

The Herald

Of Christ's Kingdom

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Impacts of the Cross

EDITOR'S JOURNAL

But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.—Luke 24:21

For those who knew and loved him most, the crucifixion of Jesus was devastating. They had placed their hopes in him. They had loyally followed him wherever he went. To them he was more than a friend: he was their hero and their Messiah. They trusted he would have redeemed Israel. They expected he would soon set up a kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace. They had believed on him. Now their hopes and beliefs were dashed.

The previous week saw their emotions riding a virtual roller coaster. First there was the thrill of the triumphal entry, with people waving palm branches and hailing Jesus as king. Then there was the further rush of joy as they saw him in the temple, with a strong and resolute hand, drive out the greedy money-changers. The intimacy of the last supper further bonded them together. That meal had another side, however, as they saw Judas sent on his mysterious mission which led to the Lord's betrayal. Their pride, too, had been shaken when Jesus stooped to wash their feet.

The walk from the last supper to Gethsemane was probably in silence for fear of the offices of the Sanhedrin, already on the lookout for the Master. Then, in the valley of the Kidron, they heard their last lesson from the one they loved so much. Fatigue overcame them as Jesus went apart to pray, and he softly chided them for their inattention.

Then pandemonium broke loose. A cadre of soldiers appeared with Judas among them. The betrayal with a kiss was quickly followed by the Master being taken in bonds to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. Found guilty in a mock trial through bribed witnesses, he was bound over for final judgment by Pilate. After a hearing by King Herod he was returned to Pilate for final judgment and the process rolled relentlessly on—through trial, scourging, and the march down the Via Dolorosa to Calvary's hill where he was lifted up on the cross to die the cruelest of deaths.

In this issue of **THE HERALD** an attempt is made to see these events as those close to him saw them. The opening article, *Anointed for Burial*, describes the love of Mary of

Bethany as she breaks her alabaster box and anoints the Lord with precious ointment. The author of *Behold Thy Son* has chosen to use the approach of a first person account, seeking to probe the emotions of the beloved disciple John. Another apostle, deeply touched by his own failures in Jesus' last hours, was Peter. The article *Healing a Guilty Conscience* deals with the interaction between the impetuous Peter and his loving Master.

It was not only his friends who bore emotional scars from the events of that fateful day. In *What Is Truth?* the author shows the perspective of the Roman procurator in his role as presiding judge, a judge who both literally and symbolically sought to wash his hands of the burdensome decision he was forced to make.

Another friend of the Messiah, one who had followed him along with her husband from the early days of his ministry, was Joanna, the wife of Chuza. Her story is narrated in *A Witness at the Citadel*. She was among the last to leave the cross and the first to rush to the tomb on Sunday morning. She was accompanied by her good friend Mary Magdalene whose viewpoint of that day is expressed in *An Honorable Servant of the Lord*.

Finally, our issue concludes with a verse by verse study of the last chapter of Matthew, entitled *Why Seek Ye the Living Among the Dead?*

Mary of Bethany

Anointed for Burial

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.—John 12:7

Robert Seklemian*

Jesus was once again at supper in the familiar home in Bethany. Once again, loving and faithful Martha was serving alone. Where was Mary, the one who loved to sit at his feet and hear his word? Martha must have known where Mary was, that she had gone to get something very special, because this time Martha did not come to Jesus demanding that Mary help her with the work. Then, as Jesus and his disciples and Lazarus were at the table, Mary quietly entered the room.

Mary Anoints Jesus

Let us try to visualize the scene. It was the custom in those days to eat at a low table in a half-reclining position, with the feet drawn up, on mats or couches arranged around the table. Mary came up behind Jesus holding a beautiful alabaster box in her hands. She quickly broke the seal and poured the contents of very precious perfume, first upon Jesus' head, then upon his feet. Kneeling down, she began to wipe Jesus' feet with her hair. The whole house was filled with the delightful fragrance of the perfume. The account is found in Matthew chapter 26, Mark chapter 14, and John chapter 12. It was not a tiny vial of perfume that Mary poured upon Jesus. John says it was a whole pound of spikenard. Spikenard is an essence derived from a rare and aromatic root. It would take an enormous quantity of this root to yield a pound of essence. Perfume of spikenard was so costly in ancient times that it was reserved for use only by kings, princes and other nobility. It was prepared in a manner similar to attar of roses, which was another perfume made in ancient times. My encyclopedia says it took 100,000 roses to produce only 180 grains, or less than half an ounce of attar of roses. 100,000 roses, arranged side by side, would extend almost five miles and would weigh over three tons. Such a quantity of roses after laborious treatment and distillation would yield only half an ounce of perfume. Mary poured a whole pound of spikenard on Jesus. That's why Matthew and Mark call it "very precious." John calls it "very costly."

Now we can better understand the reaction of the disciples to this act of Mary: "Then said one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence and given to the poor? This was said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:4-6).

Although Judas had an ulterior motive, the others were swayed by him and immediately agreed. Matthew says, "But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying: To

what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." Mark reports, "Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than 300 pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her."

In those days a penny was a day's wages for a man (Matthew 20:2). Ignoring the Sabbaths and other holy days when no work was done, 300 pence was a year's wages at that time. How much is a year's wages today? This alabaster box of perfume must have been either an heirloom that had been handed down in Mary's family, or else the result of Mary's own labors over a long period of time. It was apparently not purchased for the occasion because if it had, Judas would have deplored spending the money in the first place. Instead he suggested its sale for 300 pence. Judas, the thief, had probably known of its existence and had his eye on it for some time. He undoubtedly expected Mary would eventually sell it and donate the money for Jesus' ministry. Then he would have it because Judas had charge of the treasury. The Diaglott says he "stole what things were deposited in it." He had apparently gone to the trouble of having the alabaster box appraised. How else could he quote an exact figure of 300 pence so readily? He was terribly disappointed when Mary poured out the perfume on Jesus.

We can see what a lavish act of love this represented on Mary's part. She loved Jesus with her whole heart; nothing was too good for her beloved. She freely poured out to him her most precious possession and then, lest her act be construed as containing any element of pride or vanity, she knelt down and with her hair, her crowning glory, she humbly wiped his feet.

I think we can guess what was going through Jesus' mind just before Mary did this beautiful thing. During the last few days, Jesus had been trying to tell his disciples that he was going to leave them—that he would go to Jerusalem, be delivered into the hands of the Jews, be tormented and crucified, and return to his Father in heaven. But they wouldn't believe him. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how he must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee" (Matthew 16:21,22).

They just didn't understand. Had they understood and believed he would be with them just a few days longer, how different their attitude would be! How they would prize the last few hours of his presence! How lovingly and carefully would they listen to his last words. He had so much to tell them before his death. He yearned to tell them many things. But no. When he referred to his death, they thought he spoke in parables. "Be it far from thee, Lord," they said. They didn't understand. There was no one on earth that understood. These must have been the thoughts of Jesus at the supper table there in Bethany that night. They were sad, lonely and disappointed thoughts. It was then that Mary came up behind him with her precious alabaster box of spikenard. So rare was this perfume that emperors and kings used it sparingly. But so full was Mary's love that she lavished a whole pound on one anointing of Jesus; and, by so doing, proclaimed him to

be above all the emperors and kings of the earth—to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords! How refreshing it was to the spirit of Jesus! What lift and buoyancy of spirit it gave him! He took it, as well he might, as a sign from heaven that all was well and would be well. Mary's act was the act of an angel, ministering to him.

Then, suddenly, a clamor broke out all around. Carping, criticizing voices arose. "What a waste!" "Why was not this ointment sold and the money given to the poor?" "This woman has no regard for the poor!" "Lord, rebuke her! She has thrown away 300 pence!" It was the disciples of Jesus, incited by Judas. Instead of commending, they condemned. They spoke as though, by this tender act, Mary had been guilty of a great sin. Mary was hurt and humiliated. Tears came to her eyes and she bowed her head in shame. Jesus turned and laid his hand softly, with a blessing, on Mary's head. Turning to his disciples he said:

"Why do you criticize her? Let her alone. She has done a wonderful thing for me. Without realizing it, she has poured this ointment on me before my death; but really to prepare my body for burial. The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always. I have been telling you of my impending death, but me ye have not understood. She hath done what she could, and this is such a wonderful act of love, and devotion, that I want ALL ages and generations to know about it. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached, in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Do you realize what this means, what a wide publication this implies? Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations." (Matthew 24:14) That is how widely he wanted this incident related.

Thus, Jesus rebuked the attitude of the disciples, impressing on them that there are things far more important than money. They humbly took his rebuke and were ashamed—all, that is, except one. In the next verses after this narrative, we read: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests, and said unto them: What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him, for thirty pieces of silver" (Matthew 26:14,15).

This event at Bethany had been the last straw for Judas. He had been following Jesus for his own personal enrichment, systematically stealing from the treasury of the group. Now Jesus was apparently encouraging his followers to dissipate their resources and the money would no longer fall into his hands. Jesus had plainly said he was going to die. Judas knew that the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees had offered a reward for anyone betraying Jesus into their hands. To the perverted and twisted mind of Judas, it was but a natural decision; he may as well have their money as anyone else.

Mary's act of devotion with the alabaster box had touched Jesus' heart as nothing else had done, so he commanded that it be brought to the remembrance of all to whom the gospel is preached. But there are other reasons too, for remembering and considering this

episode. There are precious lessons to be learned and much encouragement to be derived from doing so. Let us now consider some of them.

Lessons from Mary's Act

Whenever Mary was in the presence of Jesus, she forgot everything else except to listen to his words, to learn of him. When Martha protested that Mary was not helping her serve, Jesus implied that what Mary was doing was good and was also important. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her," he said (Luke 10:42). The lesson is that the Lord does not condemn those who, lacking the ability and opportunity for prominent service, simply sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his word. Neither should we be critical of such. It has been suggested that Martha was not concerned merely with her cooking, but also in the niceties of hospitality which in our Lord's and Mary's estimation were not important compared with the words Jesus had to say. This could be implied from what Jesus said to her: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41).

What did the very precious ointment or perfume, which Mary lavishly poured upon the head and feet of Jesus, signify? I think the primary significance is love, pure, fervent love. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so does the sweetness of a man's friend" (Proverbs 27:9). "A friend loveth at all times" (Proverbs 17:17). This is what Mary demonstrated.

In the highly figurative language of the Hebrews, the sensing of an aroma is used to denote the perception of a moral quality in another. Thus, God is said to "smell a sweet odor" from a sacrifice to signify he perceives with pleasure the good disposition which the offerer expressed by such an act of worship. (See Diaglott, page 656.)

David expresses a similar meaning: "Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2).

The fervent, sincere prayer of the heart is to God a sweet savor. This is confirmed in Revelation which speaks of "golden vials, full of odors [or perfume], which are the prayers of saints" (Revelation 5:8).

Mary first poured the perfume upon the head of Jesus. Our love and adoration is primarily to our head, Christ Jesus, the head of the body of Christ. Our sacrifices which rise as a sweet odor before God are acceptable because of him. Our prayers are heard, because they are made in his name.

Then Mary poured the perfume upon the feet of Jesus. This refers to the "feet members" of the body of Christ mentioned by Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him, that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7).

These are the ones who today are preaching "good tidings," good news, happy news; not the news of pointless slaughter nor universal second death. These are they who "publish peace" and "bring good tidings of good." They tell of a time of trouble, but emphasize the enduring peace to follow, the good tidings of God's kingdom on earth. These are they who "publish salvation," the pure, unadulterated doctrine of a ransom for all, together with the blessing of all mankind. These are they who "say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth," who see and preach the presence of Christ, the great king. These are our brethren, those of "like precious faith," fellow-members of the Body of Christ. Just as Mary poured the very costly perfume upon the feet of Jesus, we should love and serve our brethren lavishly with the same love and service we render our head because of this principle: "As ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

John says in his account that after Mary anointed the feet of Jesus she wiped his feet with her hair. What was the result? You may be sure that this caused her hair to be thoroughly perfumed. Blessings given bring blessings in return. This is a law of God.

"There is he that scattereth, and yet increaseth. . . . The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:24,25). "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again" (Proverbs 19:17).

Can you imagine lending to the Lord? This means if you do a service to one who cannot repay you, and you do it without any hope or expectation of repayment, the Lord considers it as lending to him! He will open the windows of heaven to such pouring out spiritual blessings in return. There is even some evidence that the Lord often makes it up to them in temporal matters as well.

It is written of this act of Mary: "And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." The house of God is his Church, and the costly sacrifices of the Mary-like members bring sweet and savory blessings upon all God's household. For example, there are ecclesias and individuals who produce truth literature such as reprints, volumes, booklets, tracts; others put on radio and television programs, here and abroad, and make audio tapes; others perform other services. Like Mary's spikenard permeating the house with a delightful fragrance, these efforts permeate the House of God far and wide. There is no competition in the Lord's service: "Go ye also into the vineyard," the Lord said.

Devotion to God Is Not a Waste

"What a waste!" they said when Mary's sacrifice was poured out. "What a waste!" our worldly relatives and friends say when we consecrate our all to God: our time, our talents, our energies, our resources, everything. Ah, but as Jesus said, "The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always." There will always be the poor heathen, and other unbelievers, until the kingdom has done its work. But the body of Christ will not always be here. "Me ye have not always," Jesus said. "The last members of my church

will soon be glorified. So lavish your love and service upon these while you have the opportunity."

Some of the disciples were critical of Mary's generous act and some of the Lord's people today react the same way. They tell the humble Marys of today: "Do not break the seal of your alabaster box. Do not give too generously of your time, talents and means to the friends. You will only impoverish yourself. You will ruin your health. Hold back." But Jesus said: "Let her alone! She hath wrought a good work upon me." Just as Jesus deeply loved Mary of Bethany, you may be sure he loves the Marys of today as well. Regarding Mary of Bethany Bro. Russell says:

"Not only was the Lord willing that the matter should be told for a memorial of Mary, but we may safely conclude that in the everlasting future, Mary will be ranked very high among the faithful followers of the Lord. She may not be one with the apostles, upon the twelve thrones of Israel, but we may be sure that she will have some grand, some honorable place, near to the one she loved, and for whom she showed her devotion."—
Reprints, page 3878.

I think he is absolutely right.

* Excerpted from "Ointment Very Precious" in *Dicourses by Robert S. Seklemian* (Chicago Bible Students, 1998) pp. 172-175.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Behold Thy Son!

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.—John 19:26,27

Mary is finally asleep. It was so difficult ..to watch her tonight. Her pain and ..her agony were so intense as she watched her son on the cross. She was quite distraught and upset. The truth be told, we both are. We were crying and holding each other not long ago. I am glad she can finally sleep a little. But, sleep still eludes me.

Jesus is dead. As I say these words, I can hardly believe it. And, not just dead, but killed! Crucified! I saw it with my own eyes so I know it is true. Its feels like my heart has been torn in half. I'm trying to look to Jehovah to sort all this out but I fear my grief won't allow me to remember what Jesus told us.

I remember when I first decided to follow Jesus three and one-half years ago. I was fishing with my brother James and also with Simon Peter and Andrew. Jesus got into one of our boats and began teaching the multitude that had followed him. When he had finished, Jesus told Simon to let the nets down for a catch. I thought it was odd that Simon said he would! We had fished all night and we had come back to shore with nothing. But, lo and behold, immediately, the nets were full to the point of breaking! We were amazed and realized that we were in the presence of an extraordinary man. So we left our fishing business to other family members and followed him. Jesus said to us, "From now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:1-11).

Those three years with him were filled with miracles and the joy we had listening to the words he preached to us and to multitudes of people. He spoke of the coming kingdom. He healed the sick, the lame, and the blind! His words brought the old prophecies alive and we would spend hours asking questions and listening to his answers. As we shared this wonderful news in the different areas that we traveled to, the people listened to us gladly but the leaders seemed troubled by Jesus' words and actions.

It is hard to believe that it was only ten days ago prior to this awful night that Jesus had been heralded as a king when we entered Jerusalem. We were told by Jesus to get a young donkey so he could ride it into Jerusalem. As he entered riding on this donkey, the multitudes took palm branches to lay in the road before him and they proclaimed from a psalm of David, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 118:26). All in the city were asking, "Who is this?" He went to the temple and cast out the moneychangers. Then he healed the blind and the lame. (Matthew 21:12-14) We had never seen him so aggressive in showing forth his power. I felt like nothing could stop Jesus—not even the chief priests and scribes who had such disdain for him.

How could this man who had been welcomed as a king now be crucified as a common criminal? How could our own Jewish leaders not see the good in Jesus and the good that he was doing for the people?

In the days to follow Jesus met with the Pharisees and the Sadducees several times. They often tried to trap him by asking him questions. Jesus called them hypocrites and pointedly showed them how they were looking at only the letter of the Law and not at the spirit of the Law. He summarized all the commandments by saying, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39). This never moved them. They only thought Jesus was a threat to their positions.

He lamented over Jerusalem and their willingness to kill the prophets and he used a prophecy from Jeremiah when he said, "Your house is being left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38; Jeremiah 22:5).

One day as we were sitting with Jesus on the Mount of Olives, we asked him for signs of his coming and for signs of the end of this age. He told us of the many events that must take place and he shared many parables with us. He also warned us by saying that "the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion" (Matthew 26:2). Later that night, when we were in Bethany, Mary anointed him with an expensive perfume. Jesus said, "For when she poured this perfume upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial" (Matthew 26:12). I think I still detected some of this perfume on him as he walked with his cross earlier today.

I still try to understand and comprehend that Jesus is dead. Jesus told us that we must love our enemies! Why should I do this? How can I do this when they have just crucified my dearest and most beloved friend and my master?

Then there is Judas. He betrayed Jesus. He betrayed all of us! For over three years, Judas walked with Jesus. We shared everything and I thought I knew him. Jesus even trusted him with the money. There is a psalm which says, "Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). It is hard enough to understand strangers wanting to kill Jesus, but to have a friend do this is incomprehensible to me.

Wait! At supper in the upper room when Jesus seemed troubled he told us, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray me" (John 13:21). We all looked at one another and I even asked who it might be. Jesus dipped a morsel, gave it to Judas, and said, "What you do, do quickly." I thought Jesus had sent Judas on an errand of some kind since he was in charge of the money. (John 13:22-30) Could I have stopped Judas from betraying our Lord? Oh, dear Jehovah, was I responsible for not stopping the coming events? Please forgive me. I was selfish. I just wanted to stay near Jesus. I must have faith that Jesus knew all and that you, heavenly Father, allowed this. But, I still ask your forgiveness if I in any way failed you or my dear friend.

Jesus began talking about going away after Judas left the upper room. As the rest of us walked to the Garden of Gethsemane, he told us how we would be recognized as his disciples by the love that we have for one another. He told us not to be troubled. He said that we could not follow him now but that we would follow him later. He promised us peace. And he told us of the great love that the heavenly Father has for us. He called us friends and one phrase in particular stands out now, "This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12,13).

What have we done to deserve such love? What have I done? Now he has gone away, taken from us in a most cruel and inhumane way. He said that he chose us. Why? Perhaps the question should be, What will I do now? How can I best show forth his love to all and how can I share his message of the coming kingdom?

He said that he would send a helper, a comforter to us. There has never been any word which Jesus has spoken that has not been fulfilled. I must have faith in this even though my heart is filled with sorrow.

I must learn to put aside the cruel things that I have seen this night. Jesus was beaten and humiliated by the very men I must learn to love. He was charged unjustly for a crime he did not commit. He was nailed to the cross and left to suffer and cry for hours and hours. And yet, I know that Jesus forgave them. I must learn this also. When Jesus cried on the cross, "It is finished," it was a cry that will ring out in my mind for a long, long time. It was almost a relief to me to see his suffering end. I think Mary felt this also. To see this perfect man completely worn out physically and emotionally was something I wouldn't have believed possible even two weeks ago.

I remember something Jesus said early in his ministry: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Did this possibly mean Jesus? Is he this temple? I must go and meet with the other disciples to pray and search for the meaning in these things.

Mary is stirring now. I will take care of Mary as if she were my own mother. To lose a friend is difficult but to lose a son must be the hardest of all.

Help us all to look to you, Jehovah, to show us the way to best serve you and to best continue to spread the good news that Jesus brought us. Most of all help us to learn to have this same love that Jesus showed to everyone. He gave his all. Help us do the same.

Simon Peter

Healing a Guilty Conscience

Lovest thou me more than these?—John 21:15

Tom Ruggirello

The initial reaction to the death of Jesus brought a heart wrenching pain to all his disciples and loved ones. Each had special memories of the Lord and treasured visions of his life. Though he had told them on a number of occasions of his impending death, they seemed incapable of accepting such a prediction.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was hailed by the people as king, the thoughts of his death were far from the disciples' minds. However, when just hours later, Jesus hung on the Roman cross, his followers were devastated. Their long hoped-for Messiah was cut off in the prime of life. Rather than experiencing the joys of a glorious kingdom, the disciples had to reconcile themselves to the reality of their murdered king. Their sorrow, mixed with confusion, resulted in a total lack of direction for the fledgling Christian movement.

Of all those who grieved over the crucifixion, Simon Peter had more complex emotions to deal with. Though all the others had forsaken Jesus and fled when he was arrested in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:56), only Peter verbally denied that he knew Jesus. It was a scene that would be imprinted on Peter's memory forever. After the arrest of Jesus, Peter "followed afar off" and after going into the court of the High Priest's palace he sat with the servants and kept warm by the fire. His intent was to remain anonymous, to quietly observe what was happening to Jesus. He did not want to be pulled before the scrutiny of his enemies so he persisted in his denial of knowing the Master. With each denial the guilt mounted. When the cock crew, the words of Jesus' warning came crashing back (Matthew 26:34). In all the excitement and suspense he had forgotten the warning that had been given to him just hours earlier, that he would deny Jesus.

Bitter Weeping

It was then that Peter "went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). Vine's dictionary explains that the word "bitterly" is used of the "poignant grief of Peter's weeping for his denial of Christ." His fear of being identified as a disciple made him do what he swore he would never do. He had assured the Master that he would die with him before denying him (Matthew 26:35). Yet the reality of life became so different than the spoken promise. It is a lesson of the power that fear can have on the human heart. When fear takes hold, even one's strongest commitments can be compromised.

When news came that the murder of Jesus had been accomplished, Peter's sense of betrayal was complete. He may have asked himself what might have been had he stood

with Jesus. Could he have prevented his death? Might he have been able to avert the evil of the Pharisees? If nothing else, he could have given himself as a martyr with the Lord rather than abandoning him to the shame of dying as a common criminal. Certainly the crucifixion brought more than grief to Peter. He also would bare the burden of a guilty conscience.

After the cross we can only imagine how he must have felt during the time that his Lord and Master laid in the tomb. Who could comprehend the shame he must have felt? If Jesus had not specifically searched him out to restore his spirit, Peter may have been lost to the Christian world. In this experience we see a wonderful glimpse of the Lord's mercy and compassion for the inherent weaknesses of his followers. In his dealings with Peter we see that he reads the intent of the heart; when the intent is good, the actions can be forgiven.

Peter Singled Out

In the Garden Tomb, after the resurrection of Jesus, the angel of the Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (Mark 16:1). Seeing the great stone rolled away from the tomb they entered and saw the angel of the Lord sitting where Jesus had laid, and they were frightened. The angel then said those wonderful words, "He is risen, he is not here."

The angel instructed the women to go and tell the disciples and Peter (Mark 16:7). It is interesting that the angel mentions Peter by name. One commentary makes this observation about that detail:

"This second gospel, being drawn up—as all the earliest tradition states—under the eye of Peter, or from materials chiefly furnished by him, there is something deeply affecting in the preservation of this little clause by Mark alone, and in the clause itself, which it is impossible not to connect with the cloud under which Peter lay in the eyes of the eleven, not to say in his own also . . . But such wounds are not easily healed; and this was the first of a series of medicinal touches."—Jamison, Faussett and Brown, page 213.

It appears that the angel may have singled out this one apostle because he needed individual attention. It was something that only the resurrected Lord could do for he was the one that Peter had denied. In Luke 24:34 (and confirmed in 1 Corinthians 15:5) there is another statement that again singles out Peter. When the two disciples who had traveled the road to Emmaus rushed back to Jerusalem to share the news that Jesus had appeared to them, they met with unexpected excitement among the Jerusalem brethren. The eleven apostles and those that were with them said with great joy that indeed the Lord had been raised, "and has appeared unto Simon." It was on the same day that Jesus had appeared to the women in the early morning that he made a special appearance to Simon Peter. The reason for this private encounter is open to uncertainty since we are not told what was said. It is likely that Jesus was continuing his "medicinal touch" to the heart of Peter. He needed to lift the guilt Peter carried. He needed to make Peter a

productive minister of the gospel, and to the brethren. This first encounter was to prepare him for more detailed instruction later.

"Lovest Thou Me"

This leads finally to the more explicit work of Jesus in restoring the guilt-laden Peter. The account is given in John 21. It appears that Peter was still uncertain regarding his relationship with Jesus. The disciples had by this time left Jerusalem and returned to Galilee. It was Peter who stated that he intended to return to his fishing business (John 21:3). Not knowing what else to do, those with him followed and worked with Peter as they fished the waters of Galilee. They worked all night and caught nothing. Jesus stood on the shore and called out asking if they had anything to eat. After their negative reply, Jesus instructed them to cast their net on the other side of the boat. This action brought such a catch of fish that they were hardly able to draw in the net. It was the young apostle John who recognized the Lord. When he proclaimed it to the others Peter drew a robe around himself and jumped into the water, swimming towards his beloved Lord.

When the disciples landed they saw Jesus by a fire with some fish laid on the coals. Jesus instructed Peter to bring some fish from their own nets, to which Peter complied. Jesus then invited them to eat breakfast. No one needed to ask who their host was, for it was obvious to them that this was the Lord. After they had eaten Jesus turned his attention to Peter, addressing him by his common name, "Simon, son of Jonas." Had not Jesus changed his name to Peter? Why would he now call him Simon? Possibly he was reflecting Peter's own view of himself. In his own mind how could he continue to be *Petros*, "the rock," after his cowardly denial? And so Jesus addressed him as his old self, before his faith had distinguished him from the other disciples.

Now three simple questions followed from Jesus. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" To what was Jesus asking Simon to compare his love? There appear only two possibilities. First, he may have been referring to the other disciples as the object of comparison. If that is the case, then he was likely alluding to Peter's claim that though all others would deny him, he would not. And so Jesus' question would have meant, "Do you really love me more than the others, as you once claimed?" But if this was the reference, then Jesus would have been merely mocking Peter's earlier words, and it would have served no purpose.

More likely Jesus gestured toward the catch of fish on the shore and from which they had just eaten as he referred to the secular work to which Simon had returned. Jesus' intent was to restore Simon back to the office of an apostle. The choice that Jesus was presenting to Simon was between feeding himself or feeding others. Because there was still the obstacle of Peter's guilty conscience, three questions, almost identical in nature, were put to him. These three may have been intended to counteract the three denials of Peter. He had denied him three times. Now Jesus gave him the opportunity to confess his love three times.

The first two times when Jesus asked, "lovest thou me more than these," he used the Greek word *agapeo*, which signifies the highest form of love. It is a love where there is no self interest, only a desire for the highest welfare of the other person. Simon's guilty conscience may have prevented him from asserting this type of love since his previous actions would not indicate *agapeo* love. And so when Simon answered that he did love him, he used the familiar *phileo* to describe his love for Jesus. There was one thing that Peter was certain of. He knew in his heart that he cherished Jesus with great affection. He could honestly answer that his love was a strong brotherly love.

But Jesus persisted because he wanted to show Peter that he would yet have the opportunity of displaying *agapeo* love. In John 21:18 Jesus continued their discussion by telling Peter that some day he would die a martyr for the cause of Christ. Would such news strike terror into the heart of Peter? Probably not. More than likely these words brought comfort to his guilty heart. He would yet have the privilege of dying with his Lord, and of truly expressing his *agapeo* love for him. He could now stand once again as "The Rock" who professed faith in Jesus as the world's Savior. The remainder of his life was spent fulfilling the commission Jesus gave to him there on the shores of Galilee, that of feeding and caring for the flock of Christ.

Healing the Guilty Conscience

What a tremendous lesson we see of how the Lord deals with the shortcomings of his children. He reads their hearts. He knows their inherent weaknesses, and he restores them with compassion and tenderness when they are downtrodden. The importance of displaying this process through one of the chief apostles cannot be overlooked.

This experience of denial and restoration was to change Peter forever. He could never be the same self-confident man that he had been. These early days of his Christian walk were followed by a courage and commitment that flowed from confidence in the Lord. In Acts the fourth chapter, after healing a man that was lame from birth, he and the apostle John were brought before the great Sanhedrin. This was the very body of men that Peter had so feared while cowering in the courtyard of the High Priest. This time his attitude was far different. What an example of "lesson learned" we see there. He boldly spoke with authority that Jesus had been raised from the dead, and that his own power of healing the lame man had come from Jesus himself (Acts 4:10). His courage in proclaiming that salvation can come only through Jesus Christ was met with awe as even their enemies took note that these men "had been with Jesus."

After being threatened and commanded by the Jewish council to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, Peter and John spoke the words that would inspire many a faithful follower of Christ. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19,20).

In Peter's experience of sin and restoration we see a microcosm of the Christian life. The question is not whether we as Christians will sin. That is a foregone conclusion. We all

continue to fight our inherited Adamic weaknesses. The strength of our stand as Christians lies in our ability to believe that through Jesus our sins can be forgiven, and through his supervision of our lives even our sins can be made great object lessons for growth and development. As we look back upon the life of Simon Peter we can learn for ourselves that Jesus is stronger than our fears and that he often asks us the same questions he asked Peter: "Lovest thou me more than these?" When we can say "yes" with complete conviction, the Lord can work his miracles. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" (Joshua. 24:15).

Pontius Pilate

What Is Truth?

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.—John 18:38

Michael Nekora

Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect of Judea when Jesus' ministry was drawing to a close. He was expected to keep the peace at minimum cost to Rome, which meant with a minimum number of soldiers. Pilate had military experience, but political skills were far more important in the administration of Judea. Roman prefects quickly learned that it was the religious leaders who controlled what happened in Jerusalem. They either established a condition of détente with the Sanhedrin or had continuous unrest and rebellion on their hands.

Pilate's palace was in Samaria in the seaport town of Caesarea south of present-day Haifa. He had supreme authority in the military, judicial, and financial administration of Samaria and Judea. He exercised only general surveillance which required occasional travelling to Jerusalem to administer Roman justice, hear appeals, and keep his finger on the pulse of the people. He could not have known that the events associated with that particular Passover week would make him "the judge who changed history."

The Sanhedrin vs. Jesus

According to Paul Maier, in 30 AD Pilate received a directive from Rome which had obvious anti-Semitic overtones. Because he felt he had to do something Rome would think restricted the freedom of the Jews without actually antagonizing the Sanhedrin, he decided to take away their freedom to execute anyone. They could conduct a trial and find a person guilty, but the actual sentencing and execution had to be carried out by Roman authority. Pilate spoke with Caiaphas, the high priest, and explained the political pressure causing him to act as he did. "Pilate tried to sweeten the pill by granting a Jewish request that he release one prisoner, chosen by the people, at each Passover, a festival amnesty which was unparalleled in the Roman Empire, but a concession with no great implications."¹

It is unlikely that Pilate knew much about Jesus' activities because they were in the religious sphere not the political. Although the triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the people shouted "Hosanna" could be interpreted as political, by no stretch of the imagination was this a threat to Rome.

The ride into Jerusalem was not a threat to the Sanhedrin either, but interference with temple commerce was. It threatened the flow of money into their own treasury. Why were moneychangers needed in the temple at all?

When Jesus answered whether it was lawful to pay money to Caesar, he asked for a coin of the realm. "Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's." (Matthew 22:20,21) Each new supreme ruler replaced the old coins containing the image of his predecessor with new coins containing his own image. Caesar had followed that venerable tradition.

And that was the "problem," so to speak. Images were forbidden: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4). Accepting coins at the temple with Caesar's image on them would "pollute" the temple so people had to exchange them for temple coins. Whenever one kind of money is exchanged for another, a fee flows into the hands of the one managing the transaction. Jesus said: "It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him."—Luke 19:46-48

Why did a crowd which had such enthusiasm for Jesus, which was so attentive to hear him, quickly turn and cry "Crucify him"? The obvious answer is they were different crowds. Everything indicates the common people never wavered in their love of Jesus. It was the scribes and chief priests who hated him. As one of the largest employers in Jerusalem they could easily assemble the temple employees at the crack of dawn to be a crowd very much under their control. They could suggest with some conviction that Jesus was a threat to their jobs. These people knew they held their jobs at the pleasure of the chief priests. What appeared to be an unruly mob was the most effective tool Caiaphas had and he used it for maximum effect. Although Pilate had his soldiers, he also knew that actually using them might do more harm than good.

If the scribes and chief priests could have taken the law into their own hands, they would have killed Jesus. It would not have been difficult. They did it with Stephen, even though under Pilate's rules that was not legal. But Pilate was not in Jerusalem when Stephen was stoned. In the unlikely event that the chief priests had to account for their action in condoning that summary execution, they would undoubtedly have claimed that the "uncontrollable" crowd simply took matters into its own hands. Such an excuse would never work during Passover week when Pilate was "in town" and administering Roman justice.

The events of the trial before Pilate are described in some detail in the Scriptures. What is not described are the events that might have happened behind the scenes. Jim Bishop suggests that once the Sanhedrin decided that they had to execute Jesus and had to do it immediately, they faced such overwhelming problems that the high priest would have been forced to talk to Pilate the night before and get his agreement to "rubber stamp" the death penalty. Bishop gives these reasons:

1. When Pilate asked what accusation they brought against Jesus, he got this sarcastic reply: "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee" (John 18:30). When one seeks the help of a powerful ruler, one does not deliberately go out of one's way to antagonize him. Their reaction implies they think he is backing down from a prior agreement.

2. The Jews did not go in to see Pilate; Pilate had to come out to meet them (John 18:28,29). This was an enormous concession to accommodate their idea of ceremonial defilement. They could never be sure Pilate would actually do this unless they had secured his agreement in advance.

3. Pilate's wife dreamed about Jesus. "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19). If she overheard what was said between her husband and the high priest the night before, her mind would be on the matter and it would be natural for her to dream about it.²

In political relationships among powerful forces, one side may have a momentary advantage, but power can also shift unexpectedly. There were times when Pilate needed the Sanhedrin's help to advance his own agenda. Pilate's future promotional opportunities depended heavily on a peaceful state of affairs in his territory. And he knew he wasn't the only one sending reports to Rome. The high priests had their own communication channels. So cooperation was essential between the oppressors and the oppressed. This was one time when Caiaphas really needed Pilate's help, and they both knew it.

It is not clear why Pilate decided to conduct a formal trial of Jesus. Perhaps it was something that he saw or sensed in Jesus, a man who was clearly not like the two thieves he had just condemned to death. All the elements of a trial are described in John 18:

1. The Indictment: What accusation bring ye against this man? (verse 29)
2. The Examination: Art thou the King of the Jews? (verse 33)
3. The Defense: My kingdom is not of this world. (verse 36)
4. The Verdict: I find in him no fault at all. (verse 38)

When Jesus answers Pilate's question about whether he is a king, he says: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?"

And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all."—John 18:37,38

What is Truth?

Truth is one of the first casualties in the political arena. Certainly the scribes, Pharisees, and priests had a flexible standard of truth when it was applied to themselves, but an inflexible standard when it came to others. Jesus said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."—Matthew 23:2-4

As events proceeded and the priests saw that Jesus might slip through their fingers, they finally hit upon the one fear that got Pilate's attention: "From thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar" (John 19:12).

This was the one issue the priests could make bigger than it was. Caesar was known to be paranoid. If he heard that his Judean prefect was indifferent to challenges against Rome, Pilate's career could be brought to an untimely end. So this accusation could not be ignored. He asks, "Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). For the moment the chief priests have become more Roman than Pilate himself.

What is truth? These putative defenders of the law effortlessly violate commandment number one: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Truth, in their estimation, is flexible.

Because Pilate had reserved the right as Rome's representative to execute anyone, death was administered by crucifixion, a form of execution unknown to the Jews. It could be a very slow punishment, taking as long as several days. In other places controlled by Rome, those crucified died slowly, often requiring more than a day. The Jews were the only people in the Roman Empire who had obtained the concession that under no circumstances would any body be left on a cross over the Sabbath. If the legs of a crucified man were broken, he could no longer push his body up enough to get air into his lungs. Death actually came quickly through suffocation. That's why the legs of the two thieves were broken.

Unlike the thieves Jesus was scourged first which, if carried to an extreme, could cause death. This scourging made Jesus so weak he could not carry his cross. In fact an entire cross was so heavy no healthy man could carry an entire, assembled cross even though that is what we see in the pictures of most artists. Only the crossbeam, placed on a condemned man's neck, was carried.³ Pilate must have forgotten how weakened a man could become when scourged because he expressed surprise that Jesus had died so quickly (Mark 15:44).

The Roman cross, intended as an instrument of cruel death, instead became an instrument of new life and hope for the human race. Pontius Pilate, outmaneuvered at every turn by the clever priests, curiously emerges as the only one who actually defends Jesus, hardly a role he would have chosen for himself. As a result and now nearly 2000 years after these events, he is the best known Roman of the time.

On the day of Pentecost Peter told the Jews, "God . . . hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go" (Acts 3:13). The culpability of the Jews in the death of Jesus is beyond question. But the anti-Semitic reaction within the Christian community is inexcusable. As Maier puts it, "To be anti-Semitic because of Good Friday is as ridiculous as hating Italians because Nero once threw Christians to the lions."⁴

Truth

How should we answer Pilate's question, "What is Truth?" What do the Scriptures say? "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

The word of God is not "an old fiddle upon which any tune may be played." It sets the highest standard imaginable. It expects those who embrace it to uphold its principles no matter what the personal cost may be, even of life itself. But all too frequently a person may be tempted to make a quick calculation and see the advantage of sacrificing principle for momentary gain. "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (Luke 9:25). The chief priests and Pharisees did a quick calculation: "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:48). So they killed Jesus, yet they still lost both their place and their nation. They said, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). So it was for countless generations that followed.

If we have "come to the Father" through Jesus, we have been enlightened. We have tasted some of the good things of God, have received the holy spirit, and have seen that his word is true and good. This enlightenment, along with the blessing it confers upon us, also requires us to conform to the truth that we understand. If we fall away, it means death without the possibility of a resurrection: "For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once for all been enlightened, and have tasted the sweetness of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the holy spirit, and have realized how good the word of God is and how mighty are the powers of the coming age, and then fall away—it is impossible, I say, to bring them back to a new repentance, since, to their own undoing, they are crucifying the Son of God afresh and exposing him to open shame"— Hebrews 6:4-6, Weymouth.

At this memorial season, let us make fresh resolves to be among those who "are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:39). He who has kept us from falling is able to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24)—if we remain faithful unto death.

¹ Paul L. Maier, *Pontius Pilate* [third edition] (Grand Rapids Michigan: Kregel publications, 1996), pp. 129-130

² Jim Bishop, *The Day Christ Died* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1957) p. 260

³ Max I. Dimont, *Appointment in Jerusalem* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1991) p. 105

⁴ Maier, op. cit., Preface to the First Edition

The Trial of Jesus Christ

Six Infractions of Jewish Law

— *Homer Hamlin, researched by attorney Howard Rankin*

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death.—Matthew 26:59

In the proceedings before the Sanhedrin there was no prosecutor or district attorney as we know him today. The charge was made and proved by the complaining witnesses themselves, and the members of the court were denied the right to actively interrogate or prosecute the accused. Jesus was accused of sedition, seeking to tear down or destroy the Hebrew religion. The two witnesses accused Jesus of saying he would tear down the temple and rebuild it in three days. We know from John 2:21 that "he spake of the temple of his body." However, they believed he intended the literal temple, which had taken more than forty years to build. Since there were only two witnesses, and they were not in complete agreement, Caiaphas realized he would lose this particular charge, so he took control of the prosecution contrary to the Code. This was the an infraction of Jewish law..

Finding that he was not able to establish the allegation of sedition, Caiaphas changed the charge in the middle of the trial, a proceeding that would not be permitted today. He changed the charge to blasphemy. This was a crime in which the accused allegedly claims to himself a spark of divinity, either that he is divine or that he is the Son of God. This was another violation.

Jesus declined to answer the charges of Caiaphas, which he was legally permitted to do, until Caiaphas pulled a master stroke. He said to Jesus (Matthew 26:63) "I adjure you ... " The word occurs only seven times in the Bible. It was a solemn and seldom used Hebrew oath, going beyond our present day oaths "So help me God," for in addition to requiring one to answer truthfully, it also compels him to answer. In today's language, Jesus could not take the 5th amendment. Jesus recognized the solemnity of this oath, and when he was asked "I adjure you by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" Jesus said "Thou hast said, nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:63, 64). With this testimony from Jesus that he indeed was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Caiaphas closed the testimony and asked for an immediate vote, after literally condemning Jesus before a vote was even taken (verse 65). This was a gross violation of Jewish Law, number three.

Under the Jewish Code, at the conclusion of the testimony of a capital crime, the judges were directed, in the language of the code, to return home, and there to eat light foods and drink light wine, then sleep well for two days and two nights, and then to return, **ONLY THEN**, to vote, after again hearing the testimony against the accused. Caiaphas also asked for a simultaneous or voice vote, which was the *eighth* flagrant violation of their

code. The code expressly provided that the vote should be cast one at a time, beginning with the youngest member, and then ascending in seniority until the oldest and most mature had voted, since only in this manner would the vote of the junior member not be influenced by that of the elder and more wise. The fourth violation!

They all voted that Jesus was guilty. Under the Jewish Code a unanimous verdict of guilty was a verdict of acquittal. The seeming paradox is explained by the belief of the Judeans that unless the accused had secured the sympathy and belief in his innocence by at least one member of the court, he had been denied a fair trial. A unanimous verdict would raise the possibility of a purely emotional decision, possibly indicating "mob psychology." In their code a verdict of guilty must be one less than all, but more than half. They all voted guilty. Flagrant violation number five

As mentioned previously, it was not lawful for the Jews to put anyone to death (John 18:31). So they took Jesus to Pilate. It seems clear that Pilate followed each of the four steps of the Code of Criminal Procedure: accusation, interrogation, defense and verdict, for he first said as he came out of the palace "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered "If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him unto thee" Then Pilate replied "Take him, and judge him according to your law" They replied "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." We cannot apply this particular act to a specific law, but it is a clear case of verdict before trial, and we may properly call this violation number six.

Excerpted from "The Trial of Jesus Christ" in *Beauties of the Truth*, May 1997

Joanna

A Witness at the Citadel

And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.—Luke 23:55,56; 24:10

Carl Hagensick

Festive boughs adorned the walls of the Citadel of David from the majestic tower of Miramne to the tower of Hananel. It was Passover time in Jerusalem and a happy mood pervaded the atmosphere. Jews from every corner of the land came streaming into the holy city in preparation for the holy day ceremonies. Friends renewed associations with acquaintances from far places. It was a good time to be in the City of David.

The Citadel was the home of Herod Antipas when he visited Jerusalem. His father had built the majestic structure as part of his massive building campaign. Although Antipas was not Jewish, his father being Idumean and his mother Samaritan, he found it politically expedient, as tetrarch of Galilee, to observe all of the Jewish festivals.

Jerusalem stood in sharp contrast to Machareus, the desert fortress built by Herod the Great some nine miles east of the Dead Sea. There the atmosphere was tense. The fort was on the border with Arabia whose king, Aretas, repeatedly attacked after Herod, who had married his daughter, sent her back in exile so he might marry Herodias, the wife of his brother Phillip. He had seduced Herodias while in Rome and found her a soul mate, whose ambition for power matched his own.

Herod's retinue in Jerusalem included his chief steward from Machareus,¹ Chuza. Joanna, Chuza's wife, accompanied him. She was happy to do so, not only to escape Machareus for a time, nor only to join with other faithful Jews in the holy holiday season, but to see many of her beloved friends, especially Mary Magdalene. Perhaps she would even get a glimpse of Jesus whom she followed. Little did she realize how that was to come about.

At the Citadel

It was early on that fateful Passover morning when the soldiers from Pilate arrived with their prisoner. There was some surprise in Herod's courtyard, partly because few criminal cases were heard on Jewish holidays and partly because Pilate and Herod had been at enmity ever since the Roman procurator had killed several Galileans (Luke 13:1). It is unclear whether Pilate sent Jesus to Herod in order to avoid making judgment, or for the very purpose of bringing harmony to their severed relationship.

The apostle Peter attributes this reconciliation as being the fulfillment of Psalm 2:1,2 when he says in Acts 4:25-28, "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

Joanna was well acquainted with Herod's mood swings. She was probably at Machareus² that fateful night when Salome danced and Herod was forced to keep his rash promise of ordering the beheading of John the Baptist. She was familiar with his superstitious assumptions that Jesus was that same John risen from the dead (Mark 6:16). Therefore she may not have been surprised at Herod's reaction to the appearance of Jesus. "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him" (Luke 23:8).

No longer fearful that Jesus might be John, resurrected to extract revenge for his unjust beheading, Herod now was anxious for some demonstration of this Galilean's miracle-working power. He had hoped for some such signs earlier (Luke 9:9). Undoubtedly his questioning of the prisoner was along these lines. When Jesus "answered him nothing," the king's mood quickly swung from mere curiosity to anger and contempt.

Three Robes

Jesus was wearing his usual clothing that day, including a robe that was "without seam" (John 19:23). Joanna may have recognized it as a gift she, or one of her friends, had given the Master.³ Robes of such a seamless nature were a feature of the garments of the priests of Israel.⁴

Now, in mockery, Herod's men covered that seamless robe with a white garment.⁵ Thayer defines the Greek lampros as clear or translucent. This stands in marked contrast with the purple robe which Pilate used for much the same purpose. The difference in color was apparently due to localized traditions. It was customary for Jewish kings (and it was as a Jewish king that Herod the Edomite ruled) to wear white robes, while their Roman counterparts wore purple ones.

Thus, in mockery, both Herod and Pilate separately acknowledged Jesus as "King of the Jews." It is perhaps significant that, whereas Pilate had Jesus stripped of his garment before placing the purple robe upon him, Herod placed the white robe over the seamless coat which Jesus wore. Thus, in Herod's citadel, Jesus combined both the white robe of kingship with the seamless garment of priesthood—proclaiming him as a king and a priest, the office held prophetically for Christ by Melchizedek. It may also go to show that Jesus' title to kingship is based on his sinless life of purity, illustrated by the seamless robe.

Memories

Joanna's heart was torn by this turn of events. How well she remembered happier days with her Master. She had been one of his earliest followers, being convinced of Jesus' teachings by her husband when the Galileean had healed her son of a fever, bringing him back from the brink of death. This was Jesus' second miracle.⁶ Her husband, Chuza, had been stationed in Capernaum at that time. In fact, it was he who had taken the lead in traveling the 25 miles to Cana to plead with Jesus to heal their son. They had both been amazed that, though Jesus did not personally come to lay his hands on their child, his fever left him and he began to improve the very hour (the seventh hour) when the Master said that the boy would live. It is little wonder, noticing this coincidence, that John records that Chuza "believed, and all his house" (John 4:53).

Expressing their beliefs had not always been easy while in Herod's service. She had bitter memories of Herod's birthday, Salome's dance, and John's beheading. The Baptist was, after all, a cousin of her Lord. She saw the injustice. She witnessed the immoralities of court life and the brazen ambitious plays for political power.

Yet there were benefits. She and her husband were not the only believers in Herod's court. She may have well known Herod's foster brother Manaen (today, spelled Menachem, meaning consoler) and possibly she or Chuza had given him his first knowledge of the Galilean. Manaen faithfully followed in the footsteps of Jesus and eventually became an elder in Antioch (Acts 13:1, KJV). Tradition has it that this Manaen was a relative, possibly the son, of another Manaen⁷ mentioned by Josephus⁸ who was an Essene and had foretold the greatness of Herod the Great and later became his close friend.

Chuza's job paid well. Thus Joanna had sufficiency of funds, not only for her own living, but enough to make generous financial contributions to Jesus and his cause (Luke 8:3). Her greatest trial the last few months was the relocation to Machereus. This kept her far removed from being able to more actively follow the ministry of Christ. The greatest compensation was being able to share her faith with her beloved Chuza and accompany him on occasion to the areas where Jesus was actively preaching.

Reality

But the time for reverie soon passed. Joanna now had to face the harsh reality that the Master she adored, supported, and served, was now on trial for blasphemy (the charge under Jewish law) and treason (the accusation under Roman law) and could face the death sentence. Although we are not informed in the Bible, it is probable that she made the journey to the Antonium where Pilate was to pronounce final sentence.

There she would have heard the raucous cries of the mob: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" There she would have seen him stripped and adorned with mockery in royal robes and a crown of thorns. There she would have seen the whiplash tear into his tender flesh.

She may have followed the crowds watching the prisoners being marched to their death along the Via Dolorosa. Her weeping voice may have joined the choir of women who cried loudly, lamenting his death. She may have heard Jesus response: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:28-31).

She was almost certainly on Golgotha's hill when Jesus was nailed to the cross, thrown upright, and jolted as the heavy cross fell into its earth-hewn socket. There she would have heard his agonies ("I thirst," "Eli, Eli lama sabachthani. My God, why hast thou forsaken me"), his tender concern for others (saying "Woman, behold thy son" to his mother, and "Behold thy mother" to his beloved John); and finally his victory cry ("It is finished").

There they lingered, long after the Savior's dying breath, perhaps watching as his body was removed from the cross and carried to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. The day which had started with such happy promise in her room at the Citadel, ended so tragically on the hill of Calvary.

Spices for Anointing

The Sabbath was fast approaching. With aching heart, she headed home. There was much to do. Quickly she, with Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, prepared spices so that they might anoint his body when permissible after the Sabbath.

This was to be the saddest Sabbath of her life. For over three years she had followed Jesus, now the last she could do was follow him to the tomb. As soon as morning dawned, she and her companions hurried to the grave to place their spices on his body. She may have heard of how that other Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, had poured her spices on the Master while he was still living. She may have thought of the words of the Lord reported to her on that occasion, "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this" (John 12:7). How she may have wished she could have poured her ointments on him while he was yet alive. But that time was over now. Among the last at the cross, she would be among the first at the tomb.⁹ There she, who had loyally supported him for the past three years, would do one last service.

He, who at his birth had received gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh from royalty from afar, would at his death, receive fragrant spices from the women who had been close to him in his ministry on earth. Their spices were to produce a sweet aroma indeed.

Yet, once more, the mood was changed. They arrived at the tomb only to find the stone rolled away. Gripped at first by the fear that someone had stolen the body, two angels appearing as men garbed in shining robes quickly assured them saying, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you

when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:5-7).

"And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest" (Luke 24:8,9). We may never know the degree of joy that filled Joanna's heart as she and the others ran to bring the exciting news to Peter and the disciples. She was richly rewarded for her unshrinking faith and devotion to the one who had done so much for her.

May we each share both the sorrows of the cross and the joys of the resurrection, showing our appreciation to him who has saved us by yielding the rich perfume of our lives as a small token of gratitude for all he has done for us.

NOTES

¹. Godbey, W. B., *Gospel Harmony*, Ages Digital Library, p. 197

². Russell, C. T., *Watch Tower Reprints*, May 1, 1906, "Trifling With Conscience," R3778

³. Russell, C. T., *Watch Tower Reprints*, June 1, 1898, "A Look at the Crucified One," R2316

⁴. Edersheim, Alfred, *The Temple: It's Ministry and Service*, p. 69. A similar thought is implied by Anton Frey in *Tabernacle Notes*, p. 275

⁵. *Barnes' Notes*, Biblesoft Electronic Edition, Luke 23:11—"A white or shining robe, for this is the meaning of the original. The Roman princes wore 'purple' robes, and Pilate, therefore, put such a robe on Jesus. The Jewish kings wore a 'white' robe, which was often rendered very shining or gorgeous by much tinsel or silver interwoven. Josephus says that the robe which Agrippa wore was so bright with silver that when the sun shone on it, it so dazzled the eyes that it was difficult to look on it."

⁶. Russell, C. T., *Watch Tower Reprints*, February 1, 1908, "The Rewards of Faith," R4132

⁷. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Biblesoft Digital Version, "Manaen"

⁸. Josephus, Flavius, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XV, x, 2

⁹. Russell, C. T., *Watch Tower Reprints*, May 15, 1895, "The Resurrection of our Lord," R1816

Mary Magdalene

An Honorable Servant of the Lord

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.—John 20:18

One of the most notable female characters in the New Testament is Mary Magdalene. Her devotion and adoration towards our Lord have been admired by Christians throughout the Gospel age. She appears in countless devotional images, such as kneeling below the cross and crying at the garden tomb.

Despite the Bible reader's fascination with this beloved follower of the Master, very little is Scripturally written concerning the life of Mary Magdalene, although there is much speculation about her.

The Adulterous Woman

Consider John 8:1-11. If it were not for references from the oldest biblical manuscripts which explain that these verses were spurious, it might be assumed that this text referred to our dear Mary Magdalene. The account describes a nameless adulterous woman whom the Jewish leaders brought to the master to be condemned to death. Our Lord allegedly told the self-righteous accusers who had never sinned to hurl stones at the helpless woman. The popular expression, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7) has been an adopted phrase used throughout the ages by Christians, atheists, Jews, and Gentiles. Even opponents of the Bible are familiar with this text and many surmise that it refers to our Lord speaking about Mary Magdalene. It is believed that when the Pharisees recognized their own guilt, they reluctantly walked away, and thus the woman was set free.

Why do some think this account refers to Mary Magdalene. One may reason that since Mary's life was humiliated by the Jewish leaders and spared by the Master, she would be eternally grateful to him for his intervention. Her appreciativeness would likely motivate her to follow faithfully after the one who rescued her from a cruel and violent death.

However, why should anyone presume that John 8 (though spurious) even refers to Mary Magdalene if her name is not recorded in this Scripture? Who would want to taint the character of such a humble servant of our Lord with the reputation of an adulteress? The basis of such a thought is linked with Luke 7:36-38 where a sinful woman anoints our Lord's feet in the home of Simon the Pharisee. This nameless woman is a prostitute and she enters Simon's house with a vial of precious ointment intending to wash the Master's feet. However, she becomes so emotional in our Lord's presence that tears gush from her eyes, and she must use her hair to dry his feet made wet by her weeping.

John 8 has an adulterous woman while Luke 7 describes a prostitute. Both women have been characterized as being Mary Magdalene. Yet the only Scripture which describes Mary's background before she came into the Lord's acquaintance is Luke 8:2 where he cast out seven devils from her demon-possessed body.

A Devoted Follower

How honored Mary Magdalene must have felt to minister to the Master's needs while he preached the glad tidings throughout Judea (Luke 8:3). Nowhere in Scripture does our Lord regard the contributions of Mary Magdalene as inferior to his male disciples. In fact, the evangelists have listed her name as one of several women who left home, family, relations, village, and everyday life to travel with the Master and perform domestic responsibilities. Whatever shortcomings prevailed in her past, our Lord forgave them and welcomed her into his company.

What a privilege it must have been for this woman from Magdala to witness first hand the mighty miracles which Jesus performed and to listen to the discourses and parables as he preached to the multitudes. Additionally she was able to supply some of our Lord's temporal needs which must have provided rich blessings for her (Luke 8:3).

The Scriptures do not indicate whether our Lord revealed his impending death to the women who traveled with him. One may surmise that this information was shared only with his twelve disciples. It is uncertain as to how Mary Magdalene would have reacted if she had been privy to such news. One might suppose that instinctively she would have wanted to protect her Lord from his enemies, possibly by privately negotiating with them to spare his life. Or she may have tried to persuade Jesus to leave town. One can only speculate.

On the night of the Passover, the women were not invited to our Lord's last supper in the upper room. They had no idea that the disciples were celebrating the Master's memorial service that night. Thus Mary Magdalene did not know of the events which were to follow in Gethsemane or in Caiaphas' court that evening. She had no reason to believe that this was our Lord's last night on earth.

Perhaps she retired comfortably to bed that evening in anticipation of the Passover events completely unaware that her Master had been betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, abandoned by his disciples, and secretly captured by the Jewish officials.

It was not until the following morning that the news spread among the people of Jerusalem that a prophet from Nazareth had been arrested and stood in the Roman court of Pilate accused of treason. Perhaps this was when Mary Magdalene learned of the plight of her Lord as well.

Grief at the Cross

If Mary was present during our Lord's trial before the nation of Israel, what a horror it must have been for her to see the Master, bruised and beaten in Pilate's palace, quietly standing beside the notorious criminal Barabbas waiting for his fate from the clamorous crowds (Matthew 27:15-17).

Perhaps her voice to free Jesus was in the minority among the angry Jews who yelled, "Crucify him, Crucify him!" (Luke 23:21). Since the cries from the riotous mob prevailed, Mary Magdalene's savior was taken to Golgotha to be crucified.

There were great crowds of grief-stricken women who watched Jesus carry his cross to the place called Calvary. One can only suppose that Mary Magdalene was among the group to whom our Lord said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28).

Whether our Lord spoke those words in her presence or not, her heart must have been broken as she witnessed this final scene of the Master's earthly life (Matthew 27:55,56). She saw the fierce crowds jeer and taunt her Lord as he walked to his execution site. She saw the brutal soldiers pierce his gentle body as they nailed him to the cross, she witnessed him hanging innocently upon that "tree," and she saw him quietly suffer in pain between two thieves.

While the women stood viewing our Lord on the cross, the disciples had already fled in fear (Matthew 26:56). What a beautiful testimony Mary Magdalene gave to her dying Master. She was perhaps the only non-relative of Jesus standing with his mother and aunt at the cross (John 19:25). She watched him in agony, she watched as he took his last breath, and she followed as they laid his body in the sepulchre (Luke 23:55).

First at the Tomb

The following day was the Sabbath during which all Jews rested. The burial ceremony could not take place until one day later. There are varying gospel accounts as to who was first informed of our Lord's resurrection. Although Matthew 28:1 states that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary arrived early Sunday morning at the garden tomb, Luke 24:10 suggests that several women went to the tomb that morning. This suggests that not all of the women went to Jesus' grave at the same time.

If this is true, then Mary Magdalene (and another Mary) were the first to visit the tomb that day (John 20:1; Mark 16:1-3). Perhaps her devotion and love towards the Master inspired her to visit his grave in the dark, early morning hours alone. Perhaps she believed that by being near his sepulchre she could feel a closeness to him, and the quietness of the morning would allow her to meditate on his life and her adoration for him.

Regardless of her intentions for traveling to the garden tomb alone early that morning, her ultimate goal must have been a desire to anoint Christ's body with sweet spices. Not only would it be appropriate for such a humble servant to perform this service on her Lord's body, but this was also a ritual traditionally carried out by Jewish women.

There is no reason to believe she was confident of his resurrection as attested by her cries to Simon Peter and John that day: "Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him" (John 20:2).

Obviously overwhelmed with grief, she returned to the empty tomb. The events of the past two and a half days were quite distressing for the woman who loved and cared for the Master during his earthly ministry. She witnessed his capture, conviction, execution, burial and now sudden disappearance. What thoughts must have raced through her mind for a man who only loved and never did anything wrong.

Apparently even the presence of angels in the tomb who asked her why she was crying made no impression upon her. She was so overcome with sadness that she also did not recognize the voice of the Master when he asked her why she was crying and for whom she was looking (John 20:12,13,15). It wasn't until the Lord addressed her by name that she realized he was alive.

Naturally Mary Magdalene wanted to stay with her Master. She wanted to embrace him, cry on his shoulder, and possibly even ask him several questions. She may have thought at the time: "Master, I was so frightened when I witnessed your death. I do not want you to ever leave me again. Please take me with you!" Our Lord knew of Mary's love and concern for him, but he cautioned her not to touch him, but to return to his brethren and tell them of his resurrection (John 20:17). At that point, Mary knew her relationship with Jesus had changed and that any physical contact she might have had with him formerly was no longer appropriate.

Mary may have convinced the eleven disciples that she had seen and spoken with the risen Lord (John 20:18). Although this is not specifically stated in the Bible, the fact that Jesus instructed Mary to tell the apostles of his resurrection lends credence to the thought that the Master would not send her to give a message of hope and comfort which would be rejected by his distraught followers. This would contrast sharply with the other account when the women reported that Jesus had risen and the disciples regarded their story as a fairy tale (Luke 24:11).

Bearer of Good News

It is interesting to note that out of all the other women who visited his tomb, including his mother, our Lord gave Mary Magdalene the privilege of reporting his resurrection to his brethren. This lesson is important for the Lord's people today. We have also been called by the Lord to share the glad tidings, and it is our privilege to spread the news of the coming kingdom to all who have a hearing ear.

After his resurrection Christ showed himself "to many during the 40 days" (Acts 1:3). After the ascension the disciples met in the upper room to pray (Acts 1:14) with the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. Although not specifically named in this text, it is reasonable to suppose that Mary Magdalene was there.

It is clear from the gospel accounts that the evangelists are careful to name her precisely, setting her apart from the other Marys. This prominent position has caused much speculation about Mary Magdalene's exact role and place within the group of women disciples as well as her precise relationship with Christ himself.

Mary Magdalene is a remarkable woman and a fascinating figure in Christianity. She was the honored one to whom the Lord first revealed his resurrection. She was the one whom he told to report to his brethren that he was alive. Surely our Lord saw a quality of faith, love, and devotion in Mary which caused him to grant her these privileges.

Although it does not appear that any women witnessed our Lord's ascension to heaven (Acts 1:9-11), Mary Magdalene's place with the Lord in the future ages will be one of great honor.

The Resurrection of Jesus

Why Seek Ye the Living Among the Dead?

Why seek ye the living among the dead?—Luke 24:5

Verse by Verse study of Matthew 28

Perhaps no event in history so affected the people of its own time than the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. It became the theme that attracted thousands to the cause of Christ, and the cornerstone around which the early church was built.

In three and a half years of preaching, Jesus Christ, a perfect man who spoke "as never man spake" (John 7:46), and who attested his words with all forms of miracles, only some 500 became adherents of his beliefs. Within a very short time after Pentecost, the apostles, "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13) added thousands to the fold.

The significant difference was the fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Jews could not deny it. They had taken every precaution to make sure the body could not be stolen from the grave. Yet, despite the seal of Pilate and the elite guard of the Sanhedrin, the grave was empty. Given the importance of this event, it is surprising that the Bible gives only sketchy accounts of the details of some eleven post-resurrection appearances which were taken by the church as "infallible proofs" of Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:3).

Word spread rapidly. One account, somewhat muddled in translation, reads thus: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:51-53).

It is unlikely that this refers to a temporary resurrection of some who had died before Christ, or there would have been additional references to these remarkable individuals. There have been many attempts to answer the difficulties presented by this text. We suggest that the problem may not lie in the translation, but in the manuscript itself. A paraphrased translation of the fifth century Codex Bezae (D) reads: "And many bodies of the holy ones which slept were tossed upright in their graves where they were manifest to many after his resurrection at the holy city."

This act of tossing buried bodies into an upright position in itself would be a highly symbolic demonstration of a coming resurrection and would certainly have been widely noised about in the marketplace.

The last chapters of each of the gospels deal with the details of the appearances of Christ to prove to his disciples that he had indeed risen from the dead. We will take a look here at those mentioned in the last chapter of the gospel of Matthew.

The Messengers—Verses 1 to 7

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."

Earthquakes frequently have aftershocks. So it was in 33 AD. The earthquake on Friday afternoon that rent the temple veil and threw bodies upright in the graves on the slopes of Olivet was followed by an aftershock on Sunday morning which rolled back the stone from the tomb where Jesus was buried. As the first quake illustrated the twin effects of Jesus' death—both opening up "a new and living way" of life into heaven, represented by the Most Holy of the temple, and paving the way for the eventual resurrection of all mankind, prefigured by the breaking of the graveyard tombs—so the second shock revealed the method by which these would be accomplished—by the raising of Jesus himself from the dead (Hebrews 10:20).

At Jesus' second advent there is also a pair of symbolic earthquakes. In Revelation 6:12 and again in Revelation 11:13 we read of a "great earthquake" in the period of the sixth seal and sixth trumpet. Many commentators agree that this is symbolic of the French Revolution. But there is still a greater aftershock in the period of the seventh trumpet and seventh plague (Revelation 11:19; 16:18). This earthquake is an apparent reference to the final battle preceding the full establishment of Christ's kingdom—the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). These two quakes are the parentheses on either side of the great transitional trouble which will fully remove the old world order in preparation for Christ's Mediatorial kingdom.

Archaeological evidence of the earthquakes at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection may still exist today. The Essene community at Qumran, some twenty miles from Jerusalem, was destroyed in an earthquake in 31 BC and was rebuilt shortly thereafter, surviving until its final destruction by the Romans in 68 AD. Visitors to the site can see a sharp break in the steps to the ceremonial baths that can only be attributed to an earthquake. Since the entire complex was rebuilt after the quake of 31 BC, it is probable that this damage was done by the same quake which is recorded in our text in 33AD.

Whether the stone was actually moved by the angel or whether it was the earthquake that actually did the moving, it was no small thing. These stones were usually rolled into place at an incline and it took as many as twenty men to move them.¹

The supernatural appearance of the angels with their radiant countenance and brilliantly white raiment may well have been designed to accomplish the very thing it did—strike the keepers of the tomb with such awe that they literally fainted. Not only their appearance, but their position—sitting on the moved stone as though in conquest—were all designed to have the maximum effect on the keepers.

The Message – Verses 8 to 10

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

The angel, more likely two angels, apparently changed position before the women arrived, for we read in Luke 24:3,4 that they were standing within the tomb at that time. After being invited to witness with their own eyes the fact that the tomb was indeed empty, they were sent on a mission to quickly inform the other disciples of the fact.

Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John, who came quickly. The account in John's gospel has her seeing the same two angels sitting, one at the head and the other at the foot where Jesus had lain. It was at this time that she saw one she perceived to be a gardener and inquired if he knew where they had placed the body of Jesus. His familiar mannerisms soon revealed to her that she was talking to the resurrected Lord himself (John 20:11-16).

A difference in the appearance of Jesus to the women from his appearance to Mary at the tomb is that the women freely embrace Jesus without reproof, where John says Mary Magdalene's attempt to embrace him is met with a rebuff, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). Perhaps he wished Mary to proceed with her fresh testimony to Jesus' resurrection, whereas on the previous occasion Mary was already ahead of the others en route to bringing them back to the tomb.

It is perhaps noteworthy that the privilege of being first witnesses of his resurrection and given the rare privilege of becoming its first messengers was granted to women. This may indicate a readier acceptance of a near-unbelievable occurrence than would have been true with their male counterparts, or it may merely show a special reward for their early morning act of devotion in preparing the spices and rushing to anoint him as soon as legally permissible under Sabbath rules.

The message they were to deliver had two parts: first, that Jesus had indeed been resurrected and was alive; and second, they were to meet him in Galilee. They must have wondered why. He had been tried in Jerusalem. He was crucified in Jerusalem. He was buried in Jerusalem. Why did he not accompany them to Galilee if that was where he wished to go? How would he get there?

In fact many of the appearances to follow were in the Jerusalem area. Galilee was a three-day journey and they could not help but wonder at this strange request. The first Galilee appearance is mentioned in the last chapter of the book of John. It takes place at the sea shore and is specifically mentioned as being the "third time" Jesus showed himself to his disciples. Since the other gospels mention four before he went to the north, it is assumed that this count does not reflect the personal appearance he made to Mary Magdalene as the gardener nor the one to the other women as they ran to inform the disciples of the good news. The John account was his third appearance collectively to a group.

However the appearance which John records is by the sea shore, and the command of the women is that he would meet them in "a mountain." This must have been, therefore, after the sea shore meeting. Perhaps there were two reasons for sending them to Galilee. First, it would test their obedience to instructions from an unseen Jesus. Second, though there were many of his disciples in Jerusalem for the Passover, there may have been numerous others who were not able to go and remained in Galilee. It was probably on this occasion that he appeared to "five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6).

While the name and location of the mountain are not given, it may well be that this final sermon to a number of his followers was in the same mountain where he began his ministry with the "sermon on the mount" (Matthew 5-7).

The Cover Up – Verses 11 to 15

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

The Scribes and Pharisees felt threatened by the ministry of Jesus. They had expressed this fear before his crucifixion. "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:48). They recognized his abilities of persuasion, that he spoke "as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29). They knew that he had predicted his own death and assured his disciples that he would rise from the dead on "the third day" (Matthew 27:63). They concluded this probably not from his references to raising the temple "in three days" (John 2:19) but from his reference to the "sign of Jonah" who was in the whale's belly for three days (Matthew 12:40).

They suspected a plot on the part of his disciples to steal his body from the tomb and make the claims that he had been raised from the dead. Thus they obtained permission from Pilate to specially secure the tomb with a seal and place their own guard at its doors. Now their best laid plans were foiled. The seal had been broken. The heavy stone had been rolled away. Their guards had fainted in the brightness of the angel's appearance. The body had been removed and, worst of all, word was spreading rapidly that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The only counter-measure that remained was to form a cover up. This they did by offering the guards a bribe to make a false statement that the disciples had somehow overcome them, broken the seal, rolled away the stone, and taken the body. They added an additional incentive to the guards—protection in case of a Roman judicial investigation.

According to Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown, the grammatical form of the Greek in the clause "we will persuade him" (verse 14) implies the anticipation that there would be just such a judicial investigation, but that they were confident Pilate could be bribed to accept the report of the guards. They need have no fear if they gave false evidence. It might be noted that there are those even today who accept this lie which the guards were bribed to give. A recent example exists in the book *The Passover Plot*. However the lie was not popularly believed in its own time as evidenced by the rapid growth of Christianity, largely due to the acknowledged fact of the resurrection of Jesus on the third day just as he had promised.

The Great Commission—Verses 16 to 20

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The fact that only the eleven are mentioned as journeying to Galilee to the appointed mountain (probably either the Mount of Beatitudes or, possibly, Mount Tabor), does not mean that there were only eleven who saw Jesus on this occasion. This is most likely the incident to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 15:6 when he was seen by "above five hundred brethren at once." This was the only general meeting with his disciples which the Master was to hold during the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension.

This small body was to form the nucleus of his ambassadorial corps to spread the message which Jesus had introduced. He begins his commission to the assembled group by assuring them that he now has "all authority² in heaven and on earth" to give them a commission.

This great commission foresees the time, perhaps some three years distant, when the gospel call would broaden out to the Gentiles. However, even then they were to spread the word to the Jewish population already dispersed throughout the Roman empire. Later, when he appeared in their midst in Jerusalem for the last time, he gave them similar instructions, commissioning them to be his witnesses "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Again, on the day of Pentecost, the word was spread to the assembled Jews from some fifteen parts of the empire (Acts 2:9-11).

However it was the apostle Paul who, as the "apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13), applied a truly global approach to this commission. This missionary function of the followers of Christ continues to this day.

They were not only to teach the message but to baptize converts into this faith, acknowledging them not merely as believers of the word but doers also. These new followers were to be taught the same precepts which Jesus had taught the five hundred, namely, those principles laid down in the New Testament.

The baptismal formula—"in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"—is of doubtful authenticity. Although most trinitarian theologians use this text as a strong support for a triune God, the formula as given was not so used by the early church fathers³ whose writing predated our earliest manuscripts. Some scholars openly challenge these words.⁴

The close of the commission is the encouraging words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." This promise is to be distinguished from that of his personal presence at the end of the Christian age, for the apostles Paul, John, and Peter—all writing well after this promise—encourage the anticipation of the personal return of Christ.

In the context of Matthew, the meaning appears not only to be a general promise of Christ's spiritual presence throughout the age, but a specific one related to the given commission. In this, it is similar to Jesus' words in Matthew 10:18-20, "And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

Jesus, like his Father, makes no requests of those who follow him without giving them the wherewithal to carry them out. What greater assurance can we ask than that, leaning on him in our weakness, we seek to use his strength to do the Father's will.

Although the closing word, "Amen," is of doubtful authenticity and, if not spurious, was probably added by Matthew, it is a fitting response for us today. As he has commanded, so may it be ("Amen"). May we each respond to the requests of our Lord with such a fervent agreement and assent.

NOTES

¹. Thayer's *Greek Lexicon*, Digital Edition, article on Strong's word #617, *apokulio*: "For a small grave, about 20 men were required to roll a stone downhill to cover the door of the tomb. The Bible tells us that the stone covering the door of the tomb was a large stone. The women would have needed more men than even a full Roman guard of 16 men to roll away the stone."

². The Greek *exousia*, translated "power" in the King James is better translated "authority." Vine's *Expository Dictionary*, both Robertson's and Vincent's *Word Studies* and most newer translations so agree.

³. Eusebius cites Matthew 28:19 eighteen times in his work, always in the same form: "Go ye and make disciples of all nations in my name, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I commanded you." Aphraates, a Syriac writer of the middle-fourth century, cites the text in yet a different manner, "Make disciples of all nations, and they shall believe in me." Even Adam Clark, a devout Trinitarian, demonstrates that the Jews were baptized only in the name of Jesus, the Messiah. For a thorough treatment of this matter we refer the reader to *Beauties of the Truth*, January 1991, in the article "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit" by Leonard Griehs.

⁴. James Martineau in his *Seat of Authority* and Adolph Harnack in his *History of Dogma* are two of these.

Poems and Prose of Devotion

Blessed Redeemer

Up Calv'ry's mountain, one dreadful morn,
Walked Christ my Savior, weary and worn;
Facing for sinners death on the cross,
That he might save them from endless loss.

"Father, forgive them!" thus did he pray,
E'en while his life-blood flowed fast away;
Praying for sinners while in such woe—
No one but Jesus ever loved so.

O how I love him, Savior and Friend!
How can my praises ever find end!
Through years unnumbered on heaven's shore,
My tongue shall praise him forevermore.

Blessed Redeemer, precious Redeemer!
Seems now I see him on Calvary's tree
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading—
Blind and unheeding—dying for me!

—Mrs. Avis Christiansen

First published in 1920 in the hymnal *Songs of Redemption* according to Kenneth W. Osbeck in *Amazing Grace* [Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1990].

"Who Shall Roll the Stone Away?"

A nameless chill pervaded all the air,
On that gray morn, long centuries ago,
As through the city's narrow streets there crept
Two women on their way to Calvary.
The fragrant odors of sweet spices told
Of their sad errand to the tomb of Him
They loved. And as they neared the garden where
Their blessed Lord was laid, a sudden fear

Took hold upon their eager, loving hearts—
The sepulchre was hewn from solid rock,
A great stone had been rolled before the door,
And sealed with Pilate's royal signature—
They felt their weakness, and in anguish cried,
"Oh, who shall roll for us the stone away?"
But faith grew bold, they urged their faltering steps—
When lo! they found an Angel from the Lord
Had rolled away the stone, and sat thereon!

Thus often, when with loving zeal we seek
To serve the Lord, a great fear chills our hearts,
The door of opportunity seems closed,
And in our weakness and distress we cry,
"Oh, who shall roll for us the stone away?"
But when with faith and courage we press on
We find the Angel of the Lord hath gone
Before, and lo! the stone is rolled away!

—Gertrude W. Siebert
Poems of the Way, page 89

Remember the Empty Tomb

Christ is risen from the dead. I pray you, do not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as though he were now dead. It is well to dwell upon Gethsemane, Golgotha, and Gabbatha; but pray remember the empty tomb, Emmaus, Galilee, and Olivet. It is not well to think of Jesus as for ever on the cross or in the tomb. "He is not here, but he is risen." Ye may "come and see the place where the Lord lay," but he lies there no longer he hath burst the bands of death by which he could not be holden: for it was not possible that God's holy One could see corruption. The rising of Jesus from the dead is that fact of facts which establishes Christianity upon an historical basis, and at the same time guarantees to all believers their own resurrection from the dead. He is the firstfruits and we are the harvest.

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon
Sermon Collection, volume 3, page 515

The Canary and the Sparrows

A story is told of a gentleman who had a beautiful singing canary. A friend wanted to see if he could teach his sparrows to sing by keeping the canary with them. He borrowed it and placed it in the cage with his sparrows. But instead of teaching them to sing, the poor bird got so timid among the strange birds that it stopped singing altogether and did nothing but chirp like the sparrows. The owner took it back, but still it would not sing. It then occurred to him to put it beside another canary which sang well. This had the desired effect and, regaining the old note, it sang as beautifully as ever.

Many Christians go, like the canary, into the strange company and atmosphere of the world, and consequently they not only do not teach the world to sing their happy, glorious note of praise, they cannot sing the old songs of praise in a strange land themselves. Soon they learn the sorrowful note of the world. The best thing for such is to go back again into the more genial society of happy, rejoicing Christian saints, among whom they will soon learn to sing the glorious notes of praise again, making melody in their hearts!

—Reprints, page 878

The Hidden Cross

The multitude saw but the cross of olive-wood
The Man of Sorrows bore, nor knew how underneath,
Close-pressed upon His heart, a hidden cross He wore,—
A dark and bleeding weight of sin and human woe,
Made heavier with the sentence of God's broken law,
And crowned with thorns of scornful and malicious hate,—
A cross the world's Redeemer found on Jordan's brink,
Nor laid it down until He came to Calvary.

Ofttimes it seemed He almost craved some human aid,
Some sympathizing heart to share that cruel cross.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, hadst thou but known
What time that cross bore heaviest on the yearning heart
Of Him, thy King!—And yet, O, slow of faith and hard
Of heart, "Ye would not"—and the King passed on His way;
And of the people, there was none with Him, He trod
Alone the winepress of this dark world's shame and woe!

O, chosen three, had ye but watched with Him "one hour,"
That awful night in dark Gethsemane, ye might
Have lightened some the cruel weight of that dread cross,
Have known and shared with Him that agonizing woe,—
Alas! Alas! Your eyes were heavy, and ye slept.
So now, "sleep on and take your rest," ye weary ones,
A holy angel's wing hath eased the hidden cross,—
Your Master, strengthened, waits that other cross to bear!

Which cross bore heavier on the way to Calvary,—
The cross the cruel Roman soldiers laid upon
That blessed One? Ah! no, it was the unseen cross
That crushed Him to the earth, that wrung from those pale lips
The agonizing cry, "My God, My God, oh, why
Hast Thou forsaken Me?" In grief Earth rent her breast,
The sun grew dark. 'Tis finished, and the price is paid,—
The hidden cross had pierced that loving, tender heart!

"Take up thy cross and follow Me," the Master said.
Ah, yes, His faithful Bride must also bear a cross,—
The hidden cross, made not of life's vicissitudes
Alone, its ills and pain, its loss and poverty,—
The outward signs the multitude behold:

Ah! no, we follow in His steps, who went before
Us in the narrow way. We, too, must bear the woe,
Be touched with feeling of the world's infirmity,—
Its weary weight of sin and curse of broken law.
Let us, therefore, go forth to Him, "without the gate,"
Lay down our lives in sacrifice, spend and be spent,
And, while we clasp this cross more closely to our breast,
Press on toward Calvary, for there our Bridegroom waits
To take the cross of woe, and give the Crown of Joy!

—W. H. Pepworth

NEWS AND VIEWS

Pastoral Bible Institute News

Date of Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of PBI Members and Directors will be held on Friday, July 14, on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown in Pennsylvania. The General Convention of Bible Students will begin on Saturday, July 15, at the same location and end the evening of July 20. Those who are interested in the Pastoral Bible Institute, whether members or not, are encouraged to attend this meeting. Contact the Institute's secretary for details concerning accommodations.

Around the World

The AIDS conflagration continues to blaze out of control throughout most of the developing world. In 1999 alone, there will have been 2.6 million fatalities—the highest yearly total since the epidemic began two decades ago. More than 70% of the HIV-positive live in sub-Saharan Africa, a region that contains only 10% of the world's population. UN officials predict that life expectancy at birth in the region will drop to 45 sometime in the next five to ten years. The most glaring current hot spot, however, encompasses the former Soviet Union, where the proportion of the population living with HIV has doubled in only two years. Tragically, more than half the victims worldwide are under the age of 25, and few will live to see their 35th birthdays.

—Los Angeles Times, 11/24/99

Russian voters on December 19 cast their ballots according to emotional considerations rather than rational calculations. Parties of the center-right whose economic policy will be reformist (Communist) and whose defense and foreign policy will be hawkish will control the new Duma. The war in Chechnya had serious impact on the whole process. For all its ugliness, it has been popular among Russians, and even liberal politicians have toed the patriotic line by supporting the war effort. But Westerners must be careful not to oversimplify the tragedy in Chechnya. The Russian public seems to have bought the official story that Chechens were behind terrorist attacks in Moscow and Volgodonsk in September, though there's hardly any evidence. The "Chechen rebels" are bandits who ply their trade on Russian territory and whose methods can only be described as medieval. For the majority of Russians, the military crackdown in Chechnya is their only hope of ever ending corruption and criminality in cities where they live. In the coming years the shape of Russia—with all that implies for the rest of the world—may yet be decided by the ultimate outcome in little, bloody Chechnya.

—Wall Street Journal, 12/21/99

Two recent events particularly jolted the intelligence community. One was the arrest in Jordan of 13 terrorists reportedly planning attacks on Americans and Israelis. The other was the apprehension of several suspected terrorists who tried to sneak across the Canadian border with more than 100 pounds of explosives. The seized material convinced U.S. experts that the Algerian terrorist network is zeroing in on American targets. The shadowy Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden has been sheltered by the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan. A little over a year ago he issued [a decree] calling on Muslims to "kill Americans." The possibility of a more peaceful Mideast increases, in the short term, the threat of terrorism. These are free agents accountable to no nation states.

—Wall Street Journal, 1/6/2000

Israel

Israel is facing its worst drought in nearly a century, and the country's environment minister has called on the government to declare a national state of water emergency. The Middle East is already two months into what is considered its winter season and no significant rainfall has been received across much of Israel. The level of the country's major water resource, the Sea of Galilee, is critically low and expected to drop even further if the recent hot, dry weather persists.

—Los Angeles Times, 12/2/99

If there is any law that embodies the ethos of the Jewish State, it is the Law of Return. In a world in which most countries jealously guard the right to immigrate, Israel uniquely grants millions of "foreigners" the right to show up and almost instantly become citizens. Of course, the point is that no Jew is a "foreigner" to Israel—the Law of Return legally expresses the essence of Jewish peoplehood. Ironically, the quintessential vehicle for Jewish unity is now being accused of undermining the Jewish character of the state. The rise in the proportion of non-Jews among immigrants from 12% in 1990 to 53% in 1999 has set off alarm bells. The growing proportion of non-Jewish immigration is not so much a function of the expansiveness of the Law of Return as it is of increasing assimilation within Diaspora Jewry. The extension of the Law of Return to grandchildren is based partly on the idea that anyone who under the Nazi Nuremberg laws would have been sent to the gas chambers for being a Jew should be allowed to immigrate to Israel. Of the roughly 200,000 non-Jews who arrived over the last decade, most have Jewish family members, but see little reason to convert to Judaism to further integrate into Israeli society.

—Jerusalem Post, 12/3/99

For the past two decades, Washington has been home to a cadre of peace process watchers inside and outside government who have endlessly debated the nature, merits, and prospects of a comprehensive Middle East peace. They appear to be reaching a consensus that this time, at last, there is a solid chance that Israel and Syria will sign a peace agreement. This consensus draws instead upon common conclusions reached by

supporters of both Israel and the Arab cause. Israel sees a Syrian deal as the key to a deal with all but the most reconstructed Arab "rogue" states. If that proves to be the case, it is difficult to see how the prospect of a virtually comprehensive peace would be defeated in a referendum or even in a Knesset vote, though the latter is surely more difficult to predict.

—Jerusalem Post 12/20/99

Hamas plotted to cause a national epidemic by poisoning the drinking water in Israel with chemicals. During Israel Defense Forces interrogations, arrested military head Mohammed Abu Tir revealed that Adde Awadalla, the chief commander of the military branch of Hamas, was responsible for masterminding the plot. Abu Tir also told interrogators about a large shipment of weapon systems from Iran which were transported to Israel through the Dead Sea.

—Yediot Ahronot, December 1999
(an independent newspaper published in Israel)

Islam

A family of six was killed in northern Algeria in an attack attributed to Islamic insurgents. The daily La Tribune reported that six members of the same family had their throats slit in a small, isolated village near Relizane, about 160 miles west of Algiers. The Islamic holy month of Ramadan typically brings a surge of violence in the North African country. Algerian media report that about 70 people have been killed since Ramadan began December 9. In Ain Defla, 90 miles west of the capital, 17 members of the armed wing of the Islamic Salvation Front turned themselves in to authorities Sunday, hoping to benefit from a plan that would grant them amnesty, newspapers reported. An Islamic insurgency has claimed 100,000 lives in Algeria since it began in 1992. Violence broke out after the army canceled legislative elections the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win. In September, Algerians overwhelmingly voted in favor of a peace plan aimed at reintegrating Islamic militants into society. Insurgents who turn themselves over to authorities are to be granted partial amnesty and reduced jail terms as long as they are not guilty of rape, murder or bombings.

—Associated Press, 12/20/99

The Pakistani Supreme Court today ruled that charging interest was against the teachings of Islam—a decision that will likely lead to sweeping changes in this country's already troubled financial sector. The 1,000-page judgment also called on the government to renegotiate its international loans. Pakistan has negotiated \$1.6 billion in loans from the International Monetary Fund and owes more than \$3 billion to commercial lending institutions and donor countries.

"Serious efforts shall be made by the federal government to relieve the burden of foreign debt as soon as possible and to renegotiate the existing loans," the court said. "Serious

efforts should also be made to structure future borrowings if necessary on the basis of Islamic modes of financing." Eight specific laws governing interest payments will have to be revoked no later than March 30, 2000. Other laws will have to be changed by June 30, 2000 and still others by June 30, 2001, the court said. "Any amount big or small over the principal in a contract of loan or debt is *`riba'* and is prohibited by the Holy Koran," the judgment found, using the Arabic word that is interpreted as interest. There was no immediate comment from Pakistan's army-led government or from leading financial institutions.

—Associated Press, 12/23/99

Christendom

A broad coalition of religious, educational and civil-liberties groups agreed last week to encourage schools to make study about the Bible "an important part of a complete education." . . . [Guidelines were] developed to help teachers include academic instruction about the Bible in literature and history courses, without proselytizing. Developing better teacher training is the next step, says the National Bible Association.

—Time, 11/22/99

The pope's visit to the Holy Land in March of 2000 could be a new page in the historically strained relations between the Catholic Church and Jews. Israel's chief rabbi, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, said, "We see it as a reconciliation, a historic bridging of distances, in which the Catholic world feels it caused the Jews much sorrow."

—Deutsche Press Agentur, 12/20/99

After nearly five centuries as the state church, Lutheranism will end its ties with the Swedish government on New Year's Day and will be treated like any other religion. Although 90 percent of Swedes nominally are Lutherans, the change reflects demographic and immigration trends as well as Swedes' general indifference to organized religion. The changes, approved by parliament in 1995, remove a centuries-old tradition that automatically enrolled children whose parents were church members and made the church an organ of the government. The ruling means bishops will no longer be appointed by the government and the church can no longer receive tax money. Sweden remains a largely Protestant country. It has twice as many Muslims as Roman Catholics.

—Associated Press, 12/21/99

Economics

One of the grand myths that the U.S. government tells people is about Social Security's soundness. It claims that even though the system will go broke in 2014, the trust fund really has \$2.9 trillion in assets to pay retirees. In reality, the trust fund does not have real assets to pay benefits, say experts. "The bonds in the trust fund are just claims against

future tax receipts. They are not real assets," said Peter Ferrara, co-author of the book *A New Deal for Social Security*. Currently workers pay a tax of 6.2% and the employer matches it. The money is then given directly to current retirees who are owed benefits. The system taxes current workers at a higher rate than necessary to pay current retirees. But the government doesn't have a bank account to set aside this surplus. Nor is the money invested. The government issues a non-marketable bond to the Social Security Administration and uses the surplus funds for spending on current government programs or for debt reduction. "The bonds in the trust fund are worthless scraps of paper," said Scott Hodge of Citizens for a Sound Economy.

—Investors Business Daily, 12/17/99

Juan Salvador Gamar sells newspapers eight hours a day from a traffic island on a busy Mexico City boulevard. His shrunken frame and weatherworn face are evidence of his job's health risks. "I don't like doing this, but I have to eat," said Gamar, 55. He is part of a vast army of street jugglers, candy sellers, fire-eaters, and knickknack vendors who make up a sizable portion of Mexico's informal economy—people who work but do not pay taxes or get social welfare. Official estimates put the informal economy, which has mushroomed since a crippling 1994-95 peso crash, at 30 percent of Mexico's roughly 37 million economically active population. Private sector estimates put the figure as high as 50 percent for nonagricultural activities. Many Mexicans saw a large chunk of their savings wiped out in a series of drastic peso devaluations in 1994-95, which led to high interest rates, a flood of defaults and job losses. While Mexico has undergone a dramatic economic transformation in the past decade through deregulation, sweeping privatization and entry into NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), over half the population remains below the poverty line.

—Reuters, 12/20/99

Science

A team of more than 200 researchers around the world has completed a genetic map of human chromosome 22, one of the 46 chromosomes that make up the genetic blueprint of humanity. The announcement marks the first time a chromosome has been completely mapped. Researchers said that the map of chromosome 22—a list of 33.4 million pieces of DNA—offers a glimpse into the potential of efforts to decode the entire human genome. Researchers already know of several disorders associated with mutations along chromosome 22, including genes that cause cancer, poor fetal development and nervous system problems.

—Bloomberg News, 12/2/99

In a rapid surge of discovery, researchers in 1999 began learning how to direct the transformation of stem cells into new body parts, a finding that may dramatically change medicine and extend life. The editors of *Science* have selected the new stem cell research as the "Breakthrough of the Year" for 1999. Embryonic stem cells are the ancestral cells

that give rise to all of the tissues and organs in the body. Researchers believe that such cells, taken from human embryos or fetuses, could be directed to grow replacements for ailing hearts, livers or other organs. Researchers have also found that some stem cells taken from adult tissue could be converted into other types of cells—brain cells becoming blood cells, or bone marrow becoming liver. Runner-up for breakthrough of the year was the huge advances in genomics, the science of deciphering the basic genetic pattern of life. The complete gene sequence for three microbes was completed in 1999, and a third of the base pairs in human DNA, along with one complete chromosome, number 22. A rough draft of the entire human genome is expected by March.

—Associated Press, 12/16/99

Scientists have transferred a frozen embryo between species for the first time by bringing to term a rare African wildcat in the womb of an ordinary house cat. Researchers at the Audubon Institute Center for Research of Endangered Species in New Orleans say the method could be used to bolster an endangered species or resurrect an entire species.

—Associated Press, 12/14/99

Book Review

***Early Christian Doctrines* [fifth edition], J.N.D. Kelly (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper, 1978). 499 pages.**

There is no shortage of books examining the development of Christian theology. *Early Christian Doctrines* is of interest because of its objective examination of the evolution of dogma and its organization of an ocean of material through outlining the development of each doctrine in its historical context. Bible students who desire a generally unbiased view will find comfort in this treatise.

In the early years of the Christian church, there were so many new writings and so many influences that one wonders how some early Christians maintained any semblance of truth. Historians such as Adolph Harnack have been particularly useful to Bible students wishing to examine the development of popular doctrines such as the trinity and the divinity of Christ. However, these treatises are in multiple volumes and have not been easy to read.

Kelly's first edition appeared in 1960. The fifth edition, published in 1978, is a clear, precise, relatively short and up-to-date account of the development of the major doctrines. It presents a balanced picture of many of the early controversies. Perhaps no controversy was greater than that of the trinity. The examination of the history of the development of this doctrine absorbs about half the fifth edition and is well worth reading. One chapter on the concept of a "divine triad" provides an excellent perspective to show how this concept was developed—it was not inherent—in early church teaching. Contrary to modern evangelical tenets, monotheism loomed so large in the minds of the early church fathers that it was held to mark the dividing line between the Church and

paganism. Kelly traces the writings of early church fathers and shows how and why the Greek influences of Gnosticism and Stoicism took over the dominant position in theological thought. This culminated in the council of Constantinople in 381 with the formal ratification of the declaration that there was one God existing in three co-equal persons.

Apart from its fine summary of the development of the trinity, this fifth edition includes a new chapter on Mariology. This chapter summarizes recent archeological finds of documents which show that the worship of Mary began very early in the church and was a great source of controversy prior to its formal adoption by the Roman church in the late fifth century.

—Len Grieb