

# November 2014

Editor, Keith Sharp  
Designer, William Stewart

(unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp)



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Finally, brethren  
**WHATEVER THINGS** are true  
are noble  
are just  
are pure  
are lovely  
are of good report  
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE  
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

**PHILIPPIANS 4:8**

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at [christstheway.com](http://christstheway.com).

**Tanner Campbell**, who moved with his family to Rapid City, South Dakota this past summer, provides an excellent article each month for **Meditate on These Things**. He is only in his twenties and is married with two small children. About a month ago he was stricken with meningitis, and the doctors did not expect him to live. He is now at home with his family and recovering. I'm sure he had excellent health care, but I'm also sure many prayers of saints have been answered. He has more recovery to go through. I eagerly anticipate receiving his thoughtful, well-written articles again. - Keith Sharp

My wife Sandy and I lived and did the Lord's work in Northern New York State for 14 years. While we were there we met and became friends with **Vicki Fedde**, a lady who was dedicated to the Lord, studious, zealous, morally pure, hospitable, friendly, and very intelligent. She made the three and a half hour drive repeatedly to hear special Bible studies where we lived. She kept us in her home on several occasions when I preached in the capital region (Albany / Schenectady, New York) and organized Bible studies in her home for me to teach. She did this although her husband Gerry, whom she dearly loved, is an unbeliever. (Gerry is a pleasant fellow, and to my knowledge he never tried to keep Vicki from serving the Lord.) Vicki died recently of a brain aneurysm. She made a large impact for good on the Northeast, and I look forward to renewing our pleasant, uplifting friendship in a land where there are no sad partings. - Keith Sharp

## When the Roll Is Called up Yonder ...

Patrick Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

In recent weeks we have suffered the passing of some members of this church or their family members. We do "not grieve as others do who have no hope"; even so there is the shock and hurt of separation. The only cure for

this is the passing of time and the consolation that it is very far better “to be with Christ.”

The fact is, we should live confidently. We should determine that when the roll is called up yonder, “I’ll be there.” The “trumpet of the Lord” will sound when He returns, and if we faithful ones are still here then, “when the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there.” However, if the “trumpet of the Lord” has not sounded when our appointment (Hebrews 9:27) comes, when all of life is over and “our work on earth is done,” we should have so lived as to have the same confidence: “I’ll be there.”

This confidence is God’s desire for each of us; Paul wrote that God our Savior “desires all people to be saved” (1 Timothy 2:3- 4). And then Peter said that He is “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God wants you to be saved; and He has given assurance of this desire.

Other passages teach the same thing; but we conclude with Second Peter one. Peter says that those to whom he is writing should add to their faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly affection, and love (verses 5-7).

Then, in verses 8 – 11, he identifies the benefits of adding these qualities. We are particularly interested in the blessing promised in verse ten: “... if you practice these qualities you will never fall.” Practicing “these qualities” will enable one to say, confidently, when the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there!! “We’ll work ...”

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## Exchange About End Times

### Left Behind

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Without warning, millions of people around the globe simply vanish in “the Rapture.” That’s the plot of the 2014 remake of the movie “Left Behind.” Every part of the Dispensational doctrine of the “Rapture” is false. When Christ comes for His saints, it won’t be secretive (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Rather than a period of 1007 years between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked, all the dead will be raised at the same time (John 5:28-29). The saved will leave this earth forever when the Lord returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). At His coming the earth, even the universe, will be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:20-24,50-54; 2 Peter 3:1-12). There will be no second chance to be saved then, for at His coming all shall be judged and receive eternity either in heaven or in hell (Matthew 25:31-46). (article in October 11, 2014 Baxter Bulletin, newspaper of Mountain Home, Arkansas)

### Reply

I was pleased to see in your ad about the resurrection that you haven't been fooled by the pre-trib rapture propaganda that has made so many false teachers rich. That doctrine is a classic example of what happens to people with itching ears.

However, while you got something very important correct, I think there is more to the truth than what was mentioned in your ad. I've been studying the Bible since 1966 after the Lord Jesus made His saving grace real to me at that time. Before I was born again, the Lord put 15 Christians in my life, who all told me how to be saved. They came from 7 different denominations and nondenominational churches. All of them believed in a pre-trib rapture. However, I was not able to find anything to prove they were right about the rapture when I began to study God's word for myself. Every scripture I read about Jesus' return pointed to a post-trib resurrection and rapture.

One of the clearest scriptures about this is what Revelation 20 says about the first and second resurrections. The first resurrection says the beast and false prophet will be judged at that same time. Since the first resurrection will occur at Jesus' second coming and the rapture will occur at the same time, it is obvious a post-trib event. However, this same portion of scripture also says that a period of 1,000 years will elapse before the second resurrection.

Your ad does not address this, but gives the impression that there will not be 2 resurrections 1,000 years apart. If I misunderstood your ad, please forgive me. If this is what you believe to be true, please reconsider your position. The Bible seems quite clear that there will be 2 resurrections 1,000 years apart.

You may also want to consider what Dr. Carl Baugh discovered scientifically regarding this. Dr. Baugh established a Creation Science museum in TX. He also discovered an electromagnetic field around the earth, which supports life as we know it and is disintegrating at a constant rate. Because the disintegration rate is constant, it is possible to calculate backwards in time to discover that there was too much for life on earth over 10,000 years ago. This is a scientific proof that evolution is wrong. Dr. Baugh also discovered that there will not be enough of this electromagnetic field left to sustain life for more than another 1,500 years. Thus, there is still enough left for the millennium to occur if the Lord Jesus returns in 500 years or less. Dr. Baugh's discovery indicates that God created the earth with life within a certain window of time to accomplish His purpose.

### **My Answer**

Thank you for your good message concerning our newspaper article of last Saturday. I appreciate your interest, your diligent study of Scripture, and your willingness to discuss the will of God.

Yes, the Lord Himself plainly indicated that all the dead, both righteous and unrighteous, will be raised at the same time.

*“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice “and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29).*

Revelation twenty does not mention either the “great tribulation” or the “rapture.” “The great tribulation” is mentioned by the Lord in Matthew 24:21, and the Lord Himself plainly indicated it would take place in that generation (Matthew 24:34). The phrase “this generation” is explicitly used in the context to mean the people living at that time (Matthew 23:36).

The term “rapture” is not found in the Bible. The English word “rapture” is taken from the Latin term “rapturos,” which is the Latin equivalent of the Greek word “harpazo”, which is translated “caught up” in the New King James Version in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. When the saints are “caught up,” they will remain with the Lord away from the earth “always” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

If we are to take the thousand year reign literally, only those who have been beheaded for Christ will reign with Him (Revelation 20:4). Unless your head has been cut off, you're cut out. Now it might be tempting to see some sort of reference to Islam there, but the truth is the thousand years is symbolic of the complete victory of the saints over Satan, just as the great red dragon is symbolic of Satan himself (Revelation 12:3-4), and the great harlot symbolizes pagan Rome of John's day (Revelation 17:3-6,18). The primary message of Revelation was fulfilled shortly after John wrote the book (Revelation 1:1,3; 3:11; 22:6-7, 10, 12, 20).

Just as the thousand years itself is symbolic, the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5-6) symbolizes the triumph through faith of persecuted saints over Satan; though physically slain, their entrance into paradise is victory over Satan.

Your information about the magnetic field surrounding the earth is interesting, but the theories of scientists do not determine the meaning of Scripture, whether those scientists are believers or unbelievers.

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## **Questions from Nigeria**

### **Questions**

Please what does Apostle Paul mean when he said `I appeal to Caesar'? in Acts 25. Also, Is it right for a Christian to Marry and unbeliever? Are there advantages and disadvantages? Pls let me know. I will prefer if you can assist in the reply urgently plz

### **Answers**

Thanks for the good questions.

Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-28). If Paul had agreed to go to Jerusalem for judgment as Festus, seeking to please the Jews, requested (Acts 25:1-9), he would have been exposed again to the danger of assassination by

the Jews (verses 2-3). As a Roman citizen, Paul had the right, if he felt he was being unjustly treated, to demand to be tried by Caesar himself. When this happened, the trial was immediately suspended, and the prisoner, along with charges and witnesses, were sent to Rome to await appearance before Caesar. This is what happened with Paul.

Undoubtedly it is the course of wisdom for a Christian to marry another Christian. "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (1 Corinthians 15:33). However, we should not make this a test of fellowship. There is a good course and a better course, and neither is sin (1 Corinthians 7:38). Often times 2 Corinthians 6:14 is used to teach it is wrong to marry an unbeliever. This cannot be the meaning of the passage. It does not say "Do not become unequally yoked together with unbelievers" but "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." If applied to marriage to an unbeliever, it would demand that the believer divorce the unbeliever, something the same apostle Paul forbade the same Corinthian brethren to do (1 Corinthians 7:12-13). The entire context goes through chapter seven verse one. Paul commands Christians not to share in the sins of unbelievers. The phrase "in the Lord" in 1 Corinthians 7:39 means "in harmony with the Lord's will" (cf. Ephesians 6:1). Thus, it is best for a Christian to marry a fellow Christian, but it is not a sin in itself to marry an unbeliever, though it could lead to sin if the Christian shares in the sins of the unbelieving mate.

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## Jamaica Patois Wisdom, #17

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

(The Jamaican Patois dialect is colorful, unique and humorous. It is my desire to share some of the philosophy shown in this mix of colorful phrases that are witty as well as thought-provoking. I hope the readers both profit and enjoy. In my quarter-century plus of teaching there, I have come to appreciate some things about their culture. – Jefferson David Tant)

**Patois** – Fisherman neva seh im fish tink

**English** – A fisherman will never say his fish stinks

**Meaning** – People with bad habits will never admit to them

An adage says "Some people never learn." I'm sure you have known people like that. People who make one bad decision after another and never get the message that maybe they need to make some changes.

We are reminded of King Saul, who seemed to be intent on making bad decisions. Even though he could see that David was faithful to him, and respected his position as King of Israel, Saul sought to kill him time and again. 1 Samuel 24 tells of a time when David had a chance to kill the one who was seeking his life. Saul went into a cave where David and his men were hiding, and David's men urged him to strike Saul. But David refused. He did cut off a piece of Saul's robe, and then called to Saul after the king went out, asking him why he was seeking the life of David.

*"When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, 'Is this your voice, my son David?' Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, 'You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you'" (1 Samuel 24:1-17).*

Yet just two chapters later we have the same scenario, as Saul continued to pursue David, and David once again refrained from killing Saul when he had the chance.

How often did the nation of Israel get off track? It would be interesting to go through the Old Testament and count the cycles of faithful service, rebellion, trouble, calling out to God, a deliverer sent, restoration, faithful service, rebellion, etc. On one occasion Moses declared: "For they are a nation lacking in counsel, And there is no understanding in them" (Deuteronomy 32:28).

There are two good sources upon which we can rely to make good decisions, and it would be good to consider them.

(1) The source of all wisdom—our Creator. God's Word is an infallible source of wisdom and guidance. In a conversation Eliphaz had with Job, he asked: "Do you hear the secret counsel of God, And limit wisdom to yourself?" (Job. 15:8). We know that Eliphaz and Job's other friends misunderstood Job's situation, but they did

utter words of wisdom at times.

David wrote, "I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night" (Psalm 16:7).

(2) The counsel of good friends. Solomon wrote: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel" (Proverbs 15:12). "Listen to counsel and accept discipline, That you may be wise the rest of your days" (Proverbs 19:20). Paul wrote: "Do not be wise in your own estimation" (Romans 12:16).

We must be cautious about the counsel of our friends, lest it be bad counsel.

*"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2).*

Let us be wise about our habits, lest we foul the air with stinky fish.

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Paul, To The Ephesians

## Introduction to Ephesians

Patrick Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

*"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

We know quite a bit about the church of Christ in Ephesus.

We know about its beginning; in Acts 19 we learn that there were disciples there, baptized with the baptism of John (verse 3) after baptism in the name of Christ had been instituted. When the apostle Paul learned of this he said "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus" (verse 4). When they heard this, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (verse 5).

Make note of this: when they heard they should believe, they were baptized. Saving faith demands obedience (Romans 1:5).

We know something of the history of the church of Christ in Ephesus, from things said about them in Revelation 2:1-7. They are described first in complimentary terms (verses 2-3); then they are rebuked: they had "abandoned the love" they had at first (verse 4). This suggests that the Ephesian Christians, while dutifully doing the right things, were doing them as habit, and not as a show of faith. The basic remedy called for: "repent ..." (verse 5).

We know how the Ephesians were instructed, as we read this letter written to them by the apostle Paul.

It seems likely that this epistle, with those written to the church of Christ at Colossae and to Philemon, were written on the same day (6:21, 22; Colossians 4:7-9). It may be a stretch, but perhaps here sits Paul, quill and parchment in hand, or dictating to someone like Tertius (Romans 16:22), with a manuscript or two at his feet and another under construction. And he begins:

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..." (Ephesians 1:3).*

Paul's expression of blessing to God the Father sets before us a great example. To "bless" God is to praise Him; He is worthy of praise because He has made available to us in Christ "every spiritual blessing." Therefore, we should bless God, if for no other reason than this, that He has blessed us.

Paul repeatedly gives thanks to God, and we should too. We should say "thank you" to our heavenly Father. We should say "thank you" to our fellowman when we are helped by him. Saying "thank you" acknowledges our obligation – my Dad used to say, "much obliged", (which as a kid I did not understand) – but perhaps that admission is why folk do not want to say it – who knows?

God has blessed us in Christ "with every spiritual blessing." If "every spiritual blessing" is in Christ, how many

blessings are to be found outside Christ? The answer, obviously, is none. As we move through the chapter Paul will itemize spiritual blessings; but for now notice that they – every one – are in Christ.

Do you want spiritual blessings? Election, adoption, redemption, forgiveness – they are all “in Christ.” Are you in Christ? Who is in Christ? What does the Bible teach? Next lesson.

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## Should We Be As Nehemiah?

Kennedy Odongo Adhiambo | Nyatike, Kenya

Nehemiah was moved with sympathy when he learned the condition of the nation of Judah and what happened to the wall of Jerusalem.

1. He sat down and wept. 1:4a
2. He fasted and prayed.v4b.
  - A. addressed God for His goodness. v 5
    1. naming the addressed one.
    2. He is God
      - a. The Lord
      - b. Yahweh
  - B He named Him God of heaven. v 5a
    1. to distinguish him from other gods.
      - a. made of wood
      - b. or stones
  - C. Nehemiah knew God as great and awesome. v 5b
    1. He alone is the creator.
    2. He is the one who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness. Heb 1:3
      - a. Not only great but also good.
      - b. showing compassion to those who love Him.
      - c. blessing in a special way those who love Him.
      - d. He hears the prayers of those who wait upon Him.
      - e. He cares for His people. 1 Peter 5:7

If we can know Jehovah as Nehemiah did, nothing can be impossible for us.

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## How The Devil Gets Us

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

Paul told Christians, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). We are not to be naive to his influence or “ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). From what I have seen, he has no greater way of luring us away from Christ than our relationship to family and friends. I have spoken on this before but feel it is worth repeating because of the constant threat it is to each of us.

It is not uncommon for mature Christians to weaken their stand on divorce, institutionalism, denominationalism, and now even homosexuality because of their family’s involvement in these sins. People who “were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift” (Hebrews 6:4) are now turning their back on the faith that was once for all delivered because of their family’s decision to do so. These saints used to preach “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” but are now in synch with those who say one faith is as good as another. Christians who once were resolved in their mind that it is a sin for a couple to live together in fornication, or to divorce for reasons other than adultery, or that a man may not lay with a man as with a woman, are now “re-thinking” their stand on these issues. “Perhaps we have misunderstood the Bible all this time” is their reasoning as they support a child or grandchild who has conformed to this world. And behind every lie and underneath every ungodly compromise with sin is the devil, who is certainly laughing at how gullible God’s people can be.

Our Savior said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37). We will either meet that challenge or we will not as we respond to our family’s decision to disobey God. He informs us of Abraham’s faith, which was strong enough to raise the knife to sacrifice his son in obedience to God (Genesis 22:2, 10-12). Centuries later we are told, “So then

those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (Galatians 3:9). We do not have to literally take our family's life or mistreat them in anyway, fortunately, but we are required to love God more than them by choosing His will over theirs. We are required to stand with the truth even when it is perceived as hatred or being disloyal to the family. Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). This may not make us the most popular person in the room, but it will be "a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18). And, it will protect us from Satan.

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from the e-book, "And They Shall Become One Flesh"

## Concern For One Another's Soul

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

*And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.* (Joshua 24:15)

### Family And Faith

Joshua's challenge to the people of Israel was not only a motivational oration by a departing leader, but a solid declaration of his continued practice with his own family. His decision to serve the LORD was not only for himself, but for his family.

This does not mean that Joshua forced obedience to the LORD among the members of his family, against their will. Rather, he as the leader of his family, directed them in the ways of God, and encouraged the development of their faith. Each one has an individual responsibility, but family members have a spiritual responsibility to one another. Cain arrogantly asked,

*"Am I my brother's keeper?"* (Genesis 4:9)

Yes, indeed, we are our brother's keeper. We are the keeper of our entire family, including our spouse.

There are several examples of families of faith in the Scriptures. Consider:

- Noah prepared an ark for the saving of his household (Hebrews 11:7)
- Moses' parents hid him from the Egyptian soldier, and eventually Moses would imitate their faith (Hebrews 11:23-27)
- Angels led Lot, his wife, and his daughters away from Sodom (Genesis 19:16)
- Rahab sought deliverance for herself and her family (Joshua 2:12-13; 6:23)
- Cornelius called together his friends and relatives to hear the gospel (Acts 10:24)
- Lydia, one of the women who met at the riverside (Acts 16:13-14) was sure to have the gospel shared with her family (Acts 16:15)
- The Philippian jailer *"and all his family were baptized"* (Acts 16:32-33)

### Heeding Spousal Advice

As Pilate sat in the Praetorium to judge Jesus, his wife sent a message to him. The message was very clear:

*"Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."* (Matthew 27:19)

Perhaps he shrugged her warning off, too busy to consider it. Or, it might be that he did heed her advice, and that is why he tried to wash his hands of the outcome that day. Spousal advice comes from one who has our best interest at heart.

We have focused several times on the fact that the woman was given as a helper to man (Genesis 2:19). How foolish for him to not consider a word of counsel from her. No man is so wise that he cannot benefit from his wife's perspective. In fact, Abraham was commanded to heed the voice of his wife (Genesis 21:10-12). Nabal (1 Samuel 25) is an excellent example of the end of one who was unwilling to receive counsel. The woman is commanded to receive and obey her husband's word, as he is charged with the leadership of the household. Eve is an example

of the outcome when a woman does not seek her husband's counsel (Genesis 3:1-6).

### **A Few Words From Peter**

The apostle Peter gave instruction for husbands and wives in 1 Peter 3, which we have already viewed a few times in our series. Once more, we return to this text, to note the need for husbands and wives to have concern for one another's spiritual life.

Peter mentions our spiritual duties to one another in the text; obedience of the wife (1 Peter 3:1, 5); and the understanding of the husband toward his wife (1 Peter 3:7). But in addition to those duties, the need for a focus for spiritual things is seen throughout the text. The woman's concern for her non-Christian husband, and attention to living a righteous life, can prompt him to be won to the Lord.

Peter closes the portion of text which speaks specifically to husbands and wives with the reminder that we are "...heirs together of the grace of life..."

As such, we ought to be very focused on how to help each other to attain the glory of heaven. From 1 Peter 3:8-12, the scope of Peter's instruction is now to all Christians, not just couples, but, the principles are certainly applicable to the concern we should have for our spouse's soul. Among other things, we need to share the same MIND, have COMPASSION, share DUTIFUL love, turn from evil and DO GOOD. The end result - that we may inherit a blessing.

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## **Facing Your Enemies**

Sean P. Cavender | Raymore, Missouri, USA

The third psalm, a psalm of David, is written under the circumstances of the hardship of facing your enemies. "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!" (Psalm 3:1) David was overwhelmed with adversaries bringing trouble against him. Others about him wondered at his faith; they denied that God would be an aid to him. "Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God" (Psalm 3:2).

David's certainty in God would not be shaken even under these circumstances. When enemies were coming against him. Even when companions questioned his sanity and faith, David remained strong. He said that God was a shield and protector for him.

It is a wonder that David had the peace of mind to rest comfortably and the motivation to pick himself up once again to persevere even through these desperate times. "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me" (Psalm 3:5). This reveals how strong in faith David was about God's providential care for him.

David trusted in God throughout the good times and even the bad times. He had the peace of mind to rest and continue the fight. He knew salvation belonged to the people of Jehovah (Psalm 3:8)!

Do we demonstrate this same sort of faith? We certainly have our enemies. The Lord Jesus Christ told us to "love our enemies." We will have those that persecute us because of our faith in the gospel.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you," (Matthew 5:10-12).

We will face scoffers, who mock our faith in God. Christians are supposed to live with the understanding and perspective that Christ will return and this world will come to an end (2 Peter 3:2-7). Ultimately, we must be ready to stand at the day of judgment.

Do we have anything to fear? Absolutely not, because "Salvation belongeth unto the LORD; thy blessing is upon thy people" (Psalm 3:8). But for those who are living in unrighteousness, persecuting the Lord's people, they ought to fear. "Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou has broken the teeth of the ungodly" (Psalm 3:7).

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# The Tragic Sin Of King Uzziah

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

King Uzziah of Judah obeyed the law of the Lord, and, as the result, God blessed him and made his kingdom strong (2 Chron-icles 26:1-15). "But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense" (verse 16, English Standard Version). Azariah the high priest and 80 brave priests followed the king into the temple, confronted him, and informed him he had no right to offer the incense to the Lord. Uzziah became very angry, but as the priests withstood him, leprosy broke out in his forehead. The priests rushed him out of the temple, and he himself hurried to leave. But he was an unclean leper the remainder of his life, had to live by himself (cf. Leviticus 13:1-3; Numbers 5:1-3), and his son Jotham reigned in his place (2 Chronicles 26:17-23).

King Uzziah, a descendant of David, was of the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:2-9). The Lord did not specifically forbid one from Judah to function as a priest; He just said nothing about priests from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14). He commanded that priests in Israel were of the tribe of Levi and of the lineage of Aaron (Exodus 40:13-15; Numbers 26:58-59). King Uzziah could not minister as a priest because the Lord God specified the tribe from which the priests were to come, and he was of the wrong tribe.

When the Lord specifies what He wants in worship, it is sin to introduce something else. Do you think you could convince King Uzziah now that it doesn't make any difference how we worship?

The Lord specifies singing as the kind of music He wants in worship in the New Testament age (Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). The Lord does not specifically forbid instrumental music in worship; He just said nothing about it. He commanded that we sing. Does it make any difference how we worship Him?

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## Introduction to Daniel

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### Historical Setting

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his troops to conquer and destroy the Assyrians, who had been the dominant power in the world of the Jews, in 612 and again in 605 in the decisive Battle of Carchemish. He also defeated Pharaoh Necho of Egypt and swept down and subjected Judah (605). His father King Nabopolassar died, and Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon to receive the throne, taking with him Jewish hostages, including Daniel.

### Author

Daniel is the author of the book that bears his name. The book specifically claims to be the work of Daniel (7:2,28; 8:1,15; 9:2; 10:2; 12:5), and the Lord confirms this claim by quoting from the book and ascribing it to Daniel (Matthew 24:15; cf. Daniel 9:27; 12:11).

### The Man Daniel

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah" (1:1; Babylonian reckoning of time, i.e., 605 B.C.), Daniel, along with other

*young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans* (1:4),

was taken as a hostage by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from Judah to Chaldea to be trained to serve as a wise man (counselor) before the king.

The Hebrew name "Daniel" means "God is my judge." As a captive official in the court of the king, his name was changed to the Chaldean "Belteshazzar," which may mean "protect the life of the prince" and may have included the name of the Babylonian god Bel.

Daniel was a prophet of God (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14) and was one of the three major prophets of the time of

the Babylonian Captivity. Jeremiah (active 626 - 586 B.C.) prophesied to the Jews in Judah, Ezekiel (active 592 - 570 B.C.) to the Jews in the Dispersion, and Daniel to the courts of pagan kings of empires and to later Jewish people concerning the universal rule of the one true God.

Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Chaldean Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego), refused to defile themselves with the unclean food of Babylon. They were allowed to eat vegetables and to drink water. "God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (1:17). After three years of training (1:5), when they were tested by the king "in all matters of wisdom and understanding ... he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm" (1:20).

Daniel served the Babylonians "until the first year of King Cyrus" of Persia (1:21, i.e., 539 B.C.). Daniel's last recorded vision occurred in "the third year of Cyrus king of Persia" (10:1, i.e., 536 B.C.), at which time he must have been in his mid eighties.

Because of the divine wisdom imparted to Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar "made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon" (2:48). The last King of Babylon, Belshazzar, on the very night his kingdom fell to the Medes and Persians, elevated Daniel to "be the third ruler in the kingdom" (5:29). Cyrus, King of Media and Persia, conquered Babylon, and "Darius the Mede" (5:31, "Cyrus' general?"), made Daniel one of the "three governors" over the empire (6:1-2).

Daniel was renowned even in his own generation for righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14,20) and wisdom (Ezekiel 28:3).

#### **Date**

Probably Daniel was written in 536 B.C., three years after Cyrus decreed the Jews could return to Jerusalem (10:1; cf. 9:2; Jeremiah 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4).

#### **Language**

An unusual characteristic of the book of Daniel is that much of it (2:4 - 7:28) is written in the Aramaic language, the international language of trade and diplomacy of the ancient Near East (like first century koine Greek and modern English). The remainder of the book is in Hebrew. Those portions of Daniel in Aramaic are particularly designed to show the pagan Gentiles that there is one true God Who rules the nations and affairs of men.

#### **Theme**

The theme of Daniel is the Kingdom of God. Perhaps no other book of the Bible so plainly, forcefully states the fact that God rules over all the nations of the earth and ultimately decides whether they prosper or fall (Daniel 4:17,24-25,34-35; 5:21). As King Nebuchadnezzar learned, "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses" (Daniel 4:25; cf. 4:17,26,32; 5:21). The historical sections of the book (chapters 2-6) are uniformly designed to demonstrate that God rules over all men and nations (2:44; 3:29; 4:1-2,17,25,32,34-35; 5:18,21-23; 6:26). The prophetic portion (chapters 7-12) takes this theme and foretells the development of the four great, middle eastern empires from Daniel's day on (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman) that led to and culminated in the establishment of the kingdom of God. These chapters also foretell the sufferings of the Jews up to and including the time of their destruction as a nation by the Romans in A.D. 70 (cf. 9:24-27).

The book of Daniel prophesies the time of the establishment of the kingdom of God. It was to be in the days of the Roman rulers (2:31-45), when the Son of Man ascended to the Father to receive His kingdom (7:13-14; cf. Acts 1:9-11; Mark 16:19).

Daniel teaches about the reign of Messiah (7:13-14), the ministry of angels (8:16 - 12:1), the resurrection of the dead (12:2-3), and personal devotion to God and freedom from defilement with false religion (1:8; 3:13-18; 6:4-10).

Like Ezekiel, symbolism from the book of Daniel greatly influenced John in penning Revelation (compare, e.g., Daniel 7:7 with Revelation 12:3; Daniel 12:7 with Revelation 12:14).

#### **Outline**

I. Historical - chapters 1 - 6

- A. Introduction - chapter 1
  - B. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Great Image - chapter 2
  - C. The Fiery Furnace - chapter 3
  - D. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Great Tree - chapter 4
  - E. Belshazzar's Feast - chapter 5
  - F. The Den of Lions - chapter 6
  - II. Prophetic - chapters. 7 - 12
    - A. The Four Beasts (Four Kingdoms) - chapter 7
    - B. The Ram & the Male Goat (Persia & Greece) - chapter 8
    - C. The Seventy Weeks - chapter 9
    - D. Fall of Persia - chapter 10
    - E. Kings of North & South (Seleucids & Ptolemies) - chapter 11
    - F. The Time of the End of Daniel's Visions - chapter 12
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#### Parables of the Master

### **Bearing Fruit - The Barren Fig Tree - Luke 13:1-9**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

As Jesus was teaching through Galilee for the last time, some told him about a group of Galileans who had gone to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and had been attacked by the Roman troops commanded by Pontius Pilate, causing their own blood to be mingled at the base of the altar with the blood of the animal sacrifices they had brought (verse 1; cf. Leviticus 4:27-30). The reply of the Lord indicates these people must have thought these tragic victims were worse sinners than others for having suffered so awful a fate (verse 2). They had the same conviction as Job's friends (Job 4:7). In fact, even the Lord's disciples so believed (John 9:1-2).

All suffering and death is the result of sin (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:16-24), but that doesn't mean each individual disease, accident, calamity, or death is caused by the sin of the one who suffers. Since sin entered the world, suffering and death are the common lot of the descendants of Adam and Eve (1 Corinthians 15:22). Job suffered terribly, though he was "a blameless and upright man, one who" feared God and shunned evil (Job chapters 1 - 2). Some suffer because of their own sins, but some suffer for righteousness' sake (Luke 23:39-41; Romans 1:26-27; John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12). This sin cursed world is not fair, but the scales will be balanced after death (Luke 16:25; Revelation 6:9-11; 20:12-15; 21:1-5).

Thus, Christ responded, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:2-3). The Lord didn't deny they were sinners. He just denied that their fate in this world proved they were any worse sinners than others.

Christ added to their example that of the eighteen who were killed by the collapse of a tower at the pool of Siloam (Luke 13:4). Again, their tragedy didn't prove they were any worse than the rest of the citizens of Jerusalem.

But while a tragic death cannot be used to pass judgment on the victim, it should be used as a warning of coming judgment. "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5). We have all sinned, and we all fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). In all justice God could call the drama of human civilization to a halt, close the curtain, and cast us all into the lake of fire. Every untimely death is a dramatic warning to repent. We too face death. We too must meet our Maker. There's no place for smug, self-righteousness; there's only the call to repent or perish.

The Master taught a parable to illustrate the point (Luke 13:6-9). A landowner had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, a place where the soil was cultivated and suitable for producing figs. This was the third year the owner had come seeking fruit and had found none. Surely the tree had been given sufficient time to produce fruit. He commanded the keeper of the vineyard to cut it down, for it was using up the nutrients and moisture of the soil unprofitably. The keeper asked for another year to fertilize the tree and to see if it would produce. If not, it would be cut down. The parable teaches both the longsuffering and the justice of God.

Christians are the recipients of "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). We have

been forgiven of our sins (Ephesians 1:7) and have the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2). We have peace and joy, along with the blessed privilege of prayer and the watchful care of our heavenly Father (Philippians 4:4,6-7; 1 Peter 3:12).

But we can't just take up space in the kingdom of God, soaking up the rich, spiritual blessings, while producing no fruit. The Lord expects us to produce fruit for Him (John 15:8). We must produce good fruit (Matthew 12:33-35), the fruit of righteousness (Philippians 1:9-11), the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." He expects us to seek to produce the fruit of saved souls (Romans 1:13).

If we have failed to produce the fruit He requires, the Lord is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). But don't presume on the longsuffering of God.

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:10-12)*

He may say, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you!" (Luke 12:20)

What should I learn from tragedies that befall others? I should learn not to judge the victims on the basis of the tragedies they suffer but to see the goodness and severity of God illustrated (Romans 11:22). I should see the goodness of God manifested in His longsuffering, because I've been given another day to bear fruit. But I should see the severity of God's judgment if I fail to take advantage of this new opportunity He has graciously afforded me. Are you bearing fruit?



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