

On your knees, again, directors—to Him Who promised, “My God shall supply every need of yours” (not just the financial needs—though they are important—but personnel-wise as well). One evening as he was leaving the Fellowship meeting at the Sellersburg Church of Christ, our principal, brother Mullins stopped to chat with an old friend from Louisiana, “Pie” Istre (Mrs. J. R.) Satterfield. The following dialog ensued:

Mullins: What are you doing these days, Pie?

Pie: I’m just completing my practice teaching for a teacher’s certificate.

Mullins: Izzat so? When can you start teaching?

Pie: Right after Christmas, if I can find an opening then.

Mullins (hopefully): What grade have you been preparing yourself to teach, Pie?

Pie: The fifth grade. I love it!

Mullins: Would you consider teaching 5th grade at Portland Christian School right after Christmas?

Pie: Would I? (And the both could have chorused, “Thank the Lord!”)

“Coincidence,” the world would sniff, turning away. “God’s hand manifesting His continual faithfulness,” we Christians reply. Can you beat that? Can you even “tie it?”

III.

“You’ll have to put a new steam table plus all the fixin’s in your school cafeteria if you want to keep your “A” Sanitation Rating, the health authorities told us last spring. (Easier said than done!)

Fully equipped steam tables come high—right around \$5,000, and we at Portland were operating on a deficit basis at that time! But God’s Word enjoins, “Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake!” And so two of our teachers set out on a prayer-guided search. Discouraging work, that . . . prices of new equipment were “high as a cat’s back” and threatening increases. Finally the Lord directed them to a dealer who had one complete steam table assembly that exactly suited our needs—our available space—and our pocketbook! For \$900 Portland Christian secured a completely reconditioned polished up steam table plus a full line of accessories. The health authorities were not only satisfied but delighted. We are all rejoicing each day as we use it, not only for PCS children but also for special meals like the Fellowship Week lunches, congregational get-togethers, etc. Just another incident illustrating God’s enabling to those who wait upon Him Who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

IV.

During several past state inspections of this Lord’s school, Kentucky authorities (under whose charge we operate) have become increasingly insistent that we add a Department of Industrial Arts. This would offer high school boys a choice of vocational/practical

courses to parallel the Home Economics department where high school girls are taught cooking and sewing. But PCS has had neither classroom space nor teacher available. True, several years ago our school inherited a shop full of various wood- and metal-working machinery; this had been stored in brother Mullins' basement until needed.

About a year ago came a letter from a young Indiana State University man, Jerry Overman, son of the Orell Overmans of Switz City, Indiana. "I am to graduate in June, 1972, from State here," he wrote, "and would love to teach at Portland Christian. (Ed.: His two sisters, Jean (Mrs. Dale McLean) and Joyce have both taught here; Joyce has first grade now.) Would you by any chance need a teacher of Industrial Arts for next fall?" The Lord's timing is flawless! And so the Lord has provided the machinery and the teacher to enable us to comply with the government directive. now all we needed was classroom space.

As we looked around for such space, the most logical location seemed right behind our All-Purpose Building, where we could utilize a common wall and tap onto already-existing electrical, gas, and water supplies. In a series of voluntary Saturday work-parties, friends of Portland Christian and school families have furnished their men-folk (some older, some as young as 12-14 years of age) to labor long, hard, hot hours on the new Industrial Arts Building. First we had to jack up a little white frame cottage and roll it off the site selected. Then the plans were completed for a building to be 51' x 56' x 12', to be made of concrete blocks. 'Way up in northern Indiana a master mason who is also a Christian, heard of the project and volunteered his skilled services—absolutely without charge—to supervise and erect the walls! The Lord enabled us to purchase concrete blocking well below prevailing market prices, the foundation was dug and poured, and the building was "on the way." Nehemiah expressed it well, "So we built the wall, for the people (of God) had a mind to work!"

Almost every Saturday this fall a number of Christian men have volunteered their services, sometimes only 5 or 6, several times as many as 15 to 18. The school provided the lunches and drinks, the ladies came with iced tea on hot days and the Lord gave good Christian fellowship all the time. As it now stands, the walls are complete, the roof is on, the heaters (furnished at a "give-away" price by a brother) are ready for installation and the floor is the only major component yet lacking.

"And the money for all this?" you inquire. The PCHS Alumni Association held a song rally recently at which an offering for this building was received. Many gifts poured into the treasury. A check for \$2,000 plus cash gifts totalling \$650 beside were accepted. As a result of all these gifts and all the labor donated in love, it looks as though PCS will have its \$21,000 Industrial Arts Building (the lowest estimate we received) for an investment of about \$8,000

cash. We hope to dedicate this newest gift from God shortly. We recall that the psalmist wrote, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God and I will declare what He hath done for my soul!" "Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so!"—and it is because of this that these notes are being offered for your edification.

V.

It hasn't been so very long ago that finding teachers qualified both academically and spiritually for the PCS faculty was a matter of considerable difficulty. Not that it's easy now, (though we have learned to depend more on the Lord!), but your scribe is happy to report that several young people—graduates of PCHS—are "pointing" toward teaching positions at their alma mater. They have in mind certain "slots" on the staff, should the need arise. We are looking to the Lord to guide them—and us—together, if it be His will.

VI.

Maybe this squib doesn't belong here, but it's too good to "die a-borning." As I had coffee with one of our basketball coaches this morning, he said, "Did you hear what the basketball coach of Taylorsville High School told me after they beat us the other night?" "No," I confessed. "His team had voluntarily told him that that Portland team was made up of the finest gentlemen they'd ever played against!" (Gives you some little idea what kind of school we're trying to maintain).

VII.

As we go to press, plans are already under way for celebration of our Golden Anniversary next school year. 1973-74 will mark our 50th year and the committee for the celebration of that momentous event is deep in plans therefor.

There will probably be a series of events and celebrations of different sorts spaced out over the entire school year. The plan is very definitely, though, *not* to be pointing to men ("Look what *we* have done in 50 years") but to give God the glory and thanksgiving, where it all rightfully belongs. To this end the motto verse for our Golden Anniversary is Numbers 23:23:

"What hath God wrought!"

Life is Short— "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

Death is Sure— "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Sin the Curse— "For all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Christ the Cure— "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Precious Reprints

Christianity vs. Religion

Frank M. Mullins, Sr. — 1943

Christianity and religion are as different as life and death, or as daylight and darkness. The Indian mother who casts her babe into the river to the crocodiles to appease the wrath of "the god of the rivers" is very religious—but most assuredly, this is not Christianity.

When Paul entered Athens (Acts 17), he found the Athenians were "very religious," but they knew nothing of Christianity or of the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Christianity is one thing and religion another—they come from two entirely different sources. Someone drew the following vivid contrast: "Religion is what you do for God; Christianity is what God does for you. Religion is you giving your life for your God; Christianity is God giving His life for you. Religion is you living your life for your God; Christianity is God living in you. Religion is your best; Christianity is God's best. Religion is what you do; Christianity is what Christ did for you on the cross and now does for you as He lives for you, in you, and through you."

Here is set forth the fundamental difference between religion and Christianity. "Religion is what you do;" it originates from the inherent urge in man to worship something. That "something" may be anything from the creeping things of earth and the vilest imaginations of the heart to the highest principles and benevolences of which man is capable. It might find its expression in worship of beauty, or power, or money, or worldly success or pleasure. It might fashion its god out of wood, or stone, or silver, or gold, and bow down before the creation of its own hands. Or man might bow at the shrine of his own image and call it god, or even have his shrine to "an unknown God" and be "very religious," as Paul found at Athens. Such is religion, and the world is saturated with it.

Christianity does not originate with man. It is not a philosophy of life devised or discovered by man. Neither does it find its origin in what man does, nor in what his hands fashion. Christianity finds its origin in only one person. That person is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, "who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross."

THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

The fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the only begotten Son of God, the purpose of His mission to the earth to die for our sins, the fact of His resurrection and continued ministry at God's right hand as our High Priest, and His work now in the heart of man gives to

the world Christianity. Someone stated this truth in these words: "The potentialities of the Christian life are described in the Bible in view of what Christ has done for us by His life, His death, and His resurrection. It is a great, decisive day in any man's life when he decides no longer to be merely religious, but to be definitely Christian. It costs little to be religious, there is no cross in it."

It is because the death of the Son of God upon the cross is the heart of Christianity that the symbol of the cross has become the symbol of Christianity. But the displaying of an outward symbol does not guarantee that Christianity is behind that symbol. It could be used to represent just another religion based upon some of the principles taught by Christ and some of the rituals borrowed from the Bible. Such a religion falls as far short of being Christianity as any religion that is entirely foreign to the Bible. Christianity is not a "new religion" with new ceremonies—in contrast to obsolete forms of worship, or even in contrast to corrupt forms of worship. Christianity is not a set of rules and regulations subscribed to. It is not even righteous principles incorporated in one's life.

Christianity is the outflowing of an abundant life—the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who died on the cross to atone for our sins but who is now risen from the dead, alive forevermore, and enthroned at the right hand of the Father on high.

Share your ideas! Michael Sanders introduces a new idea-exchange feature. Here is a place where you can give and receive help on practical problems.

Problems, Possibilities, and Pointers

"Two heads *are* better than one!" How many times have you got a good idea from another person? Or, have you ever learned the solution to your particular problem after sharing it with someone else who has been there? It happens every day.

The purpose of this column is to offer an exchange of practical ideas. The material in this column will not be doctrinal per se. However, doctrinal considerations may well channel or limit some of our thoughts. Again, the material is not to be of a personal nature. This is not a forum for counseling personal problems. The column is to be of a *practical, congregational* nature. Okay?

Before introducing you to the format, let's emphasize the point that *you* are the resource for this column. The profit of this article will depend on the "heads" that we put together.

Now, here is the format:

I. PROBLEMS

Each month you will introduce a practical problem that you are having or have had at your congregation. Please be careful and describe it fully that we will all understand. These problems may

be ones that you have solved. You could then in turn help us in the next division of the format.

II. POSSIBILITIES

As we receive the *Word and Work* monthly we will read over the problem that you have described and then after thought send in a possible solution. It may be that many of the readers have experienced the same problem and many solutions or *possibilities* will come in. We will put them all together for you to consider and choose.

III. POINTERS

It may be that while you are thinking about the particular problem of the month, other good ideas will come to mind. We want them, too! They may not be related at all. Fine! This third division will be for assorted ideas or pointers. I personally have a file labeled *ideas*. Do you? How about sending in a couple each month?

It will take us a couple of months to get rolling. Obviously, there will be a month delay.

* * * *

I. PROBLEMS

This particular problem is one that is common. "We don't get started on time in our worship services!" "What can be done to get started promptly?" "There have been times when we began as much as 15 minutes late."

II. POSSIBILITIES

This is a problem that many of the churches have been able to overcome. The answers may appear obvious and then again not so obvious. How has your congregation been able to overcome starting services late? Share your *possibilities*.

III. POINTERS

A. If absenteeism is hampering your primary, junior, or intermediate class, you may try this one! At the end of each Bible class period allow the class to draw names. The names may be kept in secret. On the following Sunday morning at an appointed time, each class member is to phone the name he drew and be sure they are preparing to be present for class.

B. A similar idea which creates motivation for studying the class lesson involves the members phoning their names earlier in the week to remind them to prepare their lessons. Such an idea may be practical to help form the habit of Bible study in the homes. Friendships will also be strengthened.

That is it! Now that you see how it will work, let's get to work! Please send all correspondence to:

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PROPHECY

Edited by Dr. Horace E. Wood

The Coming World Church

Bill McRae

Faith being denied on every hand is one of the signs that the apostasy is upon us. The capitulation to comparative religions is another indication that we are living in the apostasy.

Dr. D. B. Steiner recently wrote, "One religion is as good as another, we might even find more of Christ in Hinduism and Buddhism than in Christianity." Now that is typical of the comparative religion approach.

I sat on a panel in a university in Dallas not too long ago with four other men, most of whom I suspect were liberals who did not revere the scriptures or Jesus Christ. The man who was sitting beside me said on one occasion: "If you ever hear a man stand behind the pulpit and say, 'This is the truth,' then you will know that that man has not begun to understand Christianity."

That is the comparative religion approach and we have capitulated to that. It is one of the signs that the apostasy is upon us. The invasion of the secular and the carnal into the spiritual is another sign that the apostasy is upon us.

I read recently that the cast of that filthy musical called Hair sang the new musical mass at the Episcopal Cathedral in New York. The mass—supposedly celebrating the death of our Lord Jesus—on this occasion was to mark the third anniversary of that musical Hair and also to celebrate Buddha's birthday and Mother's Day. The mass was celebrated by an Episcopal priest; a Roman Catholic priest read the epistle. A Unitarian political appointee read an address and the antiwar message was read by Dr. Harvey Cox, the apostate Baptist minister from Harvard Divinity School.

Here is the point—Reporters and photographers were so thick that they had to be pushed away from the communion rail at the time for communion. It is this type of thing, the invasion of the carnal and secular into the spiritual that is an indication that the apostasy is upon us.

There are others. There is the rise of the occult, and we see it on every hand. What shall one say about the rise of astrology in America? And this in a professing Christian country. It has swept people off their feet so that today there are untold millions that dab-

ble in astrology. There are forty million doing this; ten million of them will not make an important decision without consulting the stars. Lives are planned by the planets today.

In McCall's magazine I read that for many of today's young people astrology has taken the place of psychology as the personality decoder of our generation. Even up in Canada it has happened. McClain's magazine writes that Canadians are going in for what is probably the biggest revival of astrology since the fall of Babylon. No one even looks at you out of the corner of his eye if you say that you were born under this or that sign.

The Sunday Times of Britain reports that two-thirds of the adult population of Britain read their horoscopes and seven million of them do it seriously.

The rise of the occult is another indication of the apostasy that is upon us. And besides the astrology one could speak of clairvoyance, ESP, black magic, telepathy, palm reading and many other evidences. It's part of Babylon. That is the point, friends, it is Babylon. It is Babel back in Genesis 11, and what we are seeing is going to reach its full bloom during the tribulation period. It is the second feature of the professing church in the tribulation period and we are moving dangerously close to that characteristic.

But there is still a third. The third feature of Babylon in Revelation 17 is its political activism. One of the things that impresses a person reading Revelation 17 is the relationship between the woman and the beast. The beast is the leader of the revived Roman Empire, the leader of the European Confederacy of ten nations, and I want you to notice the relationship between this woman and the beast.

In verse 3, we read, "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast." She is dominating the beast. If the imagery means anything to us then it speaks to us of her dominion over the political powers that shall prevail in the world at that time.

Again I think you hear this presented to us in verse 1, where you read that she sits upon many waters, she is in a position of great political influence. In verse 18 we are told specifically that she reigns over the kings of the earth.

One thing that we can certainly expect as we approach the tribulation period is that the professing church will become more influential, more active in national and international politics. And that is precisely what is taking place in our very day and age. The painfully slow movement toward a one-world church—because of inability

to agree on a doctrinal foundation—has led the leaders of this movement to move in another direction, the direction of missions. Now the emphasis in the ecumenical movement is not what doctrine can we agree on and how we can establish a common doctrinal foundation, but rather is; what can we do together?

The Ecumenical Review, the spokesman for the ecumenical movement, in an article recently reported on this dialogue between the World Council of Churches, the Hindus, Moslems, and Buddhists, and this is what it wrote: "The World Council of Churches may have to move away from its position of continuous isolation to one of more positive cooperation with men of other faiths in matters of mutual concern such as, justice, peace, human rights, education, and development and the future of man."

And that is exactly what is happening. We are seeing the church become a political force. That is why Paul Harvey, the noted commentator, some time ago mentioned that thousands of Presbyterians have left the Presbyterian Church USA because of their ten thousand dollar donation to Angela Davis' defense and because of the twenty-five thousand dollars that they gave to the Black Panther defense in New York.

In September 1971 the World Council of Churches had its annual meeting in Bulgaria and allocated two hundred thousand dollars to antiracist groups around the world. Twenty-four organizations were given money; nine of them were liberation fronts in Africa, one of them the Malcolm X University in North Carolina. This is a typical representation of what was done with that two hundred thousand dollars. A rather interesting twist came when the revolutionary government of Angola in exile turned down its offer of \$7500 saying it was a trap and that the World Council of Churches had become political. That is very significant.

The Church Center in the United Nations is heavily staffed and heavily financed. Every major denomination in the U. S. has an office in Washington that is involved in the church lobby.

The *U. S. News and World Report* just about a month ago made this comment, "Showdown in Congress on prayer in schools reveals that spokesmen for religious groups are becoming an important part of the Washington scene. Heeding the pleas of the leaders of denominations and religious groups, Congress rejected the proposed Constitutional amendment to put prayer back into the schools. The outcome was hailed as the greatest victory for the activist churchmen in Washington since they helped push through the civil rights bill in 1964."

Now the point is not that the amendment was a good amendment. I am not sure that it was, I think that it is a good thing

perhaps that the amendment to put prayer back into the schools was defeated. It was not a good amendment in the opinion of many people today. The point is that it was defeated as the result of the influence of denominational men who are involved in the church lobby. And the influence of these men in politics is becoming increasingly great. It is in this year that the churchmen have made their marches to Hanoi and Paris.

The Canadian Council of Churches just this past year has introduced a new ministry, a ministry that is devoted to helping the men of the United States Armed Forces who are draft dodgers and who are escaping from the army. Their chaplain is a man from the University of Wisconsin. It is supported jointly by the National Council of Churches with \$70,000 budgeted every year for it from the World Council of Churches. That is the political activism of the apostate Church of Christendom today.

A recent article in an influential German magazine summed up the new religious move by documenting the emergence of a revolutionary ideology which, it says, and I quote, "Threatens to turn the Church into a political party." That is a third great feature of Babylon in Revelation 17.

For the first three and a half years of the tribulation period the apostate universal church shall control the political arm, and at the end of that three and a half years the political arm shall overthrow the apostate church and establish at that point the worship of the Anti-Christ and the worship of the Beast.

But in the tribulation period one thing is certain—there shall be a politically active apostate church that shall prevail and shall encompass the earth.

We are moving dangerously close toward that very situation. As I read Chapter 17 of Revelation, and as I superimpose it upon the newspapers and magazines that I read, I am impressed with the fact that we are moving very close toward the conditions that shall exist in the tribulation period when there shall be one church, universally united, apostate absolutely to its very core, and controlling the politics of the earth. We are moving dangerously close toward that.

If I take, then, the condition of the professing Church today, and I add to it the other signs that I can find elsewhere in the scriptures, I conclude that the better than twenty signs given to us by the prophets, our Lord, and the Apostles are in a virtual state of fulfillment today.

What are the practical effects of these facts in a Christian's life? What difference will they make in the way he lives? These questions will be answered in the conclusion of this article next month.



What Does the Bible Mean?

Alex V. Wilson

Problems and Principles of Interpretation

Some years ago it became stylish for women to wear their hair in a top-knot, piled on top of their head. A certain preacher detested the new style and determined to denounce it from the pulpit. So one Sunday he preached a scorching sermon based on the text, "Top-knot, go down!" His hearers were overawed by the message, and some of the women decided that their top-knots would indeed go down. However, after the meeting one man asked, "Preacher, I've never heard that verse before; where is it found?" "Matthew 24:17," came the reply. On reaching home the man read the text for himself: "Let him who is on the housetop *not* go down to take what is in his house"!!!

The story is only fiction, of course, but its point is true: You can prove almost *anything* from the Bible if you try hard enough. Using the same Bible, various people arrive at entirely different conclusions. Amid the confusion, many people say, "How can we know whose interpretation is right? You say the Bible teaches one thing, *he* says it teaches another thing, and *they* contradict each of you. Yet you all quote the Bible! How can I understand the Bible? What does it really mean?"

We should sympathize with people who feel that way. The problem is not an easy one. All kinds of ideas claim to be supported by proof-texts from Scripture. Let's notice some examples: 1) A tract asserts that you will be sinning if you use a Christmas tree this December. Why? Because God says, "Learn not the way of the nations. . . for the customs of the peoples are false. A tree from the forest is cut down. . . Men deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move" (Jeremiah 10:2-4). 2) The Mormons use 1 Corinthians 15:29 ("baptized for the dead") to build an elaborate doctrine of baptism-by-proxy for dead people who were not converted during their lifetime. 3) One prophecy teacher believes that the red horse of Revelation 6 stands for Communism—since red is the Marxists' color—and the white horse stands for the U. S.—since its president lives in the White House! 4) Jehovah's Witnesses claim it is sin to have blood transfusions, since God says, "I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:10-12). 5)

Some people believe science proves the Bible to be false, for Joshua told the sun to stand still (i.e., quit going around the earth) but Copernicus proved the sun doesn't go around the earth, but vice versa. 6) The Iglesia ni Cristo, a Philippine cult, insists that Isa. 46:10,11 predicts the ministry of its founder, Felix Manalo, for God says "I will accomplish all my purpose, calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country"—and the Philippines is in the *Far East!*

Wisdom is needed in *applying* the Bible, as well as in *interpreting* it. In interpretation we ask, "What does this passage *mean?*" In application we ask, "What does it mean *to me?* What shall I *do* about this truth?" Here too problems may arise, especially in the matter of personal guidance.

A guy was trying to find God's will, so he opened his Bible at random, put his finger down and read, "Judas went out and hanged himself." That didn't help him too much, so he tried again, and read, "Go thou and do likewise." That shook him terribly, so he tried one more time: "And what thou doest, do quickly." —Paul Little, *Affirm the Will of God*

That case never really happened, of course, but here is one that did: A Christian young lady in Scotland could not make up her mind whether to attend Bible college at Lebanon or Glasgow. Then she read in 1 Kings 5 that Solomon obtained cedar trees for the temple from Lebanon—therefore the Lord must want her to attend Lebanon Bible College. The school in Glasgow never had a chance, for Scripture never mentions its name.

Having a "word from the Lord" is both justifiable and helpful if the word is first put into its original context and the true meaning grasped. For example, a fellow should not break off his engagement because he suddenly has a "word" from Jeremiah 16:2 ("You shall not take a wife") though this is known nearly to have happened. The perplexed inquirer should first try to discover if his circumstances are similar to those of Jeremiah's, that is, to put the verse into its context. (He should, incidentally, try to discover a few other things as well.) —John Balchin, "An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics" (a helpful essay to which this article is heavily indebted—A.W.)

Principles of Interpretation

There are certain principles of interpretation which can help us discover the meaning of the Bible. This does not mean that the time will ever come in this life when all of us will agree about everything. Even the apostle Peter said that Paul's writings contained "some things hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:15, 16). But we can at least minimize the problems. Also, we do not mean to imply that if we use these principles we do not need prayer or the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Paul presents the proper balance: "Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything" (2 Timothy 2:7). We must prayerfully depend on the Lord for enlightenment; but we must also think and study with diligence (2 Timothy 2:15).

Therefore let us notice some principles of interpretation, most of which are self-evident. We shall also see some specific examples of the principles.

1. *Interpret the Bible according to the PURPOSE of each passage.* Ask yourself, Why did the author write this? What need was he trying to meet? This will help, e.g., to eliminate the seeming contradiction between Paul and James regarding faith and works.

Another example: The parable of the ten virgins does not prove that $\frac{1}{2}$ of humanity will be saved and $\frac{1}{2}$ will be lost. That was not Christ's purpose in telling it. He Himself reveals its main purpose at the conclusion: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).

2. *Interpret according to the CONTEXT of the passage.* Jeremiah 10:5, for instance, shows that verses 1-4 are a denunciation of idols, not Christmas trees! And Isaiah 44:24-28 and 45:1ff show that chapter 46:10,11 refers to Cyrus of Persia, not Manalo of the Philippines!

In John 15:2 Jesus said, "Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." What kind of fruit-bearing is referred to in this passage? Does it mean soul-winning, or godly character? Does "fruit" mean converts, or good works? The *immediate* context mentions keeping God's commands (v. 10) and loving one another (12ff). And from the context of *the entire Bible*, we see that fruit almost always represents holy character (Isaiah 5:1-7; Galatians 5:22,23; Colossians 1:10). For another example, Philippians 2:12 ("Work out your own salvation") and 2:13 ("for God is at work in you") belong together. To stress either part of the sentence while omitting the other is to put asunder what God has joined together.

3. *Interpret OBSCURE passages in the light of CLEAR passages.* Someone expressed it this way: "Let not that which is obscure rob you of that which is clear." For example, several cults teach "soul-sleep"—that there is no consciousness between death and the resurrection. They base this belief on these statements: "The dead know nothing." "His breath departs . . . on that very day his thoughts perish" (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 146:4, KJV). Yet Paul wrote, "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). This passage plus Philippians 1:21-23; Luke 23:42-43; and Acts 7:59 clearly refute soul-sleep. A closer look at Ecclesiastes 9:5 and Psalm 146 *in context* shows there is no contradiction; but if there seemed to be one, the preference should be given to the clearer passages.

Another example of stressing an unclear verse and neglecting obvious ones is the Mormons' practice of baptism for the dead. They base this on 1 Corinthians 15:29, an obscure verse for which at least thirty different interpretations have been suggested! Their own interpretation offers salvation to those who lived and died unconverted. But this goes against many passages: Hebrews 5:9; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 20:11-15; etc.

4. *Interpret according to the UNDERSTANDING OF THE ORIGINAL READERS OR HEARERS of the passage.* For example,

in studying the Sermon on the Mount, consider what Christ's audience would have understood His words to mean. In interpreting the book of Revelation, ask, "The disciples in the seven churches to whom this book was first sent—what would *they* have thought John meant by this statement or this symbol?" Of course it is true that this principle will produce only a *partial* explanation of some passages, especially prophetic ones. Sometimes the prophets themselves did not grasp the full meaning of their declarations (1 Peter 1:10-12). So we should not think that the original readers' interpretation exhausts the meaning of all passages, but it is an important place to begin.

For example, some think that "born of water" (John 3:5) means the same as being "cleansed by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26). But could Nicodemus have possibly thought that was Jesus' meaning? What *would* Nicodemus think He meant? —that is the key to its interpretation. Edersheim, the famous Jewish-Christian scholar, points out that proselytes to Judaism were baptized as well as circumcised. They were "immersed completely, so that every part of the body was touched by the water." As the former Gentile "stepped out of these waters he was considered as 'born anew'—in the language of the Rabbis, as if he were 'a little child just born.' But this new birth was not 'a birth from above' in the sense of moral or spiritual renovation, but only as implying a new relationship to God, to Israel, and to his own past, present, and future" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. 2, appendix 11). Since the term "born anew" was already thus used among the Jews, and since John the Baptist was creating a stir by baptizing (not Gentiles but *Jews!*) as a sign of repentance, it seems that this is what the term "born of water" would have brought to Nicodemus' mind. Jesus was saying, in effect, "Sidestepping John's baptism of confessed sinnerhood, you are coming to me as a student needing information from a teacher; instead, you must come to me as a repentant sinner needing a Lifegiver." It is true that God's word is an agent in regeneration (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), but "born of water" does not refer to that fact.

Again, Herbert Armstrong denies that Lazarus, the beggar in Christ's story (Luke 16:19ff), went to Paradise or was even conscious after his death. Then what did our Lord mean when He said Lazarus died and was carried "to Abraham's bosom"? Here is Armstrong's explanation "A 'bosom' is the breast of a human being, with the arms as an enclosure, or, an intimate relationship. So Lazarus was carried into an intimate relationship with Abraham. Lazarus is here pictured as a Gentile who received salvation," becoming a child of Abraham by faith (Galatians 3:7). But—is that what *Christ's hearers* would have understood Him to mean? Not at all, for to the Jews of His day, "Abraham's bosom" meant paradise. Christ obviously used it with its common meaning.

Next month we shall look at other principles, Lord willing. May the Lord give us understanding and help us to interpret His Word carefully.

NEWS AND NOTES

"They rehearsed all that God had done with them."

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.: If you are coming to Florida and plan to worship with us, please note that our meeting place on Sunday mornings is Piper High School, 8000 N.W. 43rd Place, Sunrise, Florida. This location is in the western part of Ft. Lauderdale. Sunday evenings we meet at the parsonage, 1320 N.W. 55th Avenue, at 6 p.m. —Vaughn A. Reeves

Ault, Colorado: I appreciate so much all the articles. Always there is an answer to a problem or question that has come to my mind. Thank you again for a good magazine. —Mary M. Klor

Mena, Arkansas: We are enjoying W & W. We think it is improving right along. Please renew our subscription . . . Praise the Lord (for a specific answer to prayer) . . . —Mrs. H. L. Ledbetter

Nashville, Tenn.: We want you to know that you bunch of fruit jars and flower pots are doing a wonderful work for us other earthen vessels. We might never reach the goal without your help. May our good Lord continue to bless you and supply all your needs. —Ada Collins

Cramer and Hanover: Word comes that Bro. Ray Canant has been seriously injured in both eyes and is in grave danger of losing his sight. Prayer groups are being formed and individuals are urged to pray for this brother.

Gallatin, Tenn. October 8 was the second anniversary of the organized meetings of our Korean brothers and sisters. (They meet in the Gallatin church building). A guest speaker delivered the sermon in the special

services that marked the day. Many in the Korean work attended.

Brother Mike Sanders has closed a meeting with us that began October 22.

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY OF PORTLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

At the August meeting of the Board of Directors, the chairman appointed a committee to prepare plans for such a celebration. We have completed our 48th year and are presently in our 49th. Next year this time, the Lord willing, we shall already be operating in our Fiftieth Year. Proper notice and celebration are in order. If you have any suggestions, please notify Bro. Bill Smallwood of the 50th Anniversary Committee, Portland Christian School.

THANKSGIVING MEETING

The annual Thanksgiving meeting of area churches was held in the Atherton school building on the morning of November 23. Attendance was good, the contribution excellent: \$4009. Brother Ernest Lyon brought the message and the S.C.C. chorus, directed by Crystal Crowder, gave two messages in song. Sister Bonnie Colwick directed the PCHS chorus.

WORDS OF LIFE

"Words of Life" reaches half the nation late at night over 50,000-watt WHAS, 840 kc, each Sunday, at 11:10 p.m. (EST). The program is also broadcast on Sunday morning at 9:00 on WFIA, 900kc.

Responses are good; costs are high. Cooperation is needed in this area. We need your regular prayer and financial support.

The frightening nuclear powers now being stock-piled are as much surpassed as they are outdated by the power released at Calvary. That power produces perfect love, and "Perfect love casteth out fear."