

# *The Bible Standard*

## Sanctification

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JANUARY 2003

# Sanctification

*The Motto Text for 2003*

**“Separate yourselves from the people of the land”**

— Ezra 10: 11 —

**THE TEXT** selected for the year 2003 is full of meaning for the Christian and appropriate to the times in which we live: “Separate yourselves from the people of the land.” Before we expand on the text, some background is in order.

At the time that Ezra, the priest, spoke these words, the remnant of the Jewish nation had returned from 70 years of captivity under the Babylonian empire. Of the nation that had been taken into captivity after the fall of Zedekiah, Israel’s last king, in the 7th century BC, only the most zealous returned to the former national capital, Jerusalem, many preferring to stay behind in Babylon and its regions, under the new Persian administration.

We may conclude, therefore, that the population of Jerusalem at the time of this text comprised the more zealous and faithful of the Israelites. Nonetheless, things were not going well for them. Development of the city was stalled. Contributing to the morbid state of affairs was the fact that the people were out of harmony with their covenant God. In Chapter 10, from which our text is quoted, Ezra exhorted the people to detach themselves from the surrounding peoples and from the “strange,” or foreign wives which many of the men had taken. Collectively admitting their error, the people were ready for reform — hence the words of our text.

Acknowledging the sin of which they were guilty, the people declared themselves willing to follow Ezra’s advice. They realized that there could be no progress in the resettlement of the city unless they did so. Collective reform of this nature does happen once in a while, especially where

there is a strong sense of community identity. There have been times during which Christian fervor has transformed society. Many of the best laws which nations have developed had their origin during such times — laws which govern the treatment of the old, the young and the indigent, and laws which provide for various freedoms in religion and social life. The high water mark of national life has often coincided with Christian reformation and revival in society. This was true in the pioneer years of the Methodist church in Colonial America, under Francis Asbury (John Wesley’s representative in the colonies), and the evangelical and advent movements in the United States during the 1800s attracted large numbers to “revival” meetings.

## THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD

Were we to restrict Ezra’s exhortation to the circumstances of his day, there would be little value in it for us now. But, as with most Biblical exhortations, there is a wider scope in the underlying principles, and we can draw valuable lessons for ourselves — Christians in the modern and rapidly changing world. The Scriptures are always relevant and always fresh — the only fixed point in an ever-changing world.

Perhaps each generation pines for its “good old days” and condemns the age in which it finds itself as shallow and immoral. There is some truth in this accusation, but it is also true that the past has never been as “good” as memory paints it. This world, in the sense of its culture and customs, has never been God’s world. The nation of Israel had a history of backsliding and half-hearted attempts to live up to their privileges as God’s chosen people, and they never attained

*Photograph on cover, facing page, and p. 7 courtesy of size-isnt-everything.co.uk*

**“Lift up a standard for the people” — Isa. 62: 10**

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the perfect standard necessary to secure eternal life. Nor could they; indeed, their inadequacy was underlined every year on the Day of Atonement, when the nation's sacrifices and offerings secured reconciliation with their covenant God and a figurative justification for the coming year. However, as the Apostle Paul points out, the blood of bulls and goats could never remove the condemnation of sin; that would have to wait for the one-time, all-embracing ransom-sacrifice of Christ on the cross (1 Tim. 2: 1-6; 1 John 2: 1, 2).

### The Christian a Target

The Christian man or woman enters into fellowship with the Heavenly Father based on his or her faith in Christ — the faith which justifies and which permits the sinner to be viewed by God as righteous (Rom. 5: 6-11). At all times the joy of this fellowship is subject to the Christian's conscience. Any sense of guilt intrudes on the purity and joy of this fellowship and causes a cloud to pass between the believer and the Father. For our daily sins of omission and commission we are to petition the Father for His forgiveness, and He freely grants this, as He has promised, in the name of His Beloved. In this we can rest assured.

But as in nature there are predators for every prey, so with the Christian. As the Apostle Peter declares, "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5: 8). Few sounds could be as frightening as a lion's roar, which, taking the victim by surprise, paralyzes him and renders him powerless. So the devil, by stealth, comes upon the unsuspecting Christian to immobilize him with an assault of guilt and condemnation, separating him from the Source of his strength. Unlike the lion, the devil does not work alone. He conscripts the ways of the flesh and the world in this assault. It is a powerful regiment.

### What is the "Land"?

By "land" the text here refers to the "world," which in Scripture frequently denotes the surrounding nations with their social order, customs, and culture — all of these conflicting with the rules and calling of the holy nation, the theocracy of Israel. Ezra could see that the people would

never re-form as a successful nation so long as they refused to shed the practices they had picked up while captives in Assyria. And, especially harmful were the "abominations" of the people of the surrounding lands with their filthiness of the flesh and spirit (Ezra 9: 1, 2, 10-15). Even the Levites were involved in this shameful violation of the Lord's commands, selfish and worldly compromises developing in them unholy characteristics, both fleshly and spiritual. It would seem a hard thing for the husbands to disown or divorce their wives, whom no doubt they had come to love. The Scriptures do not give many details on this, but record that the process took several weeks (vs. 11-13, 16, 17).

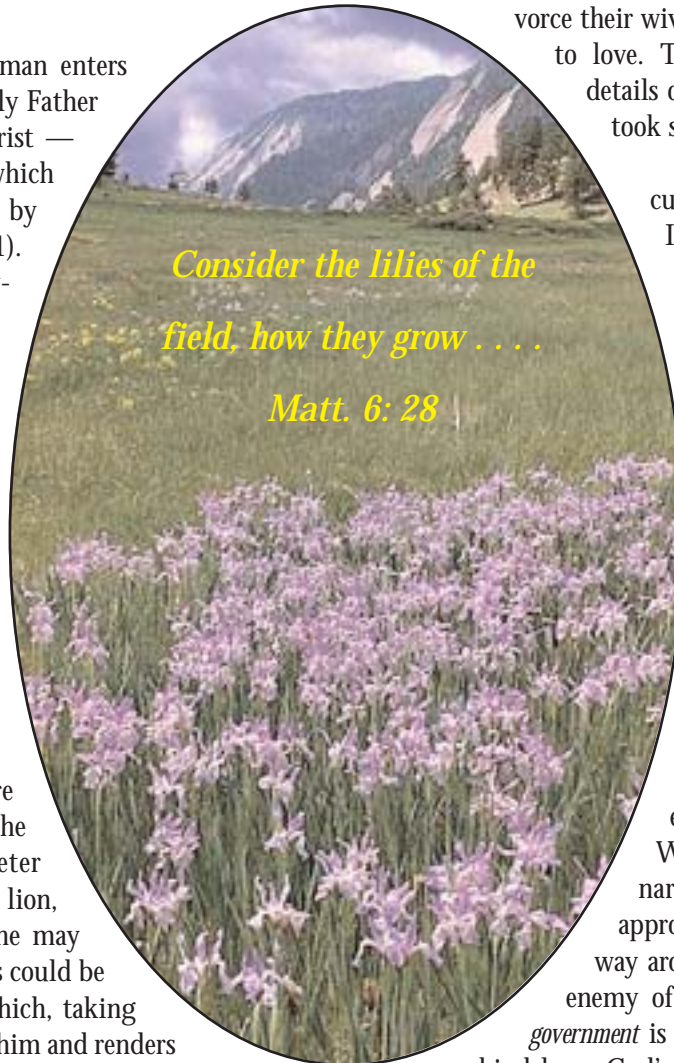
Even in this global age, marriage customs vary from nation to nation. In many countries which a generation ago would have claimed to be Christian, the institution of Christian marriage is in trouble. Many couples do not consider Christian (or civil) marriage regulations to be of any value and live in a common-law relationship. As faith in Christianity has declined, so has the adherence to Christian customs.

Wherever the true Christian is found, he or she will be out of step with the surrounding culture. The gap which separates the Christian from the secular environment is the zone of danger. When this gap narrows, it usually narrows because the Christian is approaching the world, not the other way around. The world will always be an enemy of righteousness — until righteous government is established in the earth and mankind learn God's ways in Christ's earthly Kingdom (Matt. 6: 10; Isa. 26: 9). As prayed for in the beautiful hymn by Hensley:

*Thy Kingdom come, O God,  
Thy rule, O Christ, begin;  
Break with thine iron rod  
The tyrannies of sin.*

### The World Passes Away

In general terms, the only course for the consecrated Christian is separation from the world (Rom. 12: 2). This does not imply isolation, for we must be in the world and alert to our surroundings (1 Cor. 7: 31). Separation from the



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*If we judge according to the world's standards and love according to the world's standards, our thinking and character will in time conform to these. Our judgments will become cynical, critical, and entirely earth-bound.*

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world is an essential factor in sanctification. To be sanctified is to be "set apart" for God's use. This does not mean to be *sanctimonious*. As Christians, uplifted by the grace of God from the sinking sands of sin and raised to firmer ground, we are not better than others around us but we are a forgiven people, though always conscious of our faults and failings. No, sanctification is the drawn-out process whereby we are transformed into a miniature image of Christ, our thought processes and affections being altered to reflect more closely the Divine mind and character.

If we judge according to the world's standards and love according to the world's standards, our thinking and character will in time conform to these. Our judgments will become cynical, critical, and entirely earth-bound. We will love and value others only according to the flesh, and our friendliness and true appreciation of others will suffer accordingly. Such a course will take us farther from the God-likeness which loves one's enemy and exercises longsuffering with all.

The Lord's people are different from one another by heredity and upbringing. By force of nature and personality some of the Lord's people are drawn to worldly things; for such, separation from this world does not come easily. Such need to learn to curb their interests where they promote the sensual over the spiritual, and to be always on guard to protect their conscience. Whatever kind of personality we possess, the Lord is quite able to deal effectively with us, and knows the difficulties and temptations each one of us is faced with (1 Cor. 10: 13; Heb. 2: 17, 18).

#### **Importance of Being Properly "Yoked"**

As a general principle, the Apostle Paul counselled the Christian against being "yoked" or bound up with an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6: 14). A marriage based on such an inequality will likely be fraught with difficulties. However, this is not quite as bad as the situation to which Ezra refers and not the main emphasis of this article. For the Christian man or woman, marriage is intended to be for life, and any Christian who has committed himself to an unbeliever is nonetheless bound to fulfill the contract and pray that a blessing for one or the other, or both, will be the outcome.

The Scriptures contain ample instructions for the prosecution of a good Christian marriage, in which the operating principles reflect those which God looks for in His people: a spirit of service, loyalty, and benevolence. Such a union mirrors the union between Christ and His Church and is a beautiful thing. The world's temptations too frequently intrude on this unique and intimate relationship between man and wife and the institution is much less highly regarded than it used to be. It is important that the Christian couple vigorously resist such intrusions.

#### **THE CHRISTIAN'S WITNESS IN THE WORLD**

##### **How We are to Behave**

To be separate from the world does not mean we are to be exclusive, considering ourselves above the people in the world. Even Ezra returned to Babylon to study (see the article on page 8 of this issue). We should not be sectarian in our views. The Lord has reserved to Himself Christians in many walks of life and in various religious institutions and denominations. All who accept Christ as Savior and King are Brothers and Sisters in faith. However, this does not mean we ought to underestimate the importance of right doctrine. We must seek out true (Biblical) doctrine and hold it fast. However, we are not to condemn those who differ in doctrine if their life otherwise demonstrates a commitment to the principles of Christian life and faith.

As Christians we are to be an example to the world. Jesus uses two figures to refer to the exemplary influence of His disciples — that of salt and light. Under the one figure (Matt. 5: 13), their influence was to be preservative in nature, helping to discourage the rot which sets in when society turns from faith in God and His ways. And, from a different point of view (vs. 14-16), they were, He said, like a city on a hill, illuminated against the darkness, lighting the way for others.

Everything we say and do should advance the Master's cause. When the world looks at the Christian it should see that he or she is walking with Christ. And as followers of the Master we may expect rejection and possibly persecution. If the world did not love the Lord of Life, Who was perfect, it will not love us, either (John 15: 18-24).

##### **What we are to Teach**

As consecrated Christians our single-minded obligation is to live a godly (righteous and holy) life, laying hold on Biblical truth and preaching it at every opportunity. But to be able witnesses of the Word we must be students of the Word. We are to know what we believe and why. What does the Scripture teach us and what are we to proclaim?

- The Ransom-sacrifice of Christ and its universal nature (all will have a resurrection and have a full opportunity to gain everlasting life — John 5: 28, 29);

- The true nature of death (the dead sleep, and do not live on in torment — Eccles. 9: 10);
- The true definition and destiny of the human soul — Ezek. 18: 4; Rom. 6: 23;
- The coming Kingdom on earth — Matt. 6: 10;
- The unity of God (God, the Omnipotent One could not Himself die for man, but, rather, sent His Son — John 5: 36, 37; John 3: 16);
- That there are two general classes, the Elect and the Non-Elect (mankind in general), and that the development of these two groups takes place each in its own dispensation — the Elect first, and then the Non-Elect — Acts 17: 31; 1 Tim. 2: 6; 1 John 2: 2.

There are beliefs which all Christians hold in common. There are others that divide them. It is lamentable that Christians are often separated over doctrine, but this is the present situation and it will continue for some time yet.

#### ISRAEL BLINDED TO JESUS, THE MESSIAH

Jesus, the Messiah, was sent to His own people, the Jews, in fulfilment of Jehovah's covenant with them (Matt. 10: 5-7). As the natural seed of Abraham they rightly claimed his legacy. They were the people chosen to scatter blessings on all nations of earth (Gen. 12: 3). Describing them in touching and pathetic words, our Lord lamented their unwillingness to accept Him. He did not meet their expectations and, apart from a relative few, they did not accept His invitation to follow Him. And they persecuted those who did.

The transition from Moses to Christ was simply too difficult for the majority. Schooled and misled as they were by the "traditions of the elders," they failed to recognize the One for whom they had, collectively, waited so many centuries. "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23: 37-39). These chilling words presaged the awful dispersal and suffering of the once-covenanted people in the centuries that lay ahead. And yet God loved them still.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 11: 25, 32 that God blinded the minds of the Jews, that He might have mercy on all. Blinding them is merciful? With knowledge comes responsibility; failure to live up to one's responsibility brings condemnation and punishment. That Israel might not be condemned without measure, God turned His face from them, shielding them, so to speak, from the glorious light of the Gospel. To put it another way, he turned them over to the darkness which they had themselves chosen (Rom. 10: 20, 21). But He never abandoned them. He does not rescind His promises (Rom. 11: 2, 26-29).

Loved not for their own wilful sakes, but for the faith of their fathers, the patriarchs, Israel is held in the Father's memory and looked on with deep compassion. At the

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*We are surrounded on all sides by all sorts of allurements and claims on our attention and time. At the very least, many of these activities waste consecrated time, absorbing hours that could be better spent in study, meditation, and good works. At the worst, they abuse our holy thoughts and draw us earthward, reinforcing the claims of the flesh on our heart and mind.*

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appointed time He restored them to their own land in 1948 and has since kept them there, despite numerous attempts of a military or political nature to remove them. They are home to stay, though, sad to relate, the majority of Jews in Israel today do not give God the glory for their return. But the day will come when they will look on Him whom they collectively crucified and yearn for Him as for a firstborn.

All Christians should have great hopes for Israel. In fact, the present events in the Middle East demonstrate the power and accuracy of prophecy. The establishment of Israel in its own land, after so long a wandering, is a support to our faith that God is working out His purposes and will in good time set up His righteous government on earth. For the student of prophecy this is yet one more encouragement to sanctification (2 Pet. 3: 13, 14).

#### SPANNING THE GAP

Across the great gulf that divides us from the world around us, we are to build bridges over which those who are presently aliens from faith in Christ and the Truth may come across. We must be alert, ready at all times to speak a Word for the Lord, to testify to His Truth (1 Pet. 3: 15, 16).

This world — social order — has no future (1 Pet. 1: 24, 25; 2 Pet. 3: 7, 11-13). The Time of Trouble which is now upon it results largely from sin — not just the original Adamic sin, but the sins committed collectively by a world which has rejected the revelation of God, the holy Scriptures. Such a rejection is now rampant. Up to a certain point in time, God winked at the world's ignorance, but at the sending of Christ into the world He established a standard by which all have since been judged, regardless of their faith or lack of it (Acts 17: 30, 31). This is not to say that the world now face an immediate issue of life or death, but there is light in the world (John 1: 9, 29), and all fall on one side of the

question or the other. Our life-decisions are made according to our view of life; if God is not in that view, our decisions will be affected accordingly.

### TEMPTATIONS ABOUND

We are surrounded on all sides by all sorts of allurements and claims on our attention and time. At the very least, many of these activities waste consecrated time, absorbing hours that could be better spent in study, meditation, and good works. At the worst, they abuse our holy thoughts and draw us earthward, reinforcing the claims of the flesh on our heart and mind. The Christian life is not inherently attractive. Properly carried out it is difficult.

This does not mean that the Christian is to be a doleful, strict, humorless figure. It does mean that even our pleasures are moderated by the sober recognition that the baubles of this world are not the treasures we seek. We are to use the world, not abuse it (1 Cor. 7: 31). All around us are the suffering, the neglected, the wayward. As Christians we may not ignore these, because our Master did not ignore them. As He lived, so must we do likewise. As in all things, Christ is our example. Though single-minded in His devotion to His mission — laying down His life daily and ultimately on the cross as man's Redeemer — He commiserated with the population around Him, Jew and Gentile. His compassion and large-heartedness expressed the heart of the Father in Whose presence Jesus delighted. May it be so with each one of us in the coming year.

The sentiments of our year's hymn, "Vain World, Adieu," are those of the consecrated and sanctified heart which is daily detaching itself from the love of worldliness and selfishness and fastening itself upon the spiritual. We commend it, along with our year's text, to our readers.

Vain, delusive world, adieu,  
With all thou callest good!  
To my Lord I would be true,  
Who bought me with his blood.  
All thy vanities must go;  
I have no pleasure in thy pride;  
*Only Jesus will I know,  
And Jesus crucified.*

Christ to know is life and peace,  
And pleasure without end:  
This is all my happiness,  
On Jesus to depend;  
Daily in His grace to grow,  
And ever in His faith abide;  
*Only Jesus will I know,  
And Jesus crucified.*

O that all would now unite  
This saving truth to prove;  
See the length, and breadth, and height,  
And depth of Jesus' love!  
Fain I would to all men show  
The blood by faith alone applied;  
*Only Jesus will I know,  
And Jesus crucified.*

— *Hymns of Millennial Dawn*, No. 312

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### **"Separate yourselves from the people of the land"** Ezra 10: 11

Someone has well said, "The Christian in the world is like a ship in the ocean. The ship is safe in the ocean so long as the ocean is not in the ship." One of the great difficulties with Christianity today is that it has admitted the strangers, the "people of the land," and recognized them as Christians. It does injury, not only to the Christians, by lowering their standards (for the *average* will be considered the standard), but it also injures the "strangers," by causing many of them to believe themselves thoroughly safe and needing no conversion, because they are outwardly respectable, and perhaps frequently attendants at public worship.

\* \* \*

God's people are a holy nation, severed from all others unto God's service. Their faith, spirit, hopes and aims differ from those of the natural man. So dissimilar are these two classes that the attempt to fellowship one another would prove painful and disastrous. Especially would God's people be disadvantaged by such association. For the welfare of both classes separation from each other is necessary. . . .

*Daily Heavenly Manna for August 3*

## ISRAEL RETURNS FROM BABYLON

Only 50,000 of the great nation of Israel that had been carried away into Babylonian exile could be found with the proper faith in God and the Abrahamic promise, and of the proper zeal and courage to return to Jerusalem — a journey that took about four months and covered approximately 800 miles. Weary from the journey, the travelers would have found great disappointment when they reached Jerusalem, for the city had lain desolate, according to the Word of the Lord, for 70 years (2 Chron. 36: 21). Many had never even seen Palestine. The wall and the temple had been demolished on Nebuchadnezzar's orders, and many of the private residences were also left in ruins, "without inhabitant." The place was a wilderness. Trees were growing in what formerly were streets. Everything was in disorder. The Israelites required more than a year to put themselves in reasonable condition for living, after which their attention turned to the rebuilding of the temple.

The remnant occupied only a small district in Palestine, about 25 miles square, Jerusalem being the center. The remainder of the territory of Palestine was more or less settled by immigrants. The king of Babylon followed the practice of moving captives from one nation into the territory of another, so that old associations were broken up and they would lose their own natural traits and be more dependent upon the Babylonian government. These people of various nationalities that had settled in Palestine had acquired some of the traditions of the land and its religious customs, and in our Lord's day, 566 years later, they were known as the Samaritans. These mixed peoples paid little attention to the Jews returned from Babylon until they heard of their project of rebuilding the Temple on its own site. The Samaritans, who had been un-neighborly up to this time, now seemed to catch an inspiration from the rebuilding of the Temple, as they remembered the ancient glories of the nation of this land, whose great king Solomon had built the first Temple. Ceasing to act as enemies, the Samaritans proffered their assistance, only to be refused by the Israelites, who probably recognized the blessing and honor of rebuilding Jerusalem as belonging to Israelites only, the Lord choosing at that time to develop the true Israelites, the typical seed of Abraham, through the experience.

*The Motto Card for 2003 is shown below. The card is of heavy card stock, 5½ x 8½ inches, and has a hole punched for hanging. The reverse is blank, except for our address. Each card is 50 cents, postpaid; \$5.00 for 12.*



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# EZRA'S BIBLE CLASS

## Nehemiah 8

*“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul”*

— Psa. 19: 7 —

**EZRA APPARENTLY RETURNED** to Babylon, there to prosecute his study of the Law and his collating thereof. We next hear of him 13 years after, again a prominent figure at Jerusalem. Nehemiah's work on the city wall and its gates was completed a week before the Jewish new year. That week was used for rest and refreshment, and on that day (about October 1st) a general convocation or public gathering took place in an open square just behind the temple. There a platform or pulpit was erected for Ezra who was the scribe or learned man of the occasion, who read to the people from morning until noon out of the Book of the law. It was read in sections; The priests and Levites commingled themselves with the people and explained to them the meaning of the various sections. The people, out of respect while the law was being read, stood, and then sat on the ground while it was being discussed.

It was an immense Bible class and aroused deep interest. As the people heard the words of the Divine Law, and realized that they had failed to keep that Law — even to the extent of their ability — they perceived the reason why the Lord had allowed various chastisements, captivities, *etc.*, to come upon them. They perceived that such was His covenant with them; that obedience on their part was to be rewarded with blessings and prosperity, and disobedience with punishment, captivity, *etc.* The realization of sin brought sorrow and tears — the people wept sore.

Then Nehemiah, Ezra, and others explained to the people, directly and through the Levites, that this was not a time for tears, but, on the contrary, a time for rejoicing. They were not only to remember the severity of God in punishing the wrongdoings of their fathers, but they were to remember also His mercies now returning to them, and especially to appreciate the fact that He had again sent to them the Law, and thus indicated His willingness to receive them back again to His favor. They were reminded that the very Law which foretold the punishments declared also God's mercy, and that when they would repent He would forgive and restore them to His favor. Thus their tears were turned to smiles, their mourning to rejoicing.

Nehemiah's message was: “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (v. 10).

### THEY READ THE LAW DISTINCTLY

The declaration is that they “caused the people to understand the law.” There is evidently great need of just such instruction today. Nominal Spiritual Israel is in a dilapidated condi-

tion because of the lack in understanding God's Word. We seem to be in the time referred to by the Prophet, saying, “I will send a famine in the land,” saith the Lord, “not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8: 11).

Many imagine that they are familiar with the teachings of the Bible, when in reality they are familiar with one or another of the creeds of the darker past, all of which contain some truth with considerable error, we must all admit. Our great mistake has been in assuming that our confessions of faith and all of our creeds strongly and fully represent the Bible's teachings. This mistake has already been costly. Thousands of the most generous minds have been turned away from the Bible by the mistaken supposition that the creeds properly represent its teachings. Assured that they could no longer endorse any Christian creed as a whole, these bright minds have renounced them and the Bible as well.

### STUDY WITHOUT CREEDAL SPECTACLES

The necessary thing to be done is to resume Bible study, and that without our creedal spectacles. Our forefathers who made our creeds participated more or less in persecutions of each other which we today entirely condemn. They were as honest, doubtless, as are we, but they had less light — they lived in a darker age. The belief that God is torturing thousands of millions of His creatures led some of our well-intentioned forefathers to torture one another in God's name, in a manner which we today cannot endorse as being either just or loving or Christlike.

Why then should we assume that those creeds are correct in all particulars? Should we not rather see that if so good a man as brother John Calvin committed so great a mistake as to sign the warrant which sent a brother Christian, Servetus, to the stake, this proves that there was something wrong with Calvin's theological ideas, which lie at the foundation of nearly all of our Protestant creeds?

With the wonderful Bibles which we possess today, found in nearly every Christian home, we should know more of its teachings than any of our forefathers could possibly have known. Not only has education aided in this respect, but our Bibles are conveniently formed, and we have study-aids, in the form of concordances, marginal references, topical Bibles, *etc.* Is it not time to strive as spiritual Israelites to turn afresh to the Bible and instruct the people respecting its teachings?

We are not advocating merely the reading of so many chapters a day, or the committing of verses to memory, nor the ordinary Sunday School lessons. We advocate a recon-



struction of our faith upon the basis of the Bible only. Surely if all of God's people could take from their minds their creed spectacles and study the Word afresh in its own light, a great blessing would speedily follow. The Bible students would soon become one with each other and with the Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ — the one Church of the Living God mentioned in the Scriptures, with one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all.

#### THE POWER OF THE DIVINE LAW

There is a power for good in the Word of God which can be found nowhere else. Higher Criticism has much responsibility in connection with the growing lawlessness of the world. "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"

— transforming the being. The Higher Critics in all of our colleges and seminaries are doing a terribly destructive work, in comparison to which the work of Voltaire, Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll were as nothing. It is safe to say that three-fourths of all the graduates of all colleges within the last thirty years have been unbelievers in the Bible, and that their influence has been used persistently to undermine the faith of others. The errors which led them to infidelity are liable to influence others. The Bible itself is a study, and only what it teaches should be believed whether favorable to or contrary to our former creeds.

— *Selected (1911)*

## of interest . . .

**The European Union (EU)** is set for a large expansion. Ten new countries, mostly from the former Soviet bloc, have accepted invitations to join the EU in 2004. There are presently 15 countries in the EU.

The candidate nations are nominally Christian. Turkey, which is a Moslem state, but with a secular constitution, was told that consideration of its application would be deferred until 2004, despite advocacy by the United Kingdom and the United States (which is outside the EU). Turkey has accused the EU of discriminating against it because it is outside the Christian community. The EU, however, believes that Turkey needs to address its problems with human rights before it can be considered for membership.

The launch in January 2002 of the Euro — the Community-wide single currency — was hailed within the EU as a success, though the results have been mixed. Germany, the largest country in the EU, and the world's third largest economy, has gone into severe economic decline and blames the inflexible economic policies of the EU for its prolonged distress.

As a trading entity, the EU has become a counterweight to the economic and trading power of the United States. If it can successfully absorb the new candidate countries, its economic power will be enormous and will most likely alter the economic, financial, and political landscape around the world over the next decade.

— *Compiled from various sources*

**The General Editor and staff of *The Bible Standard*, and the co-workers here at our international headquarters, send greetings of Christian love to our readers. We thank you for your prayers, support, and encouragement.**

**We pray a blessing on you and your households, and rejoice with you in the unspeakable Gift of God's Love, Jesus, and all that His sacrifice means to us and Christians everywhere and, in due time, to the world in general.**

**May the year 2003 find you pressing forward patiently in the consecrated way, and rejoicing in hope of the coming Kingdom.**



### FAITH VS. CREDULITY

**Q** What is the difference between faith and credulity?

**A** Faith as the quality by which one believes may be defined as mental appreciation of and heart's reliance upon certain objects. Christian faith has God and Christ as its objects. This definition is based upon Heb. 11: 1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The second part of the verse — "the evidence of things not seen" — is the part of faith that is exercised by the mind, mental appreciation.

The first part of the verse — "the substance of things hoped for" — is the part of faith that is exercised by the heart, heart's reliance.

Faith's *mental* appreciation includes an intelligent certainty of belief reached by relying upon competent evidence, which comes from a reliable and truthful source. God's infallible Word, especially His promises, supported by His spirit and providences, give the Christian a strong basis for his faith. In the world, faith is too easily — and inaccurately — defined as believing in something which lacks scientific validity.

#### No Substantial Basis for Credulity

Credulity, on the other hand, is the too-easy acceptance of something unsupported by evidence, or upon slight or insufficient proof. It is a conclusion reached by relying upon opinion, upon someone's say-so, or upon supposed truth which does not come from a reliable source. Credulity has a poor foundation, but faith has a sure foundation.

To believe in non-understandable, incomprehensible things is credulity, not faith. Satan would have us believe that credulity is the acme of faith, while Jehovah God esteems a faith built upon an *understanding* of the things that He reveals to us, and He invites us, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isa. 1: 18).

We might say that Satan acts like a trickster who picks out as his victim a gullible and foolish person. God is a wise Father, and seeks to raise not foolish but intelligent children. He whispers His secrets — the sweet morsels of wisdom contained in His Word — into the hearing ears of those who reverence Him, and shows them His covenant (Psa. 25: 14).

### JEALOUSY, ENVY, AND COVETOUSNESS

**Q** Jealousy, envy, and covetousness are normally thought of as bad qualities. Are they ever used in a good sense in the Scriptures?

**A** Of jealousy, the Bible says: "Jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame" (Cant. 8: 6; Prov. 6: 34). (The Hebrew word can also mean envy.) However, there is a proper jealousy, and the Scriptures refer frequently to Jehovah's jealousy. This means He desires our religious affections, devotion, and loyalty to be for Himself alone. In Ex. 20: 5 we read, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" and 34: 14 reads, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." The Apostle, referring to the Church says: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 2).

#### Envy Never a Good Quality

*Envy* may be defined as a discontented or resentful awareness of, and desire for, one or more of another's advantages and possessions. Envy is never presented as a good quality in the Scriptures, but is listed as one of the works of the flesh, which will, if not overcome, keep one from inheriting a share in the Kingdom (Gal. 5: 19-21, 26). One under the spell of envy will often seek to destroy the reputation of another to "cut them down to size."

Other Scriptures that warn against envy are: Prov. 14: 30; James 3: 14-16; and 4: 5. Some Biblical examples of envy are Cain envying Abel (Gen. 4: 4-8); Joseph's brethren envying him (Gen. 37: 3-11, 18-20; Acts 7: 9); Saul envying David (1 Sam. 18: 8, 9, 29; 20: 31); and the priests envying Jesus (Matt. 27: 18; Mark 15: 10; John 11: 47-54).

#### Covetousness — Good and Bad

*Covetousness* is in many respects like envy. It may be defined as: (1) an eager desire for obtaining and having possessions and advantages belonging to others; and (2) in middle English it meant to have the same eager desire, but without it being sinful. In this good (but now rare) sense, the Apostle says in 1 Cor. 12: 31: "covet earnestly the best gifts" (compare 14: 39). (The *New International Version* has "eagerly desire.")

It is one thing to want what another has if it is for sale, but sin enters when we continue to desire things to which we have no right, or which another is not willing to part with. The account in 1 Kings 21 of King Ahab and Naboth's vineyard is an example.

In our day, covetousness is used almost without exception in the bad sense. A few of the numerous Scriptures that exhort against covetousness are: Ex. 20: 17; Eccles. 5: 10, 11; Luke 12: 15-21; 16: 14; and Heb. 13: 5.

Some Biblical examples of covetousness in its bad sense are Eve, in coveting the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3: 6); David taking Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11: 2-5); Judas, in betraying Jesus (Matt. 26: 15, 16; Mark 14: 10, 11; Luke 22: 3-6); and Ananias and Sapphira, in keeping back part of the land price promised (Acts 5: 1-10).

We must put off ungodly jealousy, envy, and evil covetousness as works of the flesh and the devil, which, if persisted in, will keep us from attaining everlasting life. Let us put on instead the spirit of trust and unselfish love, which will help us to gain our inheritance in God's Kingdom. We need to suppress our own preferences and desires and be content with what we have.

#### ARE ANGER AND WRATH EVER PROPER?

**Q** Are anger and wrath ever appropriate for a Christian?

**A** The Scriptures repeatedly mention Jehovah's anger and wrath, which of course is proper for Him. At times He has been angry with Fleshly Israel because of their stubbornness and other sins. Also, "God is angry with the wicked" in general (Psa. 7: 11). His wrath is against all unrighteousness, and on the children of disobedience (Rom. 1: 18; Col. 3: 5, 6).

But God's anger is not the anger of injustice, malice, or self-defense (as in the anger of depraved men and devils); rather, it is an anger, righteous indignation, displeasure, or opposition to sin, inspired by His great love — by His love of truth and righteousness and His love for creatures injured by sin and error. Also, His anger is always fully controlled by His graces of justice, wisdom, power, and love. Any punishment He arranges for sinners must therefore be neither more nor less than that which is right — a just punishment.

Jesus also has the same kind of love and other attributes as His controlling qualities. But, for example, His love for the Pharisees did not hinder His having anger, righteous indignation, against their wrong teachings and practices (Matt. 23: 13-39; Mark 3: 1-5; 11: 15-17).

Likewise, the Apostles manifested righteous anger, indignation, against some individuals. But love was the motivation behind the anger — love for truth and God, whose ambassadors they were, and love for the people who

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*God's anger is not the anger of injustice or of malice (as in the anger of depraved men and devils); rather, it is an anger, righteous indignation, displeasure, or opposition to sin, inspired by His great love — by His love of truth and righteousness and His love for creatures injured by sin and error.*

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were being deceived by error. Note these passages: Acts 8: 18-20; 2 Pet. 2: 1-22; and 3 John 9, 10.

#### Three Valuable Exhortations (Ephesians 4: 26, 27)

But what about us, we who do not have the special discernment of Jesus and the Apostles? God through the Apostle Paul tells us, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4: 26, 27). Anger prompted by love must be controlled by love. It must not be motivated by malice (ill will) or bitterness toward the offender. Righteous indignation, or anger, sometimes must in love pointedly and forcefully "reprove" and "rebuke" (2 Tim. 4: 2), but will yearn for the repentance of the wrongdoers with accompanying works (Acts 26: 20).

The danger is in going to extremes and thus committing sin. Some lose self-control and get angry to the extent of unrighteous anger and wrath, rage, bitterness, vindictiveness, vengefulness, and malicious hatred. We are cautioned explicitly against these sinful extremes (Gal. 5: 20; Eph. 4: 31; Col. 3: 8). However, we should not just stand idly by and let truth fall into the street and allow error to triumph (Isa. 59: 14). Every loyal soldier of the cross should lift high the royal standard of truth and righteousness, and valiantly, yet tactfully defend it.

We are exhorted to "let not the sun go down upon your wrath," that is, let not your anger continue so long that it amounts to bitterness, malice, hatred, or vengefulness, but let it be only such anger as is controlled by love and does not continue longer than necessary. In most circumstances our anger will be over by the end of the day. If we are inclined to and remain (unrighteously) angry, we should pray to God for help, and apply our hearts and minds to those parts of the Word of God that will help us maintain self-control and dispel unrighteous anger. Scriptures such as Prov. 16: 32; 25: 28, and others mentioned above may prove helpful. Our anger should rarely be exercised in self-defense.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## announcements

### MEMORIAL DATE FOR 2003

*Monday, April 14, after 6:00 p.m.*

Our Lord's Memorial falls on Monday, April 14, after 6:00 p.m. This is calculated as follows (all times Universal Time, or Greenwich Mean Time): The vernal equinox is on March 21, 1:01 a.m.; the new moon nearest this equinox is on April 1, 7:20 p.m.; add to this, 2 hours 21 minutes to get Jerusalem time = 9:41 p.m.; so Nisan 1 is from 6:00 p.m. April 1, to 6:00 p.m. April 2; Nisan 14 begins 13 full days later, on Monday, April 14, 6:00 p.m., ending Tuesday, April 15, 6:00 p.m. May God bless all His consecrated people in this connection. Please send us reports.

### GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2003

*At-a-glance*

**United States:** *California*, February 15-17 (Dates Revised); *Florida*, March 14-16; *Massachusetts*, April 25-27; *Michigan*, May 24-26; *Philadelphia Area*, July 3-6; *Ohio*, August 15-17; *Illinois*, October 3-5; *Oklahoma*, November 7-9

*Details*

#### United States

*California*, February 15-17 (Saturday-Monday)

*Site:* Country Side Suites, 204 N. Vineyard Ave., Ontario, CA 91764; telephone (800) 248-4661 or (909) 937-9700; Sales Fax (909) 937-3414. *Rates and Reservations:* 1-2 occupants, \$69.00, 3-4 occupants, \$79.00; all rooms plus 11.85% tax; check-in after 3:00 p.m.; check-out noon. Any cancellations of guaranteed reservations must be done 24 hours prior to arrival. Free and frequent shuttle bus transport is available (only 5 minutes from airport to hotel). Please make room reservations through the Class Secretary, Mrs. Mary Detzler, 6941 Abel Stearns Ave., Riverside, CA 92509; telephone (909) 779-0331.

*Florida*, March 14-16 (Friday-Sunday)

*Site:* (New Location) Oceanfront Comfort Inn, 1515 N. First St., Jacksonville Beach, Fla., 32250; Telephone: (800) 654-8776. *Rates and Reservations:* \$72.00 for 1-4 guests, plus 13% tax. Reservations must be made directly with the hotel, and by

February 15: be sure to inform them that you are attending the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement Convention to secure the special rate. Please make all other inquiries to Mrs. Beverly Blaine (Class Secretary), 3569 Anderson Drive, Ormond Beach, Fla. 32176; telephone (386) 441-9836.

### SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

**Carl W. Seebald**

Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 2

**Ralph Herzig**

Boston, Massachusetts, January 26; California Convention, February 15-17; New Haven, Connecticut, March 16

**Richard Blaine**

Florida Convention, March 14-16

**Robert Herzig**

Auburn, Massachusetts, March 9

**John Detzler**

California Convention, February 15-17

**Leon Snyder**

Riverside, California, February 12; California Convention, February 15-17; Las Vegas, Nevada, February 19, 20; Broomfield, Colorado, February 22, 23; Seattle, Washington, February, 24, 25; Muskegon, Michigan, March 2

**Baron Duncan**

New Haven, Connecticut, January 19

**Tom Cimbura**

California Convention, February 15-17

**Don Lewis**

California Convention, February 15-17

**James Shaw**

California Convention, February 15-17

### Evangelists' Services

**Robert Branconnier**, Chicago, Illinois, January 11, 12;

Pittsfield, Mass., February 9; Boston, Mass., March 23

**Harold Solomon**, Springfield, Mass., February 2

**E. Tomkiewicz**, Minneapolis, March 29, 30

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