

Definite Sign Posts Of The End

Paul N. Smith

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."
-Matthew 24=21-22

"Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from (or, out of) the hour of temptation (or, tribulation), which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth."

— Revelation 3:10

IN THIS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR, I WISH I HAD SOME GOOD NEWS CONCERNING THE WORLD! BUT, THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE WHEN WE READ THESE WORDS OF JESUS. The Scriptures from Matthew were spoken privately to His disciples on Mount Olivet. The second message was given to John in a vision, during his imprisonment on the Isle of Patmos for preaching the Word of God. They contain the same message, but John's revelation is of a wider scope and includes not only the nation of Israel, but the Church as well. The verses of Revelation 3:7-13, were spoken to the Philadelphia Church, which represents full overcomers out of the Church, who will not witness the extreme conditions of the seven-year Tribulation Period. The disciples asked: "What shall be the Signs of Thy coming'?" Here are the two that head that list:

GLOBAL WARMING IS THE CAUSE OF MANY SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS WHICH WE HAVE WITNESSED IN EVERY CONTINENT ON EARTH. The Lord spoke through Joel of the conditions

that will prevail upon the earth during the Tribulation Period. "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and the terrible Day of the Lord come" (2:30-31). These words are repeated in Acts 2. I just talked to a foreign exchange student we had in our home in 1998, and he has been training to be a scientist in Germany. His field is the environment. Scientists are of the opinion that many of earth's recent catastrophes are the result of global warming. Two years ago, there was a world-wide earthquake, which the majority of people did not feel, but the result was felt in the South Asian region and parts of Africa, by a devastating tsunami. The deadly hurricane in New Orleans a year ago is also blamed on the changes in the atmosphere.

There are other examples of global warming causing some of the natural catastrophes occurring in

many countries of the world. The most notable of these events is the drought conditions found around the globe. More than half of the U.S. suffered from drought and abnormal dryness during 2006. Other areas had devastating floods. In Hawaii, the island's famous coral reefs are being destroyed by extreme heat. There are many news articles from day to day, telling of unusual conditions in the atmosphere. In the Arctic, glaciers are melting at an alarming rate, upsetting ecology in that region. The young man I spoke with said that within the next decade, many more unusual events will occur, bringing the sensitive balance of nature into a dangerous level. Scientists around the world are aware of this; the Bible has predicted these things, and yet the majority of people, including Christians, seem to be oblivious to this great sign of the end-time. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that many would be sleeping in this day and he "hit it on the head."

Another news program I saw recently, described the drying up of the Dead Sea in the Jordan region. Many tourists travel there each year to take salt baths for

various physical ailments. Several spas are located along the beach, and clients had been able to walk down to the water. Now, they must use vehicles to get to the bathing spots. The water is receding at an alarming rate.

We quote from another news source: In Africa, already the poorest continent on earth, natural disasters, extreme weather, floods and droughts have been common but the severity of the wet and dry periods are intensifying with disastrous results. Massive droughts in the Horn of Africa in the past year killed much of the region's wildlife and disrupted the migration patterns of animals and birds. In Kenya, soaring temperatures and drought drove herdsmen to war over the few surviving cattle. On the other hand in Ethiopia the extreme drought was broken by torrential rain and devastating flooding, drowning more than 800 people.

In Alaska there has been millions of dollars of damage to buildings and roads caused by melting permafrost. The region has been blighted by the world's largest outbreak of spruce bark beetles, normally confined to warmer climes. Last year, the largest river in the world, the Amazon, was reduced to a trickle in some areas by an unprecedented drought. Sand banks have already appeared in the deltas of the Amazon.

In the Peruvian Andes, the alpacas that have provided indigenous farmers with a means of survival have died in cold snaps where temperatures plummeted to -30° C. In the summer, melted glaciers revealed rock faces burnt red by their first contact with direct sunlight.

In Australia, large sections which are traditionally productive agricultural regions are drying up. Farmers are being forced to buy water and truck it to their farms. Drought is rampant from one end of the nation to the other; the driest region is Western Australia, the worst on rppord

'In Asia climate change is notably evident. Rivers in Afghanistan have dried up. Crops in India have failed so consistently that farmers are committing suicide. Potentially the worst damage is occurring in the Himalayas, where glaciers are melting. Several glacier lakes have already burst in Nepal and Bhutan. The disappearance of glaciers could dry up major rivers as far away as China, India and Vietnam.

POPULATION MILESTONE IN USA RAISES FEARS. Last October, 2006, America's population reached 300 million people, causing a stir among environmentalists. People in the United States are consuming more - more food, more energy, more natural resources. Open spaces are shrinking, and traffic in many areas is dreadful. One reason for concern is where people are locating. "If people remained in thriving existing communities, we can easily sustain that growth and create a more efficient economy without sacrificing the environment," said Michael Replogle, transportation director for environmental Defense, a New York-based advocacy group.

Replogle went on to say that this has not been the American way. Instead, the country has fed its appetite for big houses, big yards, cul-de-sacs and strip malls. In a word, "Sprawl." People are moving to the suburbs of large cities. This means that people have spread out, which requires more vehicles and more vehicle miles traveled. A little more than half the U.S. population is clustered in counties along the coasts, including those along the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes. "In New York City, people tend to think of that as an urban jungle, but the environmental impact per capita is quite low," said Carlos Restrepo, a research scientist at New York University. "It tends to be less than it is for someone who lives in the suburbs with a big house where they need more than one car." There are some 11 to 12 million illegal immigrants in the U.S. The U.S. is the third largest country in the world, behind China and India. The U.S. is the fastest-growing of the industrialize nations, adding about 2.8 million people per year. "It's not the

population, but it's the consumption that is doing us in," said William Frey, at Brookings Institution, "These are luxuries we have been able to support until now. But we're not going to be able to do it forever."

THE OTHER GREAT SIGN CONCERNS THE MIDDLE EAST, NOTABLY ISRAEL. This region has been likened to a powder keg, ready to explode into all-out war. I believe that it has only been God's timing which has forestalled such conflict. World leaders are also concerned about the future of the Middle East. Saudia Arabia's king warned recently that all of the Middle East is threatened by escalating conflicts around the region, from spiraling sectarian violence in Iraq to rising tensions in Lebanon to fighting among Palestinians.

"Our Arab region is surrounded by dangers," King Abdullah said at the opening of a summit for leaders of the oil-rich Arab nations around the Persian Gulf. "It is like a keg of gunpowder waiting for a spark to explode." The two-day meeting of the six Gulf Cooperation Council nations is focusing on how to head off wider strife exploding from those conflicts, or the nuclear standoff between a defiant Iran and the West. The leaders of the nations attending urged the Bush administration to engage Syria and Iran in a diplomatic effort to stabilize Iraq. In a follow-up story, Iran's foreign minister has said that Teheran would help U.S. troops withdraw from neighboring Iraq, but only if Washington makes some tough policy changes. Iran's offers do not seem to have tempted gulf neighbors who are apparently more worried about the dangers of living near Iran's nuclear facilities, especially amid threats by Washington and Israel to use military force to destroy them.

THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS ON IRAN FOR REFUSING TO SUSPEND URANIUM ENRICHMENT, INCREASING PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO PROVE THAT IT IS NOT TRYING TO MAKE NUCLEAR WEAPONS. Iran immediately rejected the resolution. The resolution orders all countries to stop supplying Iran with materials and technology that could contribute to its nuclear and missile programs. It also freezes Iranian assets of 10 key companies and 12 individuals related to those programs. Iran repeatedly insisted that its nuclear program is intended to produce energy for peaceful purposes. The

Americans and Europeans suspect its ultimate goal is the production of weapons. The U.S. said it hopes the resolution will clear the way for tougher measures by individual countries, particularly Russia.

ISRAEL CONSIDERS IRAN ITS SINGLE GREATEST THREAT. Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for the Jewish state's destruction. Mark Regev, a foreign ministry spokesman said the vote was "an important first step in preventing Iranian nuclear proliferation. The scenario in the Middle East is frightening when considering the fact of how easy it would be for Iran to drop a nuclear bomb in the middle of Jerusalem. This would bring a retaliatory strike from Israel and the U. S. on Iran, with the fallout affecting neighboring nations. But, this probably will happen, bringing in other nations to the conflict. Thus the need for a international peace agreement.

THE PEACE TREATY IS ON THE WAY. Israel and the Palestinians seem to be resuming peace talks after many years of hostility and distrust. Israel agreed recently to release \$100 million dollars in frozen funds to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and to ease West Bank travel restrictions - goodwill gestures that revived hopes for a resumption of peace talks. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made the promises in a two-hour meeting with Abbas at the Israeli leader's official residence. It was the first meeting between the two in 22 months. Olmert and Abbas failed to agree on a key issue - a prisoner swap - but decided to set up a committee to study it further. This is encouraging, but we fear that things will change soon. The balance between hostilities and peace is very sensitive, and it could tip toward all-out war overnight.

"BUT OF THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS, BRETHREN, YE HAVE NO NEED THAT I WRITE UNTO YOU . . . FOR WHEN THAY SHALL SAY, PEACE AND SAFETY; THEN SUDDEN DESTRUCTION COMETH UPON THEM, AS TRAVAIL UPON A WOMAN WITH CHILD; AND THEY SHALL NOT ESCAPE." (I Thessalonians 5:1-3). The Apostle Paul also said in this letter that the Day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night; most people will be asleep and unaware of what is happening. These Thessalonian saints knew these things perfectly, Paul said. Now, here is an important truth. The Thessalonian church represents full overcomers out of the Church who will be waiting for the

Lord to return. There is a small group today who hold tightly to the fact that Jesus will soon take His throne in heaven and begin to reign over the earth. This company will reign with Christ, also wearing crowns, and sitting on thrones. Two of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, constitute this group who will reign with Christ - Smyrna and Philadelphia. The Smyrna church represents those overcomers who have died, and await their glorified bodies. Philadelphians represent those who will be alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord. The Smyrnians have crowns of life, and Jesus said to the Philadelphia church, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God"

(Revelation 21:1-3). This is the scene of final triumph for the Lord Jesus Christ and His people. The Bride of Christ will be the Center of the New Jerusalem in heaven. From here will come judgment upon the ungodly and the enemies of God and His government. So, in view of this, "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:6-9).

Jesus is coming very soon. When the nations declare that they have finally made a treaty for peace and safety, we will have already been taken to heaven. Jesus promised that the overcoming church will be kept out from the tribulation period.

JESUS IS COMING

Jesus is coming, coming so soon,
Jesus is coming, morn, night or noon.
Seems now His bride to say,
Lord Jesus come today, Come and no more delay
Lord Jesus come.

Jesus is coming, signs ev'ry where,
Loud proclaiming, Jesus is near.
O saints, your hearts prepare,
Put on thy garments fair, to meet Him in the air,
When Jesus comes.

Jesus is coming, earth's groans will cease,
Jesus is coming, reigning in peace.
Soon comes the marriage feast;
Cana's best wine at last, sorrow and tears all past,
When Jesus comes.

- Harry Long

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* We now see Jesus in the bible, but then face to face.

The Deception

Gene Hawkins

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My Name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

- Matthew 24:4-5

These words record the first sign that Jesus gave in answer to the disciples' questions pertaining to the end time. They tell us that this deception is both philosophical and religious, as "many shall come in My Name," asserting that "I am the Messiah." The message here is that many would attribute to man, what could only be accomplished by Christ and the Cross. They would rob Him of the place to which only He is entitled through redemption, and claim abilities that He alone possesses.

The pattern of this deception is the same for all these signs defined as the "beginning of sorrows," for they become more frequent and intense as times goes on. Verse 11 asserts that "many false prophets shall arise . . ." This pattern of falsity escalates to the middle of the Tribulation Week when the anti-Christ puts his image on display in the temple, "showing himself that he is God" (II Thessalonians 2:4). Matthew 24:26 continues the pattern with this warning: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not."

Unspeakable pain and tribulation will literally permeate the atmosphere at that time, and men will be looking desperately for some kind of relief. Promises of a Savior will be made, but Jesus warns people not to fall for such deception. It is important to realize that one cannot pronounce the fallacy of wrong doctrines or actions without being able to declare what is right. These

next few verses declare the basis for Jesus' bold declaration to "Believe it not!"

"For as the lightning cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (24:27). Jesus declares emphatically that He will not be in the desert or in some secret room—rather, He will come as lightning, or judgment, from the heavens. Verse 28 explains that this judgment will escalate to the battle of Armageddon, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Furthermore, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken . . . then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:29-30). It is this conclusive "sign" that proves the assertions of the imposters are absolute fallacy.

"Let no man deceive you," Jesus said, and that warning applies to our present day. Deception has been a tool of the devil since the Garden of Eden, when he followed the same pattern as seen earlier, and induced Eve to replace God's words with her own ingenuity and reasoning. Numbers 25 details one of Israel's most devastating failures during their years in the wilderness, as they bowed first, to natural fornication, and then that which is spiritual. This was such a severe infraction of God's Law, that He instructed Moses to "Vex the Midianites, and smite them; for they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi" (25:17-18). Bowing down to these gods was simply a type of the same spiritual fornication exhibited by Christendom today, as she replaces Christ's headship with that of mere men.

Paul warns the Church repeatedly of satanic deception. Ephesians 6:11 shouts, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Ephesians 4:14 exhorts that "ye be no more children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and the sleight (fraud) of man whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (as in Matthew 24). From the Garden of Eden to his casting into the Lake of Fire, the devil will continue to implement this tool of deception, and we believers are reminded to constantly be aware of such wiles.

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My Name saying, I am Christ." This portion

is emphatically fulfilled by the false church which claims a place belonging only to Christ. She has been the great deceiver throughout this Church Age. We see her picture in Proverbs 5 and 7. She is called first, the "strange woman," meaning an adulterous woman. "Her lips drop as an honeycomb" and her mouth "smoother than oil." Her ways are said to be "moveable," and a mystery, "for thou canst not know them" (5:1-6). She is further profiled as one who "flattereth with her words." She works under the cover of darkness and is declared to be "an harlot, and subtle of heart." Also, she "lieth in wait at every corner" and practices counterfeit love as she ^ "kissed him." She counterfeits the true religion and the redemption of Christ, declaring, "I have peace offerings and this day have I paid my vows" (7:7-14).

The list of her deception and riches continues to the end of Proverbs 7, resulting in destruction. The same picture is painted of the end-time imposter in Revelation 17 and 18. Babylon, the Great, is seen there as having wealth to which none other religious "woman," or organization, can lay claim. "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls" (17:45). She is said to be "sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." The seven literal hills upon which Rome stands, refer to the political clout wielded by this woman over the nations: "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." This political influence is world-wide even today, and will continue as religious Rome asserts herself in every nation. No other religious organization can lay claim to such overwhelming influence.

This deception is not only among the nations but also to individuals, as she takes the place of Christ teaching that salvation is found through Mary, the mother of Jesus, rather than the Christ of redemption. Her priests are said to have ability to forgive sins, when the Scriptures plainly asserts that "Be it known unto you all that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth doth this man stand here before you whole. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12).

The Church at Thyatira pictures this false regime. It is a church noted for her works: "I know thy works and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to

teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Revelation 2-19^20). It is her humanitarian works that are noted here and she is known for such works around the world today. She paints herself as the Savior, rather than Christ and uses these "works" to gain entrance to proclaim a doctrine that promotes fornication, which is taking a headship other than that of Christ, and idolatry. Men are deceived into thinking that this church determines the standards of righteousness, rather than the Bible. She is doing today exactly what Midianites did to Israel - Numbers 25. Dispensationally, we are living in the Laodicean condition described in Revelation 3-14-22. The name means "The People's Rights", and this false religious system promotes this message worldwide all under the guise of bringing to people the rights they think they deserve.

This church system is not the only imposter today. Hezbollah is by no means the global force demonstrated by the false church, but the primary objective of this ungodly regime is also deception, and religion is its vehicle. After the recent conflict with Israel was brought to a screeching halt, it was Hezbollah that extended massive humanitarian aid to Lebanon, in order that they might be perceived as their savior. It made no difference that they were the ones responsible for the damage being inflicted on this country in the first place.

The president of Iran is also a deceiver. He stated recently that he had been charged to make war, in order to bring forth a "hidden Iman" as ruler of the world. This worldwide deception among the nations will definitely increase until the True Christ is revealed. We must also be on guard in a more personal manner. Paul's warning to the Corinthians is applicable for our day: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Corinthians 11:3). Paul begins this chapter with the plea - "bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed bear with me." The folly to which he refers is the Church having been espoused to Christ. So many today are teaching that the entire Church is automatically assured this place, but if that were true, why was Paul so fearful of them being swept away in a wave of deception?

Eve's actions in Eden are repeated in the Church today. Just as Eve disregarded the headship of her husband and took things into her own hands, so also the Church is not subject to Christ, and is taking other headships of men. Paul tells us that Eve was beguiled, "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Simplicity

means singleness of mind, and speaks of sincerity and dedication. Paul explains this in a three-fold manner in 11:4: "preaching another Jesus, receiving another spirit, and accepting another gospel," all of which are products of deception. Preaching another Jesus is advocating heads other than Christ. There are many people today who love to exercise control over others. It is Christ who must make known His will to us. The Lord never approved this statement: "The Lord told me to tell you." Secondly, deception declares another spirit, other than Christ's. People may proclaim His Name, but they are hard, vindictive and vengeful. When the disciples wanted to call fire down from heaven" to consume those who had rejected Jesus, He said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of (Luke 9:54-55). The Spirit of Christ is one of Grace.

The third element of corrupting the simplicity in Christ is receiving another gospel. Paul says at this point that ye might well bear with him." It is Paul's Gospel that has been grossly ignored in our day. He was chosen by God as the chief apostle for this age, but the Church as a whole has ignored that message, the theme of which is found in I Corinthians 2:2 - "I determined to know nothing among you save Christ and Him crucified." Jesus is not always to the front of the messages heard today Paul further declares that "God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16). There is no substitute for Paul's Gospel if we are going to come to full growth in Christ, and not stray from the simplicity described here.

How do we ensure ourselves that we do not fall victim to deception? Paul has already warned us that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse deceiving, and being deceived." It seems that people are willing to accept any kind of deceiving doctrine all in the name of tolerance. It is just not "politically correct" to criticize any religion. I am sure that Elijah would have been severely censured for his mockery of Baal Both Jesus and John the Baptist would have been completely out of line as they termed the unbelieving rebellious Jews "a generation of vipers." While we are unable to eliminate deception in our day, we are charged with bringing as much light as we can to this darkened world.

The Church, as a whole, has failed miserably in this mission, but as individuals, we can shine forth the Light of the Truth to anyone who will listen, and be a witness to its veracity by manifesting it in our own lives Paul urges Timothy to do just that: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and has 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" (2 Timothy 3:14-15). That is our promise to claim today. Timothy saw the message of Divine Grace on display in Paul's life; likewise, those around us must see the evidence of Truth in us. It is the Truth that will defy all deception. Paul states that "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 good works."

Paul further warns of the culmination of evil in our day: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (II Thessalonians 2:8-10). This will occur deep within the tribulation period, but the principle applies today. Men shall perish because they "received not the love of the truth."

We must love truth enough to pursue it, for only truth can defend us against deception, as Paul states emphatically, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." To the degree that men reject truth, they will believe the lie. This is true of any part of the truth. It is important for us to receive all the revelation of the Light that the Holy Ghost would bring, and that for our own protection and growth in Christ.

I do not ask for mighty words
To leave the crowd impressed.
But grant my life may ring so true
My neighbor may be blessed.

Anon

EDITOR'S REFLECTIONS

"And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."

(Exodus 12:1-2)

What an exciting time for Israel! The children of Israel had been in bondage over 450 years, slaves to the Egyptians, but one day, God spoke to Moses to lead these people out of bondage and into the Promised Land. Neither Moses, nor Aaron or Joshua was equipped for such a task, but when God speaks and makes changes, He will also train those He uses.

The point I want to emphasize this month, being the first one of 2007, is that back then, it was a new beginning. God was going to make radical changes in the lives of His people. They had no idea what it would mean to leave Egypt, cross the Red Sea, and live in the desert. It was exciting because it was new and different. Most of us like changes, except we older ones who are set in a routine. It may have been that way with many of these people also. But, when God makes the changes, we can cope with them.

The new beginning wasn't new because it was January 1, but because of the Passover. In fact, their new year began sometime between March and April of our present calendar. It was new because God was revealing to them, just Who was going to lead them and take care of all their needs. They had been used to slave-drivers, wielding whips, and forcing them into labor for the Pharaoh. What a change was coming! They were to experience what freedom was like. They were not going to be lawless, but under a new Owner, even the God of the Universe. Their passage out of Egypt was dependent upon them observing the Passover; the slaying of an innocent lamb, and eating it. Each household was to bring its own lamb for the feast.

The Children of Israel did not realize that this sacrificial lamb was typical of the Lamb of God who would come many years later to take away the sins of humanity. The Old Testament is full of types, all pointing to Calvary where the Son of God died on the cross. The Red Sea would not have parted for them, nor would the Egyptians been defeated, if they had not observed the Passover first. This typical feast was their Passport to the land of Promise, and guaranteed that they would be preserved through those 40 years of desert wanderings.

I guess the point I want to make is that we are all coming into a new year. We realize it is only a continuance of 2006, and we are carrying into the New Year the problems and responsibilities we had in the previous year. But, you know something? We can start anew, especially if we have made a mess of things in '06. Let's go back to Jesus' battle in Gethsemane, travel with Him to the Cross, and put ourselves on that Cross with Him. We do that by counting ourselves to have died with Him there, but we exited with Him from the tomb when He arose from the dead. We live with Him today!

Tomorrow we will still live with Him, and each day of the new year. He is our Passport to a victorious journey through the desert of this world. We are His total responsibility! Isn't that great! Our great change may be translation! Praise the Lord!

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ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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A Number For The Bride of Christ

Ty Robinson

The following discussion shows that the number eight, in addition to having to do with the New Creation, New Birth, New Beginning, and Resurrection, is also a number of the Bride of Christ.

In Genesis 24, Rebekah is referred to as "wife" to Isaac eight times (Vs: 3-4-7-37-38-40-51-67.) This chapter gives the best pictures of the Bride of Christ, as Rebekah is a type of the Bride of Christ.

Note this interesting statement concerning the Bride in Revelation 21:11: "Having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Strongs Concordance states this concerning the jasper stone: "Jasper, a precious stone of various colors: some are purple (speaking of royalty), others blue (heavenly), green (resurrection), brass (judgment). In Revelation 4:2-3, John states: "I was in the Spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat upon the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." These also give a beautiful description of Jesus Christ.

A few verses later, we read a description of the four living creatures, which were before the throne. These living ones describe the Bride of Christ: "Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first living one was like a lion, and the second living one like a calf, and the third living one had a face as a man, and the fourth living one was like a flying eagle. And the four living ones had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within, and they

rest not day and night, saying. Holy, holy, holy. Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." (4:6-8).

These four living ones (beasts) have qualities that correspond to those found in Jesus, as portrayed in the four Gospel Records. Matthew pictures Jesus as King of the Jews - the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Mark portrays Jesus as the faithful Servant, like the faithful ox who serves man. Mark's Gospel does not give a genealogy, because a servant's genealogy is never given. There is a lengthy genealogy found in Luke's Gospel, because he portrays Jesus as the Son of man. John paints a picture of Jesus as the eternal heavenly One, the flying eagle of Revelation 4:7. Obviously, the Bride of Christ has taken on Christ-like qualities.

These same four living creatures are also seen in Ezekiel 1. There are other places in Ezekiel where these same four living creatures are seen. In 1:16, we read, "The appearance of the wheels and their work (was) like unto the color of beryl; and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. In 10:9: "And when I looked, and behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was as the color of a beryl stone. Beryl is mentioned eight times in Scripture. In Revelation 21, where we find a description of the Bride of Christ as the great city, New Jerusalem, the foundation of the wall of the city was garnished with all manner of precious stones, and the eighth foundation was beryl. This is one more example of the number eight pointing to the Bride of Christ.

Another picture of Christ and His Bride is found in Song of Solomon. Myrrh is found 8 times in the book; 17 times total in Scripture. Alice S. Mooneyhan says this of myrrh in her notes on Song of Solomon. "Myrrh is always connected with sorrow and suffering. It seems to have been a custom of the women of that time to carry a bundle of myrrh between the breasts, to hang it around the neck with a chain, as a token of suffering. Spiritually, it means to us suffering with Christ." We eventually learn to welcome this experience, because suffering with and for Christ brings great good into our lives. When the disciples were persecuted for Jesus' sake, they rejoiced because "they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" (Acts 5:41). The Apostle Paul wrote, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2 Corinthians 12:10). The saints who are running for the Prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus go through sufferings (if need be) to become full overcomers. (1 Peter 1:6-9).

Two of the other 17 verses that mention myrrh, also point us to the Bride of Christ. One is found in Esther 2:12:

"Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the day of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors" Esther is a type of the Bride of Christ. Another Scripture that mentions myrrh and connected with the Bride is Psalms 45:8: "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassis, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad."

There are eight women whom Paul commended, listed in Romans 16. In studying the meaning of these women's names, we find qualities that will also be found in the Bride of Christ. The first woman mentioned is Phoebe. Her name means "shining," or "radiant one." She speaks of the Bride of Christ who will radiate the glory of the Lord. The word "servant" refers to an attendant, a minister, a deacon, and is always used by Paul. In this case, he used it for Phoebe. Chenchrea was a seaport of Corinth whom whence Paul had sailed (Acts 18:18). Chenchrea means "small, like a millet seed," which was abundant there. Note what Paul said about Phoebe: "That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you; for she has been a succourer of many, and of myself also." This word is used only here, and means a female guardian, protectress, patroness, carrying for the affairs of others, and aiding them with her resources. Brother Copley notes that the word "succourer" means a "first-rate protectress, and further states that Phoebe was not ashamed to minister to a little flock. She was "radiant" because of an inward glory, and possessed the Spirit of Christ, as found in Hebrews 2:18- "For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted. He is able to succour (help) them that are tempted. Brother Copley concludes his comments on Phoebe by stating, "Phoebe always shared with Christ in His service and suffering here, and will share with Him in His radiant glory hereafter."

The second woman mentioned in Romans 16 is Priscilla, wife of Aquila. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus; who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house." Priscilla is mentioned five times (Grace) in the Word, and one time as Prisca. She was always mentioned with her husband, who was a tentmaker according to Acts 18:3 We also learn that Paul dwelt with them and worked with them. The time Paul spent with them, they learned his message first hand. Priscilla's name means "Ancient one," and she shows the character of God as the Ancient One, or the Ancient of Days, spoken of in Daniel. Her overcoming quality was that

she was willing to lay down her neck for the Gospel and by doing so, she was gaining Christ as her heavenly Bridegroom

The third woman mentioned in Romans 16 is Mary:

"Greet Mary who bestowed much labor on us." Brother Copley calls her "the exalted," and Brother Hawkins notes that her name means "bitter." It speaks to us of the bitter experiences that the full overcomers will have in this life if they are to attain to being "exalted" with Christ and reign with Him. Paul said that Mary had bestowed much labor. All these women mentioned so far were co-laborers with Christ.

Next, we read of Junia: "Salute Andronicus and Junia my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." Junis means "youthful," and speaks of the vibrancy of the Bride Company. She is not old and ready to pass away, but rather her strength is renewed like the eagles, for she trusts in the Lord "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." (Isaiah 40:31) She was willing to suffer with Christ, and became a fellow prisoner with Paul. The kind of suffering she endured. Brother Copley notes, is "first-rank suffering."

The fourth woman mentioned is Tryphena. Her name means "luxurious." Her name shows that the Bride of Christ has learned to flourish and grow fat, feeding on the Word of God, feeding on Christ. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, he shall live by me." (John 6:57).

Tryphosa is named along with Tryphena. "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Tryphosa's name means "illuminating," which is what the Bride of Christ will be, illuminating to those around her. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8). The Bride of Christ displays Light in this old darkened world, more than any others. (Philippians 2:14).

"Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord. Persis, "one who divides," has learned to separate the flesh from the Spirit, worldliness from spirituality. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

Julia means "downy" which hints to us of the downy dove, or the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him" (Matthew 3:16; also, Luke 3:22, and John 1:32). In Song of Solomon we read: "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold,

thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes." "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of turtle (dove) is heard in our land." "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead." (Song of Solomon 1:15; 2:12; 2:14; 4:1)

HEAVENLY GARMENTS

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."
—Isaiah 61:10

Most people like to be well-dressed. There used to be articles about the ten best dressed people in the U.S. There is an old saying that "clothes makes the man." There was a story about a struggling pastor, whose wife was addicted to buying new dresses, and as soon as she could scrape up a few dollars, she would go and put a down payment on a new dress, and since the pastor had a small church, he was on a tight budget. When he was dunned for the new dress, he would become furious with his wife, and reprimand her, and show her that her closet was full of dresses. She would tell him that she was really sorry, but that the devil knew her weakness and whenever she saw a new dress on display, she felt compelled to buy it. Her pastor-husband advised her that the next time she felt tempted, to tell the devil to "get thee behind me." A few days later, she saw a gorgeous dress in the store window and thought there would be no harm in just trying it on, and lo, and behold, she ended up charging it. When her husband got the bill for it, he almost had a stroke. He confronted her about it and her answer, again, was that the devil made her do it. He replied, "Didn't I tell you to rebuke the devil?" She said, "When I tried it on, it fit like a glove and I knew I shouldn't buy it, so I told the devil to "get thee behind me." He answered back and told me that it fitted me perfect in the back also; so I just had to get it."

It's all right to be well-dressed if we can afford it, but our goal should be to become a well-dressed citizen of heaven. As we begin our Christian walk, there is a taking off and a putting on. In Mark 10:46-52, there is the narrative of blind Bartimaeus, sitting along the highway begging. When he heard that Jesus was coming along the way, he cried out, "Thou son of David have mercy upon me." Jesus stood still, and the reason that He did, I believe, is that Jesus recognized a cry of faith. He must have believed Him to be the Messiah, as he

called Him the Son of David. When Jesus bade him to come to him. Verse 50 states that he threw away his garment. That seems to be strange, but that particular garment was one worn by the blind to signify their blindness. It would be equivalent to the white canes that the blind use today. This did not go unnoticed by Jesus, who said, "Thy faith has made thee whole." That garment also represented his old life, as Paul explains in II Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

In Luke 5:36, Jesus speaking a parable said, "No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old, if otherwise, then both the new make a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old." Then, He used an illustration of putting new wine into old bottles. Jesus was speaking of the old and new covenants, and that the new covenant of grace was going to replace the covenant of law. He knew that not many to whom He was speaking would respond to the new covenant of grace, replacing the law. He ends His parable by saying, "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith. The old is better." But, what is surprising is that in the light of Paul's epistles, many believers are still mixing the old wine with the new.

In Matthew 23:5, Jesus spoke to the scribes (the theologians of that day) and to the Pharisees about them enlarging the borders of their garments, in order to be noticed as religious men. Jesus also warned His disciples to beware of the scribes that liked to parade around in long robes. The scribes and Pharisees had their own dress code and to be dressed as they were, was not only a mark of religious piety, but one of prestige. How unlike Bartemaus they were! They refused to shed their showy garments so they could come to Jesus.

In Colossians 3:12-14, Paul lists some of the heavenly garments that we should put on and wear: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity (LOVE), which is the bond of perfectness." Romans 13:14 exhorts us to "put on Jesus Christ." Notice some prophetic Messianic verses in Isaiah 61:1-3. Note Verse 3: "to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Most of us could use some of these garments. Paul and Silas put on these garments while they were prisoners in a Philippian jail, and it worked wonders for them!

At the beginning of my Christian walk, Matthew 5:20

was somewhat frightening to me: "For I say unto you. That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." I had not yet learned the difference between man's holiness versus God's holiness. I read that these religious people fasted, paid tithes, said long prayers, abstained from worldly pleasures, washed their hands many times a day, kept the Sabbaths and feast days. Even their name, Pharisee, meant separated. They were the very holiest of Jesus' day. All this would have been an impossibility for me to keep. But Paul, who was himself a radical Pharisee, gave a personal list of these works, and called them all "dung" that he might win Christ. Philippians 3:4-9.

Isaiah was a mighty prophet of God. After one glimpse of God's holiness, he called himself a man of unclean lips, and that all his righteousness was as filthy rags (64:6). There is an interesting story in Zechariah 3, concerning Joshua the high priest. Evidently he had been bound by Satan at one time, because the Lord rebuked the devil and pointing to Joshua, said, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" He instructed those who stood by Joshua to "Take away the filthy garments from him . . . and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Verse 5 states that he was given a complete change of raiment. The old garments of Joshua were filthy because they were fleshly ones. Paul states the same thing about himself in Romans 7:18. "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." Solomon had the best that this world could offer, but the Lord said that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as the lilies were.

God gave instructions to Israel about their garments, which gave birth to teaching concerning heavenly garments. "thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together." When I first read that, I was puzzled for some time. I went to bed still pondering, but when I awoke the next morning the Scripture came to mind - "But the anointing which ye have received of me abideth in you, and ye need not that any man should teach you, but the same anointing teaches you all things, and is truth, and is no lie." (I John 2:27).

Exodus 28 gives the wardrobe of the high priest. In Leviticus 16:4, they are referred to as holy garments, and were designed by the Lord Himself. They were all linen. Now, why linen? For the answer, read Ezekiel 44:17-18: "And it shall come to pass that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments, and no wool shall come upon them, while they minister in the gate of the inner court, and within they shall have linen bonnets upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat." An illustration of this is found in Genesis 4. Cain was

a tiller of the ground, a farmer, and one day he brought an offering that he had labored for and had harvested, but God rejected it. To the natural man, this doesn't seem fair. His offering was the result of a lot of back-breaking labor, but remember that the ground had been cursed. He had probably been working all day, causing a lot of sweating, and brought the offering without being clean. Of course, Cain and Abel represent the offering of works and that of faith.

The first hymn I sang in church was "Rock of Ages." One of the verses says, "Nothing in my hands I bring - but simply to Thy Cross I cling." Another verse has, "Not the labors of my hands, can fulfill thy law's demands." Paul sums it all up in Ephesians 2:7-8: 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." Wearing wool causes sweating. Wool is the product of sheep, and Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray." Sheep have no sense of direction, that is why they need a shepherd. Natural man has no sense of spiritual direction and needs the Holy Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God." Wool speaks of man's holiness, while linen speaks of God's holiness.

Jesus often spoke in parables because it was so that his disciples would know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. What gets to me is how some people take parables and make facts out of them, while on the other hand, they take plain facts and make parables out of them. I would classify a parable as a story with a heavenly meaning. With this in mind, read the parable in Matthew 22, which is about a king who gave out marriage invitations for his son's wedding. There was one guest who came, not properly dressed for the occasion, and was thrown out. Notice how the king addressed him: "Friend, how earnest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." Remember, this is only a parable, because in reality no one who is not dressed in wedding garments will even be at the heavenly marriage of the Lamb. "Friend," signifies the one who has been favorable to the Gospel, but as Paul states in Hebrews, "How shall we escape, if we neglect - not "reject" - so great salvation?" This one had never really accepted the Lord, but thought his "clothes" were all right. Satan is an expert wool clothier. He can dress you up as sharp as a tack, so that every dead and lukewarm church would be proud to have you as a member.

When can we know if we are wearing true holiness? Listen to Paul: "That ye put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-32)

- (Robert Devost)

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This is my wonderful story, Christ to my heart has come;

Jesus the King of Glory, finds in my heart a home.
Christ in me. Christ in me,
Christ in me, O wonderful story;
Christ in me, Christ in me, Christ in me the hope of Glory.

"Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the Lord thy God hateth."
(Deuteronomy 16:21-22)

The Cross is represented by the ancient altars of Israel. There were to be no groves around the altar - no decorations. The heathen had their altars too, corrupted from the true altar. The modernist has it the other way: he says that our Gospel of the blood of the cross is inspired by pagan blood sacrifices. Pagan sacrifices are corruptions, either consciously or unconsciously, of the authentic sacrifices of the Scriptures. Because they did not like to look at the ugly spectacle of blood-soaked altars, they planted trees around them to lessen their severity, to hide the crudity by flowering trees and fragrant shrubs.

We are to remember always that the Cross is an awful thing. It is not an entertaining spectacle; it is a bloody horror! It is inartistic, dreadful, repulsive. Campbell Morgan has said, "The people who look upon the cross of Christ as vulgar, we agree. It is the most vulgar object in the whole of the world's history. But whose is the vulgarity? Not that of the sweet Son of God who gave His blood to wash away our sin. It is the vulgarity of those who nailed Him there, who blasphemously deny its necessity, of those who by Bible criticism, make light of sin."

God commanded that there be no groves of trees around the altar. We are to present to the world the naked splendor, the bloody glory, of the Cross. There must be no object of additional appeal beside the Cross. It must be the only attraction. The Holy Spirit will honor faith and the simple proclamation of the naked truth that Jesus saves through the blood of the cross. We need no kind of "bait" to entice people into our services.

In Exodus 34:13, God commanded: "Ye shall . . . cut down their groves." In our text, we had God's command not to plant any groves in imitation of pagan altars. In Deuteronomy 31:29, Moses predicted the future failure of God's people: For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the

sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the works of your hands." Not many years after his death, we have the record of their miserable disobedience: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves" (Judges 3:7). If God's ancient people failed we can fail also. They soon lost the vision and corrupted the pattern. I wonder if we are tempted in this dispensation of Grace to lose the simplicity and glory of the Cross?

There must be no groves, no beautifying, no easing of the severity. We must proclaim in absolute truthfulness what God has given us. The nearer we get to this splendid glory of the naked cross, the more the glory of the Lord surrounds us. We are happy to preach it; the people are gripped by its message; and sinners are moved by the simplicity of this unadorned Gospel. No natural or earthly beauty must ease the severity or the tragedy of the death of Christ.

Hosea tells of the people corrupting their holy altars: "they sacrifice . . . under oaks and poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof is good." (4:13). That's it. The shadow is good! Light is convicting. Decorating the Cross is to make sinners feel easy there; modifying the simple declaration of the full truth of the Gospel; reducing the severity of the Word - all this is abhorrent to God. He does not want shadow, but light!

Evil king Ahaz saw an elaborate altar at Damascus, and he coveted such a beautiful and decorated altar. He gave instructions to the wicked priest, Urijah, to have such an altar made, to remove the blood-stained altar from the East of the temple, the position God designed for it, and to put this miserable Damascus altar in its place. (II Kings 16). He did not utterly abandon the blood offerings, but the blood of sacrifice avails nothing if it is not sprinkled in accordance with the pattern. It is as we walk in the light that we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. The blood did not avail for him at the new altar.

Ahaz did not remove the brazen altar altogether. He dared not, but he put the altar of God in a secondary place. Ahaz was walking in the dark. Beware how we may relegate the Cross to a secondary place, planning attractive introductions to its severity. We cannot use the cross as a talisman, a mascot, a lucky charm. There is

no security in such "holy" charms. The Cross is not a lucky amulet; yet that is what Ahaz and Urijah made of the blood-stained altar.

There must be no amusements to entertain and charm people; no scented paths to the Cross; no laburnums, no rhododendrons, no crimson blossoms, no rose trees, no garden parties around the Cross. The Cross is not a spectacle for entertainment; it is a lonely glory that is, in itself, a splendid attraction. The people of the Lord must gather at the blood-stained Cross. Thank God, there is Christ! Sin abounded at the Cross. Our sins nailed the Savior there. It was not a beautiful and flowery picture.

Thank God for the sweet memories of good men like Josiah, who have left a trail of glory. Thank God for Godly men who uplift the banner of the cross with no device save splattered blood. Josiah destroyed all the ungodly adjuncts, both foul and fair. "He broke down the houses of the sodomites that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove" (II Kings 23:7). What evil! Every conceivable vileness develops from small departures from the true pattern. We dare not depart today, or so it will be again.

Josiah destroyed the things which seemed so innocent, so attractive, helpful, charming. They might have asked him, "What harm in beautiful tapestries?" Beware the honey of sweet sentiment and outer embellishment. "And he broke in pieces their images, and cut down their groves; and filled their places with the bones of men" (23:14).

There must be no additions of any sort to aid the work of the Cross. The best of earth cannot lift us one inch above the earth. Many things of natural man may be beautiful, but they cannot lift the soul to heaven. Jesus needs no other force at His side to draw all men unto Him. The Cross drew "all men unto Him." We must preach a Person; not a policy or principle; not a movement, but the Master; not a creed, but the Christ; not a system, but the Savior.

No reservations, no reductions of the perfect standard. No half-measures. "Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord thy God any bullock or sheep wherein is blemish, or sheep wherein is blemish, or any ill-favouredness; for that is an abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 17:1). Christ is the perfect

Sacrifice! Perfection is the least that God will accept. Nothing else; nothing less. Everything has blemish, except Jesus! It is mere pretense to deny that we have the best. The wilderness is poor fare after Canaan.

When we put the axe to the root of every shadowing grove, every carnal help, we shall see the lost saved, the sick healed. If there is a lack of the supernatural in meetings today, it may be that we have not "cut down abominable, hindering groves," to reveal the naked glory of the Cross. Revival will only come that way. God help us to present the Gospel without "groves," showing only the naked splendor of the Cross.

- Harold Hoi-ton, England

To the wise, God's Word is sufficient!

The No-Excuse Sunday

In order to make it possible for everyone to attend church services next week, we are planning a special no-excuse Sunday.

1. Cots will be placed in the vestibule for those who say, "Sunday is my only day for sleeping in."
2. Eye drops will be available for those whose eyes are tired from watching TV too late on Saturday nights.
3. We will have steel helmets for those who believe the roof will cave in if they show up for church services.
4. Blankets will be furnished for the parishioners who complain the church is too cold. Fans will be on hand for those who say the church is too hot.
5. We will have hearing aids for parishioners who say, "The pastor doesn't talk loud enough." There will be cotton for those who say, "The pastor talks too loud."
6. Score cards will be available for those who wish to count the hypocrites.
7. We guarantee that some relatives will present for those who like to go visiting on Sunday.
8. There will be TV dinners available for those who claim they can't go to church and cook dinner too.
9. One section of the church will have some trees and grass for those who see God in nature, especially on the golf course.
10. The sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies to create a familiar environment for those who have never seen the church without them.

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"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting (that is: encouraging) one another, and so much the more, as ye see The Day approaching. "

