

# **STUDIES IN GENESIS**

BY GLENN PEASE

## **CONTENTS**

- 1. LET THERE BE LIGHT Based on Gen. 1:2-3**
- 2. THE MAKING OF MAN Based on Gen. 1:26-31**
- 3. CHRISTIANITY AND SCIENCE Based on Gen. 1:26-28**
- 4. GOD'S DAY OFF Based on Gen. 2:1-3**
- 5. THE MAN WHO WAS NOT BORN Based on Gen. 2:4-17**
- 6. THE FIRST LADY Based on Gen. 2:18-25**
- 7. SATANIC SUCCESS Based on Gen. 3:1-7**
- 8. TRICKED INTO A TREAT Based on Gen. 3:1-6**
- 9. FRUIT OF EVIL Based on Gen. 3:6-7**
- 10. THE DAWN OF CONSCIENCE Based on Gen. 3:7**
- 11. GOD IN MAN'S IMAGE Based on Gen. 3:8f**
- 12. GUILTY BUT NOT AS CHARGED Based on Gen. 3:12-14**
- 13. THE FIRST JUDGMENT Based on Gen. 3:14-15**
- 14. THE JUDGMENT OF EVE Based on Gen. 3:16-19**
- 15. FROM DUST TO DUST Based on Gen. 3:19f**
- 16. A GOOD START IS NOT ENOUGH Based on Gen. 3:1f**
- 17. AWFUL ANGELS OR MISERABLE MEN? Based on Gen. 6:1-8**
- 18. THE CURSE OF CANAAN Based on Gen. 9:18-28**
- 19. DREAM AWARENESS Based on Gen. 31:1-13**
- 20. DREAMS CAN COME TRUE Based on Gen. 37:2-20**
- 21. LABOR FOR THE LORD Based on Gen. 41:41-57**
- 22. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INFORMATION Based on Gen. 42:1-17**
- 23. EMOTIONS UNDER CONTROL based on Gen. 42:18-38**
- 24. INTERPRETING LIFE'S EVENTS Based on Gen. 42:18-28**
- 25. THE UNIVERSAL TOOL Based on Gen. 43:24-34**
- 26. PASSING THE TEST Based on Gen. 44:1-16, 33-34**

- 1. LET THERE BE LIGHT Based on Gen. 1:2-3**

**Billy Graham in his book *World Aflame* tells of how he sat in the office of Dag Hammarskjöld at the United Nations shortly before he was killed in the plane crash. He said that Mr. Hammarskjöld seemed deeply depressed, and as he looked out over New York City he said quietly, "I see no hope for permanent peace. We have tried so hard and we have failed so miserably. Unless the world has a spiritual rebirth within the next few years, civilization is doomed." Graham goes on in his book to quote leaders in every branch of life and around the world who are pessimistic about the future. Man with all of his light still lives in the dark.**

**Jean Paul Sartre, the French Existentialist, said, "There is no exit from the human dilemma." Sir Winston Churchill said, "Our problems are beyond us." Graham says that man is caught in a fire raging out of control, and in his first chapter he paints a picture that is frightening. Graham wrote this nearly 40 years ago, but the fact is we still live in a time where it is the dark ages spiritually. Can we be optimistic about the future? Yes we can if we know God through Jesus Christ. We know a God who from the beginning has turned chaos into harmony, and He has brought light out of darkness. God has a plan for this world and so there is always a bright tomorrow, for we look for a new heaven and new earth wherein dwells righteousness. The basis for optimism is found in man promises of the Bible, but we are going to study the first chapter of Genesis to see the method of God's creating that encourages us to be optimistic.**

**We find harmony and rhyme even in the very statement of the original chaos of the world. In Hebrew the two words describing the chaos rhyme. It says, "And the earth was without tohu and bohu." The word tohu describes a condition of shapelessness. There was just a conglomeration of matter. Bohu means that it was empty and void. There was no life of any kind. Our world started out as chaos. God created the raw materials just before He began to form it for the habitation of life.**

**God did not create all in immediate perfection. We see here a progression from the raw material to the finished product. There are some who have developed what is called the Gap Theory, which says that God created heaven and earth perfect in verse 1. Then a great catastrophe caused it to be destroyed, and so in verse 2 we have the chaos of that fallen world which God reforms again into a perfect world. The vast majority feel there is no basis for reading so much between the lines. It is obvious that Moses intended to**

convey no such impression, but rather, that God, like a skilled workman, began with dull and drab raw materials, and by wisdom formed them into a world of beauty.

We note that darkness was upon the face of the deep. Water was the most abundant substance that God began with as raw material. Water covered the whole earth and it was dark, for light was not yet created. It was a very bleak picture. It was a giant mud pie sunk in a cold dark world ocean. If there had been anyone around to see such a sight, they certainly would think it was a God forsaken planet. But this verse says it was not so, for the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters. The Holy Spirit is pictured like an eagle hovering over its young. Here the object is lifeless, but the Holy Spirit is eager to give birth to life. Milton in *Paradise Lost* expresses it like this: "Darkness profound covered the abyss, but on the watery calm His brooding wings the Spirit of God out spread, and vital virtue infused, and vital warmth, throughout the fluid mass."

Here is a picture of the material realm identical to the chaos and darkness of the spiritual realm, which the Bible speaks of often. The wicked man is said to walk in darkness, and darkness blinds his eyes. His understanding is darkened, his heart is darkened, and he loves darkness rather than light. But in both realms the darkness is turned to dawn, for God speaks and says, "Let there be light." In both the physical and spiritual world God has turned the chaos into harmony, and the darkness into light. Paul can say that we were once children of darkness, but are now children of light, and we walk in the light. We are delivered from the power of darkness because, as Peter said, "We are called out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Bela Vassady in his book *Light Against Darkness* tells of how he and his family lived through the horrors of the siege of Budapest in 1944-5. For three months they were forced to stay in dark, damp, unsanitary cellars as fighting raged above them. He writes, "Even unbelievers began to pray for the arrival of the day when we could climb the stairs again and enjoy once more the brightness of the sun. In those months we had to learn in the hard way that man's most stupid sin is ingratitude. He simply takes for granted the things that supply his everyday necessities; among them light, both in the form of the physical radiance of the sun, and in the form of the spiritual blessing afforded to all in the Light of the World."

**God has given physical and spiritual light, and we have the responsibility, as the hymn writer has said, of brightening the corner where we are. Those who are outside the kingdom of God fit the description of man by Louis F. Benson, "And infant crying in the night. An infant crying for the light, and with no language but a cry." God has given light, but we need to reflect that light in this world of darkness. We want to examine the two realms in which God has said let there be light in order to gain understanding of how we are to let our light shine, and to be grateful for the light God has given.**

## **I. THE PHYSICAL REALM.**

**When we state here that verse 3 records the origin of physical light we must remember that this was not the origin of light in an absolute sense. Scripture tells us that God is light, and what ever God is, He is eternally. And so light had no beginning, but is just as eternal as the very essence of God. What we have here is the origin of light that is external to God. This is important for it makes clear that there is a distinction between Creator and creation. Nothing that God has created is apart of His essence. God is not anything that is made. The whole physical universe was called into being by His Word. God is in the world, but not of it. It is not God that we see in nature. It is not God we see in beauty. These things are the handiwork and wisdom of God. We only see God in Jesus Christ, and in his written Word.**

**This origin of physical light then is not God, but it is a revelation of the wisdom of God, for light is essential to life, and God was planning for just that. He has water and light, and all men know that these are essential for life. Commentators note the interesting fact that light was created on this first day, but the sun and stars were not created until the 4th day. There are a number of theories to explain this, and it fits perfectly into the origin of the universe held by many scientists, which is called The Expanding Universe Theory. We may have here an explanation for the mystery about the nature of light. It is scientifically proven that light is both a wave and a particle. It is possible that two-fold creation of light is the cause for this paradox.**

**God is the author of light, and so all of life, beauty and color are part of God's handiwork. All of the blessings of life that come through sight are by God's grace. We need to praise God constantly for all that He has given us to see. The hymn writer has written, "For the joy of ear and eye; for the heart and minds delight; for the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and**

sight-Lord of all to thee we raise this our song of grateful praise." It is important to see that the physical is also spiritual. There is no distinction between sacred and secular to the believer, for God is the author of all that is good, true and beautiful.

## **II. THE SPIRITUAL REALM.**

The Bible refers to Jesus often as the Light. He was to be a light to Gentiles in darkness. His life was to be the light of men. He is called the true Light, and in John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." If one is walking in darkness, they are not following Christ. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Light and darkness is just as compatible in the spiritual realm as in the physical. We need not fear the darkness as believers. When intense darkness came over Egypt as a plague the people of Israel still had light. So it is in every age. The pessimism of the world need not lead us to despair, for as children of God we are to be children of light. Darkness is the domain of the devil, but light is the land of the Lord.

The economist say if we redistribute the wealth there will be light. Diplomats say that if we improve the United Nations then there will be light. Educators say that if we teach every person in the world then there will be light. Socialists say that if we improve the environment and eliminate poverty, then there will be light. But the Bible says that all of these plans would still leave the world in a chaos of darkness. They all start with the assumption that the darkness is out there, but God says the darkness is within. You will never dissolve the darkness in your cellar by putting the most modern lights on the street corner. All of men's plans treat the symptoms and not the disease.

Jesus goes right to the source of the darkness, which is sin. He alone can forgive sin and bring man out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. He is the only answer that can bring light. The poet has said,

"The world's great heart is aching, aching fiercely in the night,  
And God alone can heal it, and God alone give light;  
And the people to bear that message, and to speak that living Word,  
Are you and I, my brothers, and all others who have heard."

God wants to say through each of us in this dark world, "Let there be

light."

## **2. THE MAKING OF MAN Based on Gen. 1:26-31**

**On July 14, 1789 the people of Paris stormed the Bastille and began to tear down this hated symbol of tyranny. So many had been brutally tortured and imprisoned there. No one seemed to know what happened to the stones until Joseph Gies in doing research for his book Bridges And Men discovered that the director of France's 18th century bridge and highway authority used the stones from the Bastille to build a bridge across the Seine River. The very same material used to build a prison to deprive people of freedom was used to build a bridge to enlarge man's freedom.**

**This illustrates that good or evil is not in the material, but it is in the manner in which it is used. The same knife that is used by a surgeon to save life, can be used by the murderer to take life. The same pen can be used to write the Gospel or a hate letter. The same tongue can be used to bless or to curse. Unlike many religions and philosophies of the world, Christianity believes that matter is good. When God finished the creation of the universe He said it was very good. Matter is no accident. It is God's creation. God used matter to communicate a message about His being and His love. All of the material creation declares the glory and wisdom of God.**

**The very concept of beauty is meaningless without matter. Beauty is an abstract concept, but matter is concrete, and if the abstract idea of beauty is to have any meaning, it must be embodied in a concrete example. The beautiful idea of any artist is impossible to see until he puts it onto canvas, or into some material form. Matter is also God's means of communicating to man the abstract message of love. God became flesh in Jesus Christ in order to communicate in a concrete way the love He has for man. We use the matter of bread and juice to convey the greatest spiritual truth in the universe, for they represent the body and blood of Jesus. When we baptize we use physical water to convey the message of being buried with Christ and resurrected to new life. We use material means to express spiritual truth.**

**Every spiritual message in God's revelation is communicated through matter. The Bible is written on matter. It uses paper, leather and ink, but these material things convey the spiritual message of God command. God spent the greatest part of the creative week making matter, and all the things that are without life. Even when He made life it was combined with matter. When He comes to the climax of His creation He forms man from the dust of ground. Man is made of matter. He is composed of the same elements as the rest of creation. The atoms that God created were like the stones of the Bastille. They could be used to make a mountain, a maple, a moose, or a man. We want to look at the 3 phases we see here in the making of man.**

## **I. GOD'S CONSULTATION ABOUT MAN. v. 26**

**God pauses before He creates man. All of the rest of creation He has called into existence with no mention of reflection, but before man is created He holds consultation with someone. The great debate through the centuries has been over the question of whom it was with that He had this consultation. Jewish scholars have felt He consulted with the angels, but the great Jewish scholar Cassuto has rejected this, for there is no evidence that God created with the help of angels. He feels, as many Christians do, that the plural is the plural of majesty. A king often referred to himself in the plural. This has not satisfied many who prefer to see this as a clear reference to the Trinity. This might be a hint, but in itself there is nothing triune about plurality.**

**The best way to see it is that it does not teach that God is a Trinity, for a plural can be two or four as well as three. On the other hand we see that the New Testament does reveal God in 3 persons. We can look back and see that in this text God was keeping open the possibility of reading the Trinity back into the Old Testament. The New Testament makes it clear that Christ was the Creator, and this plural in the Old Testament makes it possible to see how that can be so. From the New Testament perspective this is a reference to God the Father consulting with God the Son about the making of man.**

**The Trinity of God is not the main truth we want to see here, however, for the unity of man is even more basic to a proper understanding of biblical theology. Bernard Ramm in *The Christian View Of Science And Scripture* writes, "The unity of the human race is one of the most important matters in Christian theology." There have been many attempts to deny this in science and theology. Some have felt that different races have had different origins,**

but science has rejected this as being highly improbable. In theology there are some who believe in a pre-adamite theory that says all of the fossils of cavemen were before Adam, and they all died before Adam was created. Some like the well known R. A. Torrey believed that some of these pre-adamite people were still alive at the time of Adam. Some feel that it was from these people that Cain took his wife.

Time does not permit to show that all of this is conjecture opposed to the biblical picture. All we can do now is to point out that the whole redemptive plan of the New Testament is built on the assumption that Adam was the first man, and that all in him die, but all can be made alive in Christ. Paul calls Adam the first man, and Gen. 3:20 calls Eve the mother of all living. This makes it clear that no persons existed but those who were born from her. Cain's wife was also then a child of Eve. The natural evidence of the unity of man is vast, but if we believe the Word of God, we need no further evidence. Paul in Acts 1:25-26 said, "..He gives to all life and breath, and all things, and has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth."

God's consultation to make man then was a reference to Adam the first man from whom the whole of human race came. Any speculation about pre-adamites has no right to call itself biblical sense it is in direct conflict with what the Bible teaches. Mankind has one origin, and is a unity.

## **II. GOD'S CREATION OF MAN. v. 27**

There is higher view of man in the world than the biblical view. David in Psa. 8 says that man was made just a little lower than God Himself. Here God declares without any vagueness that He made man in His own image. This verse makes it clear that this honor holds true for all females as well as males. Some women haters of the past, even in the church, have denied this and have sought to defend that only men are made in the image of God. Christians in general have recognized with Luther that women are equal in righteousness, wisdom and eternal life. Luther said, "The women should not be excluded from any honor which human beings enjoy, even though she is the weaker vessel." This is not hard to swallow for most men because they like women.

The creation of man in two sexes allows man to share in God's power of creation, but this is true of animals and plants as well. This is not a part of what makes man uniquely created in the image of God. Some have tried to



**defend the idea that the body of man is in some way in the image of God. The Mormons hold this view, but this is rejected by most because God is Spirit and does not have a bodily form. The body of man is just another evidence of the marvelous wisdom of God. It used to be thought that the body was only worth less than a dollar, but the DuPont Foundation has declared that man is worth 85 billion dollars in potential chemical energy. The human body can produce 100 thousand red cells in a fraction of a second. It has about 26 trillion cells all under the central control of a 4 pound brain. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, but this does not tell us what the image of God is.**

**The subject of the image of God in man is a vast literature. We cannot begin to get into that issue. Our text tells us nothing about the image of God. It only states the fact that man was made in God's image. We have to go to the New Testament to get an idea of what it means by comparing the description of the new man in Christ with what the first man must have been. In Col. 3:10 Paul says that in Christ we "...have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator." Adam then it is assumed had full intellectual power, and the fact that he named all the animals on the day he was created confirms this. Man's ability to think and have true knowledge of reality is part of the image of God.**

**In Eph. 4:23-24 Paul says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Calvin said on the basis of these verses: "We conclude that before the fall the image of God consisted in the light that filled man's mind, in the righteousness of his heart, and in the soundness of his faculties." This is what man was, and this is what God is working toward again in renewing man in Christ. Christians are to be growing into conformity with Christ, who is the express image of God. Christians are to be the best examples in mind and spirit of what man can be, and thereby bring glory to God. This ideal ought to drive all of us to see our desperate need for the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How can we dare neglect prayer and a search for God's wisdom in His Word when we know what His goal is, and also see so clearly how far we are from it?**

**God made Adam in His image, but he fell. Now in Christ we who are redeemed are again objects of God's creative hand. He is seeking to restore that marred image. Is our pattern of life helping, or is it digging deeper the scars of sin? God is still creating man in His image in the lives of those who have received Christ as Savior. The third step after God's consultation about**

**man, and God's creation of man is-**

### **III. GOD'S COMMUNICATION TO MAN. v. 28**

**God's first words to his highest of creatures were similar to those He spoke to lower creatures, for He said to be fruitful and multiply. The facts of population explosion indicate that this is one command that men have obeyed consistently. There have been those who taught that sex and reproduction were the result of the fall, and that they were not a part of God's perfect original creation. This is a flat denial of Gen. 1. Fertility in plants, animals and man is directly ordained of God, and it is stamped with His approval when He declares all to be very good.**

**God said man was to fill the earth and subdue it. Here is the great commission of the Old Testament to go into all the world and gain control and supremacy over all life. Man was made to be king of the beasts. The Great Commission of the New Testament is to go into all the world and subdue men to Christ, who is King of Kings. God's original desire to have godly men in control of the world can only now be fulfilled as the church obeys the New Testament commission. It is man himself that now needs to be subdued.**

**The second thing God communicates to man is in reference to his diet, and it appears from the text that man as well as all animals was originally made to be vegetarian. Many feel that eating of flesh came with the fall, and that before this there was no killing for food. Luther felt this was the case, and also the Hebrew scholar Delitzsch who wrote, "God did not originally will the violent breaking up of the life of one living thing by another for the purpose of enjoying its flesh..." Others, like Calvin, are equally convinced that flesh was eaten. Dominion over animals implies the right to kill them for food, and it is obvious that the flesh of sacrifices would be eaten. Arguments are good on both sides, and it boils down to the reality that we don't know. We do not know how many angels can stand on the head of a pin either, but we are no worse for our ignorance. The basic idea is that God had provided for all life, and from His perspective it was very good.**

**It was all good for its purpose. Everything God made is good in its place. Dirt is good in the garden, but in a person eye it is not good. Because good things can be out of place there was always the potential of what was bad even in a perfect world. Adam stepped out of line and started a chain reaction of**

**disharmony that we feel yet today. If it was not for the good news of the coming of the second Adam, the perfect Son of God, to restore what the first Adam lost, we would have only a message of despair. But Christ has come, and it is possible to get back in line with God's will and plan. In Christ it is possible to be a part of the new creation wherein God is again in the process of the making of man. We who have come to the cross need to be more grateful and more dedicated to the task of becoming mature in Christ, for this is God's goal in the making of the new man.**

### **3. CHRISTIANITY AND SCIENCE Based on Gen. 1:26-28**

**Jesus was a great physician who believed in preventive medicine. Curative medicine is the most spectacular, for what can compare to saying to the leper, "Be made whole!" Or what can be more amazing than to command the blind to see or the lame to rise up and walk? Preventive medicine is less exciting, for there is nothing to see, and no radical changes take place before your eyes. It keeps the limbs from ever decaying. It keeps the eye from ever going blind. It keeps the legs strong so lameness is never experienced. The result is no spectacular change, but just a plateau of sameness in good health. It is far superior to stay on that level of health than to fall and be restored to it, but it is a quiet experience that does not grab headlines.**

**Nevertheless, it is still true that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Jesus practiced preventive medicine whenever He could. He was constantly teaching His disciples to prepare them for what was ahead, so that they would not fall. Even some of His spectacular works were preventive. For example, the feeding of the 5 thousand was to give the crowd a meal so they would not faint by the way. He did not wait for them to faint from hunger and then revive them. He gave them food to prevent them from fainting.**

**The principle of prevention is so reasonable because it is the best way to deal with the reality of evil. This principle runs all through the Word of God. God's first command to Adam and Eve was for the prevention of all the evil that would result from their disobedience. All God's law is for the prevention of sin, evil, suffering and judgment. The purpose of prophecy was to forewarn so as to prevent folly and judgment. Much of the teaching of the New**

**Testament was to prevent apostasy and the falling away during persecution.**

**The Bible and Science agree that prevention is the ideal. The goal of science is to be able to predict so men can avoid what is bad and gain what is good. The whole point in forecasting the weather is so people can plan to be prepared for what is coming. Prediction for the sake of prevention is of the very essence of science. Without the ability to predict what is going to happen under circumstances science could never have gotten men to the moon and back. They had to know how to prevent every possible threat in order to survive.**

**The ability to predict and thereby prevent is to have dominion over the forces of nature, and in this way fulfill the command of God to have dominion over all the earth. Science plays the role of aiding man to obey God's first commandment. The goal of science is to put man into dominion over all the forces of nature. Someone might get technical here and say that the text says for man to gain dominion over all the earth. It says nothing about outer space. But as Dr. Rodney W. Johnson, a Christian and an authority on lunar bases, points out, to be able to escape from the earth and be independent of it shows our mastery over it and its powerful gravity. Going to the moon is a part of man's subduing of the earth.**

**Science is good and has produced so many blessings for man that there is no point in trying to enumerate them. The Christian shares in these blessings and takes them for granted, but they give him the opportunity to have a richer Christian experience. Science is dedicated to truth, life, health, and it is opposed to error, death and suffering. This makes it a natural ally of Christianity, and yet there has been a whole history of conflict between science and Christianity. Christians have made many mistakes in the past by assuming that science is a foe rather than a friend.**

**It seems natural to us today to prove things by experiments, but his way of thinking is only around 500 years old. The age of science began in 1543 when the Polish churchman Copernicus challenged the geocentric view of the universe by suggesting that the earth went around the sun. He offered mathematical calculations, which stimulated men to develop experimental methods to prove it. This was the beginning of science, as we know it. Before this, questions were settled by authority. You didn't prove your point, but you just quoted the authority, who at that time was Aristotle. He had considered**

**the idea of the earth not being the center of the universe, but he rejected it. His authority reigned over men's minds until the scientific method destroyed his authority.**

**Science from the very start was revolutionary, for it challenged authority, and when truth was on its side it toppled authority. This is where Christianity and science got off to a poor start in relationship to one another. Christians accepted Aristotle as their authority in matters of science. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest theologian of his day, used Aristotle to defend the Christian faith. Aristotle was so linked with Christianity that they were inseparable in men's minds. And so when science began to assail the views of Aristotle, the Christians felt it was an attack on the church, and so they fought science as an enemy of the faith. In reality, science was only helping to get Christianity divorced from a false worldview. Aristotle was just dead wrong, and science sought to help Christians escape the clutches of his error. The tragedy was that Christians did not understand, and they looked upon science as a foe. They had believed a lie so long that they felt it had to be true.**

**Where Christians made their mistake was in identifying their faith with a man made philosophy. This is done over and over again in history, and it is always a curse to Christianity. E. L. Mascall in Christian Theology And Natural Science wrote, "I can think of no greater disservice that could be done to the Christian religion then to tie it up with scientific views that are merely temporary." If you identify your Christian faith with any philosophical viewpoint, you adulterate it. You mix the pure Word of God with the contaminated words of men, and the result is a Christian faith that is always endangered by the discovery of new truth.**

**Christians has a tendency to link Christianity with some prevailing philosophy or authority, and then when that prevailing view begins to change Christianity is weakened. This is what happened when Aristotle's views were proved wrong. Scientist thought that they had proved Christianity wrong also because Christians acted as if their faith depended upon the truth of Aristotle. If you had been teaching something for years, and you were recognized as the orthodox authority on the subject, you would be worried sick if someone came along with proof that what you were teaching was false. That is why the church silenced Galileo and others like him. They challenged the establishment, and the church was so identified with it that they could not accept change.**

**Science made change inevitable, however, and masses of people who followed science became secular and deserted the church. It was the churches fault because it identified with a loser, which was Aristotle. In the battle between the new and the old the church stood with the old and lost the battle. Had Christians been wise enough not to link themselves with a man made philosophy there never would have been a conflict with science. Science only undermines those things, which deserve to be undermined because they are based on a false foundation. Science cannot be subversive to what is true in fact. Christians must have the spirit of freedom to allow for growth and change that can come about by the scientific method.**

**Erasmus gave this warning to Christians who fought science at the time of the Reformation: "By identifying the new learning with heresy, you make orthodoxy synonymous with ignorance." Christians foolishly put science on the side of anti-Christian forces. The anti-Christian forces were glad, for they had in science a powerful weapon. Every advance and victory of science was declared to be a victory over the narrow, ignorant and superstitious Christians. In their blindness Christians took one of God's greatest gifts to man and turned it over to the enemy to be used against them. It was one of the most dismal periods in the history of Christianity. Christians became bigoted and fell back into pagan superstition to fight science. They persecuted men of science. Non- Christians began to dominate the world of science because Christians denounced it as the realm of evil.**

**Jesus said that the children of darkness can be wiser in their own generation than the children of light. It is good to remember this, for we often wonder why God allows evil to triumph. The answer is really quite simple. When men of evil identify with the truth, and use it for their weapon, and children of God identify with error, and fight against the truth, then by God's own laws His children must lose the battle. God will not bless ignorance and error for the sake of His people. Christians become their own worst enemies when they identify with error and fight the truth. Back in 1840 John Smith wrote, "Evangelical castigators of science are unwittingly serving the designs of Christianity's enemies and are secret traitors to the cause of Christianity." Many zealous Christian men of the past would be shocked if they could see that history has proven them to have been subversive to the cause of Christ. Christians foolishly put the Word of God and the works of God in different camps. They ignored the testimony of Scripture that the God of redemption is also the God of creation. God's Word and God's works cannot contradict**

each other.

As science made rapid progress Christians were forced to modify their opposition, and more and more Christians began to see science as a friend. The pendulum began to swing to the opposite extreme. Science became a sacred cow and a new Messiah. Christian theologians identified the progress of Christianity with the progress of science. The millennium was to be brought in by scientific technology, and theology became post-millennial. This is the optimistic view that Christianity will bring peace on earth before Jesus comes again. Christians made the same mistake they had made before. They linked Christianity to a prevailing philosophical point of view, and when science failed to prevent 2 World Wars, and optimism about man turned to pessimism, Christianity was made to suffer weakness again.

Many felt God had let them down, and they forsook the church. It seemed as if Christians couldn't win, for it made a mistake of opposing science, and then made another by almost worshipping science. The only position left is the middle position, which is where most Christians stand today. They say that science can be good or evil. The Christian's responsibility is to take science as a gift of God and use it for His glory, but it is a means to an end and not an end in itself. It is to be a servant and not a master, for only God is our Master. When science is in its proper place it is a great friend of the Christian faith.

#### **4. GOD'S DAY OFF Based on Gen. 2:1-3**

I had the unique opportunity to talk deeply about biblical matters with a wealthy orthodox Jew. Among other things we talked about the Sabbath. He was a very conscientious Jew who knew his Bible quite well, and so I asked him how he reconciled operating a business on Saturday when the Old Testament forbids work on the Sabbath. He responded by saying that he does not come to his business on that day, but has Gentiles operate it. But I told him I thought the law required for you to give rest to all your servants as well. He said that it was so but that they have their Sabbath on Sunday, and so it all works out just fine. Christianity and Judaism seem to make a good team in the business world.

**He did feel some misgivings about the whole thing, however, since the law forbids making a profit on the Sabbath also, and this he was doing. He admitted it was wrong, but justified it by pointing out how Christians are in the same fix. Economic factors compel them to work on Sunday, and even if they have the day off, if they have investments or stock in companies that operate on Sunday, they too are making a profit on their Sabbath. He concluded with a statement that the whole subject of the Sabbath is full of technicalities. How true he was, for the history of the Sabbath has been a history of the burden of technicality. Few concepts have been as abused as the concept of the Sabbath. Time does not allow us to study how Jesus despised the abuse of the Sabbath, and of how He refused to be bound by man's burdensome additions to what God gave as a blessing.**

**As Christian we ought to have it clear in our minds that we are no longer under the law with all of its Sabbath regulations. If we were, we are all storing up the wrath of God for the day of judgment, for we are constantly violating the Old Testament law in ways that brought the death penalty for those under the law. If you think you are under the law, every time you turn on your oven or go out for a dinner on Sunday you sentence yourself to death. He who lives by the law is fallen from grace says Paul, and must keep the whole law or perish. Certainly no Christian has any desire to go back and live under the law after living under grace.**

**There are many Christians, however, who think of Sunday as just the Sabbath moved ahead one day. This has come about because the Puritans in the 16th century began to call Sunday the Sabbath. Before this the church never thought of Sunday as the Sabbath. Right from biblical days it was referred to as the Lord's Day, and it had no connection with the Sabbath. The Sabbath was instituted in Judaism to commemorate the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, but Sunday is a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. Sunday use to be called little Easter because it commemorated on a weekly basis what Easter does on an annual basis.**

**The first day of the week came to have more significance in Christianity than the 7th. Old Israel had its distinct day, and New Israel had its distinct day as well. With a new covenant, a new deliverance and a new life came a new day. In Christ all things became new, and this extended even to the unique day of rest and worship. It was on the first day that God began His creation, and it was on the first day that Christ rose from the grave**



conquering death and became the first fruits of a new creation that would be spiritual and eternal. As the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of the old creation when God said, "Let there be light," on the first day, so the Holy Spirit hovered over the church at Pentecost on the first day of the week, and again God said, "Let there be light," and the Holy Spirit filled the church, and the light of truth of was seen by many, and the church was empowered to go forth as the light of the world.

These events on the first day of the week make it the day of eternal significance to the church. Christopher Wordsworth has put it into poetry:

On thee, at the creation  
The light first had its birth.  
On thee, for our salvation,  
Christ rose from depths of earth.  
On thee, our Lord victorious,  
The Spirit sent from heaven,  
And thus on thee most glorious  
A triple light was given.

It was a day of light and joy on this first day of the week, and what could be more appropriate than that it should be named after the source of the physical light of the world and be called Sunday, and after the source of the spiritual light of the world, and be called the Lord's Day? From the very beginning the first day of the week became a day of fellowship, joy and worship in the church. Fasting was forbidden, for it was on the first day of His resurrection that Jesus took bread with His disciples. Because of that, Sunday's are not included in the 40 days of Lent. They are feasting days in the midst of fasting days.

The Sabbath was not just dropped by the church, however. All of the first Christians were Jews, and they continued to observe the Sabbath and worship in the temple along with Jews who had not accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Then on Sunday evening they got together for their distinctive Christian fellowship and worship. They had to meet in the evening because Sunday was just a regular workday. They had to work all day and then worship at night. A good example of such a service is found in Acts 20:7 where we read, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the

**morrow, and continued his speech until midnight." We see it was evening when they came together to break bread and hear Paul preach. The evening service was the original service of the church.**

**As the church began to grow, and as Gentiles came into the church, Sunday began to push the Sabbath into the background. Gentiles had no attachment to the Jewish Sabbath, or any of its regulations, and so it fell into disuse among Gentile churches. This did not happen without some controversy, however, for Jewish Christians felt that all Christians should be bound by the Sabbath. This is a clear indication that Jews who became Christians did not think of themselves as cut off by Israel, but rather that they were the true Israel faithful to all God's revelation. They failed to recognize that Christ abolished the burdensome observances of the law, and no longer expected men to live under the ordinances of the law.**

**It was the task of the Apostle Paul, whom God choose as the Apostle to the Gentiles to make this truth clear to the Christians of his day. The Colossians, for example, were being pressured by the Jews to stick to the law, but Paul assures them that they are not bound, for God blotted out the hand writing of ordinances against us, and He took it out of the way nailing it to the cross. In Col. 2:16 we read, "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." The Sabbath was symbolic of a greater day to come, just like the sacrifices of the Old Testament. But Christ is the real thing and not a shadow. He is the real body and since His coming we are no longer to hold on to the shadow, but give ourselves to Him to whom the shadow pointed.**

**The Sabbath was good, but it had to give way to the best when God gave His Son. The Jewish leaders finally saw this, and they no longer expected Gentiles to become good Jews before they were accepted as Christians. As Gentiles came into the church it became less and less Jewish, and Christ and His teachings became central rather than the Old Testament law. This process increased even more as the New Testament was written, and the church had a new guide for faith and conduct. The church did not ignore the values of the Sabbath, however, but recognized them as God ordained values. They were brought over into the observance of Sunday without bringing its burdens. As Christians gained power and influence Sunday was made a holiday, and work was prohibited. It became like the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship.**

**It is this principle of rest that was the main characteristic of the Sabbath. And this principle goes right back to God, as we see in our text. The Sabbath of Israel was not origin of the day of rest, for it existed long before Israel was in existence. We have records of its observance in other nations before the time of Israel, and Gen. 2 here tells us that it is as ancient as anything could be because it goes back to the time when God himself took a day off.**

**Let us remember that both Jews and Christians recognize the value of a day off because God ordained that one day in 7 be separate from the others. We often take for granted that this is just natural, but it is not so. If God is not acknowledged there is no reason to suppose that His concern for man's blessing is acknowledged either. Many years ago there was an article in Life Magazine titled "Red China Bids For A Future: The Great Leap Forward." It made this statement: "On the island of Lappa... China's communist masters have established a people's commune. The daily toil lasts from 5:00 A. M. till midnight when the last platoon of weary workers stumbles back to the barracks. Nineteen hours a day, seven days a week it goes on. The routine was the same, day in, day out, seven days a week. The only days off were national holidays." There is nothing natural about one day in seven for rest at all. It is a matter of revelation, and we have this concept because of God's rest on the 7th day after He had completed creation. God did not stop until He was finished, but when He was finished He enjoyed the fruits of His labor. It is an interesting parallel that God finished creation on Friday, and it was also on Friday that Jesus on the cross said, "It is finished."**

**The statement here in Genesis that God rested does not mean that creation was tiring to the omnipotent God. God does not need rest. The idea here is that He ceased His activity of creating. He set this day apart and hallowed it. He made it different and distinct from other days, and in so doing established the principle of rest on one day in 7. Everything God made was good, but even so, there is a point at which to stop making what is good. God introduced into the world a period of time for rest and reflection. This principle was applied to Israel in the Sabbath, and to the church in Sunday. As Christians we are not bound to any particular day to apply this principle, but it must be applied or we lose something that God intended for man's blessing. In a Jewish novel East River the central character says, "When a man labors not for a livelihood, but to accumulate wealth, then he is a slave. Therefore it is that God granted us the Sabbath, for it is by the Sabbath that we know we are not work animals, born to eat and labor; we are men. It was**

**by the Sabbath that the Jews proclaimed that they were not slaves, as in Egypt, but free men."**

**So it is for us as Christians, for we declare by our day off that we are not mere animals of toil. We are made in the image of God, and redeemed by the Son of God. We alone of all creatures can think, pray, worship and grow in many ways to make life a great experience. The Christian is not just to exist, but to have life abundant, and this demands that all of his life not be devoted to work, but that a portion of it be devoted to the up building of his eternal soul. Sunday is a day to look above and beyond the work-a-day world to the greater things of life. It is to forget for awhile the necessities of toil, and to broaden your vision to see there are great luxuries of life that are free to those who walk with God.**

**Many men shrink their capacity to enjoy life's best because they never take time out to walk with God and seek to see life with eternity's values in view. Men can get so involved in their own goals of life that they lose interest in all of the things that do not pertain to their work. An unknown poet put it well:**

**If your nose is close to the grindstone rough,  
And you keep it down there long enough,  
You will soon forget there are such things  
As a brook that babbles, and bird which sings.  
Three things your whole world will compose,  
Yourself, the stone, and your worn-off nose.**

**God never intended for man to live with such a limited horizon. Jesus had a perfect body and perfect health, and yet He recognized the need to draw apart to rest and pray. No one had a greater job to do, and no one had a greater commitment to doing it, and yet we find that the Son, like the Father, took a day off. In Matt. 11:28 Jesus said, "Come unto me ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest is a gift of God's grace, and like all of God's gifts it comes with responsibility. We need to ask ourselves if we are good stewards of our day off. Do we use it to grow in grace and of the knowledge of God, or do we use it to become more engrossed in the world?**

**There may be some who do not truly rest even when they have the chance, and they do not grow because they never submit their life to Christ. The rest**

**of God, like the redemption of God, belongs only to those who know Jesus as personal Lord and Savior. God took a day off for our sake that we might have a day of rest, but He gave His Son to die for us that we might have eternal rest. It is sad that men lose the benefits of weekly rest, but it is the greatest tragedy when they lose eternal rest. If you have never received God's free gift of salvation in Christ, do so today and God will begin in you a new creation, for when it comes to salvation, God never takes a day off.**

## **5. THE MAN WHO WAS NOT BORN Based on Gen. 2:4-17**

**An old preacher from the back woods was teaching a class of children about how God created man. He said, "In the beginning there was just nothing at all. One day God was fooling around with some mud, and before you knew it he had a man. He put that man up against a fence to dry there in the sun. God liked that man, but he looked kind of lonesome standing there all alone, so..." Just then a hand went up in the front and a little voice said, "If, as you say, there just wasn't nothing at all at the beginning, where'd that fence come from?" The preacher paused for a moment and then exploded, "It's those kind of questions that's ruin religion!"**

**So often men are careless in their understanding of God's Word. Or else they read their own ideas into it and then think the truth of the Bible is endangered because they are confronted with an unanswerable question. Questions can endanger man's subjective interpretation, but God's Word is never threatened by questions. All believers who have any contact at all with the world will have to face up to difficult questions sooner or later. Many Christians fear to face these questions, not because there are no answers, but because they do not know the answer. Lack of confidence causes the Christian to fail as a witness. He knows if he opens his mouth he will get questions fired at him that he cannot answer, and so he clams up and defends the idea of a silent witness. The silent witness is inadequate in itself, for it only calls attention to your self. It is only by word of mouth that you can bring Christ into the picture, and without Him your witness will only impress others with what a good person you are.**

**We need to realize that questions are often an open door to a great**

**opportunity for witnessing. We read in I Kings 10:1 that the Queen of Sheba came to test Solomon with hard questions, and he amazed her, for he had the wisdom to answer them all. We are not Solomon, but we have access to the wisdom of Solomon, and we can seek the guidance of the same God who gave him his wisdom. As Christians we ought to take full advantage of people's questions. Youth and adults alike are questioning everything, and all that many Christians are doing is lamenting the fact when they should be searching for answers to these questions.**

**The question is one of the greatest factors there is in teaching and learning. In the only reference we have to the boyhood of Jesus we find Him in the temple asking questions of the scholars of His day. Jesus saw the value of asking questions, and all through His ministry He was a master at asking and answering questions. Parents so often fail to take seriously the questions of their children. Many are like the father in Alice in Wonderland who said,**

**I have answered three questions, and that is enough,  
Said his father; don't give yourself airs.  
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?  
Be off or I'll knock you downstairs!**

**This sounds more like Malice In Blunderland. Parents tend to go to one extreme or the other. They are either indifferent, or they are over zealous and elaborate on a subject beyond what the question was aimed at discovering. Both are illustrated by the boy who came to his father as he was reading the evening paper. He said he wanted to ask a question. The father did not care to be disturbed and said, "Why don't you ask your mother?" "Never mind," said the boy, "I don't want to know that much about it." Both in society and in our families we fail to make effective use of the question as a means of extending the kingdom of God. It is time that we wake up to the great possibilities for evangelism that are made possible through the questions that people have. We need to stimulate people to ask significant questions, and then be prepared to give an answer from God's Word.**

**There are limitations and dangers, however and we must be aware of them. Paul warned both Timothy and Titus to avoid foolish and stupid questions that lead to senseless controversy. There are many questions that are foolish that they deserve to be ignored. Some people have a knack of inquiring into the irrelevant and insignificant. A guide at the Metropolitan**

**Museum of Art in New York City took a group through and pointed out various masterpieces. He gave a brief list of the painters, and after he asked if anyone had any questions. "Yes," said one lady, "How do you get such a high gloss on your beautifully waxed floors?" I have some idea of how he felt because I was teaching a group of juniors once and I was explaining an important Christian truth when a hand went up. I thought it was a good sign of interest, but it turned out that he must have been reliving a TV program, for he asked me if I had watched Gun Smoke the night before.**

**Stimulating the right question is not always easy, nor is it always easy to have an adequate answer, but every believer should be conscious of the great possibility of spreading God's truth through questions. You will not always be a smashing success, but one of the principles of evangelism is: It is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all. Jesus did not always succeed either, but He always tried. In a sense, this introduction is an end in it self, for it presents a key idea that we should carry away and seek to apply it. It is also meant to prepare our minds for the consideration of a very controversial question on the origin of man.**

**Can it be that all men have descended from a man who was never born? We believe that a man must be born of the flesh and then be born again to be saved. He must be born of the flesh and of the spirit. So we have some unique concepts of man and birth. We believe that all men must be born twice if they are to be saved, and on the other hand we believe that all men have descended from Adam who was not even born once. He was created and not born. Many find it hard to believe in the virgin birth, but in Adam we have one who had no mother at all. If one begins by belief in God, then the biblical record is easy to believe. If one begins with the assumption that God is not, then, of course, the biblical account is fantastic, for it is impossible for there to have been a man who was never born. This is the assumption behind the theory of evolution. Our children have pictures in their textbooks showing that man has evolved. This is far more fantastic than anything Christians believe, and it takes an enormous faith in godless matter to believe that all the wonders of the universe came through mindless evolution.**

**There are believers who call themselves theistic evolutionists, and they are convinced that evolution was God's method of bringing man into being. There is nothing inherently impossible about this being true. If God could make man of the dust, He could certainly make him from an ape with even less of a**

transformation. If Gen. 2:7 would have used the word ape instead of dust all Christians would accept evolution as orthodox doctrine. There would be nothing incompatible between the Bible and evolution if, in fact, God did make man by that process. The point is, the Bible does say dust and not ape. Neither mud nor monkey is a very flattering origin, so we do not insist on believing man's origin is from the dust because it is more dignified, but simply because this is what the Word of God says. That ought to be the basic concern of the believer. It should be to discover what it is the Bible says, and then he can consider its relation to all kinds of other questions. We want to explore several questions.

1. When did man begin? In the 3rd century Julius Africanus placed the creation of Adam at 5500 B. C. In the 17th century Archbishop Ussher placed it at 4004 B. C. His figuring really came out to more than that, but it was rounded off to 4004 because that made exactly four one thousand periods before the birth of Christ in 4 B. C. John Lightfoot, a scholar of the same century, narrowed down the creation of Adam to Friday Oct. 23, at 9:00 A. M. Being a cautious man, says another scholar, he was not willing to commit himself beyond this.

How can we begin to reconcile 4004 B. C. with the evidence of science? The most cautious of scholars have dated man back to at least ten thousand years. The first thing we need to do is to recognize that 4004 B. C. is like the fence in the story of the backwoods preacher. It is a product of man and not of revelation. It was arrived at by assuming that the genealogies of Scripture were always from father to son, but it can be shown that some of the genealogies skip many generations, and the most obvious being Jesus the Son of David, even though a thousand years came between them. The Bible does not set a date for man's origin, and so we need never feel embarrassed about bones of men being dated much further back than 4004 B. C.

First 5 simply says that man was made before domestic plants were made. Cassuto, the Jewish scholar, says the terms here refer to fields of grain which naturally were not in existence before man since they need cultivation to continue. The atmosphere was such that there was inadequate moisture for such plants. Man's food products demand rain and cultivation, and so they did not exist until after man was made. Let men cease to till the ground and all the other plants in the world will continue to grow, but mankind will soon starve, for plants of the field will cease to grow. Man was made a farmer from



**the beginning.**

**Verse 6 is added as an explanation of how other plants could grow before rainfall. The biblical answer to the question, when did man begin, is left open for a wide margin. Since scientists themselves have a multitude of opinions all the way from thousand to millions of years, we need not be overly concerned about the matter at all. We ought to be conservative and not be carried away with wild speculations, but we need not fear any question on the matter. We can move with confidence among the discoveries of science without fear that some future discovery will prove us in error, for the biblical record is such as to be not subject to error.**

**2. How did man begin? Verse 7 makes it clear that he was not born, but was formed. He was molded as clay in the potter's hand. He was a product of what already existed. He was a combination of earth and heaven, of the material and the spiritual. He is akin to both the animals and the angels, both of which existed before him. The text does indicate that Adam was made by a process, and he was not just called into being. This is where the theistic evolutionists read in the process of evolution. The problem is that the process here is with dead matter and not with other forms of living matter, which is necessary to evolution.**

**The term for dust is one that can mean loose earth, slime and mud from watered ground. Man's body is being formed from a very humble source. The evolutionist contributes to the mud itself what the Bible attributes to God. Since there is no logical reason why matter and lower forms of life should develop into such amazing patterns of beauty and design the evolutionist has to insist on millions of years of process. The assumption being that without God or any spiritual force sheer matter will produce mind, beauty and design if given enough time. The Christian rejects this as nonsense and denies it as an unproven assumption that any amount of time can produce life out of matter. The body of man came from matter, but only God could breath life into that matter.**

**Jewish tradition says that Adam was formed as a man of 20-years-old. The Bible does not say, but it does make clear that he began as an adult. He never had the experience of being born, or of living through childhood. Man is more than matter, for God gave life directly to that matter. We tend to read too much into this verse and say that this makes man distinct from the**

**animals. All animals, however, also have the breath of life, for Gen. 7:22 states this. Animals have a soul as well as man, for the soul is simply the life principle. Our life is the same as animal life, and when the breath ceases the body dies. That which makes man unique is not mentioned here at all, but it is in chapter one where it is stated that man is made in God's image. Man has a spirit as well as a soul. He is spiritual in that he has the capacity to think of ultimate truths and to commune with God and know His will.**

**This verse is only telling us how man began and that he is composed of the dust of the earth and the breath of God. It is simple and sensible, and it is in great contrast with all the pagan myths of how various gods made man. It is also in contrast with modern myths that make man in the image of apes. If you ask enough questions about the alternatives to believing what the Bible says about the origin of man, you will discover that God's creation of Adam makes more sense than they do. We need not fear the questions of the skeptic on what we believe to be the origin of man. We can state with confidence that man began with Adam, the man who was never born. Every man since has been born, but not all have been born again. They have not begun a new life in Christ where they are seeking to know Him and serve Him. The Bible says that without this second birth we have no hope of seeing God. The only way to experience it is by trusting in Jesus as your personal Savior. Adam was not born once, but we need to be born twice to have all God wants us to have for time and eternity.**

## **6. THE FIRST LADY Based on Gen. 2:18-25**

**Only one president of the United States was a bachelor as president, and that was Grover Cleveland. All others had wives, and these First Ladies of our land have had an enormous influence on history. Martha Washington was the first First Lady of the United States. She, like other wives in those early days of the Revolutionary War, spent 8 winters with her husband General Washington in the field. This included the terrible winter of Valley Forge. She helped keep the Revolutionary Army together. She sewed their tattered clothes, and she ministered to their needs, and help keep up moral.**

**When she was not involved in the war, she was at Mount Vernon managing**

**their 8 thousand acre plantation. She set the pattern as a true help mate. Many other first ladies have played a major role in the lives of the men who governed our nation. Lucy Webb Hayes, wife of President Rutherford Hayes, gained quite a reputation for her influence. When she was informed of an injustice there could be quick action to rectify the situation. President Hayes once said, "Mr. Hayes may have no influence with congress, but she has great influence with me."**

**Women have always been a major force in history, if for no other reason, because of their influence on men. Never was this more true than when there was only one woman and one man. When we go back to the first of all first ladies, we see a woman centered world. God's attention was focused on the female, for she was the one that prevented creation from being complete. Adam was alone, and he had learned all he could about the animal kingdom, but there was nothing alive that satisfied his need. God said that it was not good for man to be alone, and so He put the final finishing touch on His handiwork, and He made Eve.**

**She immediately became the center of Adam's attention and affection. The very first poem ever composed on earth was composed by Adam when he saw what God could make out of a rib. He took one look at Eve and forgot all about his surgery. He said, "Now this is more like it. This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man." Had Adam been an Englishman he may have put it more like this:**

**She, she is bone of my bone,  
And flesh of my flesh is she;  
Woman her name, which is grown  
Out of man, out of me.**

**It is fitting that history's first poetry should be in celebration of a woman. Most poetry since has been inspired by the male female relationship. Woman came from man's rib, but she has never been a mere side issue with him. She has always been a central issue because of her influence on men. Not only was she the focus of God and man, but as we read on in the story we discover she was also the center of the satanic plot to destroy paradise, and bring about the fall of man. The fact that Satan chose to make Eve his first target reveals just how subtle and clever he really is. She was the only living creature that had a**

**powerful enough influence on Adam to bring him to disobey God. The serpent would not have gotten to first base with Adam, nor would any other creature Satan might use to entice him. There was only one choice, and that was Eve.**

**The Genesis account makes it clear that there is one theme on which God, man, and Satan all agree, and that is that you can't win without a woman. God could not stop creating until He created a woman. Adam could not be content with a perfect paradise without a woman. Satan could not have penetrated Adam's defenses without a woman. W. B. Riley, the well known preacher back in the 1930's said,**

**They talk about a woman's sphere,  
As though it had a limit;  
There's not a place on earth or heaven,  
There's not a task to mankind given,  
There's not a blessing or a woe,  
There's not a life, a death, or birth,  
That has a feather's weight of worth,  
Without a woman in it.**

**That poetry is based squarely on the rock of revelation. Look at the big events of Bible history, and you will see women as key characters for good or evil: The fall, of course, and the wives of the patriarchs-Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel; the mother and sister of Moses; the wives of David and Solomon; Esther and Ruth; Mary and Elizabeth; the many women in the ministry of Jesus, and the women at the cross and the resurrection. These are just some of the major women who play key roles in the history of God's plan. If we go on into the book of Acts, and beyond into the history of the church, we see that women have been, are, and will always be a key and central influence in everything that happens in God's plan.**

**We live in a world where some see women as inferior, and where others put them on a pedestal, and see them as superior. Still others fight to prove that above all else they are equal to men. The biblical view condemns all three of these positions if they are held as exclusive truth. No view of women can be called biblical that refuses to recognize the full revelation that they are all three-superior, equal, and inferior. All three of these categories fit the first woman. Some Bible students say if you go to the first use of a term or an ideal in the Bible, that will be your clue as to its meaning throughout the Bible. I**

**doubt that this is a fool proof rule, but it does fit the study of women. If you study Eve, you have the foundation laid for all else that you will find in God's Word on women.**

**She was the first woman.**

**She was the first wife.**

**She was the first mother.**

**She was the first grandmother.**

**She was the first lover.**

**She was the first to entice.**

**She was the first person to be tempted.**

**She was the first sinner.**

**She was the first to name the name of God.**

**She was the first woman to loose paradise.**

**She was the first woman who had to move.**

**She was the first woman to see a baby, and watch it grow.**

**She was the first woman to suffer grief.**

**She was the first woman to see a child die.**

**She was the first woman to make clothes.**

**She was the first woman to receive hope of a redeemer.**

**I am sure that with some thought we could expand the list even further, for she was the first woman to experience all of the joys and sorrows of human life. We want to look at this fascinating woman from the point of view of each of the other three characters that shared the stage of history with her at the beginning. The universe was vast, and the earth was larger than it has ever been, for it was so empty of human life. The only persons in existence with Eve that she was aware of were Adam, God, and Satan. It was a small cast, and as we have said, Eve seemed to be the star, for the attention of the others was focused on her. As we look at her from the perspective of each of them, we see the three fold picture of woman. The total woman is a combination of these three views. We want to look at Eve in the order in which she is first confronted by each of these three personalities.**

## **I. GOD'S PERSPECTIVE.**

**From God's perspective we see the superiority of woman. God saved the best for last. She was the crown of creation, and as Lockyer says, she was likely the most beautiful woman to have ever lived. She was God's best gift to**

**the ideal man. She was made like him in the image of God to reflect God's glory. The male is usually the most beautiful in the animal kingdom, but God chose to reverse that pattern when he created humans. He chose to make the female more beautiful than the male.**

**The Jewish Talmud said, "All women in comparison with Sarah are like monkeys in respect to men. But Sarah can no more be compared to Eve than can monkeys be compared with men." Milton wrote of Eve,**

**O fairest of creation, last and best  
Of all God's works, creatures in whom excelled  
Whatever can to sight or thought be formed,  
Holy, divine, good, amiable or sweet.**

**God in His mercy kept her weight and vital statistics in the dark lest women all through history live in despair for not being able to match the ideal woman. Eve was not superior to Adam in every way, of course, but only in those ways that made him glad. She supplied what he needed to make life complete. She was God's first wonder drug, for she cured Adam of his loneliness, and she gave him a love for life. She was man's first savior, for she came that he might have life, and have it abundantly. God was the author of this plan, as He is of all plans of salvation.**

**Someone has come up with the top ten reasons that God created Eve, and though they are designed for humor, there is still much truth in them.**

**10. God was worried that Adam would frequently become lost in the Garden.**

**9. God knew that one day Adam would require someone to locate and hand him the remote.**

**8. God knew Adam would never go out and buy himself a new fig leaf when his wore out and would therefore need Eve to buy one for him.**

**7. God knew Adam would never be able to make a doctor's, dentist, or haircut appointment for himself.**

**6. God knew Adam would never remember which night to put the garbage on the curb.**

**5. God knew if the world was to be populated, men would never be able to handle the pain and discomfort of childbearing.**

**4. As the Keeper of the Garden, Adam would never remember where he left his tools.**

**3. Apparently, Adam needed someone to blame his troubles on when God caught him hiding in the garden.**

**2. As the Bible says, It is not good for man to be alone!**

**And finally, the Number 1 reason why God created Eve...**

**1. When God finished the creation of Adam, He stepped back, scratched his head, and said, "I can do better than that."**

**Woman is also the unique means that God used for His ultimate plan of salvation for fallen man. Jesus came into this world by means of a woman. "In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son born of a woman." The virgin birth was a team effort, not of God and man, but of God and woman. The woman is superior to man in that she alone has the capacity to bring forth life. Man is still essential, but he cannot bring forth a new life. Woman was a necessity in God's plan of salvation that called for His Son to be born of a virgin. We do not know if God could have saved man another way. All we know is that the way He did do it made it impossible to be accomplished without a woman. To blame her for the fall of man without blessing her for her role in the restoration of man is to ignore God's perspective on woman.**

**In Gen. 3:15 God in His judgment of Satan says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." From the start God said, in this first hint of the Gospel, that the seed of woman was the key to victory over Satan. God had made the female primary in His plan of redemption. As we study biblical and Christian history we will discover that this is not only theory, but fact that the mothers, sisters, and wives of great men have been the key to their victories. It is folly not to see this perspective on women. Next we look at-**

## **II. ADAM'S PERSPECTIVE.**

**Even Adam saw Eve as one superior. She was superior to all that had been created. He eventually saw her as superior even to himself, for he was willing to risk all, including his relationship to God, to follow her in disobedience. The primary perspective of Adam, however, was that at last there was someone who was his equal. Bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. She was not a creature above him like God, nor below him like the animals, but she was just like him. She was on his level. This was what Adam most needed. He needed an equal, and this is what God gave him. She was not taken from his head to rule over him, nor from his feet that he should trample on her. She was taken from his side that she might be his equal.**

**God's ideal is male and female equality. They stand side by side in life. Anything less than this is the result of the fall of man, and is not a part of God's original plan. Ruskin said, "We are foolish and without excuse in speaking of the superiority of one sex to the other, as if they could be compared in similar things. Each has what the other has not; each completes the other, and is completed by the other." God made woman for man, and so the ways in which she differs is not bad for man, but good for him. To refer to the differences in sexes as superior or inferior is, in itself, a part of the fall where all that is good is perverted, damaged, and made a cause for conflict.**

**Bible commentators all through history have pointed to Gen. 1:27 as the basis for sexual equality. It reads, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Male and female are equality part of the image of God. This opens up doors we can't begin to enter now, but keep in mind, the Bible clearly reveals that God's nature is both masculine and feminine. For now we just want to briefly describe what this means for the equality of the sexes. It means that Eve had these characteristics that made her equal to Adam.**

- 1. Rationality. She was not a creature of instinct, but, like him, one of intelligence. She too was given the capacity to think and reason.**
- 2. Volitionality. She had the freedom and power to choose. She was given a free will by which she could make decisions for good or evil.**
- 3. Emotionality. She had the same capacity as Adam for feelings of love and affection, and the ability to develop personal relationships. She had the capacity for anger and hate to break relationships.**
- 4. Morality. She had the same capacity as Adam to feel shame and guilt, and to feel peace and pride when she chose the good rather than the evil.**



**These 4 do not exhaust the image of God, but they give us enough of the picture to see that Eve was made in that image, and was Adam's equal. The nearer we get back to paradise and God's ideal, the nearer we get to the equality of the sexes. Much of the evil of history has been due to the lack of equality of women. We will see this more clearly as we continue our studies. Examples of women who are superior to most men in their field area abundant. We will look at just a couple to illustrate.**

**1. Grace Hopper. She was born in 1906, and was convinced that girls were equal to boys in math. But girls were not encouraged. They were told when they faced a tough problem that girls just can't understand. Her father was different, and he encouraged his girls to believe they were equal. She became a professor of math at Vassar, and when she joined the Navy she was assigned to work on the first computer in the United States. It was called the Mark I. Nobody knew anything about computers then. It was 51 feet long. Today a computer with the same capacity can be held in your hand.**

**She developed the computer language called COBOL. This stood for Common Business Oriented Languages, which is the language used in data processing. No one would believe it could be done by anyone, let alone a woman, but in two years she had the Navy convinced because she built a computer, and made it work with her language. She became the head of the Navy Programming Languages Section in the Pentagon. She was superior in her influence, and equal to anyone in her knowledge of computers.**

**2. Cecelia Goposhkin. She was born in 1900, and was a pioneer astronomer. Her studies enabled astronomers to understand the history of the stars, and the structure of our galaxy. In 1956 she became the first woman to be made a professor at Harvard.**

**After reading widely in the field of female accomplishments, I am convinced that there is no field of knowledge where women have not proven their equality with men. Whenever women are given equal opportunity, they become equal, and often superior to men. Adam saw this equality in Eve from the very beginning. Next we consider-**

### **III. SATAN'S PERSPECTIVE.**

**Satan also saw the superiority of woman, but he saw it as a means to bring**

**about the degrading of mankind, and because of his success we have a whole history of the negative influence of the female. Because of her superior influence Eve became the doorway of evil into the history of man. She was not more evil than Adam, but she was more influential than Adam. He did not influence her to obey God, but she influenced him to disobey God. He failed to protect Eve from the intruder into paradise, and then failed to rescue her when she was ensnared.**

**A bad woman has always seemed to be more fallen than a bad man. No nation is considered to be hopeless until it is established that the women have become totally corrupted. Satan knows that his bitterest enemies are righteous women, but he also knows that his best allies are fallen women. Numerous are the victories he has won by the aid of women. The fall of many great men and nations can be shown to revolve around women. We need to make it clear, however, that as in the case of Adam, all men who fall because of women do so by choice, and are fully accountable for those choices. Bathsheba is never blamed for the fall of David. He is held fully responsible for his actions.**

**One of the great mistakes of history has been the folly of blaming women for their powerful influence on men. The ideal of God is equality of the sexes, but sin lead to inequality, and the subjection of the female. Men have used this all through history to suppress women, and by so doing they have fallen into Satan's trap, for as long as women are kept inferior it is impossible for men to rise, and climb back toward the ideal. When you study the history of women, you will discover where women are treated like animals you have a low civilization where sin and darkness dominates the culture. The greater equality women gain, the higher the civilization, and the more light and freedom everybody enjoys.**

**The equality and freedom of women, however, leaves them wide open to the same temptation that Eve encountered. To use that freedom to chose evil, and so use their highest value to influence men to follow them in departing from the will of God. Many fight for women to be equal in order that they might have the freedom to be as corrupt as men. So what we have is another of life's great paradoxes. Women's equality is both beautiful and terrible. To deny one or the other is to be blind to reality and biblical facts. Was Eve beautiful or terrible? She was both. She was both the best resource for good, and the best for evil. Both are always possibilities, and it is the challenge of every**

**Christian woman to dedicate her life to being the best she can be for the cause of Christ and the glory of God.**

**God has used fallen women to win this fallen world back to Himself. He used Eve to go on and give the fallen world its first children. She was clearly forgiven and restored to fellowship with God, for she thanked God for her children, and taught them to offer sacrifice to God. She became the mother of all living, and began that line that led to the Savior, who was the seed of the woman who made it possible for all people to rise above the fall and be restored to God. Eve was the first lady of our world, and as far as we know, the first lady of our universe. She was in some ways superior to Adam; in many ways equal to Adam, and in some ways inferior to Adam. She represents the women of all time in these 3 categories. This is the full biblical view of women in terms of their relationship to men. If women want to be all they can be, they need to focus on God's view of their superiority, and Adam's view of their equality, and avoid Satan's view of their potential for degrading all mankind. Eve fell, but she was also a great example of the two higher views, as the first lady.**

## **7. SATANIC SUCCESS Based on Gen. 3:1-7**

**William Congreve said, "If I were a painter I would draw the devil like an idiot, a driveller with a bib and bells." All I can say to that is that I am glad he is not a painter, for he would only serve the devil's cause by painting him as a driveling idiot. I agree with Thomas Lodge who said, "Devil's are not so black as they are painted." The Bible pictures Satan as extremely capable, and never as a mere dunce only good for laughs. Satan would be delighted if we thought of him as an idiot, for this would give him another advantage in his perpetual plot to deceive. Degrade the devil and you deceive yourself. This does not mean we are to exalt the devil, but we are to recognize the facts about his capabilities and subtlety.**

**We can no more follow the devil is dead nonsense than we can the God is dead nonsense. It is true that he is a defeated foe, and those in Christ can resist him and make him flea in retreat, but it is also true that if we are dreaming that the devil is a dimwitted demon devoid of dynamic deceptive**

ability, we are asleep to reality. We can only defeat him and escape his subtle deception by being fully aware of his abilities. This will drive us to dependence upon Christ whose guidance and wisdom can outwit the subtle serpent.

Satan would like us to have our guard down, and have the attitude toward him as expressed by the 17th century poet Dryden toward a certain Shadwell. He wrote-

The rest to some faint meaning make pretense,  
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.  
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,  
Strike through and make a lucid interval;  
But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,  
His rising fog prevails against the day.

This is the way Congreve wanted to paint Satan, but it is a great mistake, for as long as men think of Satan as stupid, ugly and repulsive they will never recognize him. It is this negative attitude that has caused many to doubt his very existence, for they never confront him in that image. If you picture Satan as the subtle serpent that he is, however, then you can see his trail winding all through history. If you recognize his ability to become an angel of light, and recognize, as the temptation of Christ reveals, and as Shakespeare said, "The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose," then you can see his subtle slithering even among the very elect. In other words, the first step in recognizing the reality of Satan is to become aware of his amazing abilities. Heine tells us in poetry of his surprise at discovering the real nature of Satan:

I call'd the devil, and he came, and with wonder his form did I closely scan;  
He is not ugly, and is not lame, but really a handsome and charming man.  
A man in the prime of life is the devil, obliging, a man of the world, and civil,  
A diplomatist too, well skilled in debate, he talks quite glibly of church and state.

The Christian must forget tradition and art, and build his concept of Satan on the only reliable source of information, and that is the Bible. It is obvious that Shakespeare knew the biblical view, for he wrote, "The prince of darkness is a gentleman." A Dutch proverb also catches the biblical image-"Never was hood so holy but the devil could get his head in it." I am convinced that the

reason God has preserved the account of the fall of Adam and Eve is that so all who follow His Word might be fully aware of the cunning enemy that seeks their downfall. The most practical value we can get from the study of the fall is awareness of the methods of Satanic deception. We want to see how he succeeds so that by not being ignorant of his devices we can counter his attack with the wisdom of Christ, and so stand where others have fallen. The first thing we see is-

### **THE SUBTLETY OF HIS APPROACH.**

One of the ideas in the definition of subtlety is the ability to make fine distinctions. We see it here in Satan's choice of approaching the woman rather than the man. It is just good sense to strike at the weakest point. By this I do not mean that Eve was the weaker sex, for that is irrelevant, for strength has nothing to do with this temptation. Eve was the weakest point simply because she had been in existence only a matter of hours. She had far less knowledge and experience than Adam. Even the command from God not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil came to her second hand through Adam. These might seem like minor points, but Satan must have thought them to be significant. So did Luther, and he gives full credit to Satan's wisdom in choosing to approach the woman. He said, "I believe that had Satan first tempted the man, Adam would have gained the victory." We can never be sure of this, but we know that Satan made the wisest choice from his point of view, for he succeeded.

The fact that Satan approached by a talking serpent sounds quite far fetched to our modern ears, but nothing could have been more appropriate for the circumstances. Let us not read our experience back into Eden, for there is no comparison. The devil would never attempt to tempt anyone today in such a manner, for he is not so stupid as to think he could get anywhere that way. If a snake spoke to any woman today, it is highly unlikely she would reply with anything but a scream and a burst of speed in the opposite direction. Eve, however, stood and talked to it calmly, but why shouldn't she? As we said, she had only been alive a matter of hours, and there was nothing unusual about a talking serpent. There was nothing unusual about anything. How could there be? She did not even know of any such distinction between what was usual or unusual. She only knew what was.

If any animal, or even a tree, would have spoken it could hardly have been

**a shock. This is why it seems so strange to us. We know serpents don't talk, and if Eve would have known it, she would have thought it to be fantastic too. This just demonstrates the subtlety of Satan, for he would not likely have been able to fool Adam. He had been around longer and had contact with all the animals of the garden. A speaking serpent would have aroused his suspicion immediately, and Satan would have gotten nowhere. Therefore, he approaches the one who was most innocent, and took full advantage of Eve's limited experience. You can be sure he has not forsaken a method that was so successful. He continues to strike at the weak points. When Satan tempted Christ he struck at the most opportune time, and he directed his appeal to the weakest points.**

**Jesus had been fasting for 40 days, and at this point the strongest desire of His body would be for food, and that is why Satan suggested that He turn a stone into bread. Let us never think that Satan is against us fulfilling our desires and ambitions. He is not only for us succeeding, but he will suggest many ideas to help us succeed. He knew Jesus wanted to win people to Himself, and so he encouraged Jesus to jump off the temple and thereby bring a flock of people to Him. He knew Jesus came to regain the lost world, and so he offered it all to Him if He would bow down and worship Satan. He knew Eve would want to get all the knowledge she could and be as great as possible, and he was willing cooperate and see that she got it. He knows that all of us desire some degree of importance. He knows we long for power, possessions and popularity. He knows that we can count on him for giving suggestions for success. The catch, of course, is that he does not tell you the consequences of being successful by his methods.**

**The anticipated sweetness of following Satan's suggestion turns to bitterness in the actual experience, for we soon recognize that the cost is the loss of God's favor. It is extremely important that we recognize our weak points, for you can be sure that Satan does, and it will be there that he will apply pressure. Everyone has a weak spot. The fool and the wise man both have this in common, but the difference is that the wise man sets a double guard at that point, while the fool leaves it unguarded all together. A Christian needs to know himself and recognize his weaknesses. He needs to recognize that it is where he is ignorant, or where he has his greatest ambition, that Satan will make his approach.**

**A wise New England farmer knew his weak spot, for he said, "Whenever I**

say the Lord's Prayer I add 'don't let a five thousand dollar temptation come my way.'" He was honest enough to know where he could fall, and so he knew where to keep guard. So often people dismiss their weaknesses as if they were not accountable for falling where they are weak. But Milton put it well when he said, "If weakness may excuse what murderer, what traitor, parricide, incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it? All wickedness is weakness; that plea, therefore, with God or man will gain thee no remission." We are responsible for our weakness, and since we see Satan is subtle in his approach, and will surely strike at the weakest point, we have an obligation to know what our weak point is, and make full use of God's provision to guard it well. Eve did not have the advantage we have of knowing this. She was altogether ignorant of the existence of the subtle deceiver, and so her guilt is less than ours if we too are ensnared by his subtle approach. The next thing we see is-

### **THE SUBTLETY OF HIS ATTACK.**

We have seen how he approaches in such a way as to make sure there are no barriers set up between him and the victim. Now we need to see how he attacks the Word of God in such a way as to bring a barrier between the victim and God. He begins with a question and asks, "Has God said you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" He is expressing surprise that they would think God has really forbidden them to eat of any tree. "You certainly must be kidding to say God has imposed some limitation on your freedom." This is subtle attempt to break down respect for the command of God. It is a very common and successful method of creating rebellion.

A young person, for example, is given orders not to go to the mall after school, but to get right home. His companion wants him to go, however, and is not interested in parent-child relationships. So he seeks to shake the youths respect for his parents command. He says, "Don't tell me your old man said you couldn't go to the mall, just like you were a baby or something, you must be kidding, aren't you?" This makes one wonder if the command is somehow unjust. It puts doubt in the mind as to whether it is legitimate and worthy of respect and obedience.

This was Satan's purpose to create some doubt as to God's goodness. Another aspect of the subtlety of his attack with this question is that it centered Eve's attention on the forbidden. If Satan can get you to concentrate on the forbidden his chances are good of getting you to experiment with it. He

**is only doing what any smart salesman does. They know you have to get your product before the people and get them to thinking about it in order to have any hope of getting them to use it. Eve probably would never have thought about the forbidden tree if Satan had just carried on a general conversation. But he knew how a simple question to direct a conversation toward the forbidden could capture her interest.**

**We can learn even from the devil and fulfill the command to be as wise as a serpent. Satan's method of leading men to evil work as well in leading them to concentrate on Christ and that which is good. Each of us who wants to be an effective witness for Christ must learn how to ask questions in such a way so as to lead men's thoughts to concentration on spiritual matters. If you can get people to think about anything, their curiosity often leads them to pursue it. This works both for good and evil. Someone said, "Too much curiosity lost paradise." This could well be true, for as Burke said, "The first and simplest emotion we discover in the human mind is curiosity."**

**Satan knew that if he could get Eve's mind on the forbidden fruit it would be like getting a child's mind on a freshly frosted cake. There is bound to be some kind of action, and the chances are that it will be in favor of an evil action rather than a good one. Rev. Harold E. Kohn has written about the power of curiosity. He told the story of the severe tough-minded woman who called the county sheriff and complained about several boys who were swimming in the nude in a stream, which she could see from her porch. It was a disgrace she claimed, and she demanded he put a stop to it. The sheriff told the boys to move up stream, and they did. A few days later the woman called again and the sheriff asked, "Haven't they moved up stream yet?" "Yes they have," she said, "But if I go upstairs I can still them from my bedroom window." This, of course was silly, but it is no laughing matter when Satan can get us to be curious about the forbidden. The compulsive power of curiosity led Eve to fall, and through history has done more damage than just killing the cat, as the proverb tells us.**

**It is the responsibility of each of us to constantly examine ourselves in the light of what we know in Satan's subtle approach in aiming at our weak points, and in his subtle attack of creating doubt about God's commands, and in his stimulating curiosity toward the forbidden. Pride goes before fall, and the worse pride is that of thinking we can outwit the subtle serpent on our own. The more we learn of satanic subtlety, the more we ought to commit our**



**lives to Christ and let His mind and Spirit guide us.**

## **8. TRICKED INTO A TREAT Based on Gen. 3:1-6**

**On Halloween night the streets are filled with masked children out to get treats and to play a few tricks. Their masks may hide their identity from us, but we are only moderately fooled because we know that underneath there are children and not assorted demons, or at least not supernatural demons. This was not so on one of the first days of history. It was not a Halloween, but it was a day of tricks and treats. Satan was out to trick Eve into a treat that would bring about the fall of man. Eve was not even aware that Satan was using the serpent as a mask.**

**Satan's first role on the stage of history was that of a hypocrite. A hypocrite is one who wears a mask and who plays a role externally which does not correspond to his internal character. By the mask of hypocrisy Eve was tricked into the first sin. It seems as if the odds were so great against her that she didn't stand a chance. Milton says in Paradise Lost, "For neither man nor angel can discern hypocrisy, the only evil that walks invisible, except to God alone." Satan appears to have all the advantage, and Eve stands helpless before his cunning temptation. Except for one thing this was true. Satan then and now has the advantage over man, and man in his own wisdom will never outwit the subtle serpent. One of the very first lessons we learn from the account of the fall is that there is only one way to victory over evil and that is by obedience to the Word of God. Eve in her ignorance still had no excuse for her sin because she knew God's command and was free to obey it. Milton again has God speak concerning man:**

**"I made him just and right,  
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.  
Such I created all the ethereal Powers  
And Spirits, both them who stood, and them who failed.  
Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.**

**Verses 2 and 3 tell us that Eve had all she needed to gain the victory had she chosen to live according to her knowledge. She did not know the reason**

for God's command, however, and it was at this point of ignorance that Satan worked and sought to get her to doubt.

A children's story about an ancient king who wanted to find a faithful servant illustrates the need for obedience in spite of reasons. The king wanted to make sure he had a servant who would obey him, and so he ordered two men who applied for the position to draw water out of a well and pour it into a basket. It was not long before one of the men threw his pail away in a rage. He shouted, "This is foolish work. I will do no more of it." The other said, "This is the work the king commanded us to do, and for which he is paying us." He went on dipping his pail into the basket. When the water was nearly gone he saw a glittering of something in the mud at the bottom. He brought it up and found it to be a diamond ring. Then he understood why the king had given them that apparently foolish work. If the ring would have been brought up it could have been found in the basket. He took the ring to the king, and the king gave it back to him as a gift saying, "You are a man I can trust, because you obeyed and trusted me when you did not understand my reasons. I see I can trust you in greater things."

This simple story carries the same profound truth as the story of the Garden of Eden. If man has the knowledge of God's will that is all he needs, for he can obey what he knows regardless of the lack of reasons and the pressure to not obey. The test of the king was the same test that God gave to Adam and Eve. The test was to determine if they could obey without reasons, and even when the subtle one made it seem unreasonable. In verse 4 Satan comes right out and denies that God has spoken the truth. You will not die as God has said were his words. This left Eve standing where all of us stand, for she was between two conflicting voices. Every command of God is challenged by the voice of doubt. The first sin of man is usually thought to be disobedience, but it is likely that doubt likely deserves the dubious honor of being the first sin. Disobedience was the first sinful act, but before the act Eve was deceived into doubting God's Word. Once Satan gets a person to doubt he has them in his power.

Doubt is one of Satan's most powerful weapons simply because it is so easy to create. By the very nature of our limitations we are easy targets for the arrows of doubt. There are so many things we do not know for sure, just as Eve did not know, and unless we are willing to except many things on God's Word alone we can be duped into doubting. Doubt lost paradise, and it has

lost many blessings of God's sense. The Greeks recognized the great power of doubt in bringing loss to man. One of their most pathetic stories is that of Orpheus who was in love with a beautiful maiden Eurydice. She died and he was plunged into deep grief. He besought the gods to restore her, but to no avail, and so he decided to descend to the underworld himself and bring her back. Down he went through the gloomy way haunted by ghosts and phantoms till he stood before the throne of Pluto, god of the underworld. He made such a passionate entreaty that Pluto called Eurydice and bade Orpheus to lead her back to the light.

Pluto imposed one condition on Orpheus. He said, "Lead on in front, while she behind must follow, nor dare to doubt or look even once behind until the upper air is reached, else the boon is null and forfeit." Gladly he accepted the conditions and striking his lyre in joyful notes, he began to climb toward the light. As he came near the top a fear fell upon his heart. Had his loved one followed, or had she dropped by the way? Was she really behind him, or had Pluto only deceived him? So strong was the voice of doubt that he could stand it no longer. He turned to see if indeed his love was there. She was and with joy he clasped her, but alas, even as he did she began to fade. "Oh! What! She cried, what madness hath undone me! And, O wretched! The, my Orpheus, too." The madness that seized them was the same madness that brought ruin into the world, and it was the madness of doubt. Even like Orpheus could not trust and leave the unknown to God.

Satan says in verse 5 that God knows if you eat of the forbidden fruit your eyes will be open and you will be like God knowing good and evil. Satan seeks to change completely her concept of God. He is saying that all you think about God being good and loving is a myth. His prohibiting you is not for your good at all, but it is a hindrance to what is best for you. Satan has to wage an attack on God's character in order to get Eve to doubt his motives. The most amazing aspect of this whole attack on the character of God is that it is all done with true statements. Nowhere can a better example be found of how truth can be used for evil ends. It can be used to give false impressions, or to lead one to false implications and conclusions.

Satan said they would not die, and we know that they did not literally die, but lived for centuries after their sin. He said their eyes would be opened, and this came true. He said they would be as God knowing good and evil, and this is confirmed by God himself in verse 22 where He says, "Behold the man has

become like one of us, knowing good and evil." There is not a single statement of Satan that was an outright lie. The lie consisted in the total impression he conveyed, they were true statements, but only half-truths because they were stated in such a way as to give a false impression. Shakespeare said, "Oh what authority and show of truth can cunning sin cover itself withal." Allston said, "The most intangible, and therefore the worst kind of lie, is a half-truth."

Satan conveyed to Eve the impression that God was the enemy of her highest well-being, and that he himself was coming to her as the great liberator showing her the way to freedom from God's unjust restraint. Milton expresses the devil's delight in his clear deception:

I under fair pretense of friendly ends,  
And well-placed words of glazing courtesy  
Baited with reasons not unplausible,  
Wined me into the easy-hearted man,  
And hugged him into snares.

If we learn nothing else, we must learn that the most dangerous lies are half-truths that give us false impressions. Let us never underestimate the powers of evil as to think their lives are always an obviously false. Shakespeare knew his Bible and history, and so he knew of what he was speaking when he wrote,

Often times, to win us to our harm,  
The instrument of darkness tell us truths;  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us  
In deepest consequence.

It is not enough that an idea be true for us to follow it, for there is not a cult, philosophy or religion in existence that does not contain some truth. One of our basic doctrines is that the Bible is our soul authority for faith and conduct. This is our protection against half-truths. There is much we do not know, even as Eve did not, but like her we have an objective authority to be our guide. If we do not doubt it, but seek only to obey it even when we do not fully understand all the reasons for God's will, then we can be assured that Satan's cunning will not be able to trick us into treating ourselves to forbidden fruit.

**It is important that we recognize that Satan will even use the good to keep us from the best. What he said about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was true, for it did open their eyes, and they did become more like God. In their innocence they were not like God, for they did not know good and evil as God does. The first sin actually made man more God-like in making them true moral agents. Good came of their disobedience, but it was good at the expense of the best. There can be no doubt that if Adam and Eve would have stood the test and obeyed God would have permitted them to eat of that tree freely.**

**I am convinced that Satan's subtlety is best demonstrated in his getting men to arrive at a right end by the use of wrong means. Scripture makes it clear that the knowledge of good and evil is a good thing. It is said of David in II Sam. 14:17, "The word of my lord the king will set me at rest, for my lord the king is like the angel of God to discern good and evil." It was this God-like ability that Solomon prayed for in I Kings 3:9. "Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind to govern thy people, that I may discern between good and evil."**

**We see then that Satan tricked Eve into a treat that could have been a treat of victory, but it became a treat of defeat because it was gotten by an evil means. The very first sin teaches us of the danger of letting the end justify the means. It is by this philosophy that Satan can trick us into treats. He can offer us true and valuable goals, but when they are attained by means contrary to the will of God they are sinful. The knowledge of good and evil was a good, and it was a real treat, but to gain it by disobeying God spoiled it and left only bitter consequences. When Satan tempted Christ it was in each case to get a good end by an inappropriate means. Satan is tricking masses into treats of defeat by getting them to thinking that knowledge is the answer to all problems. God uses knowledge to lead men to higher ground, but Satan has tricked men into making knowledge an end in itself, or as a means to making them think they are gods. God is left out and a good thing is made the enemy of the best. To avoid being tricked into a treat of forbidden fruit we must always make sure that the means to a good goal is also good, and that it is consistent with the revealed will of God. Do not be tricked into getting to a good goal by a route that God has forbidden.**

## **9. FRUIT OF EVIL Based on Gen. 3:6-7**

**We have seen in our study of verse 6 that the fall of man was brought about by Satan's subtlety in getting Eve to gain a good end by a bad means. The danger of allowing the end to justify the means is a real danger all of us need to be aware of, for none are immune to the virus of this danger. We can throw it off time after time when it concerns a goal we are not greatly interested in, or committed to, but when it comes to a goal we feel is essential, then we face a real test. Edmund Cooke warns us against pride by writing,**

**So you tell yourself you are pretty fine clay  
To have tricked temptation and turned it away,  
But wait my friend, for a different day;  
Wait till you want to want to.**

**In other words, as someone else has said, "It is easy to resist where none invade." It is no victory to stand where there is no pressure to fall. This is why Jesus had to get His human nature in a weakened condition so He could really feel the pressure of Satan's temptation. Had Jesus faced the temptation to turn a stone into bread when He was in perfect condition and fully fed, it would have been a farce. He had to be in a condition where He really wanted what the tempter offered in order to make it a true victory. The test is only real when you deeply desire that which you resist because you desire even more to obey God's will.**

**This is the test that Eve failed, and then Adam followed. The first sin of man, like the first sin in the life of most everyone, was very simple and not sensational. The original sin seems so trivial that even though wrong it would seem that the consequences would be equally trivial. The fruits of this evil, however, were great and affected the whole world from that moment on. We need to learn from this that the trivial can be tragic. We do not need to commit horrible crimes or diabolical sins to wind up in deep debt. Paul Dunbar wrote,**

**This is the debt I pay, just for one riotous day.  
Years of regret and grief; sorrow without relief.  
Slight was the thing I bought; small was the debt I thought.  
Poor was the loan at best....God! But the interest!**

**It is the interest that spoils the loan of the pleasure of sin. Could we only count the cost before hand, we would hesitate to invest our life in such a costly venture of disobedience to God. All of us are still paying on the interest of Adam and Eve's costly experiment in disobedience. Had not Christ entered history to pay off the principle all men would be in unrelieved debt forever. Thank God that through Christ we can pray forgive us our debts. Even so we must still eat the fruit of evil acts and experience the bitter consequences, even though forgiven. It is of value to study the consequences of the first sin so as to be aware how great a matter a little fire can kindle. We need this awareness lest we, like our first parents, allow the trivial to be the door through which great evil enters our lives.**

**Notice how brief and simple is the record of the first sin. She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband and he ate. It is almost as if it was an incidental remark, and yet it began the history of all evil in the world. This shows us that it may not be the sin itself but the consequences of it that are so tragic. Sin itself may be a trivial matter of thoughtlessness of which one is hardly conscience, and yet the consequences can be terrible. A mother can tell her child not to pick up a firecracker, but as he watches it, and it seems to be harmless, he goes to pick it up and it goes off. It was a trivial act of disobedience, and yet he loses a finger or an eye. The consequences can be all out of proportion in relationship to the evilness of the act.**

**It is the fruit of evil that is so burdensome. Sin itself can be so appealing because people do not look beyond it to the consequences. Eve could say one less piece of fruit in the garden won't hurt anyone, and she was right, but it was still an act of disobedience. It is man's shortsightedness that enables the tempter to be so successful. One has to look at the long run to see the folly of sin, for the immediate picture, which leaves out the consequences, can appear almost innocent and inviting. It is the soft and friendly whisper to grasp a present value that led Eve into tragic consequences, and this is still Satan's method today.**

**In the castle of Chillan on Lake Geneva there is an old dungeon with a well shaft in it called the way of liberty. When it was being used a prisoner whom the authority did not want to live was put into this dark dungeon with the well shaft. The jailor upon locking the door would whisper in a friendly voice, "Take 3 steps to liberty." The prisoner thinking this was the council of a friend would begin to move about in hope in finding a way out. He would soon**

**find it by falling down the open shaft which, unfortunately, led to sharp spikes protruding from the sides. His mutilated body would be washed out to sea. He was free, but dead. This is the kind of subtlety employed by the tempter. He suggests steps to take to gain a recognized value, but fails to point out the tragic consequences of taking those steps. His way of liberty leads to death.**

**If Satan can keep us blind to the fruits of evil he will be able to persuade us to go ahead and eat the forbidden fruit. We must learn to be stubbornly persistent in our obedience to God regardless of the apparent values that are offered by following a different voice. Thomas Hood wrote,**

**When Eve upon the first of men  
The apple pressed with specious cant,  
O, what a thousand pities then  
That Adam was not Adamant.**

**It is when the appeal is so seemingly innocent, and even profitable, that we need to be adamant, which means hard and unbreakable in our determination to obey God. Adam was far from adamant. According to the brief record he responded in disobedience with less persuasion than Eve. He appears to jump on the bandwagon just to please Eve. Eve is usually blamed for the fall, but this is not fair. The New Testament does recognize that she was deceived and not Adam, but Adam holds the greatest responsibility for the fall. Paul says, "As in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive." It was by one man that sin entered into the world, and Adam was that man.**

**The fall of Eve was but a means of Satan to get Adam to sin, for he was the head and the one responsible to maintain the will of God. It was his fall that was most disastrous. It is useless to speculate as to what would have happened had Adam resisted and not sinned, but the implication seems to be that if Adam had not sinned Satan's victory over Eve would not have been sufficient to bring man to ruin. Adam as the head of the race had to fall himself, and Eve was but a means to that end. Just as Mary was a means by which the Second Adam entered human flesh, but only he alone, as the new head of the race, could gain back what Adam lost. Women played great roles in both scenes, but they are second to the roles of the two Adams.**

**The point of all this is that the Bible does not hold Eve more guilty than Adam for the fall of man, and so we ought not to do so either. The ancient**



Greeks supposed that man began wifeless in a state of ignorance, but innocent and happy. Prometheus stole fire from heaven and taught men to use it. Jupiter was so angry at this that he ordered Vulcan to form a woman of clay, and he ordered the gods to bestow on her every grace and beauty, but to fill her heart with vanity and cunning. The woman was called Pandora, and she was given to man to marry, and from that moment disease and evil began on the earth. We see elements of the true tradition passed down from the beginning, but we see that it becomes perverted. Woman is seen as a curse on man, but the Bible represents her as a blessing of God, but used by Satan to bring about a curse.

The whole picture as we see it in the Bible compels us to reject as irrelevant the conflict of the sexes as to who is most to blame for the evil in the world. Both are to blame, and it is only escapism to try and throw off guilt by each accusing the other. The fact that this conflict does exist shows us one of the consequences of sin. The battle of the sexes is often just for fun, but it is also one of the great sources of sorrow in the world, and all of it is the fruit of the first sin. Bulwer-Lytton wrote,

Preach as we will, in this wrong world of ours  
Man's fate and women's are contending powers;  
Each strives to dupe the other in the game,  
Guilt to the victor-to the vanquished shame.

In other words, neither can win the conflict, and their attempt to do so only adds to the folly of our sinful world. God made the two sexes to compliment one another, and not to conflict with one another. It is of interest to note, however, that not all women haters are men. Queen Christina of Sweden once said, "I love men, not because they are men, but because they are not women." Madam de Stael said, "I am glad that I am not a man, as I should be obliged to marry a woman." Possibly they had some legitimate reasons for disgust with the feminine sex, but as Christians our attitude must be consistent with the biblical balance, which holds both sexes equally guilty for the evil in our world. All of us share in the bitter fruits of evil because all of us make our contribution of seed to the field of disobedience. In Christ we escape the eternal consequences of sin, but still we must endure the temporal consequences. Even these, however, can be eliminated if we can only learn by our study of the mistakes of the past to listen to no other voice but the voice of God. We escape the bitter fruit of evil by eating consistently the sweet fruit of

obedience.

## **10. THE DAWN OF CONSCIENCE Based on Gen. 3:7**

**A ten-year-old boy came home from Sunday School and his mother asked him what he had learned. "Well," he began, "Our teacher told us about when God sent Moses behind the enemy lines to rescue the Israelites from the Egyptians. When they came to the Red Sea, Moses called for the engineers to build a pontoon bridge. After they all crossed over they looked back and saw the Egyptian tanks coming. Quick as a flash Moses radioed headquarters to send bombers to blow up the bridge." The mother interrupted, "Now wait a minute, did you teacher really tell the story that way?" "Not exactly mom," said the boy, "But if I told it her way you would never believe it."**

**Many find it hard to believe in the miracles of the Bible, and in its account of the beginning of man and his fall. Many are like this little boy, and they try to make it more acceptable by modernizing it to fit what modern man thinks should have happened. Sometimes the motive for this is a demonic desire to destroy the trustworthiness of the Bible, but in other cases the motive is understandable and good. Men are eager to have the Bible meet with the approval of the best minds of the day, and so they go to great lengths to show that the stories of the Bible teach profound truth about man, his nature and destiny. The danger lies in their zeal to make everything in the Bible acceptable to the modern mind. This leads them to reject a literal interpretation because it does not seem to fit with the knowledge of modern man. If they were only more patient to leave some things in the realm of mystery for the time being, they would see that history eventually takes care of the problem and makes the literal interpretation acceptable.**

**For example, it has been thought by many that no piece of fruit can be eaten and change the way people see themselves, and Adam and Eve did and saw themselves naked. Today we know that chemicals could be added to a piece of fruit that would alter the mind of those who eat it. Time has shown that the literal interpretation is very modern according to what we know is possible today. The point is that we can take this event as literal history. When they ate the fruit their were opened and they knew they were naked.**

**There was no change in objective reality, but there was a subjective change within them. It was the dawn of conscience, and man for the first time felt fear and shame.**

**The conscience was a faculty, which God had built into man from the beginning, but as long as men were in perfect fellowship with Him they had no awareness of it. As soon as they cut themselves off from the perfect guidance of God then they had need of internal guide. God in His wisdom had made provision for the fall. God had to allow the possibility of the fall if He was going to have man as a free being, but He did not have to allow evil to gain a total victory if man did fall. He so made man that if he did sin the very act of sinning would produce effects, which would be beneficial. This He did by making man with a conscience, which would be activated by the eating of the forbidden fruit.**

**It would have been infinitely better had they never known shame, but once having sinned it would have been infinitely worse not to have known shame. The fact that they felt ashamed proves that they were not totally depraved by their act of sin. Total depravity would have left them in a state of indifference to their sin and their nakedness. Man became totally depraved in the sense of being depraved in every faculty by a process. Adam and Eve began the fall of man, but it is not sound thinking to consider them the lowest of people. Man fell a great deal further after them. Their sin only punctured a pinhole in the dam holding back the waters of evil. Others went on to chop holes in it, and blast out whole sections of the dam and flood the world with wickedness.**

**It is not scriptural to think of Adam and Eve as going from perfection to the bottom in a moment. They were not totally depraved scum of the earth specimens of humanity. The world is filled with people today far more depraved then they ever were. Adam and Eve had a sensitive conscience, and the very fact that they felt shame was proof that their fall was not complete. God had seen to it that their conscience would work immediately upon sinning, and thereby bring some good out of the evil. It is almost universally accepted that a sense of shame is a value. Thomas Fuller said, "He that has no shame has no conscience." In some parts of the world the people have no sense of shame at being naked. Their conscience has been seared, and so they have fallen further from God's ideal for man. Man becomes almost like a beast when he loses his sense of shame. Plouteus said, "I count him lost who is lost to shame."**

**As far as we know Satan feels no shame at all for his evil and its consequences. He fits the concept of one totally depraved, for he is beyond restoration. This is not true of the lowest of men, however, for all men have a conscience even though it is often seared and deadened so as to be almost eliminated. Every man can be made to feel shame under some circumstances, and it is this possibility that makes him redeemable. If God had not so made man that his fall would have given birth to a conscience, man would be no different than Satan, and he would be fallen with no redeeming virtue. But with his conscience he can feel shame for his evil, and so he can repent and be restored to fellowship with God.**

**The point to observe here is the marvelous fact that God built His grace right into the nature of man. The birth of conscience was also the birth of hope. The very first effect of sin was to produce a sign of hope, for it made them feel shame, and as Samuel Johnson said, "Where there is yet shame, there may be in time virtue." We cannot doubt that Adam and Eve lived their long life after this sin with many virtues, and it is likely that they will be saved by God's grace, and we will see them in eternity.**

**Their conscience made them obey God's internal law, for they immediately made clothes to hide their nakedness, and verse 10 indicates that their fear was to be seen by God. What they did was approved of by God, for He later made them better garments showing that it was right for them to have covered themselves. They heeded the first voice of conscience and this was good. We get the paradoxical conclusion then that the first effect of sin was to produce the good of the dawn of conscience. The first illustration of how God would outwit the subtle serpent all through history by using evil to bring forth good. Satan's greatest success of all was the crucifixion, which God used to bring forth the greatest of all good, which was atonement for sin and salvation for all who would believe. The greatest proof we have of God's sovereignty in history is His ability to bring good out of evil.**

**None can doubt that conscience is one of God's greatest gifts to man. We must recognize its inadequacies, but we dare not degrade it as worthless. It has too high a place in New Testament revelation to be treated lightly. We cannot go so far as Menander the Greek poet who said, "In our own breasts we have a god-our conscience." We know the conscience is not God, but it is a gift of God. We would hesitate even to say that the conscience is the voice of God, but we can confidently say it is an instrument through which God can**

**speak. Here are some New Testament references to the role of conscience to the Christian life.**

- 1. In Acts 23:1 Paul says, "...men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."**
- 2. In Acts 24:16 Paul says, "And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men."**
- 3. In I Tim. 1:5 Paul says, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."**
- 4. In I Tim. 3:9 Paul says, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."**

**These quotes are sufficient to show that the conscience is to be God's voice for the Christian. It is to be sensitive to sin because we are feeding it with the knowledge of God's Word. It whispers to us when we digress from God's best for us, and it makes us feel shame when we disobey God's Word. We ought to praise and thank God for such a gift, and keep it in the best condition by training it to be sensitive. It was God's first gift to sinful man, and it is an experienced symbol of the hope man has for redemption. Thank God for the dawn of conscience, for with it came also the sun rise of salvation.**

## **11. GOD IN MAN'S IMAGE Based on Gen. 3:8f**

**A young boy afraid of the dark called for his mother to come upstairs to his bedroom to be with him. She came and sought to comfort him by telling him God was there with him, and so he didn't have to be afraid. He was all right for a while, but then he called her again. When she came up he offered this proposition: "Why don't you stay up here with God while I go down stairs with daddy?" The child was simply expressing the natural desire for a tangible companion. The philosopher may feel at home with some abstract concept, but most people are like the child, and their desire is for something concrete.**

**Philosophy is concerned about God's nature and will, but it has never had much appeal to the vast majority of people. It is abstract and talks about God as the Ground of being and the Fundamental Force of the Universe. Most**

people need a concept of God that can be embodied in some kind of a mental image. This is why the Bible is filled with what is called anthropomorphism. That is a big word that simply means the picturing of God in the form of a man, and with characteristics of a man. God became a man in Christ, and Jesus said that when we see him we see the Father, and so our image of God is very manlike. Our highest revelation of God is in the man Christ Jesus. In Jesus God is a man.

Even before man knew of God the Son the Father was described in terms of human characteristics. The reason for this is obvious, for there is no alternative if man is going to have any intelligent concept of the nature of God. If anthropomorphic terms were not used to describe God He would be so abstract as to be almost meaningless, and He would certainly not be thought of in a way that would be of much comfort. God is infinite spirit, and all His attributes are so infinitely superior to ours that we cannot conceive of God at all in His essence. Our knowledge of God has to be on the level of the finite. This means we must be aware that even our highest concepts of God are fall short of what He really is. God has had to descend to the level of our finite minds in order to be known by us at all.

If you want to communicate with a dog you do so with meat and bones and scratching behind the ears. These are hardly the highest expressions of man's nature, or of his love, but these kinds of things alone can be understood by the dogs intelligence. You would get nowhere in communicating with a dog by mathematics, art, or a lecture on biology. These are above the dog's capacity, and so rather than get no response at all you stoop to the dog's level and speak his language. This is what God has done with man. He has revealed himself in man-like ways, and with man-like characteristics. The result is that many young people form the concept in their minds of God as an old man of great wisdom with a long white beard. Mature believer know this is not so, but as C. S. Lewis has said, it is better that God be seen this way than as a mere abstraction, which is even more false to reality. He wrote, "What soul ever perished for believing that God the Father really has a beard?"

It is essential to think of God in human terms, and it is harmless as long as recognize them as necessary symbols to represent God, but not necessarily what He actually is. The Greeks fell into this danger and had their gods on the same level with men, and this included all of their limitations and immoralities as well. Most pagan peoples have done this, and so they have a very poor

concept of God. Any god who is too man-like is a partaker in man's evils. God rebuked this in Ps. 50:21, "You thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you, and lay the charge before you." We must use the benefits of anthropomorphism, for the Bible uses them, but we must also avoid its dangers lest we make God in man's image. God made man in His image, and so it is reasonable to assume that God is man-like in many ways. But we need to avoid any idea that God is like man in his fallen nature.

God has always been in heaven speaking the words that formed all or reality, but then we come to Gen. 3:8 and all of a sudden we see God walking on earth in the garden. He is now clearly in the image of man. Our very first concept of God, which we can visualize is of a man walking in the garden and talking with Adam and Eve. We cannot conceive of what He was before creation, but here we see Him as a man. What is of interest is that this is not just anthropomorphic, but is a literal description of what God actually did. He made himself in the form of a man and dwelt with man. Only the literal interpretation fits the total unity of the Bible. The ultimate goal is that God will again dwell with man.

It is not stated as such but it could very well be that this one walking in the garden could have been the second person of the Godhead. Jesus became a literal man in the incarnation, but here we see him taking on the form of a man. In the ultimate paradise that we see in the book of Revelation we know it will be Jesus who will walk with us in white, and we shall be like Him when we see Him as He is. Anthropomorphism is justified because God began his relationship with man as a man. He chose to reveal himself in the form of a man at the beginning, and actually became a man in history.

It is implied that God had walked in the garden before this, for how could they have known the sound of Him walking if they had not heard it before? They did not see Him but heard Him coming, and if they had never seen God before in the form of a man walking, how could they ever suspect it would be God making the sounds they heard? The text implies that God actually dwelt on earth with Adam and Eve. This means that earth was once the dwelling place of God, and God had actually been on our world in the form of man before Christ. It could have been the pre-incarnate Christ who was here in the form of man. He did not come into flesh through birth, but merely took on the form of a man as we see He did on other occasions in the Old Testament.

**We see that the Old Testament works away from an incarnation of God, which was lost toward and incarnation of God, which gave hope. It is no wonder that the Old Testament concept of the ultimate kingdom was earth centered, for this was the setting of the ideal in the beginning. Even in the New Testament where the eternal kingdom is pictured as heavenly, there is still the new earth as a part of it, and it appears that this small planet will be forever a place where God will dwell with His people, and walk in the beauty of paradise.**

**The picture of God walking in the garden was like Jesus centuries later walking in Palestine, for He was the only man on earth who was perfect. Adam and Eve had fallen and so they felt naked before God and they hid themselves. We see two frightened shameful people who do not want to be seen in their nakedness. God's first question to fallen man was, "Where are you?" God was the great seeker of man, and Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. Everything about this first picture of God reminds us of Jesus. God finds them, hears their confusion, judges them, and then provides them with coverings and the hope of redemption. This whole account pictures God as Christ-like. We see God in man's image as the God-Man.**

## **12. GUILTY BUT NOT AS CHARGED Based on Gen. 3:12-14**

**A close study of the account of the fall of man has done more to open my eyes to the danger of tradition than any other study I have done. Those who profess to take it literally have done much in making it mythological by using it to teach lessons that have no basis in the text itself. Those who pride themselves on a high view of inspiration and a literal interpretation distort the Bible as much by their additions as modernists do with their subtractions. There can be no justification for either, for they establish ideas that are passed down and become traditions.**

**The result is that there are many people who are like the girl who was asked why she believed in God and she said, "I guess it runs in the family." People believe all kinds of things just because it runs in the family. As evangelical Christians, we know that no one can be saved by inheritance. We ought also to recognize that we cannot know truth by inheritance. Just as we**



**cannot take our salvation for granted because we have a Christian inheritance, so we cannot take for granted that we understand what the Bible is saying at any point just because of our Christian heritage.**

**Martin Luther questioned tradition and it led to the reformation, but he must also be questioned. We cannot believe things just because we have believed them. Our past only is, but it does not justify anything, but the fact is, we all fall into the danger of traditionalism. I don't how many times I have referred to the classic truth among Christians that Adam was a double-crossing scoundrel who tried to pass the buck unto his wife and blame her for the mess they were in. Then Eve followed this show of depravity by passing the buck to the serpent. Each was unwilling to admit any blame for the sin.**

**It is my conviction that a plain literal interpretation of the text will not support this view, but it will show that to hold this view is to take issue with God. I feel safer in standing with God and rejecting the popular view, but you will have to judge for yourself as we examine the text. We are opening up the oldest case on record, which is God verses Adam and Eve. God has confronted Adam with a question: "Did you eat of the tree that I commanded you not to eat of?" In verse 12 we have Adam's answer. He said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me gave me of the tree and I did eat." The traditional interpretation lays into Adam for this response from two angles. First he had the audacity to throw the blame for his sin right back into the face of God by saying it was the woman you have given me who was the cause of it. Here is Adam blaming God and thereby becoming a perfect picture of an utterly degraded and ungrateful child turning on his loving parent.**

**The second charge from the traditional view is that after he accused God he turned on the woman he loved and put the rest of the blame on her. He was demonstrating the total loss of his once noble manhood. The only problem of this two-fold attack on Adam is that the evidence to support it is conspicuous by its absence. Let me suggest what I see of the proper interpretation which does not make Adam a hero, but it does have the virtue of taking the text into account. There is no doubt as to Adam's guilt, but there is every reason to believe that he is not guilty as charged by the traditional interpretation.**

**Look at the statement again and you will see that Adam responded by giving a concise and accurate statement of the facts. God took it as just that.**

**It was the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Adam was guilty and he pleaded guilty as charged, and then gave the cause for why he did it. He has been criticized harshly for doing so, but the record clearly backs him up that it was the woman whom God had given him who gave him the fruit. It is inconceivable to me that Adam is adding great sin to his record in this statement. If the traditional view is right and Adam was throwing the blame off on everyone else, why does God not even respond to this blasphemy with the slightest rebuke? God takes it as a true response, and I choose to take it as God did, and not try to make Adam guilty of horrible sins by reading in what is not there.**

**When I read Luther's comment here that Adam added to disobedience and unbelief the sins of insult and blasphemy I was amazed, for if this was true Adam is committing sins far more willful here than his original sin, and yet God ignores it and there is no mention of punishment for it. If Luther's interpretation is correct, the most amazing thing about the text is that God did not strike him dead on the spot. Instead, He apparently missed the blasphemous implications all together, and He took it as a valid testimony, and then moves on to ask Eve what she had done. God is taking Adam's sin very lightly if the traditional charges are correct. The text says Adam's statement is just a simple statement of fact without malicious intent toward God or Eve. The New Testament bares witness to this as well. In I Tim. 2:14 we read, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became the transgressor." In spite of this, however, men go on accusing Adam of sins that the text just cannot support.**

**The text does support the fact that his guilt and the folly of his fall, for what could be a poorer excuse then saying he disobeyed God simply because the forbidden fruit was given to him. It was as poor a defense as any sinner could ever give, and Adam stands self-accused as guilty of sin, folly and weakness. But to add to this other sins not in the text is going beyond revelation. Leupold says of Adam's reply, "It is a reply that offers further evidence of the complete corruption and contamination of all of man's nature by his sin." He and others who are able to see all this corruption have apparently not considered the consequences to which their view leads. If it is true that Adam's statement here is a revelation of his total depravity, then what was Adam before his first sin? If this simple statement can embody so much evil, how much more evil must Adam have been to have disobeyed God in the first place?**

**Adam must have been made totally depraved by God from the start if Leupold is correct, for it was for his first sin that God punished him. God seems to feel that this was his real sin and not blasphemy. How can it be said that it shows total depravity when it is ignored by God, and it is treated as less of a sin than his act of disobedience? If Adam could do the worst of his sins without being totally depraved, but even in a state of innocence, why must it follow that these lesser sins must be signs of total depravity? If a perfect man can disobey God, it doesn't take a totally depraved man to tell a lie, or to pass the buck. To me it is obvious that the charges against Adam are nonsense, and even if there was the slightest evidence to support them, they would not prove what they are prevented to prove, and that is that Adam was totally depraved. This is a tradition, and the only reason to believe it is because it has been believed.**

**Men came to this text with a preconceived system of theology, and they see just what they have determined to find. When men get so clever that they can spot abomination that even God himself misses, then it is time to start questioning their judgments. You might think it is a waste of time to labor such a trivial point, but how can that be trivial which changes God's Word into man's, and influences the lessons taught to millions of children in Sunday schools all over the world? To me it is worth the time we have taken if it teaches us to be cautious and accurate with God's Word, and not allow popular ideas and traditions to determine our interpretation. This passage makes it clear that man does not need to be totally depraved to be totally out of God's will, and that he who stands must beware lest he fall.**

**As we move to verse 13 we do not need to go through the arguments again to show that Eve is also only sharing the facts. She said the serpent beguiled her and she ate. Would she have been more true to the facts if she had said it is all my fault? Not at all, for there is no reason to believe she would have eaten of the tree if the serpent had not enticed her. Leupold, however, charges her with blasphemy also. Listen to his less than obvious observation: "All true fear of God and love of Him has, of course, departed also from her heart, for by laying the blame upon the serpent she indirectly also charges the Creator for having let the creature cross her path."**

**Most of us probably would have missed this blasphemous implication had it not been pointed out, but we would be in good company, for God missed it too, and He took it as a statement of the truth and went on in verse 14 to judge**

**the serpent on the basis of her testimony. If Leupold's interpretation is correct, the marvel of marvels is that God should actually curse the serpent on the basis of the blasphemous testimony of two of the most depraved, untrustworthy witnesses that ever lived. It is almost laughable, for it comes close to doing what is charges Adam and Eve of doing, which is blaspheming God, for it puts Him in as bad a light as can be, and pictures Him judging on the basis of perverted testimony.**

**Notice that God says, "Because you have done this.." He does not ask if he did this, but takes the word of Eve as pure truth. The testimony of Eve led back to the first cause and God knew it, and He began judgment acknowledging that sin did not begin with man, but was introduced by a non-human into history. God has heard the evidence and takes it as a true account, and begins judgment on the basis of it. Adam and Eve are not held in contempt of court for blaspheming the judge and trying to pass the buck. They are dwelt with on the basis of their sin of disobedience, which was brought about by the enticement of the serpent. The serpent is judged first, then Eve, and finally Adam. This was the order in which they sinned. They were guilty of disobeying God and for this they were judged by God, but all of the charges of men are completely ignored.**

**I refuse to hold Adam and Eve guilty for what God did not hold them guilty for, and I refuse to read into this account a concept of total depravity. The burden of proof rests on those who make these charges. They are to remain innocent until proven guilty. They were guilty as God charged them, but not as men charged them. This study should be a good example of the danger of taking tradition at face value.**

### **13. THE FIRST JUDGMENT Based on Gen. 3:14-15**

**An angry customer came stomping into the pet shop and confronted the owner. He said, "When I bought this dog you said he would be splendid for rats. He won't even go near a rat." "Well," said the owner, "That is splendid for the rats ain't it?" The statement about the dog being good for rats is one of those statements that can be interpreted two ways, and though they are opposites both can be right. To say a dog is good for rats can mean that he**

would be a dog that would not harm them, and so he would be good for them. On the other hand, if the context of the statement is a conversation in which getting rid of rats is the subject, then the statement means just the opposite, and good for rats means bad for rats because he is good at getting rid of them.

All of this is simply to illustrate the kind of problem that faces interpreters when they come to the first judgment in history. Adam had confessed guilt, and Eve confessed, the cause of their guilt has been traced back to its origin in the serpent. God accepts the testimony of the witnesses, and He begins to mete out judgment first to the serpent. The problem facing interpreters is this: Does the serpent mean literally a serpent, or is this like the literalness that led to the dog being good for rats? Does serpent in the context mean an evil power using the serpent? In interpreters debate this, and both sides have legitimate arguments. We have to evaluate these arguments to try and understand what God's first negative act in history means.

Everything has been good up to this point, and God has done only what is positive. Now for the first time we have a negative response to what has happened. The judgment He passes here affects all of history, and so we need to evaluate it carefully. First of all, the strictly literal interpretation has some great defenders. For example, John Calvin says the serpent is a serpent and the strife is the strife between the human race and serpents. He sees no reason to spiritualize and make this a reference to Satan. Satan does not crawl on his belly and eat dust. Everyone has to admit that the literal interpretation of the words of verse 14 do not fit the picture the rest of the Bible gives us of Satan. He is called a serpent, but he is also called the prince of the power of the air and an angel of light. The literal interpretation would seem to limit us to snakes, and to exploring such things as why we fear them. Some actually believe this is recorded to explain why snakes do not have legs like other animals. I feel this is too trivial a reason for God to use space in His revelation to man.

In order to make this first judgment as significant as it must be I am forced to accept the arguments of those who spiritualize it and see here a sentence upon Satan. A curse on literal snakes would be meaningless. Snakes do not feel bad because they crawl on their bellies. They manage quite well, and do not feel cursed. So it is obvious that the serpent must represent the person of Satan. Hengstenberg said, "The serpent is thus by its disgusting form, and by the degradation of its whole being, doomed to be the visible

representative of the kingdom of darkness, and of its head, to whom it had served as an instrument." The way to reconcile the literal language with the symbolic interpretation is simply to recognize the necessity for progressive revelation. Adam and Eve knew nothing about Satan. They did not have the revelation we have, and so from their point of view the literal serpent and its seed would have to suffer. The literal view then is true, but it is just not complete enough, for we know that there was an evil spiritual person behind the serpent's actions. And he is the real enemy of man. The whole truth demands that both views be accepted.

The symbolic value of the serpent is clear. It is a fitting symbol of one who aspired to the pinnacle of heaven, but was cast down to the pit of hell. Satan does not crawl on his belly, but he has suffered a humiliation as degrading, for he was cast out of heaven into the dust of earth. This first judgment was far more severe for Satan than for Adam and Eve. They were cast out of Eden and suffered great loss, but they were still the highest creatures on earth. Satan had been degraded from an awesome archangel to a despised devil. The idea of eating dust is a reference to defeat. We use it yet today when we say that someone bit the dust. We mean that he has been brought down in defeat.

In verse 15 we see the first good news proclaimed on the earth after man's fall. It is the good news that God is just, and when the final judgment is complete the one who caused sin will be defeated, and the victims will be victorious. This verse is called the Protoevangelium, which means the first Gospel proclamation. The mercy of God toward man is evident from the beginning, for he knows that man would not have fallen had he not been tempted. God does not put all of the accused in the same category. He makes it clear distinction between the one who caused sin and the victims. He is a just God and does not treat all as equally guilty when that is not the case.

So great is the difference in the degrees of guilt that God makes the punishment of the serpent very personal. His very nature is cursed. Eve is less guilty than the serpent and so her punishment involves suffering, but not a change of her nature. Adam was the last to fall and he is given the least personal punishment. His nature is not affected at all, but it is the external environment in which he must labor that is changed. The punishment goes from very personal to impersonal, but the good news is that both Adam and Eve are put into a different category of that of Satan. God says there will be conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of Eve. Leupold rightly

**says that enmity cannot apply to dumb beasts, and so it is obvious that the strife here must refer to Satan and man. It is equivalent to Paul's statement about wrestling, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.**

**The good news is that God is not putting man on the side of Satan in conflict with himself. He is dividing man from Satan, and He is putting them in a state of war with each other. So often we hear that man is a rebel against God and is fighting God that we ignore the good news of this first judgment. God set man at war with Satan and proclaimed that in this conflict man's seed would win the war. Satan caused man to lose Eden and perfect fellowship with God, and so he is man's greatest foe. Man and Satan are enemies. God will send a seed into the world who will destroy the works of the devil and deliver those in bondage to Satan. God is saying that He will not forsake His purpose in creating man just because Satan has thrown a monkey wrench into the machinery. He is saying He will get rid of the foe and restore man to what he was. God takes man's side in this first judgment. They must suffer for their folly, but they are assured that God is on their side and that they will come out victorious.**

**The encouraging thing for Eve was that, even though her punishment was to suffer pain in child bearing, the ultimate result of her child bearing would be the birth of one who would defeat the foe who brought the punishment upon her in the first place. This is the first hint of the incarnation and that God's plan would be fulfilled through a baby born of woman. Adam and Eve did not become opponents of God, but of evil. They continued to worship God, and they taught their children to sacrifice to God. They could not help but be grateful to God even if they did suffer the loss of Eden. It was a battle, but they passed on to some of their children a love of righteousness and a hatred for evil. Satan gained plenty of victories in the struggle, and we all know what Cain did to Abel. Even when it looked like Satan was winning the war, however, God had his Noah to carry on the seed of righteousness. We must always be aware of the good news that the seed of man will ultimately overcome the evil of Satan.**

**A question often debated is: What is the seed of the serpent? We have already suggested that it is too trivial to think of it as man fighting snakes. It is obvious that it refers to the seed of Satan. It is not easy, however, to determine just what that seed is. The two primary views are that it represents demons**

**and evil spirits, or that it represents wicked people. Those who feel that it is wicked people point out that Jesus called the Pharisees children of the devil. Edward Young says if you make the seed of Satan mean people just as the seed of Eve means people, then you have a conflict between humans and so he argues that it must mean demons. People can choose to be a child of darkness and join the demonic forces, but they are not Satan's seed. I don't pretend to know for sure which view is correct, but my present conviction is that young is probably correct. His view can incorporate the other and include people, but if you limit the seed to wicked people you exclude all the evil forces that Scripture reveals.**

**God said to the serpent that the seed of woman will bruise its head. Satan caused man's fall, but God says that man's fall does not mean man will be lower than Satan. Man will always be on a higher level than that snake in the grass that deceived him, and man will be able to bruise his head. Satan has failed to drag man down to his level. Man is bruised in the heel, but he can still fellowship with God and love God. Satan is the one who will be hurt in the vital spot of his head, and eventually lose all of his power. Satan only succeeds in causing man to suffer temporary loss. It will be a loss that can be healed, but Satan will suffer permanent loss in his battle with man. We see here why Jesus had to become a man to defeat Satan. The battle is between Satan and man, and God chooses to stand with man, but the victory must come from man's side, and so the incarnation was a necessity.**

**If you go to the cross and examine it in the light of this verse, as horrible as it was for the Lord, it was but a bruising of His heel in comparison to what was happening to Satan and his kingdom. The cross was the crushing blow to Satan's power. It made it possible for all men to cut the chain of bondage and be free. The very head of Satan was crushed at the cross. The church continues to stomp on that head, and Paul writes in Rom. 16:20 and says that, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Julia Ward Howe in The Battle Hymn Of The Republic wrote, "Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel."**

**We can actually say thanks for the first judgment, for in reality it was the beginning of the age of grace. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. From the very start of man's fall God promised victory, for He promised that man's foe shall fail and not prevail. The first great paradox of history is here, for God's first curse is also the first proclamation of the Gospel**



**of hope. Man's greatest blessing is contained in the words of this first curse. Because of the grace of God judgment day is not to be feared by those who know Jesus, for the last judgment like the first will also be a day of grace for those who are among the seed of Jesus Christ.**

#### **14. THE JUDGMENT OF EVE Based on Gen. 3:16-19**

**When W. C. Fields was deathly sick his friend Gene Fowler dropped in on him and caught him reading the Bible. Fowler was astounded, for Fields had never found any use for the Bible other than to prop up his martini. Fowler said, "Bill I am deeply touched." "Don't bother, muttered Fields, "I'm only looking for loopholes." Unfortunately, a great many people only read the Bible to search for loopholes. That is not our purpose in studying the judgment of God upon the first sinners, but the fact is, there are some loopholes to be found here, which are loopholes in the interpretation that is often given to their judgment.**

**It is a common opinion which I always assume was true, until I looked at the text carefully, that the judgment of verse 16 was a judgment upon all women, and that the judgment of the verse of 17-19 was a judgment upon all men. However, a little thinking upon the issue leads very quickly to some loopholes in that common opinion. Many women have had their children without pain with either a saddle block or by hypnosis. Other women, like my sister and Lavonne's sister have had their children so easy and pain free just naturally. My sister had her last child at home by herself and just called the doctor the next day to see if everything was all right. The average person suffers more just getting out of bed in the morning than she does in giving birth to a child.**

**I could go on and on with stories dealing with people I know, and there must be millions of examples that I don't know. The point is, not all women suffer great pain in childbirth. The judgment here upon Eve, therefore, is not to be taken as a universal punishment of all women because of her sin. This is Eve's personal penalty for her sin. If you try and make it God's judgment upon all women you have a great many loopholes to fill in. Not only do all women not suffer in childbirth, but there are millions of women who never**

**give birth to children at all. If this is suppose to be a punishment upon all women, then those who never have children get off the hook completely. This would lead to the conclusion that childless women are being favored by God. But all through the Old Testament a childless woman was to be pitied, for it was a great honor to become a mother. All of this means that we have jumped to a wrong conclusion if we have assumed that God's judgment upon Eve was meant to pass down to all women.**

**All that this text says is that God was going to multiply the pain that Eve would have in childbirth. This implies that there would be some pain even if she had not sinned. It is normal to have some pain, and even Eve in her unfallen state would have had some pain, but God said He would greatly multiply it in her case. Many other women have great pain in childbirth, but it is not because they are being judged for Eve's disobedience. If God was going to punish Eve in a way that would be specific for her, and not include Adam, it had to be in an area distinctively feminine, and it would be hard to find anything more distinctive than child bearing.**

**God said to Eve that in spite of the pain she would suffer, she would still desire her husband. The pain would not cause her to lose the desire for sex. This also is not true for all women, but it was true for Eve, and she and Adam had a great many children, and they got the human race rolling in spite of judgment. She went through the pangs of childbirth over and over again with no doctor or midwife. In 4:1 when Eve gave birth to her first child Cain she said, as the Berkley Version has it, "I have gotten a man with the Lord's help." God who passed the sentence of pain upon her was no cold-hearted judge. He was a compassionate physician who gave Eve grace and strength to enable her to bear her punishment and bring forth children successfully.**

**We notice that God says to Eve also that her husband shall have rule over her. The implication is that in a state of perfection the male and female were completely equal, but that the fall led to the male taking a superior position over the female. Eve lost some of equality, and she had to submit to Adam. This has come to be a principle that is almost universally accepted. The Koran teaches it as well. The Bible alone, however, offers women the hope of restored equality. There is no book on earth that promotes women's liberation more than the Bible, for it makes it clear that in Jesus there is neither male or female. And it teaches that in Christ people will again be restored to perfection, and thus to the original state of equality. In God's eternal plan**

**there will be no weaker sex in heaven, but all will be equal. The more people grow in Christ even in time, the more equality there is with men and women.**

**Meanwhile, there are many who feel women have the advantage. Goethe said, "In my opinion it is a much more difficult task to become a perfect man than a perfect woman." He says the woman has a mate to be submissive to, and this leads to happiness, but man has to submit to God, which is much harder. Without a doubt it is true that women find it easier to submit to a master, and that is why Jesus has been able to do so much in history through women. Billy Graham said, "I have traveled on every continent in the world. I want to tell you, in every place of the world where the influence of Jesus Christ has not gone, the woman is little more than an animal. It was Jesus who lifted the woman to her place today. And every woman owns everything she has to Jesus Christ."**

**God was good to Eve and did all He could to help her, and even turned her punishment into a blessing. God has continued to be a God of grace toward women, and one day will restore them to full equality with men. History has been filled with men who have abused this text. They have argued that it is God's curse upon women and that He demands that they suffer. Such men have opposed all efforts to help women have easier childbirth, and they have fault all relieving of pain as satanic. They were blind to their hatred of women, and they thought they were being zealous for God's Word. Had they been honest they would have gone out and quit their jobs as doctors, lawyers and businessmen, and have earned their livelihood by the sweat of their brow in the fields. If men apply Eve's judgment to all women, then Adam's judgment should be applied to all men. I have never heard anyone trying to do so, however, and so women leaders are right when they say there are man women haters who hide behind the Bible and try to use God to keep women in a state of suppression.**

**To oppose women's right to freedom from pain in childbirth on the basis of this text is to oppose all professions for men but farming, and to even oppose modern equipment, for that equipment eliminates the hard toil and sweat that Adam was to endure. Just as it is obvious that Eve's punishment was not meant for all women, so it is obvious that Adam's punishment was not meant for all men. If it was, most of us have surely put one over on God because we haven't sweat in the field for a good long time.**

**God cursed the ground so that nature suffered in man's fall, and his whole environment was affected. There was no way to punish Adam without altering his perfect environment. His punishment was the least personal, but it had the greatest long-range effect on the whole of history in that the whole balance of nature was thrown out of whack. This will be restored, as Paul makes clear in Rom. 8, but all through history the curse on the ground has been a problem. It was the main problem of man for centuries in that it took a great deal of time for man to develop industry and to escape from total dependence upon farming. Adam, of course, had to toil for his necessities all the days of his life. He had to fight nature's negatives like thorns, thistles and weeds in order to get a harvest. Eve had to suffer labor in bearing the fruit of the womb, and Adam had to suffer in labor for the fruit of the land. Labor-pains is what they both had to suffer because of their disobedience.**

**I wonder how often Adam stopped hoeing in the field, wiped his sweat from his brow and said, "All this for one lousy apple." The easy pleasure of sin always leads to the long labors of regret. In first 18 God told Adam that farming would be one continuous struggle for him. This has not been true for all men. Many have farmed in such fertile land, and with such good chemical control of weeds and bugs, that they have made great riches without terrible struggle. What God says here as Adam's punishment for his sin does not apply to all men. Adam lost the fruit of Eden and had to eat the plants of the field, but you and I can go to the store anytime and get delicious fruits without labor.**

**People who thought God intended all men to suffer as Adam did oppose industry and advanced machinery. They felt this was defined God's intended curse. Much tragic nonsense has come from jumping to this false conclusion. God intends for all who obey Him to live in the promise land flowing with milk and honey, and to reap rich and abundant harvest. Verse 19 does not apply to millions who eat well without sweating. Thoreau in Walden said, "It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do." Some tried to use this to justify slave labor, but Lincoln pointed out that the text does not say that it is in the sweat of other men's faces that we should eat bread. May God help us to learn from the mistakes of others to avoid false applications of Scripture by recognizing that the judgment upon Adam and Eve were personal, and though they have influenced the rest of history, they were never intended to be universal.**

## **15. FROM DUST TO DUST Based on Gen. 3:19f**

**The Sunday School teacher was introducing his lesson on heaven by asking his boys if they wanted to go to heaven. One boy said, "Not me!" The teacher was shocked and asked, "You mean to tell me you don't want to go to heaven when you die?" "When I die? O, sure !" said the boy. "I thought you were getting up a group to go now!" Even the Christian with the clear revelation of God's eternal plan, and mansions being prepared for him by His Savior is not anxious to get to heaven. The primary reason for this is due to the fact that one must die to get there.**

**If we could go like Enoch and Elijah there would probably very few Christians left on the earth. If Christians could choose to ascend to that realm of bliss there would be a continuous rapture of the church as people were being caught up to be with the Lord. The Apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven and into the very presence of God, but he says in II Cor. 12 that he could not describe it for us. He did not know whether he was in the body, or if it was just in spirit. He did write after that experience and say that to depart and be with the Lord is far better. Here is a man who actually went to heaven and returned. He knew of its glorious attraction, and yet even he struggled within himself as to whether he should depart or remain in this life to be of service. Paul was not afraid of death, but he knew death ended his life of service for Christ, and he did not want to give that up. Death would rob him of his chance to win others and build them up to be Christ like.**

**We see then that death itself has no attraction to the believer whether he is a little boy in Sunday School, or the world's greatest Apostle. If this is so for Christians who have a full and abundant revelation of the hope of heaven, how much more must the believers of the Old Testament have dreaded death? The greatest punishment Adam and Eve had to suffer was not pain in childbirth, or hard labor in the field, but the sentence of death upon them with no assurance with life after death. In verse 19 Adam is told that he came from the dust and that he will return to the dust. Although directed to Adam this judgment obviously includes Eve as well. I remember my mother quoting the saying that girls are made of sugar and spice and everything nice, but boys were made of frogs and snails and puppy dog tails. This is a cute way to make little girls proud and little boys mad, but the fact is, both sexes came from dust**

**and both will return to dust. According to the Bible the body is glorified dirt. It is glorified by God's creative power plus the breathing in of God's spirit.**

**Nothing is said in this judgment about the spirit of man. even Solomon in his most pessimistic book of Ecclesiastes says that the body returns to dust, but the spirit to God who gave it. Nothing is said to Adam except that he shall return to dust, and in chapter 5:5 we read, "Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years and he died." God did not give Adam any revelation about what comes after death. God has not given us any revelation either as to what happened to Adam when his body died. We do not know if Adam was saved or lost. One of the reasons that God allowed Adam and others to live so long is likely due to the fact that He did not give them any revelation as to hope beyond death. Adam lived almost a thousand years. Today we live less than one tenth as long, but we have the hope of eternal life in Christ. I do not envy Adam and his long life, for all he had to look forward to was the grave and dust.**

**Now the reason for this is clear. God could not give Adam any hope of eternal life, for it is God's gift to man based on perfect obedience. Adam lost his chance to gain it. In 2:17 God said that if he ate of the forbidden tree he would die. Adam was not made to live forever. He was made mortal with the possibility of either dying because of disobedience, or of living forever because of obedience to God. Here in 3:22 we see that Adam never got a chance to eat of the tree of life and so live forever. He disobeyed and lost the hope of eternal life. He did not lose an eternal life he originally had, but a chance to gain it by obedience. Man was thus left in a dying state without access to the tree of life.**

**This means that no man before Jesus had eternal life. Jesus Christ, as the second Adam, won back what the first Adam lost. By his perfect obedience to God he won the right to have access to the tree of life, and he offers this right to all who follow Him and overcome. In Rev. 2:7 Jesus said, "To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." There is no way to gain eternal life except through Jesus Christ. In Him we have the hope of everlasting bliss. Adam had only the thought of returning to dust. Our bodies also face the death and decay that leads to dust. Shakespeare said, "Golden lads and girls all must, as chimney-sweepers, come to dust." We, however, have the hope of not only our spirits returning to God, but of the body being resurrected and becoming like the glorified body of our**

risen Lord.

What this means is that Adam and most of the people of the Old Testament did not have anything to compare with the hope of New Testament Christians. In your reading of the Old Testament you should not be surprised to come upon very pessimistic views of death. Job in 10:20-22 says, "Are not the days of my life few? Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort before I go whence I shall not return, to the land of gloom and deep darkness, the land of gloom and chaos, where light is as darkness." David, to whom God gave insight about immortality still had a pessimistic outlook on life after death. In Psa. 143:3-4 he writes, "For the enemy has pursued me; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled."

In Psa. 88:4-6 we read this pessimistic picture of death: "I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit; I am a man who has no strength, like one forsaken among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom thou dost remember no more, for they are cut off from thy hand. Thou hast put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep." There are dozens of such dark passages in the Old Testament, and only a few rays of light that flash through showing a glimpse of hope. The result of this is that people often read the Bible and make no distinction between the old and the new revelation. They do not see that God has spoken to man finally and fully in His Son. They fail to see that life and immortality were brought to light by Jesus in His resurrection from the dead. They read the Old Testament only, and they build all kinds of false and negative beliefs upon it. Those who teach annihilation and soul sleep find almost all of their evidence in the Old Testament, and they simply ignore that the New Testament has made the old view obsolete.

Poets are numerous who write of death as if there were no New Testament light. Thomas Haywood wrote,

O man, what art thou? What more could I say  
Then dust and clay,  
Frail, mortal, fading, a mere puff, a blast,  
That cannot last;  
Enthroned today, tomorrow in an urn,  
Formed from that earth to which I must return?

**Adam Gordon sees also only the sentence upon Adam, and nothing of the Gospel of the second Adam when he writes:**

**A little season of love and laughter,  
Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,  
And a horror of outer darkness after,  
And dust returneth to dust again.**

**Such poetry is obsolete for the Christian, for we live after the second Adam rectified what the first Adam ruined, but the fact is, such poetry does describe the view of those who descended from the first Adam only. This was the worse punishment men had to suffer because of the fall. It was not even just death itself, but death without hope of continued life. Every Christian should be aware of this for several reasons.**

- 1. It magnifies the Gospel of Christ. If the Old Testament saints already had New Testament hope, then Jesus did not revolutionize our relationship to God, but only confirmed what already was. Seeing the contrast makes the new covenant in the blood of Christ something to be perpetually joyful about.**
- 2. Many questions arise in people's minds as they read the Old Testament, and if you do not know that the Old Testament view has been made obsolete by Christ, you will only confuse people rather than help them.**
- 3. Because Christians who do not recognize progressive revelation often take the Old Testament as equally relevant as the New Testament, and they develop perverted attitudes about death.**

**Many Christians have developed such a negative attitude about death that they are of little help to others in facing it. Studies have been done that show dying people are dying to talk about death, but no one will cooperate. Even the doctors do not want them to trouble themselves, and they fear to approach the subject. The result is that many dying people feel crushed by a wall of silence, and they die with many questions they longed to get answers to. If Christians overcome the foolish dread of talking about death they can perform a ministry that is greatly valued. People want to know of God's mercy for all of their past sins. They want assurance that they do not have to face God with guilt and anxiety if they trust in Christ. We are talking about Christians needing this assurance because they often live with a view of death that is strongly influenced by Old Testament pessimism. It is a blessed ministry to let the New Testament light shine through and give them the**



message that will encourage them to face their final foe with assurance of victory.

One of the paradoxes of the Christians great hope of heaven is that it adds to life on earth. Dr. Jung, speaking as a scientist, said that patients do better and people have better health in general who believe in life beyond. Hope of heaven can help people recover from problems that otherwise might lead to death. Lack of hope kills, and it leads to suicide and giving up. Hope leads to positive attitudes that fight to survive. One might easily assume that the opposite might be true, and that people who have no hope of heaven would fight like mad to live, but man is so made that where there is no hope there is no will to live. The more hope of heaven one has, the more happiness he has on earth.

Another fact is that people who lose love ones in death want to talk about them. Everyone tends to ignore the dead person as if they ceased to exist, and this hurts the love ones. We should be able to talk freely of the dead if we believe they have gone to be with Christ, but instead we often join the conspiracy of silence and add to the problem. Adam faced a terrible punishment when he was sentenced to return to dust, but God forbid that we ignore the changes made by Christ, and continue to live on the level of that judgment "From dust to dust." God likely did save Adam and Eve, and we will see them heaven by God's grace, but it is also likely that they were not permitted the joy of this knowledge. We have the knowledge, and so we have the obligation to live in the joy of this knowledge, and communicate it to others.

## **16. A GOOD START IS NOT ENOUGH Based on Gen. 3:1f**

A young boy came home from his first day of school and confessed to his father that he told a lie. The father asked why he did it and the boy said, "Well, dad, when they asked me where I was born it seemed so sissy to say The Woman's Hospital, so I said the Yankee Stadium." So often the truth seems sissy in comparison to fiction, and so there is a tendency to ignore facts and interpret life to fit ones wishes. This is a common attitude when it comes to the account of Adam and Eve. It is alright for fun and light hearted

conversation, but it would seem too sissy to take it as a serious account of the origin of man and sin, and so people have pushed it aside, and filled up books with speculation which has no foundation, but does seem more dignified.

It is true that the story is simple, for it was written for people with simple and unscientific views of life. If the revelation was given in our day God would, no doubt, give us more information, but since He gave it in the day of Moses it is natural that it should be in a form fitting the need of that age. In spite of its simplicity, there is no other source through which we can gain so much information about origins, life, sin, death, and God's purpose in the world. Gen. 3 tells us what no philosopher or scientist could ever tell us concerning why man is the way he is.

It is the story of the most fantastic of all failures. Nobody ever had a better start than Adam and Eve. They had a great start, but they didn't continue, and so they fell. One of the basic truths we learned from the account of the fall is that it is not a good start, but a good ending, that is most important. It is not the seed that quickly sprouts and gets a good start in growth, but which then withers in the sun for lack of depth that counts for anything. It is the seed that however poor a start it gets arrives at the point of bearing fruit that really counts. It is he who endures to the end that shall be saved, and not just he who gets off to a good start.

A golfer writes, "A long drive, straight down the middle of the fairway, does give a man a tremendous advantage, but it is not decisive. One can have an impressive beginning and end up very badly, and one can have a miserable start and a thrilling finish. As one golfer exultingly reported to me, I was in the rough all the way, and then pared the hole." A good start doesn't count because you don't add the score until you finish. This is a principle that applies to all of life.

Benjamin Robert Haydon was a painter in London in the early part of the 19th century. His first painting was accepted by the Academy, and then followed a succession of large historical paintings that gained for him the reputation of being one of the greatest painters for centuries. The art critic raved about him. Wordsworth said of his painting "Christ Entering Jerusalem," that it was worth waiting half of a century to complete. The whole of Piccadilly was blocked by the carriages of those who came to see this marvelous painting. Leigh Hunt said of one of his works, "It is a bit of

**embodied lightening."**

**What a start he had on the road to fame, wealth, and influence. But Halford Luccock says that by the turn of the century his name was not even known in the world of art. His rapid success in the beginning filled his heart with pride and he wanted to be the king of painters. He began to write abusive and bitter letters of satire about his rivals and critics. This caused him to lose his popularity as quickly as he gained it. He was soon friendless and bankrupt. His terrific success was reversed to a tragic struggle just to survive. Finally, in despair he ended his own life. This poor ending destroyed everything gained by the good start. Better to be like those who start was miserable, but who had a glorious ending. Just as it is true-**

**That lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.**

**So it is also true-**

**Lives of brilliant failures all remind us  
A good start is not enough.  
We must forget the road behind us,  
And press on however rough.**

**As we examine the account of the most tragic of all brilliant failures I trust that none of us will fail to grasp this truth that when all is going well we must be humble, and we must be constantly looking to Christ knowing that he who stands must beware lest he fall. And when all is going poorly we must be hopeful and press on still looking to Christ, who delights in bringing a tragic beginning to a triumphant finish.**

**No matter how bogged down a runner is in a race of life, if he truly looks to Christ he will be enabled to cross the finish line and wear the victor's crown. Because of this great hope we have in Christ, those who know him can approach Gen. 3, which Leupold calls, "The most tragic chapter in the Bible," with a sense of relief, for we know however great and complex are the problems concerning the origin of sin, we have the remedy for it.**

**If we only knew of man's ruin without God's remedy, it would be an awful account of study, but with the good news bound together with it, we can study it with great profit. All who have a good start are in danger from the same source that brought the fall of Adam and Eve. Our concern should be to examine the sources of danger and be aware of them so as to avoid them or overcome them. The first source of danger is what we want to focus on in this message.**

**External persuasion is what we see in verse 1. One of the primary truths we gain from this account is that sin did not originate within man, but it was external in origin. This fits the whole biblical pattern, for salvation likewise does not originate within man, but is external in origin. Man is not the cause of his fall, or of his salvation. But in both he plays a major role. There is profound truth in the old western preachers explanation of the doctrine of election. He said, "The devil votes against me, and God votes for me, and I cast the deciding vote." The Calvinist would be more at ease if we said, "The devil votes against me, and I vote for me, and God cast the deciding vote." This is probably more correct, but the point we want to see is that external powers plays a decisive role in both the fall and salvation of man.**

**It is man's response to the external that makes him, as Pascal said, "Both the glory and scum of the universe." The serpent is the source of the first temptation to evil, and from the context alone it would appear that the serpent is to be taken as strictly just that-an animal like all the others that God created, but superior in gifts. It is only by means of the rest of Scripture that we can see that the serpent is only a means being used by Satan. Satan was the real source of evil and not the serpent. Jesus called Satan a liar from the beginning and the father of lies, and it is obvious he is referring to this event of the fall. In Rom. 16:20 Paul says to the Christians, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." There can be no doubt that he is referring to the promise of Gen. 3:15 that the serpent's head would be crushed by the seed of Eve. In Rev. 12:9 we read, "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the world." The serpent and Satan are one.**

**The Old Testament pictures God's great enemy in the form of a serpent. In Isa. 27:1 we read, "In that day the Lord will punish with His sword, His fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea." The lesson we are to learn**

is not just to beware of snakes, but to beware of any external source of clever and cunning evil. Someone has said that one of the best proofs of the reality of Satan is the cleverness of evil. It seems to have so many resources to insure its success. The serpent here in Gen. 3:1 represents any means, which Satan might use to entice us to fall from the path of obedience to God. Joanna Baillie wrote-

Think'st thou there are no serpents in the world  
But those that slide along the grassy sod,  
And sting the luckless foot that passes them?  
These are who in the path of social life  
Do bask their spotted skins in fortune's sun,  
And sting the soul.

An evil and deception person is called a snake in the grass because he is an example of the serpent, who by deception brought sin into the world.

If external persuasion could deceive man in Eden where all was perfect and where man was pure and off to such a good start, then let us not fall into the greatest deception of all, which is to believe we cannot be deceived. Some poet put it-

Satan desires us great and small, As wheat to sift us, and we all are tempted,  
Not one, however rich or great, Is by his station or estate exempted.  
No house so safely guarded is, But he, by some device of his can enter.  
No heart hath armor so complete, But he can pierce with arrows fleet its center.

We are ever in danger of being deceived and made to fall. God made provision so that we can withstand the fiery darts of Satan. We have the whole armor of God, and we can with the sword of faith even slay the dragon in one area of life after another. But the battle is never done, and we must persist to the end, and never be content with a good start. We will be targets of temptation as long as we live. Paul wrote in II Cor. 11:3, "Abut I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thought will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." Believers are still subject to external forces that can lead astray. Otto Harback said, "Fro we're only poor weak mortals after all; Sons of apple-eating Adam, prone to fall." We are open to the serpent's sting whenever we dream that we are self-sufficient.

**We are to be ever aware that we must be faithful to the end and not count on a good start. The prize is at the finish line, and we must press on forgetting what lies behind. Walt Mason said, "You may be lustrous as a star, with all the virtues in you canned, but if you fool around with tar you'll blacken up to beat the band." We need to flee from external forces of temptation, for they have led many a believer to fall just like Adam and Eve. Why are we still in this danger? It is because God will never take from us the freedom to choose, and so we can choose to disobey him at any time, and be enticed into evil. Emerson wrote,**

**"For he that ruleth high and wise, Nor pauseth in His plan,  
Will tear the sun out of the skies Ere freedom out of man."**

**God made it possible for us to sin and choose the path of disobedience, but he does not will that we ever go that way. Only by having the choice can we truly choose to be obedient and faithful to our commitment to God and His ways. We need to have external sources of evil enticing us in order for us to be loyal to God. If we were protected from this kind of temptation we would not be choosing to be obedient, for we would not have a choice. Do not fear temptation, for it is an opportunity for you to choose the way of God and be pleasing to Him, and this is the goal of life. It is not how we start, but how we finish life that counts, and so all the temptations along the way are opportunities for us to press on to the finish line where we will hear, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."**

## **17. AWFUL ANGELS OR MISERABLE MEN? Based on Gen. 6:1-8**

**A modern book titled Sex After Sixty Five was written to encourage older people to realize their is still sexual life after retirement. This would have sounded like a joke to the people before the flood. In Gen. 5:21 we are told that Enoch was 65 when he had his first son Methusalah. Then in chapter 5 we see it ending by telling us that Noah after he was 500 had his three sons. Men had an enormously long span of life in which they could father children, and so we can understand why their was a rapid growth in the population, as it states in verse one.**

**After stating that there was a population explosion, this chapter tells of a problem that resulted from it. The sons of God saw the daughters of men, and they desired to have them as their wives. This does not sound too unlike the world of today where women watchers finally see one they feel they can't live without, and so they ask her to marry them. The problem here is in trying to determine just who these sons of God are. It is not any easy task, for Bible scholars of equal love for the Word of God, and equally skilled in interpreting it have come to 3 different conclusions. Either they are angels, the line of Seth, or the upper class of nobles.**

**When scholars disagree the best thing we can do is examine the evidence for each view and see which case is the strongest. So lets look first at the view that they are angels.**

## **I ANGELS.**

**This view goes way back into the centuries before Christ. The book of Enoch, which was written in the second century B. C. Says these sons of God were wicked angels who lusted after the daughters of men. Josephus and Philo, and most of the Jewish writers held this view. The oldest church fathers like Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Ambrose also held this view. The arguments for it are very strong.**

**A. The expression sons of God is used in the Old Testament of angels. I Job 1:6 we read, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord."**

**B. This takes place just before the flood, and Peter in II Pet. 2:4-5 pictures the angels being judged just before the flood. This seems to indicate they had something to do with the flood. In Jude 6-7 we read of the angels again being judged just before Sodom and Gomorah for their immorality, suggesting the angels may also have been judged for sexual sins.**

**What appears to have happened according to this view is that the angels took upon themselves the bodies of men in order to cohabit with human women.**

**C. This view explains the many legends and myths about divine beings producing children on earth who were giants and great men. Greek mythology is full of this type of thing.**

## **II. Sethites.**

**Those who hold this view see this account as a strictly human affair of the pure line of Seth (called sons of God), and the corrupt line of Cain (called the daughters of men). They point out that there is no other reference to angels, either before or after, and there is no reason to drag them in here. Leupold points out that there is no reference to angels in the first 5 chapter of Genesis and there is no basis for to suddenly introduce them here, when the whole history is dealing with men only.**

**A. The view that they could be angels has to be rejected on the basis of words of Jesus in Matt. 22:30 where he says, "At the resurrection people will neither marry or be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." We have no reason to believe that angels would ever have any desire to marry human women. The text in Gen. 6 makes it clear that these were not just one night stands and affairs. These were marriages that led to settling down and raising families. If these were angels who had defied the laws of God, there would have been judgment on them long before they raised families from these marriages.**

**B. The flood was the result of the wickedness of men, and there is no hint that it was a punishment for fallen angels. Angels were judged by being sent to hell, and not by being drowned in a flood. These sons of God were the pure line of Seth who departed from the will of God and married the ungodly women from the line of Cain. These intermarriages led to the complete breakdown of the godly chain. Noah only was left.**

**C. The people of God are often called the sons of God. God said to Pharaoh in Ex. 4:22-23, "Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, 'let my son go, so he may worship me.'" In Deut. 32:19 we read, "The Lord saw this and rejected them because He was angered by His sons and daughters." There is no need to introduce angels here, for God's people were called sons of God. Warnings about the marriage of believers and unbelievers are a common theme in the Old Testament. There are no warnings about intermarriage with angels.**

**D. The idea of daughters being born was nothing new. There had been daughters all along born to men, and the angels could have come down anytime if that were the case. But the point here is that the population was getting so great that the two lines of descent could no longer be kept isolated.**



**The population explosion forced the sons of God to be exposed to these daughters of godless Cainites. If you mix any two classes of people together, you will have marriages of these two classes. We see it all through history, and it happens everywhere yet today. This is a typical human issue, and there is no need to introduce angels. The preceding chapter deals with the Sethite line of godly men like Enoch, Methuselah, and Noah, and there is no reason why chapter 6 would drop that line and pick up on a line of angels that has never been mentioned.**

**E. It is true that the angels were judged, but no where is there any reference to it being due to marriage with women, or to any sexual activity. The New Testament passages that the angel theory refers to do not say anything about angels and immorality as they do humans. The fact that they are in the same context cannot be used to imply they were guilty of the same sins. Angels fell long before men even existed, and so if you bring angels into this text, you have a second fall of the angels, which the Bible does not support.**

**F. If this text deals with angels, it has no lesson for the rest of history, but if it deals with the godly marrying the ungodly, it has a lesson for all of the history of God's people. This has always been a major problem. In Ex. 34:15-16 we read God's warning to His people, "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead our sons to do the same." In Deut. 7:3-4 we read, "Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you." These and others like them are parallel with the text in Gen. 6. And the N.T. says also, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." This is the age old and universal problem, and not the danger of intermarriage with angels.**

**G. Take note of the judgement in this passage. In verse 3 God says, "My spirit will not contend with man forever,..." In verse 5 it says, "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become,..." In verse 6 we read, "The Lord was grieved that He had made man on the earth..." Verse 7 says, "So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created from the face of the earth-men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds**

**of the air-for I am grieved that I have made them.'" You will note that there is no judgment on angels, and no reference to God's regret that He had made angels. They do not appear at all in God's expression of anger and judgment. All of this evidence lead the great Christian scholars of the early church like Chrysostom, Augustine, and Jerome, and the reformers like Luther and Calvin, and the majority of modern commentators to reject the angel theory in favor of this Sethite view.**

**There are some miner views that are held by very few, but most will choose one or the other of these major views. No one could know for sure which is correct, and so one must keep an open mind. Whatever the case, the children born to these marriages were men of great stature. Verse 4 calls them Nephilim. This might seem to support the angel theory because these giant men seem to be supernatural products, but this is not the case. This same word is used in Num. 13:33 to describe the big men that the spies saw in the Promise Land which made them fear to invade it. It says, "We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them." This was long after the flood, and unless we are to assume that different groups of angels kept coming down and taking wives, these giants were clearly products of human marriage. There is no need for angels to be involved in producing these giant men.**

**This is not a vital issue at all, and godly Bible scholars disagree, but if I had to choose, this is why I would choose the Sethite theory. I would do so for two main reasons.**

**1. The angel theory gets us involved in a strange mixture of the heavenly and earthly, and it sounds too much like mythology. If we are not compelled to get into such a strange and awkward realm of angels marrying earthly wives, and settling down to raise families, why do it? If the entire account fits humans only, then we should leave it at that and not turn it into a mystery that reveals no special meaning with value.**

**2. The whole context stresses the fact of the wickedness of men. The flood was a judgment upon man and not angels. God was angry because the godly line of Seth intermarried with the ungodly line of Cain, and except for Noah, there was no one left to produce a godly line heading for the Messiah. It all makes**

perfect sense without angels. On the basis of God's attitude an anger toward men I choose to believe that the sons of God were the descendants of Seth, and not angelic beings.

## **18. THE CURSE OF CANAAN Based on Gen. 9:18-28**

Violence is not limited to the destruction of life and property. If one destroys love, truth, and understanding, or any virtue or value, that is emotional, social or intellectual violence. As Christian we would certainly agree to deprive men of the Gospel is to do violence to their souls. To pervert God's Word is to do violence to their minds. This is a far more subtle violence, and seldom does it get into the news, but this is the kind of violence that is really the most serious. The truth shall set you free Jesus said, and so it is error and falsehood that enslaves men. To be a slave to any false idea or prejudice, and to be a propagator of it is to be one guilty for a greater violence than to be one who burns down a building.

One of the greatest conspiracies for violence against the souls of men was the use of the Bible to support the right of white men to enslave black men. Men became so convinced that God willed slavery that Baptist ministers in the South denounced the speaking against slavery as a sin against the Holy Spirit. The battle against slavery is now over, but these same people use all of the same verses to justify prejudice. E. Q. Campbell said it was blasphemy to use Scripture to justify desegregation.

The race issue does not divide at the line separating believer and unbeliever. There were Christians and non-Christians on both the pro-slavery and anti-slavery sides. Men appeal to the Bible to support both sides. In the battle against slavery the Bible was the basic battleground. For it was the resource for the principles both sides were defending. Albert Barnes the great Bible commentator and anti-slavery promoter, said he had to appeal solely to the Bible in fighting slavery. The Constitution of the United States was not sufficient, for slave holding Christians said the Bible is of higher authority and it supported slavery. We can agree with their principle of obeying God rather than man, but the issue is, were they obeying God or just their own interpretation of God's Word?

**Every system of oppression seeks to justify itself, and Kelly Miller wrote in 1909, "The institution of slavery ransacked science, history, literature and religion in quest of fact and argument to uphold the iniquitous system." One of their richest finds was this passage in Gen. 9 about the curse of Noah on his grandson Canaan. If they could connect the curse of white man's oppression of the Negro to this curse then they were not only not wrong, but they were fulfilling the will of God by making life miserable for the blacks. If God wills the Negro to be the white man's slave, who are we to fight the will of God? This was their attitude. The Negro is all right in his place, but according to Scripture that place is subordination to the white man. White racism had a basis in this biblical text, and it is still used to support the right of whites to segregate the Negro. We want to examine this passage to see who is really blaspheming the Bible.**

**The story begins with the folly of Noah drinking wine until he was drunk. All of the trouble began with alcohol. This was not much of a start for the new world. The old one had just been destroyed because of its wickedness, and here is righteous Noah, who stood his ground for God against all of the mocking, but now in a time of peace he falls. We need to beware of the dangers of peace. We see that the flood did not really change human nature. Those who tried to defend Noah by saying he didn't know of the effects of wine have a weak case, for in the wicked world of eating and drinking before the flood he certainly saw the effects of alcohol.**

**In verse 22 we see Noah ending up naked in his tent and his son Ham saw him in that condition. He told his two brothers who were outside the tent. That is all this verse tells us. He saw his father naked and told his brothers. Commentators go wild here in their speculation. Ham is denounced as a God hater who is defying the law of God and reverence for his father. He is pictured as a cruel inhuman beast who mocked his father and made a big joke of his nakedness. When the commentators get done with this verse you would swear it is a condensed biography of the devil himself. They do have some reason for this, but that does not justify writing foolish and excessive speculation as if it was fact. The reason they have to make Ham look bad here is that it makes Noah look terribly bad if he curses his son's son over an incident that only happened because of his own sin. In other words, if Ham is not made out to be a real rat here, Noah looks bad, and so they give Ham the works. Moses, however, only tells us that he happened to see Noah naked and told his two brothers. Moses does not appear to be painting a vicious beast of**

**a man, but of a son who stumbled into a situation of shame.**

**It is obvious there must be some basis for Noah's wrath. Verse 23 shows us the contrasting action of the two brothers Shem and Japeth. They made sure they did not see their father's nakedness. They take all precautions to avoid this as they cover them with their heads turned away. It is clear from this that the evil was in the seeing of his father naked, even though it was Noah's own fault that he was so exposed. Cassuto, the Jewish commentator, says, "If the covering was an adequate remedy, it follows that the misdemeanor was confined to seeing." If this be so, then we are dealing here with a specific culture matter of the Jews who considered it a deep disgrace to be seen naked. When God was going to judge Israel, and let His wrath fall, He would threaten them with exposure. Isa. 3:17 says, "The Lord will smite with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will lay bare their secret parts." Ezek. 16:37 says, "I will gather them against you from every side, and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness." The most shameful experience for Jews would be to have their nakedness exposed. This is why Noah was so angry at Ham.**

**In verse 24 Noah wakes up and discovers what had happened, and he was very angry. A man waking up with a hang over is not in the best of moods anyway, and then to find out he was exposed, made things all the worse. In Psa. 78 where the wrath of God is vividly portrayed we read in verse 65, "Then the Lord awoke as from sleep like a strong man shouting because of wine." In other words, the best picture of wrath the Psalmist could use to illustrate God's wrath was a man in Noah's condition waking up with a hang over. It was in this state that Noah cursed Canaan. Now why men are so eager to take this curse as a curse of God is a mystery. They do not take Noah's act of drunkenness as inspired of God, yet they take this angry curse as the word of the Lord. Men use the words of a man in sin shouting in a hangover to support their views of segregation, and they call it divine providence.**

**In verse 25 we see that Noah does not curse the man who did the evil act of looking at his naked body, but he curses his grandson who had nothing to do with it as far as the text goes. Canaan was the son of Ham, but there is no reason to believe that Canaan must have gone into the tent with Ham and seen Noah. Even if that were so, why would he curse him and not the father, or why curse anyone at all? It sounds like Noah is still greatly under the**

**influence of his wine. This must have some meaning, however, and cannot be merely the mutterings of an angry man who does not know what he is doing. Figuring it out, however, could drive men to drink. They have tried a number of approaches to make sense out of this cursing of Canaan for the sin of his father, which is not even a sin by our standards.**

**The Jews had 3 possible solutions:**

- 1. Ham had already been blest back in 9:1, and so his son was cursed in his place, for a man cannot be blest and cursed at the same time. This is a very weak argument.**
- 2. Canaan is used, but it means the father of Canaan. This was the solution Luther chose. He wrote, "The Holy Spirit speaking by Noah was so greatly angered by disobedient and disrespectful Ham that he did not even care to mention his name but called him by his son's name, Canaan." This is clever but totally subjective.**
- 3. Canaan was himself the real transgressor. This throws the rest of the account into chaos, for it clearly says Ham was the guilty one. None of these are convincing solutions.**

**Calvin says he cursed Canaan to emphasize the severity of the curse. He wrote, "Yet, the thunder of this severe and dreadful prophecy seems weak and illusory, since the Canaanites excelled in strength and in riches, and were possessed of extensive dominion. Chapter 10:6 and following tells us who the descendents of Canaan were. They were the great peoples of the ancient world such as the Egyptians and Babylonians. Both of these peoples held the Jews in bondage as slaves, but the Jews never held them in bondage.**

**Hams descendents were the first pioneers of world civilization. We read in 10:8-9 that Nimrod, one of the seeds of Ham, was a mighty man in the earth and a mighty hunter before the Lord, and he began a great kingdom. Lange the German scholar wrote, "Instead of being servants to Japheth, the descendents of Ham were founding empires, and building immense and populous cities, whilst the sons of the younger brother were roaming the dense wilds of Middle and Northern Europe, or the steppes of Central Asia, ever sinking lower and lower into barbarism..." Luther knew the facts of history do not support the curse, and so he said you have to take it by faith and recognize their spiritual slavery to sin and corruption. He wrote, "So Ham, though cursed by his father, secured for himself the greater part of the world and established mighty kingdoms, while Shem and Japheth, though blest, were**

**properly no more than beggars compared with him."**

**Are we to conclude then that Noah in a drunken stupor cursed Canaan and the whole thing backfired? Most evangelical scholars feel it must be taken as a serious prophecy, but they are uncertain as to how or when it was fulfilled. Cassuto comes to the rescue with a solution right in the context of Genesis. In chapter 14 Chedorlaomer king of Elam was a descendent of Shem and the descendents of Canaan were servants of his. The descendents of Japheth were also his allies, and so he feels the prophecy was fulfilled in the immediate context. It sounds good but it is difficult to know for sure.**

**The question is: Is there any support for slavery or segregation of blacks? Since the Negro has no connection at all with the descendents of the Canaanites it is hard to believe anyone could so misapply a passage like this. The Canaanites were white and of the Caucasian race. This curse has nothing to do with the racial problem at all, and to use it to support any racial prejudice is certainly folly and possibly blasphemy.**

## **19. DREAM AWARENESS Based on Gen. 31:1-13**

**Doctor Paul Tournier, the great Christian psychiatrist, tells of the child who once remarked to his mother, "Dreams are God's movies, arn't they?" Doctor Tournier believes they are often just that. The early Christians believed dreams were a tool God used to give guidance, but this conviction faded during the middle ages. Then the modern secular world of psychiatry reopened the whole world of the unconscious. This influenced Christians to study the subject of dreams again.**

**Kathryn Lindskoog, in her book The Gift of Dreams, has done a marvelous job of studying the history of dreams in the Christians church. Most of us are not aware that we live in an age of a dream craze. It is just not a realm of life that we explore. I am amazed at what I learned in just a few weeks by getting exposed to the world of dream fascination. Listen to what is going on. "Dozens of dream laboratories speckle the country. Dream study has exploded. Dream discussion groups meet regularly. Dream books clutter the shelves. Dream articles pop up in magazines and journals more than ever.**

**Students flock to dream classes in colleges and universities. There are dream clinics, dream lectures, dream retreats, dream workshops, and seminars. You can even get dream therapy through the mail."**

**Jacob, of course, had none of these things, but he did have dreams, and by means of them he was led to great success, and back to the promise land. We want to look at the second dream of Jacob in which we see the dream as a source of insight and instruction. First lets look at-**

**I. INSIGHT. Jacob had a difficult time getting a fair deal out of his father-in-law. Laban cheated him year after year on his wages. But God came to Jacobs aid and gave him insight into the world of genetics and heredity. By means of a dream God taught Jacob how to raise sheep and goats in such a way that they would have the markings that made them his livestock. He got rich by this insight he received in a dream. His success and prosperity can be traced to his God-given dream.**

**Morton Kelsey, the leading Christian scholar in the field of dreams, has traced the history of dream insight that made people successful in their field. Much of the creativity that we give men credit for is really a gift of God through these individuals to the world. Beethoven and Schumann received music in their dreams. Tartian's great work, The Devil's Trill, came to him entirely in his sleep. Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Mozart, and Brahms have all described composing in a dream or near dream state where the inspiration was coming to them from another world.**

**Now you might object that not all of these men were Christians. Surely God does not give inspiration to non-Christians, and insights that benefit the world. You would be wrong to have that conviction, for a good number of the dreams of the Bible are dreams God gave to unbelievers-that is, to pagan Gentiles outside of the kingdom of God's people. Most notably are the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel that gave the world great prophecies of the future. There is also the brief dream of Pilate's wife in the New Testament that gave warning about treating Jesus unjustly. Here was a pagan male and female in high places that God spoke to in dreams. There are others too, but the point is, the Bible makes it clear, God does not limit the insights He gives to the human race to His own people.**

**If something is good, true, and beautiful, the Christians is to appreciate it,**



even if it comes through a non-Christian. God gives us gifts through those who are not His people. Origen, the early church father, back in the 200's, wrote, "That in a dream certain persons may have certain things pointed out to them to do, is an event of frequent occurrence to many individuals." Tertullian, another church father, born in 160A.D. said, "Who is such a stranger to human experience as not sometimes to have perceived some truth in dreams."

As I said before, this conviction faded, and for most of us today the dream is not a source of insight, information, or inspiration. But all through history this has been a Christian conviction. An English doctor, Sir Thomas Browne wrote, "If there are guardian angels, they may not remain inactive while we sleep, but may sometimes influence our dreams, and many strange hints, insights, or discoveries which are so amazing to us, may arise from that source." You and I may not be able to think of any such insights we have received by means of a dream, but one of the major lessons of life to learn is never limited God to your own limited experience. Your God is never very big if he is only the God of your experience. He is certainly not the God of the Bible.

This dream of Jacob's is purely personal, and the insights he gets were for his benefit only. He did not get any great truth to share with the world. There was no great music, poetry, or art that would live on forever to bless mankind because of his dream. It was purely personal, and this is the kind of insight we should be seeking in our dreams.

Louis Agassiz, the famous 19th century naturalist, was trying to free a fossil fish he had found, but just could not get it out of the rock. He left it, and a few nights later he had a dream. Three nights in a row he had this dream of a fish. When he awoke the third time he made a sketch of the fish, and went back to the fossil. Using the sketch as a blueprint, he chipped at a certain spot and the stone fell away and the fossil was free revealing an exact replica of his drawing. It was a unique specimen then unknown.

I do not share this thinking you can get excited about fish bones in rocks, but to illustrate again, this was a very specific problem a man had in a very specific area of interest to him, and he got insight by means of a dream that helped him solve his problem. Such an insight could not be found in the Bible, but God could give it to him in a dream. That is the kind of dream we see

**Jacob having, and the kind masses of people have had. It is so common that I have concluded it is the legitimate to ask God to give you insight in your dreams to help you solve problems.**

**The French philosopher Condorcet, solved a major mathematical equation in his sleep. William Blake received a truly improved method of copper engraving in a dream. James Brindley, a great engineer, would go to bed and stay there until he got an answer to his problems in a dream. God never sleeps, and neither does your brain. They both are up all night while you are sleeping, and there is no end to what the brain may be working on while you sleep.**

**Mathematician Jaques Hadammd, author of, The Psychology of Invention In The Mathematical Field, says it is an absolute certainty that the brain is working while we sleep. Many of the great discoveries of science have taken place instantly upon awakening. Einstein's best ideas, for example, came to him the moment he awoke from sleep. The assumption is that his brain was at work while he slept seeking answers to his problems.**

**One night in October of 1920, doctor Frederick G. Banting was working on his lecture for the next day. He was a young surgeon with a small practice who had to teach in order to make a living. He studied the literature on diabetes, but it was loaded with conflicting theories. He finally went wearily to bed only to be awakened suddenly at 2:00 in the morning. He got up and wrote down three short sentences in his notebook and went back to sleep. Those three sentences led to the discovery of insulin that has brought life and hope to millions of suffering people. Where did this life saving insight come from? Science calls it discovery, but faith calls it revelation. They are often the same thing-God giving gifts to mankind by means of influencing the mind through dreams. We give credit to men for that which is really the gift of God through men and women who are open to receive His messages by means of dreams.**

**Most dreams, however, are going to be like Jacob's. They will be aids to solving some personal problem by insights that are not available elsewhere. Marilyn Hevilin, in her book, When Your Dreams Die, gives a great example. Listen to her testimony of how God, by means of a dream, solved a problem she had when her son died as a young man.**

**After Nathan's death, one of the stumbling blocks in my healing process was that I didn't have an opportunity for a final good-bye. I remember saying to God, "I am not going to argue with You about You allowing Nathan to die. He belonged to You before he belonged to me, and I respect Your sovereignty. However, couldn't You have at least caused the hospital to allow me to see him before he died or even in the first moments after his death? Surely a sovereign God could have arranged that."**

**Within a few weeks of Nate's death I had a dream- a very, very real dream. Nate was standing at the foot of my bed. He was wearing the clothes he had on the night he died. As I reached for him, he stepped back out of my reach, but he smiled and waved goodbye. Then he was gone. God gave me my own private opportunity to say good-bye to my son. That stumbling block was removed. One of God's special touches. His response to a grieving mother's need.**

**The old advice that says, sleep on it, may seem superficial when you are facing a problem or major decision, but the fact is it can really lead to the answer you need. In essence it is saying, go to bed with it and let God guide you in your dreams. He may just give you the insight you need to deal wisely with your problem. We just need to have a greater dream awareness for this can lead to a greater awareness of the presence of God. The second thing Jacob got in his dream was-**

**II. INSTRUCTION. By instruction I mean, not just insight into problems, but actual specific information about what you are to do. The angel of God said to Jacob in his dream, leave this land at once and go back to your native land. This was more than an insight. It was a clear revelation of God's will for his life.**

**It would be wonderful if we could just go to sleep each night and dream of what we are to do the next day. Life would be easy, and we would not have to use our own reasoning ability at all. But this is not the way God works. Even Jacob only got a dream like this after many years. It is rare for God to give specific instruction in dreams, but the fact is, He does at times do so, and we need to be aware of what God may do sometimes.**

**Fyodor Dostoevsky was a Russian writer who advocated social reform in Russia. He was condemned to slave labor in Siberia. God had a plan for this mans life, and as the prisoners marched past a pheasant woman's hut she thrust her Bible in his hands. It was another futile effort of the ignorant to try and make a difference in the world. She likely did not know that most tracts and Bibles given to people never get read. Statistically this was a foolish waste of her resources. But this act of a simple pheasant woman changed history. Dostoevsky had nothing else to read for 12 years in his lonely exile. The Bible became his most treasured possession. He read it and fell in love with the Savior. God began to come to him in his dreams and tell him how he could share this love of Jesus with the Russian people.**

**He began to think up plots for novels whereby he could reach the masses with the Gospel. These dreams not only saved his own sanity, but the books he wrote because of his dreams made him one of the most famous authors the world over. You will find his Brothers Karmazov as volume 52 of the 54 volume set of Great Books of the Western World. Doctor Karl Barth, the great Swiss theologian, who has influenced thousands of other theologians, was profoundly influenced by Dostoevsky. The man was a sinner and a schemer like Jacob, but God used him to make a great impact for the Kingdom of God. The point is, knowing how God has worked in history by means of dreams helps us be alert to the fact that God may work in our lives through dreams. Even if God never speaks to you in a dream, being alert and aware will make you more sensitive to receive His instruction by whatever means He uses to guide you.**

**If history is any guide, the most frequent kind of specific instruction God gives to people in dreams is instruction on how to help people in serious trouble. The record of this kind of dream are amazing, and they make you realize the reality of guardian angels. If these angelic beings can get through to someone in a dream, there are amazing rescues that can take place. Doctor Horace Bushnell tells of one such dream. A Captain Yount, in California, had a dream of a company of emigrants trapped by the snow in the mountains. They were perishing with the cold and hunger, and the specific place was so real with its white rock cliff. He woke up profoundly impressed with the reality of his dream. But he went back to sleep and dreamed the same dream again.**

**In the morning he could not get the dream out of his mind. He shared it**

with an old hunter friend of his. His friend said he recognized the scenery of his dream as the Carlson Valley Pass. This motivated the Captain to get some men, mules, and provisions, and head for that pass. His neighbors laughed at such folly, but he had to follow his dream. When they got to the pass they found just what he had dreamed. They were able to rescue the trapped families who would have died had they not come. Here was very specific instruction that had to be acted on. It is rare, yet surprising how often God has given such dreams.

The odds are that you will not win the lottery, but somebody does. The odds are you will not have such a dream, but somebody will. Maybe more dreams would have meaning and instruction if we were open to them as a means of heavenly communication. Hood wrote, "Some dreams we have are nothing else but dreams, Unnatural and full of contradictions; Yet others of our most romantic schemes, Are something more than fictions."

If you read on in this 31st chapter of Genesis, you will read about another dream that the bad guy had. Laban is the father-in-law of Jacob. He had been robbing Jacob of his wages and treating him unjustly. He was coming after Jacob to do him great harm when he heard he was returning to his homeland. As far as he was concerned, it was an act of war, and he was going after Jacob to fight him. In verse 24 we read that God came to Laban in a dream. He gave him specific instructions not to say anything to Jacob. In verse 29 Laban shares this dream with Jacob as the reason why he has not attracted him. By means of a dream God providentially spared the life of Jacob. Laban was a bad man in many ways, but he had the good sense to listen to God when God spoke to him in a dream."

The Captain of the S. S. Vestris also had the good sense to pay attention to a mysterious message he received in 1828. His ship was headed for New Brunswick. His first mate, Robert Bruce, had a strange vision of a man writing on the Captain's slate in his cabin. He ran to the Captain to report it, and they went to his cabin, and there they found the words-STEER NORTH WEST. The Captain accused Bruce of writing this and had him write the words so he could compare the handwriting. It did not match. Every man on board was made to write these words, but none of the handwriting matched. The Captain said, "I am a God-fearing man. There must be some hidden meaning to the message, some providential force at work. We'll steer North West for a while and see what happens."

**What happened was that they found another ship that had been wrecked by hitting an iceberg, and it was helpless. They were able to rescue many survivors who would not have lasted much longer. They owed their lives to a man who listened to the unusual as a possible message of instruction from God. Jacob got specific instruction of what to do in a dream, and Laban got specific instruction of what not to do in a dream.**

**In the New Testament we read in Acts 10 that Peter was waiting for a meal when he fell into a trance. He saw a large sheet coming down from heaven full of animals, reptiles, and birds. A voice told him to get up and kill these creatures for his meal. Peter resisted and said he had never eaten anything unclean. Three times God gave him this vision, and when he awoke there were Gentiles at his door from the Italian Centurion Cornelius. Peter was told by the Lord that he should not hesitate to go with them. He was given specific instruction to forsake his prejudice against Gentiles, and to go and be a guest in his house. God helped Peter do this by means of a dream.**

**Plato, the Greek philosopher, said there are three valid sources of knowledge.**

- 1. The five senses which we share with the animal kingdom.**
- 2. Reason which sets us apart from the animals.**
- 3. The spiritual world of supernatural communication.**

**Aristotle, his disciple, eliminated this third source and said knowledge comes only by the senses and reason. He rejected dreams as a source of knowledge. The western world has followed the thinking of Aristotle, but the Bible and history support Plato. Here is another example of how we are often more influenced by our culture than by Scripture. God works nights as well as days, and if we are open to it He can give us insight and instruction even in our dreams.**

**Martin Luther King Jr. was a sinner and schemer like Jacob, but he was also a man who had a dream. It even cost him his life, but he never stopped dreaming even when his dreams were so often shattered. In his book, *Shattered Dreams*, he refers to Paul who longed to get to Spain, but never did, but he never stopped dreaming of reaching that part of the world for Christ. He died never having gotten to that edge of the world, but his letters reached Spain and changed that nation's history completely. God went way beyond Paul's dream. Doctor King writes, "You must honestly confront your**

**shattered dream.....Ask yourself how may I transform this liability into an asset? How may I, confine to some narrow Roman cell and unable to reach life's Spain, transmute this dungeon of shame into a haven of redemptive suffering. Almost anything that happens to us may be woven into the purposes of God."**

**Jacob did it; Paul did it; and Doctor King did it, and all of us can do it if we dare to dream and ask God to make us sensitive to His working in our lives by all means, including that of dream awareness.**

## **20. DREAMS CAN COME TRUE Based on Gen. 37:2-20**

**Vanna White, the glamorous star who shows the letters on Wheel of Fortune, was a leader in her church youth group in North Myrtle Beach, North Carolina. Her pastor wrote about how he asked her, when she was a senior, what she was going to do after graduation. She responded that her dream was to become a model, and so she was going to modeling school in Atlanta.**

**This is how the pastor reacted: "Vanna, no!" I said. "Don't do that! Those schools will do nothing but take your money. Nobody ever gets a job at one of those places. You have brains! Ability! You could be more than a model!"**

**She thanked me politely and said, "But I have this dream of going to Hollywood and becoming an actress."**

**"From North Myrtle Beach?" I asked. "Vanna, that only happens in movies. This is crazy!"**

**He goes on to say he is not surprised that her autobiography does not mention his ministerial influence. He points out that Vanna makes more in one week than he makes in a whole year of giving good advice to aspiring teenagers. His point in telling this story is to call attention to the fact that it is not wise to try and interfere with other people's dreams.**

**A dream can be an escape from reality, but it can also be an alternative to a present inadequate reality. A dream can provide an ideal toward which we strive and thereby change reality for the better. In his book, Finding The Goal Posts, Lawrence Howe tells of such a dream in the life of Cecil Rhodes. He**

was 22 years old when he conceived the idea of an international scholarship fund. A plan that would bring the keenest minds from around the world to study together, and grow in their appreciation of the culture and learning of other lands. Such a project would, of course, take millions of dollars, but with no money and a dream, Cecil Rhodes made out his will bequeathing millions of dollars to this noble cause. Then he signed his name to his dream and went out into the world to back it up.

He struggled against adversity; sometimes succeeding; sometimes failing, but before long he came into possession of the great Kimberly Diamond Mines in South Africa, and he became world famous for his fabulous wealth. He was comparatively young yet when he fell prey to tuberculosis and he knew the end was near. He called for his will to have it read. He did not need to add anything to it except a paragraph of instructions to his lawyers advising them how to make his wealth available to fulfill his dream. He did not even need to sign it, for he had done that years before. As Howe said, "He literally signed his name beneath his ideals. He built great castles in the air, and then went out by hard work to put foundations beneath them..." Here was a dreamer who built his castle from the top down.

His dream was not an escape from the real, but an ideal he sought to make a part of the real. This kind of dream ought to be standard equipment in the mind of every Christian, young and old alike. As Christians we are bound to be realistic, but we are not bound by reality, for our ideals are always to be far superior to the reality of what is, and they are to drive us on to change the real till it conforms to the ideal.

In an article titled "Dreams: Pathway to Potential," Kent Hutcheson writes:

A person who has dreams is filled with expectation,  
and no obstacle seems insurmountable. He had a  
positive attitude, is excited and is never bored.

This means that dreams are practically the same thing as faith. Listen to Heb.11:1, "What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us..." Faith and dreams are one. It is a weak faith indeed that has no dreams of being more of what God wants you to be in the days ahead. Someone



printed on a piece of stationary, "The poorest of all men is not the man without a cent but the man without a dream."

In the Congressional Library over one of the entrances leading to the archives are these words: "They build to low who build beneath the stars." Thank God we have ideal that soars far beyond the furthest star into the very presence of God where Jesus sits at His right hand. There is our ideal, and our dream, if it is divine, is to be conformed to His image. This morning I want you to consider with me a dreamer in the Old Testament whose life conformed to that of Christ in many ways. Joseph is one of the most widely known and loved characters of the Bible. He is one of the few great heroes of the Bible whose life is not blotted by a fall. Like Jesus, he was tempted, but remained faithful. Like Jesus, his own received him not, and he was unjustly persecuted, but like Jesus, he forgave and became the savior of the very ones who hated him. We want to consider his life from the point of view of the three results that can come into the life of the dreamer.

## **I. DREAMS CAN CAUSE TENSION.**

Have you ever wondered as you watch your children fight like animals, what good can possibly ever come of them? Jacob must have wondered this often as he watched his 12 boys growing up. There would be tension enough without creating special sore points as Jacob did. He showed such a special favoritism to Joseph that he made the other boys jealous to the point of hating him. Joseph was the child of his first love Rachel, and he was born to him when he was 91 years old. Jacob made no attempt to hide the fact that Joseph was special. He broadcast it by making him a long robe of many colors. This was the garment of an overseer-one who is superior.

It was perfectly natural that Joseph was not popular with his brothers. This was not his fault, but it was the fault of Jacob showing favoritism. I read of a father who heard a knock on his bedroom door and he said, "Is that you pet?" "No it isn't pet, its only me." replied a little voice quivering with sorrow. The father's eyes were opened and that was the end of pet in that family. Jacob did not see his error, however, and so tension remained in his family.

Then came the straw that broke the camels back. Joseph had a dream that only added fuel to the flame of hate already raging in his brothers hearts. He had a dream, and he shared it, that all his brother and even his mother and

**father would bow before him. It was a God given dream, of course, but the family just considered him an arrogant brat. Even his father rebuked him for such a dream.**

**A somewhat similar relationship existed between Isaac Watts, the great hymn writer and his father. As a boy Watts had such a talent for poetry that he made his general conversation rhyme. His father tried to discourage it and one day he became so exasperated by Isaac's constant rhyme, he threatened to punish him in a very un-poetic manner if he did it again. Being so much a part of him, he unconsciously did it again and his father picked up the rod. Isaac fell to his knees and pleaded-**

**dear father on me mercy take,  
and I will no more verses make.**

**His father was disarmed and recognized his son was born to be a poet. He recognized his sons dream was God given, and so the tension was eased. But this was not the case with Joseph's family. Things went from bad to worse and so we see, not only can dreams cause tension, but-**

## **II. DREAMS CAN COST TRIAL.**

**Jacob sent Joseph to see if all was well with his brothers. When they saw him coming they plotted to get rid of this arrogant dreamer. They said we will kill him and then see what becomes of his dreams.**

**The majority can never tolerate the dreams of the one who seems inferior to them. The man who dares to be different and put his dreams into practice must be prepared to face trials. When George Stephenson planned to draw a train of cars by steam at the rate of 14 miles per hour, he was regarded as a fit candidate for the madhouse, but he had a dream and he went for it. When Fulton proposed to use steam to navigate the Hudson river, men of science ridiculed him and called it the silliest idea to ever enter a silly mind. Most scientific dreamers face the same criticism, but without these dreamers there is no progress.**

**In the realm of social reform nothing would change without dreamers. Why do we have a Martin Luther King Jr. holiday? It is because he was a man who said, "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true**

**meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." The dream cost him his life, but it was a dream that changed our nation more than most of us can imagine.**

**When William Carey shared his great dream of bringing the Gospel to India, he was criticized by theologians and politicians. His plan was publicly denounced in the House of Commons as the "mission of a lunatic." Even after his dream began to become reality, Christians expected the wrath of God to fall on him for this interference with God's business. Sidney Smith, a brilliant man of his day called the early missionaries, "a little detachment of maniacs." Today we know Carey as the Father of Modern Missions, and one of the great heroes of Christian history. But he had to pay a price to fulfill his God-given dream. Dreams are not free if you are determined to follow them.**

**The man is called a fool or knave,  
Or bigot plotting crime,  
Who for the advancement of his race  
Is wiser than his time.  
For him the hemlock shall distil.  
For him the ax be bared,  
For him the scaffold shall be built,  
For him the stake prepared.  
Him shall the scorn and wrath of men  
Persue with deadly aim,  
And malice, envy, spite and lies  
Shall desecrate his name.**

**Joseph's dream cost him 13 years of trial. He was 17 when his brothers sold him into slavery and he was 30 before his dream was fulfilled. During those 17 years his faith in his dream was tried to the utmost by the pit, Potipher's wife, and prison. Yet in perseverance, patience and purity he held fast to his dream and God honored him. We tend to think it is harder to stand for our ideals in our day, but nobody ever faced greater odds against him than Joseph. He stood alone with the majority always against him. It always seems to be that way for dreamers.**

**Luther came to the point where he stood before his superiors and had to choose for safety and conformity, or for his God given convictions. He did not have an army behind him. He stood alone and his decision changed the course**

of history. He said,  
"Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me."

The fighting heart may some day win.  
The quitter never can.  
There's many a battle turns  
Upon the spirit of a man.

No young person has ever faced more pressure to be immoral than Joseph. Potipher's wife tried to seduce him. You can talk about all the pressure of modern times to entice you to forsake your Christian convictions, but they could never be harder to overcome than what faced Joseph. It was go to bed with her or go to prison. He refused to dash his dream to pieces with the hammer of lust and chose prison. That is an awful price to pay for holding to a dream, but he paid it.

In prison he got along well, but thanks to a forgetful and ungrateful butler, whose dream he interpreted, he had to remain in prison for 2 extra years. It was all so unjust and unfair, and he could have easily said phooey on the dream, but the fact is that is what was enabling him to hang in there. In all his trials we do not hear him complaining and rebelling and doubting. How could he do it? The answer is in the poem of Edgar Allen Poe,

That holy dream-that holy dream,  
While all the world were chiding,  
Hath cheered me as a lovely beam,  
A lonely spirit guiding.

It was a lonely road to travel, but Joseph traveled unyieldingly faithful to his dream and the God who inspired it. We have seen that dreams can cause tension and that dreams can cost trial, but the good news is our final point,

### **III. DREAMS CAN COME TRUE.**

The brothers said, let us cast him into the pit and we will see what will become of his dreams-and they did, for they saw the dream come true. Joseph never wavered through all his trials and even when the real was in utter contrast to the ideal he remained faithful until he finally came to be the prime minister of Egypt with the power of life and death. He used that power to save

**his family and thereby prepare the way for the great plan of God for the children of Israel.**

**It is marvelous to see Joseph's attitude when he was in power. What character he had. He was faithful in prosperity as well as in adversity. He never forsook his ideals. No wonder the story of Joseph is one of the most popular in the world. God entrusted His great plan in history to a 17 year old shepherd boy. God could not have given a more clear demonstration of His faith in teenagers. Give God a teenager who wants to build above the stars; a teenager who dreams of a life in God's will; a teenager whose ambition is to be like Christ and to be guided by Christ, and I'll show you a teenager that God is willing to use to change the course of history. God wants teenagers, and pre-teenagers, and post-teenagers who dream inspired dreams, and who live their lives according.**

**Anyone can sit down and list reasons why a thing cannot be done, but the dedicated dreamer will go ahead and do it. The task of the church in winning the world is humanly impossible. But God calls us to dream gloriously and then live for the glory of that dream.**

**Are you laid low by dilemmas,  
Or are you lifted by dreams?**

**Dream your own dreams. Don't try to fit your life into somebody else's dream. The glass slipper would fit only Cinderella because that was her dream and nobody else's. Everybody wants to be somebody, but too often they want to be somebody else. Do not dream of being somebody else, but dream of what God can do through you, for you have the same capacity to dream as anyone else. Why do you think Lincoln was president when our nation went through the Civil War? It was because Lincoln had a dream of a country where all the people were free. He never gave up that dream even though he had to endure great opposition. He was willing to pay the price for his dream, and God saw to it that the slipper of victory fit his foot, and he became the man who set the slaves free, and saw his dream come true. God uses dreamers of every age. Edwin Markham wrote,**

**Ah, great it is to believe the dream,  
As we stand in youth by the starry stream;  
But a greater thing is to fight life through,**

**And say at the end, the dream is true.**

**Victor Frankl has become one of the great authors and speakers of the 20 th century. He survived Hitler's concentration camp, and he tells us why. "Others gave up hope. I dreamed. I dreamed that someday I would be here, telling you how I...survived the Nazi concentration camps.....in my dreams I have stood before you and said these words a thousand times." His dreams kept him going when the non-dreamers died in despair.**

**Dreams will never come true if we go on sleeping. Paul says in Rom. 13:11, now it is high time to awaken out of sleep. We must wake up and get into action to make our dreams come true. It may take days, months, even years, but if we have a dream that is consistent with God's will, we will see some, much or all of it come true, and any part of a dream coming true is far better than having no dream to aim for and achieve.**

**Hold fast your dream within your heart,  
Whatever might befall;  
Let others laugh, if laugh they will,  
But keep your dream through all.**

**Jammie Buckingham tells of a young woman he visited in prison. She had been a part of the Charles Manson gang, and had been convicted on 7 counts of murder. She was sentenced to die in the California gas chamber, but just before she was executed her sentence was changed to life in prison. Somebody sent her a Bible in the mail, and she just tossed it to one side and never looked at it once. Unknown to her there were people who had the audacity to dream that such an awful person as her could become a child of God. They prayed and sent her letters telling her of God's love. She finally picked up the dusty Bible and began to read. She had only known hate all her life. When she read the life of Jesus, and saw His love for and tenderness toward the fallen, she realized that is what she had dreamed of all her life-to be loved and accepted.**

**The Bible told her she could be forgiven and accepted if she opened her heart to Jesus. She slipped off of her cot in that lonely cell and asked Jesus to come into her life and be her Savior. Susan Atkins is still in prison, but she is a free woman in Christ. She has led a number of other women to Christ in the prison, and God has made her greatest dream come true, for she is loved and she is loving-the two greatest dreams anybody can have. It looked as if her life**

would end as a nightmare, but the Gospel made her dare to dream again, and she discovered what God wants all people to discover; if we will dream the dreams God dreams for us, we will see our dreams come true.

We have just started a new year, a new century, a new millennium and the one thing we know will be true of the future is that God will use dreamers to make a difference in time and eternity. Tony Compolo said, "Without personal dreams about the future, we are all dead." One of his goals in life is helping people dream bigger dreams. The future for us as a church will depend upon its dreamers, and it is never too late to start dreaming. What can you do for this church? What can you do for this community? What can you do for your family, friends and neighbors? What can you do for yourself? What can you do for the kingdom of God? What is your Millennial Dream?

## **21. LABOR FOR THE LORD Based on Gen. 41:41-57**

Grace Kelly, the American actress, married into royalty when she became the wife of Prince Rainier of Monaco. This became world wide news back in 1956 as an American girl became Princess Grace. But it was far from being a rags to riches story, for Grace grew up in wealth and luxury. Her father was a multimillionaire, and she made her own fortune of many millions in 11 films. She just got a title that money could not buy, and a 200 room pink palace. It is hard to imagine that she would have suffered a great deal had the prince never noticed her.

But the story of Joseph is truly a rags to riches story, and one far more important to the people of the world in that day. Joseph was less than a nobody. He was a criminal locked away in prison. He was innocent, but never the less a man of no power in that culture. The slave had more power than he did, and more choice of self-determination. Apart from the grace and providence of God Joseph was a peanut shell in Yankee Stadium, and that is the level of notice he would have gotten in history from that point on. But God gave him the ability to interpret dreams, and he impressed the Pharaoh. He was instantly exalted to the highest level of power in the powerful nation of Egypt.

He not only had instant power, but he had an instant marriage that made him a part of the inner circle of the culture. Pharaoh gave him a wife named

**Asenath who was a daughter of a priest. The priest were the power behind the Pharaoh, and they usually controlled him. So here was a common criminal who went from the prison to the palace in an hour, and from being of no influence to being the number one man of influence in the country. Not a bad afternoon for an ex-con. The only story in history more marvelous is the raising of a crucified criminal to the right hand of God to reign forever.**

**The one thing that is conspicuous by its absence is resistance on the part of Joseph. He did not hem and haw, and ask for one more night in the dungeon to think it over and pray about it. He did not come up with the lame excuse of Moses or Jeremiah. He did not say, "I'm not qualified for the job, or I'm not a good communicator." Pharaoh made him an instant national authority. He put his own ring on him, a royal robe, and a gold chain around his neck. Then he made him an instant celebrity. He took him for a royal ride in his chariot, and let the people of the land know who was in charge. Do you detect a peep of resistance? Even when he is given a wife as a fringe benefit of the job, he does not say, "No thanks, I'll get my own bride." He has been in prison for 3 years, and no doubt felt this was as good a time as any to give up the single life and settle down. On a prisoner's salary it would have been tough to support a girl like Aseneth, who was accustomed to luxury. But now he is the number man in the land. He can afford a high class wife, and so he takes her and they have a happy fruitful marriage.**

**In our culture you have to feel in love to get married. In the Bible world you had to choose to love, and their marriages based on the will were superior to ours based on the emotions. The will is more stable than the feelings. Joseph, no doubt, developed feelings for Aseneth, but their relationship was based on the will at first.**

**Joseph was one of those one in a billion type men who was able to please everyone from his place of power. He pleased the Pharaoh, his wife, his family, the people of Israel, the people of Egypt, and the people from all the lands where the famine forced them to come to him for food. As far as the record goes, Joseph had a 100% positive rating, and we want to look at some of the reasons for this, and hopefully learn something to help us be more pleasing to God and man as we labor for the Lord. The first thing we see is-**

## **I. HE WAS A TERRIFIC SERVANT.**



**In verse 46 we read, "Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt." Joseph went right to work on the biggest project of government planning for the future that we have in the Bible. Joseph was in charge of a project that would save millions of lives, and it would save the people of God, and preserve the line to the Messiah. Joseph could not know the full implication of all he is doing, but in a very real sense he is being a type of Christ, for he is involved in saving the world.**

**The impressive thing about Joseph is the way he handles power. Power corrupts, but once in a blue moon someone gets great power and does not abuse it, but uses it as it was intended, and that is to be for the service of others. Joseph did not set back and say, "Wow! What a plush position I landed in. I'm just going to take advantage of this and use my power to build my own fortune." Many, if not most, in his position would think this way, and today they have their own Swiss bank account.**

**Joseph was the perfect politician, for he had a servants heart. He realized that in the providence of God some people get power that others never do, but the power is not meant for self-glory, but for service to those who are powerless. Shakespeare said, "Heaven doth with us as we with torches do, not light them for themselves." Torches are lit for others to see, that is why we are the light of the world. We shine not for self, but for others. Joseph knew he was where he was for the sake of others, and he worked like a madman to see that the task was accomplished. For 7 years he organized the stock piling of food, and for 7 more he organized the distribution of it to a hungry world. There had to be long hours and foul-ups galore, and who knows how many drudgeries? Verse 55 says that when people came to Pharaoh crying for food he told them to go to Joseph and do what he would tell them. The king passed the buck to Joseph completely. He just lived in luxury and gave the matter no thought, for Joseph was out there in the trenches taking care of the battle.**

**When you consider the length of time involved and the massiveness of the project, and the number of people affected, Joseph was certainly the hardest working man in the Bible. It took a lot of hard work to save the world from famine. But because Joseph was committed to do this work he became one of history's greatest heroes. I did not realize it before I began to study his life that he is given more space in the book of Genesis than any other person. Abraham has 273 verses devoted to his life, but Joseph has 357 verses. Wilbur**

**Smith, the great Bible scholar, said that Joseph's life is the most fascinating in all the Old Testament, and aside from the life of Jesus the most thrilling in all the Bible if not in all the world of literature.**

**In spite of this, Joseph is greatly neglected, and there are very few sermons available on this significant portion of the Word of God. I think the problem is that it is difficult for pastors to deal with a man of God who is so thoroughly at home in a pagan culture. He so adapts and adjusts that he is one with this Egyptian culture. He marries into it; he labors as a leader in it, and not once is there a word of criticism of it. This seems totally inconsistent with so many other heroes of the Bible that Joseph is just ignored in preaching. He seems to be a contradiction to masses of other sermons.**

**How can this be reconciled? By recognizing that Joseph was not a reformer. He was not a prophet. He was a servant. The whole purpose of his life was to be at the right place at the right time to be a servant to save his people and many others from a great tragedy. He was not chosen to fight idolatry, or to set his people straight in their theology or morality. He was chosen to be a servant. The fact that one so prominent in God's Word is greatly neglected in preaching reveals that Christians have a hard time accepting the reality of God's revelation that God has far many more ideas of what success is than we do. We have too limited an idea of what a successful life is all about. From God's perspective there are successful lives all over the place because they are providing a service for others.**

**Joseph was not successful because he married into a special family and got power and fame. He was successful because he was willing to give his life to provide a service that people needed. He did not preach any great sermon, or knock over any of the many idols of Egypt. The list of what he never did was very long, but what he did do is what God chose him to do. He was a terrific servant. When he was a lowly slave he was a good servant, and when he was on top of the social and political pile he was still a good servant. Joseph was among the greatest in the kingdom of God because he was faithful as a servant.**

**Charles Swindoll sent this poem to his people in his news letter. If you are a super critical person, you can detect its weakness, but it also illustrates the kind of success we see in the life of Joseph.**

**How do you measure success?  
To laugh often and much;  
To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;  
To earn the appreciation of honest critics,  
And endure the betrayal of false friend;  
To appreciate beauty;  
To find the best in others;  
To leave the world a bit better,  
Whether by a healthy child, a garden patch,  
A redeemed social condition,  
Or a job well done;  
To know even one other life as breathed easier because you have lived-  
This is to have succeeded.**

**The point is, we need to forget the stereotypes of what success is, and recognize that God has made His people full of variety. We don't have to be anyone else but who we are to be successful. All we have to be is people with a spirit of the servant. We need to be ready and willing to do what God has for us to do in meeting the needs of others. This is the law of love that covers both the Old Testament and New Testament ideal. No one else in history was just like Joseph, but everyone of us can be the right person in the right place at the right time to provide the service necessary for the good of others. This is being, not only Joseph like, but it is being Christ like, for Jesus, like Joseph, did not fight any wars, destroy any idols, or write any best sellers. The essence of his life was service. He provided the bread of heaven to save the soul while Joseph provided the bread of earth to save the body. Jesus served the whole world by providing a sacrifice for sin that all might escape the just judgment of God and be reconciled to Him. The essence of His perfect life was service.**

## **II. HE HAD A TREMENDOUS SPIRIT.**

**This is seen in his enthusiasm to get the job done that needed to be done, and in his willingness to forgive his brothers for selling him into slavery. It is seen in the way his spirit is manifested by the names he gave his two sons. His first son was named Manasseh, which means to forget. Joseph said in verse 51, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." It is not always good to forget, and Joseph knew that too, for the last verse of chapter 40 says, "The chief cup bearer, however, did not remember Joseph, he forgot him." It is a pain to be forgotten, and even more so when being**

**forgotten costs you two more years in prison, which is what Joseph had to endure.**

**It can be a curse to forget and to be forgotten, but Joseph named his first son "Forget," because he had developed a spirit of forgetfulness about his troubled past. He got a raw deal from the start when he was sold into slavery by his own brothers. Then he was falsely accused and thrown into prison. It was also unfair and unjust. It was the type of things that leads to deep resentments. People who hang on to memories of injustice and unfair breaks do damage to their spirit, and they often end up as incurable pessimists. Many Christians cannot forget the dirty deals they had to endure from parents, bosses, or someone else that treated them like dirt. They become spiritually handicapped because they cannot forget.**

**There was none of this for Joseph. He was able to forget all the tragic past and get on with his life. This is what enabled him to forgive when he confronted his brothers. They felt he would seek revenge for sure, but Joseph had no thought of revenge. We often think that you have to forgive and forget, but often it is the other way around. If you can forget, you will find it easy to forgive. If the past no longer has you in its grip, you can enjoy the present with letting a negative past ruin it. That is what forgetting is. You do not lose you memory about what was, but you lose your bitter emotions about what was. You have worked your way through it and the past no longer controls your emotions. It took time and Joseph had to work at it, but he had the spirit to succeed, for he knew that unforgiving spirit was harmful to his relationship with God and man.**

**C. S. Lewis says that hell is a place where the virtue of forgetfulness does not exist. People remember every sin, slight, cruel word, and hurtful act. Hell is the burning of bitter resentment over every negative event and injustice ever experienced. Have you ever remembered an encounter with someone and the very memory of it gets to perspiring because you have such a vivid memory of how angry it made you? That was a little taste of hell Lewis would say.**

**In heaven it is just the opposite. There is total forgetfulness of all the sin, folly, and injustices of life. The Joseph spirit will reign and there will be no bitterness or resentment at all. This does not mean there will be no memory of this fallen world anymore than Joseph forgot how he was doublecrossed by his own brothers. It just means that there will no longer be any power in memory**

**to inflict pain. The more we can forget the evils of the past now, the more we taste now of the world to come. Joseph was tasting heaven, and that is why he called his first son Manasseh-forget.**

**The second son was named Ephraim for fruitful, for Joseph says in verse 52, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." His father had 12 sons and he only had 2, and so he is not talking about fruitfulness in the number of children, but fruitfulness in the blessings of his labor. His work had been fruitful, for he had set up a supply of food that was so enormous that he was prepared for a world famine. Here in the very land where he suffered his worst humiliation and injustice he was now a fruitful servant for preventing suffering for masses of people.**

**It would have been easy to blow the whole operation. Joseph was being neglected by God, and he was cut off from his land and people. Then he had a woman trying to seduce him, and would have been easy to say, "Why should I be loyal to God? I am going to have an affair and kiss my loyalty to God's law good-bye." By this one act of sin Joseph could have cut himself out of the plan of God. Many men of God have let sex rob them of the chance to be at the right place at the right time to achieve His purpose. Joseph had the chance to lose it all, and many have done just that, but he didn't do it. He remained faithful to God's will, and God made him the most fruitful man of his day.**

**If anyone had a good reason to yield to temptation it was Joseph. Life had been unfair to him. He was single and had no sexual outlet. He was a mere slave, and this affair could put him in good standing with the wife of Potifer. As a kept man he could have had a good life. By his refusal he risked rejection, prison, and more injustice. But he chose to obey God even when it seemed like the evidence would support disobedience as the best way to go. The life of Joseph teaches us the folly of disobeying God when you feel you have every right to do so because God does not seem to be caring about you. The life of Joseph teaches that it is always right to do what is right, even when it is more desirable and less costly to do what is wrong.**

**Because of this tremendous positive spirit of Joseph God made him one of the most fruitful men that has ever lived. Joseph teaches us that wisdom prepares for the future. Saving is a biblical economic principle that is a vital truth for individuals, families, and whole nations. Christians who spend everything they get when they get it live in denial. They reject the reality of a**

**fallen world and are not ready for tough times. It might seem strange that God devotes so much space in the Bible to tell this story of Joseph saving the world physically. But we need to face the reality that nobody can be saved spiritually and come into the kingdom of God by faith in Christ if they do not survive the physical crisis of life.**

**Do not minimize the role of physical salvation. Christians spend millions a year to help people survive famine and every other life threatening crisis you can imagine. Some of the people who do this are the Josephs in our world today. They are saving people physically that they might have the hope of being saved spiritually. It a labor for the Lord, and a labor we should all be glad to be a part of, for God loves to save people in every way that people can be saved. You could be the right person in the right place at the right time to provide a service to someone that will impact their life for the kingdom of God. We need to look for such opportunities, for they could very well be your most valuable labor for the Lord.**

## **22. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INFORMATION Based on Gen. 42:1-17**

**My grandchildren were telling me of the play that was put on in the opening of their Sunday School. It seems that a man heard of an umbrella that was guaranteed to keep you dry, but after he bought one he went out in the rain and got soaked. He brought it back and was informed that he had to hold it over his head to be of any use. He went off with it over his head and still got wet. Back again he came and was further informed that he had to open it up to achieve its purpose.**

**Without proper information the umbrella was not only useless, but it was a downright nuisance, for it gave false hope and led the man to getting wetter than he ever would have without the umbrella. Without it he would not have been so foolishly traipsing around in the rain. The solution to his problem was found in information. When you know how to use an umbrella, or any other tool, you can enjoy the benefit for which it was designed. Ignorance keeps us in the dark, and in bondage, but information can turn on the light and set us free to take intelligent action. That is exactly what we see happening in this family drama of Jacob and his 12 sons. It was by means of information that God worked out His plan for this special family.**

**We are not told how Jacob got the information that there was grain in Egypt. There are traditions that Joseph had the chaff of the grain thrown into the Nile so that people who lived down stream would know there was grain available. But this would be of no help to Jacob up in Canaan, which was 250 miles North. More than likely it was a caravan travelling through from Egypt that spread the word. By some means Jacob got this information and it was by means of that information that God's will was accomplished in saving the people of Israel. We tend to think that God guides us in life by some mystical method, and we forget that all through the Bible the primary way God providentially leads His people is by just plain old practical down to earth information.**

**The unusual is also real of course, but it is unusual. Joseph had to have the special gift of inspiration to get to the place of authority he had arrived at. He was given the ability to interpret dreams and this got him to the top. But once there we never read of Joseph interpreting another dream. It was a unique gift given for a specific purpose. Once achieved Joseph had to discover the will of God like everyone else, and that was by seeking information. He was the prime minister of Egypt by inspiration, but the only way he could know if his father Jacob was alive, and if his brother Benjamin was alive, is by an elaborate scheme to get this information through his brothers. God did not give him any power to discern such information without human help.**

**Just as Jacob had to learn that grain was available in Egypt, so Joseph had to learn his father and brother was alive. Most of what we know to be the will of God will come to all of us through the information we learn. We need to get God's will the old fashioned way-we learn it. Many will ask, where does God want me to go to school? You have to get information to know what school offers what you are aiming for, and what school can you afford. God is not going to lead you without information, for He guides by means of information. You have to know something about a school before you can even pray about it. It is not likely that it is God's will that you just pack up and go off to a school that you know nothing about. You have to have information, and by means of information God will give guidance. The same holds true for many others questions in which you are seeking guidance. You start with information.**

**The will of God does not just float down from the sky on heavenly parchment. It is in books, tapes, papers, experience, lectures, sermons, advice, and every other source of information you can imagine. It may come by word**

**of mouth as it did to Jacob. It may come by an elaborate dream as it did to Joseph. It may be a long and laborious process of research, but one way or another we need information to know and be in God's will.**

**The only way any of us are in the family of God is because of information. The Gospel is good news and by some means we heard this good news and received Jesus as our Savior. The experience of being saved come by means of wonderful information that gives us the choice to receive God's gift of eternal life in Jesus. Nobody is ever saved if they have not been informed that Jesus died for them and rose again to give them eternal life. Without this information nobody can put their faith in Jesus. The biggest issues of life revolve around information. Life is full of decisions and the first thing people look for to help in making wise decisions is information.**

**Even steps of faith are taken based on information. Some need more information than others in order to act in faith. Abraham was a great man of faith, for all he needed to know was that an act was God's will. He did not need to be informed of all the details. He just knew God had called him to leave his country and people and go to Canaan. He did not know just where, and so with great gaps in his information he still went out not knowing. He did not know how God was going to bless the world through his seed if he sacrificed Isaac. He knew God could raise him from the dead if that was His plan, but he did not know. All he knew was that it was God's will for him to surrender his best to God, and with that information he responded in faith.**

**Faith always has to have some information to act. It is presumption to have faith without information. To say that you will eat this wild mushroom in faith believing God will spare you is presumption. The odds are good that you will get sick or die. There is no basis for such blind faith in the Bible. If someone who is an authority on these things says it is a safe kind of mushroom, then you have a basis for acting in faith that they are giving you true information.**

**Thomas Edison was having pain in his legs. His doctor felt it was the result of a secondary infection from abscessed teeth. The only way to prove this was to take x-rays of his teeth. Edison did not want to have x-rays because in his early days he had experimented before they knew how to protect people, and his men had suffered damage to their hands, and had other injuries. So he told them just to pull out all his teeth. The doctor was**



**shocked and reluctant, but he did do it. Five of the teeth were abscessed, and were pouring infection into Edison system. After the extraction of his teeth the pain in his legs cleared up.**

**It was an act of faith for both the doctor and Edison, but it was an informed act of faith. They may not always be right, but informed guesses do give a basis for action. For some the information can be ever so slight, and they are ready to move in that direction. For others, like Jacob, who was a pessimist, the information had to be overwhelming to get him to move. In chapter 45 when the 10 sons came back from Egypt knowing Joseph is alive we read in verse 26 that Jacob was stunned and did not believe them. It goes on to say that they had to give him all the information about what was said, and show him all that Joseph had sent back with them. They had to overwhelm him with evidence before he believed. He finally came around and was convinced, but it took a lot of information.**

**What we need to see is that this whole selection of the Bible is information oriented rather than faith oriented. Faith is here, but it is weak. It mustard size faith which only acts when there is a great deal of information. This is how life usually is, and so we have a portrayal of typical life in these chapters where life revolves around the search for adequate information. We see from these chapters that people have always lives in a information society. The Pharaoh needed information on what his dream meant. Joseph was able to give him the information he needed, and based on that information the economy was altered. For the next 14 years Joseph was managing a project that saved the world and the people of God. Without the privileged information he was given there is no way to know the extent of the damage that would have been. It was a case of salvation by information.**

**Then Joseph had to learn if his father and brother were still alive and well. That search for this vital information becomes the basis for several chapters of Genesis. That is the purpose behind his act as a stranger to his brothers. He had to get this information before he could be himself. God's will was being accomplished, but each step was only taken when adequate information for that step was gained. Nobody was taking leaps of faith, but each character in this drama is taking only the steps that are based on information. It was the primary means of God's will be achieved then, and it is still the primary means for us to achieve God's will. The reason we study the Bible is because it is the key source of information on the mind of God. To know how God feels about**

**anything we need the information we can get only in the Bible. We cannot please God and achieve the highest goals of life without this information.**

**Noah would not have spent 120 years building an ark if he had not been informed by God that a flood was coming. None of the prophets would have had the audacity to proclaim what they did if they had not been first informed as to what God was going to do in the future. All that Jesus did for our salvation He did with the knowledge that it would lead to eternal life for those who trust Him. He was not just taking a leap of faith. He was fully informed of the consequences of the incarnation and crucifixion before He came into the world.**

**These closing chapters of Genesis are part of the whole salvation plan for the world, and step by step the plan unfolded by each person acting on their information. This is how God works in history. We sometimes get the mistaken idea that God works through miracles to get His will done in history, but the fact is that miracles are rare. The primary tool by which God works is information.**

**Christopher Columbus did not want to sail off into the unknown on a whim. He had reason to believe that the world was round and that he could sail West and find the lands to the East. He was a map maker and had the information of the ancients at his disposal. Eratosthenes was the Greek geographer 2000 years before him. He had calculated the circumference of the earth to within 10 per cent of its actual dimensions. He knew about the Dutch expedition that had discovered the islands of Labrador 8 years before. He knew about the craved drift wood that had washed up on shore in the Azores.**

**Columbus was no crackpot dreamer. He was an informed geographer. His dream was based on solid information that said his dream could come true if he acted on it. He also believed strongly that God was calling him to take the light of Christ to the ends of the world. Christopher means Christ-bearer. God did not call a candle maker or saddle maker, or anyone of hundreds of other professions. He called a map maker, for he had information about the very subject that was at issue. Only a man with his information could have had the faith to stick it out when all the rest of the crew was ready to throw in the towel and abandon the effort.**

**The dream of Columbus was threatened by storms, mutiny, and hardships**

**galore. The misinformed could not take the pressure, and his partners, the Pinzon brothers, forced him into an agreement to turn back if land was not sighted in 3 more days. On the 12th they were to end the mission and head home. On the 11th God gave them all what they needed to press on. Those on board the Pinta found a piece of wood obvious craved by a man. On the Nina they found a small twig with roses on it. This evidence was the information they all needed for faith. The whole atmosphere was changed, and now everyone had the faith of Columbus.**

**They were so excited that no one wanted to take in the sails for the night. They just went plugging into the darkness knowing that land had to be near. On that 12th day land was found, and they were all laughing, dancing and rejoicing. Columbus was the first to set foot on the dry land. He carried a huge white banner with a green cross. He christened the island San Salvador-Holy Savior. All his men knelt with tears in their eyes and he prayed, "O Lord, almighty and everlasting God, by thy holy Word thou hast created the heaven and the earth, and the sea; blessed be thy name, and praise be thy majesty, which hath deigned to use us, thy humble servants, that thy holy name may be proclaimed in this 2nd part of the earth."**

**I share this fascinating history because of the parallel with our text. God's goal was to get the whole family of Jacob down to Egypt where they could survive the famine and become a great nation. Joseph was like Columbus. He was informed, and he knew the plan of God and how God was guiding in his life to make this happen. Jacob, on the other hand, was like the skeptical sailors who needed to be pushed and pulled, and finally overwhelmed with evidence to get him to pack up and head for Egypt. Had God not given information just in time the voyage of Columbus would have been aborted, and all would have been lost. If God had not given Jacob the information he needed, the plan to get them to Egypt would have failed.**

**God works in history and in our lives by means of information. What you know is the key to the way you go. The other side of this is, when you don't know you tend to make mistakes. Ignorance is not bliss, but it is misery, and we see it so clearly in the life of Jacob and Joseph. Jacob was a persistent pessimist always feeling like life was against him. It was because he was uninformed of the facts. Joseph was alive, but because Jacob did not know that he spent years in grief at his loss. Most of the suffering of his life was due to his ignorance of the facts.**

**Joseph went through much emotional turmoil also because of what he did not know. If he knew his father and brother were alive, he could have forgiven all the play acting and the battle hold back the tears. He had to pay a high price to get the information he needed to relax and enjoy the pleasure of being reunited with his brothers. Ignorance reverses the Midas touch so that all we touch in ignorance, no matter how wonderful and golden, turns to clay and we loose the joy of possessing the best. Jacob and Joseph had this in common: When they did not know all was going perfect just as God had planned, they had to suffer until they got that information. Only when they were fully informed did they have the joy and peace of being in God's perfect will.**

**When we worry and are full of anxiety, and we feel no peace, what is the problem? It is the problem of lack of information. We don't know what God is doing, and we don't know what men are doing. In our ignorance we cannot help but feel anxious. The solution that brought all of God's people in Genesis to peace and joy is the same solution that we need today. The solution that brought Columbus and all his crew out of the pit to a place of rejoicing is the same solution we need today. The prescription for perplexity is information. The answer for anxiety is information. The solution for sadness is information. The panacea for pessimism is information.**

**Look at the words of Jacob to his 10 oldest sons: "Why do you just keep looking at each other? Go down to Egypt and buy food so we don't all die of starvation." Commentators are mystified by these words. Why would the 10 be staring at each other instead of doing something more practical to save the family from starvation? Staring has never been known to cure starvation. And yet these guys in a crisis are walking around, standing around, and setting around just looking at one another. Jacob is getting frustrated with them. He says in essence: "Knock off this nonsense, and get going to buy food in Egypt."**

**The implication is that these brothers are procrastinating and are looking at each other because they share a common secret they have never revealed in 20 years. Not one of these 10 brothers let the cat out of the bag and became a stool pigeon telling their father of their awful crime of selling Joseph into slavery. Now after 20 years they are being forced to go to Egypt by circumstances beyond their control. They never dreamed it would ever be necessary to go there, and so they knew they would never have to confront**

**Joseph again. But now they face that possibility and their sin is coming back to them. They are nervous about going to Egypt, and they are somewhat paralyzed by fear.**

**Jacob finally gets disgusted with their non-action and scolds them for their delaying moves. Egypt was sort of like that umbrella we talked about. It was there, and it was the answer to a problem, but it didn't solve anything until you use it. God best provisions for our needs do not help if we do not use them. The food is there but you have to go get it. The education is there, but you have to go get it. The job is there, but you have to go get it. The problem is not that God has not made provision for our needs. The problem is, like the Jacob boys, we set and stare at each other and don't go get it.**

**Information must be followed by action or provisions will not meet our needs. They could have died with the best information on the planet at their fingertips if Jacob had not gotten them to move in spite of their fears. Hearing the Gospel is a vital step to salvation, but by itself it saves no one. You have to act on what you hear. If you do not receive Christ, the information that he saves only makes you more guilty, for now you sin in the light and not in the dark as before. If these boys had not gone down to Egypt they would have starved, and justly so. If you do not respond to saving information you will not be saved. All of their fears were based on inadequate information. Had they been fully informed they could have gone gladly. Where there is complete information there is peace and joy. This whole account illustrates clearly the importance of information.**

**God does not give all His children the same information. Joseph knew there were 7 years of famine coming. This was privileged information. Jacob and his boys did not know this and so made no provision for it. God did not give them this advanced information. It led to a serious problem for them, but God used their problem to get them to Egypt, and back into fellowship with Joseph. God uses even ignorance to accomplish His purposes. When we are ignorant we need to seek for information that God has given to others. No one can have all the information they need for every need. We need to depend upon what God has given to others.**

**There are endless variations on this theme of information. Sometimes you get information you don't want to hear. Like the pastor who thought it would be cute to have a child pray in church. He asked little Bonnie to come and**

pray. She closed her brief prayer with, "Be with our pastor and help him to preach a better sermon next Sunday." The world is full of information that may not be good news.

The world is also full of misunderstood information. Five year old Billy who had gone to Sunday School with a quarter for the offering announced when he came home that he had a lot of money. Sure enough when he dug in his pocket he pulled out several quarters, dimes and nickels. His father demanded to know where that money came from. He said, "I got it in Sunday School. The teacher said let's take the offering, and so I did."

Information has to be interpreted rightly for it to be an asset in knowing the will of God. This can often be a major task for adults as well as children. But the fact remains, in spite of the pitfalls, the only road to fulfilling God's will for our lives is the road where we are constantly aware of the importance of information. What does this mean practically? It means that the wise Christian is a reader, a listener, and a viewer. A Christian is to be a student of all of life, and ever open to receive from any source information that helps them make wise choices pleasing to Christ.

### **23. EMOTIONS UNDER CONTROL based on Gen. 42:18-38**

Three Frenchmen have come to the rescue of fathers who have no pleasure in trying to discover if their baby needs a diaper change. They have invented a little electronic device that fits right into the infant's diaper. As soon as there is any contact with moisture it breaks out with a bubbly rendition of When The Saints Go Marching In. Shall We Gather At The River might have been a more appropriate choice, but whatever the song, you have an immediate warning of wetness.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if men could come up with a device that would warn us when we are all wet in our thinking? When we are seeing life from a false perspective and are down on life, wouldn't it be great if a gizmo implanted in us began to play There Shall Be Showers Of Blessing, and we could thereby be warned that we are all wet and not thinking with the mind of Christ? The song would jolt us into an awareness that we need a change in our perspective to get back on the dry ground and not be drowning in the sea of our self-induced pessimism.

**The interesting thing about studying the Bible account of Jacob and Joseph is that the world has changed so much from their day to ours, but human nature has not changed at all. The emotions we see in their lives are just the same as what we experience in our lives today. Everything in the world can change, but emotions stay the same. You have love and hate, and fear and faith. You have the pain of the famine; the pleasure of the feast; the distress and the delight; the regret and the rejoicing, and the guilt and the glory. They are all here in this story, and they bear witness to the truth that God's people experience all emotions.**

**I know it is a popular myth that the Christian is supposed to experience only the good ones of love, joy, and peace, but unfortunately the Word of God will not support this myth. God's people in the Bible felt every feeling there is to be felt. Look at Reuben in verse 37. He is the first born, and he should be old enough to know better, but he tries to change his stubborn father by extreme emotionalism. He says to Jacob, "You may kill both of my sons if I do not bring Benjamin back." This is really sick, and we see how dangerous intense emotions can be for children. Fortunately, Jacob was not so loony he would agree to such a thing. He could get no pleasure in killing two of his grandsons. He was miserable because of the loss of his sons, and losing more was certainly not a welcome solution to his grief.**

**What we have here is a case of child abuse because of excessive emotion. I don't know if Reuben's two boys were standing there to hear this or not, but the fact that he would say such a thing reveals the verbal abuse that so many children suffer in our world. Uncontrolled emotions are the curse on children. Parents can be so obsessed with what they think a child should be that they become excessively emotional in the relationship. Joseph Heller in *Something Happened* tells of angry father who can't stand the way his daughter is and he says, "I have been so enraged with her that I have wanted to seize her firmly by the shoulders, my darling little girl, and shake her and pummel her on the face and shoulders with the sides of both my fists and scream, be happy you selfish little brat! Can't you see our lives depend on it?" That is emotionalism.**

**Emotionalism was a major problem in the family God chose to be His special people, and they did a lot of damage because of it. Jacob, of course, was a very emotional person, and he gave his boys a bad example of control. We see him in this chapter going all to pieces over his interpretation of events,**

**and it was a totally false view that seemed so valid to him. In verse 36 he says that everything was against him, and he is in a depressed and panic mood. The problem with the emotional family is that they tend to shoot first and ask questions later. Their approach to life is to go by feelings and not reason. Almost all of the sin and folly of God's chosen people was due to letting their emotions be their guide.**

**Back in Gen. 34 when these brothers heard that their sister Dinah had been raped they became far more evil than the rapist. They devised a plot to kill all of the men in the city where the rapist lived. They carried out that plan with sadistic violence. They not only killed a lot of innocent people, they ruined their own future and the future of their descendents. Commentators all agree that the evidence supports the view that the rape was what we call a date rape, and the two were mutually guilty, but ready to work out a marriage to save face. The emotions of the two hot heads, Simeon and Levi, would not let reason work out the problem. They took control of the situation and turned it into one of the great tragedies of the Old Testament. On his death bed Jacob had to curse them for their fierce anger and deny them the blessing he gave his other sons.**

**What we see in the Bible is what we see in the world today. We see excessive emotionalism leading to violence and dangerous consequences for all involved. One of the best ways to see the folly of violence due to emotionalism is to see what it has done to God's people in the Bible and in history. When emotions are your guide you can count on going astray. Why do men and women of God make such great mistakes and do damage to themselves and the image of God? It is almost always because they go by their emotions. David was not the only one to fall by his lust. It is the best known example and it lead to a host of suffering for a lot of people, but others have done the same.**

**Reuben was led by his emotions and he took one of his father's concubines, and this lead to his loss of the rights of the first born. Jacob's boys blew it so often because of their emotions. The reason they are in the mess they are in as we see in our text is because they could not handle their father's emotions toward Joseph. They became all emotional with envy and jealousy, and so they sold their brother into slavery. That is just how cruel people can become when they are under the control of their emotions. The fact that God used their folly for good does not in any way relieve them of their sin and guilt for this abuse.**



**The message of the Bible and history is this: If you are an emotional person, you have a great responsibility to learn self-control, for the emotional Christian is more likely to make major mistakes and lose their balance. But being emotional is not bad, for Joseph is one of the most emotional people of the Bible. He controlled his emotions, however, and so was also one of the most mistake free people of the Bible. If Joseph would have let his emotions run his life he would have cursed his brothers and vowed his revenge. He finally got the power to make their lives miserable, and he could have thrown them in prison and lost the key, but Joseph was not a slave to his emotions. He refused to let them lead his life. He chose to do what was God's will and what made love triumph over hate. The result is that he is a hero and a great example of how even emotional people can be in control of their emotions.**

**Joseph faced the test of David and Reuben and a host of others. He had the perfect opportunity to have an affair with Potifer's wife. She was the most willing partner we have any record of in the Bible. Many godly people would have fallen in that same context because they would have let their emotions lead them. Joseph didn't do that, but he fled the scene and paid a heavy price, but he refused to be a slave to his emotions.**

**When a man can stand before the giants of lust and revenge and defeat them he had gained a greater victory than David did over Goliath. John Powell says what is true of all ages when he writes, "Your emotions and how you deal with them will probably make you or break you in the adventure of life." This is one of the major lessons of the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph grew up in the emotion filled environment. He was conditioned by the emotions that ran rampant through a household with 4 mothers and 12 kids. He could never say with Kurt Vonnegut in Slaughterhouse Five, "How nice to feel nothing, and still get full credit for being alive." The emotionless person is just as dangerous as the excessively emotional person, for they can kill and injure others without feelings of guilt and shame. The goal is not to kill emotions, but to keep them under control so that they are helpful in motivating us to do the will of God.**

**Emotional people who do not control their emotions are short range thinkers. They do not plan far ahead, but go by the feelings of the moment. God could not have used the other brothers to save the family because they were like this, they act according to how they feel and never give thought to the long range consequences. God's plan to get a Hebrew to the top level in**

**Egypt was a long range plan that took Joseph through the pit of rejection and the prison of endurance before he ended in the palace of power. At any one stage of this progressive journey Joseph could have blown it had he let his emotions be in control. But he refused to forsake the dream and held on to a long range hope, and God used him to change history. Only a man with emotions under control could have lasted long enough to taste the victory God had in store. What did God have planned for Reuben, Simeon, and Levi? We will never know, for they let their emotions run their lives. They did violence that destroyed their future. There was still a part of the people of God, and blest in many ways, but they missed God's best because they could not control their emotions.**

**A doctor I was reading told of meeting a man while vacationing in Florida. He had found this island in the gulf of Mexico and was so excited. "This is paradise!" he exclaimed, and went on to tell of how he was going to buy some land and build, and end his days there in bliss. Two years later he met this island enthusiast in the city and learned that he had already put his house on the market. He said, "I couldn't stand it. The loneliness would have killed me had I tried to stick it out." Emotional people tend to make a lot of difficult decisions they have to reverse because they make moves that don't last very long. They go by their feelings and their feelings are constantly changing.**

**Show me a person who gets married every few years and I'll show you a slave to emotions. Show me a person who is constantly changing on a regular basis and I will show you an emotion controlled person. It is hard to be stable when emotions are in control because they are so changeable. Long range commitment to anything or anyone takes the ability to ride out the lows and highs of emotion. The emotion controlled person has no patience and they bail out. This is why Joseph is feeding the world and his brothers are looking for food. They are emotion controlled, but he is in control of his emotions.**

**The reason the story of Joseph is one of heroism and salvation and not one of murder, adultery and mayhem is because he could see where his emotions were heading and choose to take over and change the speed or the direction. He was in charge of his emotions. He made them work for him, and he fired them when they did not move him toward his God given dream. People who have long range goals that they know are God's will for them will be far less likely to be a slave of emotion than those who just live for the moment and let life happen to them. Commitment to goals will prevent you from being pulled**

**off the path to taste forbidden fruit. But if you are not going anywhere you feel more free to wander and let your emotions lead you off the path.**

**Joseph had a goal, and like Jesus he set his face steadfastly to march toward that goal and not let his emotions lead him astray. His brothers lived for the moment, and they did what they felt like doing depending on the circumstances. Their logic was, "If it feels good do it." Joseph's logic was, "How will responding to my emotions now effect my reaching my long range goal? I feel like doing this, but I don't have to act on my feelings when I can see they will only hinder the fulfillment of my dream." The thing we need to see is that doing the right and wise thing does not necessarily make you feel better. Doing the wrong thing often makes you feel better at the moment. The hot head brothers no doubt felt relieved after killing innocent people, and after selling their brother that they hated. Reuben, no doubt, felt better after relieving his sexual tension with his father's concubine. If you are going to go by feelings as the measure of value, then folly often feels better, and that is why folly is so common.**

**Joseph felt terrible when he did what was right. He fled from the bed of adultery and was falsely accused and sent to prison. It had to be a terribly depressing time. All through his act as a stranger to his brothers he was in deep pain as he held back his tears. He is often feeling miserable in his long journey to his dream. He would have felt better had he just exploded and gotten revenge. Doing the right thing did not produce the good feelings for a long time. If feelings are the final measure, then by all means we should do the stupid thing, for that really brings immediate relief and good feelings. To do the right thing could take time and involve the burden of not feeling good at all. People who want to feel good all the time usually do stupid things for the sake of their feelings.**

**If you worship the god of the age, and feeling is your idol, then whatever the cost to you, your family, and your environment, you pay the price to give feelings first place. If it means violence and prison, so what? You must be loyal to your idol and let feelings reign however great a tyrant they are. People often wonder why the Old Testament is so full of violence, and one of the main reasons is to reveal to all generations just how awful life can be when emotions are gods to be followed whatever the cost. Just think of all the stupid things you would have done if feelings were your final authority.**

**What we need to see is that every emotion you have is legitimate. If you have lust, that is normal. If you have hate, that is normal. If you feel jealousy and envy, that is normal. If you feel depressed or angry at times, join the club. You can't feel any emotion that is not legitimate. They are all part of the makeup of being human. The point is, they are all valid tools in a complete tool box. They are all appropriate for the right situation. That is why they exist, for they are all good for something. But everyone of them that is not used properly is dangerous and damaging. If you take a hammer to pound in a light bulb, the problem is not the hammer, but the one who is using it for the wrong purpose.**

**The automobile is a great tool of transportation, but the most dangerous part of it is the nut behind the wheel. If that person begins to use this tool as a means of expressing emotions of aggression or competition, it becomes a dangerous weapon. Every tool used properly under the control of reason is a blessing. Every tool used improperly will be a burden and a curse. Joseph had every emotion that his brothers had, but he was a hero and they are often fools. What is the difference between a hero and a fool? The answer is in the control of their emotions. The fool is in the control of his emotions, but the hero is one in control of his emotions.**

**Charles Spurgeon in his sermons on men of the Old Testament makes a major point when he comes to Joseph. He points out that being in God's will does not shield a person from any of the emotions of life. God was with Joseph all the way, but did not protect him from the feelings of discouragement, rejection, and fear. God's hand on his life did not screen out the temptation to lust and revenge. It did not help him escape the pain of slander and injustice. Joseph had to live through the alphabet of both negative and positive emotions. He had to go through the agony of defeat to reach the throne of victory. You don't escape emotions and all the risks they present just because you are a child of God in the will of God. The emotions are the testing ground that reveal your loyalty to God.**

**The Bible is full of idolatry and all the feelings that go along with it, because that is the great battle of every generation and individual. Do I follow my feelings as the leader of my life, or do I follow Christ and His revealed Word? My emotions are either my guide and god, or they are surrendered to Christ as tools to be used, or not used, depending on their appropriateness to achieve His goals. All tools are good, and none is bad. All emotions are okay,**

**and none is evil in itself. It is in the use that a tool or emotion becomes good or evil. There is no emotion that cannot be an asset if it is used properly, but all of them can lead you astray if they are used wrongly. Joseph is our example, for he was a very emotional man, but he kept them under control, and he used them to get him to the goal that God had for him. He is a great hero because he was a man who had his emotions under control.**

#### **24. INTERPRETING LIFE'S EVENTS Based on Gen. 42:18-28**

**Myron Maddsen, an outstanding author, speaker, and Christian leader in New Orleans, tells of his experience of interpreting his Bible story book as a young boy. He noted that all the characters had long flowing garments down to their feet, and angels had similar garb. So he concluded that only women were chosen by God, for he saw all of them wearing dresses. One day he got up the nerve to ask his mother why there aren't any men in heaven? His mother laughed heartily and asked where he got the idea that there was not men there. He told her that his Bible story book had only pictures of women and children. She explained to him that the men in the pictures were not wearing dresses, but robes. This was the greatest revelation of his life up to that point, for he was fearful that his only hope of getting to heaven was to die young or have a sex change.**

**He thought he was just dealing with the facts right before his face, but he was really dealing with his interpretation of what he saw, and that was far different from the reality of what was being pictured. There is more to life than what we see. A Mr. Goff was riding on a train and he saw a man off on the side of the road fixing a flat in the rain. He said to himself, "Poor fellow," and he turned to the man next to him and said, "I wonder when they are going to make a tire that won't go flat?" The man responded, "I hope never. I sell tires, and the trouble is they make them so good now I can hardly make a living."**

**Mr. Goff was suddenly made to realize that there is more than one perspective on what seems obviously bad. I remember when I was made to see this. I use to play tennis with a vet who went to my church in South Dakota. Most of members were farmers, and so I was conscious of how important healthy animals were to them. But the vet informed me that if animals never got sick he would have no work and no income. He was a tither also, and so I**

wondered what I should do as a pastor to encourage him. Should I pray that the other member's animals get sick so he could increase his giving? I didn't do that, but it made me realize that a sick cow which was a burden to one member was a blessing to another member. I was able to see that the same event could be seen as both good and bad because there was more than one perspective.

Joseph had this ability to see life from more than one perspective. His father Jacob, however, tended to see only his own self-centered perspective, and that is why he is groaning that everything is against him. The ten brothers are feeling the same, and they concluded that God was punishing them even when He was really blessing them. If Joseph would have seen only what was visible, imagine how depressing it would be. His brothers rejected him, and they sold him into slavery. His master had him thrown in prison for a false charge. Not everything was going his way at all. If facts are all you go by, Joseph is the one who should be saying that everything is against him. But we never hear that from Joseph, for he is able to see there more to life than what meets the eye.

Faith says there is another perspective on these events. God sees them on a deeper level, and if I could see them as God sees them I would interpret them different. But since I cannot see what God sees I will just trust that what God sees as better than what I see, and I will move along believing He will work it out for my good. Faith is an assumption that negative events can be interpreted to be positive if seen from the right perspective. If you can wait for that perspective to appear, you will see what God sees, and so see good where you thought there was only the bad.

Joseph was just such a man of faith, but Jacob had an eye for the facts only. Just give me the facts was his theme. "Joseph is dead, Simeon is in jail in Egypt, and now you want to rip Benjamin from my protective care. It is obvious from the evidence that God has reneged on his promise to bless me and the whole world through me. I am cursed and not blest." This was the way he was interpreting the events of his life. He never was asking whether it could be the way God was working to accomplish his promise. You have heard the old saying, "I cried because I had no shoes till I saw a man who had no feet." In other words, "I saw life only from a self-centered perspective and felt cursed. But when I saw life from the perspective of those who would gladly trade places with me I felt blest." So whether a man with no shoes is

**cursed or blest all depends on the perspective.**

**Is Jacob one of the most blest, or one of the most miserable of men? It all depends on how you see it. If you go by his point of view, he is a poor God-forsaken wretch watching his life disintegrate. But if you go by God's point of view, which we have recorded for us, he was heading for life in the best land where he would live in luxury, and have all of his family around him, and grow to be an old man whose family would bless the whole world. Which point of view was true? Both of them were, for God's providence led to His plan being fulfilled to the letter just as Joseph dreamed. But the negative view that made Jacob miserable was also true, because he interpreted life that way, and had to suffer needless misery of heart and mind because he refused to believe God could have a different and better view of what was going on.**

**Jacob saw his life falling apart when in reality God was bringing it all together. The sons saw God punishing them, when in reality God was blessing them more than they had ever been blest. They would argue that they were just looking at the facts, but that is not so. They were interpreting the facts, and they were interpreting them to mean what was bad when they could have interpreted them to be good had they had the faith. We do not realize it, but we are all interpreters of life. Everyday we say that something is good or bad, and seldom do we question our interpretation. We feel almost infallible about our interpretation of life's events.**

**Joseph's brothers thought they were experts at interpreting events. They said their father's love for our younger brother is bad. It means he loves us less and therefore we should hate him. He is robbing us of our fair share of love, and so we have a right to rid ourselves of this robber. Masses of people are giving this same false interpretation to the events in their lives, and they are making themselves miserable. It is just not true that if you are loved less than someone else that you are of less value. Jacob favored Joseph, but he loved all of his boys and cared about them. He wanted the best for each of them. His love for Joseph was not a rejection of them.**

**You cannot control how other people feel, but you can control how you interpret what they feel. You do not have to interpret the fact that your father loves your brother more than you to mean that he will not give you the love and support you need. I know parents who bend over backward to help an encourage children they do not favor. I see it in myself. I have poured out my**

**energy to encourage and support people who are not my favored church members. They may even be fringe people who contribute nothing to the church, but if they have need, they get more time and energy than people who are pillars of the church.**

**It is a paradox, but the fact is, people who are loved less can often be loved the most if that is their need. There is no hint that Jacob failed to meet the needs of any of his sons. Their hate for Joseph was based on their interpretation of what was, and not on what actually was. They never bothered to consider that the dream of Joseph, which had all of them bowing to him, could represent his being so blessed and exalted because they needed a loved one in high places for the salvation of them and their families. That was the proper interpretation of the dream, but they interpret it as delusions of grandeur by a bratty little brother and they hated him for it. They hated what was God's plan for their own salvation because they saw their interpretation as the only valid one.**

**This whole story of Joseph and his family is shouting at us all-question your perspectives. Ask yourself if you are interpreting life's events from the point of view of a pessimist, or are you interpreting them in the light of the revelation that God works in all things for good with those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose. Jacob and his sons suffered a lot of misery in life because they did not have the faith to interpret life's events in the way Joseph did.**

**Could you come out to your car in the morning and see a flat tire when you are running 10 minutes late already, and then give that event a positive interpretation? Many would say, "I must be a bad person for God to be punishing me like this. I haven't read my Bible for weeks, and now this is God's way of getting even." Jacob and the boys would vote for that interpretation. But Joseph would vote for another view. He would go for the interpretation that says, "I have not had a flat like this for many years. Thank God this happens so seldom, and the 20 minutes I lose this morning may just be a life saver, for now I will not be at that dangerous intersection at 7:30 like usual, and this could be God's way of providentially protecting me from an awful accident. Praise God for ways He guides that I can't see."**

**It is not the event, but the interpretation you put on the event that makes it good or bad. These 10 brothers found their money in their bags of grain and**



**they had to give this event an interpretation. They chose to see it as a bad omen, and they made it a burden. I would love to get home from the grocery store and find all my money in the bag. I think such a gesture would pretty much win me over as a steady customer even if it was the most expensive store in town. I would probably shop more than ever and be delighted to fill up bags everyday. I just know that I would interpret free groceries as a blessing. But not these guys. We know that this was Joseph being a blessing to his family, but people who get good at it can turn every blessing into a burden.**

**You know you are dealing with pros when they can turn a total refund of their grocery expenses into a fear that God is out to get them. You have to be really good at seeing the bad in order to see this. The amateur pessimist would have his guard down and would say, "Wow guys! Look at this! We got all our money back, and so we have all these supplies for nothing." He would be laughing and dancing for joy before his pessimism kicked in. But the pro is ready for these sort of surprises. He has already programmed his mind to recognize that what seems good never really is. It is just a trick to give you false hope.**

**You don't get a blessing past the defenses of a pro just by giving their money back. They have been trained by the best, which was their father Jacob. If everything is against you, it makes interpreting life a whole lot simpler. You have already prejudged that everything is bad, even when it seems good. You cannot fail to be a consistent pessimist just because of a conspicuous blessing. This kind of mind set has done a lot of damage in the history of God's people. When the 12 spies went into the promise land they all saw the same facts. But ten of them interpreted them in a negative way. They came back reporting that it would be a mistake to try and take that land. It would be like grasshoppers trying to fight giants. The minority view of Joshua and Caleb was one of optimism, and God was pleased with that. But the pessimist were made to wander for 40 years in the wilderness until they were all dead.**

**It was not the facts but the interpretation of them that made all the difference in the world. God's blessings are often like Joseph. They are disguised and dressed in the garb of a stranger. They look like bad news, but they are really good news. Don't be so quick to jump to the conclusion that what seems bad is really bad. It could turn out to be a blessing.**

**Janet had gotten fired from a good job at a time when jobs were hard to find. She was very frustrated and began to doubt that God cared for her. She kept telling her friend Cheryl that life is awful and everything is against me. Then she met Bill, and some months later they flew to California to meet his parents. When she called her mother and told her she was getting married she said she was so glad she lost her job, for her whole life was changed for the better. She could have saved herself a lot of grief had she been able to interpret the negative experience the way Joseph did, rather than the way his brothers did. Walking by faith means recognizing there is more than one perspective, and if you interpreting events from a negative perspective, you need to doubt your interpretation and consider a more positive possibility.**

**The preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, from their perspective it is sheer folly to associated with a man who was killed by capital punishment. It is a curse to hung on a tree. Just look at the Bible facts themselves and you will see that the cross is a stumbling block. Such is the interpretation of the blind. But for those who see by faith the cross is the measure of the so in God so loved the world. The cross is the picture of how much we are loved even as sinners, for it was while we were sinners that Christ died for us. Paul gloried in the cross, for that was the means by which God reconciled the world to Himself and made it possible for all to come into His family and be forever blest.**

**Crucifixion was awful, and if you are going to go by what you see, the cross was a bad event. But if you see it from God's perspective, the cross is transformed from the gory to the glory; from the bad to the best, for faith does not just look at the facts, but at the interpretation of the facts. If you interpret the cross from God's perspective it becomes the source of our salvation, for there Christ paid the price to become the door of eternal life for all who trust in Him. As we meet around the Lord's table let its symbols remind you of Jesus and of the reality behind what looks like such a negative event. If you interpret it as God intends for you to interpret it it becomes a glorious event which leads to a glorious forever for those who put their trust in the Christ of the cross.**

**Life revolves around eating, for where there is no eating there is no life. Our vacation made us all the more aware of this obvious truth, for everyday we had to make decisions about where we would eat. In Fort Lauderdale where we stayed there is a place to eat every few feet, and along the ocean there is one expensive place after another where people can eat while watching the ocean.**

**It is beyond my ability to conceive the massive amounts of food that are eaten daily in the huge hotels that line the beaches. Conrad Hilton of Hilton hotel fame tells of the stock of food needed each day in the famous Stevens Hotel in Chicago many years ago. He writes in his autobiography Be My Guest, "To feed the population of the Stevens on an average good day takes 1000 pounds of butter, 1000 dozens eggs, the meat of ten steers, and 1000 pounds of pork. We drink 700 gallons of coffee and possess a mechanical dishwasher that would clean the debris at a top speed of 193,000 pieces of silver and china per hour."**

**I share this just to give you an impression of the massive amounts of food that people eat in hotels. We were light eaters, for as soon as it got light we started to eat. Not really! But the fact is, while on vacation you tend to eat more than you do in your routine pattern of life. Everywhere you go that is special and fun there is an abundance of food that is appealing and expensive, and people are eating it like pigs at the trough. The point of all this is that eating is one of life's greatest pleasures, and it is the one most frequently enjoyed. It plays a major role in God's plan for man.**

**These chapters of Genesis dealing with Jacob and Joseph and his brothers all revolve around food and eating. Famine had gripped the world and Joseph has become the savior of the world by his plan to store food during the good years. The economy of the world and the plan of God for His people all revolved around food. Our text here in Gen. 43 is all about food and eating, and this motivated me to call to your attention just how important this subject is in the Word of God.**

**Eating is really for the birds. They need to eat at least half of their own weight each day to survive. Young birds need even more. This means your average size robin needs 14 feet of worms a day. When Lavonne and I lived in the country we learned by observation that cows are pretty much just eating machines. We would go into town in the morning and cows would all be in the**

fields eating, and 8 to 10 hours later we would return and there they were still eating. They lived to eat and their destiny is to be eaten.

Eating, of course, is the basis for all of life. Without food all life would cease, and so though we do not eat all day, nor do we eat half our weight each day, it is still a vital part of our existence. The interesting thing about this most common behavior of life is how often it is related to the plan of God. Half of the 5th chapter of Mark is about the miracle of raising up the daughter of Jairus. The tension was enormous. This synagogue ruler's house was full of people crying and wailing. Jesus had to clear them all out, and then He took the mother and father with Peter, James and John into the room of the 12 year old girl. Jesus astonished them by saying to her, "Little girl get up!" She stood up alive, and the story ends with Jesus saying these words, "Give her something to eat."

Jesus had just performed one of His greatest miracles. He raised a person from the dead. Only a hand full of people in all of history have had this unique experience. But the first thing Jesus says in this glorious context of supernatural power is, give her something to eat. Miracles can bring you back from the dead, but they don't feed you. Even the miracles of feeding 5000 was not a feeding by miracle. It was a providing of the food to feed the 5000. They still had to put it in their mouth, chew, and swallow, or the miracle would have been in vain. The point is, Jesus linked the supernatural and natural together as vital partners in life.

Anybody who tries to be so spiritual that they reject the natural is just as foolish as those who so depend on the natural that they reject the supernatural. Both are of God, and Jesus honored both and used both, and so must we to be wise and Christ like. Miracles don't feed the body and keep it in operation in a healthy manner, and eating right cannot raise the dead. Neither one takes the place of the other. To push such a basic activity like eating off into a category we call natural or secular, and pretend it has no bearing on the spiritual life and God's plan for history is to be blind to the revelation God has given us in His Word. Food was the key to the salvation of God's people, and all of the spiritual results, which includes the coming of the Bread of Life.

Joseph expressed his spiritual affection toward Benjamin by giving him 5 times as much food as the rest of the brothers. This was excessive obviously, for no one can eat 5 times more than all you can eat. It was a feast, but

**Benjamin was honored with abundance beyond anyone's ability to eat. Keep in mind that these men had been rationing food, for they were running low, and had not been doing a lot of feasting for the last two years. This was a feast they would never forget. We are not told about the entertainment they likely enjoyed, but only about the lavish spread.**

**Dorothy Berliner, the celebrated pianist, arranged a recital by her youngest students. At its conclusion, a repast of ice cream and home-made layer cake and brownies was served. One young musician had brought her little brother as a guest. When they were leaving, Miss Berliner asked, "Well, Fenimore, did you enjoy the recital?" "You bet," answered Fenimore. "That is, all but the music." The food was his highlight, and so it seems is the case here with Joseph and his brothers who are eating under the same roof for the first time in 2 decades.**

**They are eating things they likely have never eaten before, for Egypt was the trading center now with all the world, and they had foods from all over the world. We see this in verse 11 where Jacob says to his sons to take gifts. They were to take the best products of the land to Egypt, and it lists these foods: Honey, spices, pistachio nuts and almonds. People from each nation would be doing this, and so there would be foods from everywhere. It had to be one of the most varied and extravagant meals every experienced in the ancient world.**

**Such food extravaganzas have gone on in our modern world too. There are foods most of us will never even see let alone taste. At the gala dinner of the prestigious Explorers Club, held annually in the posh Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, they have such delicacies as braised filets of python, thin squares of zebra brisket, small slices of steamed rump meat of the goat-like Himalayan taahr, kangaroo tail, pickled shark fin, cocktail crackers smeared with caviar from the white sturgeon of the Black Sea, tiny sausages of armadillo meat, Aleutian salmon liver with tundra berries, fried Katanga termites, spruce-bark bread, stuffed Liberian breadfruit, mashed cactus pears, and cubes of meat from an extinct mastodon that was fresh frozen more than 10 thousand years ago in the arctic tundra but defrosted recently. Not exactly your average daily menu.**

**Joseph was treating his brothers to a banquet that was like this. It was totally unique for them. Shepherds were despised by the Egyptians, and so**

**they never would have even gotten into an Egyptian dining room, let alone be served such a lavish feast. They did have to be separated from the Egyptians, but they were not denied any of the abundance. All of this is a picture of God's people at the marriage feast of the Lamb that begins eternity. Jesus as our brother is exalted to the level of Lord of all, and He invites us who love Him to join Him in a feast to celebrate His victory over all evil. All who are a part of that victory are His family and bride. It is beyond our wildest dream what will be at that feast.**

**It is impossible to speculate on just what eternal feasting will consist of, for the more you study the gourmet eating of history the more you realize your speculation about heaven could fall short of what men have enjoyed even in time. In Colonial America, for example, there was a Virginia dish called presence of foul. It consisted of a dove inserted into a partridge, the partridge into a guinea hen, the guinea hen into a duck, the duck into a capon, the capon into a goose, and the goose into a peacock or turkey, and the entire extravaganza cut for serving into transverse sections.**

**Maybe something like that will be daily food in heaven. But maybe some of you are saying that all of this thinking about food is not very spiritual, and that it seems like a waste of time to focus on such a commonplace function of life. But let me remind you that we are to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God, and the Bible has more to say about food and the eating of it than almost any other subject. If you just look up the words eat, eating, and food alone you come to near 1000 verses of the Bible. If you think food is not an appropriate study, then you have to take your complaint to God, for He obviously feels it is.**

**Food is a subject every human being has in common, and it can be a bridge to relate to the non-Christian. Paul used food to bridge the gap in Lystra where the pagans were ready to worship them as gods. Paul points them to the living God of all creation. In Acts 14:17 he says of God, "He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." God is the great food provider, and this is a link God has with all men. It is one that can enable us to witness to all men. This physical commonplace aspect of life can lead to the highest spiritual conversation about the Bread of Life-the Lord Jesus who can satisfy the hunger of the soul as well as that of the body.**

**Almost all of the great events and great truths of the Bible involve food and eating. One of the two ordinances Jesus left the church-the Lord's Supper, is a time of remembering the greatest event of history. It is a focus on the cross and Christ's death for the sins of the world. We remember this by eating bread and drinking the cup. Jesus knew that these commonplace events of eating and drinking would never go out of style as long as history lasted. Other rituals and traditions may change, but eating never will.**

**Jesus described the entire plan of salvation in terms of eating and drinking. He was the Lamb of God that was sacrificed for our sins. The edible parts of a sacrifice were grilled and boiled and eaten by the priests and the families that brought the sacrifice. Jesus was our Lamb, and He did not expect to be wasted, but to be consumed with pleasure. In John 6:51 Jesus said, "I am the living bread that comes down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. You can sum this up with a proverb-you are what you eat. If you do not eat the bread of life, you are not heaven bound, for eternal life is in what you eat. In the garden of Eden it was in the tree of life, and if Adam and Eve could have eaten of that tree they would have lived forever. They were put out of the garden to deprive them of the food that led to eternal life.**

**Now Jesus comes and offers man another chance to eat his way into eternity. The only way into God's eternal kingdom is by eating the right food. This sounds strange to us because we have never associated salvation and eating the way the Bible does. Listen to Jesus as He says in John 6:53-56, "Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." Not only is it true that you are what you eat, but Jesus says that you will be forever what you now eat. Your diet determines your destiny. The most spiritual and God pleasing aspect of you life is in how you eat, or what you eat.**

**This was a very offensive picture for Jews brought up under the law that forbid the eating of any meat with the blood still in it. Verse 60 says that many of His disciples said this is a hard teaching. Who can accept it? Jesus responds, "Does this offend you?" The answer is that it does, and we read, "From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed**

**Him." Jesus weeded out all of the superficial disciples by this radical teaching that they had to eat his flesh and drink his blood. We have to admit that it is rather grotesque in its imagery, but by it Jesus was linking eating and salvation as one. When a sacrifice was eaten it was a time of communion between God and man. It was God's food that he was allowing man to eat with Him. It was God and man at the same table, and in Bible culture when you ate with someone you were companions for life.**

**The word companion means those who eat together. It comes from two words which are com meaning together, and panis meaning bread. Those who share bread together are companions. How much more those who share a special sacrificial meal? God and man at the same table eating the sacrifice that reconciles and makes them one. It is at the table that people are to make peace. It is one of the tragic realities of our day that families have lost the biblical significance of eating together. Studies show that families fight at the table and abuse one another. They make it a time to blame and scold, and it produces all kinds of emotional problems. The will of God is that the table be the place for love, joy, encouragement, and reconciliation. Food is to be the common ground on which people come together as one.**

**In Gen. 18 God and two of His angels come to Abraham and he prepares a meal for them. God and man eat at the table together, and God lets Abraham in on His special plans for them to have a baby, and for Sodom to be destroyed. Abraham was the friend of God, and God ate with him and gave him special insight into His plan. We can't take the time to trace this subject all through the Bible, but when we come to the New Testament we see the story of the Prodigal Son ending with father and son at the table together feasting, for they are reconciled and are one again. Jesus says in Rev. 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me." The very essence of salvation and being one with our Lord is found in eating with Him. He not only wants to be our Savior, but He wants to be our companion, and to be one who eats bread with us.**

**I have books on my shelves I have never read, and so though they are mine, in a very real sense I do not yet possess them. Only when I read them and let the author's ideas come into me do I have any oneness with that author. We eat the same bread when I consume his ideas, and I eat him when I take in his words. Some of him becomes a part of me by this process. I am a part of all**



**the authors I have consumed. Jesus is the Word who became flesh. As I give heed to the Word, and digest the Word, I take my Lord into my very being. I eat Him, and I share with Him the intimacy of His being. It is not just at communion that I eat His flesh and drink His blood. I do it in devotions. I do it in Bible study. I do it in meditation. I do it in prayer. I eat my Savior and eat with Him anytime I give my mind to the consideration of His Word.**

**You are only truly one with Jesus when you eat with Him. You are only truly one with anyone by means of eating with them. It was by means of food and eating that Joseph worked out reconciliation with his brothers, and it is by means of food and eating that we can accomplish the will of God in many relationships. It is the universal tool. It is the tool for witnessing to those outside the family of God. It is the tool for fellowship within the family. It is the tool for friendship and encouragement. It is a multi-faceted tool that we need to see as one of God's great tools all through the Bible and history. It is a tool that we need to use more effectively. Paul put it in I Cor. 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Joseph did it, and so can we, if we become more conscious of the spiritual potential of this universal tool.**

## **26. PASSING THE TEST Based on Gen. 44:1-16, 33-34**

**Children often obey the Bible even before they know there is a Bible. Paul said in I Thess. 5:21, "Test everything, hold on to the good." Babies are testing everything by putting everything in their mouth, and as they get older they begin to test adults. Our little granddaughter Kelly came up to me one day and bopped me on the head with a plastic toy. It was so funny that I laughed and so did everyone else in the room. That sounded like approval to her, and she started hitting everybody in the head, and this was even more hilarious. But then it dawned on me that we were in the process of training a sadistic child. Our emotions were leading us to motivate dangerous behavior, and so I stopped the laughing and we took the toy away.**

**It didn't hurt any of us, but the next thing she started bopping heads with could be wood or metal, and the poor innocent child could be confused by a severe scolding for what she had previously received approval for. It is so**

**hard to prevent your emotions from leading you to teach bad habits to children. When I was 13 years old we had a neighbor in our duplex with a 3 year old girl who swore like a trooper. Her family thought it was just hilarious, and I have to admit a cute little girl talking like a grown adult is funny. But this child got so much approval for her swearing that she became a foul mouthed kid who was repulsive to those outside the family. She tested the family and said you are wonderful when you swear.**

**The point is, children are testing us all the time. They are saying things and doing things to get our reaction. That is how they test all things. They learn by this what is approved or not, and the limits of what adults will put up. When you are a parent you are in school all the time, and everyday is test day. Now testing has never been a popular part of education. We don't like tests in school, or in life. A Sunday School teacher taught her class that God tests our faith to give us a chance to grow stronger. A 7th grader said, "I thing sometimes God over does it." Many feel this way about God's testing, but C. S. Lewis pointed out that testing is not meant to be pleasant. Students always complain about a test, and they ask what good will it do?**

**C. S. Lewis wrote, "But surely to demand that the test should do the boy good is like demanding that a thermometer should heat the room. It was the reading of the book which was suppose to do the boy good. You give the test to find out if he had read it." The test itself can be unpleasant, but if you pass the test because you have done what is required, then there are pleasant consequences.**

**This is precisely what we see in Joseph's dealings with his brothers. He is putting them to a test, and it is very unpleasant, for they are made to feel like ungrateful scoundrels. Joseph has treated them to a royal feast and they thank him by stealing his very special silver cup. We know it was a plant, and that they are being framed, but they are feeling so shocked and so ashamed. Have you ever left church with a hymnal, and when it dawned on you, you felt like you had stolen it? Or have you ever opened somebody else's mail by mistake and felt like you violated their property? If you have, you can feel partially at least the depth of their humiliation and embarrassment when the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack.**

**Benjamin was the baby of the family, and now it looks like he is a common thief. It would be like coming home after a great evening at a friend's home**

**and discovering your child has their remote control in his pocket. You know you would call them immediately and explain what happened. The brothers of Joseph would have set the record straight as well as they found the cup at the end of the day, but Joseph sent the steward of his house to find it on them before they did. This was the ultimate in embarrassment, and it was all done deliberately to put the brothers to a test. If they passed this test which was so unpleasant, then they would have future pleasure that would make the pain insignificant in comparison.**

**Joseph had to find out if these brothers of his had changed. Were they still the cruel and envious lot that had cast him into a pit and then sold him into slavery? If so, they would gladly let Benjamin take the rap for his crime, and they would escape with their own freedom. That was the test. Would they forsake this baby brother and save their own necks, or would they really be brothers to this favored one of their father, and stand by him in his hour of trial?**

**It was an awful ordeal Joseph put them through, but it was worth it, for Joseph learned that people can change. God knows this and that is why He is long suffering and puts up with people for a long time. He knows people can learn from their mistakes and stop making them. These brothers are not the same as they were when they plotted and carried out the elimination of Joseph from their family. They are a new breed, for now they are handed a chance to get rid of their rival brother, but instead they stand by him, and Judah even volunteers to take his place as a slave for life to win his freedom. It was a cruel test, for it put these brothers through an emotional ringer that had to be as intense as his own emotions when they rejected him. They were reaping what they had sown. They had imprisoned him and sold him into slavery, and now they are heading for jail and an apparent life of slavery.**

**They could not believe what was happening. They had just been treated to the most lavish feast of their lives, and they were now heading home with an abundant supply of food for their families. Benjamin had been treated special, and now they find the stolen cup in his sack. From the peak of satisfaction they are plummeted to the pit of sadness. This was the worst thing that ever happened to them. If they return to their father without Benjamin, it would kill him. The very thing they most feared had come upon them.**

**Benjamin, of course, was being framed. It was all a conspiracy planned by**

**Joseph to test his brothers. Joseph had learned by his troubled journey in life that problems are designed to test us. Every problem is an opportunity, for how you deal with it determines the direction of your life. If you handle the problem wisely, you make progress in the direction God wants you to go. Don't waste problems is the message the Bible teaches over and over. Joseph has designed a problem for his brothers, because if they handle it right, he is ready to change their lives for the good.**

**It looks like a dirty trick, but the fact is, it worked. They said we will be loyal to our brother and we will stand together in this trial. We will not forsake Benjamin. How could Joseph ever know they would respond this way if he had never put them to the test? The lesson for all of us is to not jump to conclusion about problems. Problems in life can be just like problems in school. They are a test, and the goal is to find a solution. The problem is not a hindrance to progress but a stepping stone to progress. If you deal with it right, you get to go on to greater things, just like these brothers did. Problems are to be seen as opportunities for growth.**

**Alexander Fleming was a bacteriologist, and in 1928 he had a number of experiments going in which he was trying to find an answer for the deadly infections that killed so many wounded soldiers, or crippled them for life. One day he noted that a mold spore had gotten into one of his plates, and his culture had been ruined. It was just another culture that had to be flushed down the sink. Contamination of plates was just one of the problems scientists had to live with. You just curse your bad luck and start over.**

**He had the plate in his hand and was ready to wash its contents away when he noticed the mold growth had dissolved the microbes around it. In his hands he held a problem that was a solution to the problems of millions, for this was the beginning of the discovery of penicillin. It was a negative event in a plan that was not going the way it was suppose to go. But it was one of the most positive events in history, for the problem was the key to the very solution he was seeking. Problems have such great potential for good that we should be careful not to neglect or waste them.**

**Lavonne and I experienced the truth of this recently. We had to change our health insurance policy, and they put a rider on it that did not cover Lavonne's back problem. This was a serious problem for us, but what could we do? On vacation we went to Dr. Kennedy's church, and the pews were**

obviously designed by an expert in human torture. I was so uncomfortable, and I was trying through the whole service to get into a position where my back was not hurting. Lavonne was having the same problem and after church she developed the most painful back spasm she had ever had. For 3 days she was in bed and finally got good enough to go to a chiropractor. But during that 3 days I went to the library and checked out all I could find on the back. I learned things I never would have had if I had not had so much time to study the back. I learned things that will, in the long run, save us a lot of money, and save Lavonne a lot of pain. It was a terrible trial, but it was worth it because of what we learned. The problem produced the solution that will give us victory over many others problems.

This is what Joseph's brothers were going through. Their problem looked hopeless, but because they responded to it in the heroic way they did it led them to the greatest blessings of their lives. It was terrible torture, but it ended in tremendous triumph. They passed the test and proved to Joseph that they were changed men who no longer solved problems by choosing the way of escape and evil as they did with him. Now they chose the way of facing their problem honestly and doing the right and noble thing.

Joseph was so impressed and moved by Judah's offer to take Benjamin's place as a slave that he lost all control of his emotions. He wept so loud that the whole neighborhood could hear him. The show was over; the mask came off, and Joseph revealed himself as their brother. These men who raided an F in his eyes had risen to an A+ and the testing was over. They graduated from strangers to brothers of the most powerful man in Egypt. What a parallel we see in Jesus and His disciples. They denied Him and forsook Him. They deserved His judgment, but instead he reveals Himself after His resurrection, and they are forgiven and restored to His fellowship as brothers of the Lord of the universe. Forgiveness and grace is what we see as the dominant theme of both Testaments.

Martin Luther was one of the few preachers of history who spent a lot of time on these last ten chapters of Genesis. He said that people in his day complained about God having all of this detail about this drama in His Word. It seemed trivial and unimportant to spend so much time on Joseph and his brothers. Luther scolded them and reminded them that all Scripture is inspired of God and profitable. The details tell us that God works in details.

**These details reveal that God never changes in His goals for man. No matter how unworthy men are God's goal is to find a way to bless them. He is a God of grace, and that is what we see in all these details. It is the thread that holds them all together.**

**These brothers had to be brought to the point where they saw what they really deserved in order to appreciate the grace of what they were finally given. Luther wrote, "Had Joseph allowed his brothers to return to their home without any further trial, they would have ascribed their good fortune to their own worthiness and works, their own prudence and eloquence, and so they would have been strengthened in their pride and self-trust. Therefore they needed more humbling and chastening." They did not really steal Joseph's silver cup, but they stole his life of freedom from him which was far worse. They were despicable brothers, and they had to be brought to see that before they could be blest.**

**Their testing made them see how awful they really were in selling their brother into slavery. In 42:21 they say to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that is why this distress has come upon us." They were ready to acknowledge that what they did was sinful. In verse 22 Reuben says, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?" Testing was working, for any test is to make us do some self-examination. Am I being tested, and am I facing this problem because I have violated God's will?**

**We know the whole book of Job is given to tell us that suffering and trial are not necessarily connected with sin at all. But this is not to lead us to conclude that suffering is never the result of sin. It often is, and we need to consider that as a possibility so that, like these brothers, we suspect that we are being forced by our testing to confess the sins that make us worthy of judgment. The testing Joseph put his brothers through brought them to confess their sin and to repent. This made them sinners that he could forgive.**

**They are no longer a divided family pulled apart by jealousy, envy, and strife. They are now a unity. This is the kind of family Joseph can be proud to call his own, and that is what he does. The whole drama is a comedy, for it ends with every one happy and delighted. What we need to grasp is that comedy can be a real test. All of life is a comedy for the Christian, for we are**

**promised a happy ending no matter what. But it is important that we recognize that there can be real trials in comedy. These brothers were living in the promise land and they were starving. You can be where God wants you to be and lack plenty. These brothers were the heads of God's chosen people-the 12 tribes of Israel. They were still plagued by family problems of parental favoritism and the green eyed monster of jealousy. Being God's people does not shelter you from the problems of life.**

**These brothers had gotten off to a great start that morning. An early start makes any long trip easier. When we left Florida we got up at 2:30 in the morning and escaped all the massive traffic on I-95. It was great, and that is the way these boys headed out of Egypt for home. But a good start does not guarantee a good journey. We once had a good start for California and a few hours out of the city our car developed heating problems that took several hours to get fixed. These boys were soon stopped and accused of stealing. It started to rain on their parade. The steward knew the cup was in Benjamin's sack, but he did not go right to it. He kept the suspense going by starting with the oldest brother and leaving Benjamin's sack till last. He did this on purpose to build to a dramatic conclusion that shattered their confidence. The whole thing is a comedy, but the point is, even in a comedy where all is going to be all right there can be such ups and downs that you feel like you are on an emotional roller coaster.**

**I know there is a lot of popular preaching that promises people a life free of trial and tribulation if they follow Jesus, but I have to call your attention to the fact that God's people in the Bible have never lived such a life. They have always had trials and tribulations, and this is true even when they lived in obedience. The brothers here deserved their trials, but Joseph was living in complete obedience to God, and yet he had to endure some awful testing. The way to look at life is to thank God for every day you do not feel the pressure of the test. It is pure grace, but don't lose faith when the test comes and life has one problem after another. You need to look at your life and see if God is trying to tell you something, but you also need to just hang in there committed to doing the will of God even if it hurts.**

**Commitment almost always hurts in some way. We see this as we meet again around the Lord's table. Jesus was not one centimeter out of the will of God. He was 100% on target, and yet he had to endure terrible testing. But he endured it and passed the test for our sakes. By his death he secured for us**

**a place in the family of God. Joseph passed his test and reconciled his family. Jesus passed His test and made it possible for all the rebel family of man to be one again in Him. As you do this again in remembrance of Him, let us thank Him for His passing the test of the cross, and pray that we too can be successful in whatever life brings our way in passing the test.**



