

Biola University

Digital Commons @ Biola

Biola Hour Highlight Series

Biola Radio

8-1974

Biola Hour Highlights, 1974 - 08

Gerald Griffiths

Al Sanders

Lloyd T. Anderson

J. Richard Chase

Vern Lewis

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/bhhs>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Griffiths, Gerald; Sanders, Al; Anderson, Lloyd T.; Chase, J. Richard; Lewis, Vern; and Wright, Norman, "Biola Hour Highlights, 1974 - 08" (1974). *Biola Hour Highlight Series*. 23.

<https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/bhhs/23>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Biola Radio at Digital Commons @ Biola. It has been accepted for inclusion in Biola Hour Highlight Series by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Biola. For more information, please contact eileen.walraven@biola.edu.

Authors

Gerald Griffiths, Al Sanders, Lloyd T. Anderson, J. Richard Chase, Vern Lewis, and Norman Wright

A Christian Says, "Thank You"

by Rev. Gerald Griffiths

At a great dinner scene, the center of attention was Jesus Christ. Hearing that He was there, a woman headed for the home of Simon. There she saw Jesus and the other guests reclining at the table. The woman probably wasn't noticed at first. People could wander in and out without anyone giving much thought to it. When the woman stood looking at the Lord, she openly wept with her tears falling on the feet of the Saviour. In a motion of deep humility she began to wash His feet using the locks of her hair to wipe them.

Simon was shocked at the event taking place in his home. He wasn't sure what to do when the woman kissed the feet of Christ again and again. This was a simple expression of her gratitude to Him. Then she opened a flask of perfume and anointed the Saviour's feet. While Simon was disgusted with her, he was utterly disillusioned about Christ whom he had thought a prophet. He should have known what kind of woman she was. Why did He let her carry on this way? Of course, the Lord did know her background, as well as what was going on in Simon's mind. He explained the situation by telling a story. Two men owed money to a creditor. One would have had to work 50 days to cover the amount. The other would have taken all he could make in 500 days to pay his bill. Both were penniless but both had their debts entirely cancelled by the creditor. Christ asked Simon, "Which of the two was more grateful?" Simon gave a very logical answer for the one whose bill was the largest was more thrilled. Then, looking at the woman, the Lord pointed to the woman and observed, "I came here as a guest, but you didn't supply water for my feet. Yet this woman has wet my feet with her tears and has wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss of greeting, but she hasn't stopped kissing my feet since I came. You didn't have oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with expensive perfume. All of this is a sign of her gratitude proving that her many sins have been forgiven." The others present were flabbergasted. How could any man forgive sins? Our Lord assured the woman once more, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

How interesting that the woman's gratitude proved the forgiveness of sins. For all of us, our sins are many in God's eyes. Our profession may be honorable, and we may conduct our business honestly, but God sees us as sinners. We have broken His law by our anger, envy, pride and bitterness. Our thoughts have been impure. We have failed to love our neighbors, failed to show compassion, failed to lend a helping hand. Most of all we have failed to love God and worship Him. What men think of us doesn't matter. Before God we all are guilty and sinners.

Alexander White, a great preacher in Edinburgh, Scotland, once at an open air meeting said that he had come to announce a name of the biggest sinner in the city. After a pause, he gave his name, Alexander White. And he believed it. It's not surprising. Those who know God, who have seen His glory, His purity, His perfect love in Jesus Christ,

know that they don't measure up. Paul knew this and he called himself "the chief of sinners." We must all see ourselves as God sees us, and as the woman saw herself, a sinner needing the Saviour. Evidently she had met the Lord Jesus before, and He had assured her that her sins were forgiven. Hearing where He was, she couldn't miss the chance to come and thank Him once more. This is also what every true Christian will do. How can you tell if a person is truly saved? He will never miss an opportunity to say "thank you" to his Saviour for salvation.

We who know we fall far short of God's standard, who shrink in our state of sin from the presence of a Holy God, can have confidence in the fact that we are accepted by Him. He credits us with a righteousness of His Son. Notice how this woman expresses her gratitude. She couldn't contain her emotions. She dried His feet with her hair. People aren't afraid to express their emotions today. They go mad over sports, over football and hockey. If these delusions are worthy of men's emotions, how much more is Christ? Is there no place for tears of sorrow over sin, and of joy for our salvation? Should not our hearts be thrilled at the very name of the Lord Jesus and with every thought of His love and grace? Our worship should reflect our feelings of thankfulness.

There is on record the tapes of a prisoner acquitted of a capital offense. He kissed the feet of his lawyer, recognizing that he owed his life to him. When this woman kissed the feet of the Lord Jesus, she was expressing her gratitude by a symbolic act. Likewise, there are symbolic acts by which we may express our thanks. One is baptism. Another is the Lord's Table. We take the bread and give thanks. We drink the cup and give thanks. It is the duty of every Christian to be present at the Lord's table for this reason. It is the divinely appointed way to say "thank you" to our Lord for loving us and giving Himself for us.

This woman also brought her costly gift of perfume. We Christians must also make a sacrifice in response to Christ's love and God's mercy (Romans 12:1). C. T. Studd was an extremely wealthy young man in Cambridge when he heard the Gospel message. He signed away his vast fortune to go as a missionary to China. These were his words, "If Jesus Christ is God, and He died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." Everything we do should be our "thank you" to Christ for our great salvation. Martyred Betty Stam's commitment must be yours and mine. She said, "Lord, I give up all my plans and purposes, all my desires and hopes, and accept Your will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all utterly to You and be Yours forever. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Use me as You will, work out Your whole will in my life at any cost, now and forever!"

After His resurrection the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." (Luke 24:44). It is exciting to consider the amazing prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament contains over 300 prophecies concerning the first coming of the Messiah. All of these have come to pass with complete accuracy.

God made the first prophecy immediately after Adam fell. He said to satan, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Here the promise was that the Saviour would be born of a woman. He Himself would receive a serious, but not a totally fatal wound. This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus Christ was born of Mary and died on the cross. At this point He won a decisive victory over the devil which will be consummated at His second coming. Next, God promised the Messiah would be born of the seed of Abraham and would be a Jew. Abraham was told, "And in thy seed shall all the

nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). The specific tribe was to be Judah (Genesis 49:10). He was also to be of the seed of David (Psalm 132:11). Christ's family tree on the side of His legal father is recorded in Matthew 1 while His mother's side is found in Luke 3.

God also revealed to the prophet Daniel the time of the Messiah's coming. This occurred 700 years before the event. Micah forecast that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (5:2). The fulfillment is recorded in Matthew 2:1. The miracle of the virgin conception was told by Isaiah 700 years before the event (Isaiah 7:14). The New Testament quotation in Matthew 1:23 uses a Greek word which, in the context, could mean nothing else but "Virgin."

Again the ministry of the Messiah was predicted in some detail in the Old Testament. His death was foretold in remarkable detail. He was to be hated without cause. He was to be rejected by the rulers. He was to be betrayed by a friend. He was to be forsaken by His followers. He was to be sold for 30 pieces of silver. The money was to be used to buy the potter's field. He was to be smitten on the cheek, spit upon, mocked and beaten. His death by crucifixion was predicted in some detail and recorded in Psalm 22. His death for our sins is explained in Isaiah 53. Yet, not a bone of His body would be broken (Psalm 34:20). He was to suffer thirst and be given vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21). He died between two malefactors on the cross. His body was not to see corruption (Psalm 16:10). He arose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God (Psalm 68:18, 110:1).

This is not mentioning many others of the Old Testament prophecies. These are a few to show how these precise predictions were completely fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ. This certainly reveals that the Bible is a supernatural Book. The probability that all of these things would just happen reaches an unbelievable record. Using the principle of probability only eight prophecies from the Old Testament concerning Jesus Christ were analyzed. When the estimates were multiplied, the final chance of all eight being fulfilled in one Man were totalled at 1 in 10 to the power of 32. That means one followed by 32 zeros. Who can conceive of a figure of one plus 32 zeros? That means billions, and billions, and billions, and billions, and billions! Someone has tried to put it like this. Just imagine there are two billion stars in the Milky Way. On each of these stars there are four billion people. That will give you some idea of the kind of figures we are thinking about. These predictions could not have happened by accident or by chance. These are not vague predictions capable of several fulfillments. They are precise and exact. There is only one source of this power to foretell the future with such amazing accuracy. It is the mind of the all-knowing God Himself to whom past, present and future are present all the time. He alone knows the end from the beginning, and has caused history to be prewritten in the Bible. The Scriptures are supernatural. Their author is God, by the Holy Spirit.

We must also realize that these fulfilled prophecies point to the fact that all the work of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, has been already reckoned. Prophecy covers all God's plan of salvation. The Bible not only speaks of the first coming of Jesus but also of His second coming. He will come again to glorify His Church and to give to His people their resurrection bodies. He will come again to set up His kingdom, ruling and reigning on this earth, establishing His kingdom of peace. He will come again to execute judgment, casting out all who reject Him. He will destroy satan and his angels. God's creative work is expected to reach its master piece. He will create the new heavens and the new earth in which there will be no sin, no corruption, and no war.

Ask yourself this question, "If God could predict with such accuracy the events concerning the first coming of the Lord Jesus, surely He can predict with equal accuracy His second coming." We are not resting our hopes on any human guess or speculation. Our confidence is based on the revealed Word of God. You could not have a more reliable basis for your faith than this. "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven."

History has been prewritten. Everything to do with God's great plan of salvation is here in the Scriptures. Believe it, rejoice in it, and live every day as if the Lord might come back today. Don't live for the things of this passing world with its false values, but live for all eternity. The Bible tells us plainly where we are going to spend eternity (John 3:36). God's Word promises that if you turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, asking Him to save you, He will give you eternal life. This is His promise, and His promise must be fulfilled. "Whosoever will call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." You can rely on every promise that He makes! Every prophecy and every promise concerning Jesus Christ must come to pass.

Rev. Griffiths is a conference
speaker and author from Edinburgh, Scotland.

BIOLA HOUR HIGHLIGHTS

ISSUE NO. 9

FEATURING AUGUST MESSAGES

The Four Suppers of the New Testament

by Dr. Al Sanders

It would be impossible to fully convey how much the ministry and fellowship of Dr. Louis T. Talbot has meant through the years. Were it not for Dr. Talbot, humanly speaking, Biola would not have a radio ministry today. I vividly recall at one service how he so graphically portrayed the four suppers listed in the New Testament. He explained, "If a person goes to the first supper, he will also go to the second, and will definitely be at the third, but positively not be at the fourth." Then he showed the opposite. He pointed out, "If you don't go to the first supper, while you actually may go to the second, you certainly won't be at the third, but you could well be at the fourth." Now, on the surface that sounded confusing, but in the reasoning which Dr. Talbot has presented over the years from Scripture, it makes very good sense.

In this series we want to consider the four specific suppers listed for us in the New Testament. The first is the supper of salvation, illustrated in Luke 14:16-24. The second is the Lord's Supper which is not only given to us in the Gospels but also in I Corinthians. Believers and unbelievers can often go to this fellowship, although it is specifically for the born-again. The third is the supper of the Lamb of God which is spoken of in Revelation 19:7-9. Only those who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour will take part in this wonderful occasion. And finally, the supper of the Great God which is given to us in such Old Testament passages as Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah in addition to the book of Revelation.

One of the marvelous things about Scripture is to realize that God uses ordinary activities of individuals to convey important spiritual truth. What could be more natural than eating? The first supper, recorded in Luke 14:16-24 is a parable given by Jesus concerning salvation. Simply defined, a parable is an earthly story which has a heavenly meaning. Notice in verse 16 the Lord said, "A certain man made a great supper and bade many." The certain man is none other than God. Salvation originated with the Lord. Redemption and eternal life were offered to the Jewish people, but Israel turned God's only begotten Son aside.

Notice, "He bade many and sent his servant at suppertime to say to them that were bidden, 'Come, for all things are now ready!' And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For

I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." We should indicate here that the word for "lord" such as in verse 23 is in lower case; that is, it does not refer directly to God.

If you've been to a restaurant recently you probably have been amazed to see how prices have gone up. But this great supper which God has referred to in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, cost our heavenly Father everything. Have you ever stopped to realize how interesting it is that the only time God speaks of man as being "great" is when He refers to our sins? Although it may not build our ego a great deal, the truth is, in the sight of God, man's greatness can only be fully measured in the area of his iniquity. This is the precise reason why the supper had to be great.

Verse 17 tells us these people were bidden to come. I was in the Bureau of Engraving in Washington D.C. a short time ago and I saw there the invitations printed up for the President as he and his wife were inviting people to come to certain functions at the White House. They were very elaborate and handsomely engraved. In Old and New Testament times, it was the custom to issue invitations far in advance with follow-up information. You remember that the prophets announced Christ's coming well in advance. John 1:11 tells us He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. Romans 11:25 declares, "Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." All things, however, are now ready. This great supper the Lord has ordained, allows for no last-minute preparations. It's certainly not a case of someone just throwing an extra bean in the pot, or of pulling out a few more TV dinners, or mixing up a little minute rice or some other instant commodity. This was a dinner, a supper that was ready immediately.

The sad part of this entire story is the excuses given. The first is, "I can't come to your dinner because I bought a piece of ground and I have to go see it." That's a laughable reason if there ever was one. It clearly indicates this is simply an excuse. Who, in his right mind, would ever think of buying a piece of property anywhere without first of all taking a look at it? There are many false advertising schemes that have sought to sell timber land in the heart of the Oregon forests, or swampland in the tidal basins of Florida to unsuspecting people in other areas of the country. How foolish to make a purchase without knowing what you bought. This was simply an excuse. And this man represents the many who have made possessions their love and goal in life.

In verse 19, the second excuse is, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to prove them." This reminds me of those who are so busy in activities of this world that they have no time for thoughts of heaven. No area of commerce will enter into that blessed celestial city. Only that which has been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ will appear in glory.

Now, the first man had possessions as his love; the second had business as his total occupation. The third is even more interesting.

Notice in verse 20 this person seeks to excuse himself by saying, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." What a shaky marriage that must have been! Although it's been more than 26 years since my wife and I were married, as a result of having met here at Biola, I can still remember those days that were very, very lean. Had we been extended an invitation to go to any kind of a meal, much less what's described here as a great supper, you can be sure we would have been there. It could have saved on our food bill tremendously. The passage, however, reminds me of the many today who are married to the things of this world.

Since these people have willfully turned their backs on the great supper of redemption

which God has provided, the order is given to the servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring hither the poor, the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." The hour is late, the great supper is about ready to begin. Notice the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind. What a gathering that must have been! Would you want to sit down in the company of people like these? It's not a very pretty situation or society to contemplate. We'd probably never have invited any one of this type, but do you know, I definitely see myself among these folks. I see all of humanity as a part of this picture. He who is rich for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might be rich. The man without physical vision who had been made whole testified, "Once I was blind but now I can see!" We cannot walk uprightly by ourselves without the holding or staying power of the Holy Spirit.

Then in verse 22 the great supper is about to take place but the servant reports, "Yet, there is room!" Do you realize what wonderful news that message is? I wonder, do you have a wayward son or daughter who doesn't know the Lord? Is there an individual among your loved ones who has never entered into the veil of salvation? Listen to those words. They are four of the most beautiful to be found in all of Scripture. "Yet there is room." You see, God is not willing that any should perish, 11 Peter 3:9 tells us. And some day, we believe that hour is going to be very soon, these words can no longer be spoken, "Yet there is room." If you've never trusted Christ, consider the fact that there is room for you at the cross. God wants you, individually, to come to the great supper which He has so carefully prepared.

The second of the four suppers of the New Testament is the Lord's Supper. It was some months ago that I slipped into a church in Dallas, Texas. They were having an impressive baptismal service before the actual evening meeting began, and it looked like it was going to be a rather full time of fellowship for the communion table was all set. A woman and her friend slipped in behind me and as they surveyed the situation the one said to her friend, "Oh, look at that, it's communion Sunday. Wouldn't you know it would have to come on a night when I wanted to get home early." The commemoration of the Lord's death, burial and resurrection isn't something we should enter into by force, ritual, or begrudging the time for the involvement. It's something that we do, as Christ said, "In remembrance of me." On Independence Day it is traditional that fire crackers are shot off. On Thanksgiving Day it is traditional that the family has a turkey. On Christmas Day it's traditional, in most homes at least, that gifts are exchanged with one another. These things are all memorials. What can we as God's children do in order to show forth the Lord's death? The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to say to the world that we believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In our opening remark, we said, "If you go to the first great supper of the Lord, you may go to the second." And it's true, if you don't go to the first supper you may still go to the second because you have to be your own judge. Anyone may come to the Lord's table in this life. The ultimate purpose is rather a means of bringing to memory what Christ has done on our behalf.

Why then such a strange menu of flesh and blood? First of all, the aspect of flesh is to remind us that in Christ there was no sin. The blood testifies what is taught in Leviticus 17:11, "the life of the flesh is in the blood." Never forget that all-important truth, "for without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins." In Scripture, the Lord's Supper is referred to as the "new covenant." God has made more than 3,000 promises to man in His Word. The best part is, He has kept and He will keep every single one of them. But this new covenant fulfills His all-important reminder to us, "If I go away, I will come again." So you see, we are to partake of the Lord's Supper until He comes. Every time you go to the Lord's table to partake of the elements you are expressing a confident testimony that you believe Jesus Christ is coming again.

To prepare supper for friends and loved ones you will probably go to your local supermarket. But for this supper, the second supper spoken of in the New Testament, God went to Calvary. So, the first supper is the supper of salvation, the great supper of God. The second supper is the Lord's Supper, the supper of communion and fellowship.

Now, the third supper of the New Testament is the supper of the Lamb of God. And for this we would suggest you turn to Revelation 19:7-9. In this chapter we actually have two suppers spoken of. One is the supper of the Lamb of God and the other is the supper of the great God, expressed in verse 17. Don't get confused. The two are entirely different. In this section we find the voice (verse six) of a great multitude.

You know, we have a tendency to forget that amid the energy crisis, amid the talks of recession and depression, with unemployment as a veiled threat hanging over our heads so often and inflation absolutely out of sight, God is still on the throne! We who name the name of Jesus Christ and know and love Him as Saviour are the only ones in this world who have just cause to be optimists. After all, satan is a defeated foe. He doesn't own as much as a single grain of sand. We can rejoice in all that God has done for us.

Verse 7 says, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." Weddings are generally joyous occasions. How often have you smiled at the little flower girl as she stumblingly comes up the aisle, perhaps a finger in her mouth. Or, the shy little ringbearer, not quite sure what he has to do. The beautiful thing about it is that this wedding, unlike any that have transpired here on earth will be in heaven. The bride, which is the Church (made up of all born-again true believers in this age of grace) will meet the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, face-to-face.

It says that the wife has made herself ready. That's us, my friend. In a sense we can't do anything to prepare ourselves. And yet, in another sense, we can do everything. Paul and his so-called swan song to Timothy, the second epistle, verse six of the fourth chapter, could testify, "I am now ready." Are you?

Our daughters, Peggy and Sharon, both had hope chests. And over the years when they were at home with us we would frequently find things they wanted to put into their hope chests, looking forward to the day when they would be united with the ones who would claim them as their brides. At the time the hope chests were given to them they hadn't selected their life's mate, but they put something in the hope chests in anticipation. Now, we haven't seen face-to-face the Lord Jesus Christ, but still we love Him. I wonder, have you put anything in your "hope chest" today? Have you done anything for the Saviour that would count for all eternity? In some newspaper accounts they'll give quite a listing of how the bride appeared as far as her clothing is concerned. Verse eight tells us that she was arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. In this coming day we'll be clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. What do we give up? Why the Bible says that all of our righteousness are as filthy rags in the sight of God. But the wedding gown Christ gives us is made of fine linen, clean and white.

Verse nine tells us, "blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." This passage has created quite a bit of theological discussion and controversy. Personally, I believe those who are called don't refer to the Bride or the Groom. Like you, my wife and I have received a lot of invitations to weddings in our lifetime, but I doubt whether or not any bride or groom ever sent themselves an invitation except to keep as a memento. It's my conviction that the "friends" here represent the Old Testament saints who will view with excitement and anticipation the experience we'll be privileged to have of being united to the Bridegroom, throughout all eternity. Notice, this isn't the day of the Lord. This is the Bride's day. This is the Rapture.

And following this glad hour, events of Tribulation will take place which will be finally climaxed by the battle of Armageddon.

Having one daughter who was married a few years ago, my wife and I are aware of the fact that the bride's parents are generally expected to pay the costs of the wedding. That's an accepted tradition. But not so here. The cost is paid by the Lamb. And the price? His shed blood. The reason being that the Bride has already become a part of the family of God. That's been through the adoption of faith. As a result, all of the provisions the Lord has are given to us in this privilege we have in the culmination of all things.

Now, finally there is the supper of the Great God. Quite frankly, this is one of the darkest pictures to be found anywhere in the New Testament. We find it here in verse 17 of Revelation 19, "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." This is a solemn, saddening scene of judgment. It follows the so-called battle of Armageddon. Four great confederacies will be destroyed.

To give a background, the anti-Christ, originally pretending friendship with God's chosen people, the Jews, then reveals himself for what he really is; the arch-enemy of Israel. This takes place just before the Millennium. And there are other passages of scripture from the Old Testament which may be helpful, too (Isaiah 13:6 and 34:6; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 30:2 ff. and 39:17). Isn't it interesting that the ones invited to this feast, unlike the other suppers, become themselves the sacrifice? This shows the complete judgment of God. In verse 18 the word flesh is used five times. The question may come, "Is God justified in allowing such a terrible thing to take place?" First of all, my friend, who is man to question God in His righteous judgment? And secondly, would God be justified in killing a Nero, a Hitler, or someone of that type? We read the rest of the book of Revelation and we see the justice, the mercy, the grace, the goodness, the love of God clearly explained. It is interesting to note that this is referred to as the supper of the Great God. It is not a breakfast. It is not a lunch. It is a supper. It is the last meal and it is midnight as far as this earth is concerned.

Now, let's review. If you go to the first supper, that is the supper of salvation to which all have been bidden, then you can go to the second, which is the Lord's Supper and you most assuredly will be at the third which is the supper of the Lamb of God; while you won't be at this fourth, the supper of the Great God. On the other hand, if you don't go to the first supper, the supper of salvation, you may go to the second, the Lord's supper because there are many who go to church and partake of communion without being born again; but you definitely won't be at the third supper, absolutely not. That is the supper of the Lamb of God and it's only for born-again believers. However, you may well be at the fourth supper, the supper of the Great God because the time of the end, and final judgment may be at hand. Our Lord is coming. We conclude with these words, given the Psalmist long ago. An invitation--"O taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who puts his trust in Him."

Dr. Sanders is host and executive producer of the Day of Discovery television program.

Biola College
La Mirada, California

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

by Dr. Lloyd T. Anderson

While love was the keynote message for the church at Ephesus, for Smyrna the hallmark was suffering. A willingness to suffer proves the genuineness of a Christian's experience. Believers of Smyrna were prepared to suffer for the Lord whenever called upon to do so. They were like Peter and John who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer this honor for the Saviour's name (Acts 5).

Bible commentators describe Smyrna as the most splendid of the seven cities mentioned in the book of Revelation. It boastfully regarded itself as the pride of Asia, always sensitive to the rivalry of the city of Ephesus. The church in this city is not mentioned either in the book of Acts nor in the other New Testament epistles. Very early tradition, however, states that the Apostle Paul visited the town on his way to Ephesus at the start of his third missionary journey. What did Jesus Christ have to say to the church at Smyrna?

Christ reminded them, "I know your tribulation" (2:9). This indicated a tremendous amount of persecution. The enemies of the faith were very oppressive and exceedingly cruel. It was a dangerous thing to be known as a Christian in the city of Smyrna. While the causes of the persecution are not given in the book of Revelation, it's not difficult to reconstruct the situation from secular history. Idol worship was prevalent and the city had acquired the reputation for its patriotic loyalty to the Roman Empire. Around A.D. 25 many of the cities were vying with one another for the coveted favor of erecting a temple to honor the emperor, Tiberius. The privilege was granted to Smyrna alone. Evidently it was then that the cult of Caesar was a matter of great pride. Christians obviously refused to sprinkle incense on the fire which burned before the statue. To do so would be open idolatry. They would not call Caesar, "Lord", when Jesus was really their Lord. Such actions were interpreted as being treacherous and even death-worthy. The flame of hatred was fanned by the local Jewish population.

They were exempt from official obligations and exploited their privilege to bring defeat to the hated Christians. They tried to gain favor with authorities by urging the Christians to sacrifice, only to criticize them bitterly for their failures. This fanatical Jewish hostility to Christian people was seen in the middle of the second century A.D. when in the same town as Smyrna a saintly bishop, whose name was Polycarp, was martyred. The voices of Jewish people cried the loudest for him to be burned alive, the most diligent in the crowd of those fetching wood for the fateful murder.

The Christians of Smyrna experienced several forms of tribulation. The Lord remarks that He knew their poverty (2:9). This is rather surprising since they were in the midst of a wealthy and very prosperous citizenry. The Christians may have belonged to the lower ranks of society. Paul pointed out that in those days not many were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, and not many were of noble birth

who came to Christ (1 Corinthians 1:26). Doubtless, like the Macedonians, they had given away everything they had in order to help the poorest in need. Without question, they had also decided on a course of sometimes expensive honesty in business dealings, renouncing shady methods and practices. There were Jews and Gentiles who would not trade with them because of their stand for Christ. It wasn't always easy for them to find employment, and their homes were even robbed and plundered. Make no mistake about it, it doesn't always pay to be a Christian, as far as actual dollars and cents may be concerned. Nor is honesty by any means always the best policy if material gain is your only ambition. Poverty has often been part of the cost of Christian discipleship. Yet, we aren't living for this world but rather for the one to come. We must make every judgment in life on the basis of that eternal truth.

In addition to such tribulation they also had slander with which to contend. Many false rumors were circulating about Christians in the city of Smyrna. Minds were being poisoned. As James pointed out, truly no man can tame the tongue. The Word of God rightly indicates that it is a deadly evil, full of poison. Christ here calls them a synagogue not of the Lord but of the devil (2:9). They had learned their ways from their master who actually called on the devil (2:10). Jesus rightly called the devil a liar and the father of all lies (John 8:44). How unfortunate that gossip has such a very strange fascination for all of us (Proverbs 26). Christians in Smyrna were deeply wounded by the abuse heaped upon them through slander. It's always painful to be misunderstood. Yet these faithful followed in the footsteps of their lowly master, Jesus Christ. Of Him it was written that when He was reviled, He did not revile in return (1 Peter 2:23).

There was not much to which these saints at Smyrna could look forward. The Saviour tells them, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer" (2:10). It wasn't too comforting to hear, "Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison." The early apostles, including Paul, had seen the insides of many jail cells. The darkness of these dungeons had been illuminated by the light of God's Word.

The Lord further urged the Christians of Smyrna, "Be faithful unto death" (2:10). The exhortation to these persecuted believers was to be constant to the extent of being ready to die for the sake of the Gospel. History shows us that opposition was so fierce that martyrdom always loomed as a very real and solemn possibility to believers in Smyrna.

As we mentioned earlier, Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, in the year A.D. 156 fled from the city at the urging of his congregation. When tracked down to his hiding place he made no attempt to flee. Instead he offered food and drink to those who sought his capture, then asking their permission to retire for prayer, he did for some two hours. As they drove into the city the officer in charge asked Polycarp to give up his faith. "What harm could it do," he reasoned, "to sacrifice a little bit of incense to the Emperor?" The saintly bishop refused and was severely mistreated when placed before the magistrate in the town amphitheater. They commanded, "Have respect for your old age! Swear by the genius of Caesar and we will release you." Stoically Polycarp affirmed, "Eight and six years have I served Jesus Christ, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" The officer in charge persisted, "Swear by the genius of Caesar! I have wild beasts waiting. If you will not change your mind I will throw you to them. After they do their work, unless you change your mind, I will make you be destroyed by fire." Infuriated Jews and Gentiles were already gathering wood for the fire. Steadfastly, Polycarp stood by the stake, asking not to be fastened to it. He prayed, "Oh Lord God, Almighty God, the Father of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the knowledge of Thee, I thank Thee that Thou hast thought me worthy this day and this hour to share the cup of Thy Christ among the number of Thy witnesses." Moments later the blaze was kindled, only to have the wind drive the flames somewhat away from him to prolong his agony. Finally, a soldier's sword put an end to his

intense misery. What a prophetic fulfillment for the promise of suffering addressed to the church at Smyrna.

Among the beatitudes in which Christ pronounces blessings upon the meek and the merciful, mourners and the peacemakers, poor in spirit and the poor in heart, He added His final tribute to those who are persecuted for righteousness sake (Matt. 5:3-12). The teaching is applicable today. If the world hates you, you can know that it hated the Saviour long before it ever hated you. Jesus points out further in John 15, "The servant is not greater than his master; and if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." Yes, in this world the believer shall have tribulation. The glad and glorious news is that we need not be discouraged or depressed for Christ has overcome, and through the presence of His Holy Spirit will cause us also to be more than conquerors.

What Jesus Christ taught here on earth the New Testament apostles carefully echoed in their writings under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The catalog of the Saviour's sufferings were also experienced by those who followed after Him. In fact, looking ahead to the future, Paul you remember promised, "All who desire to live a godly life in Jesus Christ will be persecuted" (1 Timothy 3:12). The Philippians were told that as salvation was a gift from God, so would be the sufferings they should endure (1:29). So it is given to every believer that there will always be the possibility of suffering for the Master. What kind of a concern do we show for those faithful believers who live in Communist lands such as Russia and China? And there are also persecutions for those suffering for their faith in countries where religious persecution is unbelievable. Being of flesh and blood we shrink from suffering. We don't want to be hurt. Yet, living in this world, if we are really following a godly life, there may well be pressures and ostracism.

Christ told the saints at Smyrna, "So do not fear what you are about to suffer, but be faithful unto death". Faith and fear are opposites; they cannot co-exist. The Psalmist knew that the only antidote to apprehension is trust (Psalm 6:3, 9). There is no other course of action to take. Jesus prescribed the same remedy (Mark 5:36). Trust in Christ and we shall ourselves be trustworthy; rely on Christ and we shall be reliable; depend on Christ and we shall be dependable; have faith in Christ and we will be faithful.

While Smyrna was an extremely prosperous community, we need to be careful as to how we measure wealth. Our Saviour Himself, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. In this way, by His poverty we only can truly become rich (11 Corinthians 8:9). Possessions are never a true barometer of one's wealth (11 Corinthians 6:10). Of far more value is the realization of God's priceless love, of a ripening character that will endure, of a faith more precious than gold, and of wisdom more priceless than rubies and fine jewels.

To those who remained firm and true in Smyrna Christ is generous in promising, "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. Ye who conquer shall not be hurt by the second death." Every one of these seven church letters ends with a promise of an appropriate reward. This is not a merit reward, but rather it comes as a gift we don't deserve. The Saviour is always generous in His giving. Our endurance proves the genuineness of our Christian profession. We have the dual promise of escaping hell, which is the second death, as well as entering heaven. We may lose our physical lives but then the crown of life will be given to the individual believer who gives his life for the Savior. The crown of life in Revelation 2:10 is the same as the tree of life in verse seven. The metaphor has changed from a tree bearing delicious fruit. What tremendous things are in store for those who know, love and serve Jesus Christ.

In the book of Revelation we find some tremendous challenges for our lives today, even as we consider the messages given to the seven churches in the second and third chapters. We come now to the congregation of Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17). It is interesting to

note that on the ancient side of Pergamos there is today a little village which is known as Pergama. This is the Turkish spelling for the Greek proper name. Originally Pergamos was a most beautiful and luxurious city. Supposedly it was founded and built by a son of Hercules. It is about 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. It soon became the capital city of this section of Asia Minor. By the time John penned Revelation, Pergamos had already been the capital city for more than 300 years. Kings and merchants had lavishly beautified the area through the centuries. It became one of the most imposing of all the Greek communities of the ancient world. Its famous library had on its shelves more than 200,000 volumes. That's an immense number for such an ancient day. You see, every book had to be copied by hand. It was here, because of their inability to secure papyrus, that the discovery of writing on parchment was really perfected.

The letter to this church begins with a very grim tone. Christ points out, "I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where satan's throne is. And thou holdest fast thy name and hast not denied my faith even unto those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where satan lived or dwelleth." This lets us know that these Christians actually lived where the devil existed and where his presence was fully experienced. The reference to his throne could have been to those gorgeous, impressive, idolatrous temples which the Greeks built everywhere. In this capital city there was a temple to the four greatest Greek gods, representing Jupiter who was Dionysias, the Latin name for him would be Bacus; another one to supposedly the head of all the gods, Baccus, the God of wine and drama, Athena, the god of wisdom, art, and war, and Aesculapias, the god of healing. (The latter was known all over the ancient world as the god at pergamos.) The god of healing had as his emblem that of a serpent. The courts of the temple were filled with snakes slithering on the ground. Sufferers came from all over the world to sleep in that sanctuary. If a sick person happened to be touched by one of these creatures he was supposedly touched by healing from this god. Much of what they called "medicine" would be known today as unadulterated superstition. This may be one reason why the Lord called the idolatry of the city, "satan's throne."

Another reason for this description could be that one of the ancient wonders of the world was the magnificent altar to the god Zeus. There was a ledge jutting out from the hill on which was built the largest and most famous altar in all the world. It was 90 feet square and 45 feet high. Around the carving at the base of it was one of the most impressive pieces of sculpture ever created by modern art. The German government in the last century sent an expedition to excavate Pergamos where they found a large part of that sculptured ornament. It is in the museum at Berlin this very day. This looked somewhat like a throne over the city of Pergamos. This could be the reference of our Lord when He says, "Thou dwellest where satan's throne is."

Of course, in the community was also complete emperor worship of the Roman Caesars. Much of this nation's holdings had been put together by conquests and war. There were three different temples in Pergamos dedicated to the Roman emperors. The city was the head of a district which was supposed to enforce Caesar worship.

The Lord also told the faithful believers in Pergamos, "Thou hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr." This little word "deny" refers to a thing in the past; that which is completed and done. Apparently, sometime previously, there had been a great persecution which burst out against the saints in Pergamos. Antipas was murdered for his faith. He may well have been the first martyr put to death by the Roman Empire. He doubtless had protested against Caesar worship and laid down his life for the cause. Frequently, in the days of the New Testament when a man witnessed for Christ he might well seal his testimony with his own blood.

The word for "dwell" here represented some important truth. Believers are those in this world as strangers, pilgrims and sojourners. Our eternal home, the Bible promises, is in heaven. Yet, behind the suggestion given, the original is the other Greek word for

"dwell" which means to be permanently established in residency. This was where the devil's throne was. One description of our lives today is this same fact. We live in a sin-cursed world; we cannot run away from it. While we are where satan dwells, still we can avow, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through!" May it be true with each of our lives.

While the church at Pergamos existed where satan dwelled, yet the Lord had to comment, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." This was the counsel of a shrewd sage. Wicked King Balak tried to hire him to curse the people of Israel. God wouldn't let him do it. Unfortunately he also sought to corrupt God's people by introducing them to worldly Moabitish women who got the men of Israel to live with them in prostitution. What a strange and ungodly alliance. There were those in Pergamos who encouraged the faithful to eat things sacrificed to idols as well as to commit fornication. One of the most astonishing things of the Greek and Roman worlds was that with all their magnificent philosophies and achievements in every realm, nevertheless they looked upon prostitution as a needful and acceptable way of life. Sometimes I honestly believe America is going this same route. Such will always bring down the judgment of God in a nation. The early Roman philosopher, Cicero, penned, "If there is anyone who thinks that young men should be absolutely forbidden to love a prostitute, he is extremely severe and at a variance not only with the license of what our age allows, but also to the customs and concessions of our ancestors. What indeed and when indeed was this not done? When was such promiscuity ever denied?" What a sad base moral code to be defended. He was but echoing the accepted life of the ancient Roman world, as well as the modern trends of today. In Pergamos there were those in the church who stood up and said that this was the way to live. Follow the pattern of human society around you. Don't alienate your friends. Who likes a person who's peculiar? How tragic that we should ever accept standards of the world as the patterns of life for the believer. The Holy Spirit does not want us to be isolated from the world, but certainly will insulate us from its false systems and economy.

I'm sure it would surprise you to know the number of people in churches today who have the same perverted persuasion that we ought to go along with the crowd. The church never had such an effect upon the world as in that day when it would have nothing to do with the world. As Christians we have been called to a higher life than that. When a person is really born-again he has a new transformed life. That such practices of the world were taught in the church at Pergamos was absolutely wrong. We haven't been called to conform, nor were they.

In the days when John wrote these words the most agonizing personal problem the Christians faced was concerning things sacrificed to idols. When the ancient worshipper made a sacrifice to an idol, as on that great altar to Zeus, the animal was not burned. Many times no part of it was consumed except a small piece of the outside of the skin. When the animal was sacrificed it was always divided and offered to the priest, as well as a portion of it being returned to the worshipper to eat. This became known as a communal meal. Nothing is wrong with eating together in church fellowship. But in the heathen temples, the offerer would call in all his family and friends. Together they would eat the animal that had been sacrificed to the gods. Who could be so narrow-minded as to object. Who would stay away from an invitation to a feast like this? These false teachers succeeded in telling the Christians that such a practice was acceptable. The social customs of idolatry were always a threat to the Christian faith on every side. The true believer affirmed, "I will not drink and I will not eat what has been first offered to false gods." As a result he was cut off from the social intercourse of the world. He was separate and distinct. These early faithful had to be very careful because of a potentially weak brother. Paul pointed this out several times (1 Corinthians 8:13).

There was a wonderful promise given to the church at Pergamos, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat the hidden manna." The people who loved Christ were not to eat and drink according to the customs surrounding satan's throne. Manna is called in the 78th Psalm, "angel's food and the corn of heaven." In Exodus 16:4 it is referred to as the bread of heaven. When Israel was going through the wilderness the Lord sent manna down. The people gathered it freely. Some was always placed in a golden bowl and placed at the ark of the covenant before the Lord, hidden behind the veil. Thus the Saviour is saying, "You may not share in the social life, eating and drinking things sacrificed to idols. I will give you to eat of the hidden manna which is the bread of heaven." God is willing to do this for us if we are willing to cut ourselves off from any compromise with the world. He will give so much far better for all eternity.

Additionally, our Lord promises to the overcomer, "I will give him a white stone." There are many strange interpretations to this picture. Some Bible scholars say that it refers to an acquittal from God concerning our sins. When a man was tried, if the jurors voted to free him they flashed a white stone, or dropped one in a large urn. Conversely, if they felt he was guilty a black stone was used. Others say that the stone was used in calculations. Hence we are numbered among the children of God. Still some believe that the symbol represents victory and happiness, as we would say, "a red letter day." You can be certain that if we are faithful, God will give us a white stone admission to all the wonderful things of heaven.

The next church designated for our study is the one at Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-19). To this congregation is given one of the gravest warnings for the future. Entering into the assembly had come some very evil practices which could not be tolerated by the Lord. The city of Thyatira was smaller and less significant than the three communities we have already studied. It was situated south of Pergamos, and was distinguished for its industrial activity. Because of this there was much prosperity. Archaeological studies have brought to life the fact that Thyatira was a very well known center for numerous trade guilds. Like the union movement today they had organized groups and associations for every area of life imaginable. It has been said that the water around Thyatira was adapted to dying clothes. Lydia, spoken of in Acts 16:14, was a seller of purple color from this area. She went to Philippi in Macedonia on business. There she heard the Apostle Paul preach the Gospel and she gladly received the truth.

Nowhere is it stated exactly how the church got started here at Thyatira. It might well be that when Lydia returned to her home, witnessing her faith in Christ, that a good many people undoubtedly were converted. It is further interesting to note that Lydia was the first recorded convert to Christ on European soil.

Conditions of the church at Thyatira were prophetic of the period in church history from the 7th to the 16th centuries after Christ. During this time the world saw the rapid rise of a great ecclesiastical organization which was a part of that long dark period of man's existence. We listen as the Son of God rebukes the church that would degrade Him, keeping Him only as the son of a human mother, while exalting her above Him as the mother of God and "the queen of heaven." The Saviour knows exactly when and where to insist upon His divine prerogatives. The rise of that great church made Jesus popular as the Son of Mary. That's a position which robs Him of His essential deity. It is not right when a church teaches those under its power that people must pray to Mary in order to get through to God. That is entirely falacious. Nowhere is it hinted at in the Bible. On the contrary the Lord taught that God our heavenly Father was to be approached in the name of Jesus Christ only (John 14:13-14; 16:23-24).

In Revelation 2:18 the Scripture tells us that Christ has eyes "like unto a flame of fire." You can be certain that there's nothing more piercing than that. Everything yields and melts before Him. The eyes of Jesus look through everything seeing behind the false

masks and coverings. Jeremiah rightly testified about the One who tries the minds and hearts of all men (Jeremiah 11:20). In Acts 1:24 we read, "Thou Lord which knowest the hearts of all men." Our Saviour is the great "Heart-Knower." Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who would betray Him (John 6:64). He read the hearts of Nathaniel (John 1:48) and the woman of Samaria (John 4:28-29). After the resurrection Peter confessed to the Saviour, "Lord, thou knowest all things" (John 21:17). No human being has ever escaped God's all-knowing gaze (Hebrews 4:13). This is why we need to walk circumspectly in His holy presence.

The picture John gives us of Christ also describes Him as having feet like fine brass. This shows the symbol of judgment. Brass is a metal used in the Bible as indicative of judgment (Numbers 21:9). Of course, sin must always be judged. God can never remain silent or inactive where transgressions are present. If the guilty of Thyatira, as well as America, Asia, Africa or Europe, or in any other place, will not repent, coming back to the Lord, then they must face Christ when He comes again to judge the living and the dead. I would much rather face Him today and say, "Lord Jesus, I want to be a Christian. Come Thou into my heart." Otherwise some day you meet Him in judgment hearing His scathing words, "I never knew you." You will be cast out into outer darkness forever. All judgment is committed to Jesus Christ and He will execute it infallibly. Today, in this wonderful day of grace, the Saviour's feet are a thing of beauty since He brings good tidings of salvation (Romans 10:15).

The church at Thyatira is commended for its charity (2:19). Even with all her faults there is some good. Love led the list of virtues in this congregation. Where love was waning in Ephesus it was gaining in Thyatira. It is God's love in us experientially that begets love to other men on our part (1 Thessalonians 4:9; Romans 13:10). There were Christians in Thyatira who were dwelling together in love because God was dwelling in them in love (1 John 4:16). May this also be true in our lives as we seek to serve the Saviour today.

In His message to the church at Thyatira the Lord made special mention of their ministry. There were some there who generously showed love in action toward those who had tremendous need. A person may be zealous to perform in detail and accuracy his official work. Yet he may also sadly lack the tender touch of a loving heart. Too many seem to be ready to spread a banquet who are likewise slow to give a cup of cold water. The saints of Thyatira possessed a desirable combination. They were gifted with service on one hand and they really loved on the other. Many of their names were not perpetuated in history, nor did they find a place in the Word of God. The blessed Lord remembered them, however, and when He comes again He is going to reward all such (Matthew 25:31-40).

The people were approved because of their faith. This embodies the idea of faithfulness and loyalty. Fickle and faltering saints are not faithful but rather occasional and spasmodic. Some Christians run well at the beginning of a race but they tire very quickly and fall by the wayside (Galatians 5:7).

The Lord commends them further for their patient endurance. As service grows out of love, so patience is the sequence of faith. These saints maintained an equal emotional and mental balance under pressure. This fragrant flower we call faithfulness was present in the church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:2) as well as Philadelphia (Revelation 3:10). Do we have the capacity to keep still when all around is storm-tossed? Think of Jesus' patience with sinners as well as with His blundering disciples. To bring it closer to home, consider His longsuffering and patience with you and me. There should always be readiness to endure and to suffer. We are to abide in Christ under tribulation (Romans 12:12). This is what the original of the word actually means. Through trials we grow more patient (James 1:3). We need to run the race of life with patience (Hebrews 12:1).

Our Lord's final words of approval for the church at Thyatira were, "I know thy works and the last to be more than the first." As a minister of the Gospel I have observed quite often how some people who begin a task with cheerfulness and enthusiasm often end up at a standstill, offering weak excuses for failure. Do you remember the time you quickly and readily took a Sunday school class and then after a few months quit over some little thing? It may have been because people weren't always patting you on the back and telling you what a wonderful teacher you were. Churches can't be built on members like this. We need those who are solid, faithful, loyal, cheerful and enthusiastic. We need those dedicated saints who are neither slipping backwards nor standing still. They are consistently advancing in their Christian course. How is it with you? Is your faith growing and your love increasing?

Even in the light of all these achievements, the church at Thyatira had need for great admonition (Revelation 2:20-24). The Lord strongly pointed out, "Then allowest that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Here we see a contrast between the church at Thyatira and the ecclesiastical church of the dark ages. Ephesus would not tolerate evil, although gradually its love cooled down. Thyatira on the other hand was gaining love but it was tolerating evil. These same two extremes are with us today. No one will argue against the fact that the Bible teaches us to love everybody. It also teaches us, however, that righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness (II Corinthians 6:14). Jezebel is the name which came to be associated with evil in the Old Testament. She was the notorious daughter of the pagan king of the Zidonians. Jezebel married Israel's wicked king Ahab after which she set up the worship of Baal among the people of Israel (I Kings 16:29-33). God raised up His prophet Elijah and sent him to rebuke King Ahab. Jezebel threatened Elijah and she scared him so badly that he fled for his life. He was even ready to resign from the ministry (I Kings 19:4). Jezebel was always associated with Sodom. Every sanctuary in a sacred forest was at the same time a scene of terrible debauchery and adultery. The priests of Baal were wicked sexual perverts and homosexuals. You can see the depths to which Israel had fallen under King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.

The Lord draws the attention of the church at Thyatira to these facts. He tells them frankly, "You have a woman like her in your church at Thyatira. This woman will always be a seductive and wicked influence among God's people." The Jezebel of the Old Testament had been dead for almost a thousand years but the demon that had possessed her was now controlling another woman of the same kind. Her purpose was to corrupt the New Testament church at Thyatira with ethical, moral, and doctrinal error. This woman called herself a prophetess. She boldly taught her philosophy with little or no opposition. Why did the people tolerate her? Beware of tolerating the Jezebel type person in the church. She may claim to be inspired and to have received some new revelation from God, and yet she is touching the deep things of the devil. Many of these religious leaders have founded movements sweeping many into hell. Many so-called Christians have been seduced by these modern day religions.

Jezebel may have been a member of the local congregation of Thyatira. Certainly she didn't belong to the true church of Jesus Christ. She was never born-again. Thyatira represents a period of church history after the day of Pentecost which extended for about nine centuries. It was appropriately known as the dark ages. It is not right when one man is enthroned and addressed as "His Holy Father." A woman has been put in a man's place and is substituted for Christ. The Scriptures know nothing of such teaching. In the New Testament (II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-23) the church is set forth as a woman. Even though the Bible is clear that a woman is in subjection to the man and that she is never to usurp authority over him, we must remember that there was a church that reversed that order. Millions of her people worshipped before the name of a woman, offering prayers to her and through her. Jezebel symbolically is being tolerated in the congregation. Christendom is gradually being influenced by the evil of worldly.

religion which is likened unto this woman Jezebel. How we need to be careful in this day in which we live so that we shall have a clear and unmitigated Gospel to preach to the world.

The next of our studies of the churches mentioned in the book of Revelation is Sardis (3:1-6). This passage has a remarkable listing of not only names but also of characteristics of various believers. Sardis is 30 miles from Thyatira, about 60 miles from Pergamos and east of Smyrna approximately 50 miles. Sardis was not only famous for its rich men but also for its wise men. Sardis was considered to be an impregnable fortress. It was built on the slope of a mountain at the base of which ran a gold-bearing river. There was a ridge of rock with great cliffs on each side. This gave great security to the people who lived there. Only the most brave soldiers would attempt such a fete in storming the citadel.

The message of our Lord Jesus to the church at Sardis was, "Be watchful. If thou wilt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." He also said that the church has "a name to live and is dead." That's most unusual. This church was contaminated with the world. It had an inward decay, and was experiencing spiritual disintegration. In museums of natural history are animals which look lifelike in their mounted positions, but they are dead. How sad that such a condition should also be true of the church. There can be dead men in the pulpit and dead men filling the pews. Even with this there is always a possibility for a dedicated individual to maintain spiritual commitment to the Lord. This is why Christ says, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis who are worthy." The church at Sardis is the church of the dark ages. Even in that dark period of Christian history there were stars shown in the hands of God. These were the immortal names of Sardis. Those people walked before the Lord, worthy to overcome in the name of the living Christ. In the dark days before the great flood there were righteous Enoch and God-fearing Noah. In tragic days of universal idolatry Abraham was found faithful. In the midst of the evil of Sardis there are a few outstanding saints to be found. The Holy Spirit in any hour of spiritual darkness is able to illuminate, guide and comfort. Christ holds the seven stars in His hand. Even in the snow fields and the ice rivers of the Alps one may find the solitary flower. There is no wilderness so sterile and so barren that it is without an oasis of refreshment. There are always those in midst of spiritual despair who are living for the Saviour in their own generation. In researching periods of church history we cannot help but see in the congregation at Sardis that time when a certain church was in control of the world and known as the Dark Ages.

It was in the year 1170 that Peter Waldo on a street corner heard a Christian hymn that touched his heart. He was a wealthy merchant from France and was able to hire two scholars to translate the Word of God for him. As he read the Scripture he was converted. Immediately he began to preach the Good News of Christ. He encouraged his followers to give out copies. The Waldonesian church grew and the seed of the Word of God was sown among the superstitious people of Southern Europe. God blessed them in their fervent evangelism. Then in 1208 a horrible religious holy crusade was inaugurated, and soon more than one million of the followers of Peter Waldo were wiped off the face of the earth. They were cruelly persecuted by the ruling church.

In 1320 there was a man named John Wycliffe who translated the Bible into the language of our English forefathers. There was John Huss who gave his life because of what he believed. In 1452 there was Savonarola in the city of Florence who was one of the most eloquent and mighty of all the expositors of the Word of God. Because of religious persecution he was denounced and hanged from the gallows. His body was burned by fire. This was the Sardis period of church history.

The significant message addressed to the angel of the church at Sardis is notable for a number of reasons. Like the letter to Laodicea, the last of the seven, it is an unmixed message of rebuke and censor. The message is almost devoid of any commendation. The

people in this community were surrounded by the grossest form of idolatry. Some of the so-called Christians had even become involved.

When we come to the church at Sardis there is a marked change in our Lord's method of addressing the congregation. In the other testimonies he commenced with some commendation. Here, however, He has to begin with condemnation. In the other assemblies evil had not been the habit but rather the exception. The opposite is unfortunately true with Sardis. There is nothing here which can possibly commend itself to the Lord's eyes.

As we read of "the seven spirits of God and the seven stars" we find the allusion to the seven-fold character of the Holy Spirit, resting upon Christ according to the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2-5. A similar description is found in Revelation 5:6. It is a portrait which points out the qualities of the righteous judgment of the wicked. What better introduction to the wordly of Sardis. The same description of Christ, as holding the seven stars in His right hand, was given in relation to the church at Ephesus. This makes clear that the leaders of the church are responsible to no human representative of Christ and must vein an account directly to the Lord Himself. Pastors today must realize this as never before.

Christ reminded the people in the congregation at Sardis, "I know thy works." The actions and involvements of the people were and always are "open books" to the Lord. Nothing is hidden from His searching and searing gaze. That which is not visible to man is perfectly apparent to Him. What a tragedy that He had to say of them, "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead." Evidently they had a reputation among the area being erroneously considered spiritual with an effective ministry. Just the opposite was apparently true. From the divine standpoint they were actually dead as far as spiritual life and power were concerned. Even today, outwardly our churches may seem to be spiritually powerful, but inwardly, where God alone can see, it may not be so. This is the thing I constantly fear about any church I may be privileged to serve. There is too much today that is false and hypocritical! We need to ponder the searching judgment of the Lord. Today's modern church may be filled with activity, but ineffective as far as real spiritual life and power are concerned. Someone has observed that if the Spirit of God left certain churches today, most of the people in the congregations wouldn't even know it. The machinery of the committees and the commissions would still keep right going on, as a massive piece of machinery that is inanimate, dead and lifeless. How sad to think that this could very well be true. A church is in danger of death when it begins to worship its own past, being more concerned about forms than it is with life; loving systems more than it loves the Saviour; more concerned with material things than it is with spiritual objectives.

A tremendous word of warning is given to the church at Sardis, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Apparently there were some in the church who still had true life and spirituality. Those faithful were exhorted to be watchful lest the further invasion of spiritual deadness should come upon them. They were to turn away from any defection from the truth. If they refused the exhortation, Christ promised to come upon them as a thief, taking them unexpectedly with devastating suddenness and judgment. Although the same symbolism is used here as that in the Second Coming of our blessed Lord, the figure is not related to that particular event. Judgment would be unexpected, sudden and irrevocable.

To those individuals in the Sardis church who overcame such lack of faith the promise was given that they would be clothed in white raiment. In the Scripture the robing of the saint is ever an expression of the believer's own service and character. In the description of the white-robed multitude in Revelation it is said that the white robes are the

righteousness of the saints. This is symbolic of fidelity of character and service which will have its outward manifestation and revelation. White clothing in the Bible denotes festivity, victory, purity, and a blessed heavenly state. Righteousness of the believer is bestowed in the form of a garment as a token of our acceptability to God. It is the divine recognition of our office and ministry as a priest before the Lord. The faithful have not defiled their garments as others in Sardis. Now they are promised the future of heavenly white garments, as they walk with Christ, judged as being worthy.

Furthermore there is the promise, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels." This is not a contradiction on the reality of a believer's eternal security. Once an individual receives Jesus Christ as Saviour He is forever guaranteed his salvation. His name cannot be blotted out of the book of life. There is not contingency in our salvation which is dependent upon works. Salvation is always by grace and by grace alone. If it ever depended on the believer's perseverance, the name would not have been written there in the first place. Some Bible scholars have considered the book of life not as the rolo call of those who have been saved but rather those who have possessed physical life. The moment one is born into this world his name is thereby added to the book of life, listing the generations of man. As they come to maturity, being faced with the responsibility of accepting or rejecting Christ, their names are blotted out if they fail to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour. On the other hand those who do accept Christ as Saviour are confirmed in their position in the book of life. Their names are confessed before the Father and before the angels. This may very well be the teaching in this important passage. Of this much we may be certain. Once a person has truly received and owned the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour by faith, that individual has eternal life. Here it is a fulfillment of all that God is willing to do in and through us.

The message and exhortations to the church at Sardis are to those who need the same word in every century. We, too, need to be watchful, strengthened in the things which remain. Let us remember the truth and the experience of the past. If repentance and confession is needed, it should be done speedily! The only alternative is divine judgment. The promise of the benefits of eternal life is given to those who accept the invitation. As in the other churches, the message to Sardis closes with an individual invitation, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

The church at Philadelphia was very unique. We find the information about it in Revelation 3:7-13. It was marked by the open door which the Lord afforded them for the proclamation of the Gospel. The town of Philadelphia itself was situated about 30 miles southeast of Sardis. The district was dangerously volcanic and has always experienced a number of earthquakes. There was a very severe earthquake of 17 A.D. which devastated Sardis and almost completely demolished the city of Philadelphia as well. By 90 A.D. it had been completely rebuilt and included a church of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note that the previous letter, to the church at Sardis, contained almost unmitigated censure. The letter to Philadelphia is one of the most unqualified commendations anyone could read of any congregation. We find such things here as "I know thy works"; "You have kept my word and have not denied my name"; "You have kept my word in patient endurance." Though the Christians were hard pressed they held fast to their knowledge of the Saviour. In the power the Lord gave them they stood their ground against fierce persecution. They patiently bore tribulation and shame for the sake of the One whom they loved. In Christ they were sharing with the exiled Apostle John the similar experiences of faithful endurance for the testimony of the Gospel.

In this letter to the Philadelphian church we find some vivid, symbolical descriptions. We read of a key, a door, and a pillar. Consider carefully the exciting relationship which existed between the church's open door, the master key of Christ, and the pillar in heaven which is the promised inheritance. First of all, what is this wide open door which no one is able to shut? The symbol of a door is quite common in Scripture. It

suggests opportunity. The metaphor is very clear as it is used frequently in God's truth. Of course, the first open door is the opportunity of salvation. Jesus Himself twice used this same language. One of these occasions was during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:13-14). One gate is wide with the way easy. It, however, leads to destruction. Those who enter in by it are many. The gate is narrow with the way hard leading to eternal life. There are few who come this way by faith. Here not only the two doors are contrasted, but also the two eventual finalities in eternal death or everlasting life. The wide gate is so spacious that it's easy for carefree people to surge through it, joining in with the crowd. The other gate is so low that we must stoop humbly. It cannot be entered proudly. There is no room to take anything with us. Our sins and our selfishness, yea, even the rags of our own self-morality, all of these have to be left behind. Both doors are open today. Which one will you go through?

The second door in Scripture is the opportunity for service. Christians are not just a bunch of self-satisfied individuals who are only concerned about saving their own skin. We don't find satisfaction in simply sitting down in the luxurious halls of salvation. Such would be an appalling erroneous caricature of Christian people. Keep in mind this wise observation, "Unless a man's faith saves him out of selfishness into Christian service, it'll certainly never save him out of hell into heaven." If a person is really saved, this will be demonstrated by the fact that there is a willingness and a readiness to serve the Lord. Salvation absolutely does not depend on service. It depends wholly on believing in the person of Jesus Christ. The proof of our conversion is a life of selfless service before the Lord. Any truly born-again believer, who has received salvation as a free gift from God through Jesus Christ, is deeply concerned about the well-being materially and spiritually of his fellowmen. Once inside the door of salvation the Christian's eye lights upon another door which stands open before him. It is the door of Christian service.

Now again specifically considering the Philadelphian church, we are reminded that openings for spreading the Gospel were many in the Roman Empire of the first century A.D. Christian evangelists could go about with comparative freedom. Many spoke the common Greek language of the day as they walked those superior Roman roads, using as their textbook the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. Everywhere they found groping minds and hungry hearts. The old pagan superstitions were being abandoned. People looked to the Bible and to Christ for a new life. The Holy Spirit was stirring the thoughts and desires of ordinary men and women; many thirsty souls were panting for the water of life. The Apostle Paul certainly found this wherever he went. On his third missionary journey, he spent three years in Ephesus both giving public sermons in a hired hall and visiting people privately in their own homes. Night and day he was busy preaching the gospel. Of this period he said, "A wide door for effective work has opened unto me" (1 Corinthians 16:9). Later on, a captive in his own hired home in Rome, he spoke for Jesus Christ to everyone who visited him. With all these opportunities, he was still not satisfied. He asked the believers in Colossae, "Pray for us also that God may open to us a door for the Word to declare the mystery of Christ on account of which I am in prison that I may make it clear as I ought to speak" (Colossians 4:3-4). Not all was easy. As in Ephesus, so also in Philadelphia, if the door was open there were also many enemies as well. The Philadelphia church was pathetically weak. The Lord observed, "I know that you have but little power" (Revelation 3:8). The congregation may have been small, or perhaps it was composed largely of the lower classes of Roman society. The church did not naturally exert a great influence on the city, but this was not to deter them from evangelization.

The tremendous opposition appears to have come from the Jewish population. They wanted nothing to do with Christ as the Messiah. So fanatical was their resistance that they were referred to as a synagogue of the devil who said they were Jews but really were not. No doubt the fierceness of this opposition to the truth of Christ tempted these Philadelphian believers to hold their peace and to mind their own business. There may have been some members who would offer the counsel that discretion would be the better

part of valor. Why stir up trouble in the community? The devil has sought to dissuade us also in a similar manner. We dare not open our minds to his evil suggestions. Christ Himself opened the door for the Gospel. He makes it clear that if the Christians would boldly march through it under His banner, some of those to be converted would be the Jewish people. The Jewish converts to Christ are here portrayed as captives on the battlefield. What tremendous trophies of God's grace!

Dr. Anderson is pastor of Bethany Baptist Church, West Covina, California

BIOLA HOUR HIGHLIGHTS

ISSUE NO. 9

FEATURING AUGUST MESSAGES

Panel Discussions

Our panel this month is:

Dr. J. Richard Chase, Biola President

Dr. Vern Lewis, Professor of Psychology

H. Norman Wright, Associate Professor of Psychology

Q. "Can you please explain Proverbs 23:7. It states, 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he?' Does this mean I can decide what kind of a person I am just by believing I am that kind of person?"

A. There are some excellent psychological principles to be found here. The Bible refers to the human heart in two ways. First of all it is considered as the physical organ through which blood is pumped and recirculated. Whenever it refers to the heart in a mental function, it has to do with those deeply held values or beliefs which are part of our emotional personality. The individual who has committed himself to Christ is vitally involved in serving the Lord in every way possible. In this passage there is a negative aspect brought in. We should be careful of those whose thoughts and purposes have not been centered on the Saviour. Listening to them could do us harm. Remember that we are exhorted in Scripture to love the Lord our God with all our heart. We dare not take this first and great commandment lightly.

Quite often as we work with individuals we find the reason they behave in certain ways is due to the thought patterns they have established. It matters a great deal what one thinks. This is the basis of what we do. As an example, someone who thinks he will fail generally does. Thoughts can affect every area of our lives. Much of the depression we see today is caused by improper thought patterns.

Scripture has much to say about our thoughts and imaginations. In the dawn of early history the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every imagination and intention of all human thinking was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). One of the most beautiful promises of Scripture guarantees that God will keep us in perfect peace if our minds are focused on Him (Isaiah 26:3). One of the strongest passages in the New Testament on this tells us specifically the areas on which we can confidently let our minds dwell. Philippians 4:6-8 suggests that only in this way can we enjoy true peace.

We want to underscore the fact that without a right commitment or relationship to Christ, there is no proper basis upon which to build a positive life. Only in this can we have the necessary confidence that we can do "all things through Christ." So much behavioral change can take place only after a person has accepted Christ as personal Saviour. We can never rule out or underestimate the work of the Holy Spirit.

Q. "Do you feel that television has an adverse impact upon young people? There seems to be a diversity of opinion on this point."

A. There is no question but that anything presented from a visual standpoint can influence many. This is why television for children needs to be examined carefully. Our young people spend more time watching TV shows than they do in all their years of education through high school. There are clear-cut studies which do show many individuals act in a more aggressive and hostile manner after they have viewed such activities on television shows. If the program shows someone being punished for aggressive acts people are not quite so prone to imitate them. Unfortunately many of the shows today seem to stand behind violence with the perpetrator going without any reward for his evil. This is true in motion pictures especially. Seeing so much make-believe violence and murder causes an insensitivity to real individuals who are harmed or injured. Even here we see unfortunate thought patterns established which can carry throughout a lifetime.

Q. "We have a son in high school who always complains about going to church. Should we continue to insist that he go, or let him do as he pleases?"

A. The first question might be, what happens in the church when he does go? Is he attending a service where the Word of God is forcefully presented? Does he have the opportunity of receiving something that really challenges him? In some churches many of us might find it difficult to want to feel involved. Also consider what kind of behavior patterns are given as examples to this young man. Have you watched some adults in church as they look around, exchange conversation, or even doze off during the message. They show no real interest to our youth. Try asking your son to take notes of what he hears. This really helps with concentration. After the service, try to react to what has been said. Give your children opportunity to say what they think, too. This is the way truths can be applied. One problem may be your child is asked to sit with his parents, while all the other young people are with their peers. The basic point is to determine where there is this rebellion so that help in that particular area can be given.

Without question enthusiastic leadership in the church will make a young person want to go there. Certainly we aren't called upon to compete with the world in the sense of entertainment. That is not our job whatsoever. The message of Christ, however, does have what is necessary to draw people of all ages to the truth. Don't sell your young people short. They have real values and needs to be met. Sometimes even well-meaning churches and congregations have overlooked some basic needs young people have, failing to gear at least a part of their ministry to them. The family should be able to worship the Lord together. Sit down with your young person and carefully explain to them the reasons why you want them to join in your fellowship. Give them some encouragement in terms of what should be looked for. This should be a family activity. You must make certain that in other areas of life you maintain a proper relationship with your children. Too often there is an unfortunate gap between the parent and the child which carries over to a desire to avoid church attendance together. As parents we need to make certain that we are really living the Christian life in everything we do and say.

Q. "Does the Bible have anything to say about interracial marriage?"

A. This is a question which any Christian marriage counselor will have asked him many times. One of the things we try to do is meet with the parents, too, seeking to discover their attitudes and concerns. It goes without saying that there have been some tremendous social changes in the last few years. Some of them have certainly not been for the good from several moral standpoints. As far as specific biblical references, we do not find any direct Scripture which would forbid such a union. At the same time, we should realize, as well as make our children cognizant of the fact that there are many problems causing a great deal of anguish, tension and heartache should a couple from different racial back-

grounds decide to marry. They need to examine their own personalities to determine if they could withstand these extremely strong social pressures. From a Christian standpoint, those involved will need prayerfully to consider God's will for not only their lives, but also the lives of any possible offspring. Do the two involved really have a valid reason or strong enough and lasting love? Can they fully relate to one another, supporting their faith in the knowledge of truth of God's Word? As a counsellor, we share with them some of the frank case histories which have been kept on the problems of mixed marriages. They most definitely should be brought to a total awareness of all that is involved in their planning. The greatest danger will come to those young people who may be seeking to marry just to rebel against some social mores with which they may disagree. That is a very untenable foundation on which to build any lasting happiness.

We will often ask the couple if they know of any other mixed marriages which are working successfully after a reasonable length of time. Again, our desire is to point out some of the problems which must be confronted, and how many times, because of family backgrounds, and so forth, many people are just not emotionally equipped to carry through with a permanent relationship. One has to consider not only himself when he gets married, but also what might well happen to his children. If you are a parent with a child thinking about such a union, or one who is contemplating being married to someone of another race, seek sound spiritual and biblical counselling from a qualified Christian leader. Remember, when it comes to what should be a life-long contract, consider all of the areas of potential differences. This includes varied socio-economic backgrounds, churches in which the style of worship may be foreign, even food likes and dislikes can create untold future problems. Of course, it goes without saying that regardless of color no Christian should marry someone who has never received Jesus Christ as Saviour. On this point we do have definite teaching and prohibition in Scripture.

Q. "I thought children needed disciplining to teach them to resist the devil. Most people speaking on disciplining never say anything about satan. Could you please comment on this?"

A. Discussions on satanism certainly seem to be on the increase. Remember that children are very impressionable. The best emphasis is always on the positive. Teach the child to be self-controlled seeking to serve God. In this way there will be a natural resistance of the devil. Many parents make the mistake of talking about satan to frighten children. Fears develop early which don't need to be there.

While the Bible teaches that there certainly are demons, yet no Christian can be possessed by them since the Holy Spirit dwells within. It is a sad thing to see how many are now trying to benefit from a commercialization of all aspects of the unknown and occult. Advertisements can now be found where offers are made to cast out demons from people. Teaching only the negative side can damage children, as well as adults, if they become overly concerned with someone who is described as evil out to do them harm. It can be dangerous to stress an unhealthy balance of sin in an individual without a proper balance concerning the forgiveness of God. The old adage is correct, "Where knowledge of sin is great the knowledge of forgiveness must be even greater." Never underevaluate the power and strength we have as believers through Christ. We need not be under the power of satan. It is unfortunate that some of our churches are actually spending more time talking about the power of satan, failing to point out the power there is available to overcome his work. Emphasizing more the person and work of the Saviour, as well as the ministry of the Holy Spirit, would give people more confidence in the actual spiritual battle in which they are engaged.

What has now become a comedy phrase, "The devil made me do it," can sometimes be a weak way of a person's trying to escape his own basic responsibility. Often, it is because of our own sin and willful disregard of God's truth that we do things we know we shouldn't. We should be very careful as parents with what we allow to influence our children. It is sad to see families going to see films where the young as well as the old can be

exposed to teaching and scenes that will make an imprint upon minds indelibly for the rest of their lives. This is the danger with such films as "The Exorcist". We have enough research available right now to assure us that what a child watches has a tremendous influence on him. This is why proper television habits should be carefully governed. Sometimes life-long phobias are caused by unusual circumstances or conditions that are developed early in life. Remember, fears are often learned. A child doesn't come into the world fearing a snake, for instance. Adults are far more afraid of such a reptile. A youngster has no concept of any danger. Since children do generalize their fears, exposing them to spiritual fears can have a very detrimental effect. This doesn't mean that we are to build walls around our offspring, seeking to protect them from all experiences. Yet, we must be certain to provide them some solid teaching on the realities they will experience. We must certainly avoid that which is dangerous, approaching life in a very mature manner, seeking always to use the Word of God as our guide.

Remember, satan is already a defeated foe. His fate was definitely sealed when Christ gave His life for us on the cross of Calvary. When the Saviour returns the devil will be bound, later to be judged and thrown into hell forever. We should not isolate our children, but rather insulate them through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Q. "Is there really a distinction between deliberate sin and original sin as some teach?"

A. It would be best to refer to deliberate sins (plural) and original sin (singular). Original sin means that sinful nature which we inherit from Adam (Romans 5:12). Our first human parent was only able to pass on what he had in his own spiritual life which was original sin. It is in this state into which we have all been born. Deliberate sin means your will was exercised in the matter. From this standpoint we were not involved in Adam's sins. By faith we become sons and daughters of the living God. We are made children in His family, having heaven as our home. Look at such verses as Numbers 15:30. Here we see Israel's warnings against every form of sin, both those of omission as well as those of commission. Presumptuously here means willfully. David sinned this way as we see in reading that message of penitence in Psalm 51. Read also such passages as Hebrews 10:26.

Q. "Why was it that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?"

A. Scripture doesn't specifically tell us. For this reason, any answer would have to be supposition. Perhaps he was afraid of the ruling Jewish hierarchy, of which he himself was a member. He may not have wanted to be numbered among the followers of the Lord. Of course, later on he declared himself publicly since he called for the body of Jesus from the cross. He may have come in the evening knowing that the Saviour might not have been so busy, with so many around Him. Since we believe Nicodemus was a saved individual, when we get to glory, we can ask him directly.

Q. "In Genesis there are two Enochs mentioned. One was a descendant of Cain (Genesis 4:17) and the other of Seth. Why do both men have the same name?"

For the same reason that today people have the same name. It was from this first Enoch that all city life began. Strangely enough man has perverted that whole idea ever since. God is preparing a city which hath foundations. He is the Builder, Maker and Architect. In the next chapter we read of the other Enoch (5:18). What a beautiful tribute to his spiritual depth as we read, "And Enoch walked with God." How wonderful to be a part of the line from which the Saviour of all mankind would come.

Q. "What does it mean to 'watch and pray'?"

A. We find this exhortation in Matthew 26:41 where our Lord was in the Garden of Gethsemane. This clearly means, not that we are to go without physical rest, but that we are

to watch expectantly for the Lord to come. If we keep our eyes on Him we will not likely fall into temptation. Let us be constantly alert to the wiles of the devil, watching out because he will come as an angel of light, even though he is actually a roaring lion.

Q. "How was it possible for Peter, James and John to recognize Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration? It seemed their main concern was to build each of them a tabernacle."

A. Doubtless the three disciples were excited beyond words. As to recognizing the Old Testament personalities, it could have happened in a number of ways. Although not specifically recorded in the text, they might have been introduced to them. The Lord might have done it, or Moses and Elijah could have done it themselves. This is certainly not to overrule the very strong possibility of divine illumination. The very appearance of the two must have presented an unusually striking picture, too. They were definitely set apart from ordinary human beings. No wonder Peter exclaimed, "Lord, it's good for us to be up here. Let's build three tabernacles: one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for You." (There is an implication at least that Peter, James and John might be the caretakers for those tabernacles.) Our Lord reminded them gently that a mountain peak spiritual experience inevitably must resolve into a valley of activity and service. Now, as to recognition in heaven, if you can't find Moses and Elijah just ask around. There will be plenty of people who know them. What a thrilling privilege will be ours when we get to glory!

Q. "In the book of Revelation we read of the twelve tribes of Israel. Where are the so-called ten 'lost' tribes today?"

A. It is well that you use the words "so-called." None of the tribes are lost to God. In Revelation 7:4 we learn of the 144,000 sealed out of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Today we cannot tell the difference in the Hebrew people as to their tribal ancestry. The fact is, no one knows the specific identities. Because of the intermingling of the tribes their original backgrounds and geographical locations have become blurred. That doesn't mean they are no longer in existence. God says, "I will make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of thee (Jeremiah 30:11). There is a coming day of promise when the distinctions will again be noted (Ezekiel 37:22). It is biblically incorrect to talk about "Ten Lost tribes" or even twelve lost tribes. God knows where they are and will bring them back in His own time and choosing. Amos says, "Though I sift you as grain is sifted in a sieve; nevertheless, not one kernel will fall to the ground without the knowledge of the Lord your God." The most erroneous teaching comes from those who think England and the United States are Ephraim and Manasseh. Nothing could be further from the truth! Judah and Israel are the same as they were in the land. Thank God someday they will be reunited in their land.

Q. "I would like to know what your definition of a Jew is. Also, two of the twelve tribes mentioned in Revelation 7 are actually children of Joseph. Where are the other two tribes of Israel that are omitted with these two others put in their places?"

A. Properly speaking, a Jew is a descendant of Abraham, through Judah. In fact, the word "Jew" in the original is a shortened version of this one of Jacob's sons. Israel is the name God gave Jacob after his experience in Mesopotamia. For this reason, all the twelve tribes, Jacob's sons, are Israelites. Hebrew is the name that was first given to Abraham in the book of Genesis. He was an immigrant who was called of God into the Holy Land. The New Testament indicates no distinction between the terms Jew, Israelite and Hebrew. All are used of Paul concerning himself (Acts 21:39; Romans 11:1; Philipians 3:5).

Concerning the 12 sealed tribes consisting of 144,000 evangelists we find that Dan is

is evidently dropped. We can only speculate as to why this may have been. Of course, it is a fact of history, recorded at the end of the book of Judges, that the tribe of Dan went first as a group of people into idolatry. This is the reason usually given for the deletion in Revelation 7. Keep in mind, however, that in the last chapters of Ezekiel, when the land is divided for millennial use and settlement, the tribe of Dan does get its portion.

Q. "I have heard that there are 333 prophecies concerning the coming and crucifixion of our Lord. The further calculation indicates that the fraction of probability that all these prophecies could possibly be fulfilled would be expressed as one chance in 89 followed by 97 zeros. Do you think this is true?"

A. We haven't heard these specific figures but they certainly could be accurate. There isn't a one of the prophecies concerning Christ's first coming that wasn't fulfilled with one hundred percent accuracy. That even one or two such predictions could be brought to realization is far more than mere chance. It is also interesting to note that there is about as much, or even more, space given in the Old and New Testaments concerning the second coming of the Lord as there is relating to His first earthly appearance. This is why we have every reason to believe that the prophecies concerning His return will likewise be fulfilled absolutely to the letter, even as were the prophecies concerning His first advent.

Q. "When Paul wrote his first epistle to the church at Corinth, he talked about the problems they were having. In the 11th chapter he focuses primarily on the abuses surrounding observation of the Lord's Supper. Somebody told me that this particular passage speaks of the manner of eating and drinking, and not about the actual individual who is involved. How does one interpret this section?"

A. The Lord wants us to come to Him by faith, remembering with a cleansed heart His death and supreme love for each of us. Here we have the loving command of our Saviour which is just as definite in the Bible as what we are told about baptism, and the assembling of ourselves together. If we love Christ, and are devoted to Him, we should look forward to the important commemoration of this event. If we waited of ourselves until we were worthy, no one would ever be able, of himself to participate. How could we ever merit the privilege, honor and blessing of remembering our Lord in the central fact of redemptive history? As sinners we know we are unworthy. This is why we are to judge ourselves (11:27,28). Recognize how far short we fall. Then, having confessed our sins and shortcomings we come to Him by faith. We come seriously, meditatively, sorrowfully, joyfully and triumphantly recognizing the issues involved and that we are to honor Christ. In this way we partake in a worthy manner.

Q. "In recent years there's been a great deal of discussion over whether or not a Christian ought to be submissive to those in authority over him, particularly when the ruling individuals may not be believers. They may even enact laws which are oppressive against Christians. How far do we go in obeying our government? How about those under Communist rule?"

A. Wickedness in governmental high places is what gets into the headlines in our papers, and top spot on the nightly television news. Don't overlook the many government officials on every level who are honest and upright. They are seeking to do the very best they can in an honest manner of jurisdiction. Romans 13:1 reminds us, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." In the ninth chapter of Genesis we find the institution of human government. This passage teaches us the basic premise, "Whoso sheddeth a man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." This doesn't refer just to redeemed people in the human government. After all, "the highest function of government is the protection of human life, out of which arises the responsibility of capital punishment and all that is related to that

great fact." During His earthly ministry, our Lord lived under the reign of Nero who was probably the wickedest Roman emperor in history. Yet Christ said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." And our Lord never preached or taught insurrection against the established government under which the people were living at that particular time. Of course, if the human government asks us to do something immoral or sinful, we must obey God rather than man. As Christians we have a responsibility to protect our nation, even with our lives, in order so that we may remain free insofar as is humanly possible. Thank God, in America there is still an opportunity, when we see wickedness in high governmental places, to use the ballot box as our form of protest, trying to correct the situation in the proper manner. We should also underscore the fact that it seems to be easy for some today to think that every desire they have somehow or other is ordained of God. This therefore gives them the liberty to violate the laws of the land. We must be very careful to be really good citizens, law abiding individuals, despite requirements which we may feel are oppressive.

Q. "In Leviticus 22:14, what is the phrase 'holy thing' referring to?"

A. Here, God through Moses is speaking of priests and their ministry. The holy thing is the sacrifice which the priest made, of which he was also to partake. It would probably mean the peace offering because the one who offered it got some, the Lord received a portion of it, and then the priest himself also partook. The holy thing was that which was to be eaten. Verse four shows this.

Q. "In Hebrews 2:3 we read the question, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.' Is this to be applied to the saved or to the unsaved?"

A. This is a very definite warning to the unsaved. Remember, the epistle to the Hebrews is to Jewish people. They certainly had believing ones among their number as well as the majority of unbelieving. There were those who were just intellectually convinced. To turn back would place them strictly in danger of that awful condition of apostasy. Those who have never received Christ should realize the danger of putting off life's most important decision. There is a great invitation hymn, "Almost Persuaded," but lost!

Q. "Please explain the events taking place in the Middle East today in the light of prophecy."

A. This would require far more space than these limited pages! Certainly, the first impact in the light of prophecy was the return of the Jewish people to their land with the nation officially born in 1948. There was always a remnant in the land, but 26 years ago it was again a world force. This is one of the great signs of the coming of the Lord, the Messiah. While the Hebrew people, according to Old Testament prophets, were to be dispersed throughout all the world, yet at the end of the age there is the definite promise that they will be brought back again to the land. It's interesting how so many Jews have a heart-longing to get back to the land. They have come from Russia, Europe, South America, the United States, the Orient, and every other place imaginable. It must only be the grace of God that keeps these people from being at each other's throats since they come from so many different ideologies and social stratas. There is the overpowering, burning desire in the hearts of Jews around the world to get back home, to the land God promised to Abraham and to his seed forever.

Another sign referred to in Matthew 24:15-22 is the indication that the people will go back to a period of great persecution and suffering. The antichrist, "the abomination of desolation," will unleash his merciless pressure against them. We are seeing what is probably just a prelude to the persecution which will culminate when the man of sin, the son of perdition, actually appears on the scene. The Jewish people will continue

in trouble until the Lord comes in His millennial reign to straighten things out. Right now we have the descendants of Ishmael against the descendants of Isaac. They are still fighting today as they were when their mothers were at odds. This will continue until Messiah returns.

It is also interesting to note the tremendous alignment of nations. Russia is backing Egypt and the Arab nations, supplying forces to batter and fight Israel. Whoever thought, say forty years ago, that Russia would have to be taken into account at every single step of the way. Yet her dominance in the Middle East is unmistakable through naval and military might. Actually, when one gets right down to it, the events taking place in the Middle East are all in general and many specific fashion indicative of that which is spoken of in the Word of God.

Q. "In Revelation 2:5 it speaks of removing the lampstand. Is there a significance beyond just the reference to the particular church? Could it mean removal of a Christian's joy or usefulness if somehow they fail to live up to what God expects of them?"

A. The word "lampstand" was originally translated in the King James version as a "candlestick". The seven stars are the ministers of the seven churches. In Revelation 2:5, the Lord is speaking to the church at Ephesus. If repentance wasn't forthcoming the church would be brought to nothing. This doesn't refer to a Christian's joy or usefulness individually. The passage refers to the church as a whole. Perhaps the highest church truth presented in all of the New Testament is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Written about 63 or 64 A.D., the church at Ephesus must have been a thrillingly spiritual experience to behold. It had received marvelous spiritual truth. Yet 30 years later there had grown a spiritual coldness among the congregation. The people had lost their first love for Christ. Apparently the people at Ephesus did not heed the warning. Today, of course, the church, as well as the city, is in complete ruins. The lampstand was removed.