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*The*

# **WORD and WORK**

*"Holding forth the Word of life."*

OCTOBER, 1980

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Wm. Robert Heid, Editor

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# God's Family

W. R. H.

## HELPLESS AGAINST THE MEDIA

Doesn't it distress you to think that outside forces can be so strong and sinister that they can affect the thinking of mankind to the point where he will react to his own destruction? That our otherwise rational thinking can be coerced into making a judgment that eventually proves unjustified? For example, I recall when VE day came in May, 1945, that almost immediately General Hershey, the director of the draft, said that it would be until 1948 before the eleven million men overseas would get to come home. I could understand that he was trying to suppress our optimism of a soon return home, but I could see no reason for talking in terms of three years, just to propagandize the troops and the populace at large. Praise God, I got home in about four months, in spite of Gen. Hershey.

Now, it is presidential election time, and I hate to think that the outcome of our election will be affected, possibly to a great extent, by the manipulations of Iran, Russia, and Cuba. But such can well be the case. I read where Iran thinks it would be better for them if the U. S. reelected their present administration than to risk what might be if the U. S. has a change. We can expect any negotiations about the hostages to be made, first and foremost with an aim of bettering the position of Iran. The hostages are still, as they have been from the beginning, mere pawns in the game of power.

It is also noticeable that Russia can ease up a bit in their thrust into Afghanistan, while Cuba can suddenly release some American prisoners and make weak overtures of cooperation with our immigration officials. If these changes in policy can come just at election time, what can we expect to follow, which ever way the election turns out? The real shame is that they will have an affect upon many of our citizens—men who prefer to be swayed to and fro rather than think for themselves.

As serious as these foregoing remarks are, I really want to devote this page to a more serious election, and that is "the Election of Grace." Concerning this election (of grace), someone has well said that God has voted for you, Satan has voted against you, and you have the deciding vote. This election of salvation is not for a 2- or 4- or 6-year term, but is for eternity. And it is not for an office beneath the Capital

dome or in the Oval room, but a home eternal in the heavens; that home that Jesus calls a mansion in His Father's house. Here, the issues are clear cut: heaven vs. hell, God vs. Satan, destruction vs. life, eternal rest vs. eternal torment.

In that first heavenly convention, God said, "Let us make man, in our own image and in our likeness. And let him have dominion over . . . all the earth." In God's wisdom, he made us free moral agents, able and permitted to choose, and it was then that Satan began his control of the media in order to win the election. Mud-slinging? Yes! He impugned the truthfulness and goodness of God. In a timely way he gave a news-release, that "the tree was to be desired to make one wise," and that "they would be like God, knowing good and evil." Eve and then Adam both voted that day, and their candidate, Satan won out.

Today, Satan is still in the business of slanting the news; of releasing what he wants to be known, and of withholding what he wants to stay hidden from us. He deals in the money market, and convinces men that money can cure all of the ills. Even governments have been sold this in toto, so that whatever goes wrong, disease or crime or famine or poverty—all we need is to appropriate more money. It is interesting to notice that the mark of the beast will determine whether men will be able to "buy and sell," making the money market the arena in which it will operate.

Satan is constantly slanting the news about sin. Sin has been denied, whitewashed, camouflaged, re-labeled, artificially colored and perfumed until the abhorrence of it has been swapped for peaceful coexistence, even by many good men and women. Adultery and divorce are as common as the measles. Sex behavior that would put a man out of the army under "Section 8" is now considered an acceptable life style, and to be amended into our constitution. Induced abortion has come into vogue as a women's right, one that ought to be paid for by the taxpayer. Premarital sex is being accepted as a "phenomenon of our society," as though that makes it O.K.

Yes, Satan has slanted things so much that it is hardly possible for a young person to choose. It is only with the light from the Word of God that there is any hope for purity, joy, and true happiness.

As Christians, we are a part of God's media. As Paul told the Corinthians, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not of ourselves. Indeed, the power is great. And the need for the release of this news has never been greater. May God grant us to hold high the light of the glory of the Gospel of Christ, in order that those who really seek truth may have the possibility of finding it. We cannot expect men to choose the way of the cross until they have some testimony borne to them that is so convincing as to bring them to repentance. This witnessing is the task of each Christian.

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## *Viewing the News*

Jack Blaes

**HEAT FOR THE RUSSIAN WINTER.** From the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade of June 1980: Said Artyom Troitsky, Deputy Chief of a department at the USSR State Planning Committee, "The Russian winter is no joking matter. Last year the temperature in Moscow and Gorkey dropped to -40C. A reliable heat supply is a vital problem, and it should be permanent, not an "on-off" affair as is the case in Western Europe or the USA. The mining and combustion of excavated fuel accounts for approximately 60% of harmful influences upon the environment. One-third of all fuel used in the USSR goes to produce heat." The problem is for the USSR to produce a heat supply that will be adequate and, at the same time, reduce the ecological harm. This is the same problem which America and the rest of the world faces. The safety factor is not to be overlooked either. Mr. Troitsky continues: "In order to minimize the harm without reducing the heat supply the USSR has begun an atomic station which will make it possible to shut down 200 boiler rooms which at present use fossil fuels and are filling the air with harmful pollutants. By converting to atomic energy the air will become much cleaner." In reply to a question about the safety of Atomic energy for heating factories and homes, Mr. Troitsky said, "Mankind will never solve the fuel and energy problems without atomic stations. It is impossible to reject them, but it is possible to make them reliable and safe. And that is what we are doing." He also pointed out that Atomic energy is much more economic than their present sources of energy.

**IS NUCLEAR POWER DANGEROUS?** We hear that it is, and, of course, it is.

But what is not dangerous? Atomic Scientist Peter Beckman indicates that he believes nuclear energy to be the safest answer to our energy problems.

Speaking of the Three Mile Island accident, Dr. Beckman points out that TMI was the first accident in history where a major amount of power, 843 megawatts, was temporarily out of control, did \$150 million worth of damage and resulted in a toll of zero dead, zero injured and zero deceased. This has never happened before in the history of accidents with huge amounts of energy, and yet TMI has become the rallying cry for the biggest brainwash campaign in the U.S., and around the world, in modern times." Another myth about atomic energy is the one about nuclear plants exploding. "Inducing a nuclear explosion in 3% enriched uranium, which is used to generate nuclear power, would violate physical law," says this expert on nuclear power. "It is utterly impossible."

ACCORDING TO DR. BECKMAN THE NUMBER TWO CAUSE OF accidents in America each year is falls. "Over 250 people were killed last year just going up on their roofs to adjust their CB radio antennas. Imagine if people had to go up on their roofs to scoop the snow off their solar collectors, or to clean off dirt and dust so the collect would function properly." So solar energy, too, has its hazards. Get out your placard and go protest.

**ZIMBABWE USED TO BE RHODESIA.** Now, this country which used to be free is firmly under the rule of Marxist terrorist Robert Mugabe, thanks to much help from the U. S. State Department. Last month Mugabe called on

President Carter for direct financial aid and asked the United Nations for \$1.5 billion at once and another \$5 billion over the next five years. And you know, I just won't be surprised when he gets it.

"THE STRIKING WORKERS IN POLAND have shown immense courage," declares Congressman Ron Paul (R-Tx.). "I wish the same could be said of our government." Since World War II, the U.S. Government has subsidized Polish Communism with \$677 million of taxpayer's money. "And in 1979 alone," says Dr. Paul, "we gave the government of Poland \$500 million in loans and loan guarantees." This has relieved the Soviet Union from the heavy burden of propping up the socialist Polish economy.

THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE LATEST American Legion Convention in Boston is very interesting: RESOLVED, by the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Boston, Massachusetts, August 19, 20, 21, 1980, that we demand in the best interests of our country that the Congress of the United States launch a comprehensive investigation into the Trilateral Commission and its parent organization, the Council on Foreign Relations, to determine what influence has been and is being exerted over the foreign and domestic policies of the United States.

SOVIET COMMUNISM IS MELLOWING? Some would never know. For twenty years Pyotr Vashchenko and members of his family have tried to emigrate from the USSR where they have been persecuted and imprisoned for their Christian beliefs. In June of 1978 Vashchenko and his wife, three of their children, and another Christian mother and son sought asylum in the American Embassy in Moscow, hoping to come to the U.S. Last year, Ambassador Malcolm Toon told the group they should accept the Kremlin's promise that they would not be persecuted if

they left the Embassy and returned home. The seven, having experience of what the word of the Communists is worth, refused to leave. The group has vowed to stay in the Embassy—where they all live in a 12-by-20-foot room in the basement—until they are either allowed to go to the U.S. or till they die. Relatives in the Siberian town of Chernogorsk were told earlier that the Christians will never be permitted to leave. The sickening attitude of the U.S. Embassy, according to one American journalist on the scene, "is one of tolerant disapproval, fearful lest numerous other disillusioned Soviets force their way into the compound."

HIGHER EDUCATION COSTS. New Department of Education rules concerning bi-lingual education will cost the nation's school districts and taxpayers an additional \$592 million of the coming school year. Secretary Sherley Hufstedler's Department of Education is demanding that school districts institute bi-lingual education whenever at least 25 students of one language group are enrolled. If the school district does not comply, Secretary Hufstedler will order tax money that would normally have gone to the school district as federal funding be withheld.

THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGGS: The most recent Internal Revenue Service figures indicate that of some 91 million income-tax returns filed, 43.9% reported incomes below \$10,000. These filers paid but 4.4% of the total income taxes. There were 15.5% filing between \$10,000 and \$15,000; this group paid 8% of the overall taxes. Thus nearly 60% of the populace provided one-eighth of the income-tax revenue. On the other hand, the so-called middle class, with incomes between \$15,000 and \$50,000 got clobbered: It filed 38.2% of the returns which resulted in 10.1% of the taxes collected by the I.R.S. and those earning more than \$50,000 (2.4%) paid a disproportionate 27.4% of the total.

Carl Kitzmiller is minister of the Oakdale, Louisiana Church of Christ and writes the Sunday school lessons for Word and Work Lesson Quarterly.



## Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

*Please explain to me about Christian offerings.*

This request comes from one who is a new Christian. The individual's background is such that there is probably not the basic understanding which would be held by some in becoming Christians. Because of Bible teaching received or one's associations, some who become Christians already understand, even if somewhat imperfectly, many Christian truths. Others may not have this advantage. We will try to give, therefore, a sort of basic summary of New Testament teaching concerning Christian giving.

Every organization, association, etc., has to have finances to carry on its work. The extent of that will depend on several factors—aims, personnel, necessary equipment, etc. This is achieved in several ways. Some are underwritten by a wealthy person or a charitable foundation. Others may depend on many small gifts from interested individuals. Some may have a subscription or fee system, and the members are assessed certain sums. Some may operate a business and use the profits to finance the activity. Some may charge for services rendered. Or there might be a combination of these methods used. Human organizations may use any method that is legal and that has been agreed upon by the membership. Some methods may be wiser than others, or may be more adapted to the needs, or be more likely to succeed. There is no divinely given blueprint for these to follow, however.

The church of the Lord does not have the freedom of human organizations. It is directed by Christ, the Head. It must not only be bound by what is legal and ethical, but also by the principles and examples of the New Testament. It is true that religious bodies in the name of Christ have adopted most, if not all, of the above methods, and possibly others, to raise finances, but not all of these fit the New Testament pattern. Some of them are questionable. Some, while not wrong in and of themselves, do not provide the Christian the opportunity to grow and to serve. Some put the church in the position of being a beggar. The New Testament gives us enough teaching on the matter of giving that we can have a financial system for the church that is totally in harmony with scripture.

The earth is the Lord's. The cattle on the thousands of hills are His. God has no lack as to material things. There is a sense in

which we human beings can give Him nothing. It is already His. And He could have worked out a system whereby the church was financed by gifts directly from heaven. Instead He has chosen to finance the church by gifts made by Christians, the members of the church: In much that God does in the world He uses human instruments, and it is so in the matter of church finances. The abundance of supply is not so much controlled by what He has as by the faithfulness and liberality of His people.

For the sake of drawing some distinctions, let us review the matter of giving in the Old Testament. This represents a system no longer binding on God's people seeing we live under the new covenant or New Testament, but there are principles to be found in the Old Testament which are still valid. Under the law God required of the children of Israel tithes *and* offering. The tithe is simply a tenth. This was used largely to provide the offerings made before God and to support the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi was the one from which the priests came and which was in charge of the temple and the religious activity. During the time of their service the priests lived from the goods provided by the worshippers. Since there was the killing of many animal sacrifices (Christ had not yet died and removed this necessary act of worship), much of the giving under the law was in providing animals for sacrifice. But in addition to the tithe, God called for voluntary offerings according to the ability of the people to give. In effect, the religious life of the people of Israel was financed by tithes and offerings brought by the people. The tithe was a sort of religious tax, required whether they gave it willingly or not. Offerings were made above what was required and belong more in the category of free-will offerings, offerings made by choice of the worshipper.

Now Israel was not always faithful in giving the tithe and offerings. It would be oversimplification to say that God's only concern in bestowing or withholding His blessing on the nation had to do with their giving. This was one area or activity of their lives about which He was concerned. At times He brought chastening on them for their unfaithfulness in giving—sometimes a drought, reducing their crops and their incomes, or insects to destroy the crops, etc. Generally His method was this—if they withheld, then He would withhold those things affecting their gain; if they were faithful, He blessed them with good crops, etc. In the long run they gained more when they were faithful in giving than they gave in tithes and offerings. This seems to be a principle through the ages of God's dealings with man—man does not outgive God, and it does not really cost him to give as God requires. Of course God is not going to be made a tool by man, and we must avoid the misconception that this is a mechanical rule or that God is not interested in any other facet of our life. Great financial gain is not always a mark of God's approval. God's judgments do not always come immediately. Even so, there is a comparison between our sowing and reaping. A liberal heart before God often receives liberally from God.

When we come to the New Testament and the early church, there is no longer any need to bring the sacrifices as of old. Christ was the

once-for all sacrifice for sin. Even so, there continued to be giving on the part of God's servants. One of the more remarkable examples follows the establishment of the church. Some of those who had become Christians on Pentecost and shortly thereafter had presumably come from long distances. They remained for a period in Jerusalem for instruction and fellowship. Some of those Christians therefore who had houses or land sold their property in order to give the money to the church to meet these needs. Liberal, voluntary, free-will giving became and is the financial method of the church. They were not compelled to sell their property; they chose to do so to meet the need. Shortly thereafter persecution scattered Christians from Jerusalem and the property they owned would have been only a liability. The communistic (but not atheistic) arrangement did not last long and did not destroy the right of private ownership of property in the church. We mention it here because it shows the spirit of New Testament giving—liberality to meet a valid need.

Funds continued to be needed by the church. In the early church offerings were used to support mission work, to care for certain needy people, to support those who preached the gospel, and presumably any other need the church had in carrying on the work given by God. We do not have every use of Christian funds spelled out and we can only be guided by the examples, by principles, and by sanctified common sense. At the first the church seems to have met in public buildings or in borrowed or rented quarters. If someone "gave" a place for the church to meet, that was an offering of sorts, so we assume these funds were used legitimately in providing buildings for meeting, etc. Surely there needs to be wisdom so that church funds are not used for trivial or God-dishonoring purposes, but whatever is needed in carrying out the commission of the church is provided for in such funds.

An offering was a regular feature of the Lord's Day worship service of the early church (1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 2:42, where "fellowship" includes sharing in financial need). Such giving is indeed an act of worship when it is a loving gift to the Lord from the heart. In a zeal to raise funds, some have tried to carry over the Old Testament law of the tithe as still binding on Christians or have adopted methods and pressures which do not honor God, and Christian giving is seen sometimes today as a burden to be avoided in every way possible. Some are always looking for an "easy" way to finance the work of the church, one which gets the money from others, even non-Christians, or which in some way bypasses giving. We repeat, however, that the New Testament plan for church finance is the liberal, free-will offering by Christians themselves, given regularly on the first day of the week. When this is done there will be no necessity for high-pressure methods, shoddy schemes, or even "passing the plate" at every service—morning, evening, weekdays, etc. There will be no need for the church to seem to be a beggar.

A great deal of New Testament teaching on the matter of giving is found in 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9. Here we have the "secret" of liberal giving—first giving ourselves to the Lord (8:3-5). It is called a grace, one of the qualities desired in the Christian (8:7). We are given the supreme example—that of the Lord Jesus (8:9). We are

taught it is not the size of the gift that counts but the readiness and giving according to ability (8:11-12). There is a need for equitable sharing in this responsibility—a few ought not have to carry the load for others (8:13-15). We learn that responsible and honorable conduct in the handling of the funds is important (8:18-24). Our giving to the Lord is to be bountiful, with purpose, not grudging or of necessity, but cheerful (9:6-7). It is noted here that God enables greater giving by those who give freely (9:8-11). Finally, it is pointed out that this kind of giving not only meets the needs of the saints but results in glory to God (9:12-15).

A word needs to be said about the amount. Christians are to give as they have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2) and as they have purposed in their hearts (2 Cor. 9:7). Christians are not under the law of the tithe. "Then God does not require that I give ten percent of my income?" someone asks. No, not as a law. But He does want you to give liberally, freely, bountifully. Many new Christians have found that ten percent or more is a good starting place, and then they give more as they grow in ability to do so. The new covenant is better than the old, and grace should get a better response than law. We should not be satisfied with less than the Jews did! "As purposed" suggests some kind of percentage giving rather than giving on the basis of emotion or chance. "Purpose of heart" suggests a definite plan.

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## THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

### "Hopeless Human Nature"

In studying Romans 3:10-18 it is very important to remember that we are here getting a look at ourselves by nature, but from God's viewpoint. Last time we discussed the statement that "There is none righteous, no, not one", a statement that many would like to dispute because they feel they are "more righteous" than others. But God is not looking at comparisons of qualities; He is looking here for the divine perfection, for perfect righteousness; and no one has that by nature. Romans 1:16, 17, the "golden text" of Romans, tells us that the gospel saves us because it reveals the one thing we need to be saved, God's righteousness. From that time through verse 20 of this

chapter Paul is showing how completely we all miss that righteousness and must look to God to provide it in His own way.

The two statements that I would like for us to look at together this month are ones that human nature rebels against also: "There is none that understandeth, There is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11).

When Paul says that none understand, he is saying that we do not understand divine things through our natural resources. The word translated "understandeth" is always used in the Bible of divine things. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said "seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13). Five other times in that chapter He uses the word for the same thing. Those He was talking about understand lots of things, but not divine things. A different kind of use of the word but still speaking of divine things, is found in Ephesians 5:17: "Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Paul is speaking to Christians, who have been reborn from above and have the Spirit of God dwelling in them (He even commands that they be filled with the Spirit in the very next verse) to allow them to understand divine things. What a wonderful privilege it is to be able to look into the Bible, God's Word, and understand the things that God has prepared for us. But what a sad thing to contemplate that many who could understand make no effort to understand. They are satisfied to know they are saved and satisfied to stay as babes in Christ who do not understand what God has gone to so much trouble to give us. How can they say they love the Lord? Don't be one of them. Earnestly read, study, meditate on, pray over, and apply the things God has for us in His Word.

Before passing on to the second half of verse 11, let us remind ourselves again that human intelligence, human zeal, human intuition, or any other human factor can not give us an understanding of spiritual things. Paul said it very well in I Corinthians 2:15: "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged." The brainy geniuses have no advantage over the rest of us; we must all by faith lay hold of the means God provides us to understand.

Many protest on reading the second half of verse 11 that they have been seeking after God. If so it is because God has come, by means of His Spirit, and sought after them first. We have such a good illustration of that in the beginning of the Bible. When Adam and Eve sinned they sought to cover themselves, but when they heard God coming, they did the opposite of seeking after Him—they ran and hid. God then came seeking them and began the process of providing the means whereby men could come to Him—through Jesus Christ, by faith. Maybe I should also point out that when Paul uses the word "seek" he is speaking of a determined search after something. Men may begin to respond to the way God has been seeking after them before they understand that it is He that is calling, but no man makes a determined search trying to know God and His ways until God reveals to Him his need and His provision of that need in Christ.

Many who have not read Paul's statement in I Corinthians 10:20 may reply that the many gods of the world show that man is seeking after God by nature. Paul simply points out the falseness of that assumption thus: "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God." That is God speaking through His divinely appointed apostle to the Gentiles, not some man's opinion.

If you are not already a Christian, may I point out the hopelessness of your situation without Christ? Without the remaining seven verses of condemnation and the final two of summary Paul has already shown that you are not righteous, that you can not understand the things of God, and that your "religion" is not a seeking after God. Come to Christ, receive His salvation by faith, and enter into the great and wonderful position of being said to have God's righteousness, to be able to judge spiritual things, and to seek after the One Who sought so earnestly for you. Come and be saved.

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## STUDIES ON PRAYER

Jesse Z. Wood

### "MORE THAN CRUMBS"

"To the Jew first", was our Lord's instruction to His disciples. (Matt. 10:5) Later, after His resurrection, the message was to go out to every creature, including both Jew and Gentile. (Matthew 28:19, 20) But, one day a Gentile woman came, seeking the Lord, to plead for Him to cast a Demon out of her little daughter. She persistently cried out, until his disciples said, "Lord send her away for she's crying after us". (Matt. 15:31-28; Mark 7:24-30) The Lord turned and addressed her, saying, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The woman fell down at His feet, imploring Him to help her. The Lord then said, "Let the children first be filled, for it is not meet to take the childrens' bread and cast it to the dogs". But, quickly the woman answered Him, saying, "Yea, Lord, even the puppies under the table eat of the childrens' crumbs".

The tender, loving heart of our blessed Lord heard and answered this believing woman's cry, and when she got back home, she found her child released from the power of Satan, and completely well. (This woman received "More than Crumbs".)

In Luke 18:1-8, the Lord tells us of a wicked old Judge "who feared not God nor regarded man". This heartless, selfish old miser saw a poor, helpless widow coming to him, day after day, requesting

him to grant her help against some one who had wronged her. No doubt the judge's resentment kept building up against the woman, till he decided to grant her request, and be once for all , "rid of her". So her request was granted.

The Lord, in telling this story, is not comparing Himself with this old judge. Rather, He is CONTRASTING. He is the very opposite of such a man! The outstanding characteristic of our wonderful Lord is LOVE. "Love to the uttermost ". (John 13:1) And He is not impatient with us, when we come, repeatedly for "help in our time of need". (Heb. 4:14-16) Now, back to Luke 18:6: "Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And, shall not God avenge His elect, that cry to Him day and night, yet He is longsuffering (lovingly-patient) over them?" Then, the heart-searching question is asked: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, will He find (that-kind-of-faith) on the earth"?—a faith that keeps on keeping on, "without ceasing". (see 1st Thess. 5:17)

Midnight is usually a poor time to awaken even the closest of friends just to borrow a ("cup of sugar") or a loaf of bread. But, in Luke 11:5-9, we read such a story, told by our Lord Jesus, Himself. An unexpected visitor arrives at midnight, evidently hinting to the Host that he "surely would appreciate something to eat before he retired". Desperately the man of the house goes next door to a friend, calling for him to come downstairs and get him three loaves of bread to serve to his visitor. But, the sleepy-eyed neighbor complains that his whole household is in bed asleep, and he'd rather not be bothered. Nevertheless the constantly repeated request continues, until the "friend-next door" gives in, and supplies the loaves, so that he may go back upstairs and go back to sleep.

Now the Psalmist in Psa. 121:4 wrote: "Behold He that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep". Such is the undying love God has for Israel; and He loves you and me, whether Jewish or Gentile, because we love His Son. (So He states in John 16:27) And, He does not "close up shop" and go off somewhere and go to sleep—not wanting to be bothered. His eyes are never off us, nor his ear closed to our call. There is nothing He would rather hear than our prayers of repentance and of Praise. (Read Daniel 9th Chapter.) And He delights in giving us the desires of our (consecrated) hearts. (see Psalm 37:4)

At the close of the story of the "midnight-Caller" in Luke 11:9, the Lord says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (And there's more—keep reading!)

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# Will Only Part of the Church Be Raptured?

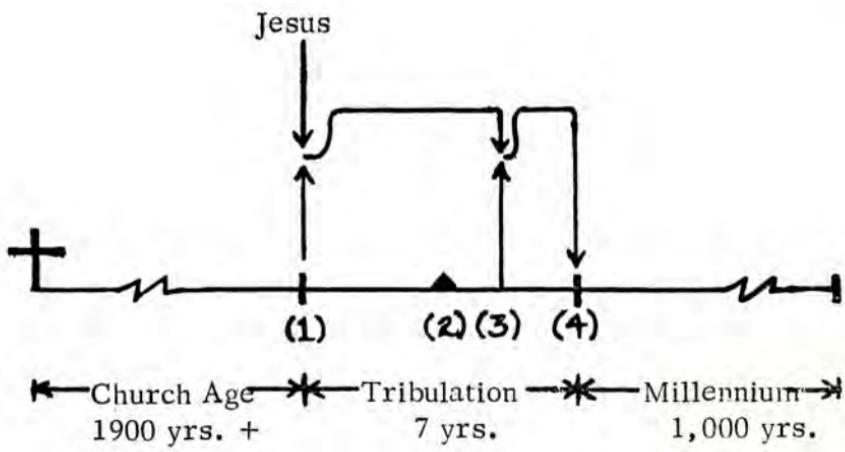
Dr. David R. Reagan



A concept of the rapture that is growing in popularity these days, particularly among Charismatics, is called "The Overcomer's Rapture." It envisions a *partial* rapture of the church at the beginning of the Tribulation. Those raptured at that time will be the spiritually mature—those "Phi Beta Kappa Christians" who have grown into the image of Jesus Christ. The rest of the church will be left on earth to experience the "refining fires" of the Tribulation, and this remaining group—probably the vast majority of all Christians—will not be raptured until the Tribulation is almost ended. They will be raptured *after* they have been "purified" by the wrath of the Anti-Christ, but *before* the outpouring of God's wrath. (See *Entrance Into The Kingdom* by Robert Govett and *Firstborn Sons: Their Rights and Risks* by G. H. Lang)

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## THE OVERCOMER'S RAPTURE



- 1) The Rapture of the "Overcomers."
- 2) The Revelation of the Anti-Christ.
- 3) The Rapture of the "Purified Church."
- 4) The Return of Christ and His Saints in Glory.

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As the chart indicates, the "Overcomer's Rapture" concept postulates two raptures. The first would occur before the Tribulation be-

gins and would include only those saints, living and dead, who had reached an advanced level of spiritual maturity. The rest of the church would be left on earth until late in the Tribulation and would not be raptured until God is ready to pour out His wrath in the Bowl Judgments (Revelation 19). At that point, those church members left behind at the first rapture who have remained faithful will be raptured, together with the martyred Tribulation saints and all those living saints who have been converted since the Tribulation began.

### THE BIBLICAL BASIS

The term, "Overcomer's Rapture," comes from the promises that are made by Jesus to "overcomers" (or "conqueror" in the RSV) at the end of each of His seven letters to the churches in Asia (Rev. 2 & 3). Because of this terminology, the conclusion is drawn that some Christians must be "overcomers" whereas others are not.

Reference is then immediately made to the parables of the wise and foolish maidens in Matthew 25. This parable portrays only five of the ten maidens as being worthy to attend the wedding feast when the bridegroom returns. The five deemed worthy are those who have their lamps filled with oil. Since oil is a common Biblical symbol of the Holy Spirit, this parable is interpreted to mean that the Pre-Tribulation rapture will affect only those church members who are filled with the Spirit. This interpretation, of course, explains why the "Overcomer's Rapture" has become so popular among Charismatic groups, for they tend to look upon their "baptism by the Spirit" (as evidenced by speaking in tongues) as a sign of their spiritual maturity—as compared to other Christians.

Other favorite scripture passages that are used to justify the "Overcomer's Rapture" concept are as follows:

- 1) Matt. 24:41-42—"Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left. Watch, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."
- 2) Luke 21:36—"But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."
- 3) I Thess. 5:6—"So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober."
- 4) II Tim. 4:8—"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."
- 5) Heb. 9:28—"...so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."
- 6) Rev. 3:10—"Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell upon the earth."
- 7) Rev. 12:1-5—The contention here is that the woman is the church and her male child who is raptured represents the faithful ones who are taken out of the world before the Tribulation begins.

Partial rapturists also like to point to the Old Testament concept of the harvest occurring in three stages: first fruits, the main harvest, and gleanings (Lev. 23:9-22). They then argue that this three stage picture of the harvest is a prophetic type that points to the rapture occurring in three similar stages. The first stage would be the rapture of the spiritually mature saints before the Tribulation begins. They are pictured as the first fruits of the harvest. The main harvest occurs later in the Tribulation, just before the outpouring of God's wrath. The gleanings are those people who are allowed to enter the Millennium after Jesus returns to the earth and judges the nations (Matt. 25:31 ff.).

### VALIDITY OF THE CONCEPT

In my opinion, the "Overcomer's Rapture" concept is not only false but dangerous. It is false because, as will be shown below, it is not firmly based in scripture. It is dangerous because it encourages spiritual pride, divides the Body of Christ, and challenges the whole New Testament concept of salvation by grace.

To begin with, the Bible provides us with a precise definition of an "Overcomer," and that definition cuts the heart out of the whole "Overcomer Rapture" concept. The definition is contained in I John 5:4 & 5—"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" I don't know how the Lord could make it any clearer that an "Overcomer" is a simple believer in Jesus and not some sort of super saint.

When Jesus refers to "Overcomers" in His seven letters to the churches in Asia, He is not referring to a type or classification of Christian. He is referring to Christians as compared to non-Christians. In other words, the churches of that day—like the churches today—contained true, born-again Christians and also persons who called themselves Christians, but who had never experienced the spiritual rebirth that comes through faith in Christ. This latter group might be termed "Cultural Christians." They are persons who are born into a Christian family, raised in the church, attend church regularly, and consider themselves Christian, but they have never experienced the reality of Jesus in their lives—and thus, they have never been born again. They are therefore *not* "Overcomers." Jesus pictures a whole congregation of these pseudo-Christians in His letter to the church at Laodicea when He speaks of Himself standing on the outside knocking at the church door, pleading for them to let Him come in. (Rev. 3:14-20)

As far as I'm concerned, this one point about the true Biblical definition of an "Overcomer" is more than sufficient to invalidate the entire concept of the "Overcomer's Rapture," but let's proceed anyway to consider some of the other arguments that are offered in behalf of the concept.

### THE PARABLE OF THE TEN MAIDENS

This parable, which serves as one of the cornerstones of the partial rapture theory, does not sustain the theory at all. In the first place, it

is not even certain that the parable has anything to do with the church. The context of the parable is Jewish. In the whole Olivet discourse, as recorded in Matthew 24, Jesus has been focusing upon the things that will happen to the Jewish people during the Tribulation. The parable is given in this discourse at a point where Jesus is discussing His second advent at the end of the Tribulation (See Matt. 24:29-51). It should also be noted that when marriage imagery is used in reference to the church, the church is always pictured as the Bride of Christ—and never as maidens who are attending a wedding feast. The most logical interpretation of the parable, therefore, is that it pertains to the gathering of the believing Jews at the end of the Tribulation.

But even if the maidens do represent the church in this parable, the story does not teach that only those who are spiritually mature and who are watchful will be raptured. For one thing, none of the maidens are watchful. They are all found slumbering at the bridegroom's return. Second, their entrance to the feast is determined not by the amount of oil in their lamps but by whether or not they have any oil at all. There is no suggestion of selection by either their degree of watchfulness or their degree of spirituality. They were either indwelt by the Holy Spirit or they were not. The foolish maidens would be those in the church today who are mere professors of Jesus. They appear to be Christians because of their words and actions, but they have never truly accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, and they are therefore not indwelt by the Spirit of God. Their lamps do not contain any oil.

### THE PROOF TEXTS

Let's take a quick look at each of the proof texts that were quoted earlier to see if, in fact, they really do teach a partial rapture of the church.

- 1) Matt. 24:41-42—It is not even clear that this passage is talking about the rapture. Its context, like the parable of the ten maidens, is the fate of the Jews at the second advent of the Lord. It may well be a reference to the gathering of believing Jews that will occur when Jesus returns. But even if it is talking about the rapture, there is nothing in the passage to indicate that only the super spiritual or the watchful will be raptured.
- 2) Luke 21:36—This exhortation to watchfulness is addressed to the nation of Israel in the midst of the Tribulation period. The rapture is not specifically mentioned. To "stand before Christ" does not necessarily mean in Heaven. All men will stand before Christ on earth at His second coming (See Matt. 25:32).
- 3) I Thess. 5:6—The distinction made here is not between watchful believers and apathetic believers. It is between believers and non-believers, between the saved and the unsaved.
- 4) II Tim. 4:8—This passage simply teaches that one of the awards which will be given at the judgment of believers for their works will be a special crown for those who looked forward with love to the Lord's appearing. It does not say that the apathetic and non-watching Christian will be left on earth. They just will not receive one of the rewards to be distributed

to the saints.

- 5) Heb. 9:28—This would be a strong proof text in behalf of a partial rapture if it were the only one in the Bible of its type. But it must be harmonized with other passages which clearly show that watchfulness is not a prerequisite to being raptured (See the parable of the ten maidens in Matt. 24:1-14). This passage must therefore be referring to what *should* be the attitude of all Christians regarding the return of Christ.
- 6) Rev. 3:10—This passage falls into the same category as James 2, with its emphasis on works. The only way such passages can be harmonized with what the Bible teaches about salvation by grace is to point out that those who are saved by grace will evidence that salvation in their works. They do not work to be saved; they work because they are saved. The contrast in this passage is, therefore, not one between lazy and hard working Christians, but between the saved and the unsaved.
- 7) Rev. 12:1-5—I hate to use the word “obviously” with regard to prophetic interpretation, but this is a passage whose primary meaning is obviously clear. The woman is Israel and the male child is Jesus, and there is no justification for trying to stretch these symbols to mean something else.

### THE HARVEST ANALOGY

Finally, there is the analogy of the stages of the harvest. This analogy, while clever and enticing on the surface, is refuted by the scriptures themselves. Paul teaches that God has already been presented with the first fruits of the resurrection. In I Corinthians 15:23, Paul calls Christ the “first fruits” of those who have fallen asleep. How can Christ and the “Overcomers” both be the first fruits of the resurrection? If the harvest analogy has any validity at all, then it should be viewed as outlined below:

- 1) First Fruits—The resurrection of Jesus.
- 2) The General Harvest—The resurrection, translation, and glorification of the saints (living and dead) at the appearing of Christ before the Tribulation.
- 3) Gleanings—The resurrection and glorification of the Old Testament righteous and the martyred Tribulation saints at the second advent of Jesus.

### SUBSTANTIVE OBJECTIONS

Even more important than the scriptural objections outlined above are the substantive objections to the “Overcomer’s Rapture” which relate to the nature of the church, the nature of judgment and rewards, and the nature of salvation.

Regarding the nature of the church, the concept of the “Overcomer’s Rapture” denies the essential unity of the Body of Christ. The concept divides the Body into two groups on the basis of works—those who are worthy of rapture and those who are not. In short, it teaches there are first class and second class citizens in the kingdom of God. In contrast, the scriptures teach the unity and equality of God’s children (I Cor. 2:12-26 and Gal. 3:28). The scriptures also teach the unity

of the promises to the church. Consider, for example, the promise contained in Romans 6:5—"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

A second substantive problem with the partial rapture concept is that it places rewards before judgment. The Bible teaches that believers have already been judged for their sins at the cross of Christ (II Cor. 5:21 and Gal. 3:13). Those who have placed their faith in Jesus have been clothed in His righteousness and stand justified before God, assured of their eternal salvation (Phil. 3:8 & 9; I Cor. 1:30; and I John 5:13). But Believers still have a judgment to face. It will not be a judgment of their sins to determine their eternal destiny. Instead, it will be a judgment of their works to determine degrees of reward in the eternal state (II Cor. 5:10; Romans 14:10-12; Rev. 22:12; and I Cor. 3:12-15).

The Bible does not clearly reveal when this judgment of Believers for their works will take place. Most Pre-Millennial scholars place it in Heaven after the rapture of the church, during the Tribulation period on earth. (See *Things to Come* by Dwight Pentecost, pp. 219-226) But whether it takes place at that time in Heaven or here on earth after the Lord returns, the crucial point is that the "Overcomer's Rapture" concept pictures the rapture as one of the rewards for works, and it is inconceivable that such rewards would be distributed *before* the judgment has taken place. In short, by picturing the rapture as a reward for good works, the partial rapture concept puts the cart before the horse. How can rewards for works be distributed before judgment for works?

### RAPTURE AND SALVATION

The most serious objection to the "Overcomer's Rapture" is the impact it has upon the New Testament concept of salvation. Whereas the Bible teaches salvation by grace through faith (Rom. 3:28 and Eph. 2:8 & 9), the partial rapture concept holds that only one part of salvation—namely, justification—is by grace. Sanctification—that is, growth into the image of Christ—is pictured as a work that splits the Body of Christ into two groups: 1) those who are growing in Christ and 2) those who are not. But, as John Walvoord has so succinctly stated it, "It is inconceivable if the church is formed by grace that it should be divided by works." (*The Rapture Question*, rev. ed., p. 99)

The resurrection and the rapture are never pictured in scripture as rewards for good works. Rather, they are portrayed as acts of the grace of God in which all Believers can expect to participate (Rom. 6:5; I Cor. 15:22 & 23, 51 & 52; and I Thess. 4:16 & 17). Furthermore, the whole salvation process of justification, sanctification, and glorification is portrayed as governed by the grace of God (Rom. 8:28-30 and I Thess. 5:23). No part of this process is dependent upon works. We are not justified by grace, sanctified by works, and then glorified by grace. It is all by grace, for which we can shout "Hallelujah!"

(Next month Dr. Reagan will begin a new series of articles on the Jew in Prophecy. Dr. Reagan would appreciate responses to this article. They may be addressed to him at Lamb & Lion Ministries, P. O. Box 527, Plano, Texas 75074.)

# "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES"

J. Miller Forcade

This exact expression, "the times of the Gentiles" is found only once in the Bible. (Luke 21:24) But this passage is part of a very comprehensive discourse in which Jesus predicted the impending destruction of the temple and the desolation of the city of Jerusalem, his own second coming and some aspects of his future judgment. The complete discourse is recorded in Matthew, chapters 24 and 25; Mark, chapter 13; and Luke, chapter 21, and it needs to be studied in its entirety.

In Luke 21:20-24 Jesus predicted the death, destruction, desolation and captivity that came upon Israel in A.D. 70. But Jesus gave a glimmer of hope to Israel when he added, "Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled".

Jerusalem, the city of peace, has been besieged twenty-one times and destroyed fifteen times. It has been under the iron heel of the Gentiles most of the time since it was captured and burned by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. But this domination of the Gentiles is to be only "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled". This hope had burned very dim in Israel until May 15, 1948 at which time she proclaimed herself an independent nation for the first time since Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman Legions under Titus in A.D. 70. Now, in 1980, thirty-two years later, united Jerusalem has been proclaimed the capital of Israel.

The Old Testament recognized the "Theocracy" of Israel as being distinct from other nations of the world usually called "Gentiles". The New Testament preserves this distinction and adds another called the "Church of God". (1 Cor. 10:32) The term "Gentile" is used in other ways in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. But please remember these distinctions in reading this article.

## THE TIMES OF GENTILE IGNORANCE

The first surprise to present itself to us in this study is that the Bible recognizes more than one "Time of the Gentiles". For instance in Acts 17:30, 31 Paul speaks of the times of Gentile ignorance. Paul was speaking to a Gentile audience and it is clearly evident, "the times of ignorance" (that) "God overlooked" refers to Gentile ignorance even though the term "Gentile" does not occur in his declaration. This view finds much to support it in other statements by the Apostle Paul. For instance, at Lystra while speaking to another "Gentile" audience, Paul said, "Who" (God) "in the generations gone by suffered all the nations (Gentiles) to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16). Or again in Gal. 4:8, "Howbeit, at that time, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them that by nature are no gods". Contrast this with what he says about himself and his fellow Israelites (Gal. 3:23-25): "But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, ... up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified

by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor". These times of Gentile ignorance seem to have begun with the inexcusable ignorance Paul spoke of in Rom. 1:18-32, and ended with the times of Gentile salvation which began with the call of Cornelius and his household.

During these times of Gentile ignorance Abraham was called from the land of his nativity and from his family of idolaters to know by faith the true and living God. From his seed a nation was formed some 400 years later and intrusted with the oracles of God. (Rom. 3:2)

The condition of the Gentiles outside of Christ may still be described as "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12), but the reasons for it are different. Before Christ came and died for all, Jew and Gentile alike, God "suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways", "but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent; inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead". (Acts 14:15-7; 17:30, 31)

Many Gentiles are yet in unbelief because Christian Gentiles have not shared the gospel with them. But many other Gentiles are living in ignorance and disbelief, not because they have not heard but because they have rejected the word of faith which has been preached to them.

### THE TIMES OF GENTILE SALVATION

When Jesus sent out his twelve disciples the first time he "charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel". (Matt. 10:5, 6) When the disciples besought him to send the Canaanitish woman away, Jesus said, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel". (Matt. 15:24) By these two examples we can see that 'the times of Gentile salvation' had not yet come when Jesus spoke these words but his actions show his love for Gentiles even during his personal ministry.

On Pentecoset Peter preached to "both Jews and proselytes" but no Gentiles were known to be present. (Acts 2:1-11) It was some years later before even the apostle Peter perceived "that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him". (Acts 10:34, 35) When Peter returned to Jerusalem and gave an orderly explanation of his conduct at Caesarea, they of the circumcision held their peace, and glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life". (Acts 11:1-18)

In the "Great Commission" Jesus commanded his disciples to "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". (Matt. 28:19) But there is no record of the gospel being preached to any of the Gentiles until Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius and his household at Caesarea". (Acts 10:48) Later at the Jerusalem Conference Peter made it clear that this marked the beginning of a new era,

'The times of Gentile salvation' when he said, "Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe". (Acts 15:7-9)

It is clearly evident that the expression "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25) has reference to "the time of Gentile salvation". For in Romans 11:11 Paul wrote "by their (the Israelites) fall *salvation is come to the Gentiles*, to provoke them (the Israelites) to jealousy". This is confirmed by many examples and statements in the book of Acts. For instance, "When they (Barnabas and Paul) were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and *that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles*". (Acts 14:27) Or again, "Be it known therefore unto you *that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles*; they will also hear". (Acts 28:28) The example of Paul recorded in Acts 18:5-11 shows that the Israelites had already begun to "harden" themselves against the gospel. "And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment and said unto them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I go unto the Gentiles."

This conclusion that the Bible recognizes "the times of Gentile salvation" is confirmed by many statements from Paul's epistles, especially those written to predominantly Gentile Christian churches. For instance in Eph. 3:3-6; "when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are *fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel*".

### THE TIMES OF GENTILE DOMINATION

The expression, "Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24) clearly refers to 'the times of Gentile domination.' The 'times of Gentile domination' referred to in this passage probably began with the subjection of Judah (the Southern kingdom) under the Babylonians about 606 B. C. The Northern kingdom (Israel) had already been destroyed by the Assyrians about 722 B. C. Since the Babylonian captivity began Israel has never been totally free of Gentile domination.

Nebuchadnezzar's image "its head was of fine gold, its breasts and its arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its feet part of iron and part of clay" (Dan. 2:31) was interpreted by Daniel to be four successive kingdoms. The first kingdom was Babylon, and it was followed by Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Israel was a part of the Roman Empire when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. It was the Romans that burned the temple, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and led the Israelites into captivity in A.D. 70.

There are definite signs that "the times of the Gentile" domination of Israel will soon be fulfilled. Among them is the establishment of the Nation of Israel in 1948, and the events that have led Israel to declare united Jerusalem her capital in 1980. Israel's troubles are far

from over but here deliverance from Gentile domination appears to be fully delivered from Gentile dom-  
mest be fulfilled.

### THE TIMES OF GENTILE SUBJECTION

Ever since sin entered into the world most men have rebelled against God. Before the flood "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of his heart was only evil continually". (Gal. 6:5) The awful lesson of the flood was too soon forgotten and men began almost immediately to rebel again against God.

The center of human rebellion seems to have been in ancient Babylon, and it may have been led by Nimrod. (Genesis, chapter 10 and 11) Neo-Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar was used to punish Israel for their idolatrous rebellion against God. But soon God had to teach Nebuchadnezzar that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will". (Dan. 4:17) Since the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persians one Gentile civilization after another has gone down in rebellion against God with its awful consequences of their destruction. Gentile society and civilization seems to be girding itself now for its final rebellion against God. "The mystery of lawlessness" has long been at work among men (II Thess. 2:7), and some day soon will culminate in the coming of "the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming". (II Thess. 2:8)

The day which God hath appointed is swiftly approaching "in which he will judge the world (inhabited earth) by the man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30, 31)

This is that day in which "he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father; and I will give him the morning star". (Rev. 2:26-28) This also is in fulfillment of Psalm 2:7-9.

That day will be 'the times of Gentile subjugation'. It may be at that time when Isaiah 11:9 will be fulfilled also : "THEY SHALL NOT HURT NOR DESTROY IN ALL MY HOLY MOUNTAIN; FOR THE EARTH SHALL BE FULL OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF JEHOVAH, AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA".

## Why Are You Here?

Dr. Horace E. Wood

Jesus said in John 15:5, I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: For apart from me ye can do nothing.

Let me ask you a question, Is Christ the object of your endeavor, or is He the source?

After one of our astronauts returned, he presented a large picture to a friend of him walking on the moon, underneath the picture he wrote these words: "The wonder is not that man walked on the moon, but that God walked on the earth."

The Astronaut said that the back side of the moon is total darkness. God made and placed the moon in the sky to rule the night. The moon is a completely dead mass, something extra ordinary must be brought to bear upon this dead mass in order for it to function and to fulfill the purpose for which it was placed in the sky. Without help from an outside source that moon is in total darkness. It does not, it cannot function for the purpose for which it was made. It is a completely dead object floating around up there.

A few nights ago I noticed in the twilight in the south western sky a mere sliver of a moon. This is called a new moon, or really a baby moon. What happened to that dark lifeless object up there? It is exposed to a fraction of that great ball of fire that rules the day. But mind you, that tiny portion that is exposed glowed with brilliance.

Now it is several nights later and I am amazed to see the great difference. Tonight, that very same dead moon glowed with full brilliance, lighting up the night. You can even read the head lines of a newspaper. What has happened? Now it has fully turned its dead face to the full light of the King of the day, now it functions for the purpose for which it was made, to rule the night and dispel the darkness. Now as we gaze at it we are reminded of the king of the day from which it gets its light.

We see a new born Christian, a baby Christian. He has just turned his dead face to the source of life, we see just a little light, but ah! Wait for a while, for as he turns more and more to God's guidance and help we see Christ glowing in this once dead face, now this body functions for the purpose for which it was created.

Jesus said: Ye are the light of the world, and oh! how this dark world needs this light. There will be no other light to shine but through a man, wholly turned to God's source of light, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A tourist was visiting in a hospital in the Middle East where leprosy patients were being treated. She came to a nurse who was changing the dressing on a patient with open, running sores. The tourist remarked to the nurse, "I would not do that for a million dollars," the Christian nurse replied, "Neither would I." The moon was reflecting the full light of the sun.

A story comes out of World War II that is heart rending. A U.S. air craft flat top was cruising in the cold dark waters of the Far North Sea. A flight of fighter planes left on a bombing mission at a distant target. They were to return at a specified time and to a specified position. During their absence, an urgent communication to the carrier came, there are German U boats in your area, put out all lights and use no communications whatever.

Time came for the bombers to return to their mother ship, the Captain of the squadron radioed in, turn on your lights we are coming home, but no reply came. The flight Captain knew that they were in the specified area and could not understand why no answer from the

Carrier. He radioed the second time, turn on your lights please we are ready to come in, but still no lights came on and no response. The Air Craft Commander was getting the request but was powerless to respond due to the urgent order to lean off all lights. He could not even tell the flight commander why.

A final frantic call came into the radio room of the carrier, please help us, turn on just a little light, our gas is about gone. Soon all was quiet, no more request for light, presumably all were lost in the cold waters of the North Sea, all because there was no light to guide—

Is Christ the object of your activity or is He the source?

## Missionary Messenger

*"Greater things for God"*

David and Colleen Brown

Natal, South Africa

September 26th

We thank The Lord for you, and for your fellowship in prayer. Being reminded that God almost limits His working to the prayers of His people, we are asking Him to raise up many who will uphold His servants and His work in the many fields of labor.

We are settled in Scottburgh, and the children have already adjusted fairly well to new schools and so on. There is no New Testament work or church that I know of in this area. The churches here are Methodist, Anglican and Catholic. There is a Full Gospel Church of God which comes nearer to the scripture in most areas than the others, but no visible New Testament Church. Many people seem to have some hunger for God's Word, but perhaps would not be willing to really follow Christ and simply be His Church. We have not been here long enough to find out many things yet.

We do have a little Sunday School which has just started in Renishaw, and we are beginning Sunday Morning services there. On Tuesday nights we have a Bible study in Renishaw, and Colleen plans to begin a ladies Bible study there next week. All of this is in early stages, but The Lord has given to us an opening, and we want to take advantage of every opportunity. Last Sunday morning after Sunday School a young person asked now she could accept Christ. Perhaps she will be the first one to be baptized soon. Her father came to the Bible study on Tuesday night and is asking a lot of questions. We praise God for this because it indicates a seeking heart.

We are asking God for wisdom to know how best to reach the Indians in Umzinto, and for God to open the door there. Please pray with us.

The Middle East situation adds to the expectancy of our Lord's soon return. The time is short and we must work while it is yet day. May God awaken everyone who is His to the urgency of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and thus extending His rule over the lives of responsive individuals.

# TYRANNY OF THE URGENT

Charles E. Hummel

Have you ever wished for a thirty-hour day? Surely this extra time would relieve the tremendous pressure under which we live. Our lives leave a trail of unfinished tasks. Unanswered letters, unvisited friends, unwritten articles, and unread books haunt quiet moments when we stop to evaluate. We desperately need relief.

But would a thirty-hour day really solve the problem? Wouldn't we soon be just as frustrated as we are now with our twenty-four allotment? A mother's work is never finished, and neither is that of any student, teacher, minister, or anyone else we know. Nor will the passage of time help us catch up. Children grow in number and age to require more of our time. Greater experience in profession and church brings more exacting assignments. So we find ourselves working more and enjoying it less.

*jumbled priorities . . .?*

When we stop to evaluate, we realize that our dilemma goes deeper than shortage of time; it is basically the problem of priorities. Hard work does not hurt us. We all know what it is to go full speed for long hours, totally involved in an important task. The resulting weariness is matched by a sense of achievement and joy. Not hard work, but doubt and misgiving produce anxiety as we review a month or year and become oppressed by the pile of unfinished tasks. We sense uneasily that we may have failed to do the important. The winds of other people's demands have driven us onto a reef of frustration. We confess, quite apart from our sins, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

Several years ago an experienced cottonmill manager said to me, "Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important." He didn't realize how hard his maxim hit. It often returns to haunt and rebuke me by raising the critical problem of priorities.

We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that the important task rarely must be done today, or even this week. Extra hours of prayer and Bible study, a visit with that non-Christian friend, careful study of an important book: these projects can wait. But the urgent tasks call for instant action—endless demands pressure every hour and day.

A man's home is no longer his castle; it is no longer a place away from urgent tasks because the telephone breaches the walls with imperious demands. The momentary appeal of these tasks seems irresistible and important, and they devour our energy. But in the light of time's perspective their deceptive prominence fades; with a sense of loss we recall the important tasks pushed aside. We realize we've become slaves to the tyranny of the urgent.

*can you escape . . .?*

Is there any escape from this pattern of living? The answer lies in the life of our Lord. On the night before He died, Jesus made an

astonishing claim. In the great prayer of John 17 He said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (v. 4).

How could Jesus use the word "finished"? His three-year ministry seemed all too short. A prostitute at Simon's banquet had found forgiveness and a new life, but many others still walked the street without forgiveness and a new life. For every ten withered muscles that had flexed into health, a hundred remained impotent. Yet on that last night, with many useful tasks undone and urgent human needs unmet, the Lord had peace; He knew He had finished God's work.

The Gospel records show that Jesus worked hard. After describing a busy day Mark writes, "That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered about the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons" (1:32-34).

On another occasion the demand of the ill and maimed caused Him to miss supper and to work so late that His disciples thought He was beside Himself (Mark 3:21). One day after a strenuous teaching session, Jesus and His disciples went out in a boat. Even a storm didn't awaken Him (Matthew 4:37, 38). What a picture of exhaustion.

Yet His life was never feverish; He had time for people. He could spend hours talking to one person, such as the Samaritan woman at the well. His life showed a wonderful balance, a sense of timing. When His brothers wanted Him to go to Judea, He replied, "My time has not yet come" (John 7:6). Jesus did not ruin His gifts by haste. In *The Discipline and Culture of the Spiritual Life*, A. E. Whiteham observes: "Here in this Man is adequate purpose . . . inward rest, that gives an air of leisure to His crowded life; above all there is in this Man a secret and a power of dealing with the waste-products of life, the waste of pain, disappointment, enmity, death—turning to divine uses the abuses of man, transforming arid places of pain to fruitfulness, triumphing at last in death, and making a short life of thirty years or so, abruptly cut off, to be a "finished" life. We cannot admire the poise and beauty of this human life, and then ignore the things that made it."

*wait for instruction . . .*

What was the secret of Jesus' work? We find a clue following Mark's account of Jesus' busy day. Mark observes that "... in the morning, a great while before day, He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35). Here is the secret of Jesus' life and work for God: *He prayerfully waited for His Father's instructions* and for the strength to follow them. Jesus had no divinely-drawn blueprint; He discerned the Father's will day by day in a life of prayer. By this means He warded off the urgent and accomplished the important.

Lazarus' death illustrates this principle. What could have been more important than the urgent message from Mary and Martha, "Lord, he whom you love is ill" (John 11:3)? John records the Lord's response in these paradoxical words: "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was" (vv. 5-6). What was the urgent need? Obviously to prevent the death of this beloved brother.

But the important thing from God's point of view was to raise Lazarus from the dead. So Lazarus was allowed to die. Later Jesus revived him as the sign of His magnificent claim, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me though he die, yet shall he live" (v. 25).

We may wonder why our Lord's ministry was so short, why it could not have lasted another five or ten years, why so many wretched sufferers were left in their misery. Scripture gives no answer to these questions, and we leave them in the mystery of God's purposes. But we do know that Jesus' prayerful waiting for God's instructions freed Him from the tyranny of the urgent. It gave Him a sense of direction, set a steady pace, and enabled Him to do every task *God* assigned. And on the last night He could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

### *dependence makes you free . . .*

Freedom from the tyranny of the urgent is found in the example and promise of our Lord. At the end of a vigorous debate with the Pharisees in Jerusalem, Jesus said to those who believed in Him: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin . . . So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:31, 32, 34, 36).

Many of us have experienced Christ's deliverance from the penalty of sin. Are we letting Him free us from the tyranny of the urgent? He points the way: "If you *continue* in my word." This is the way to freedom. Through prayerful meditation on God's Word we gain His perspective.

P. T. Forsyth once said, "The worst sin is prayerlessness." We usually think of murder, adultery, or theft as among the worst. But the root of all sin is self-sufficiency—*independence* from God. When we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength we are saying with our actions if not our lips, that we do not need Him. How much of our service is characterized by "going it alone"?

The opposite of such independence is prayer in which we acknowledge our need of God's instruction and supply. Concerning a dependent relationship with God, Donald Baillie says: "Jesus lived His life in complete dependence upon God, as we all ought to live our lives. But such dependence does not destroy human personality. Man is never so truly and fully personal as when he is living in complete dependence upon God. This is how personality comes into its own. This is humanity at its most personal."

Prayerful waiting on God is indispensable to effective service. Like the time-out in a football game, it enables us to catch our breath and fix new strategy. As we wait for directions the Lord frees us from the tyranny of the urgent. He shows us the truth about Himself, ourselves, and our tasks. He impresses on our minds the assignments He wants us to undertake. The need itself is not the call; the call must come from God who knows our limitations. "The Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frames; he remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13-14). It is not God who loads us until we bend or crack with an ulcer, nervous breakdown, heart attack, or stroke. These

come from our inner compulsions coupled with the pressure of circumstances.

*evaluate . . .*

The modern businessman recognizes this principle of taking time out for evaluation. When Greenwalt was president of DuPont, he said, "One minute spent in planning saves three or four minutes in execution." Many salesmen have revolutionized their business and multiplied their profits by setting aside Friday afternoon to plan carefully the major activities for the coming week. If an executive is too busy to stop and plan, he may find himself replaced by another man who takes time to plan. If the Christian is too busy to stop, take spiritual inventory, and receive his assignments from God, he becomes a slave to the tyranny of the urgent. He may work day and night to achieve much that seems significant to himself and others, but he will not finish the work God has for him to do.

A quiet time of meditation and prayer at the start of a day refocuses our relationship with God. Recommit yourself to His will as you think of the hours that follow. In these unhurried moments list in order or priority the tasks to be done, taking into account commitments already made. A competent general always draws up his battle plan before he engages the enemy; he does not postpone basic decisions until the firing starts. But he is also prepared to change his plans if an emergency demands it. So try to implement the plans you have made before the day's battle against the clock begins. But be open to any emergency interruption or unexpected person who may call.

You may also find it necessary to resist the temptation to accept an engagement when the invitation first comes over the telephone. No matter how clear the calendar may look at the moment, ask for a day or two to pray for guidance before committing yourself. Surprisingly the engagement often appears less imperative after the pleading voice has become silent. If you can withstand the urgency of the initial moment, you will be in a better position to weigh the cost and discern whether the task is God's will for you.

In addition to your daily quiet time, set aside one hour a week for spiritual inventory. Write an evaluation of the past, record anything God may be teaching you, and plan objectives for the future. Also try to reserve most of one day each month for a similar inventory of longer range. Often you will fail. Ironically, the busier you get the more you need this time of inventory, but the less you seem to be able to take it. You become like the fanatic, who, when unsure of his direction, doubled his speed. And frenetic service for God can become an escape from God. But when you prayerfully take inventory and plan your days, it provides fresh perspective on your work.

*continue the effort . . .*

Over the years the greatest continuing struggle in the Christian life is the effort to make adequate time for daily waiting on God, weekly inventory, and monthly planning. Since this time for receiving marching orders is so important, Satan will do everything he can to squeeze it out. Yet we know from experience that only by this means

can we escape the tyranny of the urgent. This is how Jesus succeeded. He did not finish all the urgent tasks in Palestine or all the things He would have liked to do, but He did finish the work which God gave Him to do. The only alternative to frustration is to be sure that we are doing what God wants. Nothing substitutes for knowing that this day, this hour, in this place we are doing the will of the Father. Then and only then can we think of all the other unfinished tasks with equanimity and leave them with God.

Sometime ago Simba bullets killed a young man, Dr. Paul Carlson. In the providence of God his life's work was finished. Most of us will live longer and die more quietly, but when the end comes, what could give us greater joy than being sure that we have finished the work God gave us to do? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ makes this fulfillment possible. He has promised deliverance from sin and the power to serve God in the tasks of His choice. The way is clear. If we continue in the word of our Lord, we are truly His disciples. And He will free us from the tyranny of the urgent, free us to do the important, which is the will of God.

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## ROMANS: THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Edited by Dr. Horace Wood

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.  
(*Romans 2:1-16*)

### *Introduction*

The reality and inescapability of the justice and judgment of God are elementary truths of Holy Scripture. The first is tellingly illustrated in the whining complaint of Cain after his judgment for murder, "My punishment is too great to bear" (Gen. 4:13). It would not have been difficult to convince Cain that the judgment of God is real. Nor is it difficult to support the claim that the Bible affirms unhesitatingly the inescapability of the divine judgment.

It has been pointed out that there are at least four possibilities of escape for the man who offends against human laws. In the first place, it is possible that his offense shall not become known. Illustrations of this in human experience abound. Second, there is always the chance that the guilty person may be able to escape the bounds of the legal jurisdiction under which the crime was committed. Further, there may occur, after apprehension by the authorities, a breakdown in the legal processes. And, finally, the ultimate hope of the criminal is that he may escape from detention and live in a measure of freedom.

There are no such possibilities with God. It is unthinkable that a crime may escape the attention of the One of whom it is said, "Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, and art intimately acquainted with all my ways" (Psa. 139:3). Nor is it possible for the sinning criminal to escape beyond His jurisdiction. The psalmist's words, "Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or flee from Thy presence?"

(v. 7), convincingly cancel that vain hope, as well as the last gasp hope of undetected escape from the clutches of the divine justice and judgment. Finally, can there be failure in the legal processes of One of whom it is said, "For all His ways are just" (Duet. 32:4)? The answer is pellucid, and the roadside signs which pointedly warn, "Prepare to Meet God," are surely justifiable. The judgment of God is real, and it is inescapable.

The divine judgment is not only real and inescapable. It is also just. The two words, judgment and justice, are closely related. *Justice* is the quality of being righteous, or impartial, while *judgment* is the activity of rendering a decision. In the case of divine judgment it is always in accord with the highest characters of justice. It is always right, that is, just.

Theologians usually see three aspects of God's justice. There is, first, His *rectoral* justice, the rectitude with which He rules both the good and the evil. It includes His institution of moral government in the world, with promises of reward and threats of punishments (cf. Rom. 1:32). Second, there is His *distributive* justice, the rectitude with which He executes the law, distributing justly the rewards and penalties (cf. Rom. 2:6). This distributive justice, therefore, is both remunerative and retributive, the former having to do with rewards (cf. Rom. 2:7) on the basis of relative merit (we have no absolute merit before God). Retributive justice is made necessary by sin, and it includes the infliction of penalties. Remunerative justice is the expression of divine love; retributive justice is the expression of divine wrath (cf. Rom. 2:8). While remunerative justice is relative, this is absolute. Man does not merit his reward; he does merit his penalty.

The third aspect of God's justice is *redemptive* justice, called by some theologians *iustitia evangelica*, or evangelical justice. This has to do with God's work of justification, by which He justifies the ungodly, bringing their faith-righteousness to light and triumph. It is closely allied with His lovingkindness and flashes forth His grace in the setting of a man in right relationship with God (cf. Psa. 103:17; Rom. 3:21-26).

All of these aspects of the justice and judgment of God appear in Romans, but it is with God's distributive justice that Romans two, verses one through sixteen, particularly deals. The apostle has demonstrated the guilt of the Gentile in chapter one, and now he turns to deal with the man who, standing by, is so vociferously agreeing with him. It is the pious religious hypocrite, identified as the Jew in verse seventeen (cf. Gal. 2:15). Even though he possesses all the privileges and advantages of being a member of the chosen community, he cannot escape in his unbelief the divine judgment. That is just and, will reach him also. The covenantal body must feel the full force of the ancient threat, "be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23).

There are three sections in the larger division of Romans 2:1-3:8, which sets forth the guilt of the Jew. In 2:1-16 the principles of divine judgment are propounded. In 2:17-29 application of them is made to the Jew (vv. 17-24) and their covenant status (vv. 25-29). Finally, in 3:1-8 the apostle answers Jewish counter-claims. His style, as often in the letter, is similar to the Stoic *diatribe*. Questions or

objections are put into the mouth of an imagined critic and answered (cf. 3:1). The direct address and occasional vocative (cf. 2:1) are also features of this style. It is probable that the apostle learned the method from the arguments in the market places of the eastern world with their inveterate hecklers present.

It has been said that visitors to the labyrinths of certain of the catacombs used to take hold of a silk thread by which they could retrace their steps if they became fearful of becoming lost. In this section of Romans there are also abundant opportunities of losing one's way. It is necessary, then, to keep in mind the purpose of Paul in the verses. That purpose he expresses plainly in 3:9; it is to accuse both Gentiles and Jews of the guilt of their sin. Since the Gentile guilt has already been dealt with in chapter one, the other aspect is before him here. The theme of the immediate section, (2:1-16), may be put simply: God's judgment is righteous, and by this standard the Jew, too, is guilty. There are three variations of the theme, but the essential message is the same.

## I. GOD'S JUDGMENT IS ACCORDING TO REALITY

The "therefore" (Gr., *dio*) introduces the Pauline discussion. It is the strongest inferential conjunction, and in this case introduces an inference drawn from :-32a-b. Men know that ones who sin are worthy of death, and, in his act of judging others, the Jew admits that he knows also. So, he, too, is without excuse, "however censorious" his selfconceit may be. He does not suppress the truth; he proclaims it, but he contents himself with applying it to others.

In the second verse the apostle introduces the first variation of the principle of righteous judgment. God's judgment is *according to reality*. The word *aletheian* (AV, "truth") means *truth*, but truth in the sense of reality. Stifler comments, "When gold is assayed, the test considers only the metal which is under it; it does not ask whence it came, whose it is, but what it is." That illustrates the force of the word here. The judgment of God concerns itself with the reality of a matter (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7).

In spite of this axiomatic truth there are always those who think they can escape the inescapable. It is these Paul addresses in verse three. The stress rests upon the second "you" of the verse, the Greek *su* (AV, "thou") being emphatic. Do you think that *you*, because you are a Jew, will escape? The implication is, No; you do not stand a ghost of a chance. There is no escape, —ever!"

The "or" of verse four introduces the alternative. Or, the thought is, is it that you have such a poor estimate of God's goodness that you think it gives you license to sin? The ignorance of the Jew is the reason for the despite of God's goodness, and it is his ignorance of the fact that His goodness is ever active in the pursuit of Jewish repentance (cf. 3:2; 9:4-5). The primary reference of the goodness is to the messianic promises. They are given with view to Jewish repentance and entrance into their kingdom blessings.

## II. GOD'S JUDGMENT IS ACCORDING TO WORKS

The second variation in the general theme, that God's judgment is just, is now expounded by Paul. By refusing the messianic promises

they are treasuring up for their impenitent hearts the wrath of God (cf. Acts 3:19). The relative clause in verse six states the principle precisely,—He will render to each *according to their deeds*. But a doctrinal question is sometimes raised at this point: How can one reconcile judgment according to works and justification apart from work? In answering this one must bear two things in mind:

(1) First, there is a sense in which the lost are *truly* wicked and the saved do exceed them in goodness. Of course, the goodness of the saved is not the cause or means of their salvation. It is the evidence of their new justified state (cf. Eph. 2:8-10; Jas. 2:14-26). God's method of dealing with men will ultimately be vindicated. Of that one can be certain.

(2) But, second, what is more to the point, one must remember that Paul is not here expounding the gospel. He is expounding the Law. According to the Law judgment is according to works, and life is according to works (cf. Gal. 3:10-12). Thus, the Law can only condemn (cf. Rom. 3:20). If one, then, is to obtain justification, it must be apart from law or works (3:21). All will be judged by works, —and found guilty. But those who have sought another way, the way of faith, will find righteousness. Thus, the apostle is in no way denying salvation by faith. He has in mind particularly the legal sin of the Jew. He possessed knowledge, but he did not practice what he knew. He had a creed given by God in heaven, but he cared little for a conduct that reflected it. He had in mind the kind of self-righteousness and pride of privilege that brought forth such statements as, "All Israelites will have part in the world to come" (cf. Matt. 3:8-9), and "Abraham sits beside the gates of hell, and does not permit any wicked Israelite to go down to hell." The Jewish man who wrote the Wisdom of Solomon penned these words, "For even if we sin, we are thine, knowing thy dominion" (15:2), and, "While therefore thou dost chasten us, thou scourgest our enemies ten thousand times more" (12:22). In Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* there are these words, "They who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient toward God, share in the eternal kingdom." Verses seven through eleven amplify this condemnation of the Jewish attitude of claiming exemption from divine judgment because of their special place in election and revelation. God's judgment is not according to one's special privileges, but according to one's deed, as the Mosaic Law itself teaches.

(To be continued)

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