

# THE HERALD

## *of Christ's Kingdom*

*September-October 1994*

### EDITOR'S JOURNAL

*"I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp." - Psalms 49:4*

Jesus' teaching was probably best known for his use of parables: short fictional stories pointing precisely toward the lesson he was going to teach. At the same time they revealed certain truths while concealing still others.

Jesus was not the first to use parables. The first biblical usage of the word is in Numbers 23 and 24 where the messages of the heathen prophet Balaam are spoken of as parables. The word itself is simply descriptive of a story in which the objects specified are not the objects meant but illustrate the same principles as the lesson at hand.

Simple details of everyday life familiar to all his listeners became the subject matter of these tales—a shepherd losing one sheep, a traveler beset by thieves, virgins waiting to lead the procession of the bridegroom to the house of his intended.

The lessons of many of these parables are obvious. Some are even explained by Jesus himself, furnishing not only the key to that particular story but also the method to be employed in comprehending all such stories. Other parables have become matters of debate in the Christian church throughout its history, and remain so today with varying schools of interpretation being offered.

#### **In This Issue**

The use of parables in the Bible is the theme of this issue of **THE HERALD**. Not only the parables of Jesus but also some of those of the Old Testament will be considered.

Breaking with tradition this edition features first the Question Box. It deals with the query, "Why teachest thou unto them in parables?" Reprinted from an article

which appeared over fifty years ago in this journal, it treats the overall subject matter and whether parables were intended to reveal or to conceal truths.

Two parables from the Old Testament are studied: one in *The Parable of Jotham*, sometimes known as *The Parable of the Trees*, and the other in *Wisdom and the Foolish Woman*, with a verse by verse study of Proverbs 9..

The *First of the Kingdom Parables* is the *Echoes from the Past* selection for this issue. It is taken from a 1954 **HERALD**.

Other articles cover some of the parables of Jesus. *The Abiding Life* is taken from the parable of the vine and the branches, while *Many Called, Few Chosen*, discusses the parable of the marriage feast, and *The Parable of the Penny* is on the parable of the eleventh hour.

The understanding of parables not explained by Jesus is, of course, a matter of interpretation. The articles herein reflect the thoughts of their respective authors.

The last article concludes a fourpart series with *The Word of GodIn Our Lives*.

### **The Wrap-Around Mailing Cover**

From the recent readers' survey, several comments preferring the former method of enclosing **THE HERALD** in an envelope to the present wrap-around were received. These comments have been taken into consideration. The current mailer was adopted for two reasons: economy of space and funds. It is cheaper and by including the general information on the inside of the cover another page is available for spiritual articles. One other

benefit is a considerable increase in the number of requests for free literature, because of the handy tear-off post card on the back. Nevertheless, the possibility of returning to the envelope will continue to be considered.

A number of readers preferred not using illustrations, particularly those depicting Jesus. Following this wish, illustrations will be used only to illuminate an article or to announce the theme on the cover page.

Response to the concept of thematic issues was mixed. The large majority favored them, so for the time being they will be retained. Perhaps an occasional general issue will be published. A few readers preferred retaining one color for the cover; again, the majority liked the idea of the color separation for each year so that they could more easily identify particular editions.

We thank our many readers who have taken the time to respond. This journal is for your benefit and should reflect your desires. Another survey is planned for the future, in a couple of years.

## QUESTION BOX

### Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

*I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old? -Matthew 13:10;  
Psalm 78:2*

*Reprinted from The Herald July 1943*

One of our readers writes us as follows:

"Dear Brethren:

Here is a question that comes up at our meeting now and then on which we are not all agreed, and we would appreciate your answer to this question, which may also be helpful to others who would like the matter clarified: Did our Lord speak in parables to *teach* the multitudes, or did he speak in parables *so that they might not understand?* -Matt. 13:1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 34-36; Mark 4:1, 2, 11, 12, 30, 33, 34; Luke 8:4.

This question is most interesting and has been the subject of study by many able Bible scholars. Their conclusions, however, have not been identical; some believe that the purpose of our Lord in employing the parabolic method in his teaching was to *reveal* the truth, while others have been convinced that his purpose was to *conceal* it. In view of these differences of opinion we trust the following discussion may contribute in part to its solution and prove to be of some profit to our readers.

In the first place, whatever truth there may be in the view that some parables were meant to *conceal the truth rather than to reveal* it, it seems clear that this position is untenable if maintained as being applicable to all the parables. How, for example, can anyone suppose that in the parable of the Good Samaritan by which our Lord so strikingly illustrated the true meaning of the command to love one's neighbor (Lev. 19:18, 34) his purpose was to conceal that meaning? Certainly his meaning was not concealed from that "certain lawyer" who had sought to put Jesus to the test. When our Lord put the question, "Which, now, of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell amongst the thieves?"<sup>9</sup> he correctly replied, "He that showed mere on him" (Luke 10:25, 36, 37).

All the parables may be broadly classified either as <sup>(1)</sup> typical (those in which the truth pictured is by means of exhibiting a concrete example), or symbolic (in which the pictorial representation of the truth taught is by means of symbols).

The parable of the Good Samaritan is the first of the typical parables. Its purpose, we have seen, is to reveal, not to conceal, the truth. The same intention will be found in all the other types of parables of our Lord.

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1 - Many expositors have noted another, a second, meaning to this parable. Taking it not merely as typical or by the way of an example, they regard it also as prophetic or historical of Christ himself, as the Good Samaritan, rescuing humanity from the misery of sin and death. Against this view it is sufficient to remark that neither the wording of the narrative nor the context in which it stands gives the slightest justification for the notion of such a double meaning. On the other hand it must, of course, be acknowledged to be quite within the limits of a legitimate application of the narrative to point out how, in the person of the Samaritan, Jesus not merely pictured a striking example of true fulfillment of the command to love one's neighbors, but also, in his own person, gave us a corresponding example in act, when he, the Son of God, became neighbor to us men, by the pitying, self-sacrificing love with which he came to relieve our wretchedness. But it is obvious that such a thought has its powerful influence only when it is received as an independent application of the parable instead of being made part and parcel of the parable itself as a supposed deeper, hidden meaning.

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## **Symbolic Parables Spoken to the Disciples**

**We turn** now to the symbolic parables which actually clothe the truth taught in a figurative dress, so that along with the purpose of *illustration* (present in all parables) an intention of concealment is also *possible*. There are a number in which, as a matter of fact, no intention of concealment is present but only the purpose of illustration. Such is the case with all the symbolic parables which Jesus uttered, not before a mixed group of hearers, but before the narrower circle of his disciples, for example, the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great price, and the fishing net (Matt. 13:44, 45, 46, 47-50).

In these parables symbols are employed which *might* (on occasion) serve to conceal, but this intention cannot be present, as none of the "multitude" are in the audience. The hearers are all his disciples to whom the purpose of concealment could not apply. Moreover then, in concluding these parables Jesus asked them, "Have ye understood all these things? they said unto him, Yea, Lord!" Evidently his purpose had been to reveal, not to conceal; a purpose, moreover, which had been achieved.

## **Symbolic Parables Spoken to his Opponents**

We have shown that our Lord's purpose in typical parables can be only that of revealing. We have also noted that when spoken only to his disciples, apart from the multitude, even the symbolic parables were not spoken with the intent to conceal. Let us now examine a sample of his symbolic parables addressed not to his disciples but to his opponents. To them he spoke the parable of the wicked husbandman who ill-treated every servant the householder sent, and they finally killed his son. Was this parable intended to obscure his message to them? Was it not rather to strike at their conscience and awaken them, if possible, to their sinful condition? According to the record, "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables *they perceived that he spake of them.*" Evidently his meaning was not obscure to them.

## **Symbolic Parables Often Explained**

Again, in many symbolic parables the figurative veil is so transparent, or it is so directly drawn aside by an added explanatory statement, that there can be no intent to conceal anything by them. An example of the latter may be found in the parable of the importunate friend, where the meaning of the parable is expressly given. For that reason, an intent to conceal cannot be supposed (Luke 11:5-10). As a sample of the former we may take the case of the prodigal son. Surely this parable does not hide from us the love of our Father who is in heaven! Rather it discloses that love with a pathos and a power so divine that, beyond all other forms of speech, it is calculated to touch and melt our hearts (Luke 15:11-32).

## **A Difficult Text**

Thus far in our discussion we have found nothing to support the view that a purpose to conceal was present in the parables considered but in every case have noted only an intention to reveal. However, we have yet to examine what has long been recognized as one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. It is our Lord's reply to the question, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" According to Mark he replied, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (Mark 4:11, 12).

Luke reports our Lord's answer in briefer, yet almost identical terms: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand" (Luke 8:10).

Now, if we take these words as they stand and read them in a plain, honest way, they teach us that in speaking to the multitude (as distinguished from his disciples,) the Lord selected the parabolic form of instruction, not only to conceal the truth from them but for the further purpose of preventing them from turning from their sins and receiving forgiveness.

We have already noted that in the case of some, though not all, of the symbolic parables, there *might* be an intention to conceal as well as to reveal. However, we could not accept the additional thought which seems to be in both Mark's and Luke's report of our Lord's answer. On the contrary, we know that he came to call sinners to repentance, not to frustrate their repentance.

Had we only these condensed reports we would be puzzled to understand the meaning of our Lord. Fortunately, however, Matthew's account is more complete. He tells *us at length* what Jesus said when his disciples asked him why he spoke to the multitude in parables. He says it was "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables, because (not 'in order that' but 'because') they seeing, see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and shall understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:10-15).

Here in Matthew's fuller account, the difficulty suggested by the more condensed report of Mark and Luke is removed. For here it appears that it is *the people* who have closed their eyes, not Christ who has closed them; it is *they* who *will not perceive* and understand, because they do not want to be converted and healed.

Nor need any suppose that Matthew's account can be accepted only by rejecting those of Mark and Luke. If we carefully compare the three reports, we find that the reports of Mark and Luke do not misrepresent but merely condense the answer of our Lord which Matthew reports in full. Matthew's six verses are compressed into two verses by Mark and into only one by Luke. In Matthew's fuller account it may be seen that there is authority for every word in the briefer reports and that there is no real conflict between them.

### **Isaiah's Vision**

To fully understand our Lord's words, we must go to the prophecy of Isaiah to which he refers. That prophecy is found in the sixth chapter, which we considered in some detail in a previous issue of this journal. There we said in part:

"Many have supposed that Isaiah was himself so to preach that the people's hearts would become hardened as a result; that he should deliberately seek to close their eyes and stop their ears so that they would be unable to see God's gracious character and purposes and could listen no longer to his voice of compassion and tenderness. Some have gone even further than this. By an extension of this selfsame doctrine beyond the confines of the one nation of Israel to the whole world of mankind, they have even charged God himself with

inflicting what they term a judicial blindness upon the great mass of our race which left them no chance of repentance-no hope of salvation. Such a gospel (?) we could not but reject, no matter whence it came, so utterly is it opposed to all that we have learned of the character and Word of God.

"But what do these remarkable words signify? What is the meaning of the message Isaiah is commissioned to proclaim? We answer: God saw that their own stubborn and rebellious attitude had at last brought them into a condition in which they would no longer be able to return to God. Once they had the capacity to listen and repent, and as God, in mercy and kindness, had dealt with them, rewarding them for right-doing and chastising them for wrong, they had been able to profit by his instructions. But now

they had lost that capacity. They had been so persistent in their backslidings; they had been so rebellious in heart; they had so resisted the pleadings, the warnings, the invitations of his grace; they had so hardened themselves against him, that they had brought themselves into a state in which they would be insensible to any further influence by which God might seek to cleanse and reclaim them . . . . Through long and continued neglect of their God-given powers of right-thinking and right-doing, these powers have become atrophied, they cannot now function." [Herald, September 1940, pages 134, 135.]

Exactly the same conditions obtained at the time of our Lord's first advent, and accordingly, he (at times) addressed the people in special symbolic parables. To whom did he really speak when he addressed a mixed audience? To whom has the gospel ever been spoken by his faithful messengers since? And with what intent? Surely it was and even now is preached; not to hinder any, God forbid, but certainly with no thought of converting every hearer-merely to reach those who have hearing ears. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear," saith the Lord (Matt. 13:9). "Whosoever hath [already improved what light, grace, opportunities, have come his way] shall have them increased." Yet, while speaking (in the presence of others) to those with hearing ears, our Lord is careful to so speak that those whose ears are dull of hearing shall not be aroused to still greater prejudice, as they would be if the truth were spoken plainly. Hence he veils the kingdom message that they shall not have their bitter enmity made more bitter. He puts this teaching in a form in which it can be apprehended by such as are willing to do the will of his Father (and by these only as they themselves prove more and more worthy of it and continue therein). But those whose persistent disobedience to known truth has deprived them of spiritual sight and who are therefore in a condition in which they could derive no profit from a plainly stated message it is hidden. Those might (strange perversity of the human nature) be still more hardened by it if it were permitted to reach them.

## **Conclusion**

We conclude, then, that in all of the typical and in most of the symbolic parables there is clearly no intent to conceal but only to reveal. However, we have seen also that in special circumstances, speaking before a mixed audience, Jesus did choose the parabolic form of teaching. This was not to hinder from repentance any so disposed but for the double purpose of concealing from unreceptive and impenitent hearers disclosures concerning the Kingdom of heaven which were suited only to receptive and earnest hearers. In this he did but act in accordance with his own wise saying: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matt. 7:6). These special cases, however, are the exception rather than the rule the rule being prophetically stated by Asaph, of the Messiah who was to come, in the text quoted at the head of this article, a free translation of which reads: "I will open my mouth in parables, that I may utter [not that I may conceal] things that have been secret from the foundation of the world" (Psa. 78:2).



# The Parable of Jotham

*And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.—Judges 8:23*

*By Carl Hagensick*

The period of Israel's kings and the period of its judges was the difference between a strong centralized government and one which gave more authority to individual tribes. Advocates of the two systems may be likened to the debate between the Federalists and the anti-Federalists in early American history concerning states' rights.

Gideon's response in Judges 8:23 to being offered kingship was similar to that of George Washington in the early years of the United States. However with Gideon a higher principle was involved. Instead of recognizing tribal rights as supreme, he viewed the twelve tribes of Israel as being under the kingship of God himself.

Gideon's life is a study of contrasts. The son of an idol worshipper, he destroyed his father's altar, tore down the grove to Baal, and delivered Israel from the bondage brought on by national idolatry. But after turning down kingship, he levied a tax on the tribes to make for himself a golden ephod, which became an idol to Israel (Judg. 8:28).

Also the personal life of Gideon was also not above reproach. He had 72 children from a number of wives and one concubine (Judg. 8:30; 9:5). After his death a power struggle ensued. One of his sons, Abimelech, killed seventy of his brothers and, with the assistance of his fellow-townpeople in Shechem. He attempted to install himself as king of Israel. The sole survivor of the massacre of Gideon's sons was the youngest, Jotham, and he voices one of the first parables in the Bible—the Parable of the Trees, found in Judges 8:7-20.

## The Parable

"And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit,

and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."—Judges 9:7-15

The basic lesson of the parable is simple. The trees pictured Gideon and other worthy men of noble stature who felt that their calling was to serve in various capacities and not to assert rulership over their fellows. Only the lowly bramble, an unworthy scrub shrub—Abimelech—would be presumptuous enough to assume such a lofty office.

But, Jotham warns in his parable, if the bramble does become king and notes a lack of trust, he will persecute with such power as to devour the most noble of the land, pictured by the majestic cedar of Lebanon. Future events bore out the accuracy of Jotham's predictions, for within a short while civil war broke out and continued until Abimelech was slain; a millstone was cast upon him from the top of a tower.

### **The Deeper Lesson**

The choice of kinds of trees used in Jotham's parable may have been random, but if so, that choice was overruled by Jehovah's guiding spirit to couch a deeper lesson encompassing the entire plan of God for the human race.

As a central feature of the plan of God we see Satan promoting himself as earth's ruler—"I will ascend into heaven . . . I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14). So successful has Satan been, as was Abimelech of old, that he has earned the titles "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4) and "prince of this world" (John 12:31).

Reviewing the history of the past six thousand years, we note three more worthy claimants were offered this position. They, like Gideon, declined the offer, esteeming their God-given roles as being more important than rulership.

The three noble trees—the olive, the fig, and the vine—are all standard Biblical symbols. The olive, in Romans 11, is used to picture the Abrahamic promise and the favored status to those in relationship with father Abraham. The fig tree is used in the Bible to designate the nation of Israel, as the vine is referred to by Jesus in John 15 to show the relationship between him and his church.

## **The Ancient Worthies**

It was to Abraham, whose worthiness was shown by his faith, that the great covenant promise was made: "In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:14). A parade of heroes of faith march through Old Testament history showing both the faith and the cost of full devotion to God—heroes certainly worthy of rulership positions. Yet rulership was not the role given to Abraham and other men of faith, often the very reverse. Their work was in furnishing the examples and the precepts for future generations. Many of them were the writers of the Bible, the others were the subjects of these writers.

Like the olive tree, whose root pictured the great promise to father Abraham (Rom. 11), their work was to produce "oil"—that "olive oil" which pictured the words of the holy Spirit uttered through the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New (Zech. 4; Rev. 11:4).

## **Israel**

Somewhat less noble, yet uniquely favored by God (Amos 3:2), was the nation of Israel. Unto them was committed "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2). Theirs was the "sacrifice" and the "ephod" (Hos. 3:4). Their kings sat on the the "throne of the Lord" (1 Chron. 29:23). Certainly they were fit to exercise rulership.

Symbolically they declined the offer because of the work which God had given them during their period of favor—to provide examples and illustrations for ages to come (1 Cor. 10:6, 11; Heb. 10:1). Figuratively they were to learn the pitfalls of human experience and to "gather out the stones" so that future generations would not stumble over the same things (Isa. 62:10). This was to provide the "sweetness" and the "good fruit" of the "fig tree" of Jotham's parable. (See also Jer. 24; Matt. 24:32; Luke 13:6-9.)

## **The Church**

At his first advent Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem with those sad words of rejection: "Behold your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). At the same time he turned to others, first to the publicans and sinners of that nation and shortly to the gentiles to "take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14). These were to be groomed for rulership (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6). But the present lifetime was not the time for these to presume such leadership roles. As Paul states "I would to God that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you" (1 Cor. 4:8).

Jesus chose the vine as a symbol of the church in John 15. The work of the vine was to produce grapes, used primarily for wine. It is this spiritual wine, as Jotham phrased it,

"which cheereth God and man." Literal wine may make men merry, but it hardly cheers the heart of God. The spiritual wine which does cheer both God and man is that represented in the memorial cup of the Last Supper: "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:27, 28). It is of this cup that Paul wrote: "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16 NAS).

This is the cup which will cheer both God and man, for when the new covenant realizes its work complete it will bring full atonement between the two. The training for that work is certainly more precious than attempting to assume rulership now.

### **The Bramble**

The bramble was only a lowly plant in comparison to the noble trees to which Jotham had referred; it was prickly, a nuisance, and considered as a weed. In all these attributes it was a fitting representation for the great adversary of mankind, Satan.

The threat to attack the cedars of Lebanon with fire is also significant. While the cedars of Lebanon are used in a wide variety of metaphorical phrases in the Old Testament, one of them is that of the proud and haughty, who stick their necks high above their brothers even as the cedars of Lebanon do above the neighboring trees. We find this usage in Isaiah 2:12, 13: "For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan."

It is these, who dare to assert their own independence, who feel the wrath of Satan when disagreement separates them. In keeping with this, in Isaiah's portrait of Satan as "the prince of Tyre" he prefaces his remarks with a note about the "cedars of Lebanon" celebrating his fall: "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller [however—RSV] is come up against us" (Isa. 14:8).

### **Future Kings**

While each of the trees in Jotham's parable declined the offer to become a king, deeming present activities more appropriate, this does not mean that the classes pictured thereby never shall have a role in kingship and rulership. When circumstances change and the present "prince of this world" is replaced by the "Prince of peace" the new arrangement will elicit a far different response.

The "ancient worthies," pictured by the olive tree, shall then become "princes in all the earth" (Psa. 45:16). The "fig tree" of restored Israel shall be centered in Jerusalem, the capitol city of the world, and "the word of the LORD shall go forth from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3). And the church, the "vine" of the parable, shall be "priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6). As for the "bramble," Satan shall be bound for that same thousand years (Rev. 20:2).

The remainder of mankind will be raised from the dead and pass before the great white throne, where they will be judged and separated as sheep and goats, according to the works which they then shall do. (See Rev. 20:11-15; Matt. 25:31-46.)

## Wisdom And The Foolish Woman

***"For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."—Proverbs 8:11***

*A verse by verse study in Proverbs 9.*

The book of Proverbs can be divided into three sections. The first six chapters are introductory and stress the necessity of gaining true wisdom. Chapter ten begins with the words "The proverbs of Solomon" and contains a lengthy list of wise adages, closing with two chapters which are either copies from other writers or are by Solomon, but written under pseudonyms, or pen names, as the Jewish authorities argue. These apparently are not arranged in a random order, but specifically placed. This is suggested in Solomon's autobiographical book, Ecclesiastes: "And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs" (12:9).

The intervening section of Proverbs is in the form of a parable or allegory in which the characteristics of wisdom and foolishness are contrasted. In chapter seven we have a complete description of foolishness portrayed as a seductive prostitute, her seductive tactics likened unto the temptation of the great adversary of all mankind, the Devil. In chapter eight we find a poetic description of wisdom and its origins which many expositors interpret as a personification of Jesus. Then in chapter nine, the chapter we will here investigate, we find both brought into play in marked contrast to each other.

### **The Messenger—Verses 1 to 3**

***"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city."***

The house of wisdom is contrasted with the house of the foolish woman (v. 14). The action of the chapter is the contrasting invitation by both wisdom and the foolish woman to entice the wayfarer therein. Wisdom's house is said to be of seven pillars. Whether the number seven is to be taken in anything more than a symbolic sense of completeness is unclear. It is worthy of note, however, that James, in describing wisdom, mentions seven specific attributes in connection therewith. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

If, on the other hand, wisdom be taken here as it is in chapter eight, as a personification of Jesus, we note that his house, the church, is also associated with the number seven—seven stages, the "seven churches" of Revelation 2 and 3.

The festive table laden with slain beasts and mingled wine is another figure suggestive of Jesus. Of all Biblical meals one has more attention than the last supper of Jesus' life where he replaced the symbols of the old Aaronic priesthood, lamb and bitter herbs, with those of the incoming Melchizedek priesthood, bread and wine. The Passover gives way to the commemoration of its antitype, the death of Jesus. Here, in Proverbs 9, we find the combining of these two symbols—the slain beasts of the Law dispensation and the mingled wine of the Gospel age.

The obvious connections between the maidens who proclaim the message of wisdom with the parable in which likens his church to a group of "ten virgins" seems to be more than coincidence. After his death on Calvary's cross, the church becomes his spokesmen, spreading the gospel message throughout the world (Matt. 28:19, 20).

The "highest places of the city" also finds its counterpart in the location of the harlot's house in verse 14, "on a seat in the high places of the city." Both invitations—that of the Lord, or wisdom, and that of the adversary, pictured by the "foolish woman"—go forth from the same locale. In ancient cities, even as often today, the higher elevations of the towns usually appealed to the more noble classes. Certainly the gospel message, as well as Satan's attempt to divert people from it, has concentrated its efforts on the more civilized portions of the globe, "the higher places" of the global city of mankind.

### **Wisdom's Message—Verses 4 to 6**

*"Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."*

The gospel message is for the simple. The starting point of Jesus' beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount so begins: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). The enticements of the Lord are graphically and romantically portrayed in an excerpt from the Song of Solomon, chapter eight, verses one and two: "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate."

It is not to her bed, as the harlot desires, but to her table that the Lord invites. Partake with him of those Memorial emblems, the bread and the wine, his flesh and his blood. The "mingling" of the blood can suggest either the transfer of his spiritual life to assume

human form for the purpose of suffering death for every man, or the continuing offer to his followers to become co-participants in the "wine" of his sufferings, to drink of the cup of which he drank (Matt. 20:22, 23).

For them the invitation is a new life style. "Forsake the foolish," "repent and be converted," "be transformed by a renewing of your mind" (Acts 3:19; Rom. 12:2). Because this new way involves a "renewing of the mind" it entails new thought patterns and new sets of values, therefore it is called in our parable "the way of understanding."

### **The Audience—Verses 7 to 12**

***"He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou comest, thou alone shalt bear it."***

In any audience there are two kinds of hearers—those who believe the message and those who do not. In this section in our text we meet these two classes as the "scorner" and the "wise man." Not only does the reproof of the gospel to the scorner bring unawareness, but it also incurs his anger against the reprover. The wise man, in contrast, will appreciate and love the one who gives him correction, realizing that such correction is for his own profit. The just man who increases his learning is reminiscent of the adage, "When you talk you repeat what you already know, when you listened you might learn something."

The modern philosophy of existentialism holds that all truth is relative and that there is no such thing as "absolute truth." The principle of wisdom given in verse ten is a direct rebuttal of such existential arguments: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Recognizing Jehovah as the great "first cause" and the creator of man as well as his universe, it also recognizes that the creator has the right to dictate the rules to the created. His laws are absolute.

Building upon this he adds, "and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." Too frequently secular science stands in its own right. Great theoretical hypotheses are drawn from demonstrable evidence and proclaimed as fact. When Holy Writ comes in conflict with such "science" the Bible is deemed dated and unreliable. The author of Proverbs here argues to the contrary. His position is that "holy" or religious knowledge is based on the inspired writings of an unchangeable God, and therefore superior to the deductions of scientists, which often change with new evidence and the theories of later scholars.



In verse eleven we find out why the religious knowledge is rated first. It alone can multiply days. While medical research may lengthen life expectancy it does so primarily by curing the mortality rate of infants and children, rather than actually lengthening life. Man still begins to rapidly deteriorate at the Biblical limits of "three score and ten" or "four score" (Psa. 90:10). God's Word alone holds out the formula for everlasting life through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ.

### **The Foolish Woman —Verses 13 to 15**

***"A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, To call passengers who go right on their ways."***

Our attention is now called to the contrasting invitation. She is the same foolish woman described as a harlot or prostitute in chapter seven. The Hebrew word translated "simple" has, according to Strong's Concordance, the implication of seduction. The word translated "clamorous" includes not only the stridency of her voice, but the spectacle of her appearance, as that of a harlot's apparel. The "high places of the city," while including the residency of the more affluent, were also the location of the pagan temples (see 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:15 for examples). Cult prostitution was often a part of these worship services and therefore a natural gathering ground for women of this profession. Her audience is the heedless, the passers-by who "go right on their ways," unmindful of anything beyond temporary gratification.

### **Her Message—Verses 16 to 18**

***"Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell [sheol]."***

The audience attracted by the foolish woman is further described as "simple," or, as the New American Standard phrases it, "naive." Their naivete is based on their lack of understanding, which is in turn based upon their rejection of the "knowledge of the holy" (v. 10). What they lack is a moral or ethical base, therefore their consciences permit what God does not allow. The perversity of fallen human nature is outlined only too well in the phrase: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Fallen tendencies take delight in the thought of "getting away with something." How often have we noted the strength of temptation lying in the thought that we will not be discovered in our transgressions. Sin becomes almost a game, with the object to preserve an outward purity while giving vent to human passions within.

The conclusion of the parable emphasizes the naivete and is similar to another proverb of Solomon: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

Once man tries to ignore the teachings of true wisdom, the wisdom of Christ, he is left to his own devices. These usually prove disastrous. A case in point is the history of Israel during the period of Judges when, after repetitive deliverance from their enemies, Israel kept reverting to the pagan idolatry of their neighbors. In summing up that historical era, the last verse of the book of Judges reads: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25).

How glad we are that the "hell" to which those who accept the invitation of the foolish woman end up is not the traditional fiery "hell" of Christendom, or even the "*gehenna* hell" of the New Testament from which there is no return, but the "death and hell" of Revelation 20:13 which eventually shall deliver "up the dead which are in them" for the future judgment of God's kingdom when he shall "judge every man by that man whom he has ordained", Jesus Christ the righteous (Acts 17:31).

Solomon himself saw the twin invitations of wisdom and foolishness, following first the latter before going back and taking the other path, "the road less taken." He sums up the struggle between the two and his final conclusion in the closing words of Ecclesiastes, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13, 14).

# THE FIRST OF THE KINGDOM PARABLES

*"The seed is the Word of God ..Take heed therefore how ye hear. "-Luke 8:11,18.*

*By P. L. Read*

Of all the parables of our Lord, the parable of the Sower is doubtless best known and remembered; yet like all other portions of our Father's Word, it grows richer and more precious through study and reflection. That it is foremost amongst the parables in importance and that a proper understanding of it is of assistance in understanding the others is plainly indicated by our Lord when, on finding the disciples unable to grasp its significance, he remarked: "Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables?" or to quote from the Weymouth translation: "Do you all miss the meaning of *this* parable? How then will you understand the rest of my parables?" (Mark 4:13).

## **The Parables of the Kingdom**

In the Matthew account, which appears in chapter 13, the parable of the Sower is the first of seven parables. These seem to bear a relation to one another like the messages of our Lord to the seven churches, (given by St. John in the Revelation). Together these seven parables are known as the "Parables of the Kingdom." Their teaching seems to portray the successive eras of the gospel age, from the beginning of this dispensation to its close. In them we have a vivid delineation of the trials and resistance which the kingdom of Heaven is to encounter from the Adversary, from its first introduction into the world until the end of the Age. At this time, however, we propose to consider the parable of the Sower by itself, to seek to develop its own particular lessons.

First, let us refresh our minds by reading it. "Behold, "The sower goes out to sow. As he sows, some of the seed falls by the wayside, and the birds come and peck it up. Some falls on rocky ground, where it has but scanty soil. It quickly shows itself above ground, because it has no depth of earth; but when the sun is risen, it is scorched by the heat and through having no root it withers. Some falls among the thorns; but the thorns spring up and stifle it. But a portion falls upon good ground, and gives a return, some a hundred for one, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, every one who has ears!" [Matt. 13:1-9; Weymouth translation.]

In explaining the parable later on when alone with his disciples, our Lord showed that the seed is the Word of God respecting the Kingdom (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10); the Word which, when "understood" (Matt. 13:23), "received" (Mark 4:20), and "kept" (Luke 8:15) will produce "sons of the Kingdom" (Matt. 13:38); and the four different conditions of soil on which the seed fell represent four kinds of hearers. We shall later consider these in detail, but first notice the moral Jesus draws from the parable. It is stated in Luke's account in these words; "Take heed how ye hear"-( 8:18).

## **Absurd Results Reached If Details are Pressed Too Far**

"Take heed how ye hear." In this sentence we have the moral, the lesson, which Christ himself drew from the parable. And it is instructive to note that his moral is the natural lesson, drawn by a divine wisdom; indicating not only the force and beauty of the parable but the weakness and insufficiency of even the most perfect parabolic forms of instruction (and the absurd results we will reach) if we attempt to press every little detail too far. Our Lord, summing up the lessons of the parable, declares that we are to be careful what we hear and how we hear; but how can the ground exercise any care as to what seed it will receive or the conditions under which it will be received? The ground must take whatever seed the sower casts upon it; and if the good seed should be choked by thorns or fail for lack of soil, the ground is not to blame for that; its conditions depend not on its own care but on the farmer's care. In actual farming, it is not the ground but the farmer who is responsible for the condition of the soil. It is *he* who should have burned off the thorns or added the necessary soil; it is *he*, not the ground, who is to blame if the wrong seed be sown or the ground yield no fruit.

Thus, from the very first parable uttered by our Lord we learn that we must not push his analogies and comparisons too far; that natural phenomena and processes are inadequate expressions of spiritual truth; we must bring an understanding and discriminating heart to even the most perfect words ever uttered. To give full force to the moral of this parable it must be supplemented. We must remember that hearers of the Word are not only like different conditions of soil but also like different farmers. We must remember that just as the farmer, by skill and application, may compel the ground to bring forth, despite the curse which has fallen upon it, so we, by a wise application, may constrain these otherwise barren hearts of ours to bring forth fruit unto God. *We can* determine what seed we will receive into our heart; therefore we are to see to it that we receive only the good seed that will produce sons of the Kingdom, not the tare-seed that, as our Lord shows in the next parable, the enemy will be only too happy to scatter on our heart if we permit him. *We can* determine the conditions of the soil into which the good seed is to fall; and therefore we are to see to it that there be a good soil for the good seed, a soil rich enough and deep enough to bring it to perfection.

## **One Sower And One Seed**

It is interesting to note that the possibility of two kinds of seed, one good and one evil, is not even mentioned, much less dwelt on. We know, of course, that there are two kinds of seed continually being sown in the hearts of men. One is a good seed, the other evil. One is a seed of truth, the other of error. There are seeds of love and seeds of hate, seeds of kindness and seeds of unkindness; and elsewhere in the scriptures these different seeds and how they may be distinguished are discussed. But they are not under discussion in this parable, which refers throughout to only the good seed.

Then, too, we are sometimes represented as sowers, sowing seed in the heart of each other; and then the lesson is that we should be careful to sow only the good seed-unmixed with our best guesses and fancies-and be careful to prove all things which others may

seek to sow in our hearts, holding fast only to that which is good. But, once again, we note that that is not the lesson before us in this parable. There is only the one sower here, and it is the Lord himself.

### **What Is The Good Seed?**

The reason for limiting the seed in the parable to the good seed only, and referring to the one Sower only, is that the Master is giving us here the first, the most elementary, lesson concerning the Kingdom class; other lessons will follow. Here in this parable the Master's one lesson is about the frame of heart and mind which should be ours when the good seed comes our way.

The good seed in this parable is not a discussion of the intricacies of difficult doctrinal points; even inspired Apostles differed on such things, as did, for example, Peter and Paul. It is the Word of God which, in its simplicity, discloses the wondrous character of God; any one in the right attitude of heart cannot fail to understand that word which will produce in one who embraces it a whole-hearted consecration of mind and life.

In the parable we have a description of four kinds of hearers: three of them unprofitable and one a good or profitable hearer. Let us consider these in the order in which they appear in the parable.

### **This is He That was Sown By The Wayside**

Of the three sorts of unprofitable hearers, the first set before us is he to whom the Word is as seed sown by the wayside. As the sower goes over the -field, some of the seed falls on the path (or close by the side of the path) where the earth has not been broken up by the plow. It lies there on the hard surface until it is either trodden down and crushed beneath the feet of passersby or is caught up by the birds which flock around the sower's heels. The spiritual significance of this familiar rural scene is explained by our Lord: "When any one heareth the Word, and understandeth it not, then cometh the Evil One, and snatcheth away that which was sown in his heart lest he should believe and be saved."

Now observe-the soil of the path and under the path may be as deep and as rich as the best of the field; its natural capacity for yielding fruit may be very large; but it has been trodden hard by many passing feet, so that the seed cannot penetrate the surface but lies there; it is an easy prey to the birds, it is rotting, not growing, even though it may escape the keen eye and the bruise of the passing heel.

The first unprofitable hearer, therefore, is not a man of a cold, hard nature nor of a nature all overrun with growths of evil; he is simply negligent, uninterested, indifferent. Unlike the good hearer, he does not understand the Word; that *is, he does not perceive its bearing on himself*, its true worth of importance to *him*. He has no objection to listening to it, but it does not penetrate to the depths of his being; it excites no personal interest, does not throw out slight root-filaments on every side to twine around the thoughts and affections which lie closest to his heart. The Gospel message does not *grip* him, as when

you tell him something that will be helpful in his business or advise him along other lines of earthly interest.

How has he reached this condition? What has made him thus impervious to spiritual truth? Alas! he has made his heart a highway-has suffered *all* thoughts, evil as well as good, to pass to and fro. For many a day his heart has lain open like a public thoroughfare; all base and low and sensual imaginations have claimed their right of way over it, until the soil, good enough in itself, has been trodden hard and can no more take seed or bear fruit until the keen, grinding plowshare of affliction has been driven through it.

He has felt the Word fall upon his heart, perhaps, hard though it be; he has dimly and from afar apprehended that there is a life, a reality, in the truth of God that he has not hitherto recognized; he has thought, from time to time, as the seed had fallen upon him that it would be well for him to look into the matter for himself some day; but about the time he should be reaching a decision for God something else interferes, and the impression of the good seed which fell *upon* but not *in* his heart disappears.

### **He That Was Sown Upon The Rocky Places**

The second unprofitable hearer is he to whom the Word is as seed sown in rocky places. In the great field in which the sower goes forth bearing precious seed there are places in which the hard rock crops up close to the surface; and the seed which falls into the shallow soil that covers the face of the rock springs up very quickly in the heat the rock holds and radiates; but because there is little moisture and no depth of earth, the sun scorches them and they wither as quickly as they grow. And, says our Lord, translating these familiar, natural symbols into spiritual truths: "He that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the Word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, straightway he stumbleth."

This second hearer, then, is a man of shallow, superficial, character who does nothing thoroughly, brings nothing to perfection.

And that surely is a very fine touch, which describes a man of this superficial stamp as being of a hard and impenetrable heart. Under the thin surface of easily-stirred dust, there lies a bed of rock. For it is among those who lead a life of light enjoyment and who tread a round of trivial canes and ambitions and pleasures that we learn how heartless men can be. It is not among the poor or the busy but among the elegant votaries of pleasure and fashion that men, and women too, are trained to stifle emotion, to harden themselves into indifference, to cultivate that selfishness which is death to all love and to all nobility of character.

And when a man of this sensitive, yet shallow, character has the Word of God earnestly pressed upon him, it often happens that struck by its novelty and moved by the emotion of the moment, he forthwith receives it with joy; he not only understands and assents to it

but, like the good hearer, receives it unto himself, suffers it to dwell and work in him and shape his course. For a while his life is changed; he is eager to give his susceptible and easily-moved heart altogether to this new, stimulating, excitement. Nothing in his experience was ever comparable to it. He will break through all rules of good taste and good sense to show his esteem for it and to make others esteem it as he does. He lives in a rapture and would have all men share it with him.

But like all other raptures, it is quickly past; its force is soon spent. The times change, and he changes with the times. He has no root in himself and cannot withstand any influence brought to bear upon him. A strong temptation comes, and he has no strong faith with which to meet it. The excitement is over and now the consecrated life looks as dreary to him as had all previous forms of life. "Tribulation or persecution ariseth and immediately he is offended." He does not *keep* the Word; his nerveless hands cannot hold it fast. As quickly as he received it, so quickly he lets it go.

### **He Who Received Seed Among The Thorns**

The third unprofitable hearer is he to whom the Word is as seed sown among thorns. For besides the trodden and rocky places, there are broad patches in the field thick with the seeds of thorns; and these spring up with the good seed, but *faster than the good seed*, so that it is choked before it can yield fruit.

Now, if we ask: "Who among all the hearers of the Word corresponds to this thorn-infested soil?" our Lord Jesus replies: "He who received seed among the thorns is he who, when he has heard the Word, goeth his way; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures of life, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the Word, and he bringeth no fruit to perfection."

We observe that the ground is good enough to grow either wheat or thorns *but not good enough to grow both*; that is to say, not good enough to bring both to perfection. Here, on this soil, the seed has a better chance than before. It gets *into* the soil, takes root, springs up, *forms the ear even*. It is not trodden down, nor snatched away; nor is it scorched for want of moisture or depth. Long after the farmer going his rounds has discovered that the sides of the path will be bare and seen the withered stalks of the seed sown on rocky places, he has hopes that this on the thorny ground is doing fairly well, though there are too many weeds among it. But *when it has well-nigh accomplished its task* and its promise is at its best, it is choked by quicker growths and not suffered to mature the full corn in the ear.

Now it is thus with some hearers of the Word. Like the good hearer, they understand, receive; they even hold fast the seed. The impression it has produced does not fade away instantly, like seed picked up by the birds the very moment it has fallen. Nor do they renounce it as soon as it demands a firm resistance to temptation or a patient endurance of trial, like the seed that after it has sprung up withers in the stalk. They *keep* the Word through all such trials and tests as these. Nevertheless they suffer it to be choked *when it is on the point of bearing*. Much as they love it, they love much besides it; and these other

loves grow very quickly and overtop the growth of the good seed, sucking away the juices which should nourish *it*. So much so that the life and power of the Gospel message are gradually neutralized and drawn out of them; and though fruit is formed in them, *they do not bring it to perfection*.

What are the thorns which thwart and choke the Word? Some of them are "the cares of this world," those daily recurring anxieties about what we shall eat and what we shall drink and wherewith we shall be clothed, distracting our attention; while the Word of God draws us one way, these petty cares and worries draw us another way.

Other of these thorns spring from the deceitfulness of riches, from the peculiar and subtle cunning with which they beguile us away from the simplicity that is in Christ. And though, like the cares of the world, riches are not in themselves evil, yet all careful observers of human life have admitted that wealth has a special trick of gradually withdrawing men from the love and service of the truth. As a rule rich men are content with the world as it is--naturally--for they think the world has dealt very kindly with them, and therefore they see no need for bettering it. Wealth has many wiles; it is full of deceit; and no man is worthy of greater honor than the rich man who keeps himself unspotted from the world and its ways. As we recall from time to time the many examples of Christian grace which characterized Brother Russell's ministry, we may well pause once and again to remember that among the many tests he successfully endured was this one, which few to whom it is applied prove able to withstand.

The pleasures of life and the lust of other things are more common weeds or thorns, but hardly less fatal. They ruin thousands where the deceitfulness of riches ruins one. Who that has gone through life with open eyes has not again and again seen the young man who has given himself ardently to God beguiled away from the simplicity of Christ by the lure of pleasure and the excessive pursuit of other objects? He does not suddenly and completely fall away; first this and then that object attracts him, and between them they choke his early devotion. There is perhaps not one of these objects which if the issue were distinctly raised he would not sacrifice for Christ's sake. But among so many quick-springing thorns, the good seed has but a poor chance and seldom brings its fruit to perfection. How many a fair, bright, promise has been thus nipped in the bud! Let us see to it that we come not into their number. Let us see to it that these deadly thorns do not make us unfruitful hearers of the word of truth and grace.

### **He That Receiveth Seed Into Good Ground**

We come now to a happier task, the consideration of the good hearer. And as we note the various points in our Lord's description of him may we be encouraged and strengthened in our determination to develop in ourselves, by God's grace, the characteristics he portrays; these characteristics if found in us will enable us to yield a rich fruitage from the good seed of the Word of God sown in us.

Each of the three Evangelists will be found to help us; for Matthew tells us that "he that receiveth seed into good ground is he that heareth the Word and *understandeth* it"; Mark,



that it is he that heareth the word and "*receiveth*" it; and Luke, that it is he, who, "having heard the Word, *keepeth it in an honest and good heart*, and bringeth forth fruit with patience."

The first characteristic of the good hearer is that he *understands* the Word. Scholars tell us that the Greek word here rendered "understand" is significant. It denotes a state of mind in which having compared one statement with another, having weighed each apart and then placed them side by side, having viewed truth as truth and then in its relation to himself a man gives it the assent of his whole intelligent being and affirms not only that it is true *but that it shall be true for him*: that he believes it, will act upon it, and so *far as lieth in him will see that his life is governed by it*. It includes the assent of the reason or the intellect, the determination of the will, and the sympathy of the heart. So that the very first characteristic of the good hearer of the Word is a very large and comprehensive one. Before any one of us can claim to be *such* a hearer, we must have personally studied and considered the truth as it is in Jesus and have weighed any objections to it of which we have been cognizant and have found such objections wanting. We must have felt how well adapted it is to our own individual needs and have been gripped with a strong conviction that it is from God and that it is for us. Not only must our reason, our intellect, consent to its being true, we must also determine to act upon it and find our sympathies and affections engaged by it. This done, we will have the first qualification of the good hearer; for we hear nothing to advantage while we doubt it or dislike it or do not mean to let it influence our life. It is only when we listen in faith, in love, and with a resolve to benefit by what we hear that we are in a condition to make the most of the divine Word of truth and to get the most from it.

Mark's word is equally significant with Matthew's and carries the thought still further. According to Mark, the good hearer is one who *receiveth* it; and to receive it, in Mark's sense of the word, is "to take it into oneself." It implies that the good hearer is so charmed and won by the peculiar fitness of the gracious gospel message to his own dire need, that he embraces it, receives it into his very being; he prepares, so to speak, a habitation, a sanctuary, for it in the innermost recesses of his spirit, from which, like the Shekinah in the tabernacle and the temple, it sheds a hallowing and enlightening influence through all the courts and avenues of his life.

The model hearer, then, is one who not only understands the Word, not only gives it the sanction of his intelligence and will and affection but in virtue of this sanction, admits it into himself to become a part of him, to become the guiding and shaping spirit of his life.

### **In a Good and Honest Heart**

Luke tells us that in the good hearer the heart into which the Word is received will be "a good and honest" heart.. Obviously a man with an untrue heart will not make a good hearer of truth. We cannot be good hearers unless our hearts are good-candid, open, sincere; hearts like little, children's; hearts like Nathaniel's, of whom our Lord could say, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." If we would know the secrets of truth,

we must be unselfish, unprejudiced; we must care rather to be on the side of truth than to find the truth on our side.

Then, too, having received the Word into an honest heart, the good hearer will "keep" it or "hold fast." He will not let it go, whatever allurements he may meet. He will not suffer the good seed to be withered by wayside influences, nor choked by incoming cares or pleasures of life, nor obstructed by rocky impenitences. He has found it hard to get the truth and having got it, he will not part with it. At times it may be very difficult to hold it fast. A great gain may be his or an intense delight purchasable at a very small cost of being untrue to his convictions; a terrible danger may be averted by a lie on his part or even by being evasive or by leaving a wrong impression; a friend he greatly desires to please may be made happy by only a slight deviation from the path of integrity; but he will hold fast his integrity and truth. He will be assured that the laws he has deduced from the Word, the laws by which he commonly governs his life, must not be reconsidered, much less repealed, while the storm of passionate desire is beating upon him; most of all, he needs to abide by them. This is the good hearer--the man who is a doer of the Word, a doer when doing is most difficult, and not a hearer only. He never forgets what manner of man he is or should be; but looking with a constant gaze into the perfect law of our liberty, he walks by it and is blessed in his deed.

Again, the good hearer, who understands the Word, who receives it into a good and honest heart and holds it fast, also brings forth fruit "with *patience*." *And* of all his characteristics, this, as it is the most valuable, is also the hardest to attain. To wait is even harder than to labor and to obey. Unless we are to have our harvest very soon, we have hardly the heart to sow. The farmer has long patience--must have it--till he receives the early and the latter rain. The winter frost must mellow the seed lying in the genial bosom of the earth; the rains of spring must swell it and the suns of summer mature it. So with us. To become a good hearer, a good doer, of the Word, is a task which requires long patience. We must suffer many a killing frost, many a darkening shower, many a burning sun before the good seed, cast into our heart by the great Sower, will gladden us (and him) with its thirty or its sixty or, it may be, its hundred-fold. But if we do but wait with patience or with "cheerful constancy" as the word here translated *patience* more exactly means, if with cheerful, constant endurance we bring forth fruit, the more precious will be the harvest. It is only ill weeds that spring up apace; and God is not unjust that he should forget our labor of love. In due time we shall reap if we faint not. We shall reap all that we have sown and more. For he that giveth seed to the farmer and bread to the eater will multiply the seed we have sown and give us to eat of the fruit of our toils. One day, nearer somewhat than when we first believed, all the seeds he has planted in us, which we have received in a good and honest heart, which we have kept and cultivated, will have grown to maturity and we shall awake "in his likeness." Let us be patient, therefore; let us be steadfast; let us establish our hearts before him. Thus may it be with us all, for Jesus' sake.

[Edited version reprinted from **THE HERALD** (1954)].

# THE ABIDING LIFE

*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.-John 15:5*

*By John Trzeciak*

Have you ever thought about your union with Christ? The night before Jesus was crucified he gave his disciples a very important message on "the abiding life." Union with Christ was already established in the previous chapter (14:20). Now he proclaimed a **continuing relationship, even** when he would not be with them personally. John writes of this sermon by Jesus to express the closeness and love our Lord has for those who have covenanted to walk in his footsteps. Jesus knew just how important that message was at that time. He knew that severe tests awaited those who make this step of consecration (Matt. 4:1-11). Jesus knew he would be leaving them. It was essential to assure them of his **abiding care**. He said that the Father would send us "another comforter" (John 14:16).

## **Fruit Bearing**

In the second verse of John 15 each believer is illustrated as a "branch" in the "vine." Each believer is considered only from the standpoint of bearing fruit. This parable illustrates the **oneness** that each consecrated member may have with Christ.

Since the body is one and has many members, how is one able to join? Entrance comes the same way for all-by baptism in the Spirit, by drinking of the one Spirit!

## **Removal**

If a believer fails in some way to produce even a small portion of fruit, he may expect the Father to remove him. If a farmer cannot get results, he is justified in cutting away an unproductive growth which may cause even further damage to his crop.

So it is and should be with the unfruitful children of God. They can even become contrary to the will of God, especially if they **reject** the heavenly Father's instructions through our Lord Jesus. He alone provides us with the enthusiastic life necessary for fruit bearing. The child of God who is continually ready to receive the nutrients from the source but is busy looking elsewhere or focusing in on self gratification will not bear much fruit, if any at all. Being always focused on the source is a primary example of stability of Christian character. That is why we must look unto Jesus as "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). If we look to our fellow runners, we will surely be slowed down. How others run is not our concern except as we seek to encourage them to greater faithfulness. Christ is the root, the foundation principle for all who may eventually bear fruit.

## Communication

In John 14:6 Jesus states that he is the indispensable way to the Father. He alone is able to reveal in himself the full truth about God. For a farmer to get the maximum yield from the crop it is essential that he remove any hindering thing, so that the objective of a higher yield of fruit may be obtained (vs. 2). This process may not be an easy task. Pests and crop damaging conditions (old habits) may play an important role in the eventual lack of fruit. The process the Christian uses to cleanse himself from these pests is the communication of the message of Christ (Eph. 4:29). The word "corrupt" is used of that which is worthless or useless as well as of that which is rotten or decayed. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing (John 6:63). The words of Jesus are not empty promises, they are eternal life (John 6:68).

## Abiding in Christ

Our "abiding in Christ" is more than being in Christ as a matter of "spiritual position." It requires a deliberate cultivation of the bond established with Christ by obedience and love so that "Christ in you" may be experienced as a conscious reality. The condition for spiritual usefulness is identical with the natural (John 15:4).

The branch "cannot bear fruit of itself." It must abide in the vine. Having our fellowship with the Lord and truly dwelling in this relationship should yield much fruit. Being submissive to his will and not our own is sometimes difficult. When Christ asks us to follow him, he first instructs us to "deny ourselves" (Matt. 16:24).

In this verse to "take up" one's cross literally means to "pick up at once." Cross-bearing is symbolic language for voluntary submission to the discipline necessary for becoming more like our King. That has not been an easy task. It was the same with Jesus, who is the first and foremost to do so.

In verse five the expression "without me ye can do nothing" shows the danger of trying to produce fruit without this relationship. The yield is nothing but failure, unhappiness, and frustration. That which is not useful in edifying becomes a form of **individual idealism** that can only puff one up. This can result in a lack of identity amongst the Lord's people.

Abiding cannot be maintained apart from giving the words of Christ the reigning position in the heart. Paul states in Colossians 3:16 that the word of Christ should "dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." To sing in the heart does not mean that the singing is unexpressed but only that it is heartfelt.

## Prayer

Christ is honored when his word is honored. Verse seven assures us that when the Lord's people prayerfully petition him for the promise, he will honor his word. The "whosoever will" of salvation finds its counterpart in the "what ye will" of prayer. Prayer is a privilege but it is also properly termed "the life line" by which we communicate our requests. Proving ourselves as disciples of Christ bears a direct relationship to the fruit bearing process.

The unexpressed assumption is that Christ himself bears fruit whereby the Father may be all in all. The glorification of the Father must be the pinnacle of all our hands find to do. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (vs. 8).

As fruit bearing means a movement from man Godward through Christ, so love is a movement manward from the Father through Christ (John 3:16). Verse nine mentions the continuing in Christ's love as another abiding quality of Christ. Eternal life is the fruition of hope based on the sacrificial life of the Lord whose life portrays the "fullfillment" of that promise.

## Obedience

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude 21

We are not only to "keep ourselves in the love of God," we are also to keep his commandments. We are reminded of his "new commandment" to "also love one another" (John 13:34). What a blessing it is to dwell in the love of Christ, but how difficult to keep God's laws. John 15:10 tells us that they must go hand in hand. **Both Gethsemane and Calvary** are embraced as part of the will of God. Perfect obedience and the relationship of this love expressed to all is the fullness of joy promised to all those that love him.

Paul writes that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith., meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22, 23). By bearing these fruits we will be doing good to all as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:10).

## Proportional

Since these qualities exist in our Lord Jesus, it becomes apparent that we must also try to emulate these characteristics as much as possible. In proportion as we allow the holy Spirit to infiltrate our very being, in like proportion we will vividly express these gracious fruits of the Spirit. In a similar

vein, the Apostle Peter admonishes us to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren [Greek, *idle*] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of

our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:48).

Abiding in Christ becomes an essential aspect of our service. If we are to fully appreciate his loving sacrifice, continuing in his love and the heavenly Father's love is critical.

### **How Long?**

How long must we continue in his love? Paul answers that full consecration must be maintained. We cannot bear fruits of righteousness for just one day, or whenever we are in the mood. There must be an abiding surrender. At the moment we reach each day, it should be greeted with the words, "My earliest thought I desire shall be, `what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me'" (Psa. 116:12-14)? Jesus' prayer on the night of his crucifixion shows this abiding love, so that all who desire his presence may partake of its loving warmth and security (John 17:20-26).

John was so appreciative of what the Master said that night in the upper room that he wrote these blessed words of John 15. They stand as an impression of the untiring sacrifice of our Lord on behalf of those who have covenanted to follow in his footsteps.

`Behold, what manner of love the Father bath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that bath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."-1 John 3:1-3

The measure of Christ's love is his readiness to die for those who are his friends. As he expresses his love for them and for all mankind in death, they can surely express the same toward one another in life (John 15:12-17).

# Many Called, Few Chosen

*And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.—Revelation 17:14*

*By Richard Evans*

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding" (Matt 22:1-3).

Translators use both bid and call in this parable to render *kaleo* (#2564). Because call has such special significance in Scripture, the use of bid introduces a vagueness not present in the original. It is better to use call throughout.

## The Jews

"And they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are called, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were called were not worthy."—Matthew 22:3-8

These verses describe the reaction of the Jews, the called people of God, to the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. They did not come to the marriage feast; and, consequently, as a people, they suffered greatly.

## The Gentiles

"Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, call to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."—Matthew 22:9-12)

The sending of the King's servants into the highways depicts the call going out to the Gentiles. Paul wrote of this call, "I say then, Have they [the Jews] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:11).

Many Gentiles responded — the banquet hall filled; but, as indicated in the parable, entrance into the hall is not sufficient. It is necessary for each guest to put on a wedding garment.

### **The Lesson**

"Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."—Matthew 22:13, 14

Many versions punctuate these verses so the clause "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" is related with "cast him into outer darkness." This obscures the lesson. The casting of the unrobed guest into darkness is the conclusion of the parable's narrative. A period, a full stop, should follow the word "darkness". The subsequent words are the lesson of the parable. In today's idiom, they are the bottom-line. They state the point of the parable, a danger the Lord was making manifest.

The text would be better as "... Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called, but few are chosen."—Matthew 22:13, 14 corrected

This construction gives meaning to the conjunction. For (because) few are chosen, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is the lesson of the parable!

### **Two Crises**

In the parable Jesus dramatized two crises his followers must experience. The first is God's calling (1 Pet 5:10). This crisis is resolved in the parable by entering the banquet hall. In the Christian walk it is resolved by consecration to holy living and obedience to the will of God. Typified by the general consecration of the Levites, the believer sets his mind to follow righteousness in all of life's affairs. As with the Levites, this consecration does not entail sacrifice. God has the right to demand that all his creatures love righteousness and hate iniquity, but he does not demand that all sacrifice.

A life of righteousness sooner or later brings about a tension. A sincere response to God's call results in conflict with earthly interests, earthly ambitions, earthly friendships (1 Pet 3:20,21). In the "present evil world" (Gal 1:4) the path of righteousness ultimately



requires sacrifice. The resolution of this second crisis, the putting on of the garment, is a second consecration—a consecration as a priest for sacrifice. Typified by the special consecration of Aaron and his sons as sacrificers or priests, this consecration is made by only a few (Luke 22:14).

All who desire to follow Jesus should be aware of these crises and understand the inherent hazard. Having turned to God and his ways of righteousness, having made the first consecration, there is a strong temptation to stop, to believe all that is necessary has been accomplished. There is a grave danger of not going on to the second consecration.

This perilous snare was made evident in Paul's ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-5). The Apostle found there disciples who knew only of John's baptism, the baptism of repentance, the first consecration. Paul quickly set about teaching the need for a second baptism.

This pitfall is also evident in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Hebrews were in the same provisional condition as the Ephesians.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."—Hebrews 5:12

Repeatedly the writer implored the Hebrews to go forward. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest . . ." (Heb 4:11); "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest . . . Let us draw near with a true heart. " (Heb 10:19-22); "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp ..." (Heb 13:13).

In each of these requests the Hebrews were being urged to go on to the second consecration.

To illustrate this hazard the writer used the Exodus of Israel. Every Christian who has left his Egypt, consecrated to righteousness, and followed God to the spiritual Jordan, comes to this critical juncture. There is a second baptism, a baptism unto Joshua—a second consecration, a consecration unto sacrifice!

The Ephesians heard and accepted Paul's message. They were baptized into Christ. They crossed their Jordan. Of the reaction of the Hebrews little is known. They were standing on the banks of the Jordan. The epistle was written to encourage them to crossover (Heb 3:12,19).

From this picture given by God, we know "few there be" (Matt 7:14) that make that crossing. Of the hundreds of thousands of Jews over twenty years of age who left Egypt,

of all that were baptized into Moses at the Red Sea, only two were baptized in the Jordan (Num 14:30). That is the danger! All who desire to be "more than conquerors" (Rom 8:37), all who desire to destroy the enemies in the land, must not only leave Egypt, but must also leave the wilderness. They must cross the Jordan. The great battle in which each Christian must engage takes place in Canaan, not in the wilderness!

## **The Wedding Garment**

A crucial point in the parable is the absence of a wedding garment. There has been much speculation as to the source of the wedding garment. Some declare it was the custom in Jesus' day to present wedding guests with garments. There is little evidence to support such a claim. The parable leaves the source in the background, and simply indicates that a suitable robe was necessary, however obtained. Adding to Scripture what is not given is unwise.

The verb "had on" in verse 11 is translated from *enduo* (Strong's #1746). This verb is used often in the New Testament and has the meaning "to put on." "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14); "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24).

The unrobed guest had accepted the call and entered the banquet hall, but he had not "put on" a proper garment. The meaning of this expression was given by Paul. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal.3:27)

Many are called by God and respond by consecrating to righteous living. They receive John's baptism; but, like the Ephesians and the Hebrews at the time of their enlightenment, they are not "baptized into Christ." They have not "put on" Christ. Though many are called, few go on to the second consecration.

All who respond to God's drawing (John 6:44) are fed spiritual meat and drink (1Cor 10:3,4). Just as was Israel at Mt. Sinai, they are enlightened of God's requirements.

The Hebrews were "illuminated" before they were urged to enter God's "rest." "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;" (Heb10:32). The Ephesians were first edified by Paul—teaching preceded baptism (Acts 19:4,5).

After entering the lighted hall, after enlightenment, there must be a second response. Those who fail to "put on" the garment, who fail to "put on" Christ, who fail to make the second consecration, are rejected. Just as the unrobed guest, they are taken from the bright lights of the banquet hall and cast into the darkness outside. They join those called

ones who refused to leave their farms, their merchandise. Those who enter the hall and fail to "put on" a garment suffer the same fate as those who made light of the call.

There is an important nuance apparent in the Greek which is completely lost in the English translation. ". . . he [the King] saw there a man which had not [Strong's #3756] on a wedding garment ..." (Matt 22:11); ". . . how camest thou in hither not [Strong's #3361] having a wedding garment?" (Matt 22:12)

The little word "not" in these verses is translated from different Greek words. In verse 11 the word used denotes a fact—the guest had not put on a garment. The word in verse 12, on the other hand, signifies intention—the guest had willfully not put it on. The King asked in effect, "is it your willful intention not to have a garment?" The guest knew the garment was required, but was not willing to put it on.

### **The Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth**

The ultimate consequence of not responding to the call, and not putting on a wedding garment, is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." This difficult phrase appears seven times in the New Testament — six times in Matthew, once in Luke. The account in Luke provides important insight.

"And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able . . .'"—Luke 13:22-24

Again, there is the comparison between many and few.

". . . When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth . . .'"—Luke 13:25-28

Those standing without, knocking at the door, are the same ones who, in the parable, refused to go to the feast—the called of the Jewish nation.

This text makes manifest the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is to occur in the Kingdom, after the Lord's return and the Church is complete. Only in the Kingdom will those who were called realize the great privilege they rejected. It is then they cry "Lord, Lord, open

unto us." When they hear the answer "I know you not," then "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The prophet Ezekiel wrote of this lament. "Then shall ye [Israel] remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations" (Ezek. 36:31).

Zechariah also foretold of it. "... they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech 12:10).

In the Kingdom those Jews who rejected God's call shall weep and gnash their teeth.

The parable reveals a similar destiny awaits the Gentiles who reject God's call. This was confirmed by the writer of Hebrews.

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby [the] many be defiled"—Hebrews 12:15

"Many" has the definite article, "the many"—the many who are called as contrasted with the few who are chosen.

"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."—Hebrews 2:16, 17

The Gentiles who do not respond to the call will suffer rejection and, in the Kingdom, will weep as did Esau.

### **Many Called, Few Chosen**

The Parable of the Marriage Feast dramatically demonstrates the need for understanding the two crises in the Christian experience. All who consecrate to righteous living enter the banquet hall without a wedding garment. If they remain in that provisional state they receive the grace of God in vain (2Cor 6:1), as did Esau.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."—John 12:48

The failure to be chosen is directly related to not "putting on" a garment, not making the second consecration. Many Jews and Gentiles, as individuals, follow the path taken by the Israelite nation. They leave their Egypt and pass through the antitypical Red Sea. They come to Mt. Zion (Heb 12:22). They are nourished with spiritual meat and drink (1Cor 10:13,14). They are brought to the border of their Canaan; but, as did Israel, they choose not to enter. They refuse to pass through the Jordan. They willfully refuse to put on the wedding garment!

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb 4:1); " . . . for many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt 22:14).

# The Parable Of The Penny

*Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?—Matthew 20:15*

*Contributed*

The Parable of the Penny is an illustration Jesus gave to his disciples about the Kingdom of Heaven class, the church in the flesh.

In this narrative an owner of a vineyard went out one morning to hire workers for his harvest field. As he was walking he met a group of laborers and sent them into his vineyard, agreeing to pay them a penny for a day's work. During the third hour of the same day he passed a hiring hall and observed a group of men standing around waiting for employment. He invited them to go out to his vineyard as well, stating that he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. Again, at the sixth and ninth hours, he continue finding and hiring laborers to work in his field.

At the eleventh hour, when he saw still another group of men standing idly around, he approached them and asked why they were not working. When they responded that no one had hired them the owner encouraged this final set of workers to join the others in the vineyard.

In the evening the owner directed his steward to call all the men together and pay them, beginning with the last group first. When the men who were hired at the eleventh hour received a penny those who were hired first assumed they would receive much more. However they also received a penny. In their anger, the first hour laborers murmured against the owner, claiming they received the same amount in payment as those who worked but one hour. He informed the laborers he did them no wrong; that he had kept his promise. They were hired to work for one penny, and at the end of the day that was what they received. The owner then told the murmurers to take their payment and leave, and that the last would be first and the first last.

## **First Advent Application**

This parable shows that it was the owner's desire to pay all of the workers the same amount. Our Lord presented this lesson to his followers to illustrate the murmuring by some members of the church at his second advent, during the harvest period of the Gospel age. Although this narrative seems to refer to an end time picture of the Gospel

church, we suggest it might also have a further application to the nation of Israel at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry.

At that time there was indignation against Christ by his Jewish brethren, primarily motivated by the scribes and Pharisees. Even though the Jewish nation rejected, murmured against, and ultimately crucified our Lord, in contrast the publicans and sinners heard him gladly (Matt. 9:10-13).

The prophet Daniel reveals that the children of Israel were waiting in full expectation for the Messiah at his first advent (Dan. 9:24-27). When Jesus began his ministry, he preached to his Jewish brethren that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand and he offered them the initial privilege of entering into the high calling arrangement. However, the Jewish nation as a whole, rejected this opportunity to become part of the royal priesthood class, and thus the glorious prospect of becoming joint-heirs with Christ was ultimately given to the gentiles (John 1:11; Acts 15:14).

The scribes and Pharisees believed that they were the only ones faithful to God. Thus they murmured amongst themselves that if the publicans and sinners could obtain the privilege of discipleship, then they, as religious leaders, should be granted something even better than that.

Although both the leaders of fleshly Israel at the first advent and some of his spiritual family at the second advent murmured against the Lord, the crux of the lesson applies largely to the feet members of the gospel church.

## **Second Advent Application**

We do not apply this parable to the entire gospel age. The Apostles, who were among the first workers of the vineyard as the foundations of the new Jerusalem, could not be among those who murmured. Also, they did not live nearly 2,000 years until the eleventh hour, or evening time, of this parable.

A series of prominent events take place during our Lord's second advent, including the beginning of the gospel age harvest (Rev. 14:13-20), the raising of the sleeping saints (1 Cor. 15:50-54), and the instantaneous resurrection of the faithful ones alive at this time (1 Thess. 4:13-18). All of these must precede the ending of this present evil world and the inauguration of the glorious kingdom reign.

From Matthew 20:3-7 we learn the owner hired workers during the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours. These were never promised a penny for their labor. The third hour laborers were told they would receive whatsoever was right at the end of the day. Although the scriptures do not indicate what compensation the sixth, ninth, and eleventh

hour workers would receive at the day's end, it is implied that what was promised to the third hour workers would also be granted to the laborers who were hired afterward.

We consider the penny to be "the privilege of discipleship." Consecration to the service of the Lord is always in order regardless of the time in which it takes place or the reward which is given. When the heavenly Father accepts our consecration he promises us nothing more than the "penny" of spirit begettal.

When the owner told the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour workers to labor in his harvest field without the definite promise of what their wages would be suggests a time when all the crowns for the high calling would be apportioned, and that any acceptance to this high calling would only occur to fill a vacancy. The third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour workers were never promised the penny, even though it was given to them in the evening. Likewise, those who made a sincere consecration to the Lord after all the crowns to the high calling were apportioned were never promised the privilege of discipleship. However, with the falling away of some under the severe testings of this harvest time, vacancies began to occur, beginning with the third hour of the gospel age harvest, and the replacement process continues even to this day. It appears reasonable that "whatsoever is right" would apply during the harvest of our Lord's second advent, following the apportionment of the crowns, because up until this time, there had always been a crown available for every acceptable consecration.

We conclude that the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours represent different intervals of time, or periods of sifting, during the harvest of the gospel age, when some make acceptable consecrations and receive the penny of spirit begettal even though they had to wait until former members of the anointed class vacated their positions in the body due to being overcharged with the cares of this world, or for unfaithfulness.

### **Parable Particulars**

The payment of the penny, the murmuring, and the steward are other particulars of this parable we would like to further examine. The steward seems to correspond with someone who was made a ruler over the household to give meat in due season (Matt. 24:45). The steward who paid the penalty must also live during this harvest time. We believe this steward is the same as the "wise and faithful servant" who gave full encouragement to the brethren prior to his death that the harvest work had not yet ended but was still going "grandly on." Pastor Charles Taze Russell, through his writings and oral messages, taught the privilege of discipleship, the penny of spirit begettal, and the opportunity to become a part of the royal priesthood was yet available to any whose hearts were in proper accord with the heavenly Father and his beloved Son despite the seeming lateness of the hour, and thus provided the "payment" that still brings joy to the hearts of eleventh hour workers.



We are reminded in scripture that it is still harvest time and that the call for reapers in the vineyard has not yet ceased (Matt. 24:14). Until the announcement is given by the Great Company members that "the harvest is past and summer is ended" (Jer. 8:20), the eleventh hour workers still maintain the opportunity of receiving their payment before evening closes.

In Matthew 20:10-12 we read about the murmuring of the first hour workers who labored long and received the same payment as those who were hired hours afterward. We believe that the first hired workers represent a class of people who served the Lord for many years and felt that others consecrating subsequently would not be eligible for the same reward or spirit begettal because the hour was so late. They, like the scribes and Pharisees, maintained the false reasoning that they alone maintained were entitled to the privilege of discipleship.

The fact that the eleventh hour workers received the penny indicates that the heavenly Father granted them spirit begettal. However, no murmurer who objects to God's provisions for others can ever receive the full heavenly reward. We are reminded that the good man instructed the first hour workers to "take that thine is and go thy way," adding "is thine eye evil because I am good." It is this spirit of jealousy and the arrogant disposition of heart which leads us to conclude In summary, the admonition of "Be thou faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10) is a source of encouragement for all the Lord's people who are living at the close of the gospel age harvest. We believe that the door to the high calling remains ajar, and that all whose hearts are right may enter in.

## **The Word Of God—In Our Lives**

*"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."—Hebrews 4:12*

*The last of a four-part series on "The Word of God" by Richard Kindig, originally prepared as an audio-visual presentation for the 1992 International Convention of Bible Students in Poitiers, France.*

We would now like to turn our attention to the Word of God in our own lives as brethren in Christ. As Bible Students, we have much to rejoice about. The Harvest Message has enriched our lives, and as the trouble in the earth increases, we can all have more and more appreciation for "the Truth" which we hold.

### **Emphasizing What God Emphasizes**

But we would like to suggest that it is not enough for us as footstep followers of Jesus to teach what the Bible says is true. To be fully in harmony with the Word of God, we must emphasize what the Bible emphasizes.

How can we tell what the Word of God emphasizes? By what it repeats often, by what it states clearly, by what it stresses with strong language.

Two quick examples: Paul seems to be using the strongest possible language when he states that even if he died a martyr's death, if he had not love, he would be nothing. (1 Cor. 13:8)

And in speaking of the Resurrection, Paul stated that he delivered to us as of the first importance, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again. (1 Cor. 15:3) These are examples of the ways in which the Word of God emphasizes some truths more than others.

The Word of God also draws contrasts and comparisons. Just as in the human body, every limb is controlled by opposing muscles which push and pull against each other, so it is in the Body of Christ, and so it is in the realm of ideas presented in the Word of God. The correct position can often only be found in the clash, or tension, of opposing views.

## **Philadelphia And Philaxeneas**

For example, we are taught in Hebrews 13:1 to have strong brotherly love. But in the next verse we are told to balance this love among ourselves with active love toward strangers. The sense of the Greek text in these verses is that we should nurture brotherly love and affection—"Phila-delphia"—but balancing it with love of strangers: "Phila-xeneas."

The Word of God is timeless, and fits all cultural situations. But we must be careful not to forget the historic context in which its principles are set.

For example, it was not really possible in New Testament times to ignore the brethren in our own vicinity, and forge instead relationships by telephone and travel with other, more like-minded friends. We suggest that we be very careful not to ignore the difficult relationship challenges that we find in our local ecclesias for the perhaps more agreeable, but more superficial relationships we can form at conventions. Travel may one day be restricted again. And we will need to master the art of loving one another in our local assemblies.

Let us consider some of the teachings of the Word of God that directly impact our relationships with each other.

## **Unity Of The Body**

In Ephesians 4:3 we are taught to keep, or preserve the unity of the body. We do this not by merely avoiding conflict—the Word of God does not hold up tranquility as the goal, but rather by pursuing the Biblical peace in the sense of completeness—common cause—hammering out of differences, continual mutual work, dedication, and submission.

And so the Word of God is full of advice about how to act in a community of brethren. We are taught to love one another, pray for one another, forgive one another, submit to one another, admonish one another, serve one another.

## **Daily Bible Study**

Let's consider one of the most under-appreciated virtues on this short list: prayer. Daily Bible study, accompanied by prayer, is essential for walking with God. No one should be attempting to serve God without daily attention to prayer and thoughtful study of God's word. Even Jesus, who had perfect powers of recall and a full, unlimited measure of the Holy Spirit, did not go without prayer for a single day as far as we know. He would lose sleep rather than miss out on his times of fellowship with the Heavenly Father.

## **An Active Prayer Life**

Active prayer, based on our standing with God as justified believers, is the best way to resolve differences with employees, or bosses, or wives, or family members, or brethren.

There has never been a great man of God who was not a man of prayer: Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Peter, Paul, John—and Jesus.

The Word of God records the things that great men of God have prayed for:

- That a specific believer's faith not fail. (John 13)
- That we might be successful in correcting the shortcomings in the faith of others. (1 Thess. 5:12)
- That God would forgive the sins of others against us. (Matthew 5)
- For personal wisdom. (James 1)
- That God would forgive our own newly-recognized sins. (Matthew 6)
- That God would indicate his choice for us in the outworking of duties he has given us to do.

We also find, when examining the prayers of great men of God, that they often included four elements: Adoration of God, Confession of sins, Thanksgiving for His blessings, and last of all, Supplication or requests for blessings to ourselves and especially others.

## **Submission**

Another area of importance is submission to one another. In 1 Peter 5:5, we are taught that the younger should submit to the elder. Then Peter makes it a "two-way street" by saying, "yes, and all of us should submit to each other."

Paul adds further insight by telling us that our submission to the leadership of others in the Church should be proportional to the actual work they do in Christ, and the fruitfulness it seems to have borne.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul discusses the "works" that we are able to perform because we are justified in Christ. He notes the impact these habitual actions have on our characters—and describes the impact of this fruitage on our future reward. Therefore, actual deeds are a barometer of spiritual strength, and are to be respected by the brethren. In 1 Corinthians

16:16 he urges submission to those who are committed to service of the saints. In 1 Timothy 5:17 he puts study and teaching high on the list of valuable services. In Hebrews 13:17 he urges us to obey our spiritual leaders and try to avoid making their task unpleasant. Yet in 2 Corinthians 3:1 he makes it clear that positions of leadership do not flow from a name, elected office, or a letter of commendation, but from the reality of a life of service. Lack of an official office is no excuse for lack of service to the brotherhood. And in 2 Corinthians 10:13-17 Paul sets down the principle that our work that we do for the Lord and His people is the measure of our influence. He speaks of a "measure" or "sphere" of spiritual authority, and directly links it to the actual success he has enjoyed in the Lord's service.

Mutual submission is, of course, not the only virtue laid down for us in our relationships with each other. We cannot read the New Testament accounts without being impressed with how vigorously the apostles argued their points with each other, and with worldly influences on the Church.

## **Forgiveness**

In Colossians 3:14-16, Paul prefaces his command that we teach and admonish each other with several requirements: that the Word of Christ dwell inside of us richly; that we have "bowels of mercies"—deep-seated, emotional feelings for each other; that we practice forbearing one another, or overlooking as much as we can of each other's imperfections; that we show forgiveness to one another in the same way that Christ forgave us; that we love one another; that we cultivate peace not only in our individual hearts, but also in our collective "one body"; and that thankfulness pervade our relationships.

Having said all of that, Paul then tells us to teach and admonish each other—which we take to mean that we should communicate with each other truthfully and honestly about how we should live and act. And Paul recommends a positive, joyous tone in the admonishing—an atmosphere seasoned with spiritual music and the spirit of grace.

## **Knowing Those Who Admonish Us**

Finally, Paul states in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 that we should know those who labor among us and admonish us. Perhaps that suggests that there could be those among us who are performing a service of labor and "admonishing" who have not been recognized by the Church. Perhaps it means that we should pay attention to what our leaders tell us, even when it is unpleasant. At any rate, we are "admonished" to overcome our negative reactions to being corrected, and recognize that those who perform this service to us are paying a price. Those who labor among us and admonish us should be highly esteemed.

Because the body will have lots of communication if it is healthy, the Word of God speaks much about "forgiving one another." The necessity for much forgiveness implies

that there will be many offences. Don't be surprised by your brethren's sins. Don't piously put down our brethren by talking about how "at this stage of the Church" we can expect "lots of the 'Great Company' and fewer of the 'Little Flock'." It is for God to judge. It is for us to forgive one another, just as Christ forgave us the much more important sins—the ones in ourselves.

## **The Bond Of Perfection**

Of all the virtues the Word of God asks to cultivate in our relationships with one another, Love is the most important, the most emphasized, the most essential. There are hundreds of verses that speak of love. But let us go back to the text we considered a few moments ago in Colossians 3:14. There Paul listed a number of virtues, and put love "above all." He called it "the love"—*agape*—which, he said, is the bond of perfectness. We all know that *agape* is a love based on principle. But we would suggest that Paul is here stating that if our devotion to principle is not binding us closer together, then it is not *agape*. The love is the bond of perfection—literally, of the end or finish of our course together.

Love is the bond of perfection because it combines in one word all of the elements of balanced character: it is sacrificial—willing to go to any length to serve others, even to the point of death. With Biblical love, there is no "practical limit," no "drawing the line." Christ, having loved his own, loved us unto the end—not just until death, but unto the end—to the full limit. And we are called to do the same.

While Biblical love is not based on emotion, neither is it devoid of emotion. It cares; it has gut-level feelings of compassion, interest, the ability to be righteously angry on behalf of others. We see it in Jesus, who was righteously indignant at the affront to God, and the injustice to poor pilgrims, represented by the unjust money-changers; yet he demonstrated no righteous indignation whatever in respect to his own perfect rights. Still quivering from the impact of the nails in his wrists and feet, he nevertheless felt moved with compassion by the pitiable condition of his enemies. They were so proud and yet so weak. So full of themselves, and yet so vulnerable. And so Jesus prayed for them as he taught us to do: "Father, forgive them."

But though Biblical love is emotional or compassionate, it does not ignore the faults of others. Biblical love towers above human-minded love in that it disciplines. It will pay the price it takes to admonish another. The discipline of Biblical love may lead us to withhold privileges or even debar a serious sinner from fellowship to teach an appropriate lesson. It will argue for truth; it will communicate what's happening in our lives honestly; it will set limits in our families or our work or our relationships with each other. It does not sweep offences under the rug, but confronts them honestly, and uses them as learning experiences for ourselves and other.

And finally, love, as the Word of God defines it, is forgiving. When all is said and done, there will still be offences that the rightful party has not borne, that we will have to bear ourselves. There will be punishment that is deserved by someone else, that we will need to take if we want to push forward in positive relationships with our brethren. There can be no legalistic limits to Biblical love. How many times shall we forgive? 70 times 7!

### **Bound Together**

Yes, the love is the bond of the end. And we believe that expression has special force now. In a world degenerating into anarchy, the Body of Christ should be, and we believe will, grow in its ability to love and be bound together.

Our vision of our relationships as brethren in the final years of this age should not be clouded with pessimism, and a preoccupation with "standing alone." We see the Word of God as teaching us here and in many other passages that we will become victorious as a body. It is unthinkable that the Body of Christ will pass into death in isolation from one another. Mutual love and forgiveness and joy are promised to us, and we believe the next several years will be a time for all of us to grow in our ability to enjoy these scriptural privileges.

With that thought in mind, we close with the prayer of the Apostle Peter: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things (as the new heavens and new earth), be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace." — 2 Peter 3:14

## **ANECDOTES ALONG THE WAY**

*Throughout the history of the Bible Student movement incidents have occurred indicating the supervising power of the Lord. The following four are only examples of many others.*

### **Soldiers of Christ**

**During** World War I a young British Bible student was conscripted into the armed service. Stationed on the front lines, he was ordered to charge up a hill toward the enemy. As he reached the crest, he saw a German soldier coming at him. Rather than kill a fellow human, the British soldier stuck his bayonet in the ground and braced himself for certain death. When nothing happened, he looked up and saw the German soldier in the same position. Looking closer he saw a "cross and crown" emblem on the enemy soldier's lapel. They ran to each other and embraced. With arms around the other and tears in their eyes, the British soldier brought back his German brother as a prisoner of war.

### **A Sweet Perfume**

Harry Nugent, a Bible student from New York is a motorman conductor on the subway system. One night late, as he was checking both ways before closing the subway doors, he was hit on the side of the face with a rotten tomato.

Thoroughly humiliated, he was commiserating his lot in life when, at the next stop, a small older lady approached him with a religious tract. All that was on the tract was a poem, "The Sweet Brier Rose," which reads in part: "A still more wondrous fragrance flows, the more my fingers firmly close, and crush the rose." Encouraged with the thought that his crushing experiences were only to help him yield a sweeter perfume, he took heart and pressed on.

### **Two Thousand Brethren Discovered**

For some 50 years Communism ruled Eastern Europe. In few countries was this regime more restrictive than in Romania under the leadership of Nikolai Ceaucescu. Bible students from other Eastern European countries occasionally vacationed in Romania unaware whether brethren were there or not. Shortly after Ceaucescu's death a letter came to the West informing us that there were indeed Bible students surviving in that land. In fact they flourished in isolation to such a degree that their number of over two thousand places them as the third largest Bible student community, only exceeded by the United States and Poland.



## **It Is Finished**

Shortly after hearing a Bible student discourse in 1919, young Eric Will was taken with his brother and mother by his atheistic father to Brazil. After the death of his consecrated mother and brother he sought to find fellowship, but could not locate other Bible students. He was informed by local Jehovah's Witnesses that they had all died. A Baptist minister, tolerant of Bro. Will's beliefs, encouraged him to attend their church for fellowship. Shortly he was asked to lead the Sunday school and, upon the pastor's retirement years later, to take over the pastorate. Restricted to teaching biblical truths of a non controversial nature, he used some of his paintings [for he was a noted artist] to illustrate the plan of God and the teaching of the resurrection of the dead in distinction to a God of hate and eternal torment. After some 50 years in this church, a new minister was assigned who stopped the teachings of Bro. Will. That same year he re gained contact with his Bible student brethren and discovered that they had just completed a Portuguese translation of *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. Ordering a large supply he distributed one to each member of his former church. Within a month after distributing the last of these books, he died. His work was finished.

## NEWS & VIEWS

### DIRECTORS' REPORT

The world around has been shaken by many turmoils -- in the Middle East, in Bosnia, in Rwanda -- and men's hearts are failing them for fear "with perplexity." In contrast, the directors report a year of peace and harmony amongst themselves and amongst the brotherhood of our fellowship.

The work of the Institute has gone along peacefully and smoothly, thanks to the help and cooperation of numerous brethren in each phase of our endeavors.

We have felt the loss of one of our long-time directors who felt compelled to decline nomination because of failing health. James B. Webster will long be remembered by those of us associated with the PBI as a stalwart in the faith and an able voice of counsel and guidance as a director.

Those who have served as directors during this past year are: James M. Caudle, Chester A. Czohara, Francis L. Earl, Alex Gonczewski, Carl Hagensick, Loyal Petran and Timothy Thomassen.

The Editorial staff of **THE HERALD** magazine have also lope. The *God's Kingdom* booklet will have a full-color worked together smoothly. Serving as editors were Eugene cover and an attached postcard for return responses.

DeWys, Francis L. Earl, Leonard Griehs, Carl Hagensick and Dan Wesol. In addition we are now offering free copies of two booklets produced by our brethren in the British Isles.

In addition to our annual meeting, the directors and editors These titles are: *The Divine Plan In Brief* and *Future* held an additional session in Chicago on Dec. 30, 1993.

**THE HERALD:** The bi-monthly issues of the journal have continued. Although the number of subscribers is somewhat lower than in the past, we remain encouraged by the positive responses of those who do receive it, many indicating that several read the issues which they receive. A reader response card was included in one of the issues, and we received over 60 responses. While mostly positive, certain suggestions were made and we will consider these. There were also suggestions for future topics for articles and themes.

A great majority of the responses like the thematic approach to the magazine, though some indicated they would like to see some issues that did not carry a theme. We will seek to use some variety in this regard. Upcoming theme issues are planned on Parables and on Prayer.

We would like to share a few of the encouraging comments: "I can remember when I began reading **THE HERALD**. It was always in our home, so I am sentimentally attached to it." I enjoy **THE HERALD**, very much. I save them all in hope to give further study." "Probably my favorite of several publications because **THE HERALD** does not seem to waste time on controversial matters, but endeavors to edify the spiritually minded in Christ." "Save all of my **HERALDS** from way back. Rely on them for most of my special studies, plus the ones up to date."

*WITNESSING*: A small amount of advertising in almanacs have produced some interest in our booklets. We have also experienced a sharp increase in requests for our literature from the handy post card coupon on the back of each issue of **THE HERALD** magazine. Over 2300 booklets have been mailed in response to these requests. The most requested titles were *The Divine Plan In Brief* and *Immortality and the Resurrection of the Dead*.

Our supply on some of the booklets is becoming depleted, so we are reprinting four of our titles: *Why Does God Permit Evil?*; *What Say the Scriptures About Hell?*; *Israel and the Middle East*; and *Great World Changes Long Foretold*. In addition we are producing a new booklet, *God's Kingdom*, that shows the relationship between the ransom and restitution. This booklet will offer a video tape version for those with VCR players. All of the booklets are being produced in a new format with two-color covers, and are convenient for mailing in a regular envelope. The *God's Kingdom* booklet will have a full color cover and an attached postcard for return responses.

In addition we are now offering free copies of two booklets produced by our brethren in the British Isles. These titles are: *The Divine Plan -- In Brief* and *Future Probation in Christian Belief*.

We remain appreciative of the support and encouragement received from the membership of the Pastoral Bible Institute and from the readership of **THE HERALD**, as well as of the many brothers and sisters who have assisted in the work of the Institute during the past year.

We will need your prayers for our joint-participation in the work of the Lord, and want to assure each of you of an interest in our prayers as well.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Statement of Financial Condition-April 30, 1994

### Current Assets

Cash on Hand		\$ 6,024.87
Bank Certificate of Deposit		65,000.00
Bank Money Market Savings		8,930.39
Accounts Receivable		332.00
Inventory of Books and Tapes		388.70

### Fixed Assets

PBI Office Equipment	\$ 54,128.86	
Less Acc. Depreciation	<u>36,554.86</u>	17573.00
PBI Book Library	<u>3,000.00</u>	
Less Acc. Depreciation	<u>2,200.00</u>	800.00
Total Assets		\$ 99,048.96

### Liabilities

Berean Bible Students, Australia	8.00
Herald Subscriptions Paid in Advance	245.00
Total Liabilities	253.00
Net Worth as of April 30, 1994	<u>\$ 98,795.96</u>

## Statement of Income and Expenses

### Income

Contributions	\$ 9,453.77
Herald Subscriptions	3,660.00
Legacies	15,000.00
Interest Earned	2,281.96
Herald Gift Subscriptions	152.00
PBI New Memberships	<u>15.00</u>
Total Income	\$30,562.73

### Operating Expenses

Pilgrim Expense	\$ 3,959.30
Printing and Mailing of Herald	11,872.55
Office Staff	5,000.00
PBI Moving Expense	594.00
Gifts	700.00
Miscellaneous Postage	1,184.86
Administration and Office Expense	5,125.26
Depreciation-Office Equipment	7,756.00
Library Expense and Book Depletion	1,062.50
Booklets and Advertising	150.65
Total Operating Expense:	\$37,405.12
Net (Loss)	(\$ 6,842.39)
Net Worth May 1, 1993	\$ 105,638.35
Net Worth April 30, 1994	\$98,795.96

Respectfully Submitted by Loyal Petran, Treasurer

*Note: A cash flow statement is available to PBI members on request.*

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The annual membership meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute was held on June 4, 1994 at 10:00 a.m. (EST) at the Holiday Inn in Gulfport, Mississippi. Presiding at the meeting was Tim Thomassen, Chairman.

The meeting was opened with prayer, requesting the Lord's guidance and blessing in conducting the affairs of the Institute. The chairman gave a brief report on the history and purpose of the PBI and **THE HERALD** journal. The purpose of the annual meeting was to elect seven directors for the year beginning June 1, and to conduct other business of the Institute. All members were encouraged to vote in the election, and others with an interest in the affairs of the PBI were encouraged to attend.

The minutes of the 1993 membership meeting had been previously approved by mail so an abbreviated version had been published in **THE HERALD**. It was moved that the minutes of the 1994 meeting be published in the *News and Views* section of **THE HERALD**.

Herald subscriptions were discussed at length. Currently there are 848 subscribers, which is down substantially. This decline is mainly due to the expiration of free subscriptions. About one-third of current subscriptions come from outside the U.S.A.. *THE HERALD* goes to many isolated brethren, and many feel it is their chief source of spiritual help according to the recent survey.

The Treasury report was discussed and approved. (This is contained in a separate section above.) It was noted that the printing and mailing of **THE HERALD** accounted for almost one-third of the operating costs of the Institute. While operating expenses have decreased, there was a concern expressed that the sources of revenue have declined, and eventually the Institute will face financial hardship unless a means of increasing revenue can be found.

A report on membership changes was given. At the beginning of the year there were 170 members of the Pastoral Bible Institute. Three new members were added, while six died. There were no resignations. The membership at the beginning of the new fiscal year totaled 167. At the meeting, it was learned that one other member had died during the year, so the corrected number of members is 166.

The Chairman appointed tellers for the election of directors. All members present had mailed in their Proxies, so the tellers were requested to verify the ballots and report back to the membership meeting. The tellers reported that six candidates had received a plurality and were elected. Two candidates were tied for the seventh director position. The Chairman noted that the by-laws had no provision for a run-off and so the board discussed the proper procedure.

After much discussion a motion was made and approved that the Nominating Committee should be directed to send out additional ballots to the 68 members who voted, listing the two candidates tied and to request they vote their preference for one.

The six directors receiving a plurality of votes were (in alphabetical order):

James Caudle  
Francis Earl  
Alex Gonczewski

Carl Hagensick  
Loyal Petran  
Timothy Thomassen

The two nominees receiving the same number of votes were Chester Czohara and Leonard Griehs. (In the subsequent directors' meeting, Chester Czohara withdrew his name and thus a run-off election was deemed not necessary. The seventh director position then went to Leonard Griehs.)

A motion was entertained and passed to hold the ballots for six months and then to destroy them.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer at approximately 12:20. At the board meeting which followed the following actions were taken:

Officers for 1995 were elected by the board and are as follows.

Chairman - Tim Thomassen  
Vice Chairman - Francis Earl  
Secretary - James Caudle  
Treasurer - Loyal Petran

The Editorial Committee was appointed by the board of directors and members are as follows

Chester Czohara  
Eugene DeWys  
Francis Earl  
Leonard Griehs  
Carl Hagensick (managing editor)

## **SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRATION**

With the new format of the Herald, some readers have had difficulty knowing when to renew their subscription. You should look at the label on the front cover of your Herald, which lists the expiration date of your subscription. When it is time to renew, you should cut the label off the front cover and send it in along with your renewal. If you do this when it is due, it will save us money in following up on expired subscriptions, and assure you that you do not miss a copy of the magazine.

## **NEEDED: ACTIVITY NEWS**

The most difficult part of writing this section is getting news on activities of brethren around the world. Please make sure you include us in your notices of witness activity, special conventions or trips. News about your church activities is always welcome, and we will use it if appropriate. Please send your news to the News and Views editor listed at the beginning of this section.

## **OUR READERS SPEAK OUT**

I had in mind to write you sooner, but I was unable to do so for a number of reasons. Since Bro. William Siekman's departure from the earthly scene, things in connection with the Institute's internal situation are not going so well. That's the view held by several brethren.

In spite of the bad odds, I continue reading the Herald regularly, because its contents are both spiritually uplifting and in harmony with present truth. The format of the magazine has changed in recent years-40 the better or worse, I don't really know. It seems you are in the process of making more improvements, as should be.

I would like to make a suggestion. In the future all scriptural passages either in the contexts or in separate paragraphs have to be in quotation marks always. Please avoid making grammar innovations of your own.

If you have your own articles and reports to publish, that's fine. If not, use articles from the magazine's arsenal or from Bro. Russell's writings, but in either case, publish the articles or whatever else in their entirety, without abbreviating them. Otherwise we lose (sic) the flavor of spiritual blessings. Don't ask your readers for advice in everything. You are the publishers, and it's your responsibility to find ways and means to solve these problems.

After finishing reading the latest issue of the Herald, I concluded that it was a bad idea to have published in the magazine a letter from (Greece) seeking . . . to organize a worldwide conference of Bible students there. The truth is that none of (this) group are Bible students. They call themselves evangelists . . .

The ideas and beliefs of the above group are similar to those held by Adventists. They fight furiously against Bro. Russell's teachings . . .they believe that justification and ransoming come upon every one at the moment of biological death . . . they don't believe in the restoration of Israel. They also believe that the end of the world will come with the destruction of this planet by literal fire. . .

Last year I went to Greece for two months. There are twenty or so brethren scattered all over that country, followers of Present Truth, who managed to keep their garments white and clean, if you know what (that) is all about. They have the Volumes and other truth literature in their own language. From time to time, I also prepare similar literature and articles based on current events, for their encouragement. Most of them are advanced in years as I am myself, so there is no surprise to anybody if we are a bit slow when we come to action. Holding the truth is very difficult in these days. I should apologize to you in advance for any offensive words that May be found in this letter.

*-George Loumbardas, East York, Ontario, Canada*

Editor's note: It is the policy of the Institute to publish all correspondence if possible. It has never been the policy of the Institute to feel that we have to agree with our correspondents.

## **AROUND THE WORLD**

Another U.S. Episcopal church has turned Catholic under the "Anglican Use" provision approved by the Vatican in 1980. It allows them to continue to use parts of the Episcopal prayer book. It is the sixth Episcopal church in the U.S. to do so.

*-Washington Post, 6/14/94*

## **Africa**

With the Islamic fundamentalist movement in Algeria growing stronger every day, there is reason to be concerned that this North African country may become the first Arab state to fall to Islam since the Sudan in 1989. If Islamic radicals seize power in Algeria, the impact will extend to neighboring countries such as Morocco and Tunisia.

*-Washington Post, 4/21/94*



## **Israel**

The agreement on diplomatic relations between Israel and the Vatican may open the door to a more active Vatican role in the Middle East peace process. Over the next two years, the Vatican and Israel will discuss the status of the Roman Catholic church in Israel. The Vatican had never disputed Israel's right to exist, but had withheld formal recognition, citing the Jewish state's disputed borders, the unsettled status of Jerusalem and concerns about protection of Catholic institutions under Israeli law. It had also called on Israel to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.

*Foreign Service, 6/15/94*

Hamas is now the main rival of the Palestine Liberation Organization, whose members make up the new government in the West Bank and Gaza. It approves of terror: Hamas has kidnaped Israeli soldiers, attacked Jewish settlers, and detonated bombs on crowded Israeli buses. But it is Hamas's network of social education and welfare groups that makes up the power base that has captured over 40 percent of the votes in elections in the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Hamas's sprawling empire of schools, clubs and religious institutions serves as an effective vehicle for disseminating the group's ideology to large numbers of people, generating political opposition to the peace accord, and spotting and recruiting members of the military wing which will continue to attack Israeli targets in areas not yet under Palestinian control.

*-Wall Street Journal 7/5/94*

Rabbi Moses Teitelbaum, the leader of the Satmar Hasidic movement caused a stir in his recent visit to Israel. He is the world's leading Jewish anti-Zionist, the head of a sect that has bitterly criticized the drive to create and build a Jewish homeland in Israel. He believes that the holocaust was the result of an angry God's punishment for the Zionists' efforts to establish a Jewish state before the coming of Messiah.

*-Washington Post 6/8/94*

Editor's note: In Ezekiel 37, the regathering of Israel is identified as a key event leading up to the end time. Since the late 1800's, Bible Students have tracked the migration of Jews to Israel. Because it has occurred over a long period of time, the following chronicle of immigration to Israel is offered as a help to those who follow this prophetic fulfillment.

## **Immigration Prior to Israel's Statehood**

The first modern day return came in the 1880s as a result of the pogroms in Russia and Hungary. In the early 20th century more Jewish people returned to Israel and urban life began in Jaffa. By 1931, European Jews migrated as the threats appeared. In 1933, a Jewish community of more than 200,000 was in Palestine. Only a few thousand escaped from Nazi Germany, and after the war, only 750 Jews a month were permitted to enter Palestine.

## **Immigration Following Statehood**

There have been six major waves of immigration to Israel. Five are complete and the sixth is still occurring, at a very rapid pace.

1. May 1948 to 1951: 755,000 from around the world
2. 1955 to 1957: 162,000 from Morocco, Tunisia, Poland and Romania
3. 1961 to ,1964: 215,000 from North Africa and East ern Europe
4. 1967 (following six-day war): 262,000 from North and South America, Europe and the Soviet Union
5. 1977 to 1992: 41,800 from Ethiopia

Russian Jewish immigration is the sixth major wave. Nobody really knows how many Jews live in the Soviet Union; estimates range from 1.5 to 4 million. The numbers in immigration for the last five years are as follows:

1988: 2,173  
1989: 12,918  
1992: 65,000

*1990: 185,000*  
*1991: 145,000*

*(Source for immigration numbers: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry)*