

Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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Is
CHINA
Ready for War?

February 2002 Contents

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The Bible predicts that before Christ's return, a 200 million-man army will appear out of the East (Revelation 9:16). China must certainly comprise the bulk of this force. Can China project its power like this today—or will it need to “bulk up” first? **(Reuters)**

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DO YOU SEE GOD?

Part Two

The Christian life is an educational process. God has designed it so that a person learns to judge and prioritize everything in terms of God and godliness. So we learn what is real versus what is illusion, truth versus lies, good versus evil, worthwhile versus worthless. It takes a lifetime of experiences—and sometimes multiple similar experiences—before we learn to make the proper judgments. Incredible as it seems, over a lifetime we can begin to judge matters as God does.

However, we must allow the evidence of good over evil and the like to enter our minds. Beyond that, we must also submit ourselves to the truth it reveals to us. If we reject that evidence, we have another responsibility: that of assuming guilt for denying God. In the end, it is far easier and far more rewarding to accept the evidence and submit to the truth.

Once we submit, we are required to begin living it; in practical fact, submitting to the truth *is* living it. Knowledge of what is true and godly is fine, but without being applied in one's life, it is practically useless in terms of God's judgment and eternal life. Jesus says that "he who *does* the will of My Father in heaven" is the one who will enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 7:21).

The Road to Emmaus

Luke 24 contains a noteworthy episode that occurred immediately after Christ's resurrection. It becomes even more interesting in light of a Christian living after his own symbolic resurrection, baptism. Once we commit our lives to God, we are supposed to "walk the walk." We are supposed to "walk with God" and "walk with Jesus Christ." The two men described in Luke 24 literally do this just hours after the resurrection:

Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself [the resurrected Christ] drew near and went with them. (verses 13-15)

Luke emphasizes the fact that movement was taking place. Reading this centuries later, we can apply it to life itself. Our life is not a static process; our lives "move" from the moment of birth to the time God calls us and we are converted and then to our last breath. When we die, we stop "walking." However, from the time of our calling, we do not walk alone—God is with us. He leads and guides us by His Spirit. He convicts us of things that will be important for His spiritual creation and for our salvation. Once this process of conviction begins, we repent and are converted. God comes to live in us by means of His Spirit—then we really are "walking with Christ." We have Christ *in* us!

Are we walking with Him or not?

In Luke 24, He was literally with them, walking right beside them. And *they did not recognize Him* (verses 15-16)! Luke specifically says "their eyes were restrained." One might think that God had blinded their minds, but notice how the next verses read:

And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" (verses 17-19)

Even someone who had associated with Christ for a

fairly long period of time, possibly even the full length of His ministry, could fail to see. We have to realize that they did not expect to see. Humans see what they expect to see. People see what they want to see and are educated to see. Unless a person makes the effort to be discerning, to think consciously about other aspects of what he is looking at, it is likely that he will *not* see.

Christians must consciously process the truths that they receive from God as they are involved in the circumstances of their walk with Christ. We might be walking with Christ, and He is there walking beside us, but we do not see Him. This can happen if we fail to identify the circumstances that we are experiencing in our lives with Him. The spiritual, not perceived with the five senses, is often overlooked!

So, were these disciples “blinded”? One might think so but for what Jesus Himself says in verse 25: “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!’”

The Greek word rendered “fool,” *anoetos*, means “inconsiderate” in its original sense: They failed to consider or think! Another definition is “to reason improperly.” It is very similar to the Hebrew *nabal* of the Old Testament. Jesus is telling them that they are not properly applying their minds. His rebuke also carries with it a moral reproach, describing “one who does not govern his mind.”

When we read Christ’s next rebuke, it becomes crystal clear that they simply did not *believe*! Even though they had been taught, they did not believe the things that appeared in the Old Testament describing the Messiah and His resurrection. They did not see the Christ, who stood right next to them, because they did not expect to see Him! Thus, Christ not only calls them “fools,” suggesting that He expected them to be able to identify Him, but He also calls them “slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken,” which intensifies His judgment that they were not spiritually alert. Thus, He feels it necessary to teach them the basics once again:

“Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (verses 26-27)

In verse 21, the two men are in the midst of giving their explanation of the events of the preceding week to Christ. They say, “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.” Their hope was really nothing more than a wish. It is significant that their response mentions nothing about having their trust in Him. The reason for this is that they were not using their faith or belief. A wide gulf separates “hoping” and “trusting.” While hoping may consist of just a desire for something, trusting requires a person to believe confidently, make choices, and patiently endure.

When these two disciples finally saw Jesus, when they perceived who was with them, everything that they had

experienced—including the crucifixion and resurrection—made sense (verses 31-32). The point is this: If we see God working in our lives, then everything God is doing with us will begin to “come together.” It may not happen all at once as with these men, but if we can see God involved in the circumstances of our lives as we walk with Jesus Christ, then it will give shape and form to our lives in a way that we would never have otherwise! Things will make sense, and we will see them in their proper perspective.

God-Given Comprehension

Paul adds some essential understanding in I Corinthians 2:6-8:

However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

If mankind had seen Christ, if they had clearly identified with Him, the history of the world would be exceedingly different. They did not see because, as Paul writes here, they were not mature. *Mature*, in this context, means “converted.” He contrasts those who are able to see and those who are not able to see. Those who are able to see are those who are spiritually mature.

Even though Christ quoted—and lived—the scriptures with which most of His audience were familiar, the people did not see God working through Him. So it has always been with God’s servants. Christ was not the only one. Jesus Himself testifies that these people also “kill[ed] the prophets” (Matthew 23:34-37). It is unlikely that they would have killed the prophets if they clearly saw them as God’s messengers. If they believed in God and were fearful of His authority and sovereignty over His creation, they would not have dared to do it! Nevertheless, it has always been this way: some see and some do not see.

Paul says in I Corinthians 2:7 that God’s ministers “speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.” This *mystery* is not a puzzle that is difficult to solve but “a secret impossible to penetrate.” As the apostle goes on to say in succeeding verses, the world is not “all there” upstairs because they do not have God’s Spirit to help them penetrate the secret. Without this vital ingredient, it is no wonder that it accepts its own and rejects the truths of God.

A Necessity

Paul writes in verse 9, “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared

for those who love Him.” Many in the world believe that the things of God are “too great” for mere humans to comprehend. We really cannot “get it” or see it. Yet, the truth is so simple to those whose eyes are open that a child can understand. The carnal mind, however, is so blinded by traditions and habits of thinking that even Christians tend to reject the things of God—even though *God has converted us*.

The effect of this is something like the story about the three blind Indians who were led up to an elephant. Each man touched a different part of the great beast. One held the elephant’s trunk, and when asked what it was, he said, “This is a snake.” The second man, holding the elephant’s tail, said, “This is a rope.” The third man, feeling the elephant’s leg, said, “This is a tree.”

This is analogous to what happens in the world. The world can perceive bits and pieces of the truth, but they cannot put it all together and see the glory of God in its whole. They cannot see God as an intrinsic—absolutely necessary—part of a person’s life. They cannot see how necessary the spiritual is! As Herbert Armstrong said so often, it is the missing dimension.

If it is seen and if it is understood, then life begins to make sense. We begin to be able to see ourselves—a single, unique individual—as a part of the whole, the awesome plan and purpose that God is working out! Then, being able to see God gives direction to our life. So our eyes have seen and our ears have heard, and “the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” has entered into our hearts.

... God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in Him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (verses 10-12)

These three verses prove that we are predisposed by God’s calling to see Him. He predisposes us not only to know His truth, but to know who His servants are, as well. So we can know the things of God. We may not know them perfectly, but what we know is a great source of comfort, security, hope, and direction.

God’s Perspective

Paul continues in verses 13-15:

These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;

nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

True wisdom is the result of human reason coupled with revelation. Yet, even true wisdom will result only if a person believes what God says. Only then does a person have the opportunity to see God. He is hidden from those who put their faith in human wisdom.

Natural in this context does not mean “evil.” It simply refers to one whose horizons are bounded by the things of natural life, by “the around and the about.” Such a person is not equipped to discern the activities of God. But a person with the Holy Spirit can examine God’s activities and make judgments based on them. Therefore, in his process of judgment, God comes into the picture. When the Spirit of God comes into a person’s life, the basis of his judgment **should change!** This occurs, not because the person is any “greater” or “better,” but because the Spirit of God equips him to see and to use godly wisdom. Now he can judge all things from God’s perspective. This indeed is our responsibility!

Because God has called us, we should see God so clearly and know His greatness so intimately that we can live in the expectation that something great can happen at any moment to those who are receptive. The God who raised up Jesus is equal to any occasion—any possibility! Is anything too hard for Him? Certainly not! He throws that challenge out to man—to those who truly see Him.

Daniel’s Three Friends

A familiar episode in Daniel 3 can be approached from this point of view. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego are three Jewish captives in the land of Babylon. Because they showed such promise, the Babylonian government educated them and put them to work. However, their selection by the Babylonian government put them in peril because Nebuchadnezzar, in his vanity, made an image to his god and erected it on the plain of Dura. He commanded everybody to bow down to it at the sound of the musical tone. Every citizen of Babylon had to prostrate himself before Nebuchadnezzar’s god.

And everyone did—except for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. They must have stood out like a sore thumb! Everybody else was down on their knees or on their belly groveling in the dirt, but they remained upright. They could not hide. Where could they run?

Maybe Nebuchadnezzar did not witness it the first time it occurred, but plenty of witnesses came to him and testified of what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had not done. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar ordered a command performance before him. “All right, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Let’s see how brave and courageous you are when you have to do it right before

me,” said this great Oriental potentate, surrounded by his police force and all the accusers of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. We can imagine a roaring furnace prominent in the background.

In spite of all the evidence that they had around them—Nebuchadnezzar, his warriors, the accusers, the roaring fire—did these three Jewish men see God? Yes, though not with their physical eyes.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter [that is, they would not go into any long, detailed explanation]. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But, if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury. . . . (Daniel 3.16-19)

They could see the rage in his face, but they also saw God. Where did their powerful conviction come? This kind of conviction does not arise “on command,” at the spur of the moment. It is the product of the demonstration of God in the lives of these three young men before this time, before their lives were on the line. Their faith had grown and matured over a period of time.

God is always the same. What God says through Paul in I Corinthians 10:13 applied to them just as it applies to us. God knew what they could endure. They also knew that He would provide a “way of escape.” Because of this, they told the king, despite his threats, “Even if God does not choose to protect us, we still are not going to bow down to your image.”

Have we ever considered why more “mighty deliverances” do not occur to us? It is because *we spend so little time fellowshiping with God that we do not see Him as an immediate and vitally important part of our lives.* As a result, the physical “evidence” we see around us overwhelms us.

“Impossible” Situations

Jeremiah 25:15-38 records a severe test that Jeremiah was put through. God tells him to take a cup of wine, symbolic of God’s wrath, to the nations surrounding Judah. Though the wine was just a symbol, the job he had to do was not. In a way, it parallels the work God has given the end-time church.

By God’s command, Jeremiah had to go from nation to nation, to all the enemies of Judah. One by one, he was to present to their rulers this cup of wine and make them drink it. God tells Jeremiah that, if they refused, “You will make them drink it!” God must have given him the force of personality—or whatever he needed—to make those men take that cup and to drink the wine.

Last of all, the prophet was to take it to the king of Sheshach, a code name for Babylon.

Was there a parallel in the work of Herbert W. Armstrong? Did we see God in his work? Did he go from nation to nation and tell them what would occur in the future? Last of all, will the church go to Babylon, and make its rulers to drink of that cup?

There are so many examples in the Bible of people who saw God in seemingly impossible situations. In like manner, each potential child of God is or will be called on to include God in his thinking, to see things from His perspective, to see Him in every aspect of life. Then, throughout our lives from God’s calling on, we are to slowly but surely build our strength, confidence, and faith in God until we see Him in everything!

We can see God as David did. Though a mere lad, apparently, only he—out of all Israel, out of all of the fighting men—saw God. Everyone else saw the Philistine army and Goliath. David’s kind of faith—his spiritual sight or insight—occurred because he spent long hours out with sheep meditating on the creation of God, seeing His power and divine nature revealed in it. It came about as the result of David knowing the scriptures and what had happened in former times, knowing that God had been working with the people of Israel, knowing that God had demonstrated His interest, His concern, His purpose for Israel. David believed those things, and when push came to shove, David saw God!

“Now My Eye Sees You”

Job is another example of a man of God who saw Him, though it took great tragedy and God’s own voice to make the picture clear:

Then Job answered the LORD and said: “I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, ‘I will question you, and you shall answer Me.’ I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:1-6)

This is the conclusion, the climax, of his long and detailed story. Now Job can see God. From the context, properly seeing God involves getting the self out of the way! As long as self was in his line of sight, Job judged God by his own perspective. Remember, we see what we want to see, what we are educated to see. So Job saw his own wisdom, his own works, and they blocked his view of God in His greatness. The carnal mind is trained to do this.

Continued on page 16

ANOTHER LOOK AT FOOTWASHING

In the thirteenth chapter of his gospel, the apostle John records a ceremony that Christ performed and instituted on the very last night of His life. It may at first seem strange that the other three gospel writers did not address this act at all in their biographies of Jesus' life and ministry, but upon closer examination, it makes perfect sense why God chose John to record it. The footwashing ceremony is at its root an act of love, and who better to describe it than "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:7, 20; 13:23; 19:26; 20:2, 21)?

As we have so often been taught, washing another's feet is an act of humility when we perform it as Christ instructs us. While it indeed should be done with a humble attitude, after a more intensive study of Christ's instructions concerning it, we will find a deeper and more meaningful reason why it is so vital that we do it with a correct understanding. This deeper meaning will help us realize how important Christ's example is to us today.

At first, it may also seem strange that, while the other three gospel writers focus on the bread and wine that Christ instituted that same evening—and make no mention of footwashing—John does just the opposite. We must remember that John, as the last of the gospel writers, fills in some of Jesus' acts and state-

ments that the others left out of their gospels. The answer could be as simple as that John felt that the footwashing ceremony needed to be included in the New Testament canon. On the other hand, John probably recognized the direct connection between footwashing and the awesome work of Christ in His life, death, and afterlife.

The footwashing ceremony, recorded in John 13:1-17, allows us a window into the character of our Savior. When we apply the lessons of this unique and instructive ritual in our lives, it gives us a better understanding of why some people struggle to find happiness yet never fully achieve it, and why others are brimful and running over with joy.

MASTER = SERVANT

Immediately upon reading the account, we notice that Christ performs a menial task generally done by the lowliest servant in the household. Jesus says of this in verses 13-15:

You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that

you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

This last statement by Jesus gives us a little insight into His mind. What He says can apply both to earthly relationships of masters and servants as well as to a human's relationship to Christ. We can see in the pages of the gospels that it also describes how Jesus approached His relationship with God the Father. He was always submissive to the Father in everything. Beyond this, God the Father is the greatest servant in the universe. In our behalf, He sustains everything we depend on for our very lives.

Luke probably alludes to the same statement in his account of that Passover evening:

But there was also rivalry among [the disciples], as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits

at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”

Christ, by His actions, made it very clear that He would not expect anything from us that He was not willing to do Himself. He, as our Governor and Elder Brother, though He should have been served by others, served them. Undoubtedly, service is the essence of godly leadership.

WASHED CLEAN

Notice Peter's objection in John 13:6: "Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are You washing my feet?'" The translation does not do Peter's reaction justice. Kenneth N. Taylor, in his *Living Gospels: The Paraphrased Gospels*, puts it this way: "Master, You shouldn't be washing our feet like this!" Christ responds, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this" (verse 7).

Peter, still not convinced, flatly states, "You shall never wash my feet" (verse 8). Christ's next words, however, finally cause him to give in: "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Jesus' response—whatever His tone of voice—struck the disciple squarely between the eyes: Peter's eternal life was on the line! This time, his response is quite different: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" (verse 9). This sounds a little like Psalm 51:2, where David prays, "Wash me thoroughly. . . ."

Our Savior's answer to this request is not what some would expect: "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean" (John 13:10). The New International Version's translation of this verse makes His thought clear: "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole

body is clean." Obviously, the disciples had bathed before coming to eat the Passover meal. But having to walk along dusty roads in sandals, they collected a small amount of dirt on their feet. Thus, Christ explains that to be perfectly clean again, all He needed to do was to wash their feet.

Upon repentance, baptism, and receiving God's Holy Spirit, we are at that point perfectly clean in God's eyes. The blood of Jesus Christ has symbolically washed away all our past sins, and we stand before Him completely sinless. We have been buried in the waters of baptism and resurrected to a new life. However, as we all know, our human nature has certainly not departed from us, and it is not very long until the fact that we have sinned again stares us in the face. The old self has not really gone away; our lives are much as

veil that once separated us from having access to Him has been torn away by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 6:19-20; 10:19-22). Through Him, we can communicate with the Father to seek mercy and forgiveness for our sins and weaknesses. Upon repentance, God applies again the sacrifice of Christ to us and forgives us by His grace.

Now we can see that, even though we were once washed completely clean at baptism, we will occasionally sin as we walk through this life. We will spiritually get our feet dirty, and we will need Christ to wash our feet to make us completely clean again. Thus, He tells Peter, if He did not wash his feet, he would have no part with Him. None of us can carry unforgiven sins and still remain part of the body of Christ.



*"If I then, your Lord and Teacher,
have washed your feet; you also ought
to wash one another's feet.
For I have given you an example, that you
should do as I have done to you."
—John 13:14-15*

they were—with some important exceptions: We now have the Holy Spirit and have been given God's grace.

Having been regenerated by God through His Spirit that He has given us, we have entered a unique relationship with God the Father. The

This points out why it is so imperative that we seek His mercy and help to repent each day. When we do this, He can symbolically wash our feet and make us clean again. Each year at the Passover service, we reenact this to remind us how important it is.

WASHING OTHERS' FEET

In John 13:14, Christ says, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." The common explanation for this is that it teaches us to learn humility by doing good for others, by doing acts of service or kindness for our brethren. This is certainly a good lesson that we

*"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."
—Matthew 6:14-15*

can take from Christ's example, but we can perhaps derive another from it.

In John's account, what did Jesus suggest that the washing of feet symbolized? He tells Peter that the washing of his feet symbolizes forgiveness of his sin to return him to a "clean" relationship with God. It is only logical to deduce that God expects nothing less from us in response to the sins of our brethren. In the section of the Sermon on the Mount on prayer, Jesus says: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

No doubt, God puts a very great emphasis on our relationships since our lives are to reflect His character. If we have begun to "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27), would we be a good example of His love for us if we held grudges, hated our brother, or would not forgive another? Obviously, no. Putting on Christ demands that we "put off" these carnal destroyers of relation-

ships and replace them with Christian virtues.

Peter asks Christ, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21). Christ's answer should give us a clue to how He feels about this issue. Peter had ventured a number he thought would be sufficient to establish his forbearance. Christ, though, pulls out all the stops, telling him that there is no set limit: "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to

seventy times seven" (verse 22). We are indeed fortunate and can be thankful that same unlimited forgiveness applies to us when we need God's mercy.

The following verses, Matthew 18:23-35, is the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. The servant was deeply in debt to his master, and when he sought relief, his master forgave him his gargantuan debt. Then the tables turn. Another man owed him a small amount and could not repay it. Instead of following his master's example, the servant forgot the mercy he had just received and had the man thrown into prison!

Verses 34-35 sum up the story: "And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." The language Christ uses leaves little room for exclusions. He Himself, in the agony of crucifixion, says without reservation, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). His plea applies, not only to those who cried out for His

death and nailed Him to the stake, but to all, past and future, who would be just as responsible as they were and need God's forgiveness. That includes everybody.

"HAPPY ARE YOU ..."

Finally, we must notice John 13:17, where Jesus concludes His comments on footwashing: "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." Observe that His emphasis is on their application, not on whether we know about them or even understand them.

In this verse, Christ makes a very positive statement: We *will* be happy if we put this teaching into practice. He knew that grudges, hate, anger, and lack of forgiveness do nothing but shackle us and hinder our spiritual growth. If we let them hang around, they will eventually destroy us. Forgiving even those who have done things spitefully against us (Matthew 6:44) unlocks our shackles and releases us from feelings of animosity. When we rid ourselves of these burdens, we can find inner peace and true happiness.

If we can now see how much more meaningful the footwashing ceremony is, and how important it is that we emulate the example Christ set for us, then the Passover can have a greater impact this year. It shows the depth of Christ's love in making Himself a sacrifice for us so we could be forgiven of our sins. Remember, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13), and Jesus Christ did just that for our forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.

Think of these things during the next footwashing ceremony. It may still be humbling, but it should also make us happy that we are following the example of our Savior in serving one another by forgiving one another.

—Bill Keese

GLOBALISM

Part Eight: A Force

With somewhat overblown rhetoric, former President Bill Clinton spoke of the Kosovo Conflict, localized as it was, as “the great battle between the forces of integration and the forces of disintegration; the forces of globalism versus tribalism; of oppression against empowerment. . . .”¹

It is easy for us to share Mr. Clinton’s “great battle” concept of integration and disintegration. Like his, our minds have been fed for so many years with the Darwinian idea of *struggle* among species and the Marxist concept of *conflict* among economic classes. It is easy for us to visualize the defining movements of our time, globalism and tribalism, struggling for control over civilization. Which force will win?

There is, though, a more accurate way of understanding the interplay between these two forces. *Globalism and tribalism are closely intertwined.* Globalism per se has within it the seeds of integration and disintegration:

Globalization can promote integration among states. But it can also foster conflict and disintegration within them by exposing the limitations and ineptitude of governments, by generating traditionalist backlashes against alien values that present themselves as universal, and by creating huge disparities of wealth and power among nationalities, regions and classes.²

Combine this fact—that these two forces coexist, intermingle—with the incontrovertible fact of God’s sovereignty, and the true Christian is well ahead of Mr. Clinton’s simple-minded idea of “the great battle” between globalism and tribalism. *True Christians recognize that God, who controls history, is using both forces for His ultimate purposes.*

- God is using the power of Joseph to *push* the nations into an integrated, big-screen version of capitalism.
- At the same time, He is using the force of tribalism, a reactionary force, to generate a worldwide “emergency,” that is, a pandemic crisis environment so broadly infused with chaos and confusion that it will require unprecedented leadership. With miracle and muscle—and not a little deception—the False Prophet and Beast will ultimately arise to answer this acute political, economic, social, and religious “emergency.” To some extent at least, this emergency will be the result of tribalism, the disunifying fragmentation of the social order into any number of smaller, squabbling sectors.

Using the imaginative tool of linguistic division, confusing the language of Babel’s builders, God effectively “scattered them abroad

from there over the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:8). In doing so, God powerfully indicated His *rejection* of a single world government in the days of Nimrod. He would have none of it then. How can we say, then, that God, who does not change (Malachi 3:6), is today using Israel to build a global village?

The answer lies in the fact that, by forcing the scattering of the peoples at Babel, God accomplished His goal of developing a widely populated planet. That task is certainly done. God’s objectives are different now, in a generation far removed from Nimrod’s, a generation that is witnessing the incipient “emergency,” the planet-consuming crisis we call broadly “the last days.” What are His reasons for working to build a globalized system today? Here are three possibilities.

Globalism and God’s Work

First, God may be planning to use globalism as the context in which He performs an eleventh-hour work. While a speculative thought, the idea does have historical precedence. God used the affluence of mid-20th century America as a foundation upon which He built the worldwide work in which we ourselves had a part. The thought that God may be building globalism as a context in which He will call and service, at the “last minute,” a number of Gentiles (and

Globalization can promote integration among states. But it can *also* foster conflict and disintegration within them by exposing the limitations and ineptitude of governments, by generating traditionalist backlashes against alien values that present themselves as universal, and by creating huge disparities of wealth and power among nationalities, regions and classes.

—Rajan Menon and S. Enders Wimbush in *The National Interest*, Spring 2000



for Conflict

Israelites) into His church is informed by the Parable of the Laborers (Matthew 20:1-16). In it, the householder hires idle workers as late as the eleventh hour. They go to work shortly before nightfall, “when no man can work” (John 9:4). During the “night” of the Great Tribulation, it will be difficult indeed to do a formal work because, “if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him” (John 11:10).

In this context, it is useful to remember Madelyn Albright’s words: The United States has “kind of open[ed] the whole system up. America’s place is at the center of this system.”³ Globalism certainly does have the immediate, short-term effect of facilitating transportation and communication between nations. With the United States at the hub of this travel and communication network, any Gentiles God calls could have easy access to an American-based ministry via travel, the Internet, and so on. We already see this happening to a small degree within the church. America is at the center. Therefore, God’s church, which (not by accident) has its geographic locus in America, is *also* at the center. By that token, it is in a position to serve those God may call from among the nations.

Such an outcome, a result of globalization, would certainly be a fine example of the law of unintended consequences at work. That law—that any action can have a reaction that is neither opposite nor equal—is

a principle in human relationships. Certainly, if God builds a work using the open travel and communication environments created by globalism, it will certainly be a result neither foreseen nor planned by the movers and shakers of today’s capitalism and democracy. Those planners for the most part are godless humanists dedicated to a cult of secularism, wherein religion is only a traditional trapping and God is dead. How ironic it will be, indeed, if our sovereign God uses the civilization these planners implement to do a last-minute work!

A Global Language

Second, God is clearly spreading about the influence of the English language. English is virtually a universal language already. In commerce, business, government—people everywhere speak it. Even German and Chinese scientific papers are written in English. Through globalization, God may be positioning English, the language of modern-day Joseph and Judah, where it can easily become a common world language in the Millennium. Illustrative of this is the spreading about of Israelite names. For instance, *McDonald’s* is one such name. What is intriguing is the number of ancillary English (or English-like) names that *McDonald’s* foreign competitors appropriate: *McDucks*, *McDonald’s*, *Mordornal*. In addition, the tribe of Levi is now famous worldwide, if not so much for its priestly

garments as for its patch-pocket dungarees—Levis.

The Increase of Knowledge

Third, God is unquestionably using globalization to set up the nations for the end-time “emergency.” Globalism’s two pillars, capitalism and democracy, both brainchildren of the West, are powerful tools indeed for spreading abroad the wealth, information, and technology of the Shemites, those peoples of Shem who generally populate the Occident.

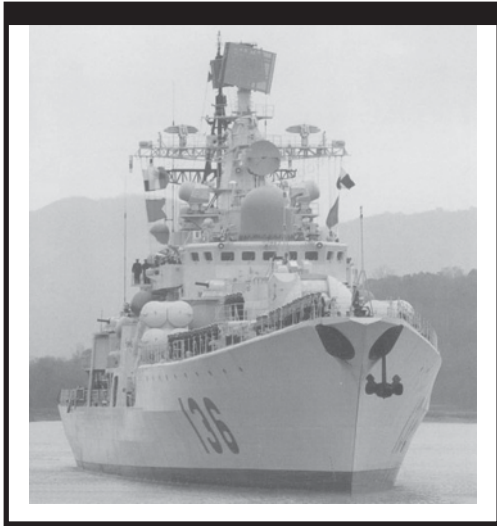
- *Democracy*, whatever its faults, is clearly an efficient way of encouraging people of all social classes to develop their talents. Totalitarian governments, by virtue of their structure and (all too often) their paranoia, do not facilitate the efficient allocation and use of human resources. The king says a citizen is a serf and will plow. Thus, in spite of his engineering ability, he plows. Democracy sets in place educational and social infrastructures by which one can legitimately leave the cornfield and invent a widget.

- Market-driven *capitalism* opens to one an easy avenue to profit from his widget. That is, capitalism permits the efficient allocation of resources, human and otherwise. It is an extremely

prophecy watch

powerful tool for encouraging innovation and invention—for encouraging people to put their minds to work. As such, it is a powerful wealth-generating system.

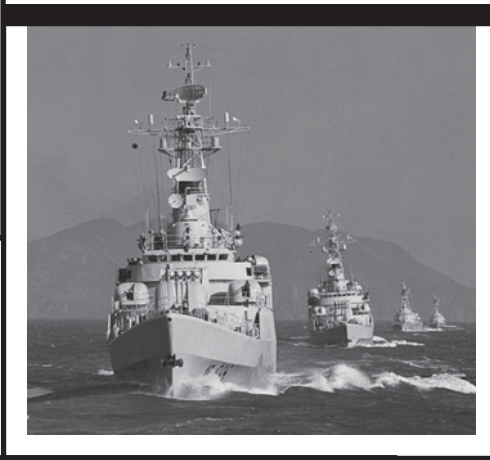
These two pillars, working together to support globalism, are producing one notable effect: *Nations around the world, including Israel's enemies, have easy access to information and technologies that would otherwise not*



Chinese naval vessels on patrol. While looking impressive, China's naval capabilities do not permit it to do much more than protect its own shores and possessions.

of Japheth. Revelation 9:16 tells us that an army of 200 million men will march on the Middle East. This is an undertaking orders of magnitude greater than anything the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan (AD 1162-1227) attempted. Yet, God's Word is clear. Someday, Japheth will be capable of major power projection, a gigantic expeditionary force moving about 4,422 miles—the distance between Beijing and Jerusalem as the crow flies. The meandering path of an army on foot will be far longer.

How long would such a trek take? Imagine how deep the column of troops would need to be to get that many men past any single point in a week! The logistics of supplying that many troops with food, water, and medical supplies is mind-boggling. Think of the number of supply trucks and repair facilities



potential of generating 200 million troops, as well as the personnel to support such a colossal projection of military power. If China were to coalesce with Japan alone, she would enjoy not only an increased population base, but the fruits of Japan's military efficiency. Today, "Japan, the true great power of the region, spends more than \$40 billion annually on the most advanced military establishment in Asia (and one of the largest)—a defense budget more than three times larger than China's."⁴ A coalition with other nations of Japheth—the Koreans, Indochina, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and others—would further increase her potential. China is certainly in a military position to gain control over other Asian nations.⁵

However, let us look away from potentials and focus on current realities of China's military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA consists of 2.8 million men, twice the number of military personnel in the United States, and by far the largest in the world.⁶ Yet, 2.8 million is a long way from 200 million. Moreover, China's army is almost wholly dedicated to ensuring internal security to her restive western provinces, where there is massive unemployment (an estimated 100 million adults out of work) and a virtual pre-industrial standard of living.

Furthermore, these troops are distinguished by their lack of mobility.



Only about 20 percent [or 560,000] of those ground forces are even equipped to move about within China. A still smaller number possess the trucks, repair facilities, construction and engineering units, and other mobile assets needed to project power aboard.⁷

be as readily available to them. As a result, globalism is permitting nations around the world to develop robust, state-of-the-art military, communication, and transportation infrastructures at an unprecedented pace.

Japheth Bulks Up

A case in point is the Orient—comprised primarily of the descendents

that would be needed, not to mention the earthmoving equipment necessary to clear the path and build bridges or fords. Consider the number of aircraft and anti-missile batteries it would take to provide air cover for the infantrymen on the march below.

Could Japheth mount such a campaign today? Let us look at the current lay of the land.

Without question, Japheth has the

The conclusion: "China's... [military] infrastructure cannot support large scale, joint force projection operations at any significant distance from the country's borders."⁸ To march 200 million men across Central Asia, China (with her allies) will have to develop and implement a far better logistics infrastructure than she today possesses.

Then, there is also the problem of



Chinese tanks and ballistic missiles could certainly damage an enemy, but it owns far less top-level military equipment than even some of its smaller neighbors, such as Japan and South Korea.



China's 3,000-plus fighters are fourth-generation models.¹¹

Additionally, China has today no theater-missile defense system like our Aegis or THAAD systems. China recently acquired her first modern aircraft carrier—and parked her in Macao, where she serves as a recreation center.¹² Why? China has no means to protect her from missile attacks. She lacks a system functionally similar to America's Phalanx system.

God's Word says that Japheth will be headed west, toward the sphere of influence of Europe. How, does China's military compare with the current capabilities of Europe's? To be fair, we

will need to build two scenarios.

Scenario One: Japheth's westward march takes place against a backdrop of Europe's *current* strategic strength. Right now, Europe, even without NATO, has plenty of defense capabilities against such an invading force.

Assuming Europe's current intelligence capabilities were still functioning when China commenced her initiative, she would have sufficient window of opportunity to respond proactively to the oncoming army of Japheth. Europe has the reconnaissance and intelligence facilities to detect its approach. If she felt threatened enough, she could respond strategically by detonating nuclear devices over the invaders while they were still well outside her territory. A few well-placed theater nuclear weapons (tactical bombs) would more than decimate that army, rendering it strategically unimportant long before it reached Eastern Europe.

According to this scenario, which assumes a strategically capable Europe, Japheth will need to develop the military assets to move *and* to defend the marching army from Europe's increasingly sophisticated missile systems. This will be a formidable task.

Scenario Two: Japheth's westward march takes place a bit later, when Europe's current strategic abilities have been badly degraded, if not de-

training and equipment. "China owns considerably less top-level military equipment than medium military powers like Japan and Britain; it owns even less than smaller powers such as Italy, South Korea or the Netherlands."⁹ An alliance with the other nations of Japheth—especially Japan—would change this situation, but not enough to permit fielding a force of 200 million troops.

Even if the equipment were there, the training infrastructure is not. The bulk of the PLA is made up of semi-literate rural peasants, physically fit and patriotic, but lacking anywhere near the training to support modern logistics, communications and armament systems. "[D]efense spending per soldier is low by First World standards, indicating the dominance of quantity over quality. . . ."¹⁰

As well, China totally lacks the means to protect her troops on the march toward the Middle East. She is not able to provide air cover for the infantry.

China's air forces include only a few dozen so-called "fourth generation" combat aircraft and only a couple hundred "third generation" aircraft. The rest rely on 1960s or even older technology. By contrast, all of the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Ma-



HZ, People's Republic of China (pp. 11-14)

stroyed, by the troubles of which we read in Revelation. Earthquakes and plagues, after all, take their toll, destroying power-generating facilities, military command and control centers, computer installations, and such. These troubles will certainly weaken Europe's ability to defend herself. Europe could come to the point where she is *unable* to exploit her advanced weapon technology against an approaching Eastern army.

Within this context, it may be worthwhile to consider Japheth's motivation to march westward. (By that time, according to prophecy, the United States will be out of the picture completely.) Japheth, noting the strategic degradation of Europe as a result of earthquakes and the like, may come to see an opening window of opportunity. By exploiting that opening, Asia could envision an end, once and for all, of the dominance of the Shemitic civilization encroaching on her shores, on her traditional culture. Perceiving a playing field rendered more level by Europe's troubles than it has been in centuries, Japheth may want to "seize the opportunity," and destroy "the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27) in which she has been coerced to dwell.

According to this scenario, which assumes a strategically *degraded* Europe, Japheth will need to develop the military assets to *move* the army. Protecting the army from missile attacks will not be a major concern, because Europe will lack the ability to deploy such weapons effectively or reliably. Japheth's task, though still daunting, will be much easier.

Whichever scenario one accepts—and the difference is really just one of timing—the prophet Daniel makes one thing clear: The King of the North is troubled by "news from the east and from the north" (Daniel 11:44). He is troubled because, by the time Daniel's prophecy starts to play out, Japheth *will* be a menacing power to Europe, whether the King of the North is militarily strong (Scenario One) or weakened (Scenario Two). Japheth will then have the strategic and tactical capabilities needed to bring a vast army to Europe's doorstep.

It is globalism that God is using to

give Japheth these capabilities. Globalism is making the acquisition of those capabilities possible—and with remarkable speed. In fact, one of the problems China-watchers have is the speed with which their information becomes dated. A few weeks, a month here and there, can make a major difference, forcing them to "re-assess" conclusions published only a short time before.

Globalism and Empowerment

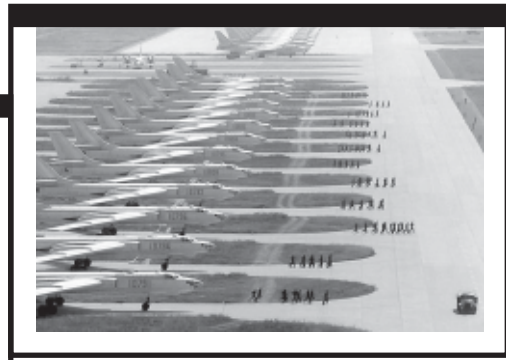
So great is America's desire to "push" her way of life—democracy and capitalism—on China that she has en-



enhancing her command and control facilities, and upgrading her training infrastructure. "While most nations are reducing defense expenditures, . . . China is one of the few [nations] doing the opposite."¹³

How is she paying for all this?

- The ordinary Chinese citizen is paying big: China enjoys one of the highest savings rates in the world. She "now holds more than \$100 billion in low-yielding foreign-exchange reserves, the second largest reserves in the world."¹⁴



Chinese fighters, bombers and helicopters are lethal, but China's air force is primarily "third generation" or older, while the U.S., for example, has 3,000 "fourth generation" fighters.



- The trade that is the heart and core of globalism is enriching her, giving her the capital—the buying power—to acquire technologies or to fund military research and the development, procurement, and implementation of modern weaponry.

With this domestically-generated grubstake and with the infusion of

gaged her widely on a number of economic, cultural, and scientific fronts. The United States has, for example, granted China extremely favorable trading terms. As a result of globalism's "open system," China is gaining supercomputers, weapons delivery systems, and mobile assets very quickly. She is making significant changes to her officer corps,

Continued on page 18

A Ready Answer

HOLY BIBLE

KING JAMES VERSION

HOLY BIBLE

STANDARD

HALLELEY

STRONG'S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE OF THE BIBLE

JAMES STRONG S.T.D., LL.D.

“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”
—James 2:17

Faith Without Works

Faith without works is dead!
Faith without works is dead!
Faith without works is dead!

Every single word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph written in God’s Word, the Holy Bible, is important. However, if a matter is *very* important, God has it repeated. If it is *very*, *very* important, God has it repeated *twice*. Such is the case with the doctrine of the necessity of Christian works and faith, here written by God through His apostle James in chapter two of James’ epistle.

Clearly then, it is *very*, *very* im-

portant that we understand that faith without works is dead. But along comes another apostle—Paul, in his letter to God’s church at Ephesus—and just look at what he has to say: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Some compare these two passages and declare, “The Bible contradicts itself, so how can it be the inspired Word of God?” They then use this and other perceived contradictions as

excuses to discard completely the whole written Word of God. Others take the “path of least resistance.” Adopting Paul’s words, but completely ignoring God’s instruction through James, they claim, “All you need is grace and faith. Works are not necessary!”

Is there a contradiction? Do we or do we not need works? And just what are “works” anyway?

We need to answer these questions because they are vital to our salvation. True, spiritual understanding of Ephesians 2:8-9 and James 2:14-26 reveals that the Bible does *not* contradict itself on this subject of faith and works—nor anywhere else, for that matter.

Some Definitions

When we first turn to Ephesians 2:8-9, the first thing we notice is that we are confronted with a whole list of spiritual-sounding words: *grace*, *saved*, *faith*, *gift*, *works*. Even those of us who have been in God’s church for many years and who may clearly understand each of these words individually, are slowed down in our comprehension of these verses when faced with such terms presented one after the other.

So let us take a very brief Greek lesson. Please take the time to study these words in more detail. Here are the key terms contained in this scripture in English and Greek, the *Strong’s Concordance* reference number, and, to make the meanings clearer, other English terms translated in the New Testament from the same Greek words:

- **Grace** (#5485): *charis* (*khar’-ece*). Also translated as *favor*, *thanks*, *thank*, *pleasure*.
- **Saved** (#4982): *sozo* (*sode’-zo*). Also translated as *make whole*, *heal*, *be whole*.
- **Faith** (#4102): *pistis*. Also translated as *assurance*, *believe*, *belief*, *those who believe*, *fidelity*.
- **Gift** (#1435): *doron*. Also translated as *present*, *offering*.

- **Works** (#2041): *ergon*. Also translated as *deed, doing, labor*.

Inconsistent Stance

We have just learned that *ergon* is the original Greek for the English word “works.” It does not appear to be a very difficult, ambiguous, or confusing term. But what do the many people and churches who claim that works are not required perceive “works” to be?

Opinions vary. One group perceives *works* to mean the whole law in general. A second group perceives *works* as specific portions of God’s law, which they look upon as being “Jewish” or “Old Covenant,” or that they are just not willing to keep and teach. A third group, amazingly enough in their rejection of it, perceives this term as meaning works of charity in general!

Individuals or groups who choose to substitute the word “law” for the word “works” in Ephesians 2:8-9, and who thus say that New Testament Christians do not have to keep God’s law, do not appear to mean it totally and literally. Instead, most of them reserve the right to choose which parts of the law they wish to keep (“You shall not kill,” “You

shall not steal,” etc.) and those that they do not wish to keep (“Remember the Sabbath,” holy days, tithing, clean and unclean meats, etc.). God has nowhere given authority to His people to be selective in these matters, thus this stance toward the law is inconsistent and even hypocritical.

Conditions for Salvation

The church of God has always agreed one hundred percent with those who say that salvation is a gift, and that a Christian cannot earn salvation by charitable works or by obedience to God’s law. However, obedience is a condition we must meet before God will give us His free gift of salvation. New Testament evidence is overwhelming on the matter. Here are just a few verses:

- And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey him. (Acts 5:32)
- He who says, “I know him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (I John 2:4)

• So He said to [the rich young ruler], “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Matthew 19:17)

• If you love Me, keep My commandments. (John 14:15)

The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 2:8-9, does not say that works are not required at all. The purpose of his statement is to show that works do not save us, but that grace and faith do! In fact, the very next verse, verse 10, shows that God calls members of His church for the very purpose of performing good works: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

The apostle’s language is very clear. God desires us to walk in good works, and He has prepared our spiritual educational process so that we will learn to do them. Doing good works in the name of Jesus Christ is a major part of the purpose for the life of each true Christian. We cannot truly be Christians without them!

Continued from page 6

Do You See God?

It takes great determination, discipline in study and in prayer, and meditation to break oneself of that natural, carnal mode of thinking. Even when we succeed, we have to understand that our vision of God still has to be constantly replenished—“day by day,” Paul says (II Corinthians 4:16)—and upgraded, refocused, exercised, as it were, in the truth.

Job’s case is particularly interesting. Job thought he knew God well, but he was painfully unaware that there was still much that he did not know. During his sufferings, he threw a great many direct challenges at God in an effort either to justify himself or to understand why he was going through this trial. Yet, God never directly answered any of Job’s challenges! Instead, beginning in chapter 38, He leads Job to see his own insignificance in light of God’s greatness. Most people do not realize that in the entire book Job never repents of sin. Sin is not the issue! The issue is that, despite Job’s extensive knowledge of God, he did not

see Him as all-powerful! He did realize that God alone puts down evil and brings to pass all of His holy will.

We can tell the real issue in the book of Job by what God says in chapters 38-41. God makes two speeches. It is not Job’s self-righteousness—certainly apparent—that God addresses, but his questioning of God’s justice in the governance of His creation.

When Job opens his mouth to speak in Job 42:1-6, it is to tell God that he got the point: **God’s purpose is all that counts!** In addition, since He is God, He can bring it to pass. God has the right, the will, and the loving nature to do anything He pleases to anybody at any time—and good will result.

Do we believe that? A caution, however: A man as spiritually mature as Job did not—until the end of the book.

God’s Counsel Stands

We would do well to consider Isaiah 46:8-10: Remember this, and show yourselves men;

No Contradiction

Finally, is there any contradiction between the opinions of Paul and James on this matter?

Simply, no! Paul, in Ephesians 2:8 says that faith is required and, as we have seen, in verse 10, says that good works are also required. James, in the second chapter of his epistle, says that faith and works are inseparable:

- Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (verse 17)
- But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? (verse 20)
- For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (verse 26)

In his *Bible Handbook*, Henry H. Halley states that:

Paul's doctrine of Justification by Faith, and James' doctrine of Justification by Works, are supplementary, not contradictory. Neither was opposing the teaching of the other—they were

devoted friends and co-workers. James fully endorsed Paul's work (Acts 15:13-29; 21:17-26).

Paul preached Faith as the basis of justification before God, but insisted that it must issue in the right kind of Life. James was writing to those who had accepted the doctrine of Justification by Faith but were not Living Right, telling them that such Faith was No Faith at all. (p. 659, capitalization as in original)

The Revised Standard Version translates James 2:20 in a very interesting and appropriate way: "Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren?" It is *barren* that is so intriguing. In the Bible, several women—for example, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth—could not have children. In the physical realm, a fertile male and a fertile female are both required conditions for reproduction for most forms of life. Spiritually, active faith and active works are both required conditions to reproduce godly, spiritual life in us. In both cases, life, whether spiritual or physical, is a gift of God, the Creator and Life-giver. If either con-

dition is absent or inactive, barrenness or lack of new life results.

Another meaning of *barren* common in English is that of a land without vegetation, a desolate place. The Greek word James uses is *argos* (instead of *nekra*, "dead," as in verses 17 and 26), meaning "lazy," "unproductive," "unprofitable," "idle," "ineffective." Its literal meaning is "no work" [*a* (negative) + *ergon* (work)]! The word picture that develops is of an area of land that receives plenty of sunshine but too little rain, and hence, it is barren, desolate. Such a land cannot be worked because it will not produce anything profitable. In the same way, a person having only faith will produce nothing profitable; he needs a steady "rain" of work to grow and mature.

So there is no contradiction. Faith is required. Works are required. Works toward God are to do His will and His work and, yes, to obey His laws. Works toward our neighbors are to serve them and to do good for them. Doing them promotes growth of godly character and provides a shining example of true Christian living.

Faith without works is dead. Faith *with* works is life—eternal life!

—John Plunkett

recall to mind, O you transgressors. Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."

These three verses contain a general principle in which God challenges us to consider, to compare, all of the material idols, which are so easily seen, to Him. There is, really, no comparison.

Joshua says at the end of his life:

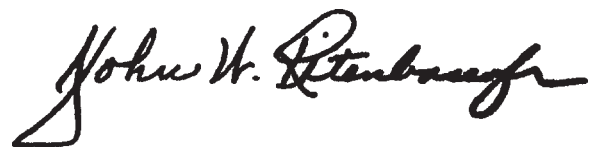
Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that **not one thing has failed** of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. **All have come to pass for you; and not one word of them has failed.** (Joshua 23:14)

"Remember" is an important word within true, spiritual

religion. Remembering brings back to mind what has happened in the past as evidence of what God can and will do. These verses in Isaiah say we must remember that God's counsel stands; when He says something, it is so. It happens. God gives plenty of evidence to demonstrate that *He can be trusted*. Seeing God and having faith is the result of recalling that God has demonstrated both Himself and His purpose in "the former things."

Isaiah 46:9 says, "Remember the former things." This is what David did. This is what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego did. We too have to *remember*. However, our focus, our spiritual insight, is greatly built and reinforced through obedience to His counsel in the present and by seeing from one's own experience that His will and purpose truly do stand. Once that occurs, we can *see* God!

In Christian love,



money produced by trade, China is developing a vast, educated middle class that can fund modernization and can eventually serve as the personnel in her army. China is changing fast, charged by the energy of globalization. The implications are important, since “[m]ilitary potential grows out of economic capacity.”¹⁵

China’s growing middle class may provide the opportunity for globalism’s other pillar, democracy, to bud. Unless the worsening conditions in western China thwart the growth of a middle class in the more prosperous coastal regions, China could develop a middle class large enough, and with enough *per capita* income, to support some form of democracy.¹⁶ The form it takes may be something akin to the “soft” authoritarianism of Singapore.

However, this is surely not a given. Considering the Chinese *zeitgeist* and the powerful vested interests of government officials, America’s attempt to push¹⁷ China into a market economy could cause her to collapse.¹⁸ Talk about unintended consequences! The result of such a debacle, given the lack of alternative political parties, could be military dictatorship. In this scenario, China may develop into a corporatist, rather than a democratic, state.

Thus, a number of opposing views about the shape of China’s future government exists. Ironically, Taiwan, the culturally and politically legitimate China, may be the best bellwether. The Taiwanese dream of returning to the mainland under the good offices of the United States ended when America “derecognized” Taiwan in 1979. Taiwan did not give up, but *democratized*, becoming a leading “tiger” in the Asian economic and political world. She set the pace for other Asian nations, where totalitarian governments began to fade slowly away, displaced (for now at least) by capitalism and democracy—both promising the wealth buried under “the tents of Shem” (Genesis 9:27). In China,

[t]his process of regime transition

will likely reach a resolution—or possibly a crisis—in the next decade or so, as the current mixed political economies of China and [other Asian nations] come to the end of the line. Dictatorship will either be renewed, at bloody cost, or abandoned, to be succeeded perhaps by genuine liberalism, perhaps by chaos.¹⁹

There is every reason to believe that we will witness startling changes in China in the next few years. God may understand that it will take entrepreneur-driven capitalism undergirded by democracy to drive China’s military advancement as fast as He wants it to grow. It may well be that America’s “pushing” initiatives in China will cause enough *Sturm und Drang* among China’s political elites—hardliners and liberals—to destabilize the nation, even to cause systemic collapse. More than a few commentators believe that a “crisis of regime” is long overdue in China. If that happens, China’s leadership might choose to seek safety in “the tents of Shem” by establishing democratic institutions and integrating more fully into global capitalism. Alternatively, if that same leadership feels threatened enough, it might opt in paranoia to reject those tents fully, reverting to autocratic rule. The worst scenario is one where China is unstable, her leaders facing loss of power and privilege. An unstable China is the most dangerous China of all.

Nothing ordains that China’s march to great power status cannot be derailed. Severe economic dislocation and political *fragmentation* could throw the country into disorder. . . . The last time China was weak and disunified [sic]—in the era of warlordism and revolution in the first half of the twentieth century—it was a disaster, not only for China, but also for international peace and stability.²⁰

Next month, we will look at a fourth use to which God may put globalism—to move *people* around.

—Charles Whitaker

Endnotes

¹ Andrew J. Bacevich, “Policing Utopia: The Military Imperatives of Globalization,” *The National Interest*, Summer 1999, p. 5. Mr. Bacevich is professor of international relations at Boston University.

² Rajan Menon and S. Enders Wimbush, “Asia in the 21st Century: Power Politics Alive and Well,” *The National Interest*, Spring 2000, p. 78 (emphasis added).

³ Bacevich, *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴ William Pfaff, “The Question of Hegemony,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, p. 221. *Foreign Affairs* is the principal organ of the Council on Foreign Relations.

⁵ Richard K. Betts and Thomas J. Christensen, “China: Getting the Questions Right,” *The National Interest*, Winter 2000/01, p. 17.

⁶ Bates Gill and Michael O’Hanlon, “China’s Hollow Military,” *The National Interest*, Summer 1999, p. 55.

⁷ Gill and O’Hanlon, *ibid.*, p. 56 (emphasis added).

⁸ Gill and O’Hanlon, *ibid.*, p. 59.

⁹ Gill and O’Hanlon, *ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁰ Betts and Christensen, *ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹ Gill and O’Hanlon, *ibid.*, p. 57.

¹² Gill and O’Hanlon, *ibid.*

¹³ James Lilley and Carl Ford, “China’s Military: A Second Opinion,” *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 71. Mr. Lilley served as the United States ambassador to China from 1989 to 1991. Mr. Ford is president of Ford and Associates, an international consulting firm specializing in Asian military issues.

¹⁴ Bruce R. Scott, “The Great Divide in the Global Village,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, p. 160. Mr. Scott is Paul W. Cherington Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School.

¹⁵ Betts and Christensen, *ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁶ George Crane, “China’s Democratic Prospects: A Dissenting View,” *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 94. Mr. Crane is associate professor of politics and chair of the Department of Asian Studies at Williams College.

¹⁷ It is interesting to note Zweig’s use of the verb *push*. He seems to understand the power the United States has on China, for good or evil: “Does the United States want to push China onto a path that could undermine the first extended period of economic growth and development experienced by the Chinese people in over a century and a half?”

¹⁸ David Zweig, “Undemocratic Capitalism: China and the Limits of Economism,” *The National Interest*, Summer 1999, p. 63. See also the views of John Fitzgerald in his article, “China and the Quest for Dignity,” *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, p. 47. Mr. Zweig is associate professor, division of social science, at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

¹⁹ Arthur Waldron, “The ‘Chineseness’ of Taiwan,” *Policy Review*, August/September 2000, p. 27. Mr. Waldron is Lauder Professor of International Relations at the University of Pennsylvania and Director of Asian Studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

²⁰ Betts and Christensen, *ibid.*, p. 29 (emphasis added).

BIBLE STUDY: THIRD TITHE

Previously, we have seen the instructions in God's Word for the financing of the work of God, His church, and the funding of our attendance at God's annual festivals (primarily the Feast of Tabernacles). In God's generous financial system, He also provides care for the needy. Jesus acknowledges that conditions would always exist that would cause some people to be occasionally or even perpetually poor and in need (John 12:8).

Some financial needs come from tragedies such as the death of a spouse or parents, or from unemployment or health problems. Personal crisis or disaster may strike because of war, fire, earthquakes, tornados, or hurricanes. Some have talents that lie in areas that society does not recompense sufficiently for them to meet all their living expenses. This Bible study will explain the tithe to care for the poor and needy, third tithe.



1. How are the needy treated under God's financial system? Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 26:12-15; Galatians 2:10; I Timothy 5:3.

COMMENTS: In ancient Israel, God instructed His people to set aside a special tithe to assist those in need: orphans, widows, strangers, and Levites. Today, God's church meets its Christian duty toward its needy brethren similarly, through a third tithe fund. God's apostles teach that Christians have an obligation to help others who are truly in need. The commandments of God concerning the responsibility of those more blessed to help those truly in need continue into the New Testament era.

2. How is the third tithe determined? When and to whom is it given? Deuteronomy 14:28-15:11; 26:12.

COMMENTS: The third tithe is an additional tithe, entirely separate from the first tithe that supports God's work of preaching the gospel and the second tithe that enables church members to attend the feasts. Like first tithe, second tithe is paid yearly. Just as the law of canceling debts is based on a cycle of seven years, the third tithe is paid only on the increase earned during the third and sixth years of a seven-year cycle. Since Christians are not spiritual Israelites (Galatians 3:29; 6:16) until converted and baptized, they do not save this third tithe until the third year after their baptism. Most members of the church count their third-tithe years from either the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles closer to the date of their baptism.

3. What does God think of those who neglect the poor, widows, and orphans? Isaiah 1:23-25; Jeremiah 5:28-29; 7:3-7; Malachi 3:5; James 4:17; Proverbs 3:27-28; I Timothy 5:8.

COMMENTS: This world's leaders have written a long record of neglect of those in need. Isaiah tells us their greed causes them to give favor to the wealthy, who can fill their pockets. The widow and the fatherless stand in a special relation of nearness to God, who is "a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows" (Psalm 68:5). To neglect or take advantage of them greatly angers God. Wisdom and understanding dictate that we should not

withhold from them or delay giving to them when we can help them now.

4. What does God promise for the generous? Proverbs 3:9-10; 11:24-28; Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 6:38; Galatians 6:7-10.

COMMENTS: By paying to God what we owe Him (that is, His tithes), He rewards us with blessings. Christians often find their third tithe years to be abundant with all types of blessings and invaluable lessons learned. These are not always material blessings, however. Storing up spiritual treasures in heaven is far more important than physical prosperity. God does not promise to make us wealthy but that our relationship with Him will prosper. Such eternal blessings are far greater than any temporary physical blessings we could receive.

5. What is the church's responsibility to the needy? Leviticus 19:9-10; Isaiah 58:7; Matthew 25:35-40; Galatians 2:9-10.

COMMENTS: The church should indeed care for its needy members. Members of the church have an important responsibility to contribute to this benevolent fund so that the biblical command to care for the needy may be satisfied. In some cases, the individual can give his third tithe directly to a needy relative. A widowed mother, sister, or daughter, for example, may qualify under the guidelines set out in Deuteronomy 14 and 26. Orphans in a similar category would also qualify. However, since ministers are usually more aware of those truly in need, third tithe is frequently more effectively distributed to the needy in the church by the ministry.

Jesus says in Matthew 10:29-31: "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." God's requirement to give back to Him a third tithe of our increase for the care of the needy shows the lovingkindness He feels for His creation, especially those who are weak and disadvantaged.