

Biola University

Digital Commons @ Biola

Biola Hour Highlight Series

Biola Radio

6-1975

Biola Hour Highlights, 1975 - 06

J. Richard Chase

Louis T. Talbot

Curtis Mitchell

Lloyd T. Anderson

Charles Lee Feinberg

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/bhhs>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Chase, J. Richard; Talbot, Louis T.; Mitchell, Curtis; Anderson, Lloyd T.; Feinberg, Charles Lee; and Sutherland, Samuel H., "Biola Hour Highlights, 1975 - 06" (1975). *Biola Hour Highlight Series*. 14. <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/bhhs/14>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Biola Radio at Digital Commons @ Biola. It has been accepted for inclusion in Biola Hour Highlight Series by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Biola. For more information, please contact university.archives@biola.edu.

Authors

J. Richard Chase, Louis T. Talbot, Curtis Mitchell, Lloyd T. Anderson, Charles Lee Feinberg, and Samuel H. Sutherland

Study in II Corinthians

By: Dr. J. Richard Chase

Perhaps you have wondered, "Why does God allow the Christian to suffer when He obviously has the power to free us from all affliction?" In our studies we have seen that the experience of trials, with the Lord's comfort, enables the Christian to be a special help to others who have problems (II Corinthians 1:3-7). There is also a personal benefit which may be experienced as Paul points out, "We should not trust in ourselves, but in God Who raises the dead" (II Corinthians 1:9). Paul told the believers, "We do not want you to be unaware, brethren" (v. 8). He wanted to share openly with his friends all significant details so that they might be informed.

The apostle refers to his "affliction in Asia." We really don't know what that was specifically. It may have been illness, despair over some wayward believer, or some other type of difficulty. The very heart of the matter was the pressing persecution he endured as a result of his ministry for Christ. The book of Acts gives us some ideas as to the kind of problems Paul experienced. His reference was undoubtedly to the Roman province of Asia Minor, just across the Aegean Sea from Greece. Ephesus was one of the principal cities. When Paul was there he was involved in a disturbance which arose because many of the people in that community made their living by fashioning little idols and trinkets to serve as a part of pagan worship. Those who received the Gospel naturally dropped off their desire to buy such paraphernalia which was really worthless. This cut into the businessmen's profits, and they were greatly agitated. You remember there was Demetrius, a silversmith, who made shrines to the mythological god Artemis. He reminded his fellow craftsmen, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all" (Acts 19:23-26). Two of Paul's companions were hauled into an assembly and made sport of. Doubtless physical harm was done to them. Some officials urged Paul not to intervene for fear of his own life.

Not too far from Ephesus is the town of Lystra (Acts 14:19). Paul was stoned there and left for dead. This was a form of capital punishment. The people thought they had accomplished their evil goal. Paul's co-laborers were taken into judgment. Additionally, mental anguish undoubtedly came to Paul as he thought of this disruption of the ministry. The apostle frankly testifies, "We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life (II Cor. 1:8).

Note the intensity. The weight must have been significantly great. The Greek word carries the connotation of a physical or mental pressure that comes down upon one. There is that smothering feeling we get when everything seems to be going wrong.

An hyperbole is a statement which is a gross exaggeration. This is what the original shows us. It means to carry to extremes. The affliction was so intense that it was carried to excess. It was so heavy that Paul testified, "So we despaired even of life." There was absolutely no way out, humanly speaking, from death itself. In fact, notice in verse 9, he declares, "Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves." Have you ever felt that there was no human way out? Is there a weight crushing you just now? Paul experienced this, too. From a secular point of view there was simply no sense in living. His entire ministry was over and he was at the end. He gave this personal testimony so that "we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." Certainly Paul knew what he was talking about. He was saying from the innermost part of his being, "I've been as low as one could possibly be. I have felt weight as intense as any could ever experience. Yet, there has been a purpose. I needed to come to the place where I would trust totally in Him."

The ultimate purpose for affliction and suffering is that God wants to work in and through us. Instead of sparing us or intervening in the problems of life, He lets us face these problems to learn just how much He loves us. Too many are like Lucifer who, given a chance, believe that they can run things pretty well without God around. An overconfident person runs the risk of ignoring the Lord. Indeed, Paul was right when he declared, "When I am weak, then I am strong." No one knows what problems Paul had in his personal life. Regardless of that, he certainly shows the triumph and victory any of us can experience. Yes, suffering can have a real purpose. Affliction and comfort can be an invaluable experience to aid in assisting others, as well as causing us to trust in God alone.

Never underestimate the available power through intercession. Of our Lord, Paul testifies, "Who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many" (II Cor. 1:11). You see, deliverance is both a possibility as well as an ultimate certainty. To illustrate, suppose the father and husband of the home had a substantial amount of life insurance, but only a modest income. With all the problems and pressures of inflation the family could possibly be in a very tight bind at the present time. We might ask them how they are financially. Their answer might be, "Not so good now, but ultimately tremendous!" This is the way Paul approaches affliction and suffering. The apostle refers to two kinds of deliverance. So, if you asked Paul, "Can God deliver?" he would definitely affirm, "Yes, He certainly can." At the same time he could also give a different answer. He might speak of "a thorn in the flesh." That was still with him, even though he prayed to God three times for its removal. Verse 10 not only focuses on the past and how God can deliver, but also it shows something of the future. This indicates that the ultimate freedom from all earthly suffering is going to be ours in the long run (Romans 8:18). Paul was aware of the fact that even though God could change problems and bring healing yet He doesn't always do so. An individual might have to live under affliction to learn the lessons the Lord has for us.

What about your present suffering? Suppose you have a physical, mental or financial affliction. You may seem crushed by it. Remember that deliverance is possible now, but ultimately it is absolutely certain. It may be that through your earnest prayers as well as the prayers of others, affliction will be lifted. That was the case for Paul in the problems he experienced in Asia. But notice, I said it is possible. God also ordained that Paul should live with certain problems

(II Corinthians 12:8-10). Amid all the tribulations, Paul assures us that there is a day coming when the glory which is to be ours won't be worthy to be compared with the problems we face now upon this earth.

The source of change for Paul, both in the present as well as the future, is all based upon God Himself. The testimony concerns the One "on Whom we have set our hope." In the popular sense, "hope" is a very weak word. Generally, it means "I wish." A Christian's hope isn't like that at all. There is no uncertainty or "shaky" expectation. We have an absolute confidence. Underscore the thought that only the time element is missing. Hope in a Biblical sense characterizes supreme confidence in God. If the Lord, who knows what is best for us, doesn't see fit to grant our present petitions, we are to endure in a patient way, not just "grit our teeth" and try to bear the circumstances. Rather, we are to live in such a manner that our lives are examples to others. The Bible doesn't indicate that man is the center of everything. Our personal will and the fulfillment of all we think we need, isn't what is really important. The Bible tells us that we are to be conformed to the image of Christ. God's will is to dominate, not ours to dominate Him. Afflictions are sometimes used by God, as this passage is unfolded for us, so that we might achieve His objectives in our lives. The Lord isn't a glorified errand boy. The options are simply these: suffer and curse God in ignorance of what God's real purpose is for your life, or look to the Bible and learn to appreciate what is happening. We really don't have any alternatives. You can simply say, "God, heal me right now or I'm going to forget about religion." If the Lord doesn't do anything, you are still in your misery. You will have to exist without the comfort the Almighty can give you. You will have no knowledge of the ultimate victory which can be yours for all eternity. What we really need to pray is, "God, help me to understand how this particular affliction can draw me closer to You; keep me more dependent on You than I've ever been before."

Paul also praises the Corinthian Christians for "joining in helping us through your prayers." Some may excuse themselves with the thought, "God knows all my problems, so why do I need to pray?" Note these words that the prayers of the Corinthians helped the apostle and God answered them. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit these words were written. The human understanding of prayer may be beyond us, but of this we can be certain, we are counseled to pray and the Lord uses these prayers of believers to accomplish His will in our lives. We don't know what God's will is for our lives. Prayer is the means of bringing the Lord's plan and program into our lives. We have no alternative but to use intercession constantly and to bring all our requests to Him.

Note that it wasn't one special person at Corinth who had the ability to pray for Paul. No one is singled out specifically. The apostle writes the church collectively, to thank them for their remembrance. These weren't very mature believers either. They were just average Christians earnestly interceding. Earnest prayer to God was their only medium for reaching Paul who received God's victory. Paul notes that there is a blessing in answered prayer for those who are faithful. These people gave thanks to God for the answer, even in advance! Always keep in mind that God uses the prayers of ordinary believers to alleviate suffering when He so desires. In that final day, ultimately through Christ, when we are in heaven with Him, all sorrow will be past. What a glorious section of Scripture this is with which to encourage and strengthen our hearts.

Following the introductory sections of II Corinthians (1:1-11), we come to the more lengthy discussion of God's message and messenger and the defense of the Gospel. This actually embodies the rest of this epistle because of the importance for Paul to re-establish his credibility with the Christians at this church. They had begun to have doubts about his calling and ministry. His detractors had been spreading rumors about his conduct and what they felt was a lack of concern for the believers

there. The apostle is not proud or boasting of spiritual exploits simply for the purpose of elevating himself. (Too many do operate that way and could easily come to such an erroneous conclusion.) Paul's motive in elaborating upon his character and qualifications comes from something entirely different. He is seeking to vindicate God's chosen vessel of divine truth.

An apostolic ministry had to be tested and affirmed. There is no one living today who is an apostle in the strict Biblical sense. The complete message is now contained for us in the Word of God. An apostle was one who had physically seen the resurrected Christ. Even as we consider Paul's right to this position, we also find for ourselves some rich, practical lessons for daily Christian living.

The major theme begins at II Corinthians 1:12, "For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you." These people needed to know that their prayers were not amiss as they had upheld him before the throne of grace. There was good reason why they should pray with confidence. The phrase is used, "proud confidence." The King James translates it simply "rejoices in his life." Keep in mind though, this boasting is based entirely upon a clear conscience. It results from a life that is lived in a holy, acceptable fashion before God. Note the emphasis upon "holiness" and "godly sincerity." He always sought to live the way the Lord wanted him to live. There were those who wanted to undermine his ability to communicate and minister the Gospel. This is all in contrast to "fleshly wisdom." This is an existence with a clear conscience, not making decisions just because they might impress other people. The whole way of existence is empowered, not by Paul's mental capabilities, but by his total dependence upon God.

When Paul refers to "proud boasting," we need to take great care. The apostle had warned these believers earlier, "That no man should boast before God" (I Cor. 1:29). This is a strong word and is one which needs practical application. Of and in ourselves we have nothing of which we can boast. Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul isn't really contradicting himself in this second epistle. Never lose sight of the modifying comment that his confidence is this, "the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity. . . we have conducted ourselves in a right manner before the people in the world, and especially toward you people at Corinth" (II Corinthians 1:12). This is the only basis which is acceptable to the Lord.

When Paul talks about his conscience it is important for us to realize what he had in mind. In ancient Greek culture, before Christ came into the world, when a person killed another in cold blood for his riches, he might conveniently convince himself that it was proper because he really needed the money. There was an avenging Greek goddess, however, who supposedly came to haunt such individuals bringing them to the place of conviction or even insanity. There would always be retribution of some type. The fear of being haunted was heavy upon them. To bring this up to date, imagine someone who cheats on his income tax. He may rationalize, "Well, I really don't like the foreign policy of the United States. Income tax is regressive; it hurts the little fellow who doesn't have much." This he feels justifies his doing something illegal. Certainly we don't believe in the Greek mythology gods and goddesses. Yet, we can be thankful that through God's Word we can have a clear conscience if we allow the Holy Spirit to convict and convince us of sin. Our knowledge of Scripture is of paramount importance. In the Bible, conscience is the seed of moral judgment. It has to function according to God's design. This means it must have spiritual information. How sad it is for people to go through life ignorant of what the Lord wants them to do. They may have a clear conscience but it is really a distortion of the Biblical sense of the word.

It only operates on their knowledge without being involved with that which is divine.

There are many people who grossly abuse the word "conscience" from a Biblical standpoint. God's imparted knowledge must always be the determining factor. Always remember that a Christian cannot afford the luxury of disliking or hating individuals. Joint knowledge with the Lord would give us a guilty conscience in such a situation. Don't ignore God's information on any subject! In Scripture we read of a "seared" conscience. This is one which has been hardened as the skin is after it has been burned. Therefore, it isn't responsive any more to proper influences. Paul certainly had a clear conscience that was fully in accord with God's Word for his life as well as his conduct towards other people. He did nothing that would cause them to be ashamed of him. His actions were not based upon a clear conscience because of ignorance or insensitiveness, but rather upon a proper life of conduct toward God and others.

Paul further testifies that he lived in holiness, which means to be separate from that which would defile. The apostle had earlier warned these Corinthians, "For you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body" (I Cor. 6:20). It was not only a matter of being separated from sin which might be offensive to others, but also to be separated unto God. Both aspects are important in holiness.

The apostle also uses the words "godly sincerity." This has its source in God and carries the connotation of that which is undefiled, being able to stand the penetrating rays of sunlight for careful scrutiny. This is why Paul's glory, or boasting, was because of what God had performed in his life. This all stands in contrast to a more popular method some foolishly seek to use in characterizing their own lives and in making their own decisions. The apostle could testify, "This was not in fleshly wisdom." Do you see the contrast? Most people glory in their pattern of life because they have made some pretty shrewd decisions. They have figured things out to benefit themselves and their own interests from a human standpoint. This is nothing more than fleshly wisdom. There has been no real consideration of God's Word. This stands in contrast to spiritual wisdom. Paul's motives were sincere and without ulterior human purpose because they were for the purpose of glorifying God and Him alone. All of this is important to understand since Paul was a channel through whom even we today receive a good portion of the New Testament epistles.

In conclusion, how is it with you? What about your conscience, is it clear or ignorant? Do you simply live with it because you have hardened yourself to what you know to be God's Word? Is there a joint knowledge which helps to guide your decisions as to what is right and wrong? Is your conscience clear because you have been living for Christ, through His power, rejoicing and glorying in what the Savior has done for you? Is there that quality of separateness or purity which could be seen in the life of Paul? These are all very real questions which each of us must face squarely. Don't play games with fleshly wisdom just so your conduct can be acceptable to other people. Follow Paul's godly pattern, "Be imitators of me, even as I am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1).

Paul had a problem in credibility with the people in Corinth. Many had questioned his conduct and even the sincerity of his dedication to the church. This was the basis behind II Corinthians. After introductory remarks, he points out that his conduct was above reproach because of what God had done in his life through Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 1:12). There was no reason for these people to doubt him. His conscience was clear before the Lord because of holiness and godly sincerity. Often today we may be faced with similar questions. We begin to wonder who we can trust. At the same time, we can be introspective and question whether our own words are acceptable before God and man. Such should be provocative thoughts to consider.

Paul understood that the people were questioning whether they could really trust him. He told them he hadn't come with "persuasive words of wisdom, but rather in the demonstration of the spirit of power." Certainly we ought to be persuaded by the Word of God, attempting to encourage others with the truth of Scripture. Paul didn't use words that were geared to mislead people. Paul reprimanded the Galatians when they got off on the wrong track in their Christian living. He told them, "This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you." He was indicating that they were persuaded away from a pattern of proper and acceptable living. The source was the deception of Satan himself and his emissaries.

Many of Paul's epistles make specific reference to the problem of listening to words and not testing them by God's truth. Today we are bombarded by words whose only credibility is found in their shape and sound. There isn't behind them verifiable evidence or credibility from an unimpeachable source. They don't relate well to the facts. Not too long ago one of our faculty members showed me a tool kit he had ordered through the mail. I saw the same ad which had indicated the product was good enough to make any kind of mechanical repairs on your car. We both looked at the tool kit and laughed. It was the smallest thing I've ever seen. Nothing more than a toy. My friend had been fooled by persuasive but untested words.

Some thought Paul had used misleading words on the believers at Corinth. The apostle counters the whole problem with three specific suggestions (II Cor. 1:12,13,14). He told them, "My conduct was above reproach" (v. 12). Credibility isn't a matter of the tongue. It is first and finally a matter of the total life of commitment.

He went on to observe, "For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end." In the second place, words need to be listened to. There has to be more than just that which is on the surface. There can't be a double sense of meaning. Paul makes his point very clearly and forcefully. His epistles in the main are extremely intelligible. Our problem today in wrestling through what we call "a difficult passage" is because of our lack of understanding of the culture of that day. We may not understand some important theological point which is made clear in another epistle.

It is unfortunate that many times our lives are lies. We have so much of a facade. Sometimes we say things we really don't mean. This wasn't the case with Paul. In Matthew 5 there is an interesting sidelight on communication. Christ exhorts, "Don't use vows. Let your communication be, Yea, yea and Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37). The Lord is pointing out that if the only way you can convince people you are telling the truth is to swear by an oath, then perhaps your words can't be trusted. Paul could testify, "My language is Yes, yes and No, no. It's as clear as a bell."

The last and final thing to suggest is found in verse 14. Here the idea suggests mutual respect. This means there will be no misleading. The people perhaps didn't understand all Paul tried to communicate to them. It may have been because of the carnality of their own lives. They were really only babes in Christ.

What we have before us isn't an apostle who merely seeks selfishly to preserve his image or personal reputation. Paul had a responsibility to the Gospel. He didn't want to have his message maligned or his testimony slandered. There is a lesson here for us. If we are wrongly judged, as we frequently are; if our words are ignored or challenged; then perhaps we aren't living the kind of life we should and thereby your credibility suffers. Our lives should be known for their open communication and honesty. We should develop the genuine respect and appreciation of others. Paul's re-establishment of his credibility was based upon a new life, given wholly over to the Lord. This is what we need as well.

Have you ever made a promise to someone who thinks you are very special? Later you find out you won't be able to keep your word. It is a difficult position to be in. Such frustration brings a demand for maturity on the part of both parties. The people at Corinth were disappointed because they felt Paul hadn't lived up to his word. The apostle had to write explaining why he was forced to make a change. He had promised to visit them, but now something had come up. Some were already saying, "Paul isn't a man of his word." The apostle sets out to show how circumstances forced a change. He wanted the people to trust him. He defends his own actions, as well as verifying God's message. His defense wasn't because he was trying to bolster his ego. Rather, he was an apostle defending his calling and usefulness to these people as God's servant.

Consider Paul's original plan, "And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you, that you might twice receive a blessing; that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea" (vs. 15, 16). Paul could boast of these believers because they were empowered by the Spirit to accept his message so that they had become new creatures in Christ. Paul and the Corinthians were both bound together in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had wanted to visit these people twice, helping them on his journey to Judea. Consider who these people were with whom he wanted to have so much fellowship. They were the struggling, carnal, unseparated Christians of Corinth. They were still living pretty much the way they had when they first accepted Christ. There hadn't been any dramatic growth and change. This is what Paul felt was necessary.

In the course of a week, materials come across my desk from all over the world, pointing out the problems of other believers and other Christian organizations. Sometimes Biola is asked to take a stand in opposition to some other Christian. It may be over a theological problem where we are called upon to separate ourselves from the world. There is a Biblical basis for not being associated with believers who are so far off base that they are a real detriment to Christianity. Unfortunately, there is a tendency nowadays to get away from everybody who has even the smallest fault we can find. We seem to have very poor eyesight with respect to our own problems. There are all kinds of faultfinders today. Even the problem of incest, mentioned in I Corinthians, Paul wanted the member separated. Still, there was a deep concern on his behalf. There was continuing evidence that Paul wanted to follow the individual's life to see what help could be rendered. If Paul were around today, I think he would befriend many an earnest Christian who perhaps has problems in his life. The apostle would want to help those who had been crossed off just about everybody's list except the Lord's. I wish we could be a little bit like Paul.

Doubtless there are those in your community who have been abused, needing help and encouragement. Even though there are difficulties, we can ignore the needs of others, especially those whom others ignore. It is so easy to find fault and be little. Paul's desire was to visit these people who had misinterpreted his goals. The apostle had to alter his ministry because of circumstances. He remained deeply concerned even amid the personal problems. This is a challenge to me in these days when it seems so popular to reject those who don't do exactly as we expect.

In II Corinthians 1:15 to 2:4 the apostle Paul outlines his specific plan to visit Corinth twice. He explains further why he was unable to do so. In the midst of the explanation he substantiates his credibility as an apostle. He observes, "Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or that which I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time? But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no" (vs. 17, 18). Paul knew there were those who were disappointed that he hadn't come. The word "vacillating" (NASB) doesn't mean that Paul was unstable.

In the Greek language he was literally saying, "I didn't use lightness or levity in my general communication to you." Certainly his basic nature wasn't frivolous. He wanted the people at Corinth to have confidence in his honest communication. Paul made his plans not for some personal gain. He was concerned about spiritual benefit. The apostle underscores for us that the importance of a solid life of thoughtful sincerity and honesty is the best foundation for acceptance with others. In this way there won't need to be any question about your character. You see, it isn't what you do in a pinch but day in and day out that really counts. Many of us have learned by bitter experience that our word isn't accepted unless the manner of living squarely backs up what we say.

It was interesting to read in the Los Angeles Times about the Dodger catcher, Steve Yeager. He declared the best way to give a pitcher confidence was to use his curve ball. If he handles those curves well when no one is on base, then when a very difficult situation arises, the man on the mound knows he can depend on his team mate behind the plate. So Yeager points out, "Give confidence by regular attention to the duties before you. Then when pressure times come, confidence will be easy." That becomes tremendous spiritual advice, too. Paul points out that his regular pattern of life was so consistent it became a basic argument for the belief at Corinth to accept his validity.

The apostle points out his source of strength in character which comes from a sovereign Savior, "For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us" (vs. 19, 20). The message God wanted His Son to portray on earth is precisely what He did. Paul realized that in the flesh it is very easy to vacillate, saying different things to different people. Because of his commitment to the Savior, who is honest and decisive in every aspect, He empowered the apostle to be honest and decisive. Paul was a faithful messenger who accurately reflected in deed and word the Master who sent him. The important thing to consider was the source of the imparted strength.

Verse 20 adds, "Wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." "Amen" is a Hebrew word similar to our "yes" or "so may it be." In the Old Testament it gives the concept of faith. It simply means for us to declare, "Yes, I agree with what you want me to do, God." It is taking the Lord at His word in complete trust. How often have we said "Yes" to our heavenly Father? Do we really want His will to be done in our lives? Everyone is committed to some principle, goal, or interest. Some may be perfectly acceptable and harmless, while others can be lustful or immoral. We must be very careful of all involvements that none of them become detrimental to our relationship with the Lord.

Some of you can think back to when you did a research project in high school or college. Maybe you received a low grade because the teacher felt you used poor sources. Your paper took on the shape of the basic materials you used. When Paul was questioned he explained, "Look at the source of strength in my life. See the One who shaped my character. His eternal 'Yes' is an affirmation of commitment to God the Father." How are you doing in your life? Who empowers and directs your life; suggesting how you communicate to others? There is a profound lesson to be gained here. These questions call for both practical and realistic answers! The only solution is a real commitment to Christ so that others may truly take note that we have been with Jesus.

To establish his credibility for the people at Corinth, the apostle Paul shows his firm foundation in God (II Corinthians 1:21) and the type of person the Lord wants him to be through the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 22). There is demonstration

that it is God who establishes us in Christ. This is the all-important identification anyone can have. In III John, the apostle addresses his friend Gaius using the phrase, "Whom I love in the truth." The common bond wasn't athletics, business or some other interest. The relationship was founded on the Savior. Consider the fact that God places us in Christ as a result of our faith. He confirms us and guarantees that His Son's work applies to our lives. These two words "confirms" and "guarantees" aren't my choices. They are clearly wrapped up in the connotation of the Greek word for "establish" used here. To any who may have doubted Paul's authority, he wanted it clearly known that he had been established by God. Really, because of this, it wasn't their prerogative to challenge him.

Have you ever doubted your salvation? Perhaps your life has never been committed to Christ. There may be an uneasiness or dissatisfaction with your existence as you lack the joy and peace for which you have sought. God is the only One who can do the establishing. It is not my approach to life nor my good intentions that can bring about salvation and contentment.

In verse 21 Paul also uses the word "anointed." The Greek word is the same for Christ, the "Anointed One." He was uniquely set apart by God for the particular function of redeeming us through His shed blood. Paul, too, was set apart and called specifically to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. In a special sense we are also anointed by the Lord. It may not be for the apostolic office as was Paul, but certainly it includes service for Christ. The Body of Christ is one, and yet it has many members, each with unique and distinctive gifts (I Corinthians 12:12-14).

There are some who seem to be in the business of trying to undercut those whom God has established and set apart for a particular function. We may disagree with the way they carry out their particular task. It may be that God is displeased, but it is His prerogative to deal with these individuals as He sees fit.

Another dimension is added in verse 22. Paul was also "sealed" and given the Spirit in his heart as a pledge. The concept of sealing has two basic ideas. There is personal identification as well as protection from change. Several hundred years ago it was a common practice for individuals to put a bit of wax on the back of an envelope and thereby sealing it with a ring or some type of personal insignia. In this way the person receiving the letter would know immediately that it came from a particular individual. The unbroken seal proved no one had tampered with the letter.

Sealing isn't only an identification, it is also protection from change. Do you remember the account of how our Savior was taken down from the cross and buried? Those who knew His claims of resurrection were afraid of foul play with His body being stolen away. We read, "And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone" (Matthew 27:66). Pilate had given permission to seal the tomb to keep it from being disturbed. From a human standpoint it was completely secure. God intervened, however, and Christ had victory over the grave.

In Ephesians 1:13 we have a similar concept of being sealed by the Spirit, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." We are also counseled not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God "by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). Paul was using these concepts to illustrate to the people at Corinth that he was indeed a believer who could be trusted. He was able to identify with them since he knew their concerns very well. God is the One who made him distinctive.

Why Do God's People Suffer?

From messages originally recorded by
Louis T. Talbot for the Biola Hour
in 1957.

It has been a question facing believers down through the centuries of time. "Why do tears, sorrow, heartaches, and tragedies come into the experience of the people of God?" It isn't hard to see why such things should befall the unsaved because "As a man sows, so shall he reap." Some of the most devoted of the Lord's saints have spent years in the veil of tears. One of the peculiar characteristics of this dispensation is the testing of those who have been saved. Almost every page of the book of Acts reveals this. It has also been the history of the Church right down to this very hour.

In this study we are not dealing with those physical infirmities which come as a result of the violation of the laws of nature. For instance, if a person dresses improperly in the wintertime, or sits down and eats things he knows disagree with him, then he obviously has only himself to blame. The problem is a lack of common sense. God is never going to do for you what you can do for yourself. The Lord has given to us some brains so that we can take care of these bodies. Go against the laws of nature and you will suffer the consequences. Our study at this point deals with the sorrows and tragedies which aren't in this realm at all. Some claim that sickness and affliction are all the result of a lack of faith, evidencing that the person who experiences these trials is really outside the will of God. Such is not only an unkind evaluation, it is also entirely untrue and unscriptural. How sad that so many are misled and confused on this point. I know a man who was fairly wealthy. One day everything he had was swept away. He found himself asking, "What have I done to offend God that I would be so treated? Where has my faith been lacking?" That wasn't the case necessarily at all. God's love isn't cruel. Some of our tribulations are not brought on because of some failure on our part.

Fanny Crosby was one of the most wonderful Christians whom the Lord ever gave to the Church. She was blind upon her birth through a medical error. Yet she wrote some of the most beautiful hymns we have ever sung. Remember the song,

"Someday the silver chord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing,
But, oh, the joy when I awake
Within the Palace of the King.
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story saved by grace."

How could she pen, "And I shall see Him face to face," when you remember that Fanny Crosby was born blind? She never saw a rose, she never saw the sun, she never saw the stars, with the physical eye. Yet she was conscious of the presence of God.

The Lord gave to Fanny Crosby these infirmities of life in order that she might all the more manifest His glory. Her life just breathed spirituality and devotion to the Savior.

Another who comes to mind is Robert Murray McChesney. He made as great an impression and impact upon England and Scotland as any man has ever done in the last five centuries. Yet he died of tuberculosis at the age of 34. When I was in Scotland some years ago I went to Dundee so that I could stand by his grave and enter his church. As I sat in one of the pews facing the pulpit I thought of the sermons he had given which stirred England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales for Christ. When I was in seminary years ago I heard a godly professor tell us that no person should enter the ministry until he has read the life of Robert Murray McChesney. Yet, there are superficial people who claim that all sickness, tragedy, and sorrow are the result of a lack of faith.

In the ninth chapter of John we are given the account of the Lord and His disciples who met a man who had been born blind. The Savior's followers asked, "Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" These disciples had the idea like a lot of folks today that physical infirmities are always the result of some sin in the life. The Lord's answer was wonderful, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." This makes it very clear that physical handicaps, disease and sorrow, tears and heartaches aren't necessarily the result of direct sin in the lives of those afflicted. It is true that God sometimes seems to have a strange way of bringing His plans and purposes to pass. He allowed that man to be born blind in order that the Lord could come along and meet him one day. Through his blindness Christ could manifest the power and glory of God.

Sometime ago I was talking along this line, telling the story of a young woman who belonged to my church in Minneapolis. She was a hunchback, but had a beautiful face and a wonderful voice. Almost every Sunday night and also during the week, she would sing in the Minneapolis Rescue Mission. The thing that gave her message in song such an impact was the fact that she had this deformity. Oftentimes at the morning service of the church I'd go to her and say, "Agnes, I want you to sing this song just before I preach." When she got through singing, the congregation would be hushed and I would be able to preach with power, vigor and joy. What a tremendous ministry of this girl who was a hunchback. When she was a child a nurse had dropped her so that her spine was injured. This caused her to be a hunchback all the rest of her life.

One Sunday morning when I asked her to sing she answered, "Mr. Talbot, I'm never going to sing again. I learned last night that I don't have the faith in God I thought I had. I'm afraid I'm not going to sing anymore." This dear girl had been to a healing meeting which was being conducted. The evangelist had erroneously told her that if she really trusted the Lord for the healing of her body, then she would be made just as normal as though the accident had never taken place. She went home that night and got down on her knees weeping before the Lord. She was led to think that her lack of faith was the reason for her misshaped body. As she prayed she told the Lord she was going to trust Him for the healing of her body, just as she trusted Him for the healing of her soul. As she told me about this, the tears ran down her face. She wept, "I woke up this morning and stood before the mirror expecting my body to be completely healed. But, lo, I'm still a hunchback! So I've come to realize that I don't have any faith. I guess I didn't have any faith ten years ago when I trusted my soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, because if I really had faith I'd be healed."

I listened to her telling this touching story. When her emotions subsided a bit, I

explained, "Agnes, do you know that 1900 years ago there was a man who prayed the same prayer you prayed? It was over a physical infirmity. That man didn't have a hunchback, but he had a failing eyesight. He was the apostle Paul. He refers to his physical problem as a thorn in the flesh. It came to him perhaps on the way to Damascus when he met the Lord. The glory of God shone about him to such an extent that the soldiers fell to the ground. The blaze of that glory did something to Paul's eyes so that he talked about them a great deal in his epistles. He wrote to the Galatians, 'You would have plucked your eyes out and given them to me when I first came among you.' He naturally thought he could do a better work for God with a good pair of eyes so he asked the Lord to remove the affliction. In fact, he prayed about it three times. Agnes, you only prayed once that the thorn might be removed. Do you know what God did for this apostle? He leaned over and put as it were His finger on the thorn. As He pressed it farther into his body He observed, 'Paul, My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness.' That satisfied the apostle Paul so that he never again referred to the thorn in the flesh. His attitude became, 'Therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of God might rest upon me; for when I am weak, then am I strong.' Agnes, one of the reasons you have such a wonderful testimony, and why men and women who have missed the way will listen to you, is because of the radiance of your life shining through a weak body." When I got through she said, "Mr. Talbot, what part of the service do you want me to sing in this morning?" I gave her the hymn and before I preached she sang. I'll never forget the radiant voice that came from that woman with the hunchback. I shall never forget that service because people came to know the Lord that morning.

It may be that you are on a bed of pain and suffering. Perhaps you have had many reverses financially and wonder the reason why. Remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said of the man who was born blind, "that the works of God might be manifested in him." How this can be accomplished cannot be fully known while we are here upon this earth. When we stand at the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord will then make known to us the "whys" and the "wherefores" of all these things. It is a wonderful thing to trust Him completely in the meantime.

The Word of God does give us some partial answers to the question of why tears, sorrows and heartaches come to the Lord's people. One is we learn from Scripture that these testings are a trust. If rightly used they enable us to honor God. We can understand about other things being "trusts." Take money as an example. Some people have the gift of getting wealthy; everything they touch seems to turn to gold. Such a person has to answer to God for that trust. There is also the gift of leadership which is a trust. Scientific skill and knowledge is another. But with these there comes the trust of sorrow and tears. Do you know, just as God can't trust some of His people with a trust of money, so He can't trust certain ones with a trust of heartaches.

If you want to know more of this, just read the book of Job. Here was a great businessman of the land of Uz. The devil came into the presence of God where he was challenged, "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in all the earth?" Here was an upright man in all his ways who glorified the Lord. God was bragging, as it were, to the devil about Job. Satan replied, "Hast thou not put a hedge about him, that no one can touch him? But if you'll let me get my hands upon him, by the time I'm through with him he'll curse you to your face." And God looked at Job and He could trust him. You know the Scriptural account of how God gave Job the trust of severe testing and this saint came out victoriously. The same can be true in our lives as we yield ourselves fully and completely to the Savior.

Dr. Talbot is Chancellor of Biola College.

Don't Miss the Best Part

By: Dr. Curtis Mitchell

One of the dangers we face as believers is becoming so involved in secondary issues that we miss the best part of being a Christian. Jesus Christ referred to it as "that good part." While service is normal and natural for the saved individual, yet the main reason God redeemed us is to bring glory and honor to His Name. There may be some of you who are so busy for the Lord that you are on every committee of the church. Yet, the fact is, you are empty on the inside. Maybe you have missed the "best part" of being a Christian. This is why the account of two women in the Bible, Martha and Mary, can be so practical. In Luke 10:38 we read, "Now it came to pass as they went, that He entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, named Martha, received Him into her house." Our Lord's coming was probably heralded ahead of Him by a number of days. Jesus loved this home where He could enjoy the fellowship of good friends. Probably in His adult ministry it was the closest thing He had to a home. When they knew the Master was coming, that house was doubtless a beehive of activity. Martha was a typical homemaker. She could have had a reputation for the best cherry pie in the community. She may have begun days ahead preparing the recipes and dishes she knew the Lord would love. From the very moment He crossed the threshold, Martha was waiting on the Lord with appetizers, publications to read, a pillow for His head. Have you ever been in that kind of house? I have many times and on occasion have felt like throwing up my hands and saying, "Wait a minute! I appreciate all of this attention and service. But the main reason I came here is to visit with you. Why don't you just stop all this activity and sit down and let's fellowship a little bit?" Such was the picture of Martha. She became so involved in serving the Lord that she was cumbered about much (v. 40). In fact, she complained to the Savior, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me." Her bottom lip was hanging out as she pouted about all the load. In a sense, she rebuked the Lord Whom she loved.

The word "cumbered" in the English carries the idea of being overworked. The Greek word doesn't have that exact connotation. It contains more the idea of distraction. Martha had gotten her eyes off the main purpose of expressing her love for Christ. You know, that's so easy to do.

Some years ago, when I was about to become a father for the first time, I was a salesman heralding forth the good news far and wide of this great event. I received a piece of advice from an older man who observed, "Curtis, I can remember when I was about to become a father. I was just as proud and happy as you are now. God gave us a little girl and I set out to fulfill my vow. I worked at two jobs, and my child had the best of everything." Then he choked up and shed a tear, "You know, one day I woke up to the realization that my little girl was almost grown and I hardly knew her." What had happened to this man? Exactly what was said of Martha in that she had missed the best part. As a parent, the most important thing you can do is to get to know and love your child.

Christ's advice to Martha is something we could well heed, "Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful." Notice that Jesus didn't rebuke her for service. He didn't tell her that she was overworked. He rather commended her for her ministrations. He simply pointed out, as we should learn, too, that something is needed in addition to service. Mary had already learned the lesson. She perhaps is one of the most misunderstood women in all the Bible. Some may picture her as kind of a lazy girl who let her older sister do all the work while she lolled around. I don't believe that is true. She doubtless took her turn with the household chores. But the secret of success in Mary's life is that she also took time to sit at Jesus' feet where she could hear His words. You see, there has to be a balance between worship and service. The key to success for Mary was that she, in addition to service, also took time to worship the Lord.

Don't miss the good part. You can be busy, but also take time to worship the Lord. When was the last time you just sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words? You weren't looking at verses just to read the Bible through in a year. You weren't in the Scriptures studying for a Sunday school lesson. You just opened the Book, relaxing yourself in God's presence and worshipping Him. When was the last time you told Him you love Him, spending time leisurely in His presence? If you aren't doing this, regardless of how many committees you serve on, you are still missing the best part of being a Christian. It is the part that pays tremendous benefits. Consider Mary who took time to sit at Jesus' feet and who gained tremendous insights into the mind and purposes of the Lord. In John 12:7 we find her anointing Jesus with precious ointment. She knew the Savior was going to die and evidently was the only one who really knew His mind on this occasion. When Christ was actually crucified the disciples fell apart. This woman really had deep insight into the mind of God.

This woman Mary evidently developed a great confidence in the Lord. When Christ stood at the tomb of her brother Lazarus ordering the stone to be rolled away, Martha was the one who got visibly shaken. She said, "Oh, Lord, don't do this! By now he stinketh!" We don't hear Mary utter a single word. She had learned that if Jesus said to do something, it must be the right thing. How did she get this deep faith without which it is impossible to please God? The answer is simple, she took time to sit at Jesus' feet and to hear His words. Remember, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." You can develop that quality about your life. You can really get to know God and His plans if you will take time to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His words.

Not only does worship pay great dividends, but also there is nothing more God wants from you than your fellowship, love and devotion. This is more than all the service you can possibly render. The Chancellor of Biola, Dr. Louis T. Talbot, told a story a number of years ago which I have never forgotten. It is about a little orphan boy named Mike who wanted more than anything else some real parents. He frequently had the heart-rending experience of having people come in, look over the crop of children in the orphanage, but when they saw his lame foot they would pass him by. As he grew older, it became almost impossible to think of ever finding parents who would love him. Yet, one day a limousine pulled up to that orphanage. A fine looking couple got out and much to his delight they put their finger on little Mike and declared, "We want you to be our little boy." They whisked him off with his few belongings to the elite section of the community. After pulling up in front of a mansion they took him upstairs to what was to be his own room. The closet was full of all new clothing. Another was stacked high with all the toys any little boy could ever dream of. The new parents stood back proudly and inquired, "Mike, it's all yours. What do you think of it, fella?" Little Mike began to cry. The wealthy people were confused. They asked, "What's wrong? Did we forget something. You name it, son, and we'll get it for you." He was sobbing now and blurted out, "Could you love a fella a little bit?" The thought comes to me if our Lord isn't saying,

"Could you love a fella a little bit?" Remember what He said to Peter after the disciple failed Him. Returning to his trade as a fisherman Peter saw the Lord while on the shore and dove in to reach Him (John 21). Did you ever ask yourself what was the first thing the Lord said to this impetuous person? Did He say, "Peter, why aren't you passing out tracts in Jerusalem? I told you to preach the Gospel to every creature! What are you doing out here fishing?" Of course not. He asked the penetrating question, "Peter, do you love Me?" You see, more than all the service you can possibly render, our Lord wants your love and devotion. Are you willing to serve the Lord with all your heart? Be careful to take time to sit at Jesus' feet and not miss that "best part."

Dr. Mitchell is Professor of Biblical Studies at Biola College. His new book, "Let's Live," a study in practical Christian living, published by Fleming H. Revell Company, is available in the Biola Bookstore.

REVELATION

By: Dr. Lloyd T. Anderson

Throughout the millenniums of time there has been a constant conflict between Satan and the Savior. This is made clear throughout Scripture, as well as here in the 12th chapter of Revelation. Here in verse five we see him standing before the woman as he has through centuries. The devil had no way of knowing when Jesus Christ would be born. The woman represents Israel and the manchild is the Lord. From the very beginning Satan carefully watched every male who had the prospect of being the Redeemer, as well as those who would be of the lineage to produce the Messiah. The devil saw to it that Abel was killed, thinking he could destroy the coming King. Adam and Eve had another son, whom they named Seth. In Genesis 4:26 we read that men began to call upon the name of the Lord. The great corruption before the flood was another diabolical attempt. Immediately after the universal deluge, since there was only one family preserved, Noah was attacked and as a result did foolish things in his drunken condition (Genesis 9:20-29). When men began to multiply on the earth Nimrod was the tool to bring about the first great rebellion against God (Genesis 10:8-10). The building of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-8) shows the working of Satan through men to defy the Almighty. Another attack was seen in Abraham's life when the patriarch failed in his faith at a crucial time in his life. He plotted the birth of Ishmael rather than trusting the Lord to provide the seed from whom the Messiah would eventually come (Genesis 16). Oppressed, Abraham ran away from the land during the times of famine. Then he lied about his wife because he feared for his life (Genesis 12:10-20).

In Revelation 12:4 the devil is pictured as specifically wanting to devour the male-child who is to be born. He almost accomplished that purpose when he caused the ruler of Egypt to issue to the midwives the decree, "If it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live" (Exodus 1:16). Never forget that God is greater than the devil. He miraculously spared Moses and eventually used him to deliver the Israelites from the land of Egypt. Later, Satan planted seeds of doubt in the mind of Moses (Exodus 4:1-13). The Lord erased those concerns and showed Himself able to bring the Israelites through all the perils. Satan especially tried to do away with David, who was to be the second king of Israel and the person through whom Jesus Christ ultimately would be born. Wicked King Saul frequently tried to kill him. God preserved His servant and defeated the devil.

At various times in the history of Israel there were very few descendants who had the possibility to be in the lineage of Jesus Christ. Of such is the case in II Chronicles 21:4, "Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he

strengthened himself and killed all his brethren with a sword, and many also of the princes of Israel." In the same chapter we read that the Philistines were also stirred up against Jehoram so that his wives were killed and not a son was left to him except his youngest. This is how close the devil came to accomplishing his goal. Still God was victorious. One little boy remained and through his line came Jesus Christ, the seed of David.

Then there was Athaliah who destroyed the royal seed, but still one escaped (II Kings 11:1-3). Little Joash was protected and later became king. Again, the line from which Jesus would descend was preserved. The book of Esther records how Haman plotted to destroy the Israelites (3:8, 9). What an atrocious plan which ultimately backfired so that Mordecai was spared (Esther 7:10).

When Herod learned that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, the devil incited the wicked ruler to issue a decree to kill all the children who were in Bethlehem and all the coast from two years old and under (Matthew 2:16). The Lord again defeated the devil. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Egypt before the decree could be put into effect. When Christ had grown to manhood the devil tempted Him for 40 days and nights in the wilderness. Satan used the same tactics he employed against Adam and Eve but still he failed for the Savior did not succumb to temptation. At another time the devil incited the people to riot. They were so angry they were going to throw Jesus over the edge of a cliff (Luke 4:28, 29). Once again God was victorious and Christ passed through the crowd safely. Matthew 8 records the severe storm on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples felt sure they would all be drowned, but Jesus knew He was in the hand of God and was sleeping. They awoke Him in desperation and pled, "Lord, save us, we perish." The Master stilled the storm and they reached shore safely. Again, the purpose of Satan to do away with Jesus was absolutely thwarted.

The devil unrelenting didn't give up in his desire to destroy the Messiah. At various Passover feasts Christ was hunted down by the followers of evil. Finally, in the last great effort of the devil in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Savior was betrayed by one of His own disciples. No doubt the devil thought this was the way to get rid of Jesus. He felt satisfied as this perfect Man was placed on the cross. Yet, the One who was to defeat the devil was at the very place necessary to bring about Satan's defeat (Hebrews 2:14).

Later on the devil attempted to keep Christ prisoned in the tomb. He inspired the chief priests and Pharisees to ask Pilate for a permanent seal and guard. In spite of it all Christ arose from the dead. His resurrection was followed 40 days later by His ascension to heaven (Acts 1:9). This was Satan's final blow. He had miscalculated God's plan and way of victory. The Savior's means of victory is always by way of death into life (John 12:24, 25). Jesus Himself said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

It is important to realize that the 12th chapter of Revelation is pivotal to the entire book. We should identify the various personalities identified such as the woman, the Manchild, the red dragon and so forth. It is also significant to understand that Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, resurrected and ascended to the ultimate position of power. In the book of Hebrews we read, "But this Man (that is, Christ), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Hebrews 10:12, 13). This is a fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. One day the Savior is going to be Lord of lords and King of kings. All enemies of God will have to kneel before Him. His ascension is proof of the devil's failure.

The method for our personal victory over Satan, our defeated foe, is given in

Colossians 6:10-13. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." In Jesus Christ there is the means to overcome. When the apostle Paul considered this he broke into praise, "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place" (II Corinthians 2:14). James further testified, "Submit yourselves, therefore, unto God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

In Revelation 12:6 when the woman, which is Israel, gives birth to this Male Child, Jesus Christ, she flees into the wilderness where God will prepare a place for her protection for three and a half years. Keep in mind that there is a great time lapse between verses five and six of this chapter. The one ends with the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereas verse six gives us the description of the Tribulation when the Jews try to escape the presence of the Antichrist. There is already a span of about 2000 years involved. God, in a single stroke of His prophetic brush, gives us a tremendous sweep of Biblical time. The age of the Church, which began on the day of Pentecost, is not even mentioned. The reason is that at that point Israel was temporarily set to one side (Romans 11:25). The events portrayed in Rev. 12:6 take place when the Lord again deals with Israel as a nation. It will be after the Church has been removed from the world at the Rapture. The events of prophecy are seen similarly as to when one looks across mountain peaks. The ranges are viewed as one, without looking at all that lies in the valleys between the heights.

Satan will wage a relentless attack against both Christ and Israel (Rev. 12:13-17). The reason is that Israel is God's chosen people. It is from them that Jesus came. Throughout the centuries the devil has made many attempts to eliminate the Jews. Even in our own generation we have already seen his program in Germany where 6,000,000 were exterminated. Again, we observe how all the Arab nations seem to be making a desperate attempt to drive Israel into the Mediterranean Sea. God has miraculously preserved His own people generation after generation. He is still on the throne and His promises to Israel are still absolutely true. His covenant with Abraham was unconditional. He will fulfill His promises to Israel in spite of all the difficulties anybody can bring upon them. When I see antisemitism beginning to arise on the American scene, it breaks my heart. I know God will deal in judgment with the United States if we allow any move against these chosen people. This doesn't mean that others in the world aren't wonderful in their own way. Some of the most wonderful acquaintances I have are of Arab extraction in the Holy Land. I treasure their friendship deeply. Yet, unmistakably, God has one chosen nation. That is, Israel, through whom Jesus came. If God fails in His promise to Israel, then everything He has promised to you and me will never come to pass. Thankfully, the Lord won't allow that to happen.

It is interesting to read of the war in heaven when Michael and his angels fight against the dragon (Revelation 12:7). The events in this passage are yet to come. They will most likely take place about the middle of the tribulational hour, preceding the seventh trumpet. This will unleash Satan's prime attack on the earth. Can you imagine such a thing as war in heaven? Remember that Satan still has today access to the heavenly places. He's the accuser of the brethren (12:10). Yet, we can be most grateful that through Christ we have complete and final victory.

Throughout the centuries of time there has been a constant struggle between the devil and his cohorts on the one hand, and Jesus Christ and the angels of heaven on the other. The conflict recorded in Revelation 12 shows this very graphically. In

the little one-chapter epistle of Jude we find another incident recorded in this seen warfare between righteousness and unrighteousness. The apostle declares, "Ye Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (v. 9). Michael, whose very name means "one like God," faced the opponent who has no honor. Michael's day is coming, as is ours, when the Lord Jesus Christ will take up His power, ruling and reigning over this universe. Jesus Christ declared, "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity" (Matthew 13:41). This is that unmistakable moment in the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. Not only do Michael and his angels gain a complete victory, but something else takes place. While there have been victories in the past, Satan always retained his place in the heavens. Now, at the culmination, he is cast down.

Keep in mind that the Bible clearly teaches that the devil at this moment still has access to heaven. We see his sphere in Job 1 where Scripture declares, "Now there was a day when the sons of God (these are angelic beings) came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan was also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it" (Job 1:6, 7). No passage in the whole Bible speaks of the devil in his present activity as being in any other place than this earth and the air that surrounds it, with visits occasionally to the presence of God in heaven. Spiritual beings travel with the speed of thought, hence there is no difficulty in this teaching whatsoever.

The presence of the devil in heaven is the explanation for the necessity of heaven's ultimate destruction and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth in the days to come. Creation is nothing more or less than the materialization of the thought of God. That is all that is required for Him to bring anything into existence. The preparation of the place for us by the Lord Jesus Christ in that future day is more fully described in Hebrews 9:23, "It was, therefore, necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

Although God has allowed the devil and his demonic force to exist and often have their own way for thousands of years gone by, He now deals with them in severe and proper judgment. While Satan has pitched his throne high, yet God has His even higher. The devil is mighty, but God is Almighty. The enemy of our souls can destroy, but God can destroy the destroyer. Satan is free, but God is going at last to shut him in forever. He may nevermore harm or even touch a single holy individual of the Lord. In His own time God will indisputably enthrone Himself by indisputably dethroning the devil. Christ gave us a picture of this vision while He was on earth, "I beheld the devil as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). His words about Satan were also recorded, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). He accurately prophesied, "The prince of this world will come into judgment" (John 16:11).

Names given to the devil describe his ejection from the heavens and are most significant. He is called first, "the great red dragon." Under that name he is frequently mentioned in the Bible as the "great enemy of God." This takes us back to Genesis 3 where he is identified as "that old serpent." The word that is translated "old" comes from another term meaning "beginning." How significant this is since Jesus said that the devil was a murderer "from the beginning" (John 8:44). The word translated "devil" means one who slanders. Surely all of the lies which mankind has believed against the Lord have come from this particular evil source. Always keep in mind that Satan is a defeated enemy. Our Lord has won the complete victory. And this belongs appropriately to all who take their stand with Jesus

Christ. Steadily, through the ages, this enemy, the devil, has been forced to give up his various fortified positions. The dust of retreat has always been his food. All victory over the devil is on the basis of what the Savior accomplished at the cross. He not only died to redeem your soul and spirit, but also to redeem your physical body (Romans 8:23). Much of our salvation is in hope (Romans 8:24). True faith learns to stand with God, looking upon these struggles from the calm of His throne and the objective viewpoint of eternity. The Son of God was revealed that He might destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8).

One of the most intriguing verses in the Bible is recorded by the apostle John who declares, "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night" (Rev. 12:10). At this point in history the Lord Jesus Christ reigns supreme in all three heavens and is now completely victorious. The event happens simultaneous with the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15-19). God allows Satan almost unrestricted freedom on the earth during the last three and a half years of the seven years of Tribulation. Then he is bound and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:1,3,7-10).

When Satan is cast out of heaven he shows his great anger because he knows his time is short. The afflictions of the earth's inhabitants come largely from the activities of the devil. These activities result in great destruction and martyrdom of multitudes of saints during these great judgments of trumpets and bowls which are poured out. The only consolation during this tribulational hour is that Satan's time on earth is very short. It is limited to 42 months, or three and one-half years. Referring to this time Jesus observed, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake (that is, the remnant of Israel living during the Tribulation) those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:21,22).

The devil has not been able to do away with the Lord Jesus Christ. He will not be able to enter heaven again in his effort to attack and persecute the children of God. It is here in the Tribulation that verse six of chapter 12 fits into the chronology of events. I've read that "the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." This is again the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation period. These events most likely begin with the blowing of the trumpet which takes place out of the seventh seal. This is also why there was silence in heaven for about a half hour (8:1). The great storm is about to break. This is Satan's last great effort to destroy the nation of Israel. How important for us to make Jesus Christ known to others, especially those of Israel.

There are several battles which take place on the earth during the last half of the seven years of the Tribulation (Revelation 12:13-15). All are a part of the great campaign of Armageddon. There is a war against the woman, Israel while she's still in the land before she flees into the wilderness (v. 13). Then after she flees the devil pursues her (12:15). When the dragon cannot devour her there, he discontinues his pursuit and turns against the remnant of the woman's seed (v. 17). This is possibly the 144,000 whose sealing is recorded in Revelation 7:4-8.

Satan's battle against Israel most probably begins with the breaking down of the covenant in the middle of the 70th week of Daniel. The prophet was told these words, "And the Antichrist shall confirm the covenant with Israel for one week and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27).

The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11 were also put to death at the middle of the Tribulation. Following their ascension to heaven, much suffering, judgment, and comes upon the earth.

The persecution begins in Judea of Israel. Christ warned the Israelites about this (Matthew 24:16).

The word "wilderness" (Revelation 12:14) refers to an abandoned or desolate place. God prepares a special place for the nation of Israel, even as He prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. This is so that she might be spared from further onslaughts by the devil. No one knows specifically where the wilderness will be. When the Antichrist attacks Israel she is miraculously spared by God (Daniel 11:41). The Apostle John tells us that the woman was given two wings of a great eagle (Revelation 12:14). God Himself referred to the eagle previously when He told about His care for the people Israel in the Old Testament (Exodus 19:4; Deut. 32:9-11). The Lord has provided for Israel in the past, even so He will preserve her during the Tribulation in the future.

The twelfth chapter of Revelation is the hinge of the entire book. It is pivotal in every respect. God gives Israel protection and victory over Satan. Scripture states, "The serpent cast out of his mouth water like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood (v. 15). This very likely is a reference to a literal flood. Remember, the nation of Israel has been spared by water twice before. First at the Red Sea as they came out of Egypt, and then after their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God miraculously parted the Jordan River so they could enter the land on dry shod as He had promised them. It is true that "flood" could also refer to the armies which come in like to overflow the Israelites in that day. Whichever the case, the enemy is going to be defeated by the Lord. God will not sit idly by for His children are "the apple of His eye." God intervenes by causing a miracle to take place, "And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" (12:16). This may be a great earthquake, causing the earth to open in this manner. It happened before (Numbers 16:31-33). When the Lord speaks even the mountains of the earth begin to tremble. The final battle of the campaign of Armageddon is brought to an end when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to the earth to destroy the armies of the earth (Revelation 19:11-21). The Old Testament book of Zechariah also tells us about Jesus Christ's return at this time (Zechariah 14:4,5).

We need to realize again that Satan hates God, especially His Son, Jesus Christ. This holds true for anyone who dares to recognize Him. This is why the devil will do anything he can to keep people from true devotion to the Lord. Satan accuses righteous men before God (Job 1:9-11,22; 2:4,5; 13:15). He also accuses the believer before his brethren. This is why we have so much gossip in the Church. The Bible rightly calls it "evil speaking." Such is satanic. The devil himself appearing as an angel of light. Thus, Christian people sometimes gossip even under the pretense of spirituality.

The devil's tactics of accusing the brethren have not changed, and there will come a day when he will be cast out of heaven to the earth and will no longer have access to the Father to accuse us anymore (Revelation 12:9, 12). Always remember that the devil is a defeated foe (Hebrews 2:14). It is by the victory which Christ had over Satan at the cross that you and I, as New Testament believers, are enabled to live in triumph (II Corinthians 2:14). All believers from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church are members of the Body of Christ. All are baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of their salvation (I Corinthians 12:13). Therefore, the devil is not effectively able to accuse us. This is why we can say with the apostle Paul, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

The sentence of execution was given to the devil at the cross. The time of his final doom is still to come as we see in Biblical prophecy. That his judgment is certain ought to be comfort to each of us (Romans 16:20). I John 4:4 reminds us of our victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Israel in the last three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation is victorious over the devil. The key is important for us to experience victory as well, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11). This gives us a threefold formula for total victory over Satan. The action taken by the word of their testimony; the action taken; and thirdly their attitude in that they loved not their lives unto death. It is all accomplished through the blood of the Lamb. Through the testimony of believers, word should be given that there is spiritual victory in Jesus Christ.

As we have pointed out in the past, the book of Revelation has as its "hinge" the 12th chapter. Beginning with chapter five down through the 11th, we see the broad brushstrokes of the tribulation hour. Chapter 12 is the pivotal point with five impressive personages brought to our attention. Starting with chapter 13 we are given the details of the earlier prophetic declarations. Actually, the opening phrase of chapter 13 really belongs to the close of the preceding chapter. Of course, Biblical divisions of chapter and verse are only man made conveniences to facilitate our finding references. They must never be considered as being inspired. Original Scripture ran in great paragraphs, which in their earliest forms were not separated by any punctuation, neither verses nor chapters.

As we begin chapter 13 we read, "And he stood upon the sand of the sea." Although the King James version has, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea," the personage involved here is the dragon, the devil himself, as earliest manuscripts reveal. John has just described the war in heaven between Michael and his angels, and that ancient serpent, Satan and his angels. The Bible encourages us with the fact that Michael prevailed and the devil was cast out of heaven. No longer will he have access to the Lord nor to the throne of glory. In great wrath and anger he comes down to the earth. No wonder we read, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time" (Revelation 12:12). This "short time" is described as forty-two months (13:5). This red seven-headed enemy of God works his final malice and rage through two of his ministers on the earth. One is described in Revelation 13:1-10 as the political leader of this world. He will be the final and ultimate Antichrist politically. The other is pictured in the same chapter, beginning at verse 11. He will be the final religious leader of the world and known as the false prophet. This evil triad finally declares war against Christ and the heavenly armies. Their efforts are in vain for they are forever and completely destroyed in the intervention of our Lord at the campaign of Armageddon. This is described in Revelation 19.

As John stands on the sands of that turbulent and fearful sea of people and nations, he sees rising out of it a great monster which is this first beast of Revelation 13. This is a very graphic vision. The vision shows the creature with 10 horns, each one wearing a crown. There appear seven heads supporting those ten horns. The body appears like a panther or leopard with feet like those of a bear. His mouth is as that of a lion, and his heads have the name of blasphemy for he speaks against God and His dwelling place. He wars with those who trust in Jesus. This is all a symbol of the last world political power which is going to hold sway on this earth and over all the nations at the time of the end. This typifies the conclusion of world government and the sovereignty of nations.

In Revelation 17:12 we read concerning the beast that "The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet." This then is yet in the

future. The one ultimate form of the government of this world is going to be divided into ten kingdoms. These ten kings will have one mind to give their power and strength unto the beast (17:17). He will thus have authority and power residing in his position over this entire earth. The Antichrist is God's symbol of the last political government this world will know. The eventual overthrow is recorded, "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet, and these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:21).

Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a kingdom without a king, and there is no such thing as an empire without an emperor. There is no such thing as dominion, sovereignty and power without somebody to wield that influence. So it is in Revelation 13 the depiction of final world government necessitates a leader and one person. The beast is not only God's symbol of a final world government, but it is also a description of a man, an ultimate apostate world political ruler. Paul calls him "the man of sin" in II Thessalonians and thereby refers to the same individual.

All the testimony of God's Word speaks of this coming final antagonist of Jesus Christ. It was common doctrine in the early Church. It is interesting to note that there has never been an Abel without a Cain; there has never been a Jerusalem without a Babylon; there has never been a John the Baptist without a King Herod; there has never been an apostle Paul without a King Nero. When our Lord seeks to reign over this world, there is Antichrist who is the adversary, lifting himself up to speak blasphemous things against God and those who are resting in Jesus Christ.

The Antichrist, who will be the last world ruler, is superlatively fascinating, intriguing, and bewitching in his personal power and ability. Remember that the devil himself is like an angel of light. Lucifer, that beautiful morning star, fell from heaven because of his own sin. He had been the summation of God's glorious creation. He himself personally and constantly stands behind the Antichrist (Rev. 13:2-4). In all time of history there will never have appeared a human being with all the glory, personality, intrigue, ingratiating, and manner of this evil leader. He will be a veritable god of wisdom, insight, accomplishment, and achievement. He is the devil's last man before Jesus Christ comes again.

This coming final political leader is going to be received in gladness. The kings of the world will peaceably yield their authority to him, thinking there is none like him. John says that this individual will stand upon the sand of a raging sea which is pictured also in the book of Daniel. It is a symbol of the violent, chaotic masses of humanity in a day of crisis and revolution. Out of these horrible chaotic events comes this tyrannical leader who will dupe the leaders and peoples of the world.

It is clear from a study of Scripture, and particularly Revelation, that the Antichrist is the individual who, politically, is going to rule over the earth in the last days of the Tribulation. The shadows are getting deeper and longer even in our own Church age. We are beginning to see some things taking place which are harbingers of final transactions. You remember back to chapter six when the first seal was opened? The Antichrist made his appearance, riding on a white horse with a bow but no arrows. He comes conquering and to conquer, but it is an absolute bloodless encounter. There is no resistance. In the midst of chaos and despair, the kings of the earth, living in the tribulational hour, gladly give their power and dominion to him. He is foolishly hailed savior of the human race. He will be the great and final ruler over the last established government of earth. No one knows who this individual will be; we should be very careful about naming any names.

During the Tribulation, the Antichrist arises out of social ferment and turmoil of the day. John describes him rightly as a diabolical monster. He is a terrible nondescript beast, appearing like a leopard, a bear and a lion. In Daniel 7, which is

the companion book of prophecy to Revelation, the writer looks ahead describing the coming great kingdoms in their glory. First he saw the lion; second, the bear; third, the lion again; finally the nondescript beast. When Daniel saw these in his vision, he realized that they succeeded each other. The apostle here in Revelation looks upon this political ruler as a conglomerate of all that Daniel envisioned.

When one considers the honor and glory of this ancient earth, he cannot help but share somewhat in the wonder and marvel of the entire panorama. Think for example of the golden majesty of Babylon or of the mighty, ponderous massiveness of Cyrus in the land of Persia. Consider the beauty, elegance, and intellect of the ancient Greek world. Reflect on the Roman government with its laws, order, power and ideas of justice. All of these past glories of worldwide governments will be summed up in the majesty of this one eventual Antichrist as political ruler. Impressive it is to read what God has written in His book about this captivating, spellbinding, resplendent ruler of man's world system. He will be the devil's masterpiece as he comes up out of the sea.

This monster is going to be the arch persecuter of all times. We know that everyone on the earth in that tribulational hour who doesn't receive his mark upon their hands or foreheads will be put to death. No one can stand before him to resist his power except for those whose names were written in the book of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Without question, this beast is the great enemy of God. He comes in glory and peace, but in the midst of that last week of Daniel (chapter 9), he breaks his covenant with the people of God. The world, as well as the Jews, sees his true character. In a blood bath, he wars against God and His people. Revelation 11 reminds us that it is this beast who slays the two great witnesses in the earth. He is used by Satan to persecute the woman and the remnant of her seed. Those who dare to worship Jesus Christ during the Tribulation seal their testimony with their own blood in martyrdom before the Lord.

God closes this passage when he tells us, "If any man have an ear, let him hear" (13:9). This expression is found many times in the Bible. As terrible as Christians have ever suffered in the worst periods of persecution throughout the history of the world, their suffering is like nothing at all compared to the agony that will be the portion of these Tribulation saints. God has a wonderful message for His people. It concerns judgment, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; and he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." This is according to the moral government by which God has claimed the universe. The text continues, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." Remember, the Lord isn't forgetful of the trial of His saints, nor will He be of you personally!

Revelation chapter 13 centers on John's vision of two beasts. The first (vs. 1-10) describes the Antichrist. The second impressive personality comes up "out of the earth." We read that he will have two horns like a lamb, and will speak like a dragon. He "causeth the earth and them who dwell on it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of man, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast" (Revelation 13:11-18). This is one of the most instructive of all the visions to be found in the book of Revelation. Both of these beasts unquestionably work side by side. One has to do with the political while the other controls the religious. The second beast, known as the false prophet, does miraculous things as he uses the power of the state politically to coerce the whole world to bow down and worship the Antichrist. Without him the political ruler could never be what he is or achieve the worldwide program that he does.

There are some marked contrasts between these two important and diabolical leaders.

The first beast rises up out of the sea while the second rises out of the earth. Tyrants and dictators have arisen out of that raging sea which we know as the nations of the world. The second beast from the land symbolically shows that he originates from civil order which isn't chaotic. He is the product of an ordered society which the first beast has already brought into existence. The second beast is religious. He is like a lamb and exercises power to deceive the whole world. It is a fact of history that the rulers of the world have had to have the religious along with them in order to maintain their sovereignty. In the days of Pharaoh, for example, we are told that when Moses and Aaron stood before this great monarch that Pharaoh called in his magicians. They were the religionists of his day who opposed the true God. When Jeroboam revolted against Judah he felt compelled to build gods of gold at Bethel and at Dan. Ahab and Jezebel were able to achieve debauchery in Israel because they were abetted and assisted by the religious prophets of Baal. In later years, the French Revolution had a goddess of blasphemy, infidelity, and atheism. Thus it will be in the last days of the Tribulation. This political ruler who comes up out of the sea builds for himself through the yielded sovereignty of ten political kings, this great final world rule. Alongside of him there stands the false prophet, this religious leader who abets and helps him get his own way. These two uniquely support and aid one another to reach their own goals impelled by the devil. Thankfully, the Lord Jesus Christ will ultimately overthrow this wicked system in His glorious Second Coming. He will set up His kingdom over this world. The book of Revelation makes it crystal clear that this world is moving in the direction of one vast political unit. This demands that there is progress toward one great common religion. Such we see on the horizon as the time approaches for the fulfillment of all things.

As we study the false prophet we come to the realization that there isn't another creature on earth who can compare with him. Scripture says "he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him" (13:11, 12). That he is typified as a lamb indicates a softness or an easiness about him. What could be more tender and precious than one who counsels people about the things of their souls or inner peace. This is very deceiving about this beast which is far more dangerous than the first. Any man who proposed to guide and command the consciences, minds and souls of people, has in his power an unbelievable authority. His manner of speech reveals him to be God's enemy as well as the opponent of the Lord's people. The state supports him and in return he supports the state.

The text tells us that the false prophet has two horns like a lamb. Remember that the real Lamb of God has seven horns, speaking of plentitude, fullness, and the power of Almighty God. This lamb is an imitation. He is a product of an apostate and perverted Christianity. The true Church of Jesus Christ of course has already gone home to be with the Lord as we saw at the conclusion of Revelation 4. He will imitate all the things the Lord Jesus Christ did. He apparently has the ability to perform miracles. He becomes the one whom the world follows. By his authority and power he promotes a worship of idolatry. History is more astonishing than fiction. Somehow there is a weakness in humanity which demands that we must have some kind of visible representation to help us in our worship. It was true in ancient Israel when Aaron made gods out of gold. It has been true in the story of religion ever since. God tells us that image worship is the abomination and scourge of the earth. Yet it is the churches which lead in idolatry. In the Tribulation we won't have a universal religion which is Jewish or Mohammedan, but it will be unbelievable Christian idolatry. What astonishing things God writes in the book of Revelation.

The first world empire was the golden sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar. He compelled all of his subjects to bow down and worship it as Daniel records. He reasoned that as long as his empire was cluttered up with diverse religions he was weakened in power. To hold the empire together and make one tremendous kingdom he decreed that

all must bow down before his god of gold. Humanity repeats that same weakness as we see from Revelation 13. All must bow down or they will not be able to sell. This is virtually what you have in communist Russia. A person can't buy or sell unless he does what the state wants him to do. People who live behind the bamboo curtain certainly can understand what is described here.

One of the most intriguing passages of the Bible informs us, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six" (Revelation 13:18). This is the most famous of all apocalyptic figures in history and literature, the number 666. Men have puzzled for many decades and centuries over the meaning of it. No one can fully know what this is except for the people who will be living on the earth during the Tribulation. There may be a thousand speculations, but still the actuality is not clear today. One thing we do know is that "six" in the Bible is always the number of man. It falls short of the perfect number "seven." Man was created on the sixth day; he is to work six of the seven days; a Hebrew slave could not be a slave more than six years; the fields were to be sown not more than six years and then they were to be allowed to rest. Here with this false prophet, we have a triad of sixes. This represents the ultimate of all human ingenuity. The most anyone will ever be able to attain beneath the perfect "seven" is always the number "six." The false prophet will probably be the greatest of all who have ever made their appearance on the scene of counterfeit truth.

There are several important things to notice about the coming counterfeit religion. This organization will speak exactly what the world will be delighted to hear. Its teaching will not cut across the grain of the things which will offend people in that hour. It will look on Biblical truth as being outmoded. A new "theology," a sophistry of enlightenment, will be in order. There will be new rules for a new day, free from the bondage of the morality and piety of that "old medieval superstition" found in the Bible. This same attitude is expressed even now toward many of the great doctrines of the faith. The system will also seek to enjoy what the world enjoys. The false beast or prophet dominates the religious scene of the earth. I personally believe that the coming for the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ is really close at hand as we see some of the coming shadows being cast across the length of the land. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Dr. Anderson is Pastor
of Bethany Baptist Church,
West Covina, California.

Panel Discussion

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

Q. "Why did Jesus tell Mary not to touch Him after the Resurrection?" (John 20:17)

A. Mary mistook Him to be the gardner. Our Lord made Himself known by speaking her name. She immediately acknowledged Him as "Master." There are three different concepts or explanations as to why our Lord told her not to touch Him. Some seek to find a contradiction between this verse and Matthew 28:9 where we read, "And they came and held Him by His feet." The comment by John precedes the other in chronology. Matthew's account was after He had already been to the Father and returned. Some hold that Christ didn't want Mary to touch Him since He hadn't yet made atonement for our sins in glory. Others interpret this as Christ exhorting Mary, "Don't hold onto your earthly, terrestrial views of Me. Don't try to confine Me within the limits of what you knew Me to be when I walked among you before My experience at Calvary." There is a third view in that our Lord did not want to be detained. He had not yet put in His appearance before the Father to announce His redemptive work. Mary was instructed to tell Christ's followers the good news.

Q. "Is there any Scripture to substantiate the belief that God will send persecution upon His people to 'sort out' those who are fit for the Rapture and those who aren't? What makes us holy enough for heaven?"

A. There is absolutely nothing we can ever do which would make us "holy enough for heaven." Some hold to a partial Rapture theory. They suggest there are some fit for the translation of the Church, and others who aren't. To make ready they will have to go through the Tribulation. An excellent passage with bearing on this question is Ephesians 5:25-27. Jesus Christ is going to do the entire job of presenting us holy and without blemish in that day. Never forget that we are saved by grace through faith. There is no such thing in the Bible as "partial Rapture." All of the dead in Christ are going to rise first, then all of us who are alive and remain will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air with them (I Thess. 4:13-18). We are to live holy lives for Jesus' sake because of all He has done for us. The purpose isn't that we can do anything of ourselves in order to be guaranteed a place in the Rapture.

Q. "Will you please explain Micah 4:5?"

A. This was one of the great prophets of the eighth century. It was a period when Isaiah, Hosea and Amos all ministered. Micah four and Isaiah two are parallel passages. Both are talking about the last days when Israel's history will be consummated after the Rapture. God's kingdom is going to overshadow all others. Nations will want to be taught out of the law of God. The Word of the Lord is going to go forth from Jerusalem. There will be a cessation of all wars. God will judge among the peoples and when He arbitrates and rebukes for sin, men will beat their swords into ploughshares because their hearts have been changed. The external comes as a

result of what has been done internally. The Authorized Version of verse five reads this way, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." This sounds like an abundance of idolatry. We need to see a better translation of the Hebrew verbs. A better translation is, "For all the people do now walk in the name of their god, but as for us we shall walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." No matter what others do we will walk in the name of our God. May that be our personal testimony each day of our lives.

Q. "Is it possible to really be a Christian without feeling God's presence? I believe every word of the Bible, but I'm without feeling of the Holy Spirit within."

A. The important thing to remember is that we are saved by grace through faith, not of ourselves, but it is a gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. Feeling isn't a direct part of salvation. Ordinarily, feeling accompanies salvation but it is peripheral and not essential. Perhaps our questioner hasn't recognized the Holy Spirit within. If you have gone to a church service where a song or a message was presented which was a blessing to your heart, then that was the Holy Spirit speaking with your spirit, reminding you that you are a child of God. You need to understand the fact that the Holy Spirit is within you and where He seeks to bless you over and over again. As you read your Bible, if there is some verse, phrase, or word that causes you to rejoice in God's provision then again it is the Holy Spirit Who bears witness concerning the truth. Sometimes uplifting and helpful feelings are really the Holy Spirit speaking to you.

Q. "What is your opinion of the 'Layman's Parallel Bible'?"

A. There are a number of so-called parallel Bibles. The format is usually three or four different versions across the page allowing a quick reference of the available information. For years the International Sunday School Lesson had parallel columns of the King James Version as well as the version of 1901, the American Standard Version. A parallel Bible could save time if one is a diligent student of the Bible. In other words, they are very good for reference work. We would advise against such use in a worship service. Don't be distracted from what the preacher is saying. If you are a young Christian or even more mature, the King James version is wonderful.

Q. "Who are the 'kings of the east?'" (Revelation 16:12).

A. This passage states, "And the sixth angel poured out his bowl of wrath upon the great river Euphrates and its water was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." There is a similar passage in Daniel 11:44. Remember, the directions in the Bible all relate to the land of Israel. Palestine has been rightly called, "the navel of the earth." It is right in the center of the earth. We don't know just who these kings of the east are except they come from oriental countries. The Antichrist will overpower them as well as the king of the north, and the south, gaining worldwide control and he becomes the Antichrist, but that's another story.

Q. "Why did Jesus curse the fig tree (Mark 11:12-15) when it wasn't the season for the bearing of fruit?"

A. This has been a troublesome question for many people. Our Lord knew the time for the fruit to come forth. He created all things. We need to understand the fig tree and its culture in the Holy Land. These retain their leaves through the winter as a result they usually have figs also, even in several seasons. This tree had none at all, nor did it yet have any indication of new figs coming. This was

an accurate picture of Israel which was a nation so marvelously blessed and privileged of God to have prophets like Isaiah all the way down to Malachi. They had Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as the lawgiver Moses. What a tremendous deposit but here they were without any fruit. There was none of the old fruit nor any of the new. What Christ meant was that the Jewish people showed no evidence whatsoever of spiritual awareness to God. He was one hundred percent accurate in His judgment.

Q. "Is it Scriptural that Christians who are living in unconfessed sin should be taken at the Rapture?"

A. Consider some basic facts concerning the nature and purpose of the Rapture. This is an experience which will take place at the time of the Lord's return to meet His Church in the air. The dead in Christ will rise first. Christians who are alive will be instantly changed, given their resurrection bodies. Those born again believers who die with unconfessed sins are not lost. Remember, it is the Lord who makes us ready. He will present us to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. He will take care of all these frailties of the flesh. That doesn't mean that we should neglect living holy lives in godly separation. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (I John 1:9). We need to keep our minds on the Savior rather than upon ourselves. If the Holy Spirit reminds us of sin we should certainly and immediately confess it. Focus your attention on the joy of the Lord.

Q. "Will you explain Daniel 10 and 11?"

A. This section gives us a panoramic view in Daniel's final vision of the future. The 10th chapter provides the framework showing that power will be transferred from Persia to Greece. In the second and the seventh chapters of this book, world rule was taken from Israel and given to the nations. This began what we know as "the time of the Gentiles." It began around 586 B.C. with Nebuchadnezzar. There are four great kingdoms. It is going to be at the end of that fourth empire that Christ will come, as He did the first time. The fourth kingdom will be renovated. In resurrected form it will be on earth again to be dealt with by our Lord. So the 10th chapter shows transference of power from the third kingdom to the second, namely from the Persian to the Grecian. Chapter 11 fills in further details concerning world leaders. Archeology has verified these prophetic foreviews.

Q. "At what time in history did God decide to create a hell in which to burn unbelievers?"

A. This would put our minds up against the mind of God. At no time in history did God decide to create a hell. He knew from all eternity that at a certain point there would be such a place. He always knew that Satan would rebel, even before Lucifer was created. The Lord also knew from all eternity that Adam and Eve would sin. He knew that most people would reject Jesus Christ and consign themselves thereby to hell. God is never taken by surprise. He has never had to change His program. It is running exactly according to His perfect plan.

Q. "What is the 'feast of trumpets'?"

A. This was the fifth feast of the seven religious feasts on the Hebrew calendar. It is mentioned for the first time in Lev. 23-25. Trumpets were to herald abroad specific information. Sometimes they were used for solemn gatherings, other occasions as a special type of war trumpet where certain notes were sounded so that the people could prepare themselves for battle. This feast of trumpets was to indicate the coming regathering of Israel. The explanation is also given in Isaiah 27.