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of Christ's Kingdom

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"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." - Hebrews 11:1

Faith is a rare commodity. It is even more rare in the age we live in, an age of skepticism. In a time when scientific proof is desired for all beliefs, faith retains belief in the unprovable. Jesus stated in Luke 18:8: *when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

The Substance of Hope

To wish is to have a desire for something better with no real basis for that expectation. To hope is to have a basis for expecting the desire to come to pass. Many people wish for the conditions of the kingdom; the Christian hopes for it. Faith gives substance to the hope, a reason for believing that it is true.

The Christian hope is both for things unseen because they are invisible-such as things of the spirit nature-and for things that will be seen, but are unseen as of yet such as the kingdom of God on earth. Faith perceives logical evidences for the reality of these hopes.

Have Faith in God

One of the most unusual miracles Jesus performed was the cursing of the barren fig tree (Mark 11:13-21). Seemingly the miracle benefitted no one. Its sole purpose appears to have been to demonstrate the casting off of favor from natural Israel, which was frequently pictured by a fig tree (see Jer. 24:110). Upon seeing the results that same day Peter expressed his amazement. Jesus' response was, *have faith in God* (Mark 11:22).

As belief in the casting off of Israel at the time of Jesus' first advent required faith in God, so much the more will belief in the promises of the restitution of Israel and **all mankind** at the second advent require faith in God.

Heroes of Faith

In Hebrews 11, Paul continues his dissertation on faith by providing a list of Old Testament characters who demonstrated this amazing quality of faith.

This quality of faith set these heroes apart from their contemporaries: *By it [faith] the elders obtained a good report* (Heb. 11:2).

Without faith many notable men of the past did great exploits. Alexander the Great conquered empires. Hammurabi codified laws. Aristotle laid the basics for logic. Yet these did not *obtain a good report*, an acceptable report in the eyes of God.

The distinguishing marks of a true faith are well captured in the following quote from the pen of M. F. Russell: "Faith in God is that humble confidence which espouses his unpopular cause, which perseveres in pursuing it in the face of all opposition and without human encouragement, and which patiently endures whatever of reproach, discouragement, privation, and persecution it may bring, assured of ultimate triumph according to his promise, and finding in his blessed truth and in his approval all the present reward and incentive desired."

In This Issue

In this issue of THE HERALD we are featuring a number of these outstanding characters of the past whose faith is an example to encourage us to develop more of the same quality.

Some of the most famous names in the Bible-Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses -- are featured in Hebrews 11. But Paul mentions that time would fail to tell of so many others who were no less heroes of faith. In the following articles some of these lesser known ones will be highlighted.

Barak demonstrates *Faith on the Battleground*. In **Rahab** we see *Faith Hanging on a Thread*. Samson illustrates *Faith Going It Alone*. **Caleb** illuminates *The Endurance of Faith* and the sweet faith of **Ruth** is discussed in *The Rose of Moab, The Rose of Sharon*. Our verse by verse Bible study in Nehemiah 6 looks at *A Faith that Faced a Conspiracy*.

Even the feature *Echoes from the Past* is on the same subject, as we reprint an article from the 1961 HERALD by our late Bro. John Ensol of England, *Be Strong and of a Good Courage*, with short vignettes of still other 'heroes of faith.

In contrast, the article on *Righteous Lot-When Faith Weakens*, traces the sad story of the decline of faith and the steps that led to it as an object lesson for our own lives.

We hope you will enjoy your journey with us through this small gallery of *Heroes of Faith*.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1

Caleb—The Endurance of Faith

"Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said."—Joshua 14:12

By Tim Thomassen

The Old Testament covers 1500 years of Israel's history. Then, as now, much of that history included valiant battles by courageous soldiers.

The Warrior—The Spy

An outstanding example of Jehovah's warriors was Caleb. He earned his greatest fame as a spy who had confidence in the power of his God.

Caleb was 38 years old at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt. He belonged to the tribe of Judah. His cousin was Bezaleel, master craftsman of the Sanctuary of God, the Tabernacle. As we compare and contrast the differing skills of these two consecrated men, we are reminded of the varied talents God has always supplied and used among his people of every dispensation.

Ten Were Frightened

Two years after the exodus, Israel was camped along the southern border of the Promised Land. They were assured that they only had to walk over the boundary-line and take possession of the land. There would be no resistance by the existing inhabitants.

The people of Israel requested that Moses delegate a few representatives to check the conditions they would be facing.

God told Moses to appoint a team of twelve men to explore the land—its size, characteristics, growing crops, cities and towns, and people.

When a spy from each tribe was sent to appraise the situation in Canaan, ten returned to Moses with a terrified report: The land was verdant, but its inhabitants were forbidding—unduly strong and impossible to defeat. The walled cities seemed impregnable.

Two Trusted God

Caleb counted the pessimistic spies. Stalwart in his faith in divine power, "Caleb stilled the people and said, 'Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.'" (Num. 13:30) Only Caleb and Joshua gave an evaluation prompted by faith in the Almighty.

Caleb never doubted the verity of the promises of Yahweh. He believed with all his heart and soul that Israel would inherit the land which God had promised them. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55:11)

"I am the LORD, I change not" (Lam. 3:23,22).

Fear Not, Neither Be Discouraged

An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity. A pessimist finds a calamity in every opportunity.

Caution is prudent if followed by action. But fear doubts the supremacy of the divine arrangement; it questions the wisdom and love of the LORD. Fear paralyzes.

Israel had heard much about the land of milk and honey. They were now at the borders of this Promised Land. Their yearning for Egypt was past. All that remained was the conquest. The spies gazed upon the vineyards and olives groves. They saw the richness of the grain in the fields. They pictured their own farms dotting the valleys. They were excited about each wonder before them. Then they saw the Canaanites! Some of them were eight feet tall. They looked like the dreaded Nephilim of antediluvian days. In sheer panic, ten spies returned to the camp of Israel with their faith shattered, bearing a message of utter and hopeless despair. Only Caleb and Joshua remembered to "Fear not, neither be discouraged" (Duet. 1:21).

All Things Are Possible

Jesus later said (Mark 10:27), "With God, all things are possible."

Luke recorded this statement (18:27): "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." As the risen Christ told Thomas, "Be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27).

Afraid, Discouraged, Angry

The congregation believed the ten. [They] bade stone [Caleb and Joshua] with stones (Num. 14:10). They abandoned their faith in the Almighty's promise. They cried all night.

There is a mentality which says, "Blame it on the leader." The people decided to depose Moses and set up another leader who would take them back to Egypt.

Faith Requires Action

In Numbers 14:6-9, we read that Caleb and Joshua "rent their clothes." They urged the people, "Do not rebel against the LORD. Do not be afraid of the people of the land. We will swallow them up. The LORD is with us."

Nor did Caleb's boundless faith deter him from exerting his physical prowess when waging war against Jehovah's enemies.

"What doth it profit . . . though a man say he have faith, and have not works? . . . As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith, without works is dead also" (Jas. 2:14,26).

Caleb's Reward

God said, "No one who has treated me with contempt will see [the Promised Land]. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me whole-heartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it" (Num. 14: 23,24).

The ten explorers whose report caused Israel to grumble against Moses' leadership—these ten were struck down and died of a plague. Only Caleb and Joshua survived (Num. 14:36-33).

The principle was later expressed, "The just shall live by faith . . . if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38).

"Without faith it is impossible to please [God]...he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

"And Joshua blessed Caleb, and gave him Hebron for his inheritance" (Josh. 14:13).

The Strengths of Caleb

At the age of 85, Caleb was still a strong soldier. He drove out the Anakim from Hebron. (Josh. 14:6-15; 15:14) He then attacked Debir, southwest of Hebron. This conquest was a difficult challenge, so Caleb offered his daughter Achsah in marriage to the valiant warrior who would obtain the victory. Othniel won Achsah and a southland and upper springs and nether springs. (Josh. 15:15-19)

Caleb lived a life of discipline and self-control. He never permitted himself to become soft. He maintained his assurance in the presence and power of Yahweh; this perspective prevented him from frittering away his physical well-being through tension and stress. The sterling faith which characterized his life remains a beacon light, shining for the encouragement of all lovers of God forever.

Rahab - Faith Hanging On A Thread

"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."—Hebrews 11:31

By Carl Hagensick

By the grace of God even a harlot could become a hero of faith. While some, eager to protect Rahab's reputation, hold that the word translated harlot can also be translated innkeeper, the distinction is more apparent than real. Nelson's Bible Dictionary, after discussing cult prostitution, states: "A second class of prostitutes consisted of those who owned bars or inns and had sexual relations with the patrons who desired their services. Rahab of Jericho was such a woman (Josh. 2:1; 6:17-25). God had mercy on her, and she was delivered and transformed. Her name is included in the genealogy of the Messiah (Matt. 1:5)."

As such she may have had clients who merely sought lodging as well as those who had more intimate dealings in mind. This may explain why the spies went to her house in the first place—merely seeking a night's rest.

The name Rahab means pride and may be further indicative of the worldliness of her parentage and upbringing.

Rahab's Faith

Joshua had sent out two spies to determine the strength of Jericho in preparation to do battle against it. They lodged at Rahab's inn. The king of Jericho sent men to apprehend the spies, having heard of their mission. While admitting that the spies had been there, Rahab protected them by lying to the king's agents, saying: "And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them" (Josh. 2:5).

Then, returning to the spies whom she had hidden behind stalks of flax on her roof, she confessed her faith: "And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath (Josh. 2:9-11)

The Basis of Her Faith

As an innkeeper Rahab would have been well informed of outside events as travelers would talk of their journeys and experiences. She had heard of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea some forty year prior, and of the recent conquests of Israel in the conquest of the two kings of the Amorites. Word of these events had spread through Jericho and frightened the people. But fright is not faith.

Rahab may well have shared the fright of the other townspeople, but she reasoned upon the events reported and drew a conclusion that others had not drawn; namely, that if Israel had enjoyed such miraculous victories there god must be the true God. She had even sought out his name, as is indicated in her concluding words to the spies: "for the LORD [Jehovah] your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (v. 11).

Rahab had thus progressed from information to belief in the truthfulness of her information to a reasonable conclusion from it—that Jehovah was God. Now, to prove that it was really faith, action was required. This final step of faith is recorded in James 2:25, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"

The Token of her Faith

The other way by which she sent the spies was circuitous. First, dwelling on the city wall, she let them down by rope. Secondly, she instructed them that their pursuers were sent eastward to the Jordan, therefor they should go westward into the surrounding mountains for three days until their pursuers would return. These were the same mountains where, centuries later, Jesus would be driven by the spirit to be tempted after his baptism in the river Jordan.

In return for saving their lives, she requested that the lives of herself and her family be saved.

A sign, or token of her faith, was established between her and the spies. As a memorial of the rope by which they had been saved, she was to hang a scarlet thread from her window until the Israelites would attack.

The effectiveness of her sign soon became evident. One week later the Israelites began their attack by circling the city for seven days with the blowing of trumpets. On the last day they marched around the city seven times and the walls collapsed—though the house of Jericho which was in the wall was not destroyed. Before burning the city, Joshua sent the two spies back into the city to rescue Rahab and her family. "But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel" (Josh. 6:22, 23).

The Rewards of Faith

Rahab's faith was richly rewarded in at least four ways.

A NEW GOD: Becoming a proselyte to the Jewish faith this Canaanite, in effect, said the same thing to the two spies that her future great granddaughter-in-law, Ruth the Moabitess would say to Naomi: "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Her new religion not only brought her peace of mind, but gave her all the advantages of a covenant relationship with God which Israel alone enjoyed (Amos 3:2).

A NEW HUSBAND: While the identity of the two spies is not specifically given, we can speculate that one of them was Salmon of the tribe of Judah. His father Nahshon was the leader of that tribe during the earlier wilderness wanderings (Num. 1:7; 2:3). Since Judah was the leading tribe (Num. 10:14) and since Nahshon had died in the wilderness, it is likely that his son Salmon would have taken his place. Whether it was on this occasion or later is inconsequential for, in either case, Salmon of the princely line in Judah, the royal tribe of Israel, became the husband of Rahab (Matt. 1:5).

AN ILLUSTRIOUS FAMILY: The family of Salmon and Ruth became the royal family of Israel. "And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David" (Ruth 4:21, 22). Most importantly, she became an ancestor of Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 3:32; Matt. 1:5). In addition to the kingly line, rabbinic tradition states that Rahab was the ancestor of eight prophets, including Jeremiah and the prophetess Huldah.

LONGEVITY: While we are not informed of the age of Rahab at her death there is evidence that she lived an unusually long life. Being an innkeeper, as well as a worker in flax, she was of sufficient age to have accumulated property and a business clientele before she entertained the spies. The book of Judges was written some 40 years later and notes Rahab as being remarkable for being alive at the time of the writing: "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho" (Josh. 6:25).

The brief genealogy given in Ruth spans a period of 490 years in just five generations—Ruth, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David—an average period of 98 years between generations. We know that David was a son of Jesse's old age and that Boaz was Ruth's second husband. This leads to the conclusion that Rahab achieved great longevity and was probably well advanced in years when she gave birth to Boaz.

Rahab and Lydia

From the two pieces of evidence that Rahab hid the spies behind sheaves of flax and the scarlet thread we have a hint that Rahab had a sideline business dealing in linen garments. This suggests an interesting comparison between her and a New Testament hero of faith—Lydia.

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us" (Acts 16:14, 15).

- As Lydia, a Gentile who had become a proselyte to Judaism, was the first European to be converted by the Apostle Paul; so Rahab, a Gentile, was the first in the promised land to become a convert to Judaism.
- As Lydia offered her home for hospitality to the strangers from Asia Minor, so Rahab housed the Israelite spies.
- As not only Lydia, but her whole household, was saved; so Rahab's faith not only saved herself, but her entire household.
- As Lydia attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, so Rahab carefully heeded the instructions of the spies.
- As Lydia was a seller of purple [purple-dyed garments], so Rahab was a merchant in red linen garments.

A Virtuous Woman

Still another remarkable parallel exists for Rahab. In Proverbs 31:10-31 we have a description of a virtuous woman, many of the details of which are appropriate to Rahab.

- "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. . . . She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. . . . She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant" (Prov. 31:10, 13, 24). Rahab dealt in flax and linen.
- "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy" (Prov. 31:20). So Rahab stretched forth her hands to the needy spies

- "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet" (Prov. 31:21) Because of the cost of the scarlet dye, clothing of scarlet was reserved for durable and warm fabrics, indicative of the kind of clothing which Rahab may have made.
- "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land" (Prov. 31:23). Salmon, Rahab's husband, was one of the elders of the tribe of Judah.
- "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (Prov. 31:28). How blessed has been the memory of Rahab, a memory blessed by the royal line of children which came from her faith and conversion to the God of Israel.
- "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30).. The Jewish rabbis hold that Rahab was one of the four most beautiful women in the world. Whether the tradition is so or not we do not know; but it is not for her beauty that she is remembered, rather she is praised because she feareth the LORD.

"Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."—
Proverbs 31:31

Rose of Moab, Rose of Sharon

And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.—Ruth 1:17

Condensed from "Meggison Notes" by J. A. Meggison

During the time of the Judges, there was no ruler in Israel. God's chosen people were more free than any nation in the world.

But there was a severe famine in this Land of Promise. Even in Bethlehem, "the house of bread," where olives, pomegranates, figs, almonds, grapes and grain usually grew in abundance, there was nothing.

A Family Flees a Famine

Elimelech ("God is my King") lived in the region called Ephrata ("bearing, fruitful.") Considering the hardship to his family more important than the covenant of his people, Elimelech took them to the very nation which had oppressed Israel, idolatrous Moab—seeking bread.

The sons' names did not indicate faith, as did their parents'—strange, in a culture where names were significant. Mahlon meant "weak" or "sick"; Chilion meant "pining" or "destruction."

Mother Naomi seems to have lived up to her name—"pleasant, lovely"; she was greatly loved.

God's Judgments Follow His People

After arriving in Moab, Elimelech died. He had not trusted God's love in the Promised Land; now, divine judgment smote him in the strange land.

Still, the young men did not return to the land of their birth. Instead, they married heathen women and settled down. Perhaps they hoped to return to Israel when the famine was past; but both sons died before that happened. They did not seem to have considered God's will nor his Law, for Israel was commanded to stay separate from heathen nations.

Now Naomi was at liberty to make a choice. She no longer had a husband to obey, nor sons to consider. She turned her heart toward home.

Naomi Bids Farewell

Naomi instructed her dear daughters-in-law to return to their mothers' homes and start their lives afresh. She blessed them with these words, "Jehovah grant that you may find rest, each in the home of a husband. Jehovah deal kindly with you, as you dealt with the dead and me." They had been good wives to her sons, good daughters to her. They shared a beautiful love.

Worshipping Jehovah In Moab

Ruth and Orpah had loved the holy atmosphere of their husbands' home. Even while Elimelech and Mahlon and Chilion had enjoyed the comforts of Moab, they had continued to worship the true God. The Moabite wives had experienced a great contrast between the purity of Israel's Jehovah and the abominable idolatry of Moab with its sensual excesses and sinful customs. They did not want to return to the habits of heathendom. They were ready to go with Naomi.

Naomi's Practical Advice

Naomi had to tell them that no man in Israel would marry them because they were foreigners. The lot of a widow would be hard. By staying in Moab, they could remarry and find the protection and honor of being a wife, so necessary in those days.

"Would You Shut Yourselves Up?"

It would have been acceptable for Ruth and Orpah to marry a brother-in-law to receive continued protection, but Naomi reminded them that she had no son to assume this duty. She added, "Even if I should this night...bear sons, would ye shut yourselves up and wait till they were grown?"

"Shut yourselves up" is an interesting phrase. A bride covered herself with a veil, withdrew from public view and shut herself up. It was like a shutting in by flowers, a shutting in for the purpose of perfection and coronation, being hedged in. Canticles 4:12 speaks of "a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."

"Find Rest"

"Find rest [Hebrew, *menuchah*] in the home of a husband," Naomi had said. *Menuchah* refers to a resting place. Whereas David had been a man of war, his son Solomon was the first king who could praise God for the complete *menuchah* gift. (1 Kings 8:56) The Holy Land, when possessed in faith and obedience, was the earthly *menuchah* to which earthly Israel had come, as the bride to the house of her husband.

Israel's highest *menuchah* is their God and his covenant. The world's final rest and home is mentioned in Isaiah 11:10, "His rest (*menuchah*) shall be glorious."

Jesus called to men in the Gospel age (Matt. 11:29), Take my yoke upon you and...ye shall find rest (*anapanois* or *menuchah*) for your souls—a place of peace, a home for your souls.

Orpah is Convinced

Orpah had a hunger for a resting place, security. She dreaded having to "shut herself up." Although she loved Naomi, she counted the cost and it was too much for her. She represented a class whose love for truth and righteousness is not enough to suffer much. They turn back into the world, as Orpah turned back to Moab.

The Rose of Moab

"Ruth" is derived from a Hebrew word for "rose." This Rose of Moab loved Naomi and Naomi's God Jehovah. She was like the Christians who sacrifice their earthly father's inheritance to become God's people.

Naomi's Example

Naomi had lived her life so beautifully that her God was reflected in her self-sacrificing love. Let us "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (Phil. 2:14-16) "Be thou an example of believers" (1Tim. 4:12). "Ye are living epistles, known and read of all men" (2 Cor. 3:2, 3).

Naomi's Sad Homecoming

Naomi and her rose, her priceless jewel, Ruth, left Moab and went to Israel. The old hometown was stirred to see them. The women asked, "Is this Naomi?" They were contrasting her condition this day with that of ten years ago when she had left them in their troubles, hoping to fare better.

"Call me not Naomi, but Mara," she sighed. Naomi was no longer splendid and full of delight. *El Shaddai* has dealt bitterly with me. Mara means "bitter." *El Shaddai* referred to the Almighty as gracious, author of fruitfulness and blessing. God had refused to bless them in a foreign land, as they had refused his chastening in Israel's famine. In the loss of children and family, "*Shaddai* hath declared me guilty."

Yet, God's faithfulness and love had reached out into Moab and overruled their affairs to bring them back. "There is a friend that clingeth closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). "I drew them with the bands of love" (Hos. 11:4). Shortly, the neighbors returned to their own pursuits, and Ruth went to the fields to glean. It was a miserable task for a once-prosperous widow. A day of distressful heat brought a little barley. Ruth's love for Naomi gave her strength. And Jehovah directed her steps.

Boaz, a Godly Man

Her lot met her in the fields of Boaz. Boaz' greeting to his workers shows a God-bent disposition, Jehovah be with you. They reflected his character in replying, Jehovah bless thee. Boaz noticed Ruth's demeanor. She was industrious, earnest, reserved—not bold, not noisy. He asked the overseer about her.

The Law of Israel provided for Ruth as an impoverished stranger (Deut. 24:19-22). Boaz was obliged to give her this right, but he was not obliged to do more. He was careful not to wound Ruth's self-respect by offering her charity, but he instructed his binders to drop a handful of grain occasionally so her gleaning would be fruitful. At noon, he invited her to eat with the other reapers, and passed her bits of corn and sour wine for refreshment.

Boaz did not say, "I will help you." He said, "Jehovah recompense thee, and a full reward be given thee by Jehovah.under whose wings thou art come to trust." She would find this blessing as she would seek shelter under the protection of the covenant-keeping God, among a covenant people.

Ruth's Gratitude

These words were the first ray of sunshine breaking through the grief of many weeks. She was lonely, without family or home. Now she heard the name of Israel's God spoken with awe-inspiring reverence, as Naomi had felt it—another voice of blessing from another of God's people.

Kind words to a loving heart are like morning dew on a thirsty field. Ruth said to Boaz, "I have been sad, but you comfort me. I looked for no reward, but you speak to my heart." She returned to her gleaning, not slackening her hand. She worked until twilight, even staying to thresh grain. She took 3-1/2 pecks of barley to Naomi, and food saved from dinner.

Naomi Recognizes Jehovah's Guidance

Naomi watched the Lord's providence: Jehovah hath not left off his kindness to the living and the dead. His blessings be on the man who has befriended you.

It was the custom of Israel: Naomi said to Ruth, "Shall I not seek a *menuchah* for thee?" She desired a home for her ward.

The Law of Israel provided that the nation be preserved in its families. If a man died childless, it was as though a branch had withered. A new branch must be grafted in by the nearest male, the relative marrying the widow. Each family was responsible for keeping the branch alive. No one could redeem the family except a blood relative.

Ruth Had to be a Blood Relative

Just as a redeemer in this Levirate law had to be a blood relative, so Jesus had to become a blood relative of Adam's race, human flesh, nourished by the body of Mary, before he could purchase the human family.

Ruth Requests Boaz' Protection

As advised by Naomi, Ruth asked Boaz to "spread thine skirt (protection) over thine handmaid." Boaz was impressed by Ruth's courage. To save the name of her dead husband from extinction, she was exposing herself to being misunderstood. She might have been considered brazen in her actions. But noble Boaz credited Ruth with noble intentions.

He filled her vail with six measures of barley grain, the number six representing labor. Seven represents rest; Boaz would seek to provide rest for Ruth.

He gathered ten elders and had them sit in the gate with him. Here he laid the case before Elimelech's nearer kinsman. That man was willing to redeem the land for Naomi, but would not marry a Moabitess, remembering the fate of Mahlon and Chilion.

Boaz knew that Ruth had become an Israelite in faith and left Moab's gods and customs to join the covenant people. He entered into the ceremony which gave Ruth to him. The other relative removed his shoe and gave it to Boaz.

In Deuteronomy 11:24, a shoe refers to possession. The relative could have had Ruth and done with her as he pleased as long as it was honorable. He showed by this custom that he surrendered all rights and claims of possession. So Boaz redeemed Naomi's and Ruth's inheritance, and married Ruth, according to the law of Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

Our Redeemer

Jesus redeemed Adam and all his children and Adam's inheritance, the earth. He will marry the bride, a daughter of Adam. This contract is witnessed by the ancient worthies in the place of judgment, before the throne of God. He planted his shoe upon the inheritance by walking on the earth for 3-1/2 years. "Over Edom will I cast my shoe" (Psa. 60:8; 108:9). The Lord will claim Edom as his possession, redeemed.

Ruth, Mother of Kings

Ruth represents the Gentiles who come into the family of God by leaving behind home and family. They become the Bride of the Prince, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, a ransom for all. They will be the mother of kings. Ruth gave up her father's home for the home of a prince of Israel, Boaz; her people were the covenant people; she received the land, Naomi's inheritance and Boaz. So God deals with the Church.

BARAK - FAITH ON THE BATTLEFIELD

"And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of . . . Barak." -- Hebrews 11:32

Barak fought the first battle of Armageddon. The Israelites had been chastened for their unfaithfulness to God under the hands of their enemies and the time had come for the tide to turn. Israel turned back to God under the leadership of Deborah, a judge of Israel. This was an unusual instance in which the Lord chose a woman to lead the nation of Israel. She called to Barak to be the general to command the army of Israel, 10,000 in number.

In those days the army of Israel consisted of foot soldiers, men whose training was in farming, fishing, and sheep herding. Israel didn't have a standing army to defend itself in times of crisis. Instead each tribe called up a militia of its able-bodied men. Each tribe fought most of its battles alone, but at times neighboring tribes would combine against a common enemy. Occasionally a local leader would appear and lead the troops to victory. The entire nation never made a united stand, but it came close to doing so in the time of Deborah, the judge.

Iron Chariots

The Canaanites of the northern and central hills had gathered a huge army led by the great general Sisera. The Canaanite forces were gathering for an attack. They were skilled in the art of war. Their chariots were made with iron. Not that their chariots were made totally of iron, but that they were reinforced with iron and had iron blades projecting from their axles so as to maim and kill their enemy with little effort. A great deal of damage could be inflicted upon their foes by merely riding through the opponent's formations. Nine hundred such chariots would easily defeat 10,000 foot soldiers.

In contrast to the strength of iron equipment, the Israelites had instruments made of copper-copper daggers and swords and shortranged bows. They had no armor for protection other than inferior wooden shields covered with leather. Numbers were not enough to defeat the army of the Canaanites.

After mustering the troops upon Mount Tabor, General Barak and the army of Israel waited the command. Barak knew that the Lord would deliver the enemy into their hands. He had faith in the Lord as did the men gathered with him. Just as important, though, was their recognition of Deborah, the judge. She had shown through her wise counsel and words that the Lord was dealing through her to manage the affairs of Israel. It would not have been appropriate to anticipate her decisions. If her counsel was wise in the past, then it was worth waiting for now.

Discipline Needed

Deborah had come on the scene when the morale of Israel was low. Under servitude to others, the Israelites were weak *in* faith. They had intermarried with the Canaanites and left the ways of the covenant they had with the Lord. Discipline was needed to bring them back into favor. Discipline is not what you do to someone. Those that seek the Lord's favor have come to realize this valuable lesson. Discipline is actually one of the signs of God's favor.

My son, always remember the value of the discipline which comes to you from the Lord, and never be depressed and discouraged when he corrects you. The Lord disciplines the man he loves and punishes every son whom he accepts into his family. Hebrews 12:5, 6 Barclay

When the Israelites learned that the Lord was willing to remove the discipline he had given them, they were eager to cooperate. What child would not be in favor of that arrangement! The Lord's used Deborah. Her encouragement and guidance turned them back to the Lord once again. Their faith strengthened, and their change in attitude made them willing to fight under seemingly impossible situations.

God of the Impossible

An impossible situation is a great test to faith, providing a platform for the display of God's almighty power. He is not only able to deliver his people, but in doing so, he will give a lesson never to be forgotten, a lesson that can be reflected upon with joy and encouragement for years to follow. God's way may not be the way we would have selected, but then our view of matters is limited by our human imperfections. God has a broader perspective that includes a longer lasting effect. If our heart is right we will never be able to thank God enough for having done exactly what *he* did, at the time he did, and in the manner he did. We will see that his solution was the best thing that could have happened for us.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Hebrews 12:11

This is exactly what happened afterward. A song was made to honor the Lord's mighty power of salvation in their time of need. The song of Deborah in Judges 5 has been a written record for generations to remember.

A Matter of Timing

Barak knew the Lord was dealing with Deborah, so when asked by her to be the general of the Israelites in battle, he agreed, but only if she would also go with them. He had faith in the victory, but also he knew that Deborah knew the correct time of the events. The Septuagint bears this out with his reply, *I know not the day in which the Lord will send his angel to give me success* (Jud. 4:9). Barak rested in Deborah's judgment of the situation. Her name signifies *orderly motion*. She knew the timing for victory (vs. 14).

How did that day become any different from any other? Would a week or day one way or the other have meant any different outcome? At the bottom of Mount Tabor lies a brook named Kishon. Normally a brook would be but a minor obstacle to a trained army. During a rain storm though, the water flowing down the hill sides can dramatically change a brook into a fast moving river overflowing its banks. The result would slow the maneuvering of the enemy's chariots and bog them down into the soft soil and sand beneath them. *The Lord discomfited Sisera . . .* (vs. 15). The thought of confusion and panic can easily be appreciated when their plans of victory came to a literal standstill. Judges 5:21 supports the thought of the waters of Kishon playing an important role in the victory.

The horses' hoofs (vs. 22) were even broken. As the Canaanites realized the turn of battle against them they desperately tried to get away. In ancient times the horses were not shod. Drawing the heavy chariots and urged on in desperation by the drivers, the horses broke their hoofs on the rough terrain, leaving them lame and their drivers stranded. The Lord knew how to turn a seeming victory of the Canaanites into a forceful display of his power and victory for the Israelites. Soon every enemy was destroyed. Even their leader, Sisera, was forced to abandon his chariot and escape, staying out of sight for a short time. In the end, he too was destroyed. What a boost of faith that battle gave to all Israel.

The period of the judges was a favorable time for Israel. It was through the judges that the Lord continually brought deliverance to Israel from their enemies. No wonder that the promise of the Lord to *restore thy judges as at the first* (Isa. 1:26) became such a hope. It pointed to a time when there would again be blessings, guidance and release from oppression.

Armageddon

The location of the battle instantly brings to mind the battle of the great day in which the enemies of our Lord will be drawn to battle-Armageddon, the final conflict. The *Vulgate* gives a different twist to Judges 5:8. *The Lord chose a new species of war, and himself subverted the gates of the enemy.*

The gathering of Barak upon Mount Tabor also ties in the victory with our Lord, for Mount Tabor is the same mount on which our Lord's transfiguration was witnessed. It is where the kingdom of Messiah was represented in a vision. Barak, meaning *lightning or a gleaming sword*, leads the battle at the precise moment of God's plan not too soon, not

too late. He would not step ahead on his own, but would wait for the right time as indicated by the great judge of all Israel. Just as our Lord did not know of the time of his return at his first advent, but left that in the hands of the heavenly Father, being ready at the right moment.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Mark 13:32

Waiting for the Lord's timing was a sign of faith on Barak's part. To wait on the Lord takes patience and faith . For this Barak was listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11.

What power is behind this victory? It is the power that produces cloudbursts of truth and the rising waters of knowledge that brings to pass the great catastrophe of the present order. This power will bring the systems of society to a halt, unable to be pulled out of trouble by their lame doctrines. And though the leaders may appear to escape the battle, it is for a relatively short time. Even they will be destroyed in the end, never again to cast fear upon the people.

Israel's Motive

They took no gain of money. They fought from heaven: the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Judges 5:19, 20

The wealth of the enemy did not motivate the Israelites. Their motivation came from faith in God's power to defeat the enemy and their obedience to follow Barak. And while it is true that instruments which God uses to overpower his enemies in the great battle of Armageddon will be the *peoples, and multitudes, and tongues* (Rev. 17:15), those associated with our Lord, the Lamb, in heaven will be the *called, chosen and faithful* (Rev. 17:14), the little flock, placed in their positions of responsibility according to their faithfulness, as *one star differeth from another star in glory* (1 Cor. 15:41).

Sisera has the meaning of *array* (Young's). A fitting comparison to Satan, whose array as an angel was as the *son of the morning* (Isa. 14:12), whose outward appearance was designed to deceive, to appear as an angel of light, when in fact his desire has been to seek out and devour the righteous (2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Pet. 5:8).

Meroz Came Not

Not all came to help Barak and assist in the victory. Singled out were the people of Meroz (Jud. 5:23). It would seem that they had an opportunity to render some particular assistance of service, but held back on their involvement. Jewish traditions associate Meroz, which may be interpreted as secret, with the evil angels which sided with the Canaanites. The Judgment Day is not limited to the nations and governments of earth but includes the judgment of those fallen angels which were kept in chains of darkness until the judgment day (2 Pet. 2:4). Darkness and secret have often been associated with this' brotherhood of God's creation since their fall before the days of Noah (Gen. 6:2). As the forces gather for the battle of Armageddon, these angels have the unique vantage point of seeing the Lord choosing a new species of war against Satan and his evil empire. Never before has the Lord actually shown what he can do with his almighty power, but now in the hands of his chosen general, these angels will see. For those angels which fail to join the battle on the Lord's side, their fate will be the same as the people of Meroz (Jud. 5:23).

*Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord [Barak], curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord **with the heroes**.* (See Rotherham; Clark's Commentary)

This curse, this bitter curse, will be their doom. They will join Satan in his destruction. Yet, a judgment suggests that there is an opportunity for them to make a change in their course should any realize their situation. In the end it is Barak that decides their fate. The church will also be involved in that judgment decision (1 Cor. 6:3). We can well rejoice in the assurance that that judgment will not only be just, but will be merciful as well.

As a reminder to the generations that followed, a song of the battle was sung and recorded. The victory of the church will be accompanied by the song of Moses and the Lamb. The ransomed of all races and kindred will join in the singing as they grow to appreciate the great victory of the ages. There will be different voices singing, but the end result will be harmony and praise to the heavenly Father, sweet music to the ears.

Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. Revelation 15:3, 4

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isaiah 35:10

The Question Box

" . . . the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor . . . "—Judges 4:9

James Parkinson

Question: In view of this statement of Deborah to Barak, why is Barak listed among the heroes of faith in Heb. 11:32, and not Deborah?

Answer: Deborah did not claim the honor. She manifested the greatest faith, but the honor of slaying the enemy captain was to go to another woman, Jael, and not to Deborah. Deborah's faith was in the LORD alone, while Barak's faith was partly in the LORD and partly in Deborah's faith.

Reviewing the battle against the Canaanites, Jabin (probably a title rather than a name), the king in Hazor, apparently had a Caucasian captain over his army, Sisera. [Sisera, which sounds more like Cicero than like a Semitic name, may well have come to Jabin as part of a package deal for horses and chariots. Magog (Genesis 10:2; the Ma-Saka ta, or Masegatae of Herodotus, in the steppes of central Asia) were the ancient breeders of horses -- primarily war-horses. (Mongols today are expert horsemen.)] Harosheth of the Goyim (Gutium, Gentile descendants of Japheth, Caucasians) was a fort controlling the west entrance of the Plain of Esdraelon (the largest inland plain in Israel). The road from Harosheth to Megiddo and Taanach runs along the north slope of the Mount Carmel range—on the south edge of the plain and south of the Kishon River. Mount Tabor is the highest mount in the area (about 1800 feet) and is at the north entrance to the plain.

Deborah (probably an Ephraimite) was a prophetess and a judge (one who delivered the oppressed from the oppressor) at the time she called for Barak and told him of the LORD's command to take 10,000 soldiers to Mt. Tabor, that the LORD would draw Sisera's host to the Kishon River and give Barak the victory. Barak was willing, but only if Deborah herself had faith enough to go with them. Deborah went, but said Sisera would not fall to Barak or his soldiers, but to a woman. The chief honor goes to him who conquers the chief; therefore Barak would win the battle but not the full honor accorded the victor. Nevertheless Barak did go—an act of faith against all worldly odds.

From Mt. Tabor Deborah could clearly see the storm [Rain may be inferred from Judges 5:19-22, *From heaven fought the stars, from their courses they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away . . . then did the horsehoofs stamp . . .* There is nothing to indicate whether a tornado or hail may have also played a part.] clouds forming to the southwest, even fifty miles away beyond Mount Carmel. She knew when to tell Barak to go down into the Kishon River valley. The clouds were hidden from Sisera's view by the mountains all along the road as far as Taanach. Then as Sisera's 900 armored chariots and army were bearing downhill toward the river on the seemingly hapless Israelites the storm came up over the mountain range and caught up with them. Suddenly the might of the chariots was defeated the same way the chariots had been defeated at the Red Sea—

with mud! The archers could not see to shoot straight. The foot soldiers were unsupported, but their armor was too heavy to run fast. The chariots were stuck in the mud. Harosheth was further away than the ten miles that a horse could run without resting. They had a problem.

Even Sisera's chariot was stuck in the mud; so he got out of it and ran several miles to his "ally," Heber the Kenite (a descendant of Moses' brother-in-law). Appealing to Heber's wife Jael to hide him, he was fed and went to sleep in her tent. Then she slew him and later showed Barak the body. Barak's active faith was well rewarded with victory, though not with the victor's glory.

[This surprise victory in BC 1378 against a Canaanite alliance must have caused some concern in Egypt which had Canaanite tribes for vassals and (untrustworthy) allies. But after Gideon's victories over Midian, Amalek, and the Arabs, Akhen-aton may not have been in a hurry to send troops since the Israelites posed no threat to Egypt itself (and memories of the Exodus may have also lingered), and they formed a good buffer between Egypt and the greater threat from the east.] [The forty years rest for Israel after these two victories would have been 1378-1338 B.C., during which time the frantic el-Amarna letters were sent from Canaan to the Egyptian kings Amenhotep III (?1408-1370) and Amenhotep IV (Akhen-aton, 1370-1352 according to Lee Casperson), and perhaps a few years after. The prince of Gezer writes, "Let the king, my Lord, protect his land from the hand of the Apiru (Habiru = Hebrews)." The prince of the Hebron district writes, "I and Abdu-Heba (prince of Jerusalem) fight against the chief of the Apiru." (Later, he and Abdu-Heba complain of each other's aggression.) Abdu-Heba writes, "Shall we do like Lab'ayu, who gave the land of Shechem to the Apiru?" Again, "As long as the king, my lord, lives, I will say to the commissioner of the king, my lord, 'Why do ye favor the Apiru and oppose the governors?' . . . All the governors are lost; the king, my lord, does not have a [single] governor [left]! . . . send out troops of archers, [for] the king has no lands [left]! The Apiru plunder all the lands of the king." (*The Ancient Near East*, Vol. 1, ed James B. Pritchard; Princeton, 1958.) We may thus understand the powerful impact of Barak's victory and the progressive nature of Judges 4:24 (ASV), *And the hand of the children of Israel prevailed more and more against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.*]

If we are tempted to think of Barak as a coward, it would be well to think of ourselves being called to lead several poorly armed people against nine hundred trucks accelerating towards us down a 3% grade. Yet, when Deborah put herself in the same jeopardy with the soldiers, Barak did just that. Of the faith of Jael we are not told for sure, though the scriptures give us no reason to doubt it. But Deborah and Barak are both heroes of faith.

These Also Had Faith

Hebrews 11 lists many heroes of faith and their deeds from Abel to Rahab. In this category, beginning in verse 32, a pairing of names may be suggested.

subdued kingdoms

Gideon--Judges 7:1-25

Barak-- Judged 4:4-23

wrought righteousness

Samson--Judges 14-16

Jephthah--Judges 11:11-33

obtained promises

David--1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Samuel 7:25-29

Samuel--1 Samuel 3:19-21; 7:3-15

stopped the mouths of lions

Daniel--Daniel 6:(1-)16-24

quenched the power of fire

Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego--Daniel 3:(1-)16-27

escaped the edge of the sword

Elisha --2 Kings 6:8-23

from weakness were made strong

Elijah--1 Kings 18:20-40; 19:1-8

waxed mighty in war

Abijah--2 Chronicles 13:3-21

turned to flight the armies of the alien

Asa--2 Chronicle 14:9-13

women received their dead by a resurrection

widow of Zarephath--1 Kings 17:17-24

woman of Shunem--2 Kings 4:32-37

others were tortured

Jeremiah--Jeremiah 20:2-9; 37:15-21; 38:3-6

The three pairs given specifically (with names mentioned) are each in reverse chronological order (as are the two next pairs suggested) which suggests that pairs are intended. In the first pair, Barak needed a reassurance but then acted with full assurance of faith to subdue kingdoms. It was likely only a few weeks later when Gideon did likewise, probably strengthened also by Barak's successful step of faith.

Samson - Faith Goes It Alone

"Woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."—Ecclesiastes 4:10

By Richard Evans

As the age of the Judges came to a close, God found it necessary to again chasten his people. "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years."—Judges 13:1

Shortly thereafter an angel of Jehovah appeared unto a barren woman, the wife of Manoah, of the tribe of Dan (Judg. 13:2), and announced the birth of a child [probably about the same time Hannah petitioned Eli]. "For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."—Judges 13:5

Thus, even as God began his punishment of Israel, he set in motion a plan that would moderate that punishment and ultimately bring about deliverance.

A Good Report

The Old Testament account of this miracle child is brief. Besides the angelic announcement only three episodes are recounted from a life that spanned nearly forty years:

1. His courtship and marriage to a daughter of the Philistines, his fight with a lion, his wife's death, and the conflict with the Philistines [a period of months.]
2. His visit to Gaza and the taking of the city gate [one day.]
3. His courtship of Delilah, her betrayal and his capture, and his victory in death [another period of months.]

Thankfully, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews added important insight into this brief record. "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, ... out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."—Hebrews 11:32-34

The writer continued: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith" (Heb. 11:39). Through his faith Samson was given a good report. This good report was not

gratuitous. Samson believed God and lived his life accordingly. For example, following his battle with the Philistines at Lehi he had a life-threatening thirst. With complete certainty he called upon the God of Israel and water came forth (Judg. 15:19). God had promised Samson he was to do a work. His faith in that promise gave him the boldness to ask for the water. Believing God, he knew he would not be allowed to perish. It was this same faith that gave him the confidence to face a lion with no weapon and to face a thousand Philistines with only the jawbone of an ass.

A Nazarite?

When studying the account of Samson care must be taken not to be confused by the King James translation. In the birth announcement (Judg. 13:5), for instance, the KJV can lead one to believe that Samson was subject to the conditions of the vow given in Numbers 6:1-21. The Hebrew word translated "Nazarite" means separated, set aside, consecrated. Rotherham's rendering makes clear the relationship Samson enjoyed. "For lo! thou art about to conceive and bare a son, and no razor shall come on his head, for one separate unto God shall the boy be from his birth—and he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Jud. 13:5, Rotherham).

The only condition placed on Samson's separation concerned his hair. There was no prohibition concerning wine, strong drink, or touching a dead body. Also this relationship was not something Samson freely elected, nor was it for a short term. On the other hand the vow in Numbers 6 involved all these things. There is no indication that Samson took such a vow or was obligated to live within its requirements. In fact, while under the direction of the spirit of the Lord he killed over a thousand men (Judg. 14:19; 15:8, 14, 16). If he was under the vow this would present a serious dilemma.

His Marriage

When Samson was in his late teens, he was led by the Lord to marry a daughter of the Philistines. "And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. But his father and mother knew not that it was the LORD, that he sought occasion against the Philistines" (Jud. 14:3, 4).

Here again the KJV may cause confusion. The use of the word pleaseth could lead to the thought that Samson's motivation was selfish and lustful. The marginal reading presents the literal and more correct rendering. "Get her for me, for she is right in mine eye" (Jud. 14:3, Margin). She was right for Samson because it was the Lord's will for him. It would provide an occasion against the Philistines.

The events that grew out of the wedding feast proved that assertion. Samson had the opportunity to do much damage to the Philistines; and it was done in such a way as not to bring down the wrath of the Philistines on his countrymen. At that time [probably after Israel's great defeat at Ebenezer and the loss of the Ark], the people were demoralized

and unable to challenge the intruders. So the marriage provided a means of limiting the incursion while restricting the conflict to Samson. He alone would incur the ire of the enemy. He alone would be pursued.

He Was Different

Though brief, the account highlights a number of differences between Samson and other men used by God. Others were raised as a result of a time of repentance by Israel, and a turning to God for help. Their task was one of leadership. They did not fight alone, but led the men of Israel. No such turning to God for help, however, preceded Samson's separation. As a result the people were not ready to receive him or rally to his support. Unlike the others, Samson was not to lead Israel into battle. He was to fight alone. Unlike the others, national repentance came after his judgeship, after his victory in death [see box].

His singlehanded defeat of a thousand men, his burning of the Philistine fields, vineyards, and orchards, some twenty years into their dominion over Israel, must have had a moderating effect on their conduct. The economic impact must have weakened them. Following on the heels of their experience with the Ark (1 Sam. 5:1-6:21), the Philistines, no doubt, exercised a bit more caution in their dealings with Israel.

Gaza During his Judgeship

Samson went down to Gaza. We are not told the reason for the visit. The unfortunate rendering by the KJV discussed above could easily lead to an assumption that it was lust since he chose the house of a harlot for his rest (Jud. 16:1). Nothing in the account, however, supports such a conclusion. Apparently it was not uncommon in that day for the houses of harlots to function as inns, just as in the days of Joshua when the spies stayed with Rahab in Jericho (Josh. 2:1). There was probably a very practical, but less sensational, reason for the visit.

"Now there was no smith found throughout the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock."—1 Samuel 13:19, 20

The Philistines enjoyed a technological edge and they very jealously guarded it. Their iron was greatly superior to the brass of Israel. Though much to their chagrin, no doubt, their iron did not stand up to Shamgar's ox goad, Samson's jawbone of an ass, or David's stone from a brook. Whatever the reason for Samson going to Gaza, the removal of the city gate once more demonstrated to the Philistines the great power of the God of Israel. Though God was using them to punish his people he was not going to let them have complete freedom to do as they willed. The Bible does not indicate the time of the visit but it was probably near the end of Samson's twenty year judgeship. His great defeats

against the Philistines would have faded in their memories. The removal of the gate would have jarred them and renewed in them a desire to get rid of him. So their subsequent bribery of Delilah may have been a direct outcome of Samson's visit to Gaza.

Delilah

As his time came to a close Samson did let the love of a woman come between him and his relationship with God. The silence of the Bible indicates that they both were unmarried at the time. There is nothing said about Delilah's race or religion. She could have been a Hebrew. Both peoples lived in the valley of Sorek, and the name Delilah is Semitic in form.

When a broad view is taken of Samson's life, his failure because of love is understandable. Though married at an early age, before he could enjoy the fruits of that relationship it was lost. Shortly thereafter his countrymen rejected him. They take him captive and turn him over to the enemy. Apparently he then lived alone for twenty years, carrying the burden of his loss and his rejection. He probably had few friends as most would be in awe of his great strength. There is little wonder, then, that he would be blinded by this love for a woman, a relationship that provided much needed human companionship. . . . and, he did love Delilah.

"And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah."—Judges 16:4

Because of his love Samson was not able to see Delilah's weakness. His love led him to share a confidence she could not keep. So God departed from him. He was taken captive and blinded.

His Victory

In the end, however, Samson accomplished God's purpose for him. He called upon God with the confidence he had had in the past with the faith he had had, and he was heard (Judg. 16:28). The destruction of the temple of Dagon and the death of a great number that were in it set in motion the events that led to the Israelite defeat of the Philistines at Mizpeh.

"So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel."—1 Samuel 7:13

As the angel had declared, Samson did begin to deliver Israel out of the had of the Philistines (Judg. 13:5). Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon—all the faithful of old—believed God, believed in his promise. So did Samson. His life reflected that belief. Jehovah is not ashamed to be called the God of Samson (Heb. 11:16).

When Did Samson Live?

To fully understand the story of Samson it is necessary to correlate events in his life with events in the contemporary history of Israel. The beginning point for such a quest is the birth announcement. The angel declared Samson would begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines (Judg. 13:5). This indicates that the announcement and Samson's birth was subsequent to the beginning of the forty year punishment of Judges 13:1.

Though by no means absolute, the Scriptural testimony seems to indicate the end point of that forty year period was Israel's victory at Mizpeh under the leadership of Samuel. "So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."—1 Samuel 7:13

This Israelite victory was preceded by a twenty year period during which the Ark of the Covenant rested in the home of Abinadab (1 Sam. 7:1, 2). The Ark had been placed there after its return by the Philistines. Its capture had been brought about by Israel's defeat at Ebenezer, and its loss resulted in the death of Eli (1 Samuel 4).

Hence Samson's twenty years of judging in the days of the Philistines (Jud. 15:20; 14:4) must have taken place during the latter half of that forty year period following Eli's death and during the time the Ark rested in the house of Abinadab. His marriage must have been at the midpoint of that period when he was in his late teens—about the time of the Ark's capture.

If this scenario be correct, the defeat of Israel at Ebenezer took place a short time before the capture of Samson by the men of Judah. This would explain their great fear of the Philistines and their willingness to turn Samson over to their enemies.

"Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us?" (Judg. 15:11).

Also this scenario would place the destruction of the temple of Dagon, along with that of a great number of Philistines, shortly before Israel's victory at Mizpeh, and would thus explain an otherwise inexplicable text. Israel had gathered at Mizpeh not to do battle, but to pray (1 Sam. 7:5)—a consequence of a great change that had come over the people. "And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long, for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD."—1 Samuel 7:2

That last clause was dropped in the text without explanation. There is no indication of any kind of the cause of Israel's sudden change of heart. If Samson's victory in death happened just before this change, as seems to be the case, then we have the answer. Samson's great act of self-sacrifice would have been the catalyst that brought on Israel's lament and thus the subsequent deliverance from the hand of the Philistines (Jud. 13:1; 1 Sam. 7:13).

NEHEMIAH-FAITH FACES A CONSPIRACY

"They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his, hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

- Nehemiah 4:17

A verse by verse study in Nehemiah 6.

The picture was bleak in those post-exilic days of Jewish history (about 460 B.C.). Jerusalem, the city of gold in its glory days under Solomon, had become little more than a heap of ruins. The Jews who had returned from the Babylonian captivity were depressed by the primitive living conditions. Even the temple which Zerubbabel had rebuilt was so meager when compared to Solomon's magnificent edifice that those who had seen both temples wept for the misfortunes of Israel. (Ezra 3:12, 13). In addition, the city was surrounded by enemies who bitterly opposed the Israelites who were trying to rebuild the city. No wonder that Nehemiah, a faithful Jew and cupbearer to Cyrus, king of Persia, reacted as he did to the news of Jerusalem's plight.

And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and ,prayed before the God of heaven. -Nehemiah 1:3, 4

Upon returning to Jerusalem, Nehemiah surveyed the situation and motivated the populace to rebuild the wall. Ridicule and threats from the surrounding peoples forced the laborers to work with hods and trowels in one hand and weapons in the other (Neh. 4:17).

Negotiations Proposed

Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.-(vs. 1, 2)

Having failed with ridicule and threats, the enemies formed a conspiracy to lure Nehemiah outside the safety of the city to the fortified city of Ono, some forty miles northwest of Jerusalem. There, under the ruse of a peace conference, they hoped to slay him.

While there were many tribes opposing Israel, the trio mentioned in these verses represented the largest of the enemy forces. Sanballat, a Horonite, was a Samaritan from the north; and Tobiah, an Ammonite, came from Transjordan, on the east (Neh. 2:10). The Arabians from the southeast were represented by Geshem, or Gashmu.

With only the installation of some twelve gates remaining, this plot was an effort by Israel's foes to thwart the work. The city of Ono was undoubtedly chosen because it would appear to be neutral ground, not under the command of any of the three conspirators. However, the approach to it led through a precipitous mountain pass where Nehemiah's band could be easily ambushed. Appropriately enough the name Ono means *grief*, and that is just what they wanted to cause Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's Response

And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it; and come down to you? (vs. 3).

Knowing that the very cause of the proposed conference was to stop his work of rebuilding the city walls, Nehemiah used his project as his reason for refusing the proposed negotiations.

Such singleness of purpose is a lesson to all who seek to accomplish a work for the Lord. A line from a familiar hymn expresses it well: *My goal is Christ and Christ alone!*

Not to be easily put off, the conspirators pressed their cause with repetitive invitations.

Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner (vs. 4).

It has been well said of Satan, "If you can give him credit for nothing else, at least you have to admire his persistency." How often the same is true with our experiences. Meeting a temptation with refusal may be done once with resolute rejection, but facing the same test over and over again tends to wear down resistance.

How vital are the words of the Apostle Paul in this regard: *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:12).*

An Open Letter

Unwilling to give up after four rejections by Nehemiah, the conspirators tried another tactic an open letter read to all the people.

Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together (vs. 5-7).

The letter contained three specific charges against Nehemiah: (1) fomenting rebellion against Persia; (2) personal ambition to be king; and (3) mounting a public relations program to achieve these ends.

The first charge is supported by the evidence that they were building the wall; the implication being that building fortifications anticipated attacks and, since the surrounding tribes were feigning a willingness to negotiate, it must be against Persia that Nehemiah was building fortifications. The fallacy of their argument is quickly evident when considering where the conference was proposed -- a mighty walled and fortified city itself--the city of Ono.

The second charge was more subtle. Nehemiah had been duly appointed governor of Jerusalem by Cyrus (Neh. 2:7-9). In carrying out his duties with a populace that had become apathetic to their religion and discouraged as to their prospects, Nehemiah had to take a heavy hand. He berated the nobles soundly for oppressing their own people (chap. 5). This would naturally raise a certain amount of enmity in return by the former leaders of the Jews. Sanballat sought to enflame this incipient unrest with this open letter.

The final charge, like so many of the great Adversary's attacks, was based on a half truth. In point of fact, Nehemiah had encouraged the prophets to proclaim that there was a king in Jerusalem. That much of the charge was true. What was false was the implication that Nehemiah was the king they were proclaiming. In fact he was encouraging them to prophesy that Jehovah was their king. He desired to ignite the religious vision which should provide the true motivation to rebuild Jerusalem, restoring it to the glory of the former days.

Nehemiah's Second Response

Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of throe own heart. For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the wont; that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands (vs. 8, 9).

A simple denial of the accuracy of the charges was sufficient for Nehemiah. He saw no need to produce witnesses and evidences that the charges were false. Such would only serve to further detract him from his work. How reminiscent is this of Jesus of whom it was prophesied: *he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth (Isa. 53:7).*

However, resolute as Nehemiah was in his answer to Sanballat, the effect the open letter might have on the people did sufficiently concern the governor to make it a matter of prayer -- a short and simple prayer *Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. Too frequently Christians seek to stand in their own confidence against the temptations of the Adversary. How appropriate to all is this short prayer so that fear not weaken our hands in the Master's service.*

Sanctuary in the Temple

Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired; that I should be afraid and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me (vs. 10-13).

Little is known of Shemaiah. We may presume from this brief account that he had been a prophet of the Lord, for Nehemiah seeks the interview with him. However he evidently was not faithful, since we conclude from his words that he had come under the payroll of Tobiah and Sanballat. The term *shut up* is somewhat ambiguous and may imply that he either was an invalid-a shut-in-or under the restraints of house arrest. The former seems the more likely.

His counsel seems most appropriate. The suggestion was not to spend all of his time in the temple but merely to sleep there at night when assassination would be a great danger. His work on the walls need not be hindered. Not only would the temple give sanctuary, but it would also put Nehemiah in close proximity to the protection of God.

Such a Man as I

Two fallacies in Shemaiah's proposition caused Nehemiah to see that he was impelled by the conspirators. The first was the example that would be set. We underrate Nehemiah if we take the expression *such a man as I* as indicating boastfulness. Rather, his position as leader of the nation is recognized. If he sought such protection, the indication of fear on his part would lower the morale of the laborers. He must not show any inclination to heed the risks, thus setting an example for his co-workers to likewise despise the dangers.

His second reason for turning down this offer was even more important. In verse 13 he indicates that to accept the offer of temple sanctuary would be *to sin*. A little background on Nehemiah can help us see how such an act as entering the temple could be considered a *sin*.

Before becoming governor, Nehemiah had been King Cyrus' cupbearer (Neh. 1:11). The office of cupbearer included supervising all the king's food, for poisoning was a common method of royal assassination. To ensure that such an one would not be open to sexual temptations, the custom was to castrate such servants-the *eunuchs made by men* to which Jesus refers in Matthew 19:12. Such eunuchs were not admitted into the temple (Deut. 23:1). Therefore Nehemiah perceived that the suggestion to seek sanctuary was really to invite his own death sentence by Jewish law.

My God; think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear (v. 14).

Rather than seek vengeance on those who opposed him, Nehemiah simply turned them over to God for a proper judgment according to the principle *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap* (Gal. 6:7). The mention of Noadiah and other prophets shows how well Israel's enemies had penetrated into the city, bribing many of the Lord's prophets or at least intimidating them with doctrines of fear.

A Quick Work

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God (vs. 15, 16).

To build a fortified wall around a city as large as Jerusalem in less than two months would be a remarkable feat in the best of times. Doing it under the conditions that Nehemiah faced—apathy within and animosity without—was even more remarkable.

The effect was two-fold. For the laborers the fruit of their work was a reward in itself and a tribute to the vision, perseverance, and the organizing genius of Nehemiah. For the enemies round about it was a sore blow. As the *New International Version* phrases verse 16, they *lost their self-confidence*.

For those who truly perceived that this *work was wrought of our God* there was the opportunity of proselytizing to the Jewish faith. The effect of Nehemiah's faithfulness was similar to the effect of Queen Esther's faithfulness a few years hence, when God saved Israel from the conspiracy of Haman.

And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them. -Esther 8:17

So it is with the Christian building his walls of faith; when friends and neighbors see the accomplishment of God's work despite opposition, more than any words they might speak, the example of their faith provides a greater witness.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. - Matthew 5:16

The Enemies Persist

Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Bereehiah. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear (vs. 17-19).

Though the wall was built and Israel's foes suffered a blow to their self-confidence, they were far from giving up. Through intermarriage with Shechaniah, one of the priests of Israel, Tobiah had inroads to many of the nobles of Judah. A letter campaign spreading rumors went on for some time. However the effect of this endeavor was greatly minimized by the wallbuilding faith of Nehemiah.

The wisdom of God's laws prohibiting intermarriage with the people of the land was once again shown. This same wisdom was given by the Apostle Paul as a rule for marriages among Christians.

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.-1 Corinthians 7:39.

To stop this Israelite practice, Ezra called for reform and a putting away of foreign wives. (See Ezra 9 and 10.) Interestingly, Shechaniah, this same priest, was the first one to come forward.

And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Ezra 10:2

May we be as quick to acknowledge our individual shortcomings.

The lesson to the Christian is equally clear. Our resistance in faith against temptations is a lifelong work. In the words of the hymn:

*Ne'er think the victory won,
Nor once at ease sit down;
Thine arduous work shall not be done
Till thou hast gained thy crown.*

Every temptation to leave our work of building the walls of Zion must be met with the same resolute steadfastness of Nehemiah: "Will I go to negotiate in the plains of Ono. Oh No! I have a work to do in finishing the work of the Lord

Be Strong and of a Good Courage

"Be strong and of a good courage; for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them."—Joshua 1:6

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The dictionary rendering of courage is bravery, boldness; and of the word strong, powerful. Be thou powerful and very brave is what the Lord meant.

As the world estimates courage and strength people go to great lengths to prove their skill and stamina in feats of strength and endurance—climbing great heights, crossing oceans alone and in a variety of different ways—but that is not what the Lord wants of his people. Strength of mind and moral courage are the qualities to be acquired. True, his ancient people did have to endure hardness of a physical kind, and as we read the life of Joshua we recall the unpleasant task he had of smiting and subduing the surrounding nations before he could possess the land for the children of Israel, but it was a far deeper and more significant thing that was required of him. As recorded in the last few verses of chapter one, the children of Israel were willing to accept him if he would keep faith with God and give them good leadership.

In keeping with this line of thought let us examine the record of some of the people mentioned in Holy Writ who demonstrated these virtues in their little span of life—records that come down to us as examples of how we should live today.

Job

We recall the very severe trial that Job had to endure, Wracked with pain, and passing through a time of mental anguish, he was forced to listen to the arguments of worldly-wise men. His resistance to the admonition "curse God and die," and his confidence in God in saying, "If he slay me yet will I trust him," prove that although he was unable to combat their arguments, his faith was still strong. The whole book of Job is eloquent with the fortitude of this man of God, showing a picture of the suffering of the whole world of mankind and their final deliverance and inheritance.

Gideon

Now let us look at Gideon. Recall his strength of endurance and courage, and his implicit trust and faith in God when the numbers were whittled down to three hundred. In Judges, chapter 7, we have a wonderful picture of the way in which God ordained which should be the ones that would assist Gideon in the remarkable victory that was his. The seemingly simple test of how they drank the waters had in the act of being prepared for any emergency. It makes stirring reading even in these days when we take so much for granted, to refresh our minds as to the way God dealt with his servant. We read of the culmination of their victory, how they took up strategic places (one hundred on each of three sides of the Midianites), how they had lamps in their pitchers, and trumpets in their

hands, and at a command from Gideon they "brake the pitchers and holding the lamps in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled."—Judges 7:20, 21.

There is a very similar Scripture in 2 Chronicles 20, verse 17, which reads: "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you." Surely these passages have a very special meaning for us at the present time.

David

Coming to David, we will only take one example from a life full of incidents. The one that stands out most vividly is the slaying of the Philistine giant Goliath.

Here was a strapping young lad obviously in the prime of youth, but even so, no match for such an antagonist. We can well understand why the Philistine hero should have derided him and poured scorn on those who sent him. In 1 Samuel 17 we read how King Saul clothed David in his own armor and put a helmet of brass on his head and armed him with a coat of mail. Lastly he got him to gird his own sword on his armor.

Needless to say, David felt must uncomfortable in all this paraphernalia, and of course cast it all off. He then took five smooth stones from the brook and put them in a bag. And he took the sling that he had used so many times before when he had protected his father's sheep from the lions and the bears. You will also remember the confident words of David when he was face to face with his adversary. "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (v. 45).

What a marvelous example this is for the Lord's people today—this is the only safe way to meet our Adversary.

Elijah

Elijah is another example of tremendous courage and dependency on the Lord. We recall the times he had to go before Ahab and Jezebel to prophecy before them; and also how he had to flee on more than one occasion and she sought his life. Just picture his steadfast courage as he stood on Mount Carmel and defied the priests of Baal. In 1 Kings, chapter 17, we are told of the famine that had been in the land; of how there had been neither dew nor rain for many years; how he was succored by the ravens and the widow of Zarephath. And then in the 18th chapter we come to the wonderful climax, and to the passage where his strong faith was vindicated.

We readily call to mind the assembling of the great multitude of people, all the children of Israel and more than 800 prophets of Baal and of the groves. How Elijah prepared an altar and had the sacrifice slain. And after it had been lain on the altar he commanded that they fill four barrels with water and that it should be poured over the sacrifice so that it run over the wood even down to the trench that had been dug around the altar. This he repeated so that the whole thing was thoroughly saturated—and this at a time when there had been no rain for years.

Then crying on the Lord: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (v. 37, 38).

Later Elijah called upon the Lord: "It is enough, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.: But the Lord showed him that he still had work for Elijah to do, that even at that time there were many thousands that had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah had a very unpleasant mission to perform, nevertheless he carried on, steadfastly determined to follow the leading of the Lord. He was called at a very early age to the prophetic office and continued to prophesy for forty-two years. One commentator has said of him: "We find him sensitive to a most painful degree, timid, shy, hopeless, desponding, constantly complaining and dissatisfied with the course of events, but never flinching from duty. . . . Timid in resolve, he was unflinching in execution; as fearless when he had to face the world and he was dispirited and prone to murmuring when alone with God. Judged by his own estimate of himself, he was feeble and his mission a failure; really, in the hour of action and when duty called him, he was in very truth 'a defended city,' and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land. He was a noble example of the triumph of the moral over the physical nature."

It is worthwhile noting how he was called, as recorded in the first chapter of Jeremiah, verses 4-9: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet among the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words into thy mouth."

Daniel

Passing on we come to Daniel and try to conjure up the scene as he was thrown into the den of lions—an innocent man wrongfully condemned by jealous men—his feelings of complete trust and confidence in the Lord and the courage he showed when actually confronted with the ferocious beasts. His exultant reply when the king went to visit him the next morning: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. might."

Lessons for Today

How do these reflections affect us? Are we being strong and very courageous in our present, everyday experiences? Do we trust sufficiently? Are we bold to come to the throne of heavenly grace to get the necessary strength to assist us in our trials and difficulties?

Again, let us think for a moment how we react in times of national and international stress. These upheavals sometimes make us fearful, and as human beings we shrink from them, but should we not rather look on them as additional opportunities to prove ourselves. We are instructed to be more than overcomers; if this is to be true of us we shall need to be equipped with the whole armor of God. We shall need to be sure that it is securely buckled on, that it is kept bright and shining, and that there are no cracks anywhere, and particularly, we should keep our eyes ever on the goal set before us, to the end that we shall be overcomers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

What an ennobling thought, that the great God of the universe has called us to be joint-heirs with his son. That, just as he dealt with the heroes of faith, whose lives we have briefly touched on foregoing; dealt with them by fighting their battles, preparing the way for them, cheering, encouraging, and fortifying them when they lost hope; so does he deal with us if we are willing and obedient.

If we are truly his, and his spirit witnesseth with our spirit that we are the sons of God, then each of us can claim the promise: In quietness and confidence shall be our strength, while with joy we are able by the eye of faith to look forward to that wonderful day—not far distant—when God shall "make wars to cease even unto the ends of the earth. Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted in the earth." (Ps. 46:9, 10)

Righteous Lot - When Faith Weakens

"And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked."—2 Pet. 2:7

Have you ever thought of Lot as a just or righteous man? Would you be more inclined to call him "bad Lot" or "weak Lot?" Why would the Apostle Peter use this appellative "just" to describe a character usually viewed as one who was far less than faithful?

Lot was the nephew of Abraham, being the son of his older brother, Haran. He was part of the entourage which Terah, Abraham's father, led out of Ur of the Chaldees northwestward along the Euphrates river to a place they named Haran, in honor of Terah's oldest son, now dead.

After the death of Terah, Abraham left Haran for "the promised land," a land which God had indicated he would inform him of when he was still residing in Ur. This act of Abraham is denoted as one of the great acts of faith in his life by the Apostle Paul in Heb. 11:8.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

If it was faith which prompted Abraham to leave Haran, was it any less faith on the part of Lot? Some might say that he was younger, and therefore he had little choice. But his sister, Milcah, was left behind. He did have a choice. He chose to go with Abraham. Assuredly, this was an act of faith on Lot's part! Yet, he was not singled out for this act of faith as was Abraham. Why? Because his faith did not continue to grow to maturity.

Arriving in the land of Canaan, both Abraham and Lot prospered so much that "the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great." (Gen. 13:6) Strife developed between their herdsmen. In an amicable discussion, the two decided to part company. Lot chose the then fertile area around the base of the Dead Sea. Although now a barren area, it was apparently agriculturally productive before the cataclysm that destroyed the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

This decision to relocate in the area of Sodom was not in itself an act displeasing to God. Given first choice, it was only logical to select the area with the best prospects for prosperity. However, it did place Lot in a position of temptation. Prosperity is always tempting, and one of the greatest antagonists of faith. Where prosperity exists, man feels less and less need for God.

Six Steps to Sin

Following the course of temptation, the move to Sodom traces his decline in six successive steps.

1. **STRIFE.** (Gen. 13:7) Disagreements are natural. No two independent people can long live without differences of opinion, but these disputes need not degenerate into strife. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." (Jas. 3:16) Strife breeds suspicions of the other person's motive and destroys the incentive to work together. While Jude says that we are "to contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 4), he does not say that we are to be contentious for it.

2. **BEHOLDING.** (Gen. 13:10) Every materialistic act begins with a desire. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (Jas.1:15) Modern commercial enterprises spend millions of dollars for the very purpose of creating just such desire. Stores invest heavily in creating eye appeal. For Mother Eve, one of the appeals of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" was that "it was pleasant to the eyes." (Gen. 3:6) Similarly, one of the strong temptation to the Christian is "the lust of the eyes." (1 John 2:16)

3. **CHOOSING.** (Gen. 13:11) Desiring an object in a store window does not mean that we must buy it. Noticing the fertility of the Jordan valley, Lot could have considered other aspects of his decision: perhaps he should defer to his older uncle, Abraham; perhaps he should have taken into consideration the character of his new neighbors, which was already iniquitous. But Lot carried through with his desires and made a positive decision to make a choice based solely on materialistic considerations.

4. **DWELLING TOWARD SODOM.** (Gen. 13:12) To Lot's credit, he did not choose to live in Sodom, with all its iniquities. Nevertheless, by pitching his tent "toward Sodom" he was inviting the future temptations which caused him such loss in his later life. In similar vein, Solomon writes in his love song, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." (Song of Solomon 2:15) It is the little temptations, the small sins, which sear the conscience, opening the door for the greater sins to follow.

5. **LIVING IN SODOM.** (Gen. 14:12) True to this pattern, it is only a short while before we see Lot changing his residence to within the city. No doubt the conveniences of an urban environment over a desert tent and the prosperity which enabled him to purchase a home in the city were all factors in this decision. "Surely," he may have thought, "there can be no greater danger in living in the city than in dwelling in its environs." But there was, and it took two great cataclysms to extricate him from his difficulties.

6. **SITTING IN THE GATE.** (Gen. 19:1) The position of "sitting in the gate" was reserved for the elders, or judges, of the city. It denoted a position of prominence and esteem. After experiencing the wickedness of his Sodomite neighbors, Lot chooses not to leave the city, but to try to reform it. Numerous compromises would have been required

to win the acceptance and necessary votes to hold such a high office, but a conscience which is seared often chooses to ignore the dangers of such compromises.

Two Tragedies

As a result of Lot's living in Sodom, his very life came into danger on two occasions. In one he was taken captive, in the other he fled to avoid destruction. In the one, the whole city was saved for Lot's sake. In the other, the whole city was destroyed for Lot's sake.

The first of these incidents is recorded in Genesis, chapter 14. Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, had been holding the people around the Dead Sea as a tribute people. A rebellion finally occurred, in which all the residents of Sodom, including Lot, were taken captive.

Upon hearing of this, Abraham gathers together his entire household, some 318 men, and sets out on a rescue mission. Successful, he restores all of Sodom's possessions to the king of Sodom, and Lot to his home. On the return journey he is met by Melchizedek, king of Salem, and after partaking of ceremonial bread and wine, gives Melchizedek a tithe, or ten percent, of the spoils.

The second tragedy is recorded in the 19th chapter of Genesis, and this time the attacker of Sodom is God himself, because of the extreme wickedness of the residents of both Sodom and its sister city, Gomorrah. After negotiating for its being saved from destruction if 10 righteous people could be found therein, Abraham leaves the matter in God's hands. (Gen. 18)

Ten righteous were not found. Only Lot, his wife and two daughters were sufficiently concerned to flee the city before an earthquake cause subterranean deposits of sulfur and salt to be forced up through the resultant fissures. The friction thus caused set the sulfur on fire and, with the accompanying salt, rained back on the earth. Lot's wife, stopping to look longingly back, became encrusted in the descending salt and was turned into a salty pillar.

How well these two incidents demonstrate workings of God in our lives. How often our wrong decisions put us in harm's way. How frequently the Lord delivers us from these situations, even though they may be of our own making. Delivering us, he does not change our life's environment. He returns us to our individual Sodoms. The choice is ours, whether to remain or flee. The time comes, however, when no other choice is left us. It will be "flee, or die."

It is worthy of consideration, in this regard, to note the counsel of Rev. 18:4, ""And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

If Israel had not sprinkled their doorposts with the blood of the lamb on the night of the passover, they, too, would have suffered the terrible consequences of the last plague on Egypt—the death of their firstborns.

It is incumbent upon the Christian to note the consequences of his own actions, to ask the Lord for deliverance and to accept that salvation. But they must go further. They must repent of their former wrong conduct and change their future course of action lest, ultimately, they be destroyed with the wicked.

Vexation of Soul

"And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.)"—2 Pet. 2: 7, 8

Peter's evaluation of Lot, despite his history, was that he was "just" and had a "righteous soul." Noting Lot's involvement with the Sodomites, he assures us that this was vexing to his soul. It is worthy of note that the word translated "vexed" in verse 7 is very different from the one translated "vexed" in verse 8.

Both the New International Version and the Revised Version translate verse 7 with the word "distressed." Lot was distressed with the unrighteous acts of his neighbors. He did not agree with them. He probably sought his judgeship with a hope of reforming the city, perhaps enacting a more strict legal code on moral matters.

The word "vexed," however, in verse 8, comes from the Greek *basanizo*, a word often translated "torment:" but which, according to Strong's Concordance, meant literally "a touch stone." A touch stone was used in gold mining, to assay the gold content of ore. The ore was rubbed against the stone and, if containing gold, would leave streaks of gold on the touch stone. Idiomatically, it came to signify a "putting to the test, an investigation, to assay or assess."

The thought, then, in our text, is that, being distressed with the unrighteousness surrounding him, Lot's soul was put to the test. How would he react. Would he seek to reform, or would he flee? It was, indeed, a vexing question.

Entering the Defenced Cities

A parallel to this lesson is found in Jer. 8:9-22. Here he talks of "wise men" who had "rejected the word of the Lord." In consequence their wives and fields were given to others. Their response to the troubles around them was to say, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." Like Lot, they compromised with the evil for the sake of maintaining peaceful relationships—co-existence.

The further deterioration in conditions around them lead them to the decision of Jer. 8:14. "Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD."

It was this decision, one that was just as wrong as Lot's decision to remain in Sodom after being rescued by Lot, which causes these "wise men" to lament in verse 20: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Righteous Lot

Thus, in spite of the deterioration of Lot's faith and his continuing association with the Sodomites, he earns Peter's judgment as "just" and "righteous." But, as the story shows, being righteous does not necessarily mean being right. His righteousness related to his heart intents. They were good. He was vexed, distressed, by the wickedness which surrounded him. But his decisions were not right. Thus he failed of the high commendation of faith which Paul gave his uncle Abraham.

The judgment of Lot in the Lord's eyes is not given in the Bible. We do well, though, to profit from his mistakes and not to repeat them. As for his judgment or ours, how comforting are the Apostle's words in 2 Cor. 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

NEWS AND VIEWS

PBI NEWS

Are you a member of the Pastoral Bible Institute? Subscribing to the Herald magazine does not mean that you are a member of the Institute. While the major work of the Institute is to publish the Herald, other activities occur as well. These activities include printing and distributing booklets on various biblical topics, sponsoring speaking trips for directors and editors, and retaining stewardship over the financial assets of the Institute. Membership in the PBI gives a right to elect directors and to be eligible to serve as a director or editor. Assuring a continued resource of members who are willing and capable of serving in these capacities is a concern of the current directors. If you have not considered membership, please do so. It costs only \$5.00 - a one-time membership fee. You can join by sending in your fee and a request for membership to the PBI secretary at the address listed on the inside front cover. And don't forget to tell a friend about the Herald. Write for an extra issue to share with a friend.

Moving?

During the past year, we have lost subscribers because of no forwarding orders. If you are moving, please let us know as far in advance as possible. With the new expanded format of the magazine, it costs even more to have an issue returned by the post office. Just drop a post card to the PBI secretary, and it will assure that your Herald will find your new home along with you!

Pilgrim Service

Several of our directors and editors travel regularly and would like to include visits to classes of the Lord's people or to the Lord's isolated. Classes are easy to find isolated ones are not. Check the itineraries of the directors and editors listed on the back cover of each issue. If you know of someone in an area covered by one of these visits, please write to the secretary.

LETTERS

May/June Issue

Shalom. When the Lord's first and second advents are considered, I am so glad this is the second and not the first. Glad some of the tragic history is in the past. Your May/June Herald featured Israel's 45th anniversary. Haven't we so much to be thankful for. More history past. In Israel itself, no longer second and third class citizens of other countries. (Jeremiah 30:8). (Israel) has a government of their own people. Nor do we have to dread the coming of Zechariah 13:8 (Rotherham). The hunters destroyed two-thirds---six million of nine million-of European Jewry. Many of us can remember the displaced persons camps, the frail immigrant ships, the survivors of Hitler being turned to Cyprus. What a trying time for the survivors.

Then, too, when Jerusalem was supposed to be under the U.N. jurisdiction, their flag was immediately the target of Arab snipers. It was blue and white and looked like Israel's! We read of the battles to free a corridor up to Jerusalem through Arab territory which finally ended in half the city not being cut off from the rest of Israel. Like the Lord's telegram of Zechariah 14:1, 2.

Even when we think of Ezekiel 38 and 39, it is the forces of Gog who fall upon the mountains of Israel.

A rabbi on Israeli radio said, "Since Israel was reborn she has experienced one miracle upon another, fulfillment of the prophetic word. There is no doubt whatsoever that God has returned to us - now we all must return to God." As Bro. Lanowick would have remarked, "it is the goodness of God that leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4).

The article contributed on *Israel and the Land* on page 19 of the May/June Herald, I found very interesting.

Elaine Myhill, Belleville, Ontario

Thank you for sending me a copy of the May-June 1993 issue of the Herald. I am pleased that the group which sponsors the publication is friendly to the State of Israel. [*Editor's note: The author of the letter was given a copy of the Herald issue on Israel.*]

I liked the passage on page four in which the author of the first article invokes the metaphor (from Ezekiel) of dry bones being revived, as being exemplified by the revival of the State of Israel after centuries of nonexistence. The same article contains, on page 6, the beautiful passage from Isaiah, "out of Zion shall go forth, the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The author also rightly points out that the "stiff-necked" people of Israel have not always been admirable in their ways; he says correctly that many were unfaithful to God.

Another good point is made in the second article, where the author declares that, whereas the phrase "decline and fall" applies to many nations, in Israel's case, the proper phrase is "fall and rise."

The third article highlights Isaiah's famous expression, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." The use of these and other uplifting words of Isaiah in Handel's oratorio "The Messiah" is very moving. Although I do not adopt the theology of Handel's oratorio, I have always been spiritually exalted when I hear it.

William Gerber, Washington, D.C.

A GIFT OF LOVE

In memory of Audrey Grant, born Audrey Mabel Charlton July 26, 1917 and died February 3, 1992, Melbourne, Australia:

The 1993 Melbourne Christian Convention was the first one in many, many years not attended by Audrey. However, it (was) not without some of her thoughts written in the 1930s while living in the Canberra area. The spirit of her gift of love remains with us.

(Following is an excerpt from the pamphlet *Audrey* distributed in Australia)

Humble Pie

I had the blessed privilege of one day visiting the wisest man in all the earth. Craggy mountains, deep gullies, dangerous ravines and tearing rapids shut him out from the majority of mankind; but once having the courage to pass these, the way to his dwelling lay through pleasant woods, gaily carpeted with multitudes of highland flowers, and the blue vault of heaven above, peeping through the leafy branches. There are many stories to tell of this adventure. The character of my host was exemplary, being most accomplished in all manner of pursuits, including even the culinary arts. He kindly lent me his recipe book, that I might see for myself what ingredients he used to obtain the results I so much admired. "There is one recipe of which I am particularly fond," he said to me as I turned the pages. "Read it with care, for oft partaken it keeps us healthy and gives us strength." And this is what I found:

Humble Pie:

First, clean your dish thoroughly, inside and out, then place it in the oven called Zeal to become thoroughly heated.

Then take one cupful of the flour of Patience as the base, and with the fingers gently rub in two tablespoonsful of Determination's butter. Add a shake of salt from the container Courage, a handful of Gentleness, well pounded, and moisten with oil gathered from the herb Do-As-You-Would-Be-Done-By.

When these ingredients are thoroughly mixed, turn them out and roll with Self-negation, place around your dish and trim the edges with your knife of Perception.

For the filling, mix seven spoonsful of Sweet Temper with three of the golden sugar of Silence, and mix with a sufficient quantity of Milk of the Word.

This Humble Pie will be found most easy of digestion if made according to the above recipe, and will be of inestimable value to those who make it part of their daily diet.

-submitted by John Arthur Grant, Collingwood

BIBLE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A recent witness effort took place in Cape May, New Jersey, where there was a denominational gathering of churches (see *Editor's Journal*, May/June, 1993) aimed at promoting unity. Several Bible Student classes in the area ran newspaper advertisements, put up posters, and placed booklets in local hotels. The witness effort offered a new booklet printed in Chicago called *One World Church?* This booklet presents the biblical view of the church and discusses the prophecies regarding the confederation of churches and the subsequent fall of Christendom at the end of the current age. A preliminary report indicated that several dozen booklets were distributed. Copies of the booklet may be requested through the Institute secretary. These booklets are printed by the Chicago Bible Students.

AROUND THE WORLD

Christendom

The Presbyterian Church has taken a step toward uniting with eight other Protestant denominations. Under the plan, approved during a meeting in Orlando, Florida, in June, the churches would keep their own denominational structures and ordination process, but would share their services and ordination ceremonies. David Taylor, general secretary of the meeting, said "There is nothing of merger in this proposal, but everything of removing old barriers. This is an attempt to begin to repair that 450-year-old schism." (Dating back to the Reformation.)

(Associated Press, June, 1993)

A study of the pattern of donations in 31 Protestant denominations shows that people are giving fewer dollars for use by their denominations at large. Sylvia Ronsvalle, executive vice president of Empty Tomb Inc., the nonprofit Christian research organization that is conducting the ongoing study, said, "Our data point in the direction of the extinction of support for denominational structures in the middle of the next century." The study said that many church-goers prefer to restrict their gifts for specific purposes such as supporting missionaries or youth choirs. As a result of the diminished contributions to the denominations, many have had to severely trim budgets for staff.

(Washington Post, 6/10/93)

Americans are losing confidence in the churches. A 1993 Poll conducted by George Gallup, Jr. found that only 29 percent of Americans said they have a great deal of confidence in religious institutions. Only 53 percent gave good marks to the church over other institutions. In a 1983 poll, 62 percent of Americans favored the church over all other institutions.

(Princeton Religion Research Center)

Protestants are gaining at the expense of Catholics. In Brazil, for example, about 30 million Brazilians, 20 percent of the population, are Protestants; in 1960 the figure was about 4 percent. In 1960, 93 percent of Brazilians said they were Catholic, while today, 72.5 percent hold Catholic beliefs. That trend exists throughout Latin America, where the Protestant population has tripled to about 12 percent in the past 30 years. The growth is attributed to the increase in Pentecostals evangelizing throughout Latin America. News reports cite faith cures and exorcisms as commonplace.

(New York Times, 7/4/93)

The Supreme Court ruled on June 11 to strike down a law in Hialeah, Florida, prohibiting animal sacrifice. In striking down the statute as violating the constitutional right to free exercise of religion, this excerpt from the decision; written by Justice Kennedy, was published on June 12: "The case involves practices of the Santeria religion, which originated in the 19th century. When hundreds of thousands of members of the Yoruba people were brought as slaves from eastern Africa to Cuba, their traditional African religion absorbed significant elements of Roman Catholicism. The resulting syncretion, or fusion, is Santeria, 'the way of the saints.' The Cuban Yoruba express their devotion to spirits, called orishas, through the iconography of Catholic saints. Catholic symbols are often present at Santeria rites, and Santeria devotees attend the Catholic sacraments. The Santeria faith teaches that every individual has a destiny from God, a destiny fulfilled with the aid and energy of the orishas . . . and one of the principal forms of devotion is an animal sacrifice . . . The sacrifice of animals as part of religious rituals has ancient roots. Animal sacrifice is mentioned throughout the Old Testament and it played an important role in the practice of Judaism . . ." The decision went on to say that "although the practice of animal sacrifice may seem abhorrent to some, religious beliefs need not be acceptable, logical, consistent, or comprehensible to others in order to merit First Amendment protection."

Israel

[Editor's Note: Interpreters of Ezekiel 38 have speculated that during Jacob's Trouble, those that descend on Israel to "take a spoil" may be doing so to tap into Israel's brain power in dealing with natural resource crises. It is interesting that Israeli scientists have found what may be the answer to the middle East's most severe problem: water.]

The wind tower is the serious proposal of a team of Israeli scientists, engineers, and architects who believe they have found a cheap method of generating electricity. Located in the Negev desert near the Red Sea, the station would rise 3,300 feet-twice the height of the World Trade Center in New York City. The tower would draw water from the Red Sea and produce up to 80 billion kilowatt-hours of electric energy a year at one-fifth the cost of generating electricity today in the U.S. In some versions, the tower could also desalt sea water, providing cheap water for desert farming. The fund-raising arm, Technion, is already putting together a group of U.S. companies to sponsor the construction of the tower. A former water commissioner of Israel, Dr. Dan Zaslavsky, has proposed agreeing with Jordan to dig a canal from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea and placing a wind tower generator at each end of the canal to produce all the electrical needs of both countries.

(New York Times, 6/19/93)

Human Rights

A new group, Compassion in Dying, has been formed to help the terminally ill commit suicide. It is the nation's first organization which will provide professional help such as doctors, nurses and members of the clergy to offer "counseling, emotional support and their time to be present at the time of death." The group organizers said that the terminally ill should have a right to a humane death. Ralph Mero, a Unitarian, said that "There's nothing in the Bible that says terminally ill people who are suffering should not commit suicide."

(Seattle Press, 6/12/93)

BOOK REVIEW

Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century by Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security advisor, is a book that should interest all students of prophecy. Mr. Brzezinski presents a provocative viewpoint of today's post-Cold War world, worrying that the former communist societies will fail to achieve the material success they want and turn to new doctrines of hate out of frustration. He sees global inequality amongst occupants as far more threatening and worrisome than the prospect of economic rivalry amongst nations.

He identifies a "permissive cornucopia" in Western democracies, particularly the U.S., that place the desires of the individual above the greater social good or distinctions of right and wrong based on religion and morality. Mr. Brzezinski presents 20 dilemmas that must be solved or America is "threatened by dissolution" or guerilla warfare. These dilemmas range from low savings rates to moral corruption propagated by mass media.

In 30 newly-formed countries Mr. Brzezinski identifies a "whirlpool of violence" (such as the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia). He sees an uprising of the billions of the world's poor that live in the Far East as a major threat to stability in emerging powers such as china.

This short (240 pages) book will surely make one reconsider thoughts of a more peaceful, more stable world now that the great Russian threat is gone. Mr. Brzezinski presents a picture of a more unstable world, no longer driven by the ideology of two great powers, but now driven by the desires and whims of the masses. For those Bible students who believe that Joel 2 and 3 suggests an uprising of the world's masses to form "The Lord's Great Army" will result in anarchy, this should provide speculative support. The book is published by Scribner's.