



“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.” Dan. 7:9

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” Rev. 13:1

These two citations are most definitely related, and combine to depict and reflect the volatile world political climate at this present hour. Daniel 7 records the prophet’s vision of “..... a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, ...and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.” V.7 Daniel is given a “moving panoramic view” of these happenings as he observes constant changes unfolding before him. The ten horns are reduced to seven and the text above displays “thrones” being “cast down” (lit. to hurl, throw, set, impose). “The thrones,” (plural) must be contrasted with “his throne,” on which “the Ancient of days did sit.” The changing of the “thrones” indicates that which is taking place on earth, while the “Ancient of days” is being enthroned in heaven. The latter has not taken place as yet. According to Revelation 4, the bride of Christ, represented by the four living ones and twenty four elders, must be in the throne room at that coronation, and that rapture has not as yet taken place. When it does and Jesus is crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords, all other governments on this earth will be ruling in usurpation.

The “thrones” being “set” or hurled, indicating that the imposition of them is often violent, is unfolding before us in actuality just as Daniel saw it in spirit. This volatile change of events seemingly began when Saddam Hussein was dethroned in Iraq. More recently, and in rapid succession, Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak was removed, followed by violent upheavals across the Middle East. Violent demonstrations were unleashed in Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen, Bahrain, and the most recent long-term and

powerful dictator to have been dethroned is Moammar Gaddafi of Libya, all demanding that current rulers step aside to make way for democratic elections. Whether or not Bashar al-Assad of Syria will be able to quell this same uprising in his country is unknown at this time. The world community has condemned his violent actions against his own people, but at this writing he is still in power.

The second citation quoted above is the beginning of John's third vision viewpoint. He saw this book of Revelation from a total of 5 strategic observation points, and in this one he "stood on the sand of the sea." That vantage point, serves to show just how unstable the present political climate is, and while John saw these events at a different time than did Daniel, both men witnessed the unstable conditions of these latter day governments. Daniel clearly saw them at an earlier time than did John for he saw the ten horns as they were reduced to only seven, while John beheld only a seven headed beast. The **7 horns** of Daniel's vision represent exactly the same nations as those portrayed by the **7 heads** which appeared before John. Both the sand and the sea are typical of the tremendous unrest, graphically displayed before us at this present time. The sea has long been a symbol of the wickedness and volatility inherent in humanity. Isaiah declared that "...the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Isa. 57:20 Such waters are surely casting up the mire and dirt of entire nations today, and the unrest in those national waters is most rampant as men continue to clamor relentlessly to claim a certain place of power and authority in occupying those thrones "cast down" before Daniel.

We do not know who will emerge to sit on the thrones being set up in Daniel's vision. Nor do we know who, and exactly when, this ten nation coalition will be reduced to seven. We do know however that this end time scenario has already been set in motion, and many players around the world are doing everything in their power to become a part of it. All of them seem to have the same goal in mind, and that is to stop, or at least curtail the extreme instability represented by the sand on which John stood. We know, without doubt, that men will never achieve such a goal for any length of time, and the "political sands" will continue to shift dramatically until King Jesus, the "Ancient of Days," steps in to restore a complete and righteous order. Until then, we

must watch these ever changing events, hopefully knowing that all of them are ever increasing signs, of what it all means to us concerning the coming of Jesus.

It seems almost impossible to keep up with these unstable sands, since they seem to change daily. However, we must be especially alert as to how they relate to Israel, for in addition to the unstable political atmosphere they portray, John's position, as he "stood upon the sand of the sea," speaks loudly of the inseparable link between Israel and the nations. What affects Israel affects the nations, and vice versa. Scripture often describes Israel as being "the earth" while the sea represents the Gentile nations. Revelation 10:1-3 presents one prime example of that, where Jesus is seen as a "mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud:..... and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth:..." v. 1-3 These verses testify of the time when Jesus will assume full authority over both the "earth" (Israel) and "the sea" (Gentile nations) when He comes to execute judgment as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. John's strategic place here between the earth and the sea again testifies of the volatile conditions that exist as the "sea" meets the "earth."

Thus, this upheaval in the nations surrounding this chosen nation of Israel is having a tremendous effect on the Jews, as the sea is trying desperately to erode the earth into non-existence. This is especially evident due to the fall of the Egyptian government. Most of the world applauds the removal of the Mubarak dictatorship, but his absence has become a great threat to the Egypt-Israeli border. Not only so, but the Muslim brotherhood, which played a key role in Hosni Mubarak's overthrow, falsely assuring the world in the beginning that they had no interest in Egyptian politics, is just waiting for upcoming elections to assume some kind power in that nation. Their entire message, published throughout the Arab world, is to annihilate Israel. Recent reports out of Egypt confirm the steadily worsening ties between the two countries. The A.P. reported that "Israel's ambassador, Ytzhak Levanon, along with his family and other embassy staff, were waiting at Cairo's airport for a military plane to evacuate them," because protestors had broken into the Israeli embassy in Cairo. These Egyptian "protestors reached a room on one of the embassy's lower floors at the top of the building and

began dumping Hebrew-language documents from the windows.” So it appears that the message against Israel is resonating loudly across the Middle East, and though The A.P. loudly announced the “Israel keeps peace with Egypt after the embassy riots, many in Israel fear that this years’ uprisings around the Arab world are giving freer rein to anti-Israeli sentiment.”

Osama Bin Laden has been killed, but that has not stopped the multi-headed terrorist snake that still threatens to destroy Israel. There were ten horns on the beast with seven heads which John saw rising up out of the waters. These horns are described in Rev. 17:12 as being “ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet.” They will also destroy the “great whore,” and what better way to do that, than with religious “Jihad?” We believe that description fits this network of terrorist groups perfectly. They are couched within a number of nations, but do not actually rule a kingdom, and there are many of them. Afghanistan was home to Bin Laden’s al-Qaeda, but Lebanon alone plays host to an astounding number of these cells. The most powerful is Hezbollah, which operates with the approval of Syria and receives massive weapons shipments and military training from its founders in Iran. However, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command—as well as the Abu Nidal Organization, al-Jihad, Asbat al-Ansar, and some local radical Sunni Muslim organizations, are also located here and all of them are actively engaged in Jihad, sharing the common goal of Israel’s destruction. Another militant group, Fatah al-Islam, which surfaced in 2006, has become one of the Lebanon’s main security threats and was involved in a deadly clash with Lebanese troops in May 2007.

Israel is also facing great opposition from former ally, Turkey. The ‘Belfast Telegraph’ published a recent story announcing: “Turkey’s Bid To Lead The Arab World Meets Israel Head On.” This article goes on to explain how the democratic uprisings, in the aforementioned countries, have weakened them, and that Turkey, “For the moment is seen as the coming power in the Middle East. Its assets are a strong, democratic, mildly Islamic government ruling 80 million increasingly prosperous people. Its escalating hostility to Israel and support for the Palestinians are highly attractive when the US is more than ever in lockstep with

Israel.”

A-7 news also reports the volatile change between Israel and Turkey. “In yet another sign of the deterioration in Israel-Turkish ties, Turkey’s Star Gazete reported that the military is installing new technology that will allow warplanes and ships to target Israeli vessels. Previously, Turkish planes, ships and submarines used American technology, which automatically classified Israeli equipment as ‘friendly.’ The new system, developed in Turkey, will allow the Turkish military to decide which targets to label as friendly. The switch was pioneered by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s regime. The system was declared ready just days after Erdogan suspended defense trade with Israel and termed Israel a “spoiled child.”

7 Though some of her neighbors seem to be tightening the proverbial “noose” around this little nation, it is also quite evident that Israel has a profound effect on **all** nations. One sign of that, is how the “earth” influenced the already volatile political waters in America. New York’s 9th district recently held a special election to fill the congressional seat vacated by disgraced congressman Anthony Weiner. This position had been held by Democrats since the early 1920’s and Former New York Mayor Ed Koch was adamant in his insistence that it was the large Jewish community which chose Republican candidate Bob Turner, over the Democratic contender. He lashed out at his own Democratic party and President Obama insisting that “They ought to revisit their position on how to deal with Israel in a way that would be comparable to what every president since 1948, Harry Truman, did — a special ally relationship.” He also said that many in the Jewish community were concerned with the “disparaging” way in which their beloved “Bibi” was treated at the White House, as well as the President’s call for Israel to reduce her borders to “pre-1967 lines.” In addition Mr. Koch declared that Jews are “disturbed by Obama’s special efforts to solicit support in the Muslim world.” He goes on to say that “We were astounded that he has never visited Israel on his several trips to the Mideast.” Whether or not this will have an effect on the 2012 Presidential elections as the former mayor suggests in this same piece, is simply not known in these rather explosive political waters. God may very well see to it that these “despised Jews” will be most instrumental in choosing the next American leader.

Israel was also at the very heart of the tumult created in the recent U.N. meetings in New York, when the Palestinian President handed U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon a letter requesting full U.N. membership, in the U.N., as a Palestinian State. This move had been vigorously opposed by the “The Middle East Quartet,” composed of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations, because of the great controversy it would incite, and The U.S has already given notice that if the Security Council does make such a unilateral declaration, it will be vetoed. Reuters published the report that “Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas asked the United Nations on Friday to recognize a state for his people, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed the world body as a ‘theater of the absurd’ and said only direct talks could deliver peace.” An associated article further emphasizes their diametrically opposed views, saying that “Abbas accepts that negotiations are still necessary, but argues statehood will put Palestinians on a more equal footing. Israel sees the U.N. bid as an attempt to destroy its own legitimacy.” The issues which make this situation so explosive and impossible 8 to resolve are summed up in this statement from the same article. “A gulf of mistrust separates Israelis and Palestinians, who each feel their existence is at stake in a bitter struggle over borders, security, refugees and Jerusalem.”

Thus the shifting sands and volatile political waters continue unabated and, due to the multiple clashes between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders, especially over the past few months, Jerusalem is the major point of contention. We are certain that the Palestinians would never be satisfied with statehood with their Capital located in a city such as Ramallah, rather than Jerusalem. They continue to insist on Israel returning to the pre – 1967 borders, which thus far, they have refused to do.

We are also confident, in view of the many prophecies surrounding the Holy City, that Jerusalem will eventually be divided. Whether that comes sooner rather than later, can in no wise be determined at this present time. The way the political sands and waters change almost on a daily basis, it could occur very quickly.

Jesus exhorted us to “discern this time,” (Luke 12:56) and we must surely be very much aware of these signs which are happening all around us. However, let us also realize that Jesus’

coming is not predicated on all these things actually being realized. The full overcoming company of believers, represented by the Church at Philadelphia, could, at any moment, hear the same call that John heard "...Come up hither,.... And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne." Rev. 4:1,2 This is exactly the same throne which Daniel saw, whereon "the Ancient of days did sit," as Jesus Himself, was crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. We need not, must not, wait for certain prophesied events to actually take place for our hearts to be acutely aware and our ears open for the sound of The Trumpet. Prophecy has already been fulfilled to the degree that "...the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." I Thess. 4:16-18

BURNING - YET NOT CONSUMED

Paul N. Smith

“AND THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED UNTO HIM IN A FLAME OF FIRE OUT OF THE MIDST OF A BUSH: AND HE LOOKED, AND, BEHOLD, THE BUSH BURNED WITH FIRE, AND THE BUSH WAS NOT CONSUMED. AND MOSES SAID, I WILL NOW TURN ASIDE, AND SEE THIS GREAT SIGHT, WHY THE BUSH IS OT BURNT” - Exodus 3:2,3.

This was a marvelous thing to Moses as he looked at the bush, burning so brightly, and yet not consumed. God attracted his attention by this phenomenon and made him to know that it was the I AM who was speaking to him. A bush is a fragile plant, compared to trees or other shrubbery; and to see it engulfed in flame and yet remain in its original form was marvelous to behold.

By this illustration, the Lord revealed Himself to Moses as the eternal One; and He also gives us a picture of Israel's history, from the slavery of Egypt to their great tribulation days. They were in fiery trial and persecution, and yet they were not destroyed. The hatred of Pharaoh seemed to inspire their growth and tenacity. It has been thus with Israel through the years; and the greatest fulfillment of this wondrous phenomenon will be manifested during the coming tribulation on the world. But there is still another typical picture seen here - the trials of the Christian - the means by which the child of God becomes an overcomer, and is prepared to reign with Christ.

When Moses saw the burning bush, he turned aside to see the thing. It was unusual, and he was interested enough to know all about it. God often speaks to us through an unusual occurrence; and, if we are interested in what God is doing, He will reveal Himself in the trial. We are taught this in Hebrews 12¹¹ - “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” the Lord wants us to be concerned about every unusual circumstance that comes into our lives. He is working something good for us. We are to be exercised by every trial; not in an agitated way, but interested enough to know why God is allowing the trial. It was when Moses turned aside, that the Lord spoke to him.

If Moses had continued on his way and excused the burning bush as just an illusion, he would have missed his entire life of usefulness. Nothing happens to a child of God that is unnecessary or unimportant. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." If you want the Lord to speak to you in an unusual experience, then turn aside and seek what the Lord's purpose in the trial is. He has lessons for us to learn; and He, the wise School-master, knows the best technique for each one of us.

In II Corinthians 4:7-11, we have the New Testament answer to the burning bush. Note verse seven: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." the bush answers to the earthen vessel, which refers to our mortal bodies. how fragile a bush is! How fragile are our earthen vessels! The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, chose to put His treasure in an earthen vessel. This treasure is Christ revealed and formed in us through the Gospel. There is such power and force contained in the Gospel that, if God did not ordain it as He has, our bodies would be changed to immortality the moment the Christ-life entered our bodies!

11

Notice that as God shined His light and glory upon the darkness and emptiness of the earth in creation, so He has shined in our hearts. That is a great force, which could transform our body of humiliation into a glorious body.

Why then, did God choose that this great immeasurable treasure be placed in weak, frail, easily destroyed vessels? The answer is right above - "That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." God's excellent power can only be manifested when that strength is needed; and who needs His strength more than they who are living in weak bodies? God does not delight in the strength of His people, but in their weakness and dependence on His great arm. As we let the Christ-life strengthen and bolster these weak vessels, then the strength is God's.

The next three verses show us the means by which these bodies are manifested to be earthen, and the victory displayed in the weak vessels. The Apostle Paul, who wrote these words had experienced each phase of this "burning." Other overcomers in the Bible also went through similar experiences which were means to their overcoming. The saints today, who choose to

go Paul's way, will travel this route to development and victory. There are no short cuts or easy ways to go. This is the way God has ordained, so it is the best way.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed." The word "troubled" means "hedged in" or "presses." At one time or another, we may be in the same situation, hedged in and unable to find a way out: in fact there may be no way out except through divine deliverance. One outstanding example of one being hedged in or pressed on every side is that of Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6). This is a familiar story, even to children; but, what Daniel felt before he was thrown to the lions and during that ordeal, we are not told. We do know that Daniel was a man of faith; and at this time, as at other periods of perplexity, he remained true to God and always found the way of deliverance.

He was pressed in on all sides, the only way out was up; and the walls of the pit were too steep for him to climb. We are sure that he did not panic or try to escape. That God can give such assurance and calmness in time of trouble is a miracle; but He can. Others, who were cast into that same pit, had their bones broken by the time they reached the bottom. But what was the difference in Daniel's case? The answer is in verse twenty-three - "...so Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN HIS GOD." Daniel had the mastery over the lions, because of his faith.

12

The application is very plain for us today. Though we may be pressed in so that no way out is seen, yet God is with us. His power will so strengthen us that we will be able to endure the lions' stares and snarls through the night. God's power is thus manifest in our mortal bodies. Daniel's flesh was no more tough than any other's; yet, when God was manifested in him, he was indestructible. He could have thereafter lived with the lions, if God so chose; and he would no have suffered any harm.

The three Hebrew companions of Daniel were also hedged in by a wall of fire seven times hotter than usual. Yet, because of the Presence of God, that furnace became a burning bush, indestructible though burning all the while. They were a burning bush within a burning fiery furnace.

The word "distressed" means "not able to turn around." This was the lot of the three Hebrews in the burning furnace.

They were bound when cast into the furnace; but, when Nebuchadnezzar looked within, he saw them loosed and walking around. The enemy cannot keep God's children bound for long. There was a fourth One in the furnace with these young men,. Today, we may be hedged in on every side, but God always makes a way for us to be loosed.

"We are perplexed, but not in despair" (or, without help). This word "perplexed" literally means "without a way, without resources, without understanding, or embarrassed." it may seem strange to some why a Christian would ever be put in a position of complete bewilderment and embarrassment; but it is so. To come to such a state will prove that we are not sufficient of ourselves, and that we need the power of Christ to take over. Perhaps we have made a declaration of our loyalty to Christ, or taken a firm stand for some Truth; and suddenly find ourselves doing exactly the opposite of our determination. Sometimes we boldly declare faith for healing, and the next day be embarrassed because we are sick and cannot get the victory. Embarrassed? Oh, Yes, but not left alone.

13

A good illustration of this point is found in Peter, the chief of the kingdom apostles. Before Jesus was arrested and taken to the judgment hall, Peter made a bold and firm declaration of his loyalty to the Lord; and he also declared himself willing to die with Jesus. He meant every word of it at the time! When the actual test came, however, Peter found no strength to carry out his desire. His spirit was willing indeed; but he was too weak to move himself in the right direction. He could not resist following Jesus afar off, but could not boldly declare his heart allegiance to the Lord. His heart said, "I love Him"; but his mouth cursed and said, "I know Him not." What was his way out? Jesus looked across that milling throng and sought out Peter. He looked deeply into Peter's eyes, even to his soul, and Peter knew that Jesus understood. The words of Jesus in Gethsemane rushed upon Peter's mind, and he ran out to kneel and weep in his own Gethsemane. Was this defeat? Yes, to Peter's strength; but it was victory - lasting and undefeatable. The life of Christ was manifested in his mortal flesh.

"Persecuted, but not forsaken." The word "persecuted" means "Pursued, hard-driven." Have you ever been pursued by the enemy - chased from one place to another without any

breathing spell? Satan uses many devices and means to pursue, but it is always the same. But, whenever we are pursued, we are not alone.

David illustrates this experience, as well as the foregoing one also. In I Samuel 21:10-15, we find David has been chased to Gath. Here, hoping to hide and rest awhile from his pursuers, he heard the people talking of his exploits and his success as a warrior. Their suspicion of him arouses fear of being taken there. Perplexed? Yes. Embarrassed? Most assuredly. We next see the King of Israel, the anointed of God, being humbled to the place where he feigned himself to be a mad man; and scribbled on the wall even as a child might. His spittle fell down on his beard, even as one who is too old and feeble to control himself. This was his means of escape. Oh, we cannot condemn dear David for this! God allowed it for his sake.

Next we see David escaping to the cave of Adullam. He was pursued even to the dampness and darkness of a tomb; but he was not forsaken. All the others, who were pursued and perplexed, came unto him. They became one company, because they understood each other's perplexity. The pursued company to day is one company; they understand each other; they fellowship each other's experience. And this was the scene of one of David's greatest victories. Here he could have ended his persecution, with his own sword; but instead he let the Lord take over and strengthen him until it was God's time for deliverance. He did not take himself out of God's hands. To kill Saul himself, would have meant defeat of God's purpose for his life. This persecution was a necessary training to prepare David for the throne, for he was truly a man after God's own heart.

"Cast down, but not destroyed." The Apostle Paul illustrates this experience very vividly. He was literally cast down, but never destroyed. The Lord had to use this harsh means to get Paul's attention. He was struck to the ground on the road to Damascus, and blinded; but he was not destroyed. The Lord had a purpose in his life. Later, at Lystra, Paul was dragged out of the city, stoned and left for dead - Acts 14. His would-be worshipers became his would-be murderers. Yet, while the disciples stood round about him, he arose and continued preaching the Gospel Message. He visited again in Lystra, and preached in the place where he had been stoned. One who is moving in the will of God

cannot be destroyed. Though he is may be cast down, either literally or figuratively, yet he is never destroyed. Again we see the burning bush. Paul despaired of life on numerous occasions; and wrote to the Corinthians that he had the sentence of death in himself that he might not trust in himself, but in God who raises the dead - I Corinthians 1:9.

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” this fifth experience is a constant daily identification with Christ. This daily dying (I Corinthians 15:30-33) is not “dying out” to sin or crucifying the old man. This was taken care of at the Cross; but, there is a daily suffering of the saints who know they have been crucified with Christ, which is hard on the body and manifests more clearly that it is only earthen. Paul states he was in jeopardy. He would have been killed numerous times if God had not manifested His resurrection power in his behalf. Jesus was pursued by His own countrymen, and assailed by Satan; sometimes the battle caused physical strength to ebb away. A real spiritual battle saps the strength of the physical body, and the resurrection life of Christ must be poured into the earthen vessel to quicken it for further service.

15

Paul died in many ways - depriving himself of everything that could have been gain to him. He suffered loss, that he might know what death Jesus endured; not the final execution at the Cross, but the intense inner suffering which was climaxed at Gethsemane. Paul wanted to know the power of His resurrection. His experience only comes through dying daily. The only ones who know anything about this daily sacrificing are those who have counted the old man dead and the new man alive.

There are times when saints feel crushed - broken. They have no strength left at all, and would surely collapse. But, if we collapse and give in to pressure, others will collapse too. If we take the strength of Christ daily then, when we feel as though we are melting into the earth under the weights of oppression, we feel the resurrection life of Christ girding us from within. Instead of sagging further, we feel a girder being raised so we straighten up and become stronger than ever before.

Paul prayed similar prayers for the Ephesians and Colossian saints, which illustrate the inner strengthening so necessary to go on in victory. To the Ephesians he wrote -

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” - Ephesians 3:16. To the Colossians he wrote - “Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” - Colossians 1:11. You will note that the strengthening is inner. If Christ bolsters and girds our inner life, then we are not defeated by what happens to the body. The inner strength comes first, before the victory is seen outwardly. Thus, we are experiencing not only the dying of the Lord Jesus but also the victory within. Our body is not strengthened first and then victory, but the opposite.

A further word concerning the two Scriptures just quoted. The one in Ephesians tells us we will be strengthened “according to the riches of His glory,” or “out of the treasury of His glory, to be strengthened and reinforced.” The Scripture in Colossians read to be “strengthened with all might according to His glorious power,” or “invigorated according to the might of His glory.” The one is according to His grace (riches), the other according to His power. Thus, His grace will be sufficient until such a time as His power will deliver.

16

A HIDDEN MINISTRY

“IF ANY MAN SPEAK, LET HIM SPEAK AS THE ORACLES OF GOD; IF ANY MAN MINISTER, LET HIM DO IT AS OF THE ABILITY WHICH GOD GIVETH: THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, TO WHOM BE PRAISE AND DOMINION FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.” 1 Peter 4:11.

Here is a ministry for all - to serve the children of God because we love them. It is not necessarily to preach, or to teach the Oracles of God. This kind of ministry does not mean talk. It is doing the *little* things that come our way; and God is thereby glorified. A man may talk big and most fluently, and yet there be nothing in his message but words and wind. He may be seeking to glorify himself - and many there are of this character today. But the service of which Peter emphasizes is of far greater worth. It is to go to the burdened, weary, sorrowing saint with a message of cheer. If it is a financial worry, it is to take along something of material help if possible. It is to put one's self in the very place of the needy one and apply the golden rule. The new man is able to

show the empathy needed in every situation.

Here is an incident that illustrates this kind of service. It occurred during the First World War. A tired horse fell in a busy street, and the usual crowd gathered. Various efforts were made to get the poor beast up, but all was in vain. The reins were pulled, and shouts were hurled at the poor fallen animal. It made a few spasmodic jerks, but that was the only response. Then the whip was tried. This also was useless. Finally, the driver, losing patience, kicked him vigorously; but there were only shudders of pain seen.

At this moment, there came on the scene a soldier back from the war. He told them, "Get out of the way. Leave the poor animal to me." Then to the amazement of all those watching, the soldier laid down by the side of the horse and whispered soothingly into his ear, at the same time stroking his neck. This continued for several moments and then, to the amazement of all who were witnessing the scene, the soldier and horse rose from the street together. The whole thing was done simply and quietly.

17

The soldier understood the plight of the horse. He himself had been down. The horse seemed to sense that he understood, and that was the secret. It makes such a difference when we understand; for he who serves, must have a heart for others. Most of us have too little feeling for the other fellow's need; but the Lord can change us. We can then minister in the spirit of Christ who Himself came down to where we were, and lifted us up to His level. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many."

Hidden service is the need of the day - not golden-tongued oratory which does not lift the fallen. God never forgets. He will reward all service, regardless of how unimportant it may seem. The Lord Jesus links such ministers with Himself. These deeds of love are recorded in heaven.

Names unknown here will be well known in heaven. When all the honors of men and all their perishable crowns have passed away, diadems of glory shall be found upon the heads of those lowly ones who sacrificed their lives for others.

"Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"- ! Cor. 15:58

---Anon---

REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

. . . From the Editor

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:8,9

This is a glorious verse boldly declaring that salvation comes in only one way: **by grace through faith**. Most students of scripture are also well acquainted with the fact that “salvation” goes far deeper than just forgiveness and deliverance from the guilt of sins, to include any salvation we may need. The key here is that regardless of the circumstance, boasting in “my faith,” can have no place in our lives.

Several years ago a certain preacher gave the following report at a camp meeting. He said that a father had called for prayer, informing him that his son had been in a horrific accident and was now in a coma. Due to the rather hopeless circumstances which had been conveyed to him, the minister said a short, somewhat “generic” prayer, and went about his business. Four days later he declared that the Holy Ghost convicted him of his passive attitude concerning this child and he immediately and extremely earnestly began to intercede for him. Almost immediately the phone rang, and he learned that this child had just come out of the coma. He was filled with remorse and sorrow and began to repent for his failure because, in his words, “that little boy had to stay in a coma four more days because of me.” That story was intended to convey genuine humility, repentance, tears, and sorrow. Instead it rings of conceit, arrogance, and pride, for it completely discounts the prayer of all the other thousands of members of the Body of Christ, who had also been earnestly seeking God during that time. According to this man’s testimony, God was just waiting for “my faith” to come before Him, so He could raise this child up.

We know that without faith it is impossible to please God, but never can we boast in “my faith.” We have heard another cliché which has been used quite extensively over the years in regard to doctors. Some have said “faith works, doctors help,”

this in response to some doctors who do seem to convey the attitude at times that they are indispensable, and their prognosis infallible.

However, let us, as people of faith, never convey an air of superiority because of “my great faith.” Some doctors are indeed rather conceited and arrogant, but we will never win them if we display the same attitude and insult the knowledge and expertise of a minister whom God has chosen for our benefit. Not only so, but all doctors do not fit the above description. Some of them are absolutely filled with divine love and compassion for those who are suffering, and know full well that only God can heal. We have heard multiple testimonies of how God led some individuals to exactly the “right physician.”

Scripture plainly tells us “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” Rom. 13:7 This verse includes all those whom God would use to minister in our behalf, regardless of what role they may play. It is also imperative that we remember: faith is a gift to us from God, and as Paul said to the Corinthians, “...and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou **glory**, as if thou hadst not received it?” In other words, why do you “glory” or you take credit for something that God did? We are plainly told in Eph. 2:8 that faith is a **gift**. Our lives absolutely must not bear the stench of pride, arrogance, and conceit, boasting in something for which we can in no wise claim glory belonging to God Alone.

The Final Letter part II
R. Hawkins

We left our story last month unfinished and with a question. What became of Timothy? He was Paul's chosen successor to preach the message of divine grace and the recipient of Paul's last known letter, II Timothy. I have heard from several of you who took my query to heart and have continued to 'think on these things'. For those of you joining our story late- I counsel thee to stop reading now, find a September Grace & Glory, and start on page 20.

The Church at Ephesus had a very special place in the heart of Paul. He would spend roughly three years there, "teaching publickly and from house to house"- Acts 20:20, and declaring, "the whole counsel of God"- 20:27. It was in Ephesus that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul" Acts 19:11, and where an evil spirit testified of Paul and Jesus- Acts 19:15, and thereby "mightily grew the word of God and prevailed"- 19:21. His letter to that assembly contains the highest of Church truth, most notably their exalted placement in the "heavenlies." 20

"For I know this ,that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20: 29, 30.

The verses above from Acts 20 foretell a pressure cooker in Ephesus. On his fateful journey to Jerusalem he requests a meeting with the elders of the Church. While in Miletus he warns his strongest assembly of the "grievous wolves" outside, AND "your own selves within." Paul knew the Ephesians should "see my face no more" -Ch. 20:25, and that is why he had entrusted the Church with the one man he knew would be faithful- I Tim. 1:3. That of course was Timothy who, like Paul, had been called with "an holy calling"-II Tim. 1:9.

If II Timothy is anything, it is a looking glass into what this "good soldier" was walking into. He could expect a wave of apostasy from false teachers outside the Church and from self seekers within. "Commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" 2:2 was Paul's desire, but above all else: "**STUDY to shew thyself approved unto GOD**"- 2:15. You are responsible for yourself and only God's approval matters.

So what became of our dear brother? Was he approved of

God? Did he “*Hold fast the form of sound words*” and keep “*That good thing which was committed unto thee*” by the Holy Ghost? - 1: 13-14. Many of you, I am sure, are familiar with the letters to the seven Asian Churches from Revelation referenced last month. The first one in Revelation 2 is to Ephesus, Timothy’s Church; the one with every advantage afforded it: “*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.*” *Revelation 2:2,3*

21

Paul’s prophecy in Acts 20 is answered in verse 2. The Church cannot bear them which are evil (*grievous wolves*) and those calling themselves apostles, (*of your own selves*) they had found liars. He mentions their patience twice, their labour twice, and uses the word borne, which means to bear or carry- all in Jesus’ Name. And just to drive home the point of how hard they were working, he says they had not fainted.

The fatal condition of Ephesus is in verse 4: they had left their first love. This statement cannot however apply to Timothy. I say that because verses 4-5 give us a clue, that when coupled with some early Church history, reveals the answer to our question. “*Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*”

The Apostle John had written these revealed words of Jesus Christ in a letter to be read aloud to the Church at Ephesus. He writes it while exiled on the isle of Patmos in the year A.D. 96. On January 22, A.D. 97, Timothy crosses paths with a pagan festival, ironically one for Diana of the Ephesians. It turns violent. With a heart still ‘aglow with a vehement flame’, Timothy finishes his racecourse.

It was an early Church historian, Eusebius, who preserved the recording of Timothy’s position and subsequent death in Ephesus. *Grace & Glory* founder A.S. Copley also believed Timothy was in Ephesus when John wrote this letter to them-p. 5, 6 *Letters to Timothy, A.S. Copley*. Brother Copley concluded in his *Detailed Studies on Revelation*, that the ‘candlestick’ was

members of the congregation; the meeting's light bearers of truth who were removed- p.24. Brother Copley however could not explain what was meant by 'his place' and did not try. He of course was not in the information age.

Timothy had to have been, the candlestick for the Church at Ephesus, but the assembly had grown cold. They are first asked to repent and to remember how things used to be because thirty years prior Paul commends them on their '*faith and love*'- Eph. 1:15. But Rev. 2:2-3 describes what time does to the message of grace when 'works' get in the way. The programs and outreach in Ephesus receive wonderful commendations, but in the end they earn a '*nevertheless*'.

The candlestick examiner, searching the hearts and reins, may have known the answer quickly, but it seems that they got a year's reprieve. I'll bet Timothy ran that last mile as fast as he could, preaching the word and being '*instant in season, out of season*' . . . *with all longsuffering and doctrine*'- 4:2. When things did not change and hearts were not rekindled, Jesus did come unto them quickly. There was nowhere else for Timothy to go, and nothing more he could do, so Jesus took him home. I am confident he was ready, Praise God! 22

I wonder how those in Ephesus felt when they got the news. Maybe one of the elders felt something in his spirit and went and found that year old letter from Patmos and read it again. I wonder how they felt about all those works on January 23, A.D. 97? That, as they say, is between them and the Lord.

So what are the 'first works'? We can again look back to Paul's words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:32. "*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*"

The word of his grace. It builds you up and gives you an inheritance because it produces a preeminent love for Jesus, our coming bridegroom. Sitting under that message is not enough as demonstrated by the Ephesians- you have to have '*ears to hear*' and like Timothy- "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God.*" Jesus said it best in Luke 12:48: '*. . . For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. . .*' It is, as noted last month: God still has his living, breathing examples in place. Find your candlestick, and never let them go.

Epilogue

I know that without my use of history, this story does not get told. God placed Timothy in Ephesus for a reason, and history confirms that, through the writings of the Roman Church historian Eusebius. It is also Eusebius who preserved the writings of an early Church father, named Irenaeus, whereby Bible scholars have affixed 96 A.D. to the writing of Revelation. The fatal event that took Timothy's life is recorded in Greek and Latin manuscripts as the *Acta Timothei*, (acts of Timothy), right down to the day and date. Its continued preservation to our day was made possible by both the Catholic and Protestant Churches. Everything seems to have two witnesses.

I also wondered if perhaps Bro. Copley had a Schofield Bible in his study, which is how I became familiar with A.D. 96 as the date for the writing of Revelation. I also believe that had he come across A.D. 97 for Timothy's death he may well have found it intriguingly quick also. Of course that document was still being preserved, and seen only by the cultural and religious academia of Bro. Copley's day. But not anymore. This truly is a time, like no other before, where men can be "*Ever learning, and never able to*"- II Tim. 3:7.

I am at peace with the accuracy and especially the why of knowing Timothy's story. As overcomers ourselves, we should want to know what became of him. What became of the calling on his life and the invested interest and love that Paul had for him. I know I wanted to know and the answer has only added to my own resolve to "*continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of,*" II Tim. 3:14.

Finally, what about that day in 96'. Timothy was surely doing what Paul had not only taught him, but had time and again showed him: "*in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.*" It was a fitting end to Timothy's stand at Ephesus, as well as a tribute to Paul, the grace of God, and the "*power, love, and sound mind,*" that Paul knew was still in him. It was also an example of how Jesus separates believers in his Church. It happened first in Ephesus, is happening today, and will continue until "*...his bride hath made herself ready.*"

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

By Mary M. Bodie

DIVISION ONE

THE BIRTH OF THE KING

Chapters 1 and 2

Matthew presents the most systematic as well as consistent book in the Bible when we have secured its key. He continually sets before us the Messiah, the King of the Jews as come unto His own people, and their rejection of Him.

The purpose and extent of its teaching we see at the outset. It is "the book of the generations of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." The Holy Spirit who inspired Matthew, endeavors to set before us at once the connection of Christ with two of the most important promises of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. The one given to David as the King (2 Sam. 7:8-16) and the one given to Abraham as to His Seed (Gen. 15:18). Christ was the fulfillment of both promises. As Son of David, He is the King of Israel. As Son of Abraham, though not necessarily King, He is the promised Seed through whom all the families of the earth are blessed, upon the simple condition of faith. Hence, the promise is not absolutely made void by Israel's unbelief. In fact it has found a higher fulfillment (though not manifest at the present) in Christianity, which later will be fully in evidence.

24

Genealogy of the King

Matthew identifies the King for us, points Him out as eligible to the throne by giving us His genealogy. He begins with Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel and the basic head of blessing, and ends with Joseph, the last of the chosen line. The genealogy is divided into three sections each separated and emphasized "**as fourteen generations.**" And the fact that some links in the chain are missing, in order that there may be this exact number, marks it as doubly important. The number 14, a double seven, stamped upon it three times, is the number of divine completeness. It emphatically proclaims that the rule in Israel has reached the limit; the number 2, the number of witness is combined with 7, the number of perfection.

The first part of the genealogy embraces both heads of promise. It begins with Abraham and ends with David. The second part begins with Solomon, favored son of David, after

which there is a general history of decline; while the giving up of the nation as the acknowledged people of Jehovah ends the section. The third part has in it only one significant name, Zorobabel --"**melted at Babylon,**" implying that Israel are scattered in the refining pot of God's judgment. Of this time we have no inspired history. All is in ruin and hopeless, save for God's intervention; but this is the very opportunity for which God waits. Therefore when the tide in Israel's affairs were at their lowest ebb, Jesus was born--the Resurrection and the Life--thus justifying the numerical symbolism of the third part, the resurrection number.

The fact that the ruin is hopeless, save for God, is that Joseph, the last of the line before Christ, is shown to be Jeconiah's son, of whom it had been prophesied "**that none of his seed should prosper, sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah:** - Jer. 22:30. Thus the direct legal line is smitten with a curse; a witness again of the hopelessness of expectation of good from the fleshly birth. Therefore God must come in and fulfill His promise to His servant David in another way, that He may not make void His Word concerning Jeconiah's seed. The Lord is never defeated. He has another line of David's seed through whom He will bring in the promised King, for Mary too is a descendant of David. And Joseph, the legal heir to the throne, becomes her husband by divine constraint, and thus transfers to her child, "**the seed of the woman,**" his own legal rights to the throne. Hence, Christ is King of the Jews by natural, as well as supernatural birth, by law as well as grace. After the genealogy of the people, He was the heir of David through Joseph; but according to God's Word, independent of man's reckoning, He was the heir of David through His mother, Mary.

25

Five Chosen Women

Therefore while the genealogy reveals the complete ruin of man, it also serves as a most effective background for the grace and power of God. The latter needs such a setting for its fullest display which is surely manifested in the birth of Christ. We believe, had we eyes to see it, that every one of the names in this genealogy of Jesus Christ would manifest in some measure, God's sovereignty in grace, even as the names of the women, herein mentioned, prove. There are only five of these; five having a most wonderful signification in this place. It

is the number expressive of responsibility according to capacity; also of God in governmental ways, as witness the two tables of the law with their five precepts upon each. And more than this, it symbolized the weak united with the strong, man joined to God; as illustrated by our four fingers, the number of human weakness connected with the one thumb, the number of God. **Immanuel** - "God with us," is the full expression of the latter.

The history of these five women is of such character that judging by the standard of man, we would not expect to find them among the noted line which gave birth to the royal Son of David, King of the Jews. And yet that expresses God's character--He is glorified in weakness, and He delights to blow upon the pride of man, which He has surely done in the matter of these women being in the ancestry of the King of the Jews.

For the latter nation is the fullest expression of the self-righteous moral man. Four of these women may be Gentiles; three certainly are; while two are Canaanites, the people under the curse. What light this sheds upon the ways of God! What a revelation of His grace in the midst of law, that they with all their apparent weakness and shame would find a place in the genealogy of God's King. And not only are three of these women under a cloud, because of their heritage of shame by birth; but three of them are marked by their own sin: while Tamar, the first in the line, actually finds her place here through her sin, which teaches that salvation is for sinners. For it is thus that we all find our title to Christ--our sin gives us a divine right to his favor and name. And He is not ashamed of such, as Tamar's name, implying "prosperity," is the witness.

The second woman, **Rahab**, the harlot of Old Testament fame, signifies "**breadth**." She emphasizes the fact, that increase was her portion as joined to the princely family of the house of Judah. As wife of Salmon, and mother of Boaz, she takes her place in the genealogy of the Lord and teaches us by her history this sure principle: that salvation is by faith.

Ruth--"satisfied," is in contrast with Tamar and Rahab as to character and reputation. She is a most vivid illustration of the fact that salvation is by grace in opposition to law: for she was a Moabite; and the sentence of the law shut her out absolutely from the congregation of the Lord: it is written, "**an Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter the congregation**

of the Lord even unto the tenth generation; they shall not come in the congregation of the Lord forever” - Deut. 23:3. Therefore she is legally excluded from the people of God. Yet grace is sovereign in her case also. It rises above the law and she and her children come into the congregation of the Lord; for had the law in her case been rigidly enforced David himself, third in succession, would have been excluded from the congregation.

The fourth woman is not mentioned by her name, but as **“her of Uriah,”** she finds her way into the genealogy of the King of the Jews. Her history is thus briefly, but concisely told, and when seen under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, is wonderful. She teaches to all generation, whether in the case of individuals or nations, **“that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,”** thus emphasizing the fact that God’s salvation is eternal. We do not come into possession of salvation by our good conduct, hence cannot lose it, by our misconduct, though we may lose its joy and power and our future reward by our lapse and failure.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the fifth woman mentioned in the genealogy. She was also under reproach; for in her case was fulfilled the Scripture, **“A virgin shall conceive and bear a son,”** which according to the natural man was shameful. Nevertheless it teaches to us, who have ears to hear, that in God’s plan of salvation man and his thoughts are altogether out of the reckoning. God is supreme. He sets the natural man aside and brings in another source of life, the Seed of the woman the Second Man, the Last Adam. He comes into this world in weakness, but manifests strength; in yielded-ness, but manifests the energy of the overcomer. He comes into the world in dishonor, He leaves it in honor and glory. He is the promised One who shall bruise the serpent’s head and bring the ruined race back to God.

Therefore in the first chapter of the biography of the King we have the genealogy of His perfect lineal claim, hence legal right to the Messianic throne of David. That is, He entered by the door--the Scripturally appointed way--into the sheep-fold and Israel is without excuse--John 10. We are also shown at the outset His primary work. **“He shall save His people from their sins.”** Immediately then would follow the results for which the Jew waited, namely, deliverance from their enemies, by their reception of **Immanuel--God with us.”**

Pursuing The Right Vision Gene Hawkins

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. Hab. 2:1-4

These verses, quoted in Hebrews 10:37-38, announce an urgent vision for us today, as the apostle Paul uses them in reference to the eminent return of Jesus. These first four verses of Habakkuk present an outline which will prepare us to feel the burden as deeply as did that dedicated prophet. Verse one bespeaks an imperative attitude. Verse two is God's answer and purpose for His prophet and for us. Verse three records His Promise, while verse four issues a solemn warning.

Habakkuk makes these words intensely personal by his repeated use of personal pronouns such as I, me, and my. “I will...” reflects an individual commitment to responsibility. He asserts that he will make a solid stand “upon my watch,” following Paul's admonition for the Church “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand**. **Stand** therefore, ...” Eph. 6:13-14 This watch is one of defense, and must be claimed as our own, guarding against anything that could harm or cause difficulty to the charge that has been given us. He is also “set upon the tower,” a beautiful reference to the our high tower of the heavenlies, watching and exploring the glorious provision wherein God “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:...” Eph 1:2 The next “watch” carries a different meaning, for this one announces that we are watching “...to see what he will say unto me.” We must, like the prophet, be ever open to His voice that He may impart the revelations of truth which are so imperative for His work, both in and through us. Such an attitude causes us to be wide open, as to “...what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.” It is imperative that we be so obsessed with His Voice, we are willing to be reprov'd, if

and when we may have some wrong ideas about the path we are traveling. Paul spoke of this same glorious state when he wrote “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, **God shall reveal even this unto you.**” Phil. 3:15 This is a much needed admonition today because so many seem to be pursuing the wrong vision. The Lord answered Habakkuk by showing him “**the vision.**” Proverbs 29:18 declares plainly that “where there is no vision the people perish.” God has given many visions, down through the ages, containing His plans and purposes for certain times, but as noted earlier in Hebrews 10:37-38, Paul quotes verses three and four of our opening text, defining “**The vision,**” as being a reference to the coming of Jesus. Tragically, many of our day are in no wise proclaiming it. The eyes of some are still filled with prospects such as II Chron. 7:14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” That is a glorious vision, and though this promise will be fulfilled in its entirety in the millennium, it will **never happen in this Church Age.** Scripture is filled with examples of the fact that God has a will, but He also has a designated time for it. He filled Israel with the vision to march triumphantly into the land of Canaan in Numbers 14, but when they refused to do so, He decreed that they should wander in the wilderness for the next 40 years. Some decided that they would now turn and believe God announcing in V. 40 “....Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.” It was too late for such “humbling” of themselves, “And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.” V. 41-42 They disregarded Moses instruction and were indeed soundly defeated. So it is that the proclamation by some that we simply need to “fall on our faces and repent,” is an outdated message. Scripture plainly declares that nothing will save this nation or the world, and our only hope lies in Paul’s glorious interpretation of “the vision” given to Habakkuk “he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” Heb. 10:37

The parable of the ten virgins likewise teaches this same

truth. The five wise virgins prepared themselves, and were admitted to the marriage. The five foolish did not have the required oil at the proper time and thus did not gain entrance to the wedding. This parable does not speak of the bride of Christ, for it does not take place until the midnight hour, long after the bride, as well as the bulk of the Church, is already in heaven. It does, however, represent this principle, that timing is a most important part of God's ordained plans.

Another "vision" in our midst today is the so-called prosperity message. It especially makes two major promises: Divine healing and material wealth. Undue emphasis on this "vision" does most assuredly appeal to the masses, but it comes at the grave expense of genuine spiritual increase, for it omits the depths of divine grace and the deep spiritual blessings "in heavenly places in Christ." Eph. 1:3 Complete healing, in spirit, soul, and body, has been most gloriously provided in the atoning work of Jesus. God also promised that He would "...supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:19 Romans 8:32 further asserts the bold, and all inclusive proclamation: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" But never in scripture do we read that God ordained all members of the Body of Christ to be wealthy in material goods. Never does He proclaim the prosperity mantra that you "must give to get." Nor does He tell us that we will never be tested in body and that **only** gross unbelief, or sin, can prevent us from "stopping Satan in his tracks" and deprive us of God's Healing Hand.

We are instructed to simply give, and leave our reward to Him. We must also understand that God, at times, "lets down the hedge" on purpose, thus making us accessible to Satan's attack, for it was God who made that Corporate decision regarding Job. There is no record, that this man of faith, was invited to the meeting between God and Satan, and let us never think that Job was the last person who was the subject of such a conversation. If God made the decision that Satan could "attack" Job, who are we to think we have the power to stop his advances, before God has completed His Work in us. We, like Job, must understand that Satan could go not one step further than the boundaries SET BY GOD: "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." Job 2:6

Sometimes people want to make a great demonstrative display, of how they can overcome Satan, and “rebuke him in the Name of Jesus,” but that authority was never given to us. We are told to “resist” him (Jas. 4:7, I Pet. 5:9) but both Zechariah and Jude indicate that only The Lord can “rebuke” him. Zech. 3:2, Jude 9. Furthermore, Paul tells us that God has an even greater plan for “putting Satan in his place,” and He is using His Own people to do it. “To the intent that **now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places** might be known by (through) the church the manifold wisdom of God,…” In other words God is using His saints, just as He did Job, to prove His Own point to Satan and his host.

Paul likewise proved that God’s purposes for our lives go far beyond just having faith to be healed. Had God answered the cry of the apostle, simply to remove his “thorn in the flesh,” Paul would never have understood the full import of; “my grace is sufficient for thee.” II Cor. 12:9

31 There are many worth-while and God-given visions today, visions that are to be pursued vigorously. However, all such visions must literally be **controlled**, by “the vision” recorded in our text, and Jesus’ parable in Luke 12 illustrates the point beautifully. His exhortation “Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not,” (V. 40) must be our vision, and the basis for any ministry of our day. The Master intends that we should be faithful to His calling. “And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” V. 42,43 We must be found giving “them their portion of meat (the depths of God’s Word both in word and deed) in due season” when Jesus comes again, but verse 45 tells us emphatically that one’s attitude toward “the vision” proclaimed by Habakkuk, will determine whether or not a person will be pronounced a faithful servant. “But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” This servant’s conduct was a

direct result of his perception that “my lord delayeth his coming,” and the consequences are severe. These words of judgment do not mean that such a servant will be cast into hell, for there is no mention of such condemning terms as “outer darkness,” or “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Neither is he accused of **being**, and unbeliever. He rather receives the “portion” of an unbeliever, meaning that he does not get the portion which faith would have given him, simply because this unfaithful servant was not motivated by Jesus’ coming. In fact, we will never reach the full potential of the “vision” God has given to us unless the message of Jesus’ coming is paramount in our lives.

The prophet Habakkuk next proclaims “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, . . .” We cannot give what we do not have. Paul illustrated this truth with money in II Cor. 8:12, but the same principle applies to all our possessions. We cannot impart money, love, faith, grace, comfort, truth, or any other commodity, be it spiritual or material, if those things have not first been given to us. Thus, if we are to “write” this vision, it must be a vivid and personal revelation of our own. Then, and only then, can we give it forth “that he may run that readeth it.” Hab. 2:2

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” V. 3 This is the emphatic promise waiting for us today. Despite opinions to the contrary, this promise is sure and the “appointed time” is upon us. Waiting for it is an act of faith as we shall see presently, but verse 4 issues this very sobering warning. “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” That which is lifted up is a reference to pride, which must have no quarter in our lives. Could it be that men become so “proud” of their various ministries and accomplishments that they lose sight of the real object of faith? Such pride is here listed as a direct enemy of faith, and especially the faith to “wait” for the vision.

We noted earlier in this message that Paul quoted these words, and reinforced this same pattern of urgency, in his letter to the Hebrew Christians, in an endeavor to turn them from the types and shadows of the law, to the realities in Christ Jesus. “. . . . ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the

will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Heb. 10:34-38 Today, our faith and thus our lives, must be centered on this glorious vision of Jesus’ return. We too must be obsessed with it, as was Habakkuk and Paul. Sadly, we are living in a day when that is not the case with the masses, who seem to be involved with converting the world and achieving a life of ease. Paul closes this chapter with these words. “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” V. 39 The apostle writes here to Christians, and thus the “perdition” (ruin or loss (physical, spiritual or eternal) is not a reference to hell as many suppose, but rather to the ruin some Christians will suffer when they miss the reward they **could** have had. This innumerable company of believers is found in Rev. 7:9-17. They are said to have come “out of great tribulation,” V. 14. Verse 17 declares that “....God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” This is undoubtedly a reference to the fact that they have endured great pain in the tribulation period, but I am also persuaded that their tears are tears of remorse, because they finally realize that they simply did not attain the fullness of glory that they could have had. The Philadelphia Church was promised: “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will **keep thee from** the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Rev. 3:10-11 The innumerable company evidently did not hear, or at least they did not heed, the admonition “Behold I come quickly.” They did not keep the word of His patience, which is a strategic part of Paul’s exhortation in Hebrews 10, “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, **ye might receive the promise.**” These would display the same attitude evidenced in Luke 12, “My lord delayeth his coming.”

Jesus admonished us to “occupy till I come,” (Lk. 19:13) and He was speaking of guarding and defending, that which is committed to our trust. We must be faithful to such a “vision,” be it giving out the Word of God, ministering in alms, or beneficial deeds to others. However, as seen throughout this message, anything and everything we do, must be motivated, and dictated,

by “**the vision**” which “shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” Hab. 2:3

(Ed. note: This message was delivered at the Labor Day 2011 Meetings, held in Sand Lake, Michigan)