTHORITY. THE KINGDOM BENEFITS WERE AVAILABLE. THIS IS ONE OF THE ASTONISHING STATEMENTS WITH REFERENCE TO JESUS' MESSIANIC CREDENTIALS.

IV. HIS AUTHORITY - LUKE 4:34, 36

THE WORD AUTHORITY IN THE TEXT WAS USED TO REFER TO DIFFERENCE KINDS OF AUTHORITY SUCH AS ROYAL, DOMESTIC, LEGAL, CIVIL, MILITARY AUTHORITY. JESUS, FROM THE RELIGIOUS POINT OF VIEW, WAS AN UNEDUCATED MAN. HE HAD NOT TRAINED IN THE RABINICAL SCHOOLS.

YET, WHEN HE SPOKE HE DID NOT REFER TO OTHER SOURCES, HE SIMPLY SAID: "I SAY UNTO YOU". HE DID NOT SAY: "IT IS MY OPINION, I THINK, MAYBE THIS WOULD BE GOOD ADVICE, IF I WERE YOU I WOULD CONSIDER, I THINK YOU OUGHT TO DO SUCH AND SUCH, MAY I MAKE THIS SUGGESTION, I COULD BE WRONG BUT." BARCLAY REMINDS US THAT JESUS ASSUMED THE RIGHT TO TELL MEN WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO LIVE. HE DID NOT TAKE THESE THINGS UNDER ADVISEMENT FOR DISCUSSION. HE SIMPLY APPROACHED MEN WITH THE ASTONISHING DECLARATION THAT HE HAD THE AUTHORITY TO DIRECT THEIR LIVES AND HE SAID TO THEM SIMPLY: "FOLLOW ME. HE DEMANDED THAT THEY LEAVE THEIR HOMES, PARENTS, JOBS AND SET OUT WITH HIM ON A ONE-MAN CRUSADE. HE DEMANDED THAT THEY UPROOT THEMSELVES, ABANDON ALL APPARENT SAFETY AND SECURITY, BID FAREWELL TO ALL THAT WAS NORMAL IN LIFE AND FOLLOW HIM IN AN ADVENTURE WHICH NONE OF THEM COULD FULLY UNDERSTAND WITH REFERENCE TO ITS OUTCOME. HE DEMANDED LOYALTY AND OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDS. HIS REQUIREMENTS WERE ABSOLUTE, UNQUALIFIED, UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER TO HIS LORDSHIP. SUCH AUTHORITY, TO SAY THE LEAST, IS ABSOLUTELY ASTONISHING - AS THE TEXT SAYS. OUR LORD SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY UNPARALLELED IN HUMAN HISTORY AND WHICH UTTERLY DEVASTATED HIS HEARERS. WHEN HE SENT HIS DISCIPLES INTO THE WORLD HE SAID SIMPLY: "ALL POWER IS GIVEN UNTO ME IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH". (MATT. 28:18) WHEN IT COMES TO AUTHORITY THIS IS THE MOST ALL ENCOMPASSING SWEEPING STATEMENT POSSIBLE FOR ANYONE, ANYWHERE TO MAKE! IT IS A STATEMENT OF ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY. WHEN JESUS SPOKE, HE SPOKE WORDS WHICH NEEDED NO SUPPORT FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE, HIS WORD ON ANY SUBJECT WAS FINAL. ONE OF THE MOST FAMILIAR TEXTS IN SCRIPTURE DEALING WITH AUTHORITY IS JOHN 1:12. JESUS HAS AUTHORITY TO BEGAT SPIRITUAL LIFE TO THOSE WHO PLACE THEIR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. (RELATE BILL LAYNE LETTER.)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING MAY 31, 1981

A.M.

Revised Sept. 1984

PEOPLE ON THE RUN

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE AN INTERESTING WAY OF DISCRIBING THE RAPID PACE OF LIVING TODAY, THEY CALL IT LIFE IN THE FAST LANE. THESE PEOPLE HIT THE GROUND RUNNING EACH MORNING AND DO NOT STOP UNTIL THE COLLAPSE INTO BED AT NIGHT. THE DULL ROUTINE OF A MEASURED PACE FOR QUITE LIFE IS NOT FOR THEM. (RELATE TO TV COMMERCIALS) WE ARE PEOPLE ON THE GO IN FAST CARS AND AIRPLANES. FOR SOMETIME, I HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING THE WORD RUN OR RAN AS IT IS USED IN THE BIBLE. SOMETIMES THIS WORD IS USED IN A FIGURATIVE SENSE MUCH IN THE WAY WE MIGHT SAY "RUNDOWN OR OVER TO THE STORE" OR "RUN OVER TOWN" TODAY, WE WILL LOOK AT THIS WORD AS IT RELATES TO SEVERAL PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE. BY THE WAY, THERE WERE MEN KNOWN AS RUNNERS IN SCRIPTURE. RELATE TO CUSHI AND AHIMAAZ. II SAMUEL 18:21-23, II SAMUEL 15:1 -50 "OUTRUNNERS." THESE TWO MEN BELONGED TO A SELECT GROUP BEFORE THE INVENTION OF TELE-PHONE OR TELEGRAPH - "TELERUNNER". (INSERT IDEA OF WALKING FOR RUNNING AS IT RELATES TO MARRIAGE TEST.)

I. THE HASTE OF YOUTHFUL OBEDIENCE- I SAM.3:1-5

THE OPENING VERSES OF THIS CHAPTER REFLECT THE MORAL AND POLITICAL DECLINE OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL THE TIME OF SAMUELS BIRTH. THE ARK WAS IN THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINES WHO THREATENED ISRAEL AND HER VERY EXISTENCE. IT WAS A TIME OF PERMISSIVENESS, POLYGAMY AND SPIRITUAL DECLINE- JUDGES 21:23. ISRAELS SIN HAS RESULTED IN THE HIDDEN FACE AND SILENCE OF GOD'S VOICE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE ARE ONLY TWO RECORDS OR REFERENCES OF GOD SPEAKING DURING THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES. ELI'S SONS REFLECTED THE SAD STATE OF THE PRIESTHOOD. THERE WERE NO MEN THROUGH WHOM GOD COULD REVEAL HIMSELF. THE N. A. S. V. SAYS: "WORD FROM THE LORD WAS RARE IN THOSE DAYS, VISIONS WERE INFREQUENT" THERE WAS NO VOICE FROM GOD AND THERE WAS NO OPEN VISION SUCH AS WHEN GOD APPEARED TO OTHERS SUCH AS ABRAHAM, MOSES

AND JOSHUA. THE SILENCE OF GOD WAS TO REMIND ISRAEL OF THEIR NATIONAL AND PERSONAL SINS. THE "LAMP OF GOD" REFERS TO THE CANDLESTICK FOR ONLY LIGHT IN THE TABERNACLE. INTO THIS DESPERATE SITUATION A CHILD WAS BORN. MUCH OF WHAT HE BECAME, WAS DEPENDANT UPON THE SPIRITUAL DEDICATION OF HIS GODLY MOTHER. SHE TOOK HIM TO THE HOUSE OF GOD, DEDICATED HIM TO SERVICE THERE AND IT WAS IN THAT ATMOSPHERE THAT GOD CALLED SAMUEL. OUR TEXT IS VERSE 5 AND THE WORD RAN. NOTICE THE VERBS THE LORD CALLED, SAMUEL ANSWERED, SAMUEL RAN. GOD CALLED SAMUEL AS HE MINISTERED TO THE LORD IN THE SMALL TASKS OF ROUTINE RELIGIOUS LIFE. HE OPENED AND CLOSED THE DOORS OF THE TABERNACLE AND LIT THE CANDLESTICK. ALSO HE MADE HIMSELF AVAILABLE TO HELP THE AGED PRIEST ELI. IN ALL PROBABILITY, SAYS JOSEPHUS, SAMUEL WAS ABOUT 12 YEARS OLD AT THIS TIME. TWO OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS YOUNG MAN LEAP FROM THE TEXT. (1) HIS SENSITIVITY TO THE VOICE OF GOD. SAMUEL WAS LISTENING SO WHEN GOD CALLED HE HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD. (2) SAMUELS AVAILABILITY TO THE CALL OF GOD. WHEN GOD CALLED HE WAS WILLING TO OBEY AND BEGAN TO MOVE. HE RAN TO ELI BUT HIS VERY ACT OF MOVING INDICATED THE WILLINGNESS AND OBEDIENCE OF HIS HEART. (BY THE WAY - PLEASE NOTICE THAT HE CALLED HIM WHEN HE WAS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD AND NOT IN THE DEVILS TERRITORY.) GOD CALLS MOST OF HIS CHOICE WORKERS WHEN THEY ARE YOUNG. BEFORE THE PERILS OF MID-LIFE, FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES, SECURITY PROBLEMS AND THE INTANGLEMENT WITH THE AFFAIRS OF LIFE. MANY PEOPLE LOOK BACK WITH REGRET AT WASTED YOUTH AND WRECKED LIVES BECAUSE THEY SOUGHT TO SERVE THEMSELVES AND THEIR OWN PLEASURES INSTEAD OF SEEKING TO DO THE WILL OF GOD. SOMEWHERE ALONG LIFE'S ROAD, GOD AND HIS WILL SHOULD BECOME A PRIORITY IN THE LIVES OF CHRISTIAN YOUNG PEOPLE. TO THE YOUNG PERSON IN THE RIGHT PLACE, WITH AN OBEDIENT HEART, GOD WILL CALL TO A LIFE OF SERVICE AND FULFILLMENT. IF WE GO THROUGH LIFE MISERABLE, UNHAPPY AND UNFULFILLED IT IS OUR FAULT NOT GOD'S!

QUESTION: HAVE WE EVER ANSWERED GOD AS DID SAMUEL - HERE I AM?

II. THE HASTE OF RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM - MARK 10:17

IF WE WERE LOOKING FOR AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF HIGH MORALITY APART FROM GRACE, THE RICH YOUNG RULER IS THE OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE. HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU KNOW WHO RUN TO CHURCH TO HEAR ABOUT JESUS?

BY FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE RUN FROM THE LORD RATHER THAN TO HIM. THIS RICH YOUNG MAN WAS CHARMING IN MANY WAYS. HIS LIFE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY EXEMPLARY IN EVERY WAY. HE HAD RESPECT FOR HIS PARENTS AND FOR TEACHERS LIKE JESUS. HE BOWED HIS KNEE TO THE LORD IN COURTESY AND RESPECT. WHEN THE LORD SAW HIM, HE LOVED HIM AND I AM QUITE SURE OF MUCH OF WHAT THE RICH YOUNG RULER SAID ABOUT HIMSEFL WAS ABSOLUTELY TRUE! TO FIND SUCH A PERSON WITH A POSITIVE AND MORAL OUTLOOK ON LIFE IS BOTH RARE AND ENCOURAGING . MOST PEOPLE WOULD WELCOME SUCH A PERSON INTO ANY RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT! THIS WAS A "GUY WITH GUSTO" AGGRESSIVE, APPEALING, WILLING TO GET INVOLVED, YOUNG AND RICH! WHAT ELSE COULD ONE ASK FOR? IN ESSENCE WHAT THIS MAN WAS ASKING JESUS WAS: "WHAT CAN I DO FOR GOD?" HIS APPROACH TO JESUS WAS ON THE BASIS OF ONE GOOD PERSON TO ANOTHER! THIS YOUNG MAN WAS WILLING TO JOIN JESUS MOVEMENT, TO GET INVOLVED, TO GIVE GENEROUSLY AND TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF JESUS IN PALESTINE. LOOK AT ALL THE POSITIVE THINGS ON HIS SIDE OF THE LEDGER, RESPECTFUL AND REVERENT, AN ARISTOCRAT BOWING TO A CARPENTER, A HUMBLE GOOD MAN RECOGNIZED JESUS AS AN OUTSTANDING TEACHER WHOSE PHILOSOPHY WAS WORTHY OF HIS ATTENTION. THIS YOUNG MAN TOOK THE TIME TO INQUIRE TO INVESTIGATE TO SEEK OUT JESUS AND EXAMINE HIS MOVEMENT. THE RICH YOUNG RULER WAS AN OUTSTANDING HIGH PRINCIPLED SINNER! HIS FAILURE IS THE FAILURE OF EVERY NATURAL OR UNSAVED MAN AND THAT IS HE WAS WILLING TO COME TO JESUS BUT MAKE NO SPIRITUAL CHANGE! WITH ALL OF HIS MARVELOUS MORAL CHARACTER-ISTICS JESUS SAID SOMETHING WAS MISSING (VERSE 21) THE WORD LACK IN THIS VERSE IS TRANSLATED "COME SHORT" IN ROMANS 3:23! RESPECT FOR JESUS IS NOT RECEIVING HIM. AS A MATTER OF FACE, THIS MAN WAS WILLING TO DO IT HIMSELF BUT GOD DOES NOT ASK US TO SAVE OURSELVES BY OUR GOOD WORKS BUT RATHER TO LET CHRIST DO THE SAVING. RELIGION SAYS, "KEEP THE RULES AND BE SAVED" SALVATION SAYS "RECEIVE THE SAVIOUR AND SAVED" THE DIFFERENCE IS FUNDAMENTAL AND VITAL IN THE BIBLE. THE RICH YOUNG RULER REPRESENTS A CLASS OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK UPON ETERNAL LIFE AS A GOAL TO BE ATTAINED WHEREAS THE BIBLE SAYS IT IS A GIFT TO BE ACCEPTED! THIS IS THE NUMBER ONE AREA OF RELIGION CONFUSION IN THE WORLD TODAY. (TITUS 3:5 EPHESIANS,2-8-9, ROM. 4:5-6) MEN DO NOT DICTATE TO GOD THE TERMS OF THEIR SALVATION. THIS YOUNG MAN PICTURES A PERSON WHO WAS LOVABLE, CHARMING AND ATTRACTIVE IN

CHARACTER BUT CHARACTER WITHOUT CHRIST IS NO BASIS FOR SALVATION. BASICALLY, THERE ARE ONLY TWO APPROACHES TO RELIGION AND SALVATION.

(1) THERE ARE THOSE WHO EXPECT TO BE SAVED BY DOING

(2) THERE ARE THOSE WHO KNOW THEY ARE SAVED BY SOMETHING ALREADY DONE.

YOU AND I ARE EITHER TRYING TO SAVE OURSELVES OR LET CHRIST DO THE SAVING THERE IS NO MIDDLE GROUND. THE STORY IS TOLD OF THREE MEN WHO WENT TO NEW YORK SEVERAL YEARS AGO TO HAVE A BIG TIME. THEY REGISTERED AT A FANCY HOTEL AND WERE GIVEN THE OPTION OF A MODERATELY PRICE ROOM, MODERATE LUXURIES OR THE FINEST SUITE IN THE HOTEL ON THE 29TH FLOOR. THEY TOOK THE LUXURIOUS SUITE. AFTER THEY WERE SETTLED IN THE ROOM THEY WENT OUT FOR DINNER AND A NIGHT ON THE TOWN. WHEN THEY RETURNED IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS TO THE HOTEL THEY DISCOVERED THAT THE ELEVATOR WAS NOT WORKING. BEING IN A GOOD FRAME OF MIND, THEY JOKED ABOUT WALKING TO THEIR ROOM. THE FIRST SEVERAL STORIES NO PROBLEM BUT HALF WAY UP THEY HAD TO REST AND SLOWLY PAINSTAKINGLY THE LAST FEW FLOORS WERE MADE BY CRAWLING STEP BY STEP SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY THEY REACHED THE TOP. THE FIRST ASK THE SECOND TO UNLOCK THE DOOR BUT THE SECOND DID NOT HAVE THE KEY. THEY BOTH LOOKED AT THE THIRD MAN WHO EMPIED HIS POCKETS TO REVEAL THAT HE TOO HAD FORGOTTEN THE KEY. 29 FLOORS UP THEY HAD FORGOTTEN THE KEY. MANY PEOPLE LIKE THESE MEN ARE CRAWLING AND GROPING THEIR WAY UP THE "STAIRS OR LADDER" TO HEAVEN. THE PROBLEM IS THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN THE KEY AND WHEN THEY GET TO THE HEAVENS DOOR IT WILL BE CLOSED TO THEM FOREVER REGARDLESS OF MORAL CONDUCT BECAUSE CHRIST IS THE KEY OR WAY INTO HEAVEN. (JOHN 14:6, ACTS 4:12)

Parental

III. THE HASTE OF PATERNAL OR DIVINE FORGIVENESS LUKE 15:20

THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON IS ONE OF THE MOST FAMILIAR IN THE BIBLE AND MAYBE ONE OF THE MOST FAMILIAR STORIES IN THE WORLD. HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE CHARACTER IN THE STORY WHO IS USUALLY OVERLOOKED - THE FATHER. AS YOU KNOW, THE FATHER IN THE STORY REPRESENTS OR IS SYMBOLICAL

OF GOD THE FATHER. THIS IS THE ONLY PASSAGE, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, IN THE BIBLE THAT PICTURES GOD IN A HURRY! THE TERM RAN IN VERSE 20 SUGGESTS THIS GREAT TRUTH. BY CONTRAST NOTE IN THE CREATION STORY IN GEN. THE UNHURRIED PACE OF GOD AS CREATOR. ALSO BY CONTRAST NOTICE THAT THE ELDER BROTHER PICTURES RELIGION WITH ITS COLD CALLOUSED CALCULATING APPROACH TO HUMAN NEED. THE FATHER WAS ONLY GLAD TO SEE HIS SON THE BROTHER WAS ONLY SAD. THE ESSENCE OF THE STORY IS THAT WHEN PRODIGALS HEAD FOR HOME, THE FATHER IS ALWAYS ANXIOUS WATCHING AND WAITING AND READY TO EMBRACE THEM. THE UNDERLYING TRUTH ABOUT THE FATHER IN THE STORY IS THAT THE FATHER OR GOD IS ALWAYS QUICK TO FORGIVE. BY THE WAY, THE TWO ATTITUDES OF THE PRODIGAL ARE MENTIONED IN THE STORY: (1) GIVE ME - THERE WAS NO CONCERN FOR THE FATHER. (2) FORGIVE ME - THERE WAS NO CONCERN FOR HIMSELF . WHEN THE PRODIGAL WENT TO THE FOREIGN COUNTRY HIS DESIRE WAS TO LIVE "HIGH ON THE HOG " BUT HE WOUND UP LIVING WITH THEM! IN THE FAR COUNTRY WITH HIS FATHERS MONEY AND HIS NEWLY BOUGHT FRIENDS THE SON SELDOM IF EVER THOUGHT OF THE FATHER. HOWEVER, WHEN HIS FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND FAIRWEATHER FRIENDS WERE GONE, HE BEGAN TO THINK OF HOME, FAMILY, LOVE AND THE PLENTY IN HIS FATHERS HOUSE. IN A SENSE, THE PRODIGAL FORGOT HIS FATHER BUT THE FATHER NEVER FORGOT HIS SON. IT IS MY JUDGMENT, EVERY DAY OF THE FATHERS LIFE THAT WAYWARD BOY WAS HEAVY UPON HIS HEART. THERE IS NO SORROW IN LIFE LIKE THE SORROW OF A WAYWARD CHILD! WHEN THE PRODIGAL SON CAME TO HIMSELF THIS BOY WHO HAD ONLY WANTED HIS FATHERS WEALTH NOW WANTED HIS FATHERS WILL. THE POINT OF EMPHASIS TODAY IS THAT THE FATHERS LOVE TOWARD HIS SON WAS RICH, GENEROUS AND FORGIVING. WHEN THE PRODIGAL RETURNED THE FATHER DID NOT SCOLD HIM OR SEEK TO BRING HIM IN THE BACK DOOR OF THE HOME BUT WAS GENEROUS AND OUTGOING IN HIS LOVE AND REJOICED WITH A JOY THAT ONLY TRUE DEPENDENCE CAN GIVE. HIGHLY IMPRESSED WITH THE WORD THAT THE FATHER SAID NOT A SINGLE WORD ABOUT THE FOOLISH AND WASTEFULNESS OF HIS WAYWARD SON. IN EXCHANGE FOR THE SONS RAGS THE FATHER GAVE A ROBE. IT WAS NO ORDINARY ROBE BUT THE BEST ONE FOR FESTIVE DAYS AND JOYFUL OCCASIONS. THE RING WAS A SYMBOL OF HONOR AND AFFECTION AND SYMBOLIZED TRUST. THE SHOES WERE THE SIGN OF A FREE MAN CONSTRAST TO A BAREFOOT SERVANT. SONS WORE SANDALS. THE CALF SPOKE OF JOYFUL FESTIVITIES IN WHICH THE COMMUNITY

COULD SHARE IN THE JOY OF A REUNITED HOUSHOLD. THERE IS A TOUCH OF IRONY IN THE CONCLUSION OF THIS STORY. THE FATHER SAID HIS SON WAS DEAD BUT WAS NOW ALIVE. HE WAS LOST BUT NOW FOUND. QUESTION : WHEN DID HE DIE? OBVIOUSLY THE REFERENCE WAS TO HIS SPIRITUAL AND NOT HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME AND THE PRODIGAL SON. WE HAVE ALL WASTED OUR LIVES AND THE FATHERS RESOURCES SO BOUNTIFULLY BESTOWED UPON US FOR OUR OWN PLEASURE AND INTEREST. THE SAME FATHER WHO WAITED AND WANTED HIS WAYWARD SON TO COME HOME WAITS FOR YOU AND ME TO TAKE THAT FIRST STEP OR MOVE TOWARD HIM. GOD IS WAITING TO FORGIVE AND HE WILL RUN TOWARD US AND EMBRACE US IF WE WILL TAKE THAT FIRST STEP TOWARD HOME.

" RAISING THE DEAD"

During the days of our Lord's public ministry He raised 3 persons from the dead. And yet surrounding these unusual events there was none of the strange cultic weirdness that goes along with much of the world of psychic phenomenon which deals with visions, crystal balls, dreams, ESP, mental telepathy, astrology, inner voices, vibrations and attempts to communicate with the neuter world. There was no mystic or gypsy spirit surrounding the ministry of Christ. In these 3 acts of restoring life to the dead there is a simplicity and openness that was so characteristic of our Lord. In each of these cases, the person restored to life responded in a different way, and this will be the basis of our study today.

I. THE RAISING OF JARIUS DAUGHTER--Mark 5:21-24 35-43.

The Gospel of Mark is the action gospel. Other gospels tell us what Jesus said --Matthew. What Jesus felt--Luke. What Jesus was--John. But of all, it is Mark who stresses so well what Jesus did! Who of us having read this book completely thru can forget the characteristic usage of the key words--"straightway, immediately" The narrative moves with vital interest and in an atmosphere of exitement. It was written to the Roman mind which was more interested in seeing the snapshots of life rather than the full length story of our Lords life in detail--this was left to men like Luke.

A. The Plea of An Anxious Father--v.21-23

Every parent who has ever had one of their children seriously ill can understand the feeling of this man's heart. Illness and death are never easy matters to deal with in life but they are even more difficult when they involve the lives of children. (** Remember when our oldest was in the hospital-- a young couple brought their daughter to the hospital who had fallen onto concrete walk from chinning bar on the play ground. All night vigil wondering about her condition---everyone in the hospital was deeply concerned--everything else seemed to be secondary to seeing how this girl would respond to treatment.)

The text tells us that this man was not just an ordinary man in the community--he was a man of influence and respect. He was a "ruler of the synagogue." That does not carry much weight in our thinking today, but in Biblical times this man was one of the most important in town.

" THINGS THAT WORK "

The other morning as I came to the study, I stopped to exchange the usual morning greetings with our church custodian. When asked how he was feeling that day, his reply was: "I am agravated." His watch had been to the jewelers a couple of times and he had taken it off in disgust and laid it down---it still wouldn't work! The next morning, I turned the key in my V.W. and instead of the roar of the engine, I heard a faint dying sound as the battery gave evidence of being dead--it wouldn't work!

Ours is an age that wants and enjoys things that work. Someone said a few years ago that everything in the American home works by a switch--eveything except the children! There is nothing more useless than a television set that won't work when your favorite program is on---talk to a T.V. dealer and let him tell you how out of sorts and downright mean some folks get if they don't have their sets working when they are prepared to relax for the evening! (Jack Loy)

The Bible has a great deal to say about things that work. As a matter of fact, the world measures the quality of our beliefs by how well they work in our lives. If your "religion" just gets you out to church at 11:00 on Sunday morning, it does not work too well as far as your witness to a lost world is concerned.

TRIALS Work For Our Good.

I. EVERYTHING THAT GOD BRINGS INTO THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN WORKS FOR GOOD--Rom. 8:28

This verse begins with the conjunction--"And." This links the verse with the preceeding verses dealing with the Spirit's ministry in the life of the believer. God's Holy Spirit is actively engaged in directing the believers life according to a plan. (Campus Crusade have popularized this idea in their tract.) The verse does not say that all things work together for good for everybody! It does say that all things work together for good to them that love God...called according to his purpose! There is no such thing as "luck" or "chance" for the Christian. (Prov. 16:33) This verse does not say we will fully understand and appreciate everything that comes into our lives at the time that set of events happen to occur.

Cindy is weaving a rug. Look at the back it looks like a tangled mass of yarn--rather unattractive to look at. Turn the rug over and the design is very lovely. Our view of life is often the "worms eye view" rather than the "bird's eye view"! Someone has illustrated the same trust like this: Remember those days before Betty Crocker and Duncan Hines when ladies

III. THE WORD OF GOD WORKS FOR GOOD IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN --1 Thess. 2:13 Retreat - young people.

The Word of God changes people. It was the Word of God used by the Spirit of God that brought us to a saving knowledge of Christ. 1 Pet. 1:23, James 1:18, Rom. 10:17. The Word of God is able to cause us to grow as believers. This is one of the by products of public worship services where the Bible is preached--exposure to God's transforming Word. Col. 3:16, Heb. 4:12.

I have no fear for the spiritual development of a believer who comes daily to the Bible for spiritual nutrition. The real problem in the life of a Christian is when he or she begins to neglect a personal, devotional study of the Scriptures every day. (Acts 17:10-11.) Jer. 15:16, Job 23:12. Psalm 119:11, 18,24,105,130--176 verses ref. to the Word of God 173 times!

*** Several years ago, a young lady came to a pastor friend of mine with a problem so disturbing she could not tell him the details only that she was far from the Lord. My friend wisely asked her to begin reading the Book of Romans. After a week or so of this great book, she returned and with broken heart with a determination to break off the romance she had been carrying on with a married man! " God's Word will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from God's Word"... said D. L. Moody.

Like a Dr's prescription! And for what ails us

IV. PRESENT AFFLICTIONS (DIFFICULTIES) ARE WORKING FOR FUTURE GLORY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN 2 Cor. 4:17-18- (Sermon 5) Bulletin

Paul was absolutely sure that nothing he had to suffer in this life was worthy to be compared with the glory of the next life. God will make up for all the sufferings of His people. (2 Cor. 11:24-28) (2 Cor. 6:4-10) When we reach glory we shall wonder why we ever sighed over the burdens of life and regret that we did not suffer more for our Lord.

As you know, several of us are preparing to go to Israel--a time of great expectation. A different mood has come over us--excited about the prospects of the tour--everytime we get together this is the topic of conversation. We are going to take a greater trip! For some there are the fears of flying, the inconvenience of passports, photos, etc. Getting ready--but all will be worth while when we get to our destination. All of the preparation/expence will pay off then! So it is with the Christian life--all of the difficulties will be worht while. (Sermon Day) next home

(most popular man in our state 65% are saying) - [Howard Hughes J. Paul Getty]

" WHAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST"

Our generation measures the success of a man by what he has. Job, car, status symbols, where you live. (Marg. Dunlap) It is refreshing to meet a person occassionaly who is aware of the really worthwhile things in life. (Wayne LeNeave)

The Bible teaches that we believers are spiritually wealthy. However, many of us are like the Indian whom F.B. Meyer describes in one of his books. He was living in poverty and ultimately died of starvation. Around his neck on a cord, in a small pouch was a grant from the U.S. government regarding rich oil resources he and his tribe held--but even thought he was wealthy he had appropriated none of the benefits. HAVES HAVE NOTS

I. WE HAVE ACCESS TO GOD THRU CHRIST--Rom. 5:2

I had lots I knew but ~~Peter~~ Carter — with such access — learn is a living not accumulation.

In one sense of the word, this is what the Bible is all about---access to God. The word"access" means "to lead or bring near--right of approach." In literature this word was used of being ushered into the presence of royalty. It was used in naval terms of that place where ships docked--a harbor. In the O.T. we tremble at the thunder of Sinai, the barriers that were set up to keep men back. In the temple area the restrictions to keep men from the holy place except certain men on certain days. But now, in Christ, we are bid to come without fear into the very presence of God. ** Livingstone told the story of two villages in Africa were at war. He tried to get them together--"How can we be at peace while they hold my son a prisoner.?" Once we have settled the "son" question we are bid to come into God's presence thur Him. Heb. 4:16--"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to h help in time of need."

** A southern soldier who had been freed from a prison camp and was too crippled to return to the Civil War was seeking an audience with President Lincoln to intercede for his brother who was also in a prison camp and very ill. He had tried to get past the guards but failure. One day, young Tad Lincoln was walking near the White House when he noticed a crippled soldier sitting at the curb, head in hands. The man explained his situation to the boy. Tad took him by the hand past the guards to the Presidents office.

II. WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER--1 John 2:1

This term is strange to us. "One who pleads the cause of another." Every person who has ever been in a court of law knows the meaning of this idea.

"THANKSGIVING FOR THE THINGS WE HAVE IN CHRIST"

On this Thanksgiving Day there are certain things for which saint and sinner alike can express common gratitude. Appreciation for Country, a measure of freedom, family, friends, health, prosperity. However, for the believer there are some benefits and blessings which are uniquely ours because of our spiritual relationship to Christ. I would suggest four of these blessings as a basis for our Thanksgiving Service today.

I. LET US BE THANKFUL THAT THROUGH CHRIST WE HAVE ACCESS TO GOD Romans 5:1-2. (προσαγωγήν) PRIVILEGE

The word "access" means "to lead or bring near". It suggests right of approach to God. Peter used this same word in I Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that (He might bring) us to God."

The plan of God for world realized thru Christ Rom. 8:28

The Ephesian Letter:
2:18-"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." admit or admission = CONTACT. (A Continuing Privilege)
3:12-"According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." "Our faith in Him."

In Literature it was used of ushering someone into the presence of Royalty. Or the process of leading a vessel through a harbor to the dock.

Ex. 19:12 Think of the Temple Worship in the O. T. There was one barrier (Sinai) after another - restrictions to keep men from the presence of God. Certain areas restricted. Access to God limited - the High Priest himself only entering behind the veil once a year. Since Calvary, direct access on an open face basis!

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:16.

Because of our relationship to God through Christ we have the right of approach to God. I am afraid it is a right which we do not use as frequently as we should.

*A southern soldier, who had been freed from a prison camp too crippled to return to the war, was seeking an audience with President A. Lincoln to intercede for his brother who was also in a prison camp - very ill. His repeated request to the guards at the White House were denied. One day little Tad Lincoln was playing near the White House when he noticed a crippled soldier sitting at the curb weeping. He asked why he was crying. The soldier explained his need, not knowing the identity of young Tad Lincoln, but glad to talk to anyone who appeared to be sympathetic. Tad took the man by the hand - past the guards, assistants, into the very office of President Lincoln. There were no restrictions or questions - a family relationship made the

-169-

T.N.T. to fill a freight train from here to the moon/back 15 times. 1 H. Bomb=more explosive power than all explosives used in World War II.)

2. Don't know or realize the dangers in the world. Rose colored glasses. Enemies will have us sooner or later. Russia/China will progress - be more civil to us.

3. Those who believe our only hope is in the intervention of God into human history and the affairs of men.

The Bible says our "forerunner" is in heaven. (Explain) Our hope is sure. "My Hope Is Built.

IV. LET US BE THANKFUL THAT IN CHRIST WE HAVE AN ALTAR FOR THE PROPER SACRIFICE TO GOD. Heb. 13:10-15

These verses speak of our Lord's sacrificial death. The altar was Calvary. Because of His sacrifice for us - we who are saved should render a proper sacrifice to our Lord. That sacrifice is praise to Him! A person who praises the Lord is mindful of the Lord's goodness to him.

*Remember the prodigal's brother? One of the things that bothered him - "he heard music and dancing" - the sounds of joy! Perhaps the reason he was bothered - (joy) and praise have a contagious quality. One word of praise will light the fire of praise in another's life. There is enough darkness, dullness, sullenness in the world without our participation in it!

I Thessalonians 5:18 - "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Ephesians 5:20"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul's inditement of universal guilt - "Because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful..."Romans 1:21.

* "Peal it."-Illustration

Psalm 107:(5)