

Grace and Glory

Declaring unto you the
whole Council of GOD

Without Price Since 1910

Loving His Appearing

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The Lord shall fight
for you and ye shall
hold your peace.

EXODUS 14:14.

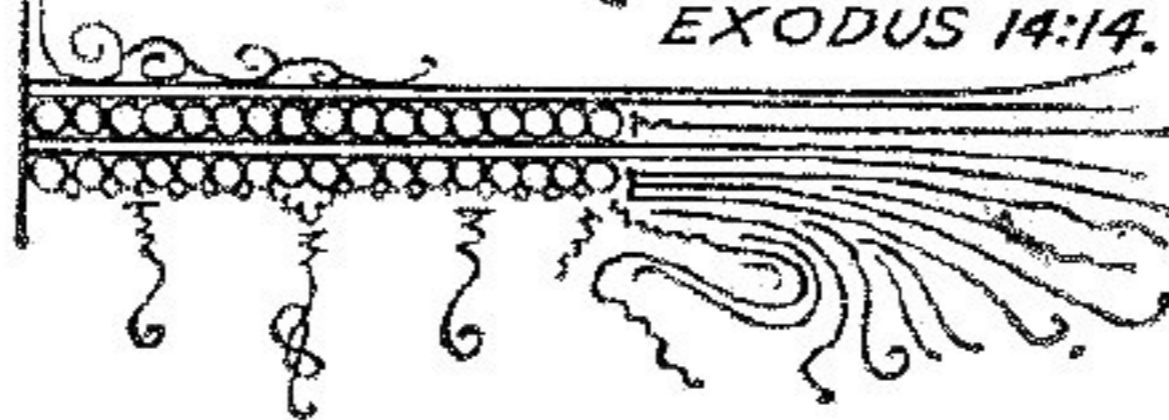
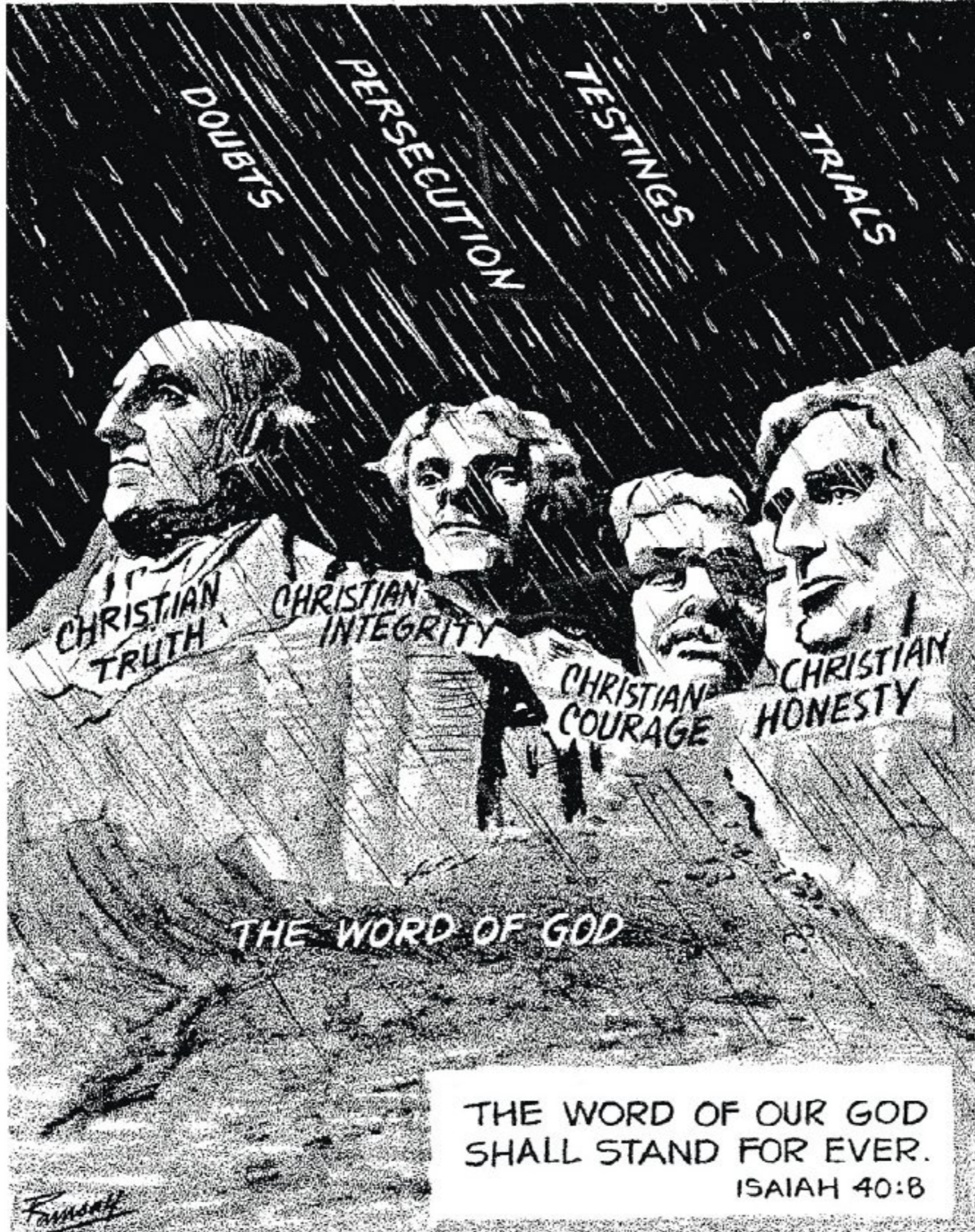


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IMPREGNABLE



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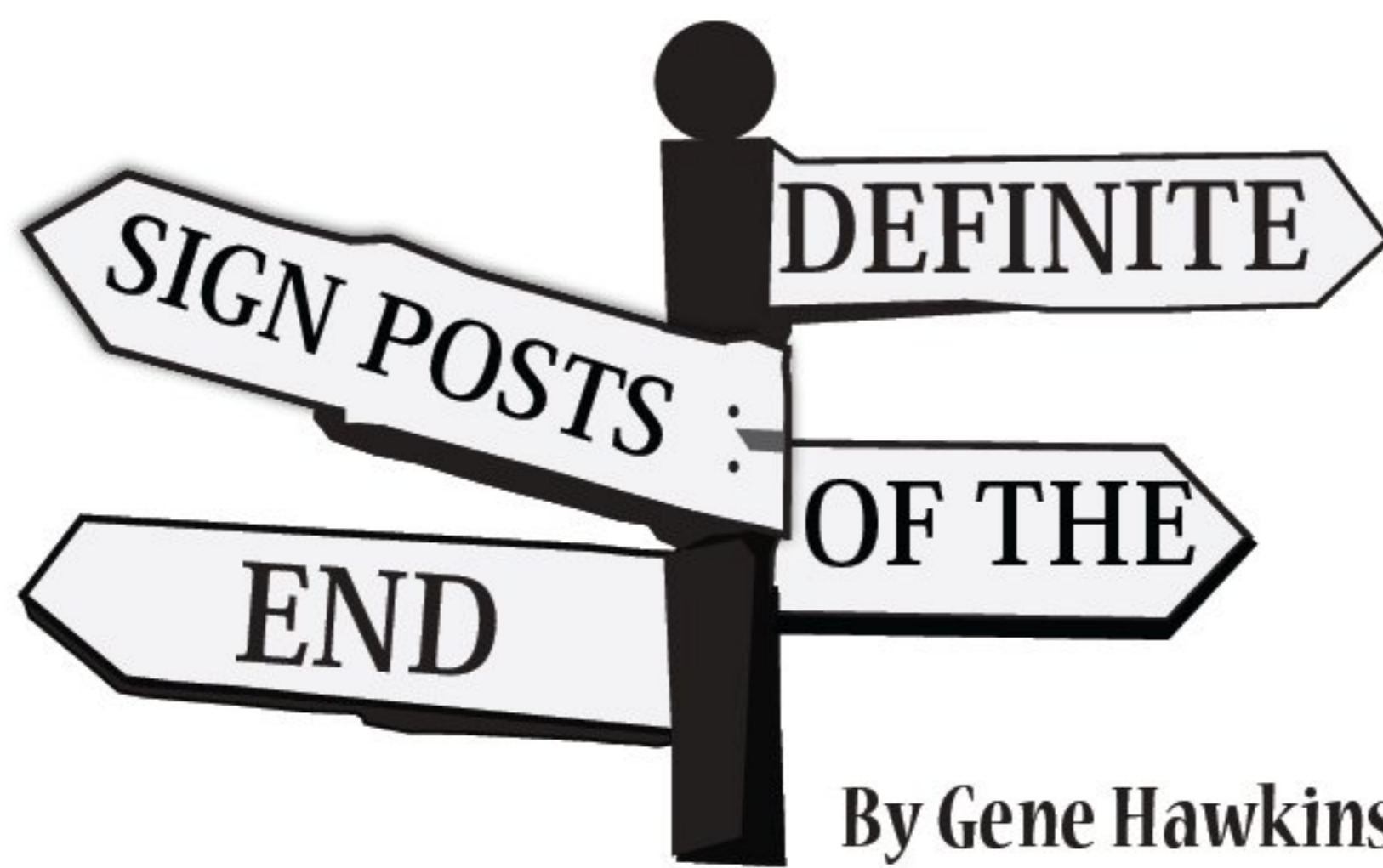
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Editor: Gene Hawkins



By Gene Hawkins

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” II Tim. 3:1-5

3 This is a very familiar portion of scripture, having appeared in the sign posts numerous times over the years, and rightfully so, for it depicts and specifically defines the characteristics of this world just prior to Jesus’ Second Advent. “Perilous,” (dangerous, furious, fierce,) times are announced in verse 1, while the little word “For,” of verse 2 shows us that men being “lovers of their own selves,” is the root cause of such perilous times. Paul then lists no less than 19 unsavory results which are manifest when real love is lacking. What a contrast to the 16 beautiful characteristics that prevail when men are controlled and motivated by divine love. I Cor. 13:4-8

We heard from some recently who were very much concerned that Grace & Glory was becoming too “political.” I tried to reassure those folks that this publication never has, nor will we ever, endorse a particular party or candidate. I did have this same conversation with Bro. Smith, numerous times in the months, and even years, before he went home to be with The Lord. He informed me that it was getting harder and harder not to “appear” political. The reason for that is that the politicians themselves are throwing long time end time issues into the political arena. Some of them have been very bold in quoting scripture, taking it out of context and grossly misapplying it in an effort to show that Jesus agrees with their political agenda. Social and moral issues, such as abortion, and homosexuality, which at one time were left to “the preacher,” have now been pushed front and center on the political stage, and are being used to further the ambitions of men.

Scripture also speaks loudly of the fact that destructive forces, that were once called “acts of God,” such as earthquakes, famines, fearful sights from heaven, and waves roaring, would come to pass in these last days. Men, however, have made such happenings political, declaring that these “acts of God,” are now due to man-made global warming in an effort to establish greater governmental control.

“...*men shall be lovers of their own selves*,...” is manifest in every segment of life here upon this earth, producing all the effects seen above. The recent presidential election produced a graphic picture of the American spiritual (or lack of it) state of the union. The majority of American votes went to candidates who strongly approve, and are working feverishly, to legislate homosexuality and same-sex marriage. We wonder what part of “abomination” indecency and shame, do they not understand? Lev. 18:22, Rom. 1:26,27 America voted for those who support insurance funded contraceptives, thus completely ignoring God’s decree against fornication, for this provision of the health care law was vehemently defended by single individuals who wanted to maintain such an ungodly lifestyle, and in their words, “did not have the money to pay for it themselves.” Abortion, even partial birth abortion, has been defended and justified to produce needed stem cells for medical research and the so-called “greater good,” for all mankind. Abortion has also been justified because a girl should not be “punished” with a baby just because she chooses to engage in illicit pre-marital sex, which God specifically condemns as “fornication.” “Men shall be lovers of their own selves...” and they will indeed pursue that which they desire, at any cost, regardless of the consequences to themselves and others.

America also voted for the “fiscal cliff,” which has currently taken center stage in politics, since the election. That cliff is in reference to the President and Congress who, according to ABC News, are “trying to reach a deal to avert the automatic triggering of \$6 trillion in tax hikes and \$1.2 trillion in spending cuts that could begin on Jan. 2 via sequestration.” The majority of Americans voted for “free stuff,” in the form of entitlement programs that are literally strangling America. They have become one of the major causes of that fiscal cliff dilemma, proving once again that men are surely “lovers of their own selves,” even “covetous,” **demanding** what they want, when

they want it, and a majority are determined that “the rich should pay just a little bit more,” in taxes, in order to achieve their goal. Newsmax quoted Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin as saying “Higher taxes are necessary, **The American people spoke on this issue in the election.**” We would wonder: when did America turn her back on the scriptural premise to able bodied people “...that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” II Thess. 3:10

5 Taxing the rich, in order to pay debts, is not new in scripture. King Menahem, of Israel, followed this plan, trying to buy an alliance with Assyrian King Pul. II Kings 15:20 Is it any coincidence that just a few short years later, this very same Assyrian nation began to take Israel captive? II Kings 15:29 Daniel also tells us of a Syrian King who would “stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes...” Dan. 11:20 According to history, this was done to pay the tribute incurred by his predecessor, Antiochus the Great. Today, those who oppose that same pattern of raising taxes, in regard to the current fiscal dilemma, declare that, even if the rich were taxed to the fullest extent, those extra revenues would only fund the government from 7 to 16 days, depending on which report you read or hear. It would do nothing to reduce the national debt, and it seems that the only solution for some is to raise the debt ceiling, and plunge the country into even deeper debt. The fact is that nothing, outside the limits of Divine Love, can stem the tide of the “incontinent” or out of control nature of humanity. Men seem determined to have their own pleasure, even when such pleasure is diametrically opposed by The Word of God. Furthermore, we have not heard of anyone, NOT ONE, crying out to the The Lord for His Wisdom in solving this potential fiscal cliff disaster! We rather see them as “...lovers of their own selves,” plotting their strategies as to how their own party will not be blamed when something goes awry.

Perilous, even violent times are surely on the increase in these last days. Mass shootings have taken place in Arizona, Aurora, Colorado, and Ft. Hood Texas, and just a few short weeks ago, a professional football player in Kansas City shot, and killed, his girl friend, and a short time later turned the gun on himself, as he committed suicide in front of his former coaches. Here again even sports commentators and writers, cast the political football of gun control into the fray, as the cause of such violence. Just a scant couple of weeks after that, America was plunged into a state

of mourning due to the horrific massacre at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut which took 26 lives, 20 of them small children. That despicable act of violence was followed almost immediately by the political cry for more gun control. Guns are not the problem! Rocks are the weapon of choice in Egypt and other countries around the world, but the real culprit is the same, all over this planet. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Jer. 17:9 Add to that the words of Jesus, as He outlined the characteristics of these last days in Matt. 24. “And because iniquity shall abound,....” V. 12 Those days of iniquity are here, and despite the most stringent efforts of men to stop them, these ungodly deeds will inevitably increase, for The Master Himself said that they would “abound,” (increase, multiply, throng) standing as most emphatic and dramatic signs of the days announcing the “coming of the Son of Man.” Jesus continues this verse with the same pattern Paul announced in our opening text: “the love of many shall wax cold.” Mental health professionals tell us that those who commit such atrocities, as seen above, are completely consumed with themselves. They are, as Paul affirms, “lovers of their own selves, having absolutely no regard for anyone else. Paul further identified the cause of these problems in I Tim. 4:1-2 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared with a hot iron.**”

“...men shall be lovers of their own selves...” is also clearly manifest in political leaders around the entire globe. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez reportedly “lied about his cancer, to win re-election.” Lignet published that headline explaining that Chavez’ original announcement, which made no mention of a successor in case he did not survive, “misled the Venezuelan public about the seriousness of his illness....” Men of power do love power, and will do absolutely anything to maintain or hold on to it.

Syria’s President Bashir Assad, is likewise “pulling out all the stops,” to preserve himself. Reports from NBC, Fox News, and other outlets affirm that this regime has “mixed” chemicals, to use as “weapons agents either into bombs or for use in an aerosol form that could be deployed from aircraft,” for use against his own people. Some speculate that this is simply a ploy “to increase his leverage for the terms of his departure from

power, to convince Western states to facilitate an asylum deal.” This same article goes on to say that “The issue of asylum or immunity for Assad has been a controversial issue that has split the international community almost since the uprising in Syria began in the spring of 2011. Last June, the United States and the UK reportedly were discussing a plan to offer clemency and immunity from prosecution to Assad if he agreed to step down. U.S. officials denied this, however. UN officials also denied it and are demanding that Assad be tried for war crimes.” The opening list of unsavory characteristics displayed by these “lovers of themselves, includes “trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors,” any, and all, of which strongly apply to the power seeking regimes in today’s world.

7 The general consensus is that the Assad regime will fall, as even Russia, Syria’s strongest ally, has reportedly signaled. The great fear for the U.S. as well as the world, is that the Syrian Rebels are being assisted by al-Qaida. Rest assured that this terrorist group is a “lover of their own selves,” and their intention for Syria is not just to assist these rebel forces, out of the goodness of their hearts. They too have their own agenda in mind and many experts fear that if the Assad regime were to fall, his stockpile of chemical weapons would fall into the hands of these ungodly terrorists, and like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, al-Qaida would dominate Syria.

Another strong threat which is contributing to the end time “perilous times,” and great unrest among the nations, is North Korea, which recently launched a satellite into space. Several news agencies confirm that as fact, and Reuters issues this quote. “Pyongyang says it is entitled to launch a satellite into space but critics say the rocket development is aimed at nurturing the kind of technology needed to mount a nuclear warhead on a long-range missile. North Korea is banned from conducting missile and nuclear-related tests under U.N. sanctions imposed after its 2006 and 2009 nuclear tests.” This source further asserts that “Most political analysts believe the launch is designed to bolster the credentials of new leader Kim Jong-un as he cements his rule over the country of 22 million people.” Self advancement, and power grab, regardless of breaking truces, or outright deceit, is common practice among world leaders in order to achieve their own objective.

We have seen much change on the world political scene, just in the past few years. Dictators have been dethroned, as

is evidenced especially in Egypt, but according to numerous reports, the new President Morsi, empowered by the Muslim Brotherhood, is doing everything in his power to become another dictator. According to worldnews.nbcnews.com, "President Mohammed Morsi issued a decree that gave him temporary but absolute powers. That decree also shielded the largely Islamist 100-member assembly, writing the constitution, from the threat of being dissolved by the judicial court order." The constitution in question has been widely criticized because it is "a wide-ranging document that includes articles on trade, education and politics, drafted by a insular group not reflective of a broad consensus of Egypt's diverse political viewpoints. They argue it will pave the way for an Islamist takeover of the state that tramples on the rights of individuals, minorities and women." Political uncertainty and street violence, have followed. Egypt's stock market also suffered strong negative reaction, the reason being "An attempt by the president's government to increase state revenue by imposing one of the largest tax hikes the country has ever seen." Thus the violence and peril, for Egypt and the world, escalates even further. 8

The U.S. is also caught in this great controversy raging in Egypt. A report from Newsmax declares that "The U.S. government will give Egypt 20 F-16 fighter jets with delivery to start in January as part of the American aid to that country despite President Mohammed Morsi's power grab and ties to the Muslim Brotherhood." This same article continues with a number of other reservations. "Delivering the planes as ordered to a different Egyptian leadership has been questioned by leaders and analysts because of the recent uprising resulting from Morsi's dictatorial power grab last month. Among the concerns is an overreaction by Egypt over issues with Israel --- given the Muslim Brotherhood's history in the Middle East --- and that American built military hardware could be used against the Jewish state or worse."

Florida Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Republican chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs weighed in on the controversy with this comment; "The Obama administration wants to simply throw money at an Egyptian government that the president cannot even clearly state is an ally of the United States." "Malou Innocent, a foreign policy analyst at the Cato Institute, pointed out that if the turmoil in Egypt were to result in another war with Israel, the United States

would be ‘in an embarrassing position of having supplied massive amounts of military hardware... to both belligerents.’”

“...men shall be lovers of their own selves,” as all the national leaders position themselves to take advantage of one another trying desperately to hold on to power. It is no accident that Israel will find herself at the very heart of all these matters, and all nations will be forced to “take sides.”

Make no mistake, the “perilous times,” of fierceness announced by Paul, will continue to escalate. Iniquity shall abound; and none of the puny efforts of men will in any wise curb it. It also seems that the majority of men around the world are willing to simply ignore these times as being “expected and normal.” Others are of the opinion that they can “fix it,” with laws, diplomacy, and empty rhetoric. God’s Word declares differently. None of this world-wide “mess” will be altered, until King Jesus comes, and takes His throne. That event will, in no wise, produce an immediate peace, as it will take seven long and destructive years for Him to achieve His objective. However, Paul’s admonitions marking the end of the chapter, quoted at the beginning of this article, can fill us with instruction, hope, and great joy. “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” II Tim. 3:14-17 God’s Word abounds with hope for those who would claim it. Peter tells us that “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.” II Pet. 2:9 This world will get no better, but God does not intend that we should stay here. The Philadelphia Church, representative of full overcoming believers who are alive when Jesus returns, was given the promise: “Because thou hast kept (to guard from loss or injury) the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from (out of) the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Rev. 3:10 This is the message Paul delivered to Timothy. If men will but heed, or “keep” the scripture which “is given

by inspiration of God,” such a message will guarantee that the man of God is “perfect, (complete) throughly furnished.... (fully equipped)” Rather than being plunged into depression because of the perilous times that surround us, our hearts can dance with joy, knowing without doubt, that these very events which are bringing chaos and consternation to the world, are actually announcing Jesus’ message to us: “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” Heb 10:37



The Other Comforter

The other Comforter ascended to abide.
To send Him, once the Savior died.
The other Comforter now teaches me to pray
And gain the vic’ try every day.
My Jesus knew the other Comforter Divine,
And gave Him that, He might be mine.

10

He came from heaven to guide us into all the Truth,
To fill the elders and the youth.
Not only does the Spirit comfort and caress;
With power He doth also bless,
For wonders, signs and miracles He doth command,
That Christ be praised thru-out the land.

The other Comforter a Training School is too,
That we may run the race straight thru.
Without Him, who can hope the Bridegroom to win?
Without Him, none would e’en begin.
Be not deceived. He did not come to earth in vain.
He’s here, that we the best may gain.

Should we not emphasize this truth today,
Lest compromise impose delay?
The bridal crew must like the Bridegroom surely be-
Immersed in love and hope, yea free.
The other Comforter alone can make them so,
Prepared in the first rank to go.

Anon

THREE REALMS OF FAITH

OUR WALK INTO THE UNKNOWN

Paul N. Smith

“BUT WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE HIM: FOR HE THAT COMETH TO GOD MUST BELIEVE THAT HE IS, AND THAT HE IS A REWARDER OF THEM THAT DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM” - Hebrews 11:6

In Hebrews eleven, commonly called “The Faith Chapter,” we find that every exploit of these Old Testament warriors is prefaced with a “by faith.” On the surface, it seems very simple to apply this “by faith” to our own experiences. But, this is not necessarily so. These men and women endured tremendous trials through faith; and this faith did not come to them overnight. They did not receive it by “praying through” at the altar. This faith came through many experiences with the Lord. Faith is progressive, and it grows as we grow.

11

There are steps of faith to which we come, if we are overcomers. I have separated them into three realms. They are: Virgin (untried) Faith, Vital (living) Faith, and Victorious (perfect) Faith. God deals with each person according to which realm he is dwelling in. Each step we take in our Christian growth is carefully noted by the Lord. We are all a part of God’s intricate design; and, as we yield to the Holy Spirit, we are made to fit into the place of His choice. The Lord allows us and, even more, put us in circumstances that will test our faith. As we exercise what faith we have we find that, though each succeeding experience may be more severe, yet our faith has grown in like measure also.

We find in the life of Abraham, the father of faith, these three steps vividly illustrated. In Genesis 12:1-3, Abraham hears God’s Voice for the first time. He is told to get out of the country in which he lived; then unto a land of God’s choice for him. Then we read of the wonderful promises to Abraham: That he would be the father of a great nation; that he would be great and even “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

Thus Abraham had a glorious vision of what God was telling him. He could see in his mind great vistas of rolling plains, mountains, and valleys, alive with people all springing from him! There was nothing for him to do but believe God. He obeyed the Lord and entered into the land of Canaan. There the Lord gave him another promise: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." What a thrill to Abraham! How he must have enjoyed the wonders of that land! He traveled through the land, stepping on the ground that would be possessed by his progeny. He was unmistakably blessed with the wonder and newness of it all. Thus with his virgin faith, he was childlike in his appreciation of these promises, not wondering how God was going to fulfill what He had said.

Now, isn't this just like us? When we first start out following the Lord, we see the vast treasure of heavenly wealth of our Father, and we glimpse the unending expanse of our heavenly Canaan; and we are eager to appropriate some of these good things. We are so overwhelmed at first with the magnitude of our wealth in Christ and being seated in the heavenlies with Him, that we never wonder how we will make it our own. Our faith is still untried. We are not satisfied very long with the first flush of enthusiasm over finding out that we are heirs of God. Our souls long to grow, and that is God's plan. Our young wings of faith strain to transport us over our vast heritage. And, oh, how those tender wings ache before they are strengthened through exercise. Then, with Abraham, we explore our new possessions and rejoice in our new-found treasure.

But there comes a time when our virgin faith is tested and we experience some misgivings about our inheritance. The enemy begins to assail our secure existence, and we are hard pressed to keep our shout of victory. We do not feel so good. What is the matter? The Lord answers our anguished cry, and sweetly comforts us and encourages us to press on. This He did with Abraham. Let us read in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis.

"After these things the Word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." These words came after

Abraham had won a great victory; not only over an outward enemy, but also over his own flesh. God encouraged him, and beckoned him on to more victories and deeper faith. But Abraham had heard these wonderful promises, and they did not thrill him so completely as before. He had not yet learned that having the Lord as his reward means everything. He began to get a little bolder in his association with the Lord. He asked, "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless?" Ah! Now he began to wonder how God was going to fulfill His promise. He did not doubt but that God would eventually do what He said, but he tried to figure out how the Lord would do it. He was worrying a little at that time. "Lord, You have not given me any seed, and the only one in my house is a Syrian; and he will be my heir unless You give me a child." So Abraham told the Lord what to do.

Well, we cannot be too hard on Abraham, because we have done the same thing. When the Lord allows us to wait awhile, we begin to get restless and worry about the Lord answering our need. Our faith is being tried now. We find whether our faith in the Lord and His Word is active or not. This point in our experience is of great importance. This is the "going-ahead" or "giving-up" place. The Lord is very careful with us yet. He has to encourage us often at this stage. This He does to Abraham. Listen: "This (Syrian) shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. Then he brought Abraham outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall they seed be."

Oh! Wonderful words of comfort! How Abraham must have taken in those words of promise! They were a balm to his troubled heart. But he proved that he was on the right road. "He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." He believed God! Can you find greater words? This was a great turning point for Abraham. His faith took a great step forward. Paul's commentary of this in Romans 4:16-21 speaks more loudly than we can. He believed God in spite of his own body and his wife's also. He asked for a little more assurance, and God graciously

complied by accepting his offering and having wonderful fellowship with him.

Now comes a great point in our narrative. God left Abraham apparently, and did not speak to him for fourteen years! We have no record of any conversation between them for this length of time. Abraham tried to make God's purpose complete, by relying on Hagar for a son. But he knew in his heart that this was not God's way. Yet, there was no word from the Lord as before. This is notable - there comes a period in our faith growth, when we are put on our own. The Lord does not speak comforting words to us as before. We are growing, and the Lord may let us suffer without apparently knowing anything about it. We hear no word from Him, no feeling of glory. "Where is He?" we ask. Then the enemy gives us a going over. He knows when we are vulnerable to attack. This is our real test - believing God, when we see no answer in sight.

14

But back to Abraham. Fourteen years of silence! What did he think during that time? How many were the battles he fought with the enemy? Where was the promise? He and his wife were getting older, and still no child. Ah! His faith was still very active; and during those fourteen years, his faith became victorious. Then, through the clouds of despair and seeming defeat, God broke the silence. He said, "I am the Almighty God who last spoke to you." He might have said, "Remember Me? I have not forgotten you, Abraham. I am still the same Almighty God who last spoke to you." Imagine the indescribable joy upon hearing that Voice. All the pain, heartaches, and disappointments faded into nothing. The Lord was there. There were no questions from Abraham this time. He had learned to be quiet. Then God talked to him and told him all that He would do, and then the unbelievable words - "You and Sarah shall have a son." How good to believe God! He will do what He promises, never fear.

Thus, Abraham's faith had been rewarded. How he had progressed with the Lord! When he was one hundred years old, and Sarah ninety years old, the promised son arrived as God had said. Abraham was made to laugh, Sarah laughed, and Isaac was laughter personified. Their

tears were turned into joy. Every time they looked at Isaac they knew that God's promise would be fulfilled. Here was the channel of blessing. This was the seed of promise. But Abraham was put to his greatest test of faith yet. Abraham's faith was perfect at this time; but the Lord wanted to prove to the devil and to all the world that it was so. Thus He asks the impossible of Abraham.

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (prove) Abraham, and said unto him....Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” - Genesis 22:1,2. Here was the son of promise - and should he kill him?

How could God fulfill His purpose through Isaac if he were dead? These and many other questions may have gone through Abraham's mind, but we read of none of them. Abraham answered nothing. Instead, he arose early the next morning and proceeded to do exactly what God had told him to do. What faith! Abraham fully intended to sacrifice his son. Paul wrote later, that Abraham did receive Isaac again in resurrection in a figure. God counted that Abraham had actually obeyed to the slaying of his son - Hebrews 11:17-19.

15

Thus, this man's faith is shown to have been perfect. He knew that God could never fail to answer His promise to him. His faith brought forth Isaac when all natural strength was gone. How his faith grew!

May we all grow in faith, so that our faith may be perfect, lacking nothing - I Thessalonians 3:10.



Do not wrest the Scriptures, but rest upon the Scriptures. Just as we use words to transmit our thoughts to others, so God sent His Word (Christ) to show His thoughts to us. John 1:1-5,14

The saints who really have a **MISSION** in this life, will soon be **MISSING**

WAIT!

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isa. 40:31

Teach me Lord to wait upon you. Waiting for anything does not come naturally for us, but we can pray and ask the Lord to make us content in the waiting. It is very easy to become discontent with life, even with God, when our eyes are fixed on circumstances of life. Moses told the elders and the children of Israel in Ex. 24, to “tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you.” Just a few short chapters later the discontent of the people becomes manifest as they saw the delay in their waiting for Moses. One can read of the horrendous blunder they made in idol worship, all stemming from their inability to lovingly and patiently wait upon the Lord. Ch. 32

When we wait upon the Lord we actually show extreme trust in the Him; believing His Ways are higher. Waiting upon the Lord is trust made practical. It is in the waiting that God most often has the most valuable lessons in store for His children; lessons only learned as we give ourselves over wholly to the Wise Master-Builder.

Is the Lord holding you in the valley of disappointment today? Are you stricken with an unforeseen illness? Have you searched high and low for employment? Are you waiting for an answer to prayer? Is your heart wondering why the Lord hasn't come yet?

If weakness is setting in because the wait seems long, “Rejoice evermore” even if it is difficult to do, and, “in everything (even the wait) give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” I Thess. 5:18

We can rejoice as patience has her perfect work! We can rejoice because the Lord has ordained us to bring forth fruit! We can rejoice as the Lord gives the waiting heart the ability to run and not grow weary, to wait and not faint. In your waiting He is exalted, and when the answer comes He alone will get the glory.

And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him” Isa. 30:18

To wait is to trust.

Cara Schnakenberg

Wait Upon the Lord

Waiting is the hardest
When we feel our need is great
But it helps if we remember
That our God is never late.
He knows our deepest longings,
And He times things perfectly,
For in his Love, He only does
What’s best for you and me.

WAIT patiently and realize
That God is in control
As you RENEW your strength in Him
And once again feel whole-
You’ll MOUNT UP over obstacles
With the power of eagles wings,
You’ll RUN and not be wearied
By the challenges life brings.

You’ll WALK and not feel overwhelmed,
But stronger than before,
If you wait upon the Lord
Till He renews your strength once more.

Emily Matthews

REFLECTIONS

. . . *From the Editor*

“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets..... that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.” Num. 10:10

The silver trumpets which God ordained for Israel were used for a number of purposes, including this one, as “....a memorial (to mark --- so as to be recognized) before your God:” These instruments were made of silver or ram’s horns, and testify of sounding forth God’s Word of redemption. The children of Israel were instructed to sound the trumpets at the beginnings of their months invoking the very recognition by God upon them. We too are coming to a new beginning of months, but we have not heard men sounding the trumpets of God’s Word calling on Him for His protection and blessing. We often hear of men wanting a new beginning, as they make “new year’s resolutions,” trying to leave their old ways and means behind and just start over. There are those who have a mind to take from the rich and give to the poor, but taking from the rich will never make the poor rich. We have heard of a number who have “won the lottery,” but greed, drugs and various other complications, have propelled them back into poverty with some even going to prison. Others have come into large inheritances, or large insurance settlements, but have squandered it in a very short period of time, and their “new beginning” became exactly like the life they had before.

God did have a way of “starting over,” but it was done every 50 years. It was called the year of jubile and was a time when every man’s inheritance was returned to him. The value of any “stock,” or possession was based on how near or far the next jubile would occur. Lev. 27 Values were extremely high if the jubile had just passed and extremely low if it were coming in the next few months. God knew the hearts and ways of men and that some of them would indeed waste, and lose their living to others in a very short period of time, just because of their own foolishness. Likewise, the equity which some seek today will never come to pass for exactly these same reasons. Even Jesus

SAINTS OF CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD

Mary M. Bodie

“All the Saints salute you, chiefly that are of Caesar's household.”—Phil. 4:22.

Here is a striking verse of Scripture though almost unbelievable that there were saints in Caesar's household. Paul says there were, so we believe it. They were surely unusual folk to take a stand for Jesus Christ in that place of rebellion against God and His rule. When we remember who Caesar was at that time, the miracle is the more wonderful, that there should be saints in his household. Nero was the Caesar of that day and the most infamous of all the Caesar's. In fact it is questionable if there is any other that even compares in any measure with this beast of Rome. Once indeed the devil had realized his conception of a man in this vicious monster. In Nero his ideal stood out and was manifested in bold relief. His mother and father were of the same evil turn and it is no strange thing that their son should even outdo them both in wickedness, cruelty and diabolical corruption. As a boy Nero was a slave of the most violent passions. His capacity for cruelty was developed with the years. He murdered his own Mother, his two wives and his rival. His Tutor Seneca he bludgeoned to death. Disguised as a highwayman he often went on tours of Rome, committing the most outrageous crimes. He was cured of this however, when a man who knew how to deal with highwaymen took him and beat him within an inch of his life not knowing he was the emperor. His extravagance was unsurpassed except by his cruelty. If Calliagula drank pearls in his wine, Nero shod his mules with silver. He never wore the same garment twice. His golden house was a marvel of extravagance and luxury to the highest degree. On his porch he had a statue of himself 120 feet high. The space that was in it was large enough to take in two proportions each a mile in length, and a silvered lake surrounded it with buildings, resembling a city. Within its area were vineyards, pastures, cornfields, and woods containing large numbers of tame and wild animals. Parts of the house were overlaid with gold and mother of pearl. The banqueting house was built in circular form revolving ceaselessly night and day, imitating the motions of the planets. After dedicating it, Nero said "I have now a dwelling fit for man." And he might have added, but I have no man fit for the dwelling.

This one was the man at the head of the household in which Paul said there were saints. Is there a Godless man at the head of your household and does he make you to feel that you cannot be a disciple of Christ? Then picture this scene of Caesar's household. Remember the monster at the head of this house, recall the fortitude it required to be a Christian in that time and in that place and take courage in the fact that what God's grace could do for the men and women of Caesar's age, that grace can accomplish in the men and women of this age also. If you fight for spiritual life, remember "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." Consider also the age in which these people lived. It was an age of despotism, absolute power was vested in the emperor. Did a man want an office, he went to the emperor, did he desire a commission in the army, he saw the emperor, did he wish to enter the senate, he saw the emperor, did he wish to be religious, according to the religion of the day, he saw the emperor, did he want to keep his head on his shoulders, he saw the emperor. All authority was lodged in the emperor. Anything against the emperor meant death; human rights were trampled under-foot and liberty was unknown. Despotism had slain manly principals leaving men who were only parodies on manhood, weaklings by the side of the mighty men of former days. Nevertheless the mightiest character, next to the Son of God, could be found right there in Rome in that age of despotism and wickedness. He never sat upon the throne of Caesar, but the fact that he was a prisoner in that prison flooded that dungeon with an effulgence such as Caesar's throne had never known. In that dark noise-some hole underground, Paul built a throne upon the principals of Jesus Christ and from that throne mandates were issued which have shaken the kingdoms of the world and transformed civilization. In that age of absolute wickedness there were some who had come into harmony with a will which was above the will of the emperor. They struggled up to the heights of glory, all aglow and be-spotted with blood, to lock hands with a man of Calvary, counting their lives not dear unto themselves they sowed the crimson seed of martyrdom, Philippian Christians to whom Paul wrote. "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household."

Some of Nero's and other beastly men's actions were out of desire for pleasure. Theaters enthralled the multitudes with their deadly charm. The serious business of life had passed away and

amusement was to the front. It is estimated that the public pleasure resorts were beyond number. They could accommodate masses of people. Public baths became centers of pleasure. They were kept open night and day, the rich almost lived in them. It is said that some ate in their bath. Some bathed as high as seven times a day, just before eating and then after eating, to create a new hunger. The baths were built on a magnificent scale and the genius of art was prostituted by allowing on the marble walls pictures of shame. There were representations that ought to bring a blush to the cheeks of a demon. But this Roman midnight of shame was ending, melting away under the radiant dawn of the Christian Era. The Star of Bethlehem and the Son of Righteousness shone upon the darkness and God's golden morning burst over the hills of the world. Paul came to old Rome with his message of redemption. The Son of God had come down to earth to deliver them from the slavery of sin which is much greater than the natural slavery in Caesar's household. They saw the Light of the world. He shone upon them the Lord of glory. Building their faith upon this deathless One they became deathless too. He lightened their darkness as well as their burden and conquered their fear and immortalized their hopes and their salutations have become a part of the music of the age. "All the saints salute you chiefly they of Caesar's household." And if such saints can bloom and blossom in such an atmosphere, what can the rest of us do who are in the latter time when things are so much better? We can overcome to the uttermost and live in perfect peace and harmony with each other and bring to God a glory that is unsurpassed. If they of Caesar's household could overcome and salute us we surely can do as much and more.

Extravagance marked that day. Men vied each other in doing something beyond his fellows in one way or another. The doings of those days are beyond our idea of things. We cannot conceive of the foolishness into which they delved. Gluttony was a part of their very mind. They were slaves to their stomachs and a higher estimate was put upon a big eater than a big thinker of their time. Nevertheless in that day there were men of spiritual greatness and divine ambition such as those of Caesar's household. They breathed a pure atmosphere and lived upon heavenly manna and angel's food came to them upon platters of gold as it were. They overcame all things, those of Caesar's household who saluteth all saints. History tells us of consequent carnality

and beastliness. When we consider that those saints in Caesar's household lived in days of slavery, we are the more amazed. In fact of the one hundred twenty million population, it is estimated that half of them were slaves. They were denied both social and political rights could not contract legal marriage or make a will or inherit property, and were cast into a subterranean cell at night after toiling all day. At His master's will a slave was crucified or tortured. Slaves not only did the manual labor but labored in mechanical arts also, and were found in the professions. They were musicians, actors, secretaries, and schoolmasters. These folk were brought from Syria, Africa, Asia Minor and Greece. Think of an educated Grecian obeying the commands of a brutal Roman, and that without thanks. Nevertheless a declaration of independence had been drawn up on the Judean hills. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Paul had caught this message from the lips of the Son of God and carried it across the mountains and seas and proclaimed it in the slave-marts of Nero. Like a melody from heavenly shores it ravished their hearts and strengthened their souls. It lifted them from the dungeon, the lion's claw, and the woodsman's ax. There were other saints in other cities singing the song of victory in the midst of the jaws of death. It was to the true church a glorious harvest of that work. What a kingly privilege to hear their salutation ringing down the ages "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." What an honor to be saluted by such glorious worthies of faith.

Nero's age was not a brainy age. Schools of carving superseded schools of philosophy. A great eater was rated higher than a great thinker. Cooking was a serious matter in the closing days of the Roman empire. We read that they ate everything, from water-rats to white worms, from snails to pheasants, from peacocks to singing birds, from oysters to wild boars. Great was the glutton and his greatness *grew* with his increased capacity for gluttony. Marvelous scrumptious repasts they enjoyed, beyond the imagination of men to conceive. Dinners that would cost thousands of dollars at a sitting were a common occurrence. In addition to the manifested gluttony, there was an idolatrous worship of tables and dishes. Even Cicero paid three thousand two hundred fifty dollars for his banqueting table, and other extravagances we could mention, but this is enough to convince us that overcoming is possible in any age and under any circumstances.

The Kingdom of God in ACTS

Ty Robinson

The book of Acts records the phrase “**the kingdom of God**” seven times, the number seven, signifying SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or COMPLETION. Bridal Saints attain SPIRITUAL PERFECTION by following the guide lines found in Paul's gospel, or following Paul as he followed Christ. “*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*” Phil. 3:17 The principles of Paul's gospel are actually introduced in the book of Acts, and then the apostle expounds upon them in all his epistles. The Holy Ghost inspired Luke to pen the book of Acts, using the phrase “the kingdom of God” like book ends, to both open and close his discourse to Theophilus. Bro. Copley too noted this fact, and wrote a wonderful summation about “the kingdom of God” at the conclusion of his notes on Acts. Those closing words were recently reprinted in the July 2012 issue of the Grace and Glory magazine entitled “The Gospel of the Kingdom or The Gospel of the Glory.”

Better understanding on this subject is gained by Bro. Copley's outline explaining that there are “two grand divisions” found within these 28 chapters. The first twelve chapters center mainly around Peter, a kingdom Apostle, and pertain to things of “the kingdom of God,” peculiar to Israel. The last sixteen chapters put Paul to center as the chief Apostle to the Church, and reveal how he became the Apostle to the Gentiles. These chapters also cover the introduction of this, yet present the Church age, expounding on the gospel of the grace of God, and how the word of His grace “...is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified...” by faith that is in Christ Jesus. Acts 20:18-35 & 26:16-18.

Jesus preached “the kingdom of God,” as noted in several scriptures, one of which is Mk. 1:14. “*Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,...*” This continued after His resurrection as noted in Acts 1:1-3 “*The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up,....unto the apostles whom he had chosen:....speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:....*” The Jews understood Jesus message concerning “the kingdom of God,” but their view was from an earthly perspective, primarily because this is what they had been taught from Old Testament scriptures. Bro. Copley noted that their line of thinking was along the lines of “the kingdom of God on earth, (Christ's reign with Israel over the nations).”

The Davidic Covenant expresses this, and is summarized in I

Chr. 17:7-15 *“Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepecote, ...that thou shouldest be ruler over my people Israel:Also I will ordain a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, ...neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more,Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that the LORD will build thee an house. And it shall come to pass, ...that I will raise up thy seed after thee, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me an house, and I will stablish his throne **for ever**I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.*

The Old Testament prophets likewise foretold Jesus, the Messiah. *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: ...Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David,to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.....”* Isa. 9:6,7. Daniel also prophesies of a time, in the not too distant future, when Messiah shall reign. *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed:and it shall stand for ever.”* Dan. 2:44. This reference to “the kingdom of God,” foretells the time when the Gentile rulers, which have ruled since 606 B.C. will be replaced by the rulership of Christ. With these scriptures ingrained in their teaching, it is easy to see how the Jews view “the kingdom of God,” from their earthly perspective.

Add to this a couple of accounts from Matthew. *“Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* Matt. 19:27-28 Judging the twelve tribes of Israel where? In heaven, or upon the earth? Once again, the earthly perspective comes to the fore, as is also seen in the following narrative. *“Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.”* Mt. 20:20-21 She too made this request looking for the day when Christ would be the supreme over the nations, with Israel as the head, during the millennium.

Though the Jews enlarged on His earthly kingdom, Jesus emphasized His heavenly position. *“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, ..., and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world:now is my kingdom not from hence... John 18:33-35.*

Jesus continues the discourse in Acts as “...*he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel” Acts 1:3-6.*

Jesus spent forty days “... *speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God ...*” but was Jesus expounding heavenly things, or earthly things? Obviously He enlarged on heavenly riches, for they were told to wait in Jerusalem till they be endued with power from on high, without which they could not receive the enlightening power of the Holy Ghost. Jesus here addresses His disciples, who already knew what He had twice spoken unto Nicodemus ...*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” John 3:3, 5. However Jesus’ disciples were focused, like most all men are, on what they can see, earthly things. They also knew the very same Old Testament doctrines referenced above how that the kingdom of David would be established forever, and that Christ the Messiah would be their King of kings, and Lord of lords. They did not yet understand exactly what Jesus was teaching them concerning “the kingdom of God,” and thus asked Him “... *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*” V. 6. Recall also what Jesus had told his disciples in John 16:12, 13 “--*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:...*” Our present text declares that Jesus was reminding them the importance of receiving the Holy Ghost, Who would help them better understand His answers to their questions. And as Bro. Copley noted in his summation concerning ‘The Gospel Of The Kingdom,’ after “the Holy Spirit was poured out, a new age was introduced. Apparently it was the millennial age, **which it would have been** if Israel had received Jesus then as Messiah, ...but the Jewish nation rejected Christ; therefore, He had to postpone His coming to reign.”

Meanwhile, kingdom blessings were displayed for about seven years. Many were saved, starting on the day of Pentecost after hearing Peter preach his first Holy Ghost inspired impromptu sermon. This Kingdom Apostle referenced King David, and said in his sermon: “*For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom*

ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ ...” Acts 2:34-36.

The days and months following Pentecost brought many signs and wonders, wrought by the hands of the apostles, including the healing of all manner of sickness and diseases among the people. In Acts 6, the number of believers had multiplied so much that the Kingdom Apostles sought help, and seven honest men full of the Holy Ghost were chosen to assist in this ministry. Among them were Stephen, and Philip. Acts 7 records Stephen’s sermon to the very same Sanhedrin council that brought Jesus before Pilate, and he too referenced King David. Stephen made it known that they were the betrayers and murderers of Jesus, their Messiah. Stephen then confirmed that he saw Jesus in heaven standing on the right hand of God... V. 55. They then stoned Stephen to death, but his testimony pricked the heart of one Saul of Tarsus.

Acts 8 continues describing how “...*Saul was consenting unto his death.....there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad,.... except the apostles. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*” V. 1, 4. The ministry of Philip is then highlighted in Acts 8, which he learned from the Apostles, and is found in V. 12 “...*preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ,...* . This is the second mention of “the kingdom of God” in the book of Acts.

The account concerning Saul of Tarsus begins in Acts 9 with his conversion, as he saw the Light brighter than the noonday sun, the very same Jesus of Whom Stephen had witnessed in Ch. 7. It seems that Saul of Tarsus instantly recognized Him as “...*the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords...*” of which he too had been taught from his youth. After asking Jesus, "Who art thou?" The Lord answered and said: ...*I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me*Acts 26:15-18. Contained in this short declaration was Saul of Tarsus' life sentence! Here Jesus really introduced Paul's gospel unto Saul of Tarsus. Down the road of life a short ways, he becomes the Apostle Paul, the Apostle

sent unto the Gentiles to proclaim these doctrines. Paul got a glimpse of "the kingdom of God" in this "heavenly vision" he witnessed on the road to Damascus, and spent the rest of his life learning, and then teaching about the high calling of God found in Christ Jesus, with his eyes fixed upon winning the heavenly prize. (Study Phil. 3:14.) On his race course Paul was given more *...visions and revelations of the Lord...* II Cor. 12:1. Thus, both his focus and vision were heavenly. Paul's view point of "the kingdom of God" was from a lofty perspective, (seated together with Christ Jesus in the heavens ...Eph. 2.6), not the earthly view point Paul learned as a youth studying the Old Testament.

The final five mentions of "the kingdom of God" in the book of Acts are all in association with the Apostle Paul. Five is the number pointing to GRACE, and Paul uses the word more than any other Holy Ghost inspired writer of scripture. His gospel unfolds the truths that are to be preached during this Church Age. Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles got a glimpse of the gospel message Paul taught, but Paul's message to them included, as Peter put it in II Pet 3:12, "*...some things hard to be understood,....* ." 28

In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas are found in Antioch, Syria preaching to believers from all over their known world. These new Apostles, then went on a missionary journey, where literally hundreds, and thousands of Gentiles were saved, along with those Jews who listened, and believed. Finishing these trial filled adventures, they concluded their teaching *...Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God...* Acts 14:22. This is the third time this phrase is used in Acts, and the first time in connection with preaching unto the Gentiles.

Paul later expounds upon this doctrine, writing in Rom. 8:16-18 that "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Note here also "*...that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God...*" This is heavenly teaching, and even points to the opportunity we all have to be a joint-heir with Christ in "the kingdom of God." Rom. 8:17 also explains degrees of heirship. *And if children, then heirs [kleronomos]; heirs of God, and joint-heirs [sugkleronomos] with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*" There is a difference between heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ. A joint-heir is a fellow heir; heir together, heir with, or a joint participant

with some other heir or heirs. Heb. 1:1- 2 declares that Jesus Christ has been appointed heir of all things by God. A ... joint-heir with Christ: will be someone who shares with Christ Jesus His heirship, and of all things appointed to Him by God, nothing is left out! This “someone,” who shares with Christ Jesus His heirship, will actually be an elite group of “sugkleronomos” (joint-heirs) Saints collectively known as the Bride of Christ.

The Kingdom Apostles did not teach this doctrine, and continued to see "the kingdom of God" as it pertains to Israel, and Christ's reign with that nation over the Gentiles, which will take place during the Millennium. This became evident in Acts 15 when Paul, Barnabas, and Titus went to Jerusalem after completing their missionary journey. At this time they had a lengthy discussion concerning the salvation of souls, and whether following the law of Moses was necessary in order for a Gentile to also be saved. After hearing Paul and Barnabas tell of their missionary experiences, James, the pastor at Jerusalem, asserted: *“Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, ...That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord,....”* Acts 15:13-17. Here James acknowledged that the Gentiles would be a part of "the kingdom of God."

Paul's second missionary journey, which also included Silas, Timothy and Luke is recorded in Acts 16-18. During this trip, Paul spends a year and a half in Corinth, and expounds his gospel message unto many. He began his third missionary journey with a three year stint in Ephesus, where he establishes the Church at Ephesus. Acts 19 *“And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God...”* V. 8. Who mainly goes to the synagogue? Jews. Paul reasoned, and persuaded them concerning "the kingdom of God," explaining the difference in what they had been taught through Jewish tradition, and the revelation he had received from Jesus Christ concerning the heavenly Kingdom, and the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, trying to elevate their understanding of "the kingdom of God" to it's highest levels. The apostle then moves on, in Acts 20, and once again passes near Ephesus, sending for the Ephesian elders, reaffirming and reminding them *“... how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,*

*Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ..... And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more..... 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.” Acts 20:20-32. Later, the chief apostle for this age wrote a letter to Ephesus which has become a high water mark of scripture. If one verse could explain what Paul taught in expounding "the kingdom of God" it would be Eph. 3:6 *That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.* Paul uses the very same word we found in Rom. 8:17 above: [sugkleronomos] a joint-heir (fellowheirs) with Christ.*

Acts 19:8, and 20:24 above are the fourth and fifth times wherein is found the phrase, "the kingdom of God," in Acts. Chapters 21-28 also give a beautifully detailed account of the amazing adventures Paul had, as the Lord took him to Rome revealing how "... we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" Acts 14:22. 30

Paul was also afforded the opportunity to expound his doctrine unto the chief Jews of Rome. "*And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.*" Acts 28:23 Certainly, in this length of time, Paul could explain his heavenly view of "the kingdom of God." The end result for them was: "*And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. ...*" V. 24.

Finally in Acts 28:30 and 31 we read the seventh time in Acts the phrase "**the kingdom of God:**" "*And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*"

Is there now any doubt that Paul was teaching about the high calling of God in Christ Jesus here? Is there any uncertainty that he also was teaching about the same opportunity we all have to be a joint-heir with Christ in "*the kingdom of God*," to reign with Him? Don't you suppose the apostle was also expounding "...*God having provided some better thing for us...*" that he would later write about in Heb 11:40? Such SPIRITUAL PERFECTION awaits those sugkleronomos overcomers following Paul as he followed Christ to the kingdom of God.

ISAIAH

Chapter 4 Gene Hawkins

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.”

V. 1

This chapter is a continuation of the previous one and corresponds with the book of Numbers. It begins with the words “in that day,” which is also the theme in chapters two and three where the same phrase is repeated no less than five times. Thus this prophecy of Isaiah is in reference to the end time.

Verse 5 connects this text directly with the book of Numbers. “And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night:...” This same language is found in the ninth chapter of Numbers when “...the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents.” Num. 9:15-17 This cloud provided protection for Israel and also made known His Will and direction for their journeys. Those same blessings are portrayed here in Isaiah. God will surely protect His people during the very devastating events which will come to pass “in that day,” and will also light their path during some very dark, dreary, and uncertain days.

Numbers 12 also declares the wondrous glory of the cloud, as Miriam and Aaron rose up, challenging the authority of Moses. God sprang to his defense as we read that “..... the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto

him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: **wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?**” V. 5-8 Miriam and Aaron were both older than Moses and thus undoubtedly felt they had the right to challenge as they did. Moses, however, “...was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,” (Num. 12:3) and left his battle for the Lord to fight. God let both Miriam and Aaron know, in no uncertain terms, that He would choose His own leaders. After that, “.... the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow:....” V. 10 The glory of the Lord had departed for a season, because the leprous, (sinful) condition of Miriam, was actually a very telling index to the entire congregation. We know that the cloud was restored, after Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days, for “....afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.” Thus Isaiah also tells us that the glory of the Lord will once again rest upon Mt. Zion after Israel is cleansed, as is expressed in the remainder of our chapter.

32

Isaiah four is a continuation of chapter three, as noted above, and begins with the women, declaring that “....seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.” V. 1 This very devastating phenomenon is undoubtedly a consequence of Ch. 3:25. “Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.” These words are addressed directly to the “daughters of Zion,” who have been so haughty and independent walking “...with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes,...” Isa. 3:16 Thus God has left them desolate and devoid of their men, who have been destroyed by war. These women who assumed such places of authority, with the very haughty attitude of “making it on their own,” have now been given the chance to do so. This same scenario prevails in the “women’s liberation movement” of our day, and will produce the same consequences. Their independence is actually directed

toward God and that is still manifest in this chapter as they declare plainly, “We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel:...” “We will make our own way, and provide for our own needs, we just do not want to live with the reproach of being single.”

The next verse, however, brings forth glorious hope for Israel. They will eventually get beyond their own independent and rebellious attitude for “In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.” There will be a glorious day when Jesus, “the branch of the Lord,” will be manifest in Zion, and the remnant of Israel will surely “escape,” because they will have become “the fruit of the earth,” excellent and comely. They will escape the devastation, known as the “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” Jer. 30:7 Peter promises that “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:” II Pet. 2:9 This has been manifested repeatedly throughout the ages. When God poured out the judgments on Egypt, there came a day when He said, “And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell,...” Ex. 8:22 Psalm 91:7,8 also promises “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.” The woman in the wilderness is also protected from the dragon in Rev. 12 It shall indeed “.....come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:” V. 3 Just as the glory of the cloud reappeared after Miriam was restored, so also this small remnant will be called “holy,” and the next two verses explain the process.

“When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion,....” V. 4 There is but one way to wash away the “filth” of these daughters of Zion described previously. It is the same for all humanity: the blood of Jesus. Israel, as a nation, will one day look upon Him whom they have pierced and accept the glorious redemption which they have so long rejected. They

too will finally look “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” Rev. 1:5

However, Isaiah continues here emphasizing the fact that another “purging,” is also necessary. “...and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.” V. 4 This people will be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. We also know that the entire world will be judged or “purged,” by fire, during the coming seven years of tribulation, but this verse especially targets Jerusalem. Those purifying burning fires will no doubt include even nuclear devastation, which will sweep this earth during that most destructive time, and such burning must occur, in order that God’s Chosen people should be prepared for the following work. “And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.” (cover, canopy, protection) V. 5 Here, once again is the cloud of glory which will prevail in Jerusalem. It will indeed be Israel’s protection as in days of old, and while so many are destroyed, this nation will prevail and come forth to form the nucleus of Christ’s coming millennial kingdom. Their glorious protection continues: “And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” V. 6 Israel, as a nation, will learn, by experience, that glorious place of protection during a time when others are falling all around them. They will finally realize their exalted place in Christ, for they, “...shall be called holy, even every one that is written (in the Lamb’s book of life) among the living in Jerusalem:” V. 3





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