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Recommended Citation

Chase, J. Richard; Feinberg, Charles Lee; Anderson, Lloyd T.; and Sutherland, Samuel H., "Biola Hour Highlights, 1974 - 06" (1974). *Biola Hour Highlight Series*. 25.

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Credibility Gap

By: Dr. J. Richard Chase

Much has been said in recent days concerning the credibility gap in Washington. Our purpose is not to say who is right or wrong. Each of us doubtless has his or her own views. Seeing what these problems have done to our country causes me to wonder, "Do Christians have a credibility gap? If so, how can we bridge it in order to regain the confidence of those with whom we are seeking to communicate?" At times anyone may find his influence minimized so that there is a virtual incapacity to lead others. Not too many people will follow those whom they distrust. Even if a person tells the truth, he still must have people who will accept his words and act upon them. Since most of us don't have the ability or information readily available to make adequate judgments, we therefore have to evaluate the individual himself, sometimes based on such obscure things as outward appearances.

What about a Christian's testimony with the unsaved? Is what we say accepted and valid or are we viewed with suspicion similar to the way some political leaders are considered?

We have read about some Republicans during the past year who went to great lengths trying to separate themselves from Richard Nixon. They felt some of their constituents at home saw a credibility gap with the President. To gain their reelection they sought to divorce themselves from him. Not too long before, during the last major elections, some of these same individuals tried to ride into office on his coat tails. Interesting, isn't it, how people will do almost anything if they feel it's in their own best interest. Suppose the church's credibility is poor, and we as individual Christians aren't accepted by the unsaved around us. As believers in Christ we must make certain that our light shines brightly and effectively.

The apostle Paul recognized the significance of being effective and acceptable. Paul wrote to his young minister friend, Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." The exhortation was to be competent in the study of the Word so that people would have confidence in what was said by him. We also note that Paul was very thankful to the church at Thessalonica because their testimony was known throughout that entire area. On the other hand, the church at Corinth had to be taken to task since through immorality they were weak in the faith. In fact, even at the Lord's Supper some of the people were conducting themselves in such an unseemly manner that God had to judge them. Everything they did was to be all to the glory of God.

Poor conduct on the part of the Christian weakens his credibility with those whom he wants to serve. The people at Corinth had used an artificial standard by which to evaluate Paul. The apostle was aware of this and took steps to reestablish his

credibility. It wasn't his message that was questioned, but rather his person. Paul was simply presenting the message God had for him. Still, his authority was challenged because the Corinthians didn't like the way he looked, acted, or spoke. Because of false standards in the church at Corinth, Paul had been set aside by many people. His authority was not accepted. He had been judged on the surface. They hadn't probed deeply into his message, but were simply looking at his pattern of speech and conduct. There were individuals in that day who made their living going around giving speeches and lectures generally not on religious themes. Paul's purpose was not to try to match their manufactured oratory. He refers to this in I Corinthians 2:1, 2 and 4. There was no excellency of speech on a human plain. With a simple message he came to present Christ. The apostle reminds them, "I didn't take side excursions to reveal the intricacies of my reasoning ability." He went on to explain, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (2:2).

Paul perhaps was shook to the very marrow of his bones because of the responsibility that was his. He realized the message of Christ's redemption wasn't just another clever speech simply to be applauded. It was an address to be accepted with eternal life itself at stake. The people of Corinth, however, were hard to convince. They reasoned, "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (II Cor. 10:10). Unfortunately, from the standpoint of looks and pattern of communication, Paul didn't measure up to highest oratorical standards. It wasn't his content but rather personal characteristics. How foolishly these people avoided the truth being blinded by appearance, use of language and culture. From one perspective the people at Corinth were really fault-finders. His conduct didn't measure up to their standards.

Paul came to Corinth as an itinerant tentmaker by trade. His needs were met either by working at his trade or by the gifts some people gave him. By living on such a low level he undoubtedly caught some of these people off guard (II Cor. 11:7-9). Certainly there must have been those who complained that Paul had no class. He certainly didn't have the kind of income that allowed him to live high on the social ladder.

The people at Corinth also felt Paul was different because you couldn't really peg him down. Sometimes he seemed to attack those who were rather legalistic and bound up in some of the Old Testament practices. On other occasions he would attempt to set in order those who were free and not living by legalistic principles. Why did he do this? He tells us in I Cor. 9:19, "That I might gain the more;" that he might reach them for Christ.

Paul certainly had a credibility gap. He had a message to present and he knew it was the only truthful one. How the apostle establishes himself for those at Corinth can be applied to your own life. God can use you, even as Paul was able to be used more effectively when his credibility was established.

If there are those who question your spiritual credibility, you can check how the apostle Paul met this problem head on. He experienced victory for the Lord through establishing his competency and concern.

Did it ever strike you that when the Gospel of Luke was written, the writer took time to establish his credentials in order that his message might be accepted? He underscored that he knew what he was talking about (1:3). John also uses this device in his gospel found in the last chapter (John 21:24). He was very definitely an "eye witness." Yes, competency is absolutely essential to credibility. Would you take your automobile to a mechanic whom you know has questionable abilities? We seek counsel from those who have had experience in the lines of our interest. Any leader has to have competent abilities. Paul realized this very well and proceeded to

establish his credentials. To do so he stated, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord?" Paul knew what he was talking about. It may well have been that the people in Corinth didn't think Paul understood what freedom in Christ was all about. They questioned Paul's pattern of conduct. He had actually chosen by design to make himself a servant of all that he might win others for Christ. He knew what he was talking about. Paul wasn't looking for some religion of man to make him acceptable before God. Through Christ he was free from all obligation to justify himself. Because of what Christ had done for him, Paul felt a strong obligation to reach others for Jesus Christ.

The apostle had also been questioned because he lived a bit differently from others (I Cor. 9:7-18). The confusion on the part of the people at Corinth was that they thought Paul was ignorant when it came to taking offerings. On the contrary, he knew this entire area only all too well. In fact, he quoted to them from a passage in Deuteronomy 25:4. It may well have been an obscure verse as far as these people were concerned. Moses had earlier written, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the grain." If God can take care of oxen then certainly He can make provision for a minister and his needs. In verse 13 of chapter nine, he makes another reference to an Old Testament passage. Here individuals who serve in the temple are allowed to take of certain offerings. Well aware of all these facts, he still does not ask for support; he willingly doesn't take offerings for his own support by personal design. The point is, to establish credibility with others we have to know what we're talking about. For this reason, Paul gave ample proof that the Corinthians could place their confidence in him.

Paul could also testify, "I have produced." In verses one and two of I Cor. 9 we find these phrases, "Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." He had done this because the Corinthians had become believers. The purpose of an apostle is far more than just taking offerings and making fancy speeches. His ultimate goal was to reach others for Christ (II Cor. 12:12).

Sometimes we allow artificial standards to be set up. We have to know what the real task is in order to produce properly. We cannot evaluate anyone properly on criteria which are erroneous. We must measure ourselves, as well as others, by the measure which the Lord requires. This is the only way credibility can be established.

Recently I read a book entitled, "Effective Management by Objectives." It was written by a professor in Eastern Canada. He points out that so many times in corporations, job descriptions are given for employees by individuals who many times miss the essence of the necessary job qualities. For this reason little progress is really achieved. He referred to the training officer of a large company who was invited to list the points of which he thought his position consisted. His evaluation, "My job is to develop training programs, to administer training programs, to analyze training programs, to review training programs, etc." The author pointed out that this man missed the essence of his whole job. Not once did he say, "My job is to improve managerial effectiveness," which was the ultimate objective for the establishment of his job. He had been lost in the details of his work. Presumably he could run his administrative program without ever evaluating whether or not he improved the effectiveness of those who went through the programs. This is one reason why here at Biola College and Talbot Theological Seminary we want to remember that our work isn't to enroll students, hire faculty, and buy equipment. Of course, we do all these necessary things. Our main responsibility is to increase the opportunities for young people to improve their skills and abilities so that they might be what God wants them to be. We must always keep the end view in mind. We must develop the potential God has placed within them. Make sure you get your evaluation off on the right foot.

The people at Corinth, who criticized Paul, had been looking at his appearance and

pattern of speech. Our evaluation must be more than merely superficial. We may not have all the answers; we may not be able to do everything. Yet, when the opportunity arises we must do what we can and ought to do. There's obviously a big difference between having a credibility gap and being ready and willing to bridge that gap. We must be sensitive to the fact that a leader who really commands our respect must be competent, fully demonstrating that he is a producer in the areas that are most crucial.

Do you really know Jesus Christ? Do you really know His Word well enough to communicate it? Have you followed the instructions Paul gave to Timothy so that his credibility gap would be bridged? Youth was not to be a handicap. Others are looking to us for Christian leadership and testimony. Let's pray that God will give us the strength, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to use every opportunity to serve Christ effectively in the days ahead. In this way we can bridge the credibility gap in our lives.

As Christians we should seek to minimize anything which would weaken our effectiveness in reaching others for the Saviour. The apostle Paul was well aware of the fact that to establish credibility an individual must first be competent. Then there follows the need to be genuinely concerned about others. This particular concept is focalized in I Corinthians 9:19-23. Paul didn't hesitate to say that he was so deeply concerned about others that he was ready and willing to limit his own life in an effort to reach them.

TIME magazine wrote recently about an individual from the Washington scene who said that the nation's capitol is filled with those only interested in themselves. They don't seem to be concerned about any consequences so long as the events made them look good and enabled them to get ahead. On the other hand, this politician's argument was, "I'm genuinely concerned about people; I'm not concerned about what I'll get out of the office if elected. I only want to render service to the individual." Whether or not he will fulfill his pledge is one thing. At least he knew one basic principle. People want those who are interested in them. Have you ever known anyone who ran on a ticket by saying, "Look, I'm broke! Unless you elect me, so that I can get on the public payroll, I don't know what I'll do with my life." Who would want such a candidate? There must be confidence borne of concern. Because God created us He knows that we would be susceptible to those individuals who are really concerned about us. This is one reason why the message of salvation is so practical. Christ loved us long before we ever loved Him!

To point out exactly how he felt, Paul told them frankly, "Unlike you at Corinth who are only concerned about yourselves, I am so deeply concerned about you that I am willing to make myself your servant" (I Corinthians 9:19). In the original, this carries the idea of table service for others. Jesus Christ is our Master, and we are His servants. Paul limits his service so that he clearly showed that he wasn't interested in accommodating only himself. He had as his consuming goal a desire to reach others for Christ (v. 20). The apostle would alter or compromise his stand in relationship with Jesus Christ to accommodate himself to men. He was ready and willing to go as far as he could to limit his own freedom and desires (v. 22).

Stuart Briscoe has told how that after returning home to England, following extensive evangelistic work in our country, he was impressed by a little snack shop across the street from his home. Here young people would congregate as they do in our coffeehouses or soda fountains. He watched these students crowd in there night after night. Finally, he went over to share a word of testimony. Before long he was engaged in conversation and prayed for some boldness to present his faith. He explained how men were lost and how they could be saved only through Jesus Christ. One person to whom he spoke looked him right in the eye and said, "You don't believe that! If you really thought we were lost and going to hell without Christ, you wouldn't have lived in that home across the street watching us all these months, but waiting until

now to come over." It's a fact, people don't trust individuals if there's not a demonstration of earnest and genuine concern.

Paul, in establishing confidence in the minds and hearts of the people at Corinth, took time to explain that he was so concerned for lost souls that he was ready and willing to limit his own pattern of conduct so that other individuals might be reached for Jesus Christ.

Think of the credibility gap that may exist in your life. Ask yourself about whether you are competent as well as genuinely concerned. Too many people are only concerned about themselves. What about the effectiveness of our local churches? Are we helping the pastor and his staff to demonstrate concern to the community? Consider how many homes you drive by on the way to church. Are you really impressed by the fact that without Christ they are lost and will go to hell? Let us be sure to show a genuine and sincere concern to those in need about us.

One of the primary guiding principles in the life of the apostle Paul was to do everything possible to accommodate himself to the needs of men and women so that he might reach them for Christ. Without question, he had a genuine concern for others; he was a man of strong commitment and firm character. A credibility gap always exists when people believe their leaders, or those in authority, are not sincere. As an example, if a salesman is deeply concerned about his product so much so that he invests his own funds in it, and through thick or thin remains loyal to it, then certainly credibility is enhanced. This is exactly what James had in mind when he pointed out, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways (1:8). It is not unusual to become suspicious of those who aren't willing to stick to a task. Competency is extremely important in life, but so is commitment.

There is no question but that Paul was thoroughly committed to the ministry God gave him. This is seen clearly in such passages as I Corinthians 9:24-27. In this section he uses an illustration with which the people of this area could readily identify. About every other year in Corinth the Isthmian games were held. These would be similar to what we know as the Olympics. Here, the apostle pictures himself as a committed and earnest Christian. He wanted to give his all for Christ. One who wanted to be effective in the Corinthian games had to dedicate himself completely and wholly to the race or event in which he participated. In this particular instance Paul draws a parallel to point out, "I, too, have given myself to Jesus Christ with this same degree of commitment. Whereas an athlete will do a number of things in which he attempts to train his body to win the prize, so I have subjugated my body that I might fulfill the purpose that God has for me."

Paul uses three very strong words in this particular illustration to drive home his message. The first thing is to be "temperate." In the Greek language this has the idea of self-control, recognizing that there is a power which would urge us to take the easy way and compromise. Fortunately, there is a contrary power which can bring victory over the fleshly desires. We need to recognize the problem and be firmly committed to the positive answer the Lord has provided. In essence, what the apostle was saying was, "Even though, in my own life I have felt these selfish tendencies, through Christ I have been given a greater power. In this way I can control these desires and serve Christ effectively." Paul certainly knew what temptation was, but he was even more familiar with the controlling power of God.

We also find an interesting statement which avows, "But I keep under my body." In the original the word means to "strike under the eye." What he is testifying means literally, "I give myself a 'black eye' to bring my body into subjection; I've made a slave of my body, lest that by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway." This, of course, is an athletic illustration. The Scripture isn't suggesting that we physically attack our own bodies. In order to be victorious

Paul exercised self-control. These fleshly desires were beat down so that he could be successful in presenting the message of salvation without being a stumbling-block to those who looked to him for guidance. He was ready and willing to sacrifice in many areas of his life so that he could be an effective witness for Christ. Paul never looked for the easy way out; his commitment was firm.

Here is a practical lesson for all of us. If we could only be observed by others as men and women whose testimony is valid and whose words can be trusted, then we, too, should be people of firm commitment. As an example, a politician will surely have a credibility gap with his constituents if he talks about economy on Monday and then votes himself a pay raise on Tuesday. As a parent, some of you have had occasions where you have talked about honesty with your children. Yet, if the phone rings and you urge them to say, "Tell them I'm not at home," you can see how that lack of commitment and character is going to undermine your testimony. Our commitment to Christ must be firm if we would avoid a credibility gap. An individual will only establish credibility if he demonstrates that he is competent, that he knows Christ and His Word, and that he is living the effective life God has given him to live. There must be a genuine concern for others. We must minimize thoughts for personal opportunity. May we resolve that there will be no credibility gap in our relationships with those in our own family, our church and our community, as we seek to serve Jesus Christ.

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BIOLA HOUR HIGHLIGHTS

ISSUE NO. 7

FEATURING JUNE MESSAGES

Purpose in Seminary Training

By: Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg

Definite fear has been expressed by many that seminary training is useless at the best and dangerous at the worst. They claim, "All any seminary will ever do is rob you of your faith or zeal, and spoil you for any useful service in Christ's Church." Perhaps this attitude is not so prevalent now among the general public or the student world, but many look for shortcuts, especially in view of shortage of manpower in the ministry.

A Scripture passage, which is clear and decisive as to the purpose of seminary training, is II Corinthians 4:1-6. It reads (NASB):

"Therefore since we have the ministry, as we receive mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

THE AIM OF SEMINARY TRAINING IS TO PREPARE THE STUDENT TO PREACH.

Paul, in II Corinthians 4:5, unmistakably declares the goal is preaching. The seminarian is not to prepare himself, in the first instance, to be a social reformer. Though ever conscious of and burdened for social needs, he is never to occupy himself as a social reformer. Men must first be made aware of divine rights and claims before they are engrossed solely in civil and social and human rights. No society has ever lost out by giving God His rightful place and due. And the seminarian is not to prepare himself to be an entertainer. Probably no age in history has placed higher stock in those who can amuse, entertain, and regale an audience. Read Amos 4:1 and Isaiah 1:10 and see how intent the prophets of God were on humoring their hearers.

Furthermore, the theologian is not to prepare himself to be an organizer or administrator as an end in itself. Others can perform these necessary functions, but for him it is without the range of his calling. Moreover, the student is not to prepare to be an orator or elocution expert. No one will deny the joy of listening to one with genuine speaking ability, but this is not the goal of the seminary's training, even though homiletics is one of the important emphases of that discipline. Finally, the seminarian is certainly not to prepare to be an athletic or social director for the congregation. First, last and always he is to prepare to be an expository preacher of the whole counsel of God.

It is reported of Woodrow Wilson, son of a minister, that he once said of preachers: "When I hear some of the things which young men say to men by way of putting the arguments to themselves for going into the ministry, I think they are talking of another profession. Their motive is to do something. You do not have to be anything in particular to be a lawyer, and I know. You do not have to be anything in particular, except a kindhearted man perhaps, to be a physician. You do not have to be anything, nor undergo any strong spiritual change, in order to be a merchant. The only profession which consists in being something is the ministry of our Lord and Savior--and it does not consist of anything else. And that conception of the ministry which rubs all the marks off and mixes him in the crowd, so that you cannot pick him out, is a process of eliminating the ministry itself." One must be a man of God as he prepares to preach.

THE PURPOSE OF SEMINARY TRAINING IS TO PREPARE
THE STUDENT AS A SERVANT OF THE LORD.

If Christ is Lord, then we are His subjects. If He is Master, then we are His slaves. There will always be a struggle against the self-life (Galatians 5:16, 17). But the most important lesson of seminary discipline is to learn to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Edwin L. Sabin put it well:

An enemy I had whose mien
I stoutly strove to know.
For hard he dogged my steps,
unseen
Wherever I might go.

My plans he balked, my aims he
foiled,
He blocked my onward way.
When for some lofty goal I toiled
He grimly said me nay.

"Come forth!" I cried, "lay bare
thy guise!
Thy features I would see."
But always to my straining eyes
He dwelt in mystery.

One night I seized and held him
fast
The veil from him did draw,
I gazed upon his face at last--
And lo! myself I saw.

Whether the life is brought under the full control of the Lord or not, matters in preparation for the ministry in a way it could not for one studying law, dentistry, medicine, or many other professions. It is a matter of the will, and we must say honestly, "Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done." Some measure of surrender to Christ has already been realized before entrance to seminary. If the opportunities of seminary days are used aright, they should mean not only academic equipment, but fuller meaning and depth of commitment to Christ as Lord. Such a surrendered life does not spell monotonous uniformity. The Spirit of God has a way of taking the special and unique mind and personality, and making it serve His sacred design. First and last, seminary students are meant to be slaves, bondservants of Christ.

THE GOAL OF SEMINARY TRAINING IS TO PREPARE
THE STUDENT AS A SERVANT OF MEN.

This does not mean that the minister is to become a type of glorified church bellhop. Sometimes it is right to say no to some demands as well as yes to others. This means that through a close walk with the Lord, much study of the Word with prayer, and much observation of the needs of men, we are to discover the basic requirements of those to whom we minister. Then thought is to be given to how the need may best be met. With the love of Christ motivating the undershepherd, he is to spend and be spent in the service of men. This calls for humility, for the performance of many acts of simple kindness. Spiritual ideals and goals are ever to be kept before us. Knowledge and heart experience must be joined. If there be success or failure in the days of ministry, it will be in direct proportion to the surrender or non-surrender of the life to Christ as Lord, and to fellowmen for Jesus' sake.

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ

By: Dr. Lloyd T. Anderson

One of the wonderful titles of the Lord Jesus Christ is "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5). There are some who would erroneously teach that the Saviour was simply created by God. There were others who were raised from the dead, such as Lazarus, but they were brought back into this earthly life only to die again. This was not true of Christ who was brought into the newness of life, in eternal victory over death and the devil.

The Greek word for "firstborn" in verse 5 is important. It is the same as we find in Colossians 1:15. There He is referred to as "the firstborn of all creation." This has no reference to His being created, but that He is the head and the object of all creation. In the original it doesn't mean so much that He was born before anyone else, because that wasn't true. Jesus Christ never ceased to be. He always was, and always will be God. He was not created like the angels, or like you and me. As God He is therefore self-sufficient, never created, but always existing. The word in Greek is one of precedence showing that He takes His position above and beyond everything and everyone else in the universe. Inasmuch as the book of Revelation is to reveal all things actually subjected to Christ, we must connect Psalm 89:26, 27 and 37 with Him. The Saviour's power is number one, and God has so ordained that He should always be.

In verse six we read, "and hath made us (that is, believers) kings and priests unto God and his Father." Here, the Bride of Christ is spoken of as a kingdom. (The word in the Greek is in the singular number, "kingdom"). This particular passage can be connected with Revelation 5:9 and 10 where we read of the four living creatures along with the four and twenty elders who sing a brand new song concerning the Saviour who has just taken over the seven-sealed book. Their testimony is, "Worthy art thou to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God with thy blood out of every tribe and tongue, and people and nation and madest them unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign upon the earth." Every born-again child of God has this priestly function (Ephesians 2:18). This is why we are committed to pray "for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority" (I Timothy 2:1, 2). The book of Revelation looks forward to the exercise of a royal priesthood. When our Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth for His rule and reign, the full Melchisedec priesthood will come in again. Every born-again believer is going to be a priest with Christ. That should certainly be something to thrill the human soul. The last part of verse six ascribes, "to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." This describes the eternal glory and dominion which will be our Saviour's.

In verse seven of Revelation chapter one, we read, "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." The second coming of our Lord is

a very vital part of Christian doctrine. There never has been a time of greater need for the preaching of this truth than today. It is essential to realize that there are two parts to this great event. There is definitely a period of time between the Rapture, that is when Jesus Christ comes for the believer to close the age of the Church, and when He comes visibly and bodily to rule for a thousand years on the earth. The next great event for the Christian is the carrying home of the body of Christ, which closes this age which began at Pentecost. The second phase of Christ's coming is when His feet touch the Mount of Olives and He comes with His saints who previously had been caught up to be with Him in the air. Read such passages as Jude 14, Zechariah 14:5, Colossians 3:4 and Revelation 19:11-14. These deal distinctly with this second aspect as given in Revelation 1:7. It certainly agrees with Daniel 7:13 where he writes, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven." This also corresponds with the prophetic utterance of the Lord on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24:30). The Rapture of believers is the next thing on God's prophetic program. In a real sense it will be a mysterious event. No person, except believers who are caught up to Him, will see the Lord in that moment. That is the first part of His second coming. He will descend only in the air. The trumpet will sound and the voice of the archangel will be heard. Christ will not stand on the earth when He comes at this point. That takes place in the second phase of His coming. This is what Revelation 1:7 refers to.

The formation of the true Church of Jesus Christ began on the day of Pentecost. It now continues until the Bride is taken home to be with the Lord in the air. The word "church" doesn't refer to some denomination or building. It is not a human organization but rather made up of all born-again, converted children of God who may be in or out of churches who will be taken home to be with the Lord in the air.

In Revelation 1:7 we have a marvelous, celestial, incomparable announcement, "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." This is similar to what we find in II Thessalonians 1:7-10. Keep in mind, this isn't the Rapture of the Church. It is the visible and bodily return of Christ to this earth. Our Saviour foretold this event to His disciples in what is commonly known as "The Sermon on the Mount." As the lightning splits the sky, so shall the appearing, the presence, the coming of the Son of man really be. What takes place, as translated from the original is "the manifestation of His coming." Rotherham has it, "The forthshining of His arrival." That's a wonderful picture. And certainly the truth is with us as we look at it and study it together. This phase of Christ's second coming is diametrically opposite of the Rapture. In Revelation 16:15 we read, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." This is the same thing in Matt. 24:42 and I Thess. 5:1-2 and II Peter 3:8-10. Here, in the latter passage, a thousand years is compared to a single day and a day as a thousand years. Some have wondered why there is such a violent contradiction between Christ's return. On the one hand, He is spoken of as coming fervently and quietly as a thief, but also He is referred to as coming in glorious mighty power and every eye shall see Him. There is no discrepancy or real problem in coinciding these two manifestations or revelations. It's true, He is coming in lightning that breaks the sky in two, that floods the earth with the light of its power, and then in the very next sentence He is coming as a thief, secretly, fervently, softly. When we read the text of Rev. 1:7 we must see exactly what the Spirit of God has said. This verse does not state that all shall see Christ at the same time, in the same place, in the same manner, and with the same feelings. There will be some who will see Him when He comes as a thief to steal away His jewels. Then there are others who will see Him as the terrible lightning breaks the sky. There are two great acts in this final climactic drama. He is coming as a thief to steal away His people. This is the Rapture of the Church. And then He is coming as the lightning, brilliant upon the throne of His glory and of His judgment. At that time everybody will look upon the face of

the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be that terrible indescribable horror and despair for those who do not believe in the Saviour. Scripture tells in verse seven that "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

The first of the two phases of Christ's coming will be secret in a sense. Every believer is going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (I Thess. 4:14ff; I Cor. 15:51ff; Phil. 3:20, 21). The unredeemed peoples of the earth will not be able to see Jesus fully at that moment. The second aspect of this tremendously important event is given to us in Revelation 1:7. This last book of the Bible concerns itself with that great final act of the mighty drama when the Saviour comes in power and in glory, including the great visitations of judgment that precede and follow it.

Dr. Louis T. Talbot observed, "Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming in the glory of His manhood: God and man, the man-God, Christ Jesus. He is coming to be King over Israel. He is coming to be King over the nations. He is coming to be the Restorer of the earth, its Re-creator, its Prince, its eternal God. 'Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him.'"

Scripture tells us, "And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." This little word "wail" is interesting and very strong in our English language, but not nearly as emphatic as John has selected in the original Greek. It means "to cut" as one would remove a branch from a tree. When people were in despair and horror in ancient days, they always cut themselves. We might therefore read the passage, "And all the kindreds of the earth shall fall in such a despair that they will cut themselves because of Him." We see this very vividly pictured in 6:14-17 where people will seek death but not be able to find it.

Those who crucified Christ will also see Him (1:7). Those who shared in His shameful murder will some day confront the Lord face to face. John had personally seen the fierce looks of these men. He had beheld their hard and impenitent hearts, and witnessed the fruits of their cruel hands along with their blasphemy and terrible unbelief. Those who were responsible for this unjust deed, whether they literally drove the nails or just stood by or cried out "Crucify Him," will behold the King on the throne in the glory of His judgment day. At this point, God's people have already been taken out of the world at the Rapture. The scene now portrayed is the tribulation hour at the conclusion of which the Lord returns.

The appearance of the King of Kings strikes terror and despair to the hearts of those here on earth during the tribulation. While the world is drinking, carousing, living in godlessness, rejection and unbelief, then the Great Judge of the world appears. In a moment the earth changes from its sinning into awful despair because of the horror of the judgment of God which is soon to fall after the church is gone. In that dread hour the wicked dead are going to be raised and shall stand beside those who are living in unrighteousness and unbelief. Remember that old hymn that carries with it a lot of truth, "Oh, what a weeping and wailing, when the lost are told of their fate. They cry for the rocks and the mountains, they pray, but their prayer is too late." What an awesome, cataclysmic hour that will be. If you are going to be saved, you'll have to be saved now. God doesn't deceive us with idol dreams of repentance and restoration after that day of judgment arrives. If His first coming didn't save us when He came as a babe and died on the cross, His second coming will certainly condemn us. Never forget, death is coming, judgment is coming, and Christ is coming. To those who lift up their hearts in faith and trust, His return is our redemption. It is our salvation, our glory, and our final ultimate triumph. It is our heaven forever, world without end. To those who turn aside from the invitation of mercy and forgiveness it becomes a day of horror and judgment, crying for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them.

Jesus Christ is coming first of all for His church. He does not come back to the earth again at that particular event which is the next thing on God's prophetic program. It could happen at any moment. This is the first phase of the second coming of our Lord. The second phase of His second coming is given to us in Rev. 1:7. It is at this time He will be seen by all the peoples of the earth living in that hour; when the nations of the world will view the coming judgment that He brings and will wail because of Him. We urge you, as one who echoes the words Biola stands for, we long to see you know Jesus Christ so that in a coming day you will not be in judgment, but instead you will be one of the inhabitants of heaven forever with the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the writing of the book of Revelation, the apostle John was inspired by the Holy Spirit while serving a sentence for his faith. "I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9). He was sent to this remote area because of persecution from the Roman government. It was in the year 70 A. D. that Titus leveled the city of Jerusalem. His brother's name was Domitian who was a mighty man of war and who later ascended to the throne of Rome. He was blood-thirsty and extremely cruel. He was the first of the Roman Caesars who demanded that all of his subjects address him as "our lord and god." He even made images of himself which were placed in public areas. People were then ordered to prostrate themselves in worship. Because of these circumstances the lot of the Christian was extremely cruel.

The pastor of the church in the capital city of the Roman province of Asia was the apostle John. He was the disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and was exiled to the isle of Patmos because of his faith and testimony. This is a little rocky island about 24 miles into the sea along the Asia Minor coast. It is directly opposite the ancient town of Miletas in the land of Turkey. About 25 miles in diameter, it is very mountainous. Apparently John had free access to all the confines of this little island. Here he saw the sublime portrayal which we know as the wonderful book of Revelation. This faithful saint was probably somewhere between 90 and 100 years of age. Yet, his spiritual vision was undimmed. Obviously, John was not an ordinary man. He was thoroughly dedicated to knowing and doing the will of the Lord. How sad it is when we question God's wisdom about allowing some trials to come into our lives. Remember, God never forsakes the believer. Whatever comes will work together for our good (Rom. 8:28). You see, John lived in two environments at the same time. He was on a desolate island, with perhaps a few other prisoners, while also revelling in the companionship of the Holy Spirit who was living within him. While it may be within the power of men to separate Christians from one another, yet no man can shut out the Spirit of God from a believer or limit the testimony of Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation has been circulated for some nineteen hundred years, blessing the hearts of millions since that hour.

Some of the greatest blessings for God's people have come through prison experiences. Consider the apostle Paul whose "epistle of joy," the letter to the Philippians, was penned from a Roman dungeon. John Bunyan, the writer of the book, "Pilgrim's Progress," was put in jail in England because he dared to preach the Gospel. His literary effort has probably been translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible. It was Dr. Donald Barnhouse who observed, "The Romans thought they had quarantined the Gospel by making John a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos. But there John found his greatest liberty in the Holy Spirit. His local physical situation was that of a prisoner, but his spiritual consciousness was that of the freedom of the Spirit. Not only is man's extremity God's opportunity but it is often only in the plans of God for His people to pass through experiences like John." How do you and I react to loneliness? We should "let God be God" in all of our experiences.

John tells us that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. He had been transported

beyond the normal senses into a condition where God could reveal in a supernatural way the contents of what we know as the book of Revelation. Apparently solitude was just what John needed for these visions. In the Spirit the apostle was loosed from the normal boundaries of the flesh. He was transported into the future as God sees it. Carried across the centuries he saw the time that the Bible calls "the day of the Lord." This refers to the consummation of all things. It begins with the Great Tribulation period and it ends with the close of the kingdom age of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the prophetic epic era.

John was on the Isle of Patmos "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9b). This expression "the word of God" is the larger term which sets forth that insistence upon God's claims upon individuals, warning them of the truths presented by the prophets in bearing witness. "The testimony of Jesus Christ" is the Gospel. John's peculiar message was that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, dying, rising, interceding, and about to return as the Lord over all. John's vision was largely concerning the future. What he saw had to do in a large measure with the time of the end. The expression "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day" has been understood by many Bible scholars to mean Sunday or the first day of the week. In Scripture we must remember that there are other days referred to as well. It was the first day of the week in which, although banished, John had spiritual fellowship with all believers who gathered on that same day to remember the Lord. The experience doubtless took place on Sunday, the first day of the week, as God revealed to him many, many things included in the book of Revelation for our instruction, exhortation and admonition.

We find a tremendous truth in Rev. 1:9. Here we find an answer for many people today who wonder why God permits suffering. Whether we like it or not, people do suffer. Many Christians have even been put to death. John tells us as he writes from Patmos that he has been put there for giving testimony to Jesus Christ. It is not strange or unusual that John was in exile, trial and suffering. Jesus Himself said that the mark of a Christian was his persecution (Matt. 5:10-12). In our Revelation study and in Matt. 24:9 Christ speaks to the people of Israel about the hour of great tribulation, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." During His discourse in the upper room Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The apostle Paul also warns the believer, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12). The endurance of suffering and trial is a mark of the favor of heaven and the blessing of God upon the believer who really lives a godly Christian life, who is aggressive in his testimony for the Lord.

We may wonder about the church of the 20th century. Certainly we do not know such persecution! Perhaps part of the reason is that Christians are living so close to the world it is hard to tell the difference between believer and non-believer. Some Christians do not hesitate to copy the lifestyle of non-believers in every detail. We will never know a great spiritual revival until that is changed. The people of God must be different. The world needs to see that we are a different sort of people--we have been born again! Our life is to be joyous, an optimistic existence, living wholly for Jesus Christ.

Why, in the purpose of God, are His people permitted to be persecuted? It is out of the trial, martyrdom and imprisonment, the sorrows and tribulation of God's people, that the Lord communicates to the world His truth to the soul of man. This is certainly seen through the epistles of Paul. Most of the apostle's ministry was spent in prison. He could have been out preaching the Gospel across the nations. Why did God allow his imprisonment? From the chains of his prison cell Paul was able to write those letters that comprise the larger part of our New Testament. Out of the sufferings of the life of the apostle Paul the great truths of God have been revealed.

We find another illustration of this truth in the book of Revelation itself. Had John remained in the position of pastor and bishop of the church of Ephesus, Revelation might not have been written down. In an hour of heavy trial, from that solitary, lonely exile on the rocky isle called Patmos, John saw these great revelations that comprise the book we are now studying, words given for our comfort and encouragement.

A second reason for suffering of God's children is that the truth which has been darkened by men is brought to light in the fires of martyrdom of His people. It would perish from the earth had the truth not been resurrected by the death of some of His own.

In the early 14th and 15th centuries, our forefathers recovered for the world the faith of the living God and made the Bible an open book. Many did so by giving their very lives for the Lord's cause. When opponents of His Word burned Master Ridley and Bishop Latimer in Oxford, Master Ridley began to cringe before the mounting flames. Bishop Latimer encouraged, "Be of good cheer: we shall this day light in England, that please God, a light of fire that will never go out!" He was absolutely right. Across the years God has uncovered His truth, which men would bury, by allowing someone to suffer for the cause of Jesus Christ. This is God's way of bringing His light into the world in which we live.

Now consider the third reason for suffering. Persecution is the means by which the Holy Scriptures themselves are scattered abroad. Wherever the Bible goes, it always brings light. The Scripture is scattered to the ends of the world whenever God's people are martyred and persecuted for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the early church days, following the day of Pentecost, persecution broke out and Christians left Jerusalem, becoming missionaries throughout the known world. This was God's way of making His truth known to all mankind.

When the converts of Wycliffe, many years ago, were burned at the stake, the Bible that Wycliffe had translated was hung around their necks. Men foolishly thought that the Scriptures might perish together with the bodies of the preachers of the Gospel. But the fires that burned these people lighted the whole world. They gave to the nations of the world a knowledge of the Son of God unknown before. Out of its light and burning, God's Word was given to the world.

Revelation 1:10-20 is a very interesting passage. John heard behind him a very great voice that sounded to him like a prophet. The voice of God in the Old Testament was a still, small voice. When God silences the noise of the human heart, His voice rings forth like a cymbal! We may miss His deepest revelations when we are so occupied with the noises of daily life. The heart of the Old Testament is in Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God."

The King James Version of Revelation 1:11 ends the verse, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." The earliest manuscripts of the New Testament omit these phrases, however, there is no doubt that the one who speaks is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Daniel received a vision of the Lord (Daniel 8:26; 12:4-9) and was told to shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end. In Revelation, John is to write and send out to the churches that which Daniel had been told to close up and seal. At the close of this last book of the Bible, the messenger repeats the command, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10b).

Some may scoff at Christians for preaching that the time of the Lord is at hand.

Some contend that no one really knows the truth about Biblical prophecy and consequently we should not scare people by saying that the Lord's coming is very near, that there will be a battle called Armageddon, and that a man called the Antichrist will rule the earth for a time. What fallacy! As we draw closer to the second coming of Jesus Christ, all men - believer and non-believer - have the right to know what the Bible teaches about future things. Of course, we are not setting a date for the Lord's return. Yet we can say that God has given us signposts and these certainly indicate that the time of His coming is near.

Moses turned aside to see the great sight of the burning bush, "And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush" (Exodus 3:4). John, on the Isle of Patmos, also turned to see God's revelation. He is ever placing burning bushes and sounding trumpets for the eyes and the ears of His own children. The history of the church reveals to us, however, comparatively few are willing to turn from their casual living to the extraordinary in which God is waiting to speak.

The first thing to meet John's gaze were the seven golden candlesticks, or as ought to be translated, "lampstands." We do not have to look for interpretation of these lampstands for Revelation 1:20 clearly tells us that they represent the seven churches. They are not the source of light but are the bearers of light, thus signifying the works of the church.

The golden lampstand is a fitting symbol for the church. The Lord told His disciples that He was the Light of the world. Anticipating His departure, Christ also declared, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). The Holy Spirit speaks of the sons of God who shine in the midst of the darkness of this age (Phil. 2:15, 16).

In the midst of the churches in the book of Revelation, John sees a vision of the Son of Man. It is the risen Saviour. Here He is in His judicial role, standing in the midst of the seven churches. The believer is secure for while the seven churches of Asia are seen in the blackness of their earthly failure, the seven lampstands are in the heavenly places where the risen Christ is in their midst.

If we attempt to visualize the description that the Spirit of God gives us through John, we can only come to confusion, trying to go into detail about so many unknown things. An ancient artist has left on canvas an attempt to portray Christ in heaven according to the description of Revelation. The result is certainly not a masterpiece at all. How unrealistic is the portrait of a man whose hair is as white as snow, whose face shines like the sun, with flames coming out of the eye sockets and a sword out of his mouth. His feet are of burnished metal, with seven stars in his right hand. A picture like this is absurd if we try to look at it from a literal point of view. It should teach us that the understanding of this particular passage lies in another direction, through the eyes of the rest of the Word of God, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

John saw One like unto the Son of Man. He saw the humanity, the human form of God. Jesus uses this phrase to refer to Himself. It is highly mystical and symbolical. John saw the figure of the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end-which was and is and forever more shall be, the almighty God, the Lord God Himself!

In the book of Revelation we find a wonderful portrait of Jesus Christ (1:13ff). He was clothed with a long flowing garment which refers to His dignity, judicial authority, and kingly presence. He was clothed down to His feet with the dress of a priest, the regal robes of a king, and the legal attire of a judge.

He was also girded about the chest with a special golden belt. In that ancient day, because of the long flowing robes, it was necessary to have the loose-fitting garment

securely fastened. This would enable work and movement without any hindrance. This is the same Lord who took the little babes in His arms and blessed them. He put His hands upon the blind to make them see. He had sincere compassion upon the people. He was girded about His heart with a golden belt.

In this passage we discover seven descriptions of our Lord's wonderful character. The first thing we notice is His head. His hair was white like wool, as white as snow. This certainly refers to the purity and the nobility of his thinking. It also refers to the eternality of His character. (He is also referred to as "the ancient of days" in the book of Daniel.) Here is patriarchal honor and eternal dignity. We also see that Christ's eyes were like a flame of fire. This portrays the omniscience of Almighty God (Hebrews 4:13). Nothing is hidden to Him with whom we have to do. Additionally, His feet were like fine bronze as if they burned in a furnace. Consider the tabernacle of the Old Testament. All of the instruments of the outer court were made out of brass. This symbolically speaks of the judgment of God on sin. No man can look upon the holy righteousness of the presence of God. He treads upon His enemies, He walks upon sin, He condemns iniquity, His feet are like fine brass as if they burned in the fire of judgment.

As we continue this portrait of Christ, we discover that His voice was as the sound of many waters. This doubtless refers to many messages and many prophets although there is but one great eternal Word. John also sees Christ holding in His right hand seven stars. This translated as being messengers or pastors of the seven churches. He has them in the hand of authority and command. He has the might, skill, strength, and power. Everyone who leads in the churches is represented here as the star in the right hand of Christ. We are also told that "out of His mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword." This is the power of the deliberate testimony of the Saviour. When the message of Christ is preached in full power, results will take place.

The robe and the belt around the breast of Christ reveal Him to be in the place of final authority. There is none to dispute His rule (Ephesians 1:20, 21). He is Prophet, Priest, and King. He deals in compassion with those who come by faith to Him. In this early passage of Revelation we see God's provision of love so that man may escape those divine judgments spoken of in the rest of the book.

Let's consider for a moment the sharp sword mentioned in verse 16. This is not a literal metal implement of destruction, but rather refers to the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). Christ speaks the word and condemns the false. He absolutely approves the true. We read the same in Revelation 19:15. At this time Christ will smite the nations, ruling them with a rod of iron. In regard to the anti-Christ who is yet to come Paul states, "Then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (II Thess. 2:8). No man will be able to escape Christ's spoken word at any time (John 12:48). It is quoted on the radio, it is published in book form, it is given out in periodicals, it is on television. There is very little excuse for anyone who lives in North America not to know what God says in Scripture. The Bible, either in part or in whole, is available to large areas of the world today. What a contrast is drawn between Christ, whose lips speak the Word of truth, and the unbelieving man, whose mouth is filled with other things (Romans 3:13, 14). Being men ourselves we tend to look on the outward appearance of people, whereas God looks upon the heart. This is what really counts. John sees Christ as the priestly Judge. The sword comes out of His mouth.

Another interesting thing we discover in this portrait of Christ is that His face was as the sun shineth in his strength. What a picture this presents of the divine majesty and sovereignty of our Saviour. We readily recall this was the face that

was once covered with vile spit from the lips of sinful man. No person can look at the sun at high noon without black spots coming before his eyes. The reason the Holy Spirit uses the brightness of the sun at this time of day is because it is the most powerful light known to man. In actuality, it is only a weak comparison to the fullness of His glory (John 8:12). Malachi 4:2 refers to Him as the Sun of righteousness to Israel. In Revelation 22:16 He is the bright and the morning Star to the Church. We, the ministers of Christ, are simply reflectors of His light. The Church, made up of all born-again individual believers, is the light bearer to a dark and sinful world.

The vision John saw is quite different from the Christ whom we see in the Gospels. The writers portray Him as tender and humble, holy and loving, a kind and compassionate personality. In Revelation, however, we find Him clothed in majesty, splendor and tremendous power. In fact, when John saw Him in this manner he states, "I fell at his feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death" (1:17, 18). Remember the effect of the glorious vision of Christ was more than Paul could stand in human flesh. He, too, fell down as a dead man and even lost his physical vision. This is the same John who witnessed the ascension of the Lord as recorded in Acts 1. Now he lies as a dead man at the feet of Jesus. Isaiah was broken down in the presence of the glory of the Lord. He cried out, "Woe is me, for I am an unclean man." Ezekiel also fell on his face before the glory of God. Daniel more than once fell before the glory of the Lord (8:17, 18; 10:7-10).

Probably John was the most loved of the disciples. Still he couldn't stand on his feet in the presence of the glory of Christ. Human weakness is answered by divine consolation. The Saviour, touched by the feeling of our infirmities, displayed His grace and tenderness by laying His right hand upon John. At the Mount of transfiguration, the touch of the right hand and the voice of the Lord Jesus instantly removed all fear from the hearts of these disciples. This again happened to John on the Isle of Patmos. How wonderful to hear Christ's words, "Fear not." We, too, can take them to heart.

Our Lord refers to Himself as "the first and the last." This same title appears three times in Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; and 48:12. Three times it is also found in the book of Revelation (1:17; 2:8; and 22:13). The application of it as used by Jehovah in the Old Testament is absolute proof, beyond the shadow of a doubt, of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was and is equal to the Father in every aspect of existence and characteristic. He is also eternal in self-existence. He never had a beginning but is truly the first and the last. He is before all and above all. From Him all things proceed. In Him all things center. He is the source and the sum of all creation. Everything from eternity through eternity points to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 18 we read an interesting Scripture as the affirmation declares further, "I am He that liveth." Christ is the author and source of all life. In Him we live and move and have our being. The incarnation and the virgin birth did not originate the life of Jesus. He was always in the beginning with the Father. There never was a time when He started to be. This title, the Living One, was used by the Jewish people to distinguish Jehovah from the false gods around them. We have eternal life today because our God is eternal. Our inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled; it fades not away (I Peter 1:4-6).

What is said of God in the Old Testament is true of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament (I Timothy 3:15). Jesus is the God-Man. He took a body of flesh and did what the law could not do. Death, which is the wages of sin, had no claim upon the sinless Lamb of God. Jesus voluntarily gave up His life on the cross so that you

and I, as we believe in Him, might have everlasting life. The Saviour completely conquered death. Satan's bands were broken. He conquered hell and the grave. He did in the flesh what no man had ever or has ever done before. He willingly went to the cross to lay down His life where He was smitten by God (Isaiah 53:4). Christ has emerged from the darkness and domain of death. As a result, in Him we have eternal life (Romans 8:1).

In giving a picture of Himself and His absolute power, Jesus Christ declares in Rev. 1:18, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death." This is a symbolic word which presents the universal Lordship of our Saviour. We see a similar view in Philippians 2:9-11. Christ is King over man as well as the unseen world in the vast beyond. Whether in heaven, whether in hell, whether in earth, whether in death, He holds the keys to hades, containing souls of men, as well as death, representing the bodies of men. This is what Isaiah prophesied, "And the government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6). The powers of hell and death are not allowed to run riot without authority and control. Even hell and the demons tremble at the presence of Christ. His throne is higher and mightier than the throne of evil and iniquity. There is nothing which isn't under the direct surveillance of the great God and our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He reigns supreme and serene forever. Nothing happens by chance. All history lies in the elective purposes of God. Christ reigns by right and by fact.

What does Scripture mean in referring to the keys of hades? This is the world of men's souls whether they are damned and in torment, or glorified and in paradise. He is King over all.

Perhaps we should distinguish between the soul and the spirit of man. Spirit is always "unincarnate." The soul carries with it the idea of body. There is never any exception to that. Spirit can be pure spirit, unassociated with body. Christ is King over the souls of men, that is, men who do not have bodies. The angels are Christ's ministering servants. The door to life and death is faithfully kept by the hand of God.

When the unsaved or unconverted die, they fall instantly into torment and condemnation in hades, the place of perdition. Christ is King over this region as well. Unrecognized and rejected in this life, these tragic figures must now confess in horror, torment, and agony that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father.

In the ninth chapter of the book of Revelation there is a picture of an angel who has the key to the bottomless pit. Satan will be chained for a thousand years. After he is liberated for a time, he is finally cast into condemnation, damnation and torment which will last forever and ever. Christ has the key already in his hand. What Satan does now can only be performed by the permissive will of Christ. "Thus far and no further," says the Lord. How wonderful to come to the settled conviction, as did the Psalmist, "My times are in Thy hands."

As we face the future we can do so securely and confidently, knowing that Jesus Christ holds the keys to death and hades. We learn in Hebrews 2:14 that our Lord took part Himself in flesh and blood so that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

Many people have found great confusion in their Bible study because they fail to understand the term "hades" which our Lord speaks of as "hell" in the King James Version. This is really an intermediate stage for the soul of man. Originally the place contained two different divisions. There was the abode of the wicked dead, those who had rejected the Saviour, and Paradise, to which believers went at death. Between the two there was a great gulf fixed and it was impossible to cross from one to the other (Luke 16:22ff). This second area is also known as "Abraham's

bosom." This term was used to denote that the believing Jew was carried into the place of happiness and joy as a faithful saint. In the Hebrew language this abode of death was referred to as "sheol." One of the most helpful passages to study concerning the abode of the dead, before the resurrection of Christ, is Luke 16:23-26. Remember the bodies of all believers and unbelievers alike crumble in the dust, or are burned in the flame, or whatever happens to the body. The Bible refers to this as death and sleep. Christ now has the key. As believers in the Lord we are guaranteed new bodies which are to be fashioned like the resurrection body of Christ (Philippians 3:20, 21). This will be in the coming day when Christ returns for His Church.

To look at it again, the spirits and souls of everybody, before Jesus went to the cross, went down into hades. The division in which the righteous remained was called Abraham's bosom as well as Paradise. In Luke 23:43 the thief on the cross was told by the Saviour, "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise." This is where the spirit of the Lord went triumphant when He spent the three days between crucifixion and resurrection while His body was lying in the tomb. When our blessed Lord arose from the dead, He emptied the Paradise division or hades of every believing soul that was there. Those who had been in captivity of joy, yet away from the central presence of a holy God, with sins covered but not yet atoned for, now knew what it was to be fully justified. With Christ they ascended into heaven (Ephesians 4:8). The first fruits are sheaves of these Old Testament saints who were raised with the Lord. All of them are now in heaven. This means that today, when a believer dies, his soul does not go down into the godly half of sheol or hades any longer. It goes immediately into the presence of God (II Cor. 5:8). This is why Paul affirmed, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, which is far better."

The One who was dead and who is alive now has robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. He has in His hands the keys of this prison house of the soul. Such victory should set the heart of the believer at rest for there need be no fear of judgment.

The marvelous key that unlocks many doors in the book of Revelation is the 19th verse of chapter 1, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." It cannot be fully considered if one has never entered into a personal relationship by faith with God's Son. If you are an unbeliever, having rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, remember that if you die without Him your soul and spirit will go down to the place called hades. There, in conscious torment and suffering, you will await the day of judgment only to be cast into a final hell forever and ever. On the other hand, for believers, the moment your soul and spirit leave the body they go immediately into the presence of the Lord. This is a wonderful thing to contemplate for the trusting heart. Whether we live or whether we die, we have a living hope in the Saviour.

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Panel Discussions

Panel: Dr. Chase, Dr. Feinberg, and Dr. Sutherland

Q. "There are a lot of Scriptures which refer to dancing as a means of expressing to the Lord. Why is it so many Christians today feel that dancing is sinful?"

A. As Christians, we have an obligation to make certain our praise to the Lord stems from joy within rather than an attempt on our part to search for joy through any of the devices the devil may put before us. We have a far greater obligation in this life than to simply live for self (I Corinthians 10:23, 24). What is true of dancing should also be applied to all amusements. Anything that causes someone else to stumble, for the sake and cause of Jesus Christ, ought to be forsaken.

Q. "Does the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem have to take place before the Rapture can occur?"

A. We do not believe there is any prophecy which yet needs to be fulfilled before the Lord comes in the air to meet us. The re-institution of the temple will require the authorized priests known to be of a Levitical family. That will have to be validated by the Messiah Himself. We are not waiting today for any temple construction to know the nearness of Christ's return. As one Bible scholar succinctly put it, "We are so close to the coming of the Lord that there's no sense in looking for signs. We would be better off listening for the shout!"

Q. "What does the phrase mean in II Timothy 2:15, 'rightly dividing the Word of truth'?"

A. This passage has been used as a basis for dispensational teaching. That is, all Scripture is for us but not all Scripture is to us. As an example, God said to Adam and Eve in the Garden, they could eat of the fruit of every tree except that of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The day they ate of it they would die. The Lord didn't say that to us. The story is for our edification, instruction and information as to how God dealt with Adam and Eve before the fall. The same is true with other people and situations in the Old Testament. God didn't tell us to build an ark but we read the story of Noah's involvement to see how the Lord dealt graciously with him and his family. To understand the Scriptures we should approach the Bible as to whom certain portions or books were written, why the Holy Spirit caused them to be penned and what personal application we can draw from the truths. This is what constitutes, "rightly dividing the Word of truth." One translation puts it that we are "to hue the line." This refers to a woodsman who cuts a straight line with an axe. We are not to act upon the Bible, rather we are to allow the Bible to act upon us! As a result of our study we should thereby desire to proceed straightly in accordance with the revealed Word of God as to His plan and pattern for our lives.

Q. "Please explain I Corinthians 5:5. Is the person spoken of in the preceding a born-again individual? Do you think this verse teaches that a born-again believer can be lost after he has once been saved?"

A. The background of the passage tells us that there was fornication among the believers at Corinth. It was so bad even the sinfully wicked Gentiles were ashamed of it. The person involved had participated in illicit relations with his stepmother. What a heartache to the apostle Paul. He exercises his apostolic authority in proper judgment of the situation. It was in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that the sinful believer was to be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. His spirit, however, would be saved. This is what was really discipline. The person was excommunicated with no possibility for reinstatement. Having once believed in Christ as Saviour he could not lose his salvation; his spirit was saved.

Q. "Does the Bible contain all of the prophecy that is to be given to man? Can people today add to what we know to be God's Word?"

A. God's written revelation is absolutely complete. Our responsibility is simply to interpret and "rightly divide" what has already been given to us. We need to apply the Scriptures given to our hearts and put them into practice in our daily lives. The book of Revelation is very clear on this (22:19). We believe that this last book of the Bible doesn't stand merely alone. This is the concluding book of God's Word, organized and presented through the direct influence of the Holy Spirit. If any man adds to any of the prophecies or truths of the Bible, God is going to add plagues to his life. The same is true if anyone takes away from the words of Scripture. Judgment will come in that the Lord will take away that individual's part from the Book of Life. Absolutely, there are to be no additional prophecies or revelations. Don't be looking for something new. Use that which the Lord has given and ask the Holy Spirit to apply it personally to your life!

Q. "How does Acts 13:33 blend in with the concept of the Trinity?"

A. We read, "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Our finite minds can never comprehend how we could have Christ as a member of the Trinity, which is eternal, and yet also hear of Him being "begotten." Passages on this wonderful statement, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," also repeated in Hebrews, represents the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Whenever there is a father there must be a corroborative idea of a son. This wonderful Scripture about which you have asked illustrates the resurrection of Christ. There the Saviour is seen to be confirmed as never before. As in Romans 1, He is declared to be the Son of God "with power." This is simply another attestation and confirmation in His rising from the dead that He was the eternal Son whom He claimed to be.

Q. "What does John 9:39-41 really mean?"

A. This passage is in the same chapter which tells how Christ healed the man who was born blind. The Pharisees wanted to discount the miracle so that they could divert attention from the Saviour. It is important to realize that there is vastly more than physical vision. There is also the all-important spiritual perception as well. The Lord Jesus points out that His purpose in coming into the world is to bring salvation. Man is in darkness and desperately needs the divine light which God has provided. The Lord has come to the earth to provide the test for judgment whether man will receive eternal life or eternal separation from God. Those who are spiritually blind can receive spiritual sight by trusting Christ.

We are all blind because of sin. We continue to go astray and need that perfect salvation provided freely for us. What a testimony when the Lord declared, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." "In Thy light," the Psalmist affirms, "we shall see light."

The other side of the picture is much darker. There are those who make themselves spiritually blind by rejecting the Saviour. This refers to those who are self-righteous and feel they are sufficient without any divine help or guidance. The life of Jesus readily showed up their shallow perception. The Pharisees asked the rhetorical question, "Are we blind also?" (They referred to spiritual, not physical blindness.) These people were actually willfully blind! Jesus also said, "I have come, not to call the righteous (since there is no one righteous, no, not one) but rather sinners to repentance." Those who refused to admit their need would not receive sight. This provides a tremendous truth. In coming to God we must admit and confess our sins and our need of Him. If, on the other hand, we say we have no need then certainly the Lord isn't going to be there. The hymn writer rightly expressed it, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

Q. "Do we have any firm indication whether Adam was saved or lost? Can any Scripture back up your view?"

A. There has been a division of opinion on this subject. Most Bible scholars generally agree that Adam was a saved individual, although there is no reference that states this in so many words. In Genesis 3:21 we read how God made for Adam and Eve coats of skins so that they might be clothed. This typifies the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb who gave His life that we might be covered in His righteousness. Adam was given a divinely provided garment. In this way the first sinners were made fit for God's presence. From such indications we believe we will someday again see Adam, this time in glory. Remember, it is not by our own works nor by our own efforts that we are saved. God alone furnishes the covering in the Person of His only begotten Son. Salvation comes only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. "What can you tell me about the phrase, 'Son of Man'? Does this refer to man or to Jesus? We find it in Psalm 8:4 and Hebrews 2:6."

A. In studying any part of the Bible we must be sure to analyze it in the specific context which is involved. "Son of Man" is a remarkable phrase in the Old Testament. It frequently appears, as an example, in Ezekiel. Here it refers to a human being, not to our Lord. In Daniel 7:13, 14 the use of the title does refer to Christ. In the New Testament we again find this description. Our Saviour always referred to Himself as the Son of Man, although no one else did so. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

In Psalm 8 we see God's ideal. Man was a little lower than the angels, being crowned with glory and honor. Man was given dominion over all the works of His hands. Yet, because of the fall by sin, this all was lost with Adam. Because he listened to Satan, Adam was made subservient to him.

In Hebrews 2:6, on the opposite side, is a wonderful passage dealing with how Christ became a human being. God the Son became Man. So He is the unique God-Man. Through Him we regain the paradise lost in Genesis.

To summarize, in Psalm 8:4 we see the ideal, while in Hebrews 2:6 there is the beautiful fulfillment.

Q. "After the death of Judas, Matthias was chosen to be a disciple. Yet, I have

heard some say that Paul fulfilled that position. Which view is correct?"

A. Matthias was indeed chosen as the 12th disciple to take the place of Judas. This is clearly shown in the first chapter of Acts. It is true that Matthias is not named again, but neither are several of the other disciples.

Paul's apostleship, however, was of a different sort. He had physically seen the resurrected Saviour (I Corinthians 15:8). In Romans 11:13 Paul speaks of himself as being the apostle to the Gentiles. He certainly was no less an apostle. In his epistle to the Galatians he points out, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that his call was not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead.

Q. "How could Mary be related to Elizabeth when, according to Luke's gospel, she was of the tribe of Judah while Elizabeth was of the tribe of Aaron?"

A. Scripture affirms that the two were definitely related (Luke 1:36). Mary was also of the tribe of Judah. This was a distinct line, not only on her side but also on Joseph's. Remember that Elizabeth's husband Zacharias was a priest. He undoubtedly had to be of the tribe of Aaron (Luke 1:5). Her relationship came very simply on her mother's side. She would not necessarily also have to be of the tribe of Levi. Certainly there was intermarriage between the tribes.

Q. "Why did God create Lucifer if He knew all the evil the devil would do?"

A. This is a question to which no finite being can possibly know the answer. Before his fall Satan was one of the foremost of all angelic beings. He was created a perfect being and fell on his own account. God evidently allowed these created beings a freedom of choice (Isaiah 14). Man has been created as a free moral being. We are to be in heaven only if we choose by faith to be there. God has provided the only way for us as sinners to have eternal life. If we didn't have that choice we would simply be mere automatons. We have the power to choose between good and God, or evil and Satan. Some reason that this is why there had to be evil present in the world. The full revelation of this can only be completely known when we see our Saviour face to face.

Q. "Why was it that Christ charged John to take care of Mary, His mother, when she had children of her own?"

A. This is exactly what transpired when the Saviour was physically dying on the cross (John 19:25). The Gospel accounts indicate that the family of our Lord did not believe in Him at the first. Some even thought He was beside Himself.

Over in the first chapter of Acts, after the resurrection, those who had believed "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." Something happened between that time and John 7:5. Apparently His human family had believed. Christ saw beyond all natural relationships. He felt that his human mother, Mary, would have more affinity, joy, comfort and warmth spiritually in the home of John.