

The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

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The Last Week of Jesus' Life

Editors' Journal

Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. . . . But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death.—John 11:53; 12:10

Two deaths and two restorations to life form a parenthesis for the closing experiences of Jesus of Nazareth upon this earth. When he performed the miracle of bringing Lazarus back to life, Jesus sealed his own death sentence. The die was cast. All that remained was for the drama to be played out to its conclusion.

So determined were the Jewish priests to arrange his death that Jesus found it prudent to withdraw until the due time for his death at the Passover celebration. "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples" (John 11:54).

When he returned, less than a week before his crucifixion, the pace of events picked up. These days provided a roller-coaster of emotions. From the heady start with a feast in honor of the Lord and his anointing by Mary, through the triumphal entry where he was proclaimed "king of the Jews" by a throng strewing palm branches in his path, to his assertive expulsion of the money-changers from the temple precincts they were seeing Jesus take charge in an uncustomarily bold manner. Then events took a solemn turn. Mystified by his conduct at the Last Supper, where he played a servant's role in washing their feet, they walked with him the familiar moonlit steps to the Garden of Gethsemane, only to witness there his betrayal and arrest. In uncharacteristic and illegal manner they saw a rush to judgment that ended with their Master crucified on Calvary's hill like a common thief.

The events are only too familiar to almost every Christian. They evoke both the emotions of sadness for his cruel sufferings and joy for the redemption his death provided. Above all, the heart is filled with gratitude for the greatest gift of all time, a gift that ultimately provides the opportunity of life for every man, woman, and child who has ever lived.

The Last Week

That was "the week that was." More space is spent on the closing scenes of the Master's life than on any other portion. The gospel accounts combine to give an immense amount of detail to the events of these few days. These are the events we commemorate in this edition of **THE HERALD**.

On Tuesday, April 2, many Christians will join in a simple celebration, as Jesus commanded, "in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25). For some time prior they will meditate upon those events of nearly two thousand years ago. Hopefully the articles in this journal, one covering each day of that week, will be helpful in this meditation.

In *Hosanna to the Son of David* the author treats the appreciation shown Jesus—first by his followers at the supper in Bethany with the anointing of his feet, then in the morning by the people meeting him as he rides, like a king, into Jerusalem on a donkey.

The following day his authority is emphasized in the happenings chronicled in the article *The Cleansing of the Temple*. With uncharacteristic aggressiveness, he drives the profiteers from the Temple. Like the Israelites of Old Testament times, he cleanses his Father's house of all leaven, especially that of malice and wickedness.

Final instructions for his disciples are given the next day as they begin to grope with the reality of his departure (though they knew but little of what it would mean.) In *Our Lord's Great Prophecy* he answers their questions as to what signs would portend his presence and the end of the age.

These hectic activities earn a well-deserved time of quietness with his followers to prepare himself for the ordeals that lie ahead. This day is treated in *A Day of Rest*.

Now the intense opposition begins to solidify as we contemplate the familiar story of the Last Supper, the walk to Gethsemane, the trial, and finally, the crucifixion in *This is the Day the Lord Hath Made*.

The confusion, sorrow, uncertainties, and anxieties of the Sabbath day are chronicled by *Fasting in the Bridechamber*, in sharp contrast to the following day when the women hastening to the tomb were given the glad news, "He is risen." The author of The Day of the Resurrection shows the grand climax to the week where their intense sorrow was turned into everlasting joy.

The concluding article is the "Verse by Verse Bible Study," Jesus: *Our Rock and Our Rod*, looking at the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, where Christ is pictured.

May this Memorial Season be rich for each of us as we continue to contemplate, not only the death of Christ on our behalf but the privilege of sharing in his sufferings so that we may also participate in the joys of his reign.

Sunday-Monday, Nisan 10

Hosanna to the Son of David

And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.—Mark 11:9, 10

By Ernest Kuenzli

One of the most stirring episodes in our Lord Jesus' brief life and ministry occurred just four days before his death. On the tenth day of Nisan (called Abib before the Babylonian captivity), Jesus, the Son of God, came in triumphal procession to Jerusalem and to the Jewish people as their Messiah, their king and savior. While our Lord's followers and a number of the Jews rejoiced at his arrival, the nation and its leaders rejected him; as a result, the nation lost its opportunity to then become the spiritual seed of the Abrahamic promise, the kingdom of priests and holy nation promised by Moses (Gen. 22:17; Exod. 19:5-6; John 1:11).

The Passover

The first scriptural mention of the tenth day of Nisan occurs with another stirring event—the Passover. The Passover took place more than one thousand years before our Lord Jesus' death, and yet the Scriptures link these two events together as type and antitype. Prior to the Passover, the descendants of Jacob had been dwelling in Egypt for nearly 430 years, the last years under bitter servitude and bondage to the Egyptians (Exod. 1:14). God raised up Moses and sent him unto the Israelites as their deliverer. Through Moses God poured upon the Egyptians nine different plagues to force Pharaoh to release the Israelites, so they could serve him in the wilderness. Nine times Pharaoh saw the plagues removed and refused to release the Israelites. It would take one more plague, the slaying of the first-born, to release them. In preparation for the tenth and final plague, God established the religious calendar for the Israelites. He decreed Abib (Nisan) as the beginning of months and instructed that, on the tenth day, they were to select a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, and separate the animal from the flock until the fourteenth day; then between the two evenings, they were to kill the lamb, sprinkle its blood upon the lintel and doorposts of their dwelling place, roast the lamb and then consume the entire animal that night (Exod. 12:1-14).

On the tenth day the lamb whose blood would protect the first-born was chosen, separated from the sheep and goats, and brought into the household where it was kept until slain. From a practical standpoint, the lamb taken into the household was given only water to purge its digestive system. This was necessary so that the entire lamb including its entrails could be roasted with fire and then fully consumed during the passover night. The Lamb of God

All of this pictured what was to happen many years later, when Jesus would present himself to the same nation as their savior, the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The perfect man Christ Jesus, holy, harmless and undefiled, separated from sinners was pictured by the unblemished Passover lamb (Heb. 7:26). He is the antitypical passover lamb, slain not only on our behalf, but on behalf of the whole world of mankind (1 Cor. 5:7; 1 John 2:2).

On the tenth day of Abib, A.D. 33, Jesus approached Jerusalem. The scriptures tell us about our Lord and his disciples got to Bethphage from Bethany, at the crest of the mount of Olives, approximately 2 miles from Jerusalem, "then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them and bring them unto me" (Matt. 21:2). The disciples followed Jesus' instruction, found the animals and untied them. When questioned by the owners of the animals, the disciples responded with Jesus' words, "the Lord hath need of him" and they were allowed to take the animals (Luke 19:33-34).

Zechariah's Prophecy

This special entrance into Jerusalem fulfilled a prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee, he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass and a colt the foal of an ass." Zechariah's prophecy described the tradition of the kings of Israel riding to their coronation on an ass. Previously, our Lord had resisted the disposition of some of the people to take him by force and make him king (John 6:15). Now, however, under the divine plan, the due time had come for Jesus to offer himself as king to the Jews and thus fulfill God's promise to that people that his favor should be to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16).

Our Lord Jesus fulfilled every element of Zechariah's prophecy. He came unto the Jews as a just, or righteous, perfect man, having kept the law, doing only those things which pleased his heavenly Father (John 8:29). As the Apostle Paul states in Hebrews 4:15, our Lord was without sin. Jesus also came to the Jews with salvation. Jesus plainly declared to the Jews that he was the bread of life, that he would give his flesh for the life of the world; and except they would eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, they would have no life in them (John 6:51, 53-54). Finally, Jesus was meek and lowly of heart (Matt. 11:29). He humbled himself, first to give up his glory as a spirit being and be made flesh and then further became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:7, 8). He did not present himself as the Jews expected, a conquering general to liberate them from the Roman yoke. Instead, he presented himself as their passover lamb to liberate them from their bondage to sin and death.

Once the animals were found, the disciples accompanying Jesus (and a number who had come up from Jericho and had witnessed our Lord's power and teachings enroute to Jerusalem) took a more active role in the day's activities. The disciples placed their garments upon the animals, set our Lord upon the ass and then the entire group began to pay our Lord homage as a king in the customary manner for their day. They spread their

outer garments in the way for his beast to tread upon and began plucking grass, flowers, and branches of palm trees and strewing these also in the way (Luke 19:36; Mark 11:8).

This group, with our Lord at the head, proceeded toward Jerusalem and along the way met a multitude coming from the city, looking to meet Jesus and Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Upon meeting the Lord, this group turned and became a vanguard, shouting like the rest, "Hosanna to the Son of David." And so our Lord Jesus was preceded and followed by a very great multitude of people crying, "Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Mark 11:9-10).

Hosanna!

The expression of those proclaiming our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, "Hosanna to the Son of David, . . . Hosanna in the highest," refers to Psalm 118:25, where the psalmist writes: "Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD." More than just an expression of adoration, it was a plea by those present that the Lord Jesus save them; save them from the oppression of the Romans and restore the kingdom to Israel (Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6). Our Lord's followers had seen Jesus' mighty works and were looking forward to the day when the Old Testament prophecies and our Lord's statements concerning the kingdom would be fulfilled. No doubt they had in mind the glory Israel enjoyed at the height of their kingdom. Little did those individuals realize that our Lord Jesus' salvation would far eclipse the glory of Israel under David and Solomon and would instead restore the earth and the human family to the glory of perfection enjoyed by our first parents before they sinned.

When the multitude cried "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were describing Jesus as their king, as one of the royal line of David. When the Pharisees present in the multitude heard this, they complained to Jesus to rebuke his followers for proclaiming him as king. Jesus, knowing Zechariah's prophecy should be fulfilled, refused. He countered that if the multitude had not shouted and proclaimed him king, the very stones would have cried out to fulfill Zechariah's prophecy (Luke 19:39, 40).

When the procession reached the top of the Mount of Olives and the city of Jerusalem came into view, Jesus halted the procession and wept over the city, saying "O, that thou hadst known, even thou, at this day, the things which are for thy peace! But now are they hidden from thine eyes . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:41-44). While the multitude that accompanied him proclaimed him king, Jesus did not consider this group to represent the nation. Instead, Jesus clearly indicated that the Jewish nation, as represented in their leaders, would reject him.

Because of their blindness and failure to recognize the time of their visitation, the Jews were left desolate and cast off from divine favor for a "double," a period of disfavor equivalent to their earlier period of favor. Jerusalem was laid level with the ground and not one stone of their temple was left upon another (Luke 19:43, 44).

Only a remnant of the Jewish people were in the proper condition of heart to accept Jesus as their Messiah during his first advent. The remainder of the spiritual seed of the Abrahamic promise, church of the first-born, the body of Christ, would be selected from among the gentiles.

The goal of our Lord's journey was Jerusalem, the Holy City. Once he arrived, Jesus did not go to Herod's palace to take possession of his throne nor to Pilate's palace to demand recognition from the Roman authorities for his kingdom. Instead, as the Messiah, he went to his Father's house, the temple. No doubt the temple was crowded with Jewish pilgrims who had come to worship the Lord and observe the Passover. The appearance of Jesus and the multitudes who followed him crying "Hosanna in the highest" led to even greater commotion. The scribes and Pharisees, while full of anger, were powerless to stop our Lord. Later, at the temple, Jesus began to exercise his kingly authority. He expelled those who had violated the temple by selling doves for offerings, changing money, and making a profit by taking advantage of the Jewish pilgrims from other lands (Luke 19:45, 46). Rather than violating the law, our Lord was authorized under the Law, as was any Jew, to use as much force as necessary to maintain the sanctity of the temple.

Three Aspects

This triumphant procession into Jerusalem can be viewed from three aspects. First, to the followers of Jesus and the multitude, it was a grand occasion, a moment of triumph. Here was the great prophet, who had the power to heal the sick and raise the dead, presenting himself to the Jewish nation as their Messiah, their king. The group was full of enthusiasm and hope, expecting that the longed-for blessings upon Israel were about to be realized. They had great faith that Jesus would make himself and them invincible against all enemies and fulfill all the glorious promises foretold by the prophets. The disciples did not understand and seemed to have forgotten our Lord's words concerning his need to go to Jerusalem to be condemned by the scribes and Pharisees, to be scourged and crucified by the gentiles and then rise the third day (Matt, 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34).

Second, to Herod, Pilate, the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, this was merely a parade of a fanatical leader and his ignorant followers. Herod and Pilate had no fear that Jesus and his unorganized followers were any challenge to their authority and power. However, the Jewish religious leaders were concerned that the fanaticism of Jesus' followers would spread and bring down upon them and their nation the wrath and further oppression of the Roman authorities. They were concerned that Romans would come and take away both their place and their nation (John 11:48). And so they counseled together to apprehend our Lord and have him killed. Despite his many miracles and the words of God which he spoke, none of the chief rulers accepted him as the Messiah. These who boasted in God and the law, who considered themselves a light to them which are in darkness and a guide to the blind, crucified their Messiah—in ignorance (Rom 2:17-20, 23; Acts 3:17).

Third, Jesus and all the holy angels rejoiced in the procession as an important step in the outworking of God's divine plan of the ages. It was the prelude to our Lord's greater

triumph through the sacrifice of himself: his resurrection from the dead, being highly exalted by God, given a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth (Phil 2:9-10). As a child of God, we share this view of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Monday-Tuesday, Nisan 11

Cleansing the Temple

Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-22

And Jesus came out from the temple, and was going away when his disciples came up to point out the temple building to him.—Matthew 24:1 (NAV)

Contributed

The building was magnificent to behold—the embodiment of pride for the Jew of Jesus' day—the temple. The Rabbis thought of Jerusalem in glory: "The world is like unto an eye. The ocean surrounding the world is the white of the eye; its black is the world itself; the pupil is Jerusalem; but the image within the pupil is the sanctuary" (*Jerusalem and the Temple*, Alfred Edersheim, p. 39).

Where did this temple come from? Why did it rank so highly in the eyes of the Jewish people? What role did the temple play in the last week of Jesus' ministry?

The Third Temple

Herod the Great was responsible for the construction of the great temple in Jerusalem. King Solomon had built the first temple (1 Kings 5-8), which was destroyed when Jerusalem fell to Babylon nearly 600 years before Jesus' time. When the exiles returned from Babylon, a second temple was built under the leader Zerubbabel. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe the building of this temple. Zerubbabel's temple had been an eyesore and shame to many from the day it was built. The aged men among the returned exiles wept when they compared Zerubbabel's temple to the glory of Solomon's temple (Ezra 3:8, 12). Vastly inferior and diminished in beauty, Zerubbabel's temple had become defiled by wars, greatly decayed, and impaired.

Herod undertook the construction of a magnificent—even opulent—third temple on the same site, partly to win favor from the Jews and partly to augment his already well-deserved reputation as the builder of outstanding public and private edifices. Herod shocked the people by telling them that the temple Zerubbabel, constructed centuries before was too small. Piece by piece the old gave way to the new temple. By the time Jesus entered Herod's temple that last week of his ministry, the new construction had been going on for forty-six years. It would not be completed until shortly before Titus would come and destroy its beauty once more, along with the rest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

On Mount Moriah a thousand foot square area was cleared. A nearly 600 feet high supporting wall was built from the base of the mountain to support the landfill needed for the large court area, the Court of the Gentiles. Along the court's boundaries, cloisters

were built, roofed with cedar and supported by multiple rows of Corinthian columns. Each marble monolith was so large that three men could barely join hands around it. In this main court were the booths of the money-changers, who for the convenience of pilgrims changed foreign coins into those acceptable by the sanctuary. Here, too, were the stalls where one might buy animals to offer in sacrifice. There were rooms or porticos where teachers and pupils met to study and discuss Hebrew and the Law. There were the noisy beggars familiar to Oriental scenes. Crowds entering for the Passover swelled the population of Jerusalem to over three million (*The Jewish World*, Will and Ariel Durant, p. 37).

In the center of the Court of the Gentiles was a smaller court, separated by a four foot high partition. Only Jews could enter the area called the Court of Women. Marble slabs written in both Greek and Latin warned any gentile that if he went any farther he did so under the threat of death.

Still further in the center of the temple area was the Court of Israel, where only Jewish men were allowed. Inside this area was the Court of the Priests, where only priests were permitted. Steps led through bronze doors seventy-five feet high and twenty-four feet wide, above the doors a beautiful golden vine. Through the bronze doors, accessible only to priests, was the temple proper, built entirely of white marble with a gold-plated façade. The interior divided into two rooms. The Holy contained the golden candlestick, the incense altar, and the table of shewbread; but in the Most Holy there was nothing whatever—the Ark of the Covenant having been lost or hidden centuries earlier.

Now after forty-six years of construction, Herod's temple was a magnificent sight to behold. For its splendor the Jews almost forgave the Corinthian columns of the porticoes and the golden eagle that—defying Jewish prohibition of graven images—symbolized the power of Judea's enemy and master, Rome, at the very entrance to the temple. The people were proud of this great shrine, which ranked among the marvels of the Augustinian world. At the Antonium, in the corner of the temple grounds, the Roman garrison watched over the temple's proceedings, ready to pounce upon any evidence of a Jewish problem that might develop. The leash upon the Jewish people was grasped firmly in the hands of Rome.

The Sadducees

The Sadducees controlled the priesthood, temple rituals and finances, while the Pharisees lived mainly in the towns of Palestine. The Sadducees controlled the synagogues and, therefore, the education of the average Jewish family. They primarily came from the aristocracy, in contrast to the Pharisees, who were from the lower, middle, and artisan classes. With the responsibilities of the temple came the governing of the business that took place within its walls. The rates of exchange and commissions for the moneychangers must have been well known by the priests as were the other business transactions. Sadducees were few in number. Although not every priest was a Sadducee, every Sadducee was a priest. The Sadducees dominated the Sanhedrin during Herodian

rule and cooperated closely for political and social reasons. The rebuilding of the temple and their freedoms stemmed from that alliance.

The Court of the Gentiles was the least sacred area of the temple grounds. Here temple business was transacted. The items bought and sold pertained to the sacrifices. Quite possibly, however, the traffic extended to all kinds of trading, giving rise to much confusion, noise, and contention. To the sober and sincere the trading was an exceedingly improper atmosphere for the temple of the Lord, yet nothing was done by the priests to correct the situation.

Money-changers

Judea was subject to the Romans. Money in current use was of Roman or Greek origin embossed with images of pagan deities. Such coins were not acceptable as a gift to God or as payment of the annual temple tax. The acceptable coin was the shekel of the sanctuary. The last coinage of these was in 140 B.C. These shekels were quite scarce in our Lord's day and sold at a premium. Money-changers, like the bankers of today, exchanged these coins. When exchanging coins brought to the festivals by pilgrims from far countries, the moneychangers could manipulate the exchange rates, often as high as a twelve per cent profit. They could readily abuse their position during the times of major festivals.

The enormous Jewish religious establishment of synagogues, the temple, Levites and priests was supported by an elaborate system of offerings and taxes. Offerings were sheep, cattle, doves, and grain at the various festivals or in fulfillment of individual vows. The first-born male of each species, including a family's first-born son, was to be given to the priests. The son could be "redeemed" for a set fee. Sometimes the offerings were of money or of valuable pieces of gold or silver work. Such offerings were put into receptacles in the temple court known as the treasury. The Law required offerings to equal a "tithe" or a tenth of a person's gain. Understandably, what should be considered "gain" became a matter of extensive litigation and regulation.

Every male who turned twenty was required to pay an annual "temple tax," an amount equal to a half-shekel. This tax had its origins in a tax that Moses levied on all males after a census, when he sought precious metals for the materials in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:13; 38:26).

Close to three million Jews paid the temple tax. Add to this the harvest offerings; the pieces of meat from 300,000 lambs sacrificed at Passover; the sin offerings which occurred daily; the heavy offerings of wealthy families; the sale of animals and birds for sacrifices (guaranteed unblemished on temple grounds). It seems that the finances passing through the temple coffers were enormous indeed and ever growing.

In the Chamber of Utensils was a great store of gold and silver vessels used in worship services. Funds in the Chamber of Secrets were secretly handed to the "poor of good family." Private individuals, too, could bring their money to the treasury for safekeeping.

Operation of this remarkable enterprise required competent, detailed administration. The preservation and security around such an accumulation of wealth must have required the watchful eye of many Levite guards, but the ultimate protection was the sanctity of the temple.

A Good Week for Business

The scene is set for the last week of Jesus' ministry—crowds—noise—business transactions—the dishonest taking advantage of poor pilgrims—the animals—the non-religious affairs surrounding the temple area—the utter lack of reverence and decorum bordering the house of the Lord.

" And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city."—Mark 11:15-18 (Cf: Matt. 21:12-13 and Luke 19:45-48.)

This was not the first time Jesus had entered the temple under such conditions. He had been here for other feasts. He came here with Mary and Joseph as a boy. But this time was different. He had entered the city of Jerusalem as a king and for this reason it is believed that all four gospel accounts refer to the one event near the end of his ministry. The timing of his triumphant entry and its prophetic implications for the end of the Gospel age in our day directed his actions and responsibilities. He now claimed the right to cleanse the temple area, something that reflected directly upon the priests who had allowed the atmosphere of the temple to become so irreverent.

The actions of Phinehas (Num. 25) set a precedent for the responsibility of each Jew to carry out the work of the Lord in assaulting any crying offense which disgraced the Lord. While this responsibility existed, apparently no other Jew had attempted such an unusual display. The chief priests heard of Jesus' actions and wanted to stop him, but they were afraid because the multitude was astonished at his teaching. The people hung upon his words. With Jesus much was said in few words . . . "It is written, my house shall be a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17). As others would note, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). The blind and the lame came to Jesus and he healed them. The priests watched helplessly at the wonderful things Jesus was doing. They heard the deafening cries of the children, "Hosanna to the son of David" and they were sore displeased (Matt. 21:14, 15). The Sadducees did not want any one person to spoil their profitable arrangement with the civil government.

Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, everyone will

believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." (John 11:47, 48; RSV).

Strange as it seems, the priesthood, in corrupt times, has continually spearheaded opposition to reform. Were they afraid that others would see they were no better than the money-changers or profaners of the temple? Did they fear that their system would be overturned if true worship to God was restored? Did they fear the Romans? No wonder they were sore displeased. An Antitypical Cleansing

As an event shortly preceding his crucifixion, the cleansing of the temple finds an antitype in a similar work at the end of the Gospel age. This is the time for casting out from the spiritual temple—his body (I Cor. 3:17), the consecrated church—those who are unworthy to be of that body. The worthy ones, in contrast, are correspondingly blessed.

The scourge of small cords was a fit symbol of the harmonious doctrines accomplishing this task. In this time of cleansing, sifting and purifying the temple of God, none will be permitted to remain whose purpose is in any way to make merchandise of God's holy things.

The Merchandising of Religion

Intelligent people—not necessarily limited to the Christian community—have long noticed the merchandising of religion. Everything possible is hedged about with penalties, prohibitions, and limitations. The people are led to believe that they can present nothing acceptable to God except through their priesthood. Catholics are expected to pay for every birth and infant baptism; they are expected to pay for every service, that they may participate in the blessings of the common mass. They are expected to pay for marriages, funerals, prayers, as well as the privilege of being buried in holy ground. Payments for privileges extend to those who wish to pay for loved ones that have died. This has been a fitting counterpart of our Lord's day, making merchandise of the temple things.

The Protestants have also carried merchandising to their congregations with strong appeals for donations which accompany membership. Promotional items offered on television are interspersed with pleas to support missionary projects, hospitals, crusades, and buildings. Fund raising projects in church buildings—bingo games—bake sales—rummage sales—to whatever extent any of these use religion as a business to collect more money from the people, they become merchandizing that Jesus condemned that day in the temple. Christian people have been blessed by their response to the numerous demands nevertheless, the principle is wrong. Whatever is given to the Lord should be voluntarily given, with love for him, with a desire to render unto him the first-fruits, the best of all we possess—time, influence, and money.

The Temple of His Body

"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). The Jews demanded of our Lord by what authority he set up so high a standard as he required of them in the cleansing of the temple. He answered them as noted in the above text. It was a dark saying of our Lord and few understood the meaning. The Jews thought he was speaking of the glorious temple of Herod under construction for forty-six years. They were incensed at him, and we recall that this was one of the charges against him a few days later. They took his words as blasphemy of the temple, that he could raise it up again in three days if it were destroyed.

Jesus spoke of the temple of his body. The disciples evidently got the thought that he referred to his fleshly body as the temple of God and supposed that his prediction was fulfilled three days after his crucifixion. But the Lord spoke of the temple of his body—his church—of the temple of which the Apostle Peter wrote, that we as living stones are built together upon Christ for a habitation of God through the Spirit. The thought that Jesus was referring to his fleshly body would imply that his fleshly body would be raised from the tomb and would contradict his own statement in John 6:51, "My flesh I give for the life of the world." And Paul confirms this by saying, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, now know we him so no more" (2 Cor. 5:16).

In due time, his glorious church, the new creation, will in the first resurrection come forth a glorious temple of God, composed of living stones and filled with the glory of God. This will be on the third day also. If we consider the 6,000 years past as being six days of a great week and the Millennial Age as the seventh day or year period, then we find it was early in the fifth of these days that our Lord was sacrificed. Many of his followers suffered likewise during the fifth day, through the sixth and into the seventh day. We are into that seventh day and soon the entire body of Christ will be completed and perfected. Then the great temple of God will be completed—raised on the third day—ready for the great work of the Millennial age—the blessing of all the families of the earth. Through that work all may have the opportunity of coming into full harmony with God and gaining the blessing—eternal life.

Tuesday-Wednesday, Nisan 12

Our Lord's Great Prophecy

"As he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?" (Matthew 24:3, AV, Wilson Diaglott)

By David Rice

It had been a long and labored day. Rarely had our master experienced such intense confrontation. Many hours earlier, as he entered Jerusalem this last day of his public ministry, his authority had been publicly challenged. Later he confuted the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians who were sent to trap him in his words. Still later he publicly condemned the Pharisees in a series of "woes" decrying their hypocrisy. His most severe rebukes had only just passed his lips (Matt. 23:29-33), when he added these solemn and chilling words. ". . . upon you may come all the righteous blood . . . from Abel . . . unto . . . Zacharias . . . All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets . . . Behold, your house is left unto you desolate . . . Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." With this he withdrew. They saw him no more until his arrest.

His disciples were confused. The condemnation of the Pharisees probably did not surprise them. But there was something in these closing words that did not well comport with their views of the imminent establishment of Messiah's Kingdom. Perhaps their confusion caused them to remark on the splendid buildings about them as they left the temple—as though to suggest that the judgments just uttered could not imply the wasting of all this magnificence. Jesus' reply was not reassuring. "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." (Matt. 24:2)

The Disciples' Questions

We know not what discussion may have filled the time as they passed from Jerusalem eastward, through the Kidron valley and up the slope of Mt. Olivet. As they paused to rest in the declining day, it was clear the Lord's words were still the focus of their thoughts. They inquired of Jesus, "when shall these things be" that you speak of? "What will be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age" (Diaglott) when you "come in the name of the Lord" as you mentioned?

These simple questions touched issues beyond the knowledge of those who framed them. Certainly the end of the Jewish polity did come on that generation, as Jesus predicted. But not until the close of the Gospel age will the enemies of Jesus fully acknowledge him: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And of the passage of that age, these disciples knew nothing.

Our Lord's Response

It is not surprising therefore that our Lord's response includes lessons appropriate to the conclusion of both ages. This directly leads to one of the puzzling aspects of the prophecy—distinguishing which parts apply to which age. Another related difficulty is determining the precise narrative of Jesus' reply, for the records of his response in Matthew, Mark and Luke differ somewhat. We will consider this second issue first.

Comparing Matthew, Mark, and Luke

Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 12, 17, 21 are the pertinent chapters. In Luke we find parts of the narrative in three different chapters, and the context of each implies they were on different occasions. The occasion of Jesus leaving the temple (found in both Matt. 24 and Mark 13) is found only in chapter 21 of Luke.

Also, we notice that Mark's record is more limited. For example, we find two portions of Matthew's record missing in Mark: (1) verses 37-41, 28, (2) verses 43-51. Then we notice these portions of Matthew are also missing from Luke 21, though they do appear elsewhere in Luke, namely in chapters 17 and 12 respectively.

Thus the two parts of Matthew 24, which Mark 13 omits, are parts Luke implies were spoken at other times. This allows the inference that Matthew augmented Jesus' reply with words Jesus spoke on other occasions (topically related to the issue at hand) or that Jesus uses the same words on more than one occasion. Naturally, these portions have some valuable lessons. However, for brevity we will restrict our discussion to Mark's narrative.

Mark 13

Let us return to the first difficulty mentioned above—distinguishing which portions of Jesus' reply applied to which ages. A variety of possibilities exist. Some expositors conclude that the whole pertains to only the close of the Jewish age; others appear to take an opposite view, applying nearly all of our Lord's reply to the Gospel Age and its close.

Perhaps the true key is found in this comment on Matthew 24:15-22 and Mark 13:14-20: "while it . . . had a typical application to the trouble in the end of the Jewish age, its . . . most important application belongs to the trouble with which the Gospel age terminates" (*The Battle of Armageddon*, page 570). Two reasons for this conclusion are especially telling.

(1) Though the "abomination of desolation" (Mark 13:14) did have a fulfillment in the Roman armies which sieged the holy city, it is clear from Daniel's prophecies and Revelation's reference to them that there was also an "ABOMINATION THAT MAKETH DESOLATE in nominal spiritual Israel; which was set up in power representatively in Papacy." (*The Battle of Armageddon*, page 571, see paragraphs 2, 3)

(2) Three apostles—Peter, Paul and John —refer to this prophecy when speaking about our Lord's second advent and the consummation of the church's hopes, which come at the end of the Gospel Age. Here are the citations. Peter: 2 Peter 3:4 refers to the "promise of his *parousia*," evidently drawn from the mentions of "*parousia*" in Matthew 24. (Cf. 2 Peter 3:10 with Matthew 24:43, "thief in the night.") Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16 mentions a shout, voice, and trump at the Lord's *parousia*. (Compare Matthew 24:31, "with a trumpet, and a great voice" [AV margin]. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:2 with Matthew 24:43.) John, in Revelation 1:7 speaks of his "coming with clouds" (Cf. Mark 13:26 and Matthew 24:30).

Therefore, we do not think the prophecy has a double application. As is generally true with prophecy, the immediate fulfillment is the more precise of the two. The second is the more important and far reaching. Let us now examine both fulfillments.

The Prophecy Applied to the Close of the Jewish Age

Mark 13:5-8. False Christs did appear (Acts 5:36, 37), also assorted distresses, earthquakes, famines and battles. But these were not the end, only "the beginnings of sorrows" which would later climax in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Mark 13:9-13. During this intervening period the saints would give their testimony amid much persecution and affliction. Nevertheless, the gospel was preached through apostolic and other labors throughout the civilized world.

Mark 13:14-19. Later Jerusalem would be sieged by the desolating Roman armies, bringing a time of intense distress on the people. The famine and internal anarchy of this bleak period are legend. There would come an opportunity for flight. This came when Vespasian withdrew his legions in A.D. 68 to return to Rome and claim the throne. However, flight during this respite required faith and a willingness to suffer the pains of a refugee. Better had they taken refuge before the Roman standards had taken position around the city again—but now at least flight was urged as their last and only remedy. It would be all the more difficult for those with children, and yet more painful if during the winter season. In those days would be great distress and affliction. "The suspension of the war in Judea during 69 . . . was of little avail to the Jews . . . fierce struggles for mastery still continued among the insurgents in Jerusalem. [Josephus] charges the rebel leaders with terrible enormities, of which the chief victims were the people of Jerusalem." (*Ancient Empires*, Newsweek's Milestones of History, page 151)

Mark 13:20. Had not the Lord intervened, the opportunity for this difficult flight would not have come. But for the elect's sake he did intervene, so that they were not swept away in the carnage which followed. The word "shorten" here is not *sustello*, "to contract, shorten" (Vines), but *koloboo*, "to cut off, amputate" (Vines). It well describes what the Lord did to the days of the siege—he cut it off, he stopped it, to allow a time for flight.

Mark 13:21-23. Do not be surprised if this crisis brings many claims of Messiah— here, there or another place—do not believe them, even if their claims are attended by signs and wonders. The crisis will not be resolved. "Behold, I have foretold you all things."

Mark 13:24-26. Now the worst comes. "In those days, after that tribulation"—the affliction of verse nineteen—"the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken." This is very much like the language of Isaiah when he symbolized the collapse of ancient Babylon (Isa. 13:10). Here it represents the collapse of Jerusalem in a dreadful carnage. The temple was burned, the city destroyed, the people slain—the light of Judaea was extinguished and her rulers fell in mighty ruin. Thus was the great power of their rejected Messiah made known (cf. Matt. 10:23).

Mark 13:27. But his elect would be spared, gathered, and blest. Indeed, in the aftermath of these judgments, the gospel banner would go forth with even greater brightness.

Mark 13:28-37. As the time of these events would not be foreknown, it would require alertness to watch the advancing signs, to grasp the import of events as they unfolded. The climax would indeed come within that generation, so the matter was urgent. Therefore, "take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is . . . and what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

The Greater Meaning for the Gospel Age

Mark 13:5-8. Many would "come in my name"—great Jezebel and her daughters—and would deceive a great many. Wars, famines, pestilences, persecutions and earthquakes would come—and are not these the very symbols Revelation records in seals two through six to mark the troubles of the Christian age? But these troubles are only preliminary to the end—only the "beginnings of sorrows."

Mark 13:9-13. During this age the saints would give their testimony amid much persecution and affliction. Nevertheless, the gospel would spread throughout the world before the end would come.

Mark 13:14-19. When you see the Christian abomination "spoken of by Daniel the prophet" standing where it ought not (2 Thess. 2:4), flee Judea, "flee to the mountains." For "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people." He is the refuge we seek as we flee Christendom. Flee when you see the abominations, all "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezek. 9:4). The flight will be difficult. Pray that it be not in the winter time but in the more favorable summer time of harvest.

Mark 13:20. The Lord will cut short the forces gathering for the last debacle—he will "hold back the four winds" to allow the flight of the saints, until their sealing is complete.

Mark 13:21-23. Do not be surprised if during the harvest time of flight many new voices rise, claiming great things and new insights —Mormonism, Spiritualism, and Christian Science—even if they are attended by the sign of good works. These are not the answer.

Mark 13:24-26. The final demise of organized Christianity will indeed come. The powers of this age will collapse in a fearful climax, bringing ruin where once stood imposing magnificence. Thus will the great power of the new King be demonstrated to the world—thus "shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."

Mark 13:27. His elect would be spared, gathered, and blest. They are gathered from "the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven," out of every part of Christendom, before its fall (cf. Zech. 2:6, 7). Afterward, the kingdom of Christ would spread with increasing splendor throughout the earth (cf. Luke 21:31).

Mark 13:28-37. As the time of these events is not foreknown, the saints through the age would require alertness to watch the advancing signs, to grasp the import of events as they unfolded. Therefore, "take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is . . . and what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Thus have we watched, thus have we seen, thus have we acted. We are living in the very days of harvest, and the Lord beckons all who have the ear to hear, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). Let us appreciate our present privileges. Let us appreciate present truth. Let us appreciate our commission to extend the call—"flee to the mountains"—to the Lord, and his kingdom. Now is not the time to slack our hand, dim our interest, or dull our fervor. Now is the time to be zealous in his service.

Wednesday-Thursday, Nisan 13

A Day of Rest

Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest . . . Hebrews 4:11

By Michael Brann

Perhaps no other single week of our Lord Jesus' earthly experience was as full of drama as was his last week. Looking ahead, the Lord realized how many goals he must yet accomplish. As we look at the Bible record, we see that Jesus kept a very busy schedule indeed. Knowing that he was to come to Jerusalem for the express purpose of dying made him keenly aware of the events remaining to be played out in order for the scriptural predictions to be fulfilled. He full well knew these would be his last days with his apostles and disciples. This would be the time to give them last minute instructions and words of encouragement.

There is no particular accounting of his activities on Nisan 13 in the scriptures. The gospel account is that he abode the night in the mount of Olives (Luke 21:37, 38). Some of the events associated with these last days are difficult to pinpoint as to the exact day he did this or that. Furthermore, there is no specific mention made of his retiring in Bethany. However, we think the idea is plausible. Other commentators have likewise suggested a gap in the record where no specific incidents are recorded for this Nisan 13. It thus seems likely that he spent this day quietly communing with his heavenly Father and a few of his beloved disciples.

In A.D. 33, Nisan 13 would have been the equivalent of our Thursday, thus it was not a Sabbath day nor any special religious occasion calling for a day of rest. Just three days prior, Jesus made a dramatic entrance into Jerusalem, the crowds laying palm branches in his path with a great deal of fanfare. The next two days were spent openly teaching in the temple and meeting with all the people. Also, we are given accounts of verbal skirmishes with the religious leaders, and the casting out of the money-changers in the temple itself. Just as this momentum was building to a climax, he chose to remove himself from the scene.

Why Did Jesus Rest?

The question naturally arises as to why Jesus would choose to rest in the middle of such a busy and momentous time. Two reasons will be given.

It seems that Jesus' very noticeable disappearance from Jerusalem and subsequent retirement called special attention to the fact that his public ministry was now completed. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Of course, he had to complete the plan by dying on the cross, but his mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, gathering out of them those who were Israelites

indeed, was complete. Those who manifested sheep-like qualities would be attracted to him, while those who manifested goat-like qualities were sealed in their minds to oppose the Lord and his plan as it was then unfolding.

From that day forward, he confined his remaining time to his faithful followers, instructing them in things which must shortly come to pass and his plans for sending them the comforter, the holy spirit, during his subsequent absence. Down through the Gospel age until this day, our Lord's focus is on his faithful disciples—feeding, guiding, protecting, and sustaining them. Once his body members have been completed and gathered to himself, he will turn his full attention to ministering to the general public: restoring them from death and all its encompassing effects; giving them an opportunity to receive him; all the willing and obedient may share in everlasting life on the earth.

The Sabbath Rest

This rest reminds us of a similar rest mentioned in Genesis 2:1-3, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because on it he rested from all his work which he had done in creation" (RSV). When the last of the creative days was finished, God rested. In other words, Jehovah God turned over the outworking of creation to his Son, the Logos or Word of God. Jehovah allowed sin and evil to spread. He did not use his mighty power to restrain the evil nor to lift humanity out of it except to place his work into the trustful hands of the Redeemer to finish it.

Jesus' Rest, An Example

A second suggestion as to why Jesus may have chosen this time to rest was to set us an example. We are confident that one priority he would never choose to leave undone, or forget to do, was to rest. We are not speaking of the necessary type of rest requisite after expending physical vitality. Oftentimes, Jesus chose to forego this kind of rest in exchange for continuing the work given him. Jesus always made time to commune with his heavenly Father. It was his custom, his daily habit, his joy. Knowing the days were short and the crucial hour of his impending death lay before him, he realized the value of this communion for grace to help.

Jesus had in these last several days intended to instruct and teach his special pupils, not just knowledge of parables and end time prophecies but character lessons as well. What better or more valuable and pragmatic lesson could he have taught than the privilege of resting by faith in God! When the pressures of life close in about us, when troubles afflict and worries press hard upon us, let us note the example of the Lord by taking time to quietly reflect on his leadings of the past and of his promises to uphold and sustain us, to give us sufficient grace for our hour of need.

There Remaineth a Rest

Hebrews 4:1-11 discusses the need for the saints to enter such a rest, suggesting the key lies in the exercise of faith in the promises of God. Israel did not enter into this rest because they failed to exercise such faith. Paul continues by saying in verse 12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In other words, the promises held forth in the scriptures have the power to allow us to enter into a complete rest by faith in them. By these we are not only enabled to overcome the weaknesses of the flesh, but to become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)!

The scriptures are overflowing with such promises. It is good to choose one or two specific ones at a time and think upon them and claim them as special gifts from the Lord to you, such as Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light;" and Isaiah 41:10, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Perhaps it was at this time while Jesus was in Bethany that Judas was meeting with the religious leaders, investigating how he might capitalize on information he could provide on the activities of Jesus. One lesson for us is to realize that "our adversary the devil" is always on the alert and ever vigilant seeking to devour the footstep followers of the Lamb. Knowing that such a powerfully evil and wicked being is constantly seeking to do us spiritual injury would nearly make us faint were it not for the fact that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psa. 121:3, 4).

An Active Rest

As a final consideration of this Nisan 13 day of rest, we realize that, for Jesus, resting did not mean inactivity or idleness. He was actively seeking the Father's guidance. Just as, though Jehovah God rests, he has not been inactive all these six thousand years. A being of such magnitude would not be idling his time away. He must be active in some domain of his vast universe, perhaps planning and preparing eternity for his spiritual and human beings to inhabit. As Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Likewise, since our Lord's completion of his earthly work, we are confident that he is actively engaged in gathering and preparing his body members, fitting them to occupy a special place in his kingdom.

Let us also be active during our rest of faith. Let us always be seeking to know and do the will of God, never thinking about taking a vacation from doing those things which are pleasing to him, nor allowing the flesh a few moments in the pursuit of power or pleasure.

Thursday-Friday, Nisan 14

This is the Day the Lord Hath Made

This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.—Psalm 118:24

By Richard Kindig

If ever there was a time in Jesus' earthly life when he could have felt justified in thinking about himself, it was this night—Friday, Nisan 14. His disciples had been arguing again about who the Master would choose to be greatest in the kingdom which now seemed so close. And Jesus had other burdens as well: the trauma of the cross, and the joy of redeeming the world. Not a detail of the immense task before him escaped his perfect mind.

The Last Supper

In this emotionally charged atmosphere Jesus and his disciples arrived at the upper room. With no women or children present to serve the water to the guests, the disciples may have looked around awkwardly for a volunteer to play the role of servant.¹ Perhaps Jesus rose silently, as is customary in today's Paschal hand washing service, and not only held the ceremonial water pot, but actually washed the feet of his men.

This act was most astounding. Only moments before, Jesus' followers had been so selfish. Now they were forced to accept menial service from their Lord. Yet Jesus gave no hint of indignation. Instead, we are told he "loved them unto the end." As he considered what it must have taken for Jesus, the Creator and Heir of the Universe, to be able to so meekly give such an abject demonstration of humility, John seized on the fact that Jesus must have drawn strength from his own relationship of trust in the heavenly Father: "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands . . ." (John 13:3). Yes, it was Jesus' personal experience with God that gave him the dignity and humility to reach ever deeper into his heart for the infinite springs of divine love. On the eve of his own darkest hour, Jesus finds something that his disciples need and supplies it.

The men did not break the silence until impetuous Peter blurted out, "Lord, dost THOU wash MY feet?" It seemed so illogical for the Son of the living God to be so humbled. Yet the lesson is unmistakable: Jesus politely insisted, over Peter's protests, that unless Peter submitted to Christ, and accepted this gift of love, he could be no part of his body (John 13:12-17; see also Matt. 25:31-46). Every gift comes from God, and all we can do is attempt to pass his gifts on to others. (Cf. James 1:17; Matt. 5:45; John 7:38.)

The Betrayer Identified

After the feet were washed Jesus commented to them, "you are not all clean." He was alluding to Judas. In John 13:18, he quoted David's lament in Psalm 41:9—"He that eateth bread with me has lifted up his heel against me." Later Jesus stated explicitly: (vs. 21) "Truly, truly . . . one of you shall betray me."

John, leaning against Jesus' bosom² whispered, "who is it Lord?" Jesus quietly whispered to John, "he it is, to whom I shall give a morsel, when I have dipped it." This would most likely have been the bittersweet mixture of charoseth³ and horseradish, carried to the palette on a piece of unleavened bread. The moment had great significance; for we are told that as he chewed that morsel from Jesus, Judas' heart was filled with Satan's spirit.

The lesson should not be lost In times of peril, brothers are in a unique position to hurt—or help—each other. As Jesus prophesied in a passage that seems to point with special force to the ends of the Jewish and Gospel ages, "brother SHALL deliver up brother to death" (Matt. 10:21). Let us pray that we be delivered from such temptations.

Judas left at Jesus' urging about 9:00 p.m.⁴ It is interesting that the disciples assumed that Judas was supposed to buy something "against the feast" (John 13:29). This indicates that they still expected the band to celebrate the main Passover feast at the time of the rest of the nation, on Nisan 15.⁵ They still had no idea that this unusual Passover seder they were holding was the only feast they would observe that year.

After Judas left, Jesus began to tell them what to expect. "Now is the Son of Man glorified . . . whither I go you cannot come" (John 13:33). Jesus now gave the men a "new commandment:" that they love each the other as Jesus loved them—with unswerving commitment based on the fact that the Father had chosen them (John 17:6). And he predicted that this sort of love would be the characteristic which would distinguish his disciples from other men: not their claimed love of God; not their righteousness; not their knowledge—but their love of one another. John later reinforced the importance of love in 1 John 3:10-19. He asserts that love, active amongst us, is an evidence that we are "of the truth."

But that night, the message about love did not get through. They were still pondering Jesus' earlier words about leaving them. Peter asked: "Where are you going? . . . Why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Here Jesus did something wonderful: he helped Peter get through the coming trial by stating calmly that Peter would fail. Jesus could have scolded Peter and made him feel guilty about his upcoming failure, but Jesus did not place upon Peter a burden he could not shoulder. He simply accepted the fact that Peter would fail—and gave a little prophecy about the time of that failure, so that when it occurred, it would become an experience that would strengthen Peter's faith. He was showing Peter that confidence in the flesh will not sustain our faith.

The Good News Emphasized

The disciples were troubled by this bad news of the departure of their master. Yet Jesus quickly consoled them. "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me."

These were devout men. They identified God as their Creator. Jesus now urged that they believe also in him. As the Son of God, Jesus carried the Father's authority. The disciples had seen this fact through Jesus' miracles and gracious words. Jesus wanted them to see that hourly, daily, they could trust him—their friend, their brother, their co-worker (See John 14:2-4).

Thomas was a logical man, and he had a question: "Lord, we do not know where you are going: how can we know the way?" Jesus' answer is profound: "I am the way."

The New and Living Way: Symbolized by Our Lord's Memorial

THE BREAD: Bread, the staff or support of life, has from ancient times been a symbol of living truth, the word of God which sustains us and upholds all things. The Hebrew word for Leaven, *chometz*, means "bitter" or "sour." It is a fitting symbol of sin, which brings bitterness to life and distorts or corrupts truth. The Hebrew word for unleavened bread, *matzo*, means "sweet, without sourness"—signifying life without sin. In another sense, it symbolizes the Word of God personified—"The Truth"—Jesus. Significantly, *matzo* has always displayed burn marks and pierce-marks.

At this juncture Jesus introduced an important lesson to his disciples. "Take this bread. Eat it. This is my body, which is broken for you" (Matt. 26:26).

THE WINE: It was customary in the Jewish observance of the Passover in our Lord's day to partake of four glasses of wine. The wine was red, and was diluted for the Passover Memorial with hot water. Thus it strikingly symbolized blood.

The first two cups were taken with prayer and thanksgiving earlier in the dinner. But the third and most important cup was called "The Cup of Redemption (Salvation)" or "Cup of Blessing," and it was served immediately after dinner. "Drink ye all of it," Jesus said. The lesson for each of us is that until we (by faith in his atonement) eat his body and drink his blood, we have no life in us.⁶

At this point (Matt. 26:29) Jesus announced that he would skip the fourth cup tonight. The third cup, the "cup of salvation," would be the last for the evening. The fourth cup, called the "Cup of Acceptance" or the "Cup of Elijah," would be reserved until "I drink it anew WITH YOU in my Father's kingdom" (author's emphasis)—when the antitypical Elijah is complete!

The Closing Song

Between the third and fourth cup, a song was always sung. It was the "Hillel" taken from Psalms 115-118, and since on this night Jesus had already announced there would not be a fourth cup, this hymn became the last event of the Last Supper.

One of the verses referred to what Jesus had just done with his disciples: "I will take (accept and drink of) the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD" Psalm 116:13.

The Way to Gethsemane

With the sounds of Hallelujah still echoing in their ears, the disciples wended their way toward the private garden among the olive groves where Jesus liked to come; "the olive press."

It was on this long walk that Jesus reassured his disciples of his nourishment and his Father's cultivation (John 16:12). It all seemed so confusing to the disciples. Repeatedly Christ explained his departure and absence, until finally the disciples assured him that they understood (John 16:29-30). But Jesus knew, and warned them, that as yet their faith was very fragile. So he did the most important thing he could do, besides the cross: he prayed for them, and for us (John 17).

Jesus' Response to Troubles

The pace of the evening was getting quicker. Jesus was concerned as he contemplated the rigors of the cross, the weightiness of his task, and the weakness of his disciples' faith. We can learn much from Jesus' actions. First, he was aware of his true feelings and did not choose glossy words to express it: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Jesus also asked his closest disciples to share with him in the hour of trouble. He was therefore not a stoic heroic figure but a brother, a companion who sought the help of others just as he earlier extended help. One important reason for this mutual sharing is that it is the process by which we all bear fruit (John 15:16).

While Jesus was sorrowful "even unto death," he did not succumb to depression. He turned to the heavenly Father in prayer. He asked for a blessing in harmony with the Father's will. While the Father's answer was, as Jesus knew and expected, that the trial must still be undergone (Luke 22:42), yet God still provided reassurance (Heb. 5:8; Luke 22:43). Since the disciples were groggy and unresponsive to Jesus' need of encouragement, God sent an angel. The more severe our trials, the more demanding our tasks, the more we need to come before God with thanks and with requests. We are never alone.

The Allegory of Barabbas

As a result of Jesus' trial that morning, another man whose trial was already past, went free— and Jesus was probably put to death on that man's cross. Barabbas, an insurrectionist—a rebel leader who had been found guilty of murder and sentenced to death by crucifixion—languished in a Roman dungeon on the evening of Nisan 14. His name means "son of the father," and as such, he pictures Adam, the only other human son of the Father. What did Barabbas do? The same thing Adam did: he rebelled and was deserving of death. In the course of events that night, Barabbas found himself liberated by a surprising exchange; a just man for the ringleader of a revolt. What a striking corroboration of the Ransom!

All Were Guilty

Jesus' trial demonstrates that he was unworthy of death. Because no sins could be ascribed to him, he died under the accusation that he was the king of the Jews—a true statement! Paul states that the charge nailed to his cross is our sins. The cross graphically demonstrated that all the world stands guilty before God.

First, there were the disciples. They knew Jesus, witnessed his miracles, and believed in him. They had left all to follow him. They were the hand-picked future leaders of the world, and yet as men the events of the night proved that they were utterly unworthy of the honors to which they were heir.

The High Priest and his servants occupied a position of sacred trust as the representatives of God upon earth. Yet they came to symbolize all those who have sold out for earthly power. They did not even pay faith the compliment of hypocrisy—everyone at the time knew that they did not believe in the resurrection, the spirit world, or the power of miracles. They were willing to cooperate with whoever could help them attain power.

The Pharisees represented all who attempted, with piety and dedication, to obey God. We should not peg them as merely formalists. They treasured God's Word. They studied prophecy and knew much about the Messiah—even prayed daily for him to come. Yet they failed because their knowledge and righteousness, compared to that of other men, tricked them into an unteachable state of mind.

The duty of the Roman soldiers was to obey orders, to punish malefactors, to make war or keep the peace. They went well beyond the call of duty in mocking and persecuting Jesus. They scourged him so severely that he was unable to carry his cross. Though his garments may still have borne the aroma of perfume from Mary's kindness, they callously divided them amongst themselves and made a game of stealing his robe.

Herod claimed to want to see a miracle. He pretended as though some dramatic act would make a believer out of him. Jesus knew otherwise; and so he bore Herod's mocking in dignified silence.

Pilate was the natural man, the man of the world. He was repulsed by the transparent envy of the sanctimonious scribes. He was impatient with the religious technicalities of the devout. He was shocked at the screaming of the rabble, and the hard-heartedness of those who roused them. As a practical man, Pilate could not understand Jesus' unwillingness to defend himself. While he believed Jesus innocent, and his wife's dream made him nervous, the more important factor for him was the security of his career. To avoid rocking the boat, Pilate bowed to political pressure.

Only the women, perhaps, did not fail. Mary had spent a year's wages, and her treasure or dowry at that, to show her devotion. The women stood by, braving the crudeness of the ruffraff and the humiliating tragedy of the cross to weep for him. Only the women were out at sunrise, to anoint his body while the male disciples huddled in the upper room. The women were also the first to believe in his resurrection, and the first to obediently declare it to others. And yet it remains clear that, even if our faith and obedience were as nearly perfect as that of those women, it is still true as Paul stated, that our sins were nailed to his cross.

The Humiliation of the Cross

Roman crucifixion was designed to be a public humiliation, a frightful terror that no one would voluntarily endure. It was reserved for rebellious slaves, vicious criminals, insurrectionists, and other enemies of peaceful society.

According to archaeological evidence, the large nails used to impale crucifixion victims were driven through the wrists. The weight of the body, hanging by the wrists, would have made breathing shallow and speech quite difficult.⁷ Inhaling could only be accomplished by pulling the body up by the arms, and by pushing up from the similar wound in the feet. According to the doctors, the nails would have severed the median nerve to the hands—each breath only permitted by a rotary movement that would have resulted in "excruciating jolts of fiery pain in both arms."

Seven Statements from the Cross

Most of Jesus' time on the cross was apparently passed in silence. But seven times during that six hours Jesus opened his mouth and spoke.

1. **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"** (Luke 23:34). Though perhaps spurious, it appears likely that the text is authentic. Therefore, Jesus' first words were a prayer to God for mercy toward his persecutors. Why? Because that was why Jesus died—to seek and to save that which was lost. Jesus' blood spoke peace, and God—himself severely pained by the anguish of his Only-Begotten—no doubt heard and appreciated Jesus' prayer.

2. **"Woman, behold thy son . . . Behold thy mother."** Provision was made for his mother (John 19:26, 27). Jesus' next act on the cross was to discharge his responsibility to his widowed mother. Jesus placed her under John's watchful and loving care.

3. **"Verily I say unto thee this day, thou shalt be with me in Paradise"** (Luke 23:39-43). Confronted by a glimmer of faith, Jesus encouraged the thief with a promise of the future kingdom.

4. At around 3:00 p.m., Jesus exclaimed: **"My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?"** (Reciting Psalm 22.) This statement was not lost on the devout Jews who were present. They would have recited this popular song in their heads, and undoubtedly called to mind many amazing prophecies now being fulfilled before their eyes: the dividing of the garments, the obvious description of a crucifixion, etc. This was the only time Jesus ever addressed the heavenly Father as "My God." If Jesus was to be tempted in all points as we are, he must surely experience the distance from God which seems so normal to us, most of the time. But God had not forsaken Jesus; by the darkness and disruption of the Passover ritual over at the temple, he was already showing his acceptance of the Son's sacrifice.

5. **"I am thirsty"** (John 19:28). As Jesus considered the prophecies of his death, he no doubt remembered the prophecy in Psalm 69 about his thirst and the vinegar which was offered. The only way to fulfill this prophecy was for Jesus to tell the bystanders of his thirst—and he now did so.

6. **"It is finished"** (John 19:30). After he had drunk the vinegar, Jesus had completed every prophetic fulfillment. He now took the words that expressed his triumph directly from the last verse of Psalm 22.

7. He "cried again with a loud voice:" **"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."** Jesus had triumphed. Despite the absence of any feelings of communication from God, Jesus continued to trust him who judges righteously (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46).

While Jesus' earthly life was ebbing away, there was confusion on the temple mount. God had smitten the land with darkness, and no doubt the efforts to slaughter upwards of 250,000 lambs was encountering difficulty. Then, when Jesus expired at 3 p.m. the veil of the temple was torn asunder. Imagine the confusion of the priests and the fearfulness of the people! No wonder that within months, some of that confusion had given way to reconciliation; for we read that "a great company of the priests believed" (Acts 6:7).

And what of the others who failed their "trial" as above described? The Lord's brethren, after Jesus' appearance to James, were converted. Several of the Roman soldiers believed; a number of Priests and Pharisees; and thousands of the Jews answered the Lord's call within a few short years. Jesus died for all; his death made victory possible for every man who does not fail to repent of even the most heinous crimes. In due time, after the "high calling" is complete and the message of the cross is testified to the entire world, "every knee shall bow" to the one whom God has graciously given a name above every name (Phil. 2:8-10; 1 Tim. 2:4-6).

"The Day" of his crucifixion will result in "The Day" of his reign!

Friday-Saturday, Nisan 15

Fasting in the Bridechamber

And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.—Matthew 9:15

By Carl Hagensick

It was the saddest day of their lives. For over three years they had followed the Galilean. Their hopes had been high. They had seen his miracles. They had watched him confound the greatest leaders of his day. They had heard his teachings. They had walked with him back and forth from Galilee to Jerusalem on many occasions. This was the Messiah. They were convinced. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). Now he was dead, crucified like a common thief at "the place of a skull" (Matt. 27:33), on the busy city road where passers by could gawk at him and mock him. It was the saddest day of their lives.

The rest of Jerusalem was in a festive mood. It was the first day of the Feast of Passover. Celebrants had streamed in from throughout the land. News quickly spread among them. "Jesus of Nazareth has been crucified." There was much rejoicing in meeting old friends and relatives. The sound of singing could be heard throughout the streets of the city, but there was little joy in the hearts of the small group that had followed Jesus.

The Bible does not tell us much about the events of that day; but we know the character of those who followed Jesus, and it is not hard to imagine their feelings. Despite their loss, they would be partaking of the feast of Passover, albeit with a heavy heart.

This feast was distinct from the dinner they had eaten in the upper room. The Passover festival ran for an entire week. It not only commemorated their deliverance from Egyptian bondage but it was also an occasion for thanksgiving for the Spring crops. How their minds must have gone back over that earlier meal and the strange events following.

Their Master had told them that the bread and the cup were in remembrance of his death, but they had hardly anticipated it so soon. His mood in the preceding months had been increasingly somber; he left them many hints that he would die, but they were loathe to believe them. They could still feel the tension of Gethsemane—the gentle chiding of Peter, James, and John for not being able to stay awake and watch with him one hour. The sudden noise of the guards who came to arrest him; the bitter realization of betrayal in the traitorous kiss of Judas; the ensuing scuffle with Peter's sword thrust, severing the ear of Malchus; Jesus' command to put back the sword and then his healing the wounded man. In fear they had fled—including Peter who sought to observe the trial before Caiaphas from a safe distance. They would have heard the testimony of John regarding the final hours on the cross and the concluding triumphant words, "Father, into thy hands

I commend my spirit . . . It is finished!" (Luke 23:46; John 19:30). Now they felt alone, somehow abandoned, bewildered, and confused.

The Passover

The band of followers had heard and read the accounts of the original Passover, but they would have had only the slightest concept of its real meaning. Soon they would learn that the death of their leader, which they mourned that day, was not only necessary in God's plan, but that Christ was the real Passover lamb. In fifty long days, when the feast of Pentecost would come, they would begin to realize that they were part of the antitypical firstborn who would be saved by coming under the blood.

As time would go on they would appreciate that not only were the firstborn saved on that miraculous night in Egypt, but that this was only the precursor for the deliverance of the entire nation. They would come to understand that the deliverance of the followers of the Nazarene was not an end in itself, but was also a harbinger of the salvation of the entire world of mankind. Although they had been bred deeply in their Jewish heritage, they would also comprehend eventually that Jesus' death was not only needed for their salvation and that of their people, but that even gentiles would be included in the resurrection guaranteed by Christ's death. This was the promise of the future. But today was today, and today they were sad.

A Day of Bewilderment

The night must have been a sleepless one for many of them. The events of the preceding day had gone by at a lightning pace. Instead of seeing their Lord fearlessly confound his opponents, they saw him meekly bowing his head in acceptance. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

The day was a day for discussion. The closest followers of the Master were used to living day by day. They went where Jesus went. They sought always to be by his side. When they had questions they knew where to go for answers. Now they were alone. Their leader had died; they were still alive. Sorrowful or not, life must go on. Some would decide to go back to their fishing businesses. Some determined to wait a while for further developments. Others who had fled when Jesus was arrested spent the day in nearby villages. Confusion and sorrow were the common bonds that connected them.

It was a day for prayer. Never had they needed divine guidance more than at the present. Jesus had told them that whatever they asked the Father in his name would be granted (John 15:16). Now they must learn to rely on that power. How personal those prayers must have been! How fervent!

New Dimensions

Above all, it was a day for adjustment. Never again would they tread the dusty roads with the one they had come to dearly love. Yet never was Jesus as close to their sides as he

would be in the days that lay ahead. He had said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [Greek *aión*, age]" (Matt. 28:20). He would always be "this same Jesus," yet he would always be different. They would need to adjust to these necessary changes.

They had loved to see his visage, to be cheered by the sight of him as he addressed the multitudes. Now they would have to adjust to an invisible Christ. He would be just as real, but not as manifest. This would take some preparation time. Just such a preparation they were to be having the next forty days, as he would appear miraculously in their midst, some times even behind closed and locked doors.

They had been used to a parochial Christ, one who had cautioned them, "Go not into the way of the gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" (Matt. 10:5). Soon they would be sent not only to Samaria but "unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). They would need to follow his unseen leading wherever they might go.

Their custom was to follow unquestioningly, looking to Jesus for making the many decisions that are required for daily living. Now they would have to think for themselves. They would need to sort out principles and apply them. They would not always do so correctly, as in the choosing of Matthias to replace Judas as an apostle (Acts 1:15-26), but they would learn through their mistakes to "rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

They were comfortable with Jesus. Now they would have to work with a new force in their lives, the holy spirit. The giving of that spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) must have been as surprising to them as it was spectacular to any onlooker. Even though he had bidden them await the arrival of the spirit (Acts 1:4-8), yet they must not have comprehended these words any better than his earlier statements regarding his death.

There was much to learn! There seemed little time to learn it all! Their Master tried to prepare them for this very hour by saying, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." To Galilee they must go. But that was tomorrow—today it was time to mourn and wonder.

Children of the Bridechamber

The followers of Jesus are called to be his bride. They are also likened to virgins awaiting the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-10), to guests at a wedding (Matt. 22:1-12), to servants waiting for their Lord to return from a wedding (Luke 12:36), and in our theme text to the "children of the bridechamber." There is no inconsistency in these similes. They are each separate and distinct pictures. They are all true. Each points to a unique feature of likeness.

The expression "children of the bridechamber" is a Greek idiom. It is related both to the expressions "virgins" in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and "friend of the bridegroom" in John 3:29: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the

bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

In the latter verse John the Baptist refers to himself as "the friend of the bridegroom." He uses that term as we would use the word "best man" today (see Nelson's Bible Dictionary). The "virgins" were the female members of the wedding party and "the children of the bridechamber" were the male members. The term "children" is from the Greek *huios*, meaning, literally, "sons." The idiom is a bit more direct than merely "bridal party." In first advent times a Hebrew child was known as a *teknon*, "child," until about the age of twelve when, after a ceremony similar to the Bar Mitzvah of today, he became a *huios*. This latter term conveyed not only the concept of an older child, but one who copied the parents and sought to be in their likeness. Thus "the children of the bridechamber" implies those who enter fully into the spirit of the oncoming wedding and partake fully in the joys of the bridegroom.

This was certainly an apt description for the followers of Jesus during his lifetime when they could not yet be the "bride," because the holy spirit had not yet come upon them. They could rejoice to be in his presence and they did so. But now, on the fifteenth of Nisan in the year of our Lord 33, they no longer had the bridegroom in their presence. Now they laid aside the rejoicing clothes of the wedding and put on the garment of sorrow.

Fasting

Not only did they mourn but our theme text indicates that they also "fasted." Nelson's Bible Dictionary comments on fasting: "Going without food or drink voluntarily, generally for religious purposes. Fasting, however, could also be done for other reasons. It was sometimes done as a sign of distress, grief, or repentance. The law of Moses specifically required fasting for only one occasion—the Day of Atonement."

There are many examples of the fasting over grief in the Bible. There was a seven day fast after the burial of King Saul and his sons (1 Sam. 31:13; 1 Chron. 10:12). David fasted after hearing of the death of Jonathan and Saul (2 Sam. 1:12), and Nehemiah fasted when he heard that Jerusalem lay in ruins (Neh. 1:4). For seventy years there were commemorative fasts in the fifth month, when the siege of Jerusalem was begun, and in the seventh month, when the city fell to the Babylonians (Zech. 7:5).

Abstaining from food is no easy task at the best of times but, as anyone who has been on a diet can testify, it is most difficult when all around you are feasting. Such was the case with the disciples. They began this spiritual "fast" on one of the great "fast days" of Israel, the first day of the seven day feast of Passover. Nor did their "fast" only last one day, nor yet the entire seven days of the feast, nor even the biblical forty days; it was a "fast" that would last for nearly two thousand years, until the return of the bridegroom.

Looking Forward

That sober Saturday was not merely a day of looking backward. Now, despite their great loss, they needed to look forward. Their long-range plans had not yet materialized. They deduced from Jesus' words in Matthew 26:32 that he wanted them to return to Galilee (the home of the remaining eleven apostles). First, however, they wanted to pay their final respects at the tomb of their beloved Master.

Because it was the Sabbath they could not go without the city on the fifteenth of Nisan. This would be their first order of business on the morrow. Three of the women had purchased sweet spices, probably between the time of the crucifixion and sundown on Friday. They prepared these for placing on his body on Saturday so that, first thing in the morning on Sunday, they would go to the tomb and anoint him (compare Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56; 24:1).

Even though Nicodemus had already seen to the procurement and use of some 65 pounds (a Greek "hundred pound weight") of embalming spices [John 19:39, 40] these three devoted women wanted to add their portion as well.

Thus it was with the deepest of love they mingled the spices, and with them their tears, for one last expression of their devotion. The eleven, still troubled in mind, ended the day by settling down for another uneasy sleep, also planning to visit the tomb. They would probably plan to complete the feast in Jerusalem (for they were faithful Israelites) and then return to their homes in the north.

They had been unprepared for the sad events of the previous day. Little did they know that they would meet a new surprise for which they were equally unprepared . . . in the morn.

On the morrow they would hurry forth to the tomb of their beloved Lord. And they would find it . . . empty!

Saturday-Sunday, Nisan 16

Early in the Morning

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb . . . — John 20:1

By Tim Thomassen

It is noteworthy that a woman had the distinction of being the first to be made acquainted with our Lord's resurrection. It has been suggested that the feminine mind is activated more by intuitive faith than analytical faith. A case can also be made that this illustrates a woman's tender sympathy.

Possibly Mary loved much because she had been forgiven much (Luke 7:47). Mary Magdalene was at one time possessed by evil spirits. However, once released from their control, she became a faithful and loyal follower of Jesus.

Mary went while it was still dark, in the dawn of the day. This dawning may beautifully picture the church's resurrection time in the transition between the Gospel age and the Millennium. "God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day" (Psa 46:5). It is in this Millennial morning the saints are changed in the first resurrection (see Psa. 30:5; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; Rev. 20:6).

The resurrection Sunday was so dramatic and significant that the early church began to commemorate it (Acts 20:7). In time, the first day of the week came to replace the Jewish Sabbath, rooted deeply in Jewish law. The Jewish feast of Pentecost would shortly give way to the Christian Pentecost.

There are many interesting points associated with the resurrection of Jesus. One has to do with the spices. Luke's account mentions that "the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb" (24:1).

We learn from this that Mary Magdalene was not alone, but was the first on the scene.

Since embalming was not practiced by the Jews, it would appear that the spices were brought as an act of devotion and love to anoint the body of Jesus. These concerned and compassionate followers of the Master obviously had no expectation of Jesus' resurrection.

The women who figure prominently in the resurrection stories illustrate dramatically the love that does not end with death. They loved Jesus beyond the end. They endeavored to demonstrate the last respect that could be paid. How great is our love for our Lord?

A Great Surprise

On this journey of faithfulness they encountered a great surprise. "Faithfulness has a way of running into surprises." Sometimes the unexpected occurs. Indeed, as the hymn phrases it, "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform; He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm."

"They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:2, 3). A tomb's entrance was ordinarily closed to keep vandals and animals from disturbing the bodies. This stone, however, had been sealed by Jewish authorities for a different reason. The chief priests and the Pharisees had petitioned Pilate to secure the tomb so that Jesus' disciples could not steal the body and then tell the people that he had been raised from the dead and Pilate told them to set their own watch. (Matt. 27:62-64).

However God sent his angel to remove the obstacle! Should this come as a surprise? Certainly not, for "all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isa. 55:7-9).

Removed was the stone that man had placed. This stone can well illustrate human efforts, ignorance, superstition, unbelief, selfishness, hatred, cruelty, jealousy, pettiness, doubt, fear, bitterness, and injustice. We may sometimes view these barriers as insurmountable. Yet our wise, loving, and powerful Lord can and will abolish these hindrances in due time for the first resurrection. Let us not forget that we "must suffer the darkness of night to welcome the coming of dawn."

He Is Risen!

Luke continues the story: "while they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again' Then they remembered his words" (24:4-8).

The two men alluded to were no doubt heavenly messengers. Just as the announcement of Jesus' birth to the shepherds induced fear, so these women became frightened. Fear was as natural a reaction then as it is today.

The women were asked a poignant question, "Why do you seek for the living among the dead? He is not here: he is risen!" This question has as much relevance now as ever. The

living Lord is not to be found embalmed in creeds and rituals, nor in pious ordinances (Col. 2:20-23). But he can be found in our most holy faith (Jude 20), in hope that does not disappoint us (Rom. 5:5), and in "sincere love" (2 Cor. 6:6).

The women were reminded of their Lord's announcement that he would be taken by sinful men, crucified, and then raised on the third day. One wonders how they could have forgotten. But words do not always sink in until something dramatic takes place. Do we, on occasion, have to receive shock treatment before we snap and come to our senses?

The Disciples Hear the News

"When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the others. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them told this to the apostles. They did not believe the women, because their words seemed like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened" (Luke 24:9-12).

The majority of the disciples felt the story was nonsense, but Peter and John decided to check it out for themselves (John 20:2, 3). The net result was that Peter "went away, wondering to himself what had happened" (Luke 24:12), while the other disciple "saw and believed" (John 20:8). In John 20:9 we read that "they still did not understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead." Does the voice within you ask, "How could they be so dense? What more would it take to convince them?"

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Perhaps we minimize the significance and role of the holy spirit in our lives today. Without the holy spirit's illumination we would be just as ignorant. Praise God for the help of the holy spirit!

In conclusion, I challenge myself and you to answer a few questions. First, is the resurrection merely an interesting story or historical fact? Has its repeated reading and study become meaningless and ritualistic, like other things that we do on a continuing basis?

Looking forward to the future, are we confident of our own resurrection? . . . of the resurrection of mankind in general? Are these beliefs part of our mind set or do we have doubts or second thoughts? If we died and were resurrected "in the twinkling of an eye," would we wonder what happened or be surprised?

In John 20:30, 31, we read: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Believing is not only the precedent to the life to come, to be attained at the resurrection, but it is also a forerunner to a proper life in the present time. "We believe

that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him" (1 Thess. 4:14). "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Christ was victorious and thus arose from the grave. If we are faithful we shall likewise "be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3).

NOTE: All scriptures used in this article are from the New International Version.

Foreshadows of the Messiah

Jesus: Our Rock and Our Rod

[Israel] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.—1 Corinthians 10:4

A verse by verse Bible study in Exodus 17

The Old Testament is replete with types and shadows of the crucifixion of Christ. The most notable, perhaps, are the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham and the raising up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness. However, there are many other pictures illustrating the same event. Two of these are found in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Exodus. In this chapter we find two of the trials the Israelites endured during their wilderness wanderings—the testing at the waters of Meribah and the battle with the Amalekites at Rephidim.

The Setting—Verse 1

And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.

While the term "wilderness of Sin" seems such a fitting name for this wilderness, considering the sins of Israel during their wanderings, this is not an appropriate use of the word. Here Sin is the name of an Egyptian city and of the surrounding wilderness.

Rephidim has not been positively located, nor is even the derivation of the name agreed upon by scholars. Nelson's Bible Dictionary defines it as "refreshments," implying an oasis, while Strong's Concordance gives it as "ballusters," supports, suggesting a location between high cliffs. McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia lists both possibilities.

An oasis would make a logical stopping place for the Israelite camp; if Moses chose the spot, he might not have known that the water supply was dried up. However, Moses was not the one to choose the encampment. They had been led there directly by God through the medium of the "cloudy pillar" (Exod. 13:21, 22). Certainly God would have known that there was no water at the site of the encampment.

One could logically ask why God led them into a location where there was not the necessary supplies for survival. The answer is simple. The needed water supply was there. They just could not see it. He who brought them there was amply able to care for them also. As the familiar adage phrases it, "His grace will not lead us where his power cannot keep us."

The Complaint—Verses 2 and 3

Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

The sin of complaining and murmuring was Israel's abiding weakness. Their situation in Egypt had been none too comfortable. As slaves they were an oppressed people. Yet they found the conditions of their deliverance more intolerable than the conditions of their bondage.

On five different occasions in the Pentateuch they are spoken of as "murmuring" against Moses. Only once the biblical God accuses them of "murmuring against me" (Num. 14:29). In truth, as Moses says here, "Why chide ye me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?" Moses was only the representative of God. God was the hidden director of their wilderness path. In a similar vein God confronts the "miserable comforters" of Job with the charge "ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right" (Job 42:7).

They "thirsted" for water. The statement seems almost redundant. If there was no water it is only natural that they would "thirst." Matthew Henry, in his Commentary seems to capture the essence of their complaint: "If they had no water to drink, they must needs thirst; but this intimates, not only that they wanted water and felt the inconvenience of that want, but that their passion sharpened their appetites and they were violent and impatient in their desire; their thirst made them outrageous. Natural desires, and those that are most craving, have need to be kept under the check and control of religion and reason."

From complaint sprang demand, "Give us water to drink." They were demanding it, as if it were a debt Moses owed them. They had been supplied manna (16:15), now they must be supplied with water. Both were gifts from God, neither was an obligation owed them. How often we, too, begin regarding God's graciousness as an inalienable right and, taking it for granted, slack in our continual thanksgiving for the bounties the Lord has provided.

The Solution—Verses 4 to 7

And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?"

The geography of this verse is puzzling. Moses was commanded to go in the company of at least some of the elders of Israel to Horeb where he would find a rock which, once smitten, would issue forth sufficient waters for the people to drink and be refreshed. Horeb is called the "mountain of God" (Exod. 18:5) and was the spot where Moses was first addressed by the Lord at the burning bush (Exod. 3:1). It is usually identified with Mount Sinai where the Law was given. However, Israel does not break up camp at Rephidim to move to Sinai until Exodus 19:2. The two are thought to be about one day's journey from each other.

The most logical solution to this problem is to assume that Horeb does not refer to a single mountain but to a range of mountains, which separated Rephidim from Mount Sinai. Moses is apparently led to the pass leading through these mountains where he is shown the rock he is to smite to produce the needed water.

In applying the picture we have one sure starting point. The Apostle Paul definitely identifies the rock that produced the water— "and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). The "smiting" of the rock relates to his life of trials and crucifixion (Isa. 53:4). Jesus refers to himself as the fountain of living water in his discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:10).

Speaking poetically in his "Song of Deliverance," Moses likens this water to "honey and oil" (Deut. 32:13). Honey is generally recognized as a picture of the high calling of the church, while the oil is the fruit of the olive tree. Paul likens the olive tree to the Abrahamic covenant in Romans 11, into which all men, both Jew and gentile, will eventually be grafted. For Israel this water was life producing for both the firstborn and the entire nation. Likewise Christ's death is effectual in producing both those who will receive the heavenly and the earthly salvation—the "sand and the stars" of the Abrahamic promise.

The next stop of Israel was at Mount Sinai where they received the law. The location of the rock at Horeb suggests that it was at the boundary between Rephidim, the site of their trials, and Sinai, the "mount of God;" this implies an experience at the crossroads between the present permission of evil and the new law covenant of the future. This is the location of the cross of Christ. It forms the legal bridge from the death sentence to the resurrection of the dead.

This miracle was to be specifically performed in the sight of the elders of Israel so that there would be witnesses. Any suspicion of Moses finding a hidden well and faking the miracle was thus precluded.

The renaming of the site to Massah and Meribah was as a testimonial against the murmuring of the people. These names are derived from the words of Moses' question in verse two, "Why chide ye with me? Why tempt ye the Lord?" Massah is a Hebrew word based on the root word translated "tempt" in this verse while Meribah is a name from the root translated "chide." Men chide or quarrel with fellow men, but it is God whom they are putting to the test, or proving. God seeks to be taken by faith and believed and not put

to the test. Israel was demonstrating a lack of faith in the care given by their God and for this they were chastised.

Battle with Amalek—Verses 8 to 10

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

The Amalekites were a branch of the family of Esau and related to Eliphaz, one of the comforters of Job. They dwelt in the southern Sinai and apparently were a marauding tribe seeking to pillage and loot the Israelites. According to Deuteronomy 25:16, 17, they followed behind the migrating nation and attacked the feeble and poor in the rear of the procession. This battle was undoubtedly to stamp out this annoying threat. The battle evidently occurs in a lowland, for Moses is to be clearly visible on the heights above where he goes with Aaron and Hur.

The choice of lieutenants for Moses is an interesting one. Aaron is readily identifiable as Moses' brother and, at this time, the high priest designate. Hur is not so easy to identify. He was obviously prominent, for he and Aaron were put in charge of the camp when Moses went up into the mount (Exod. 24:14). He was the cousin of Elisheba, wife of Aaron (Exod. 6:23; Num. 2:3), and Nashon, father-in-law of Rahab and ancestor of David. Tradition has him as the brother-in-law of Moses and husband of Miriam. He was also the grandfather of Bezaleel, the chief craftsman of the tabernacle. Thus in Aaron and Hur we see the uniting of the priestly and kingly functions of Israel.

The Banner—Verses 11 to 13

And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Joshua led the battle, but Moses was the real hero. As long as that great leader held his rod stretched out in his hand the Israelites were winning, but when his arms drooped the battle went against them. The setting is vivid. While the battle rages below, the silhouette of Moses with the outstretched rod, supported by the leaders of the priestly and kingly houses, became the banner under which victory would be wrought.

The presence of two to strengthen him suggests that the rod was stretched out between his hands, with one man supporting each side. To the soldiers below the silhouetted form of Moses, sitting on the rock with the rod going from side to side, formed the shape of a cross. Is not the cross of Christ the banner under which we, especially the poor and

feeble, gain the victory. They are the ones with whom Christ identified: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28); "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3); ". . . they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick" (Luke 5:31). All our victories are in him: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

Memorials—Verses 14 to 16

And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi. For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

Victories are not to be forgotten. In this case there were two memorials. An account of the battle was written in a book and an altar was built and given the name Jehovah-nissi, Jehovah our banner. This is also true for the Christian. Lives may be full of conflicts and struggles. Some end in defeat; more will result in victory as the banner of Christ crucified is kept before the mental vision. These successes are not to be forgotten, but to be commemorated in appropriate ways to remind us of the power that is in our Savior.

Our memorials may take the form of a testimony, or a letter to a friend, or an entry in a diary, or a poem. All of these will be incentives to greater endurance next time. This was one of the great weaknesses of Israel in the wilderness. As David so aptly puts it, "They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel" (Psa. 106:13).

In contrast, may our attitude be that "This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" (Psa. 77:10-13).

The Last Week of Our Lord's Ministry

(with Texts and Articles for Each Day's Reading)

Arranged from Contributed Material

'TRAVELING TOWARD JERUSALEM

Matthew 20:17-28; Luke 18:35-43; 19:1-10

R3362 -- "Only the Humble Shall be Exalted"

R3847 -- "Thy Faith Hath Saved Thee"

JESUS CAME TO BETHANY

Mary anointed our Lord. Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:39; John 12:1-8. These three accounts record the same episode. John's gospel gives us the timing -- the evening after the close of the day Nisan 9, which had turned into the Jewish day Nisan 10.

R2447 -- "A Bottle of Spikenard, Very Costly"

R3534 -- "Perfume Very Precious"

NISAN 10, MONDAY (SAT., MARCH 30, 1996)

Selection of the Lamb. Triumphant ride into Jerusalem, ;palm branches strewn, visit to temple. Exodus 12:3-5; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; Psalms 8:2.

R2745 -- "Hosanna! Blessed Is He That Cometh"

R2146 -- Column 2, para. 2, Selection on day 10

R3837 -- "Hosanna In the Highest"

R3850 -- "Coming in the Name of the Lord"

NISAN 11, TUESDAY (SUN., MARCH 31, 1996)

Cursing of the fig tree, cleansing of the temple. "The scribes and chief priests ... sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him" (Mark 11:18).

R4122 -- "Cleansing the Temple"

R5503 -- "Barren Fig Tree -- Defiled Temple"

R5920 -- "Lesson of the Blighted Fig Tree"

NISAN 12, WEDNESDAY (MON., APRIL 1, 1996)

Mark's account (chap. 11) distinguishes the days more clearly than Matthew's. On this morning (the day after the cursing of the fig tree), the disciples marvelled that it had so quickly withered and "dried up from the roots" (Mark 11:20). As Jesus walked in the temple the chief priests, scribes, and elders challenged his authority. Many parables were given on this day. Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees tried to catch him in his words. Seven "woes" were pronounced on them and a chilling doom on Jerusalem. In the closing hours of the day Jesus spoke our Lord's great prophecy to his disciples (Matthew 21:23-26:2; Mark 11:20-14:1).

- R1982 -- "Parable of the Vineyard"
- R3852 -- "Teaching with Authority"
- R3000 -- "Yearly Reckonings, Spiritual Accounts"

NISAN 13, THURSDAY (TUES., APRIL 2, 1996) The disciples made ready the Passover, which was eaten after six o'clock on Thursday. Matthew 26:17-30; Luke 22:7-71; Luke 22:24, strife among the disciples; John 13:1-17, he washed their feet.

- R3542 -- "Washing One Another's Feet"
- R3551 -- "I Pray for Them"
- R4167 -- "Our Lord Betrayed and Denied"
- R3885 -- "With Strong Crying and Tears"
- R2467 -- "The Lord Betrayed"
- R2469 -- "The Great High Priest Arraigned"
- R2773 -- "Gethsemane -- Watching and Praying"
- R5331 -- "Test of the Apostles and Its Lesson"
- R1801 -- "The Agony in Gethsemane"

NISAN 14, FRIDAY (WED., APRIL 3, 1996) The day of crucifixion. Let us keep very close to our Lord during this day, remembering what he endured and entering into it as fully as possible. Matthew 26:27; Exodus 12:6.

- R3895 -- "As Deceivers and Yet True"
- R3369 -- "How and Why Christ was Crucified"
- R3366 -- "Choose Ye This Day"
- R2315 -- "A Look at the Crucified One"
- R2473 -- "He was Numbered with the Transgressors"
- R1815 -- "Christ Died for the Ungodly"
- R3560 -- "The Greatest Event of History"

NISAN 15, SATURDAY (THURS., APRIL 4, 1996)

Christ in the tomb. First day of unleavened bread.

Exodus 12:14-20; Leviticus 23:5-8.

R1366 -- "An Ancient and Interesting Document"

R2453 -- "I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"

R2455 -- "He Shall Give You Another Comforter"

R3900 -- "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"

R5640 -- "The Blood of Sprinkling of the Passover"

R5869 -- "Thoughts on the Memorial Season"

NISAN 16, SUNDAY (FRI., APRIL 5, 1996)

The Resurrection. Offering the sheaf of the firstfruits.

Matthew 28:1-10; Leviticus 23:11-13; Luke 24:1-26.

R3903 -- "He is Risen, Even as he Said"

R2476 -- "Now is Christ Risen from the Dead"

R2800 -- "Communing with the Lord"

R1823 -- "The Walk to Emmaus"

R5415 -- "Jesus Himself Drew Near"

R3563 -- "I Am Alive Forevermore"

News & Views

Readers Speak Out

Dear Brethren of the Herald,

Greetings in our Savior's name. I continue to enjoy your magazine. While not always agreeing with all the thoughts expressed, they are always stimulating and generally uplifting. May our Father give you a greater portion of his spirit.

Dan Anas, Fenton Michigan

I enjoy every copy of the Herald and look forward to its coming to my home. Just enjoyed reading again "An Admonition for the New Year" by Br John T. Read. Many times we enjoyed having him in our home. I love the pieces "Echoes from the Past," as well as all of the others. May God's rich and bountiful blessing continue to be with you - each and every one.

Alta Wolfengerger, Weatherford, Texas

Dear Friends,

The Herald has improved dramatically, congratulations! I'd like to see more articles on Pastor Russell, or written by him, and also information on Bible Student history and current Bible Student activities.

Jonathan Ross, Sunnyvale, California

Bible, Student Activities

Editor's note: Most readers should be familiar with the Bible Fellowship Union in England, publishers of the Bible Study Monthly. Brother A. O. Hudson (now in his 90's), one of the principles of the Bible Student movement in England and long-time editor of the Bible Study Monthly, sent the editors of the Herald a letter on the status of the Bible Student movement in England. We found it extremely interesting and asked Br. Hudson for permission to print it in THE HERALD. We trust our readers will be moved by it as well. It is printed in its entirety, and only edited for clarity.

"Long time since your letter but I have been fully occupied as you may guess with the reorganization of our activities over here, which has occupied a term of years, but is now nearly complete. I had gotten so used to our increasing field of activities that I did not realize what was going to be involved. Since our entire team was packing up together, all being of roughly similar age, it meant an entirely new team. That has not been easy, but within a few more months I shall have more time on my hands than have had for many years.

"Our own annual head count of classes and brethren makes gloomy reading so far as the UK is concerned. We are down to seven organized class meetings with a total normal attendance of 75. Total number of brethren nominally associated together is 200 plus 50 of the LHMM (Layman's Home Missionary Movement) who still keep themselves largely aloof although becoming less rigid. Compared with our 246 classes and 4,500 brethren in the independent "breakaway" movement here in 1931, there seems to have been a slide. Between 1903 and 1925 so many came in; most of these came to the end of the way between 1950 and 1970. There has been a marked diminution since 1970. The elders at the London Tabernacle told we teenagers in the 1910's that we lads would see this happen-they were right.

"However, have you noticed that there is a marked increase in interest in the Truth in the eastern sector -Eastern Europe, Siberia, India. Roberts, guiding star of the LHMM in the UK, has just returned from a European tour and has addressed conventions of 400 to 500. He tells me there are 5000 brethren in Poland, most LHMM*, and a similar number in the Ukraine. I read of a LHMM convention in Siberia, of all places, of 800. They believe that the High Calling was closed to new entrants in 1918 and that the last ones passed into heavenly glory by 1954 and that these today will see the Millennium inaugurated and hail it with enthusiasm. Their official expectation is that everything seems running strictly according to plan (except the dates) and that Brother Russell will be shown to have been not very far wrong.

"There is not much doubt that the entire Bible Student movement as initiated and carried on for many years is petering out. You have the same signs as do we. Sixty percent of our two hundred brethren look for a future advent without a preliminary parousia. Some expect quite a lurid literalness to the advent: blood and thunder similar to what was believed in the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, an increasing proportion of the Bible Student population is accepting the idea of a personal holy ghost, the trinity, speaking with tongues, and miracle healing.

"As far as the work of the Bible Fellowship Union, we note an increasing interest on the part of the Christian public in our message. Eighty percent of our UK readership is not of the Bible Student fellowship; indeed most are unaware of our movement. Very few of these `publics,' as we call them, ever ask about a meeting where these things are discussed. Most of the churches here run study groups in halls or houses and we have found that some of these use the articles from the Monthly as subjects for discussion. The number of these exceeds the number of our classes, which gives some food for thought. There is one Salvation Army major who takes a quantity of literature to distribute among his entire congregation; a Baptist church puts six copies of each issue of the Monthly on its church bookstall for the interested to take away; a Pentecostal theological seminary places a copy of each issue in its library for the use of students-quite often we get a letter from one that says he finished at the school and wants to subscribe personally. In India, the head of an evangelical body translates articles for reproduction in his bi-lingual magazine which has a circulation larger than our Monthly. This same group reads contents of the Monthly on broadcasts twice a week over a station which reaches all of Eastern Asia. Presently, this person is translating our booklet "The Coming of the King"

into his language for wider circulation. All of this activity has led us to wonder if Brother Russell's original idea, to disseminate his findings among the denominational churches, is now what the movement is reverting to at its end.

"There is no doubt that we are now in the middle of a time of change and we do well to recognize the fact and find our place in it accordingly. Our latest booklet, a 100-page publication titled "Paradise on Earth," treats in detail the coming Millennial Age. It was rather costly to produce and is not intended for indiscriminate circulation, but for those likely to be seriously interested. We will send a copy to Jim Caudle for official notification to the PBI and will be available free."

With Sincere love to you all in the Lord,

Albert O. Hudson

* Of the three Bible Student movements registered in Poland, the LHMM is the middle in size.-Editor

Around the World

Jerusalem

The Holy City's final political disposition remains one of the sorest points of Mideast peace negotiations. Debate rages over how best to Preserve its Place as a uniquely historic Place a sacred monument and a modern city. One key is the continued ban on facing new buildings with any thing but the classic local stone. Its stones remain the key to revealing still-hidden secrets. A recent Israeli attempt to reconstruct part of a seventh-century Omayyad palace adjoining the Temple Mount sparked protests from Jews and Muslims alike. Orthodox rabbis argue that the palace was built with Temple stones tossed from the mount when the Romans destroyed it and that their use to rebuild is a double sacrilege. Muslim leaders say the excavations disturb ancient graves and fear it is all the precursor to an archaeological invasion of the Temple Mount. It has become known irreverently as the "war of the stones and bones."

(U.S. News & World Report, 12/18/95)

Israel

Israel and Syria have small delegations attending peace negotiations on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The goal for the negotiations is a peace agreement, not just between Israel and Syria but between Israel and the rest of the Arab world, in which partnership would supplant a half century of enmity. Israel would evacuate the Golan Heights, a strategic promontory looming over northern Israel and the Sea of Galilee and an important source of water seized from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war, in exchange for a peace treaty that would include diplomatic recognition, open borders and trade. Such an arrangement

would effectively end the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has been a fact of life in the Middle East since the creation of the Jewish state in 1948.

(Washington Post, 12/28/95)

The prospect of peace is fundamentally changing the traditional great power rivalry in the Middle East. The treaties signed between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinians have generated billions of dollars of potential deals. Most Arab countries are now ignoring a boycott, which for years prohibited many companies from doing business with Israel. European countries are trying to raise their profile in the Middle East after laying low for years. France signed an accord with Jordan providing for joint war games and technical assistance, as well as French training of Jordanian army and air force personnel. The European Union is going to head the team of International observers overseeing Palestinian elections. For the U.S., this means a new way of dealing with the Middle East. "Europe would not like to see the U.S. being less involved in the region," says Bernard Bajolet, French ambassador to Jordan. Competition between the European Economic Community and U.S. for large jobs in the Middle East remains intense.

(Wall Street Journal, 11/95)

Ukraine

The Russian Orthodox Church and two Ukrainian nationalist churches are contesting whether Ukraine is a distinct nation or part of Russia. While independence for the nation was declared in 1991, the conflict over the leadership of the millions of orthodox believers continues. Bishops and priests have switched allegiance from one church to another and back again, sometimes in hopes of advancing careers. Supporters of rival churches have fought street battles over church property. With the Ukraine, the Russian church represents about half of the world's 170 million Eastern Orthodox believers. Since 1992, two independent Ukrainian churches have challenged Russian authority, winning priests and members. Relations between the two churches are very antagonistic. In November, the leaders of the Ukrainian church said they would work with the Moscow-appointed primate in Kiev to form a united Ukrainian church.

(Washington Post, 11/18/95)

China

A New York-based human rights organization asserts that thousands of children have died in China's state-run orphanages from deliberate starvation, medical malpractice and staff abuse. Human Rights Watch said it was impossible to obtain the full number, but reported "The brutal treatment of orphans in Shanghai, which included deliberate starvation, torture and sexual assault, continued over a period of many years and led to the unnatural deaths of well over 1,000 children between 1986 and 1992 alone." Human Rights Watch took much of its report from the testimony and medical records of Chinese physician Zhang Shuyun, who fled China last year after an unsuccessful campaign to

expose abuses at the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute. "There is compelling evidence that these astonishing death rates are the result of a deliberate policy to minimize China's population of abandoned children, many of whom have been born in violation of the country's family planning regulations and are sometimes physically or mentally handicapped," the group said in a news release accompanying its report.

(New York Times, 1/5/96)

Archaeology

Among the discoveries that strengthen the Bible's claim to historical accuracy:

1-In 1979 Israeli archaeologist Gabriel Barkay found two tiny silver scrolls inside a Jerusalem tomb. They were dated to around 600 B.C., shortly before the destruction of Solomon's Temple and the exile into Babylon. When scientists unrolled the scrolls, they found parts of the Book of Numbers etched into the surface, proving the Old Testament was copied long before skeptics believed it was even written;

2-In 1986 several lumps of clay called bullae which had been bought from Arab dealers, were discovered to have impressions stamped into them from the seal of Baruch, son of Neriah, a scribe who recorded the doomsday proclamations of Jeremiah. Another bore the seal of Yerahe'el, son of King Jehoiakim's son. This again confirmed the existence of biblical characters;

3-In 1990 Frank Yurco, an Egyptologist from Chicago used hieroglyphic clues from a stone known as the Merneptah Stele to identify figures in a Luxor wall relief as ancient Israelites. The stele was dated to 1207 BT and celebrated a military victory by the Pharaoh Meneptah over the Israelites, suggesting Israel was a distinct population more than 3000 years ago;

4-In 1993 Avraham Biran of Hebrew Union College and Joseph Naveh of Hebrew University announced the discovery of an inscription bearing the phrases "House of David" and "King of Israel." The writing was dated to the ninth century B.C. and described a victory by a neighboring king over the Israelites;

5-In 1994 the French scholar Andre Lemaire reported a "House of David" discovery in the most extensive inscription ever recovered from ancient Palestine. Lemaire spent seven years studying the stone in the Louvre and reconstructed a missing letter to decode the wording, which verifies another ninth century B.C. reference to David's dynasty.

(Time, "Are the Bible's Stories True?" 12/18/95)

Science

New techniques are accelerating gene mapping. The project is moving to its final sequencing stage, to build on genetic and physical maps to spell out all three billion letters of the human genetic code. "Ninety-eight percent (of the human genome) will have been read out within five to 10 years," says Eric Lander, director of the Whitehead/MIT Centre. Geneticists say that all genes will be available on sets of CD-Roms (or whatever replaces them). The focus will then switch to gene dynamics -discovering how 100,000 genes interact and communicate to regulate the whole human being, in sickness and in health, as it develops from embryo to old age. Gene therapy-giving patients new copies of defective genes will then be possible. Genomics will provoke enormous social and ethical concerns, ranging from protection of genetic privacy in individuals to the protection of genetic diversity in mankind against excessive pressure to eliminate "bad" and promote "good" genes.

(Financial Times, 12/19/95)

Science is testing the healing power of prayer. Researchers at the University of Arkansas are studying whether human muscle cells respond to prayer from afar. A group of doctors at Temple University is about to begin a study of the effects of prayer on 150 infants at risk of death from neonatal problems. The U.S. National Institute of Health, which never looked at the issue before, is sponsoring a study being conducted at the University of New Mexico on the effects of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish prayer on alcoholics and drug abusers. Believers in prayer insist that the current studies are legitimate quests rooted in Albert Einstein's theories that matter and energy are interchangeable. If "people are matter they can interact on an energy basis in endeavors such as prayer," says Daniel Benor, a psychiatrist and healing researcher in England. The academic interest in prayer received a boost in the mid-1980's when cardiologist Randolph Byrd recruited a group of born-again Christians to pray in a study of 393 coronary patients at San Francisco General Hospital. Results reported in the Southern Medical Journal showed that the prayed-for group was much less likely to require antibiotics or develop fluid in the lungs. No one who was prayed for needed breathing machines, while 23 in the control group did.

(Wall Street Journal, 12/95)

Christendom

Among theologically liberal Christians, a movement is afoot to rewrite hymns to recognize the influence of such sweeping social changes as feminism, environmentalism and multiculturalism. The 1.5 million-member United Church of Christ offered evidence that its new hymnal, containing some of the boldest revisions yet of traditional sacred lyrics, has become a strong seller. "The New Century Hymnal" has sold nearly 190,000 copies. More than just old English words like "thee" and "thou," but also replacing words like "men" with "people" and to a large degree, traditional masculine titles for God. The 109-year-old hymn, "Lead On, O King Eternal" has been revised as "Lead On Eternal

Sovereign." The older "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" appears in the new hymnal as "Dear God, Embracing Humankind." A church spokesman said that the committee has debated the hymns one by one, including whether to replace such words as "blindness" when those words appeared as metaphors for sin or evil.

(New York Times, 1/6/96)

Book Review

The Day Christ Died. Jim Bishop, Harper Press, 357 pages.

Most biographies about Jesus' death are "put downs" on the life of Christ-pseudo-scholarly sensationalizing that has tried to recreate Jesus in the author's image depending on the fad in vogue the year of publication. Some of the pictures drawn have been of Jesus as the Radical Revolutionary, Jesus as the Passover Plotter, Jesus as the Happy Husband, Jesus as the Superstar, or Jesus as the Master Magician. The Day Christ Died is a reverent approach which does not try to remove the supernatural out of the life of Jesus. Miracles stay as miracles; signs remain signs. It is a refreshing look at the times of Jesus centered around the historical setting of Rome and Jerusalem. Although categorized as fiction because of the narrative style, the book is true to the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John relative to Jesus' activities. Bishop confesses to taking a few liberties with the biblical record, not contradicting it, but supplying certain elements of what most likely happened in order to keep the narrative blocks of scripture. Importantly, the book is not just a record of the last twenty four hours of Jesus' life, but contains much "flashback" material which sets the background for the Jewish and Roman world of Jesus' day. The Bible Student will find it particularly refreshing that Jim Bishop was not trained as a New Testament scholar and thus is not clouded by seminarian philosophy and theology; however, Bishop confesses to believing that Jesus is the second person of a trinity. That belief does not cloud his historical accounting and he writes the narrative for a non-sectarian general audience. This book is a good adjunct for reading during the memorial season.