

Fulfil Your Specific Ministry Effectively

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(Bangalore, India)

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your Bible and see whether these things are true. Iron sharpens Iron

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Articles

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In the Old Testament, the prophets spoke about a remnant among God’s people. They spoke about how in a time of spiritual decline among God’s people, there would be a few who would remain faithful to God. The theme of the Prophets was restoration.

“The more we come into fellowship with God’s heart, the more we will share His burden.”

For example, Hosea spoke about spiritual adultery and God’s unchanging love. Habakkuk spoke about the conflict of faith and triumph of faith. Zechariah’s burden was the movement of God’s people from Babylon to Jerusalem. Haggai’s burden was the building up of the temple. Each prophet had a unique burden given to him by God – but all of them were concerned about the lack of holiness among God’s people.

Holiness and God’s unchanging love were the burden of all the prophets: Holiness in God’s people and God’s unchanging love for His people even when they are in spiritual adultery and gone astray. God’s desire was always to bring His people back. He disciplines them; but then He wants to bring them back to Him after the discipline is over.

This is how true prophetic ministry should function in the church too. A true prophet in the church today will have the same burden that the Old Testament prophets had for holiness among God’s people. And he will be moved as they were, by God’s unchanging, longsuffering, compassionate love that perpetually desires to bring His backslidden people back to Him and to genuine holiness. There should be a prophetic ministry in every church if it is to be kept alive and functioning for God as it should.

The burden God lays on your heart is almost always an indication of the ministry He has planned for you. So, wait on the Lord to receive a burden from Him. If you serve the Lord without a burden, you will get bored with the Lord’s work after a while, and you are likely to end up seeking after money, man’s honour or earthly comfort. It is unfortunate that many who claim to be serving the Lord today have no God-given burden for their ministry.

God may give one man a burden to work among children and another a burden for evangelism. Yet another may be given a burden to teach God’s people. God gives different burdens to different members of Christ’s body. We must not imitate someone else’s ministry or try to have *his* burden. Don’t force others to have *your* burden; and don’t allow anyone else to give you, his burden. Let God Himself give you a burden – the one He has planned for you.

The more we come into fellowship with God’s heart, the more we will share His burden. If God has called you to be an Evangelist, He will give you a compassion for lost souls. If God calls you to be a Teacher, He will give you a compassion for believers who are blinded and deceived, who are not entering into a life of victory. Fellowship with the heart of God in sharing His compassion is essential if we are to fulfil our ministry effectively.

Many people have urged me to have a burden for *their particular* ministry – usually evangelism. But I have always resisted such pressures. I am *not* interested in having the burden God has given to another. God has given me a specific burden and I am determined that that is the only ministry I will fulfil. The prophets never allowed anyone to sidetrack them from the burden and the ministry God gave them.

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If you don't have any burden at all, you must go to God and ask Him to give you a burden. He has a definite task for you to fulfil in the body of Christ and you must know what it is.

Many preachers wander from one ministry to another – joining whichever Christian organization offers them the highest salary. For example, they may start with an *apparent* “burden” for a radio ministry. But if some child-evangelism organization then offers them a higher salary, they suddenly develop a “burden” for child-evangelism! A little later, if a Christian literature organization offers them a still higher salary, their “burden” suddenly shifts to a literature ministry!! Such preachers are not serving the Lord. They are religious men who are engaged in Babylonian “businesses”.

When God gives you a burden, you cannot give that up just because some organization offered you better earthly benefits.

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Word for the Week
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Let No One Deceive You

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (Charlotte, North Carolina)

As Daniel 12:4 predicts, we live in a time of increasing knowledge. Data flows constantly around the globe, facilitated by communications satellites, the Internet, television and radio, newspapers and magazines, telephones, pagers, and a host of other means and methods. This rapid—indeed, almost instantaneous—flow of information makes possible the doubling of man's knowledge in just a few years rather than the decades it used to take.

Having such a sea of information available at the touch of a key or the click of a mouse makes some people uneasy. They may like being able to get a real-time update of their team's score or check the current price on a stock, but they hesitate to dive further into what seems to them an overwhelming deluge of facts, figures, and opinions. Though many welcome the constant high tide of information, many people feel swamped by it and frequently need to come up for air lest they drown.

One cause of this modern malady is contradiction. A news report says, for instance, that the American army met only sporadic resistance on the road to Baghdad and were greeted and cheered by most of the Iraqis along the way. Another report announces that U.S. forces were nowhere near their objective, and, in fact, an Iraqi victory was certain and imminent.

To most people, the decision over which report correctly conveys reality is relatively easy, yet for some it is a daunting choice. They have a difficult time determining which report to believe for a number of reasons:

1. They may be ambivalent about the sources, considering them to be equals, either in terms of morality or credibility.
2. Being thousands of miles away, they may say to themselves, "How can I know who is telling me the truth? I'm not there to see it for myself."
3. They may cynically believe that everyone has an agenda, and thus no one tells the truth.
4. They may be so uninformed in this area that they have no basis for making such a determination.

Additional causes of stress due to information overload are a lack of time to absorb what is taken in; an inability to detect "spin," "baloney," or "satire"; an awareness of increasing instances of "manufactured" news and "doctored" supporting evidence; and a deficient background in history, language, culture, economics, and politics, among others, to provide context.

It is no minor problem, and it has interesting and potentially devastating ramifications for us as Christians. We enjoy being

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able both to obtain and dispense God's truth so abundantly. Yet, paradoxically, the more information that is available, the more easily people can be deceived.

The First Seal

It is no coincidence that the first warning Jesus gives about "the sign of [His] coming and the end of the age" is, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:3-4). In fact, warnings about deception are frequent throughout His Olivet Prophecy (verses 4-5, 11, 23-26, 48). The time of the end, it seems, will be one of falsehood and deceit.

In the book of Revelation, this same warning appears as the first seal, also known as the first of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse:

Now I [John] saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:1-2)

Comparing Jesus' comments in Matthew 24 with these verses in Revelation 6, it becomes apparent that this horseman is not Christ proclaiming the true gospel but a counterfeit spreading the news of a false Messiah. For instance, this horseman carries a bow, but in every case, Christ is pictured with a sword (see Revelation 1:16; 19:15). Jesus interprets this horseman for us in Matthew 24:5: "For many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many."

The apostles frequently caution us to remain on guard against lies. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:6, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." In an obviously end-time passage, he warns:

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means. . . . (II Thessalonians 2:1-3)

He continues later in the chapter:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (Verses 9-10)

Peter speaks of "destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed" (II Peter 2:1-2). He later predicts that "scoffers will come in the last days, . . . saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'" (II Peter 3:3-4). The apostle Jude echoes these statements in his epistle (Jude 4, 17-18).

John warns Christians about deception being a hallmark of the Antichrist, signs of which were already popping up in his time:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. . . . I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. . . . These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. . . . Little children, let no one deceive you. (I John 2:18, 21, 26; 3:7)

God paints the time of the end as a period of rampant deceit. His concern is primarily spiritual, since recognizing, knowing, and following the truth is absolutely necessary to our salvation. However, we must also be on guard against secular, political, and cultural deceptions because they can affect our approach and reaction to the truth.

God's Nation?

No example of this is so clearly recognized as is the belief of some devout and patriotic Americans that the United States—"the land of the free and the home of the brave"—is God's country. This idea runs the gamut from the simple

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belief that the U.S. is a Christian nation to the more "true believer" conviction that it is America's manifest destiny to convert the world to its way of life and usher in a new age of world peace and prosperity. If every nation were like America, the belief goes, the world would enjoy the Kingdom of God on earth—or something close to it.

America, then, becomes God's proxy here below, and all its activities—good, bad, or indifferent—are bathed in a heavenly glow of righteousness and glory. Wars and "police actions" are no longer considered to be "aggressive," "imperialist," or "unwarranted," but instead they are roundly supported as "just," "honorable," and "necessary." Domestic and international policies are presented with religious-sounding phraseology—"crusade," "reformation," "revival," and the like—and with quotations from the Bible and eminent religionists of history. Patriotism evolves from a voluntary and spontaneous feeling of pride in one's country to a Christian responsibility.

In most cases, this situation is more bearable than its secular or immoral counterpart. However, taken to an extreme, such national self-righteousness produces naked intolerance, ostracism, persecution, and murder of those who disagree or merely fail to take part. Historical parallels exist in Cromwellian England and Puritan America, as well as in various Catholic nations under the Inquisition and Protestant nations in the first blush of the Reformation.

This equation of national action and God's will is highly persuasive to those who are already accustomed to look for the hand of God at work in the affairs of men. With the application of well-crafted, inspiring rhetoric and deft spinning of events and outcomes—all nationally broadcast—it is not difficult for the leadership of a nation to sway millions to its righteous cause in a relatively short time. These days, it is easier than ever.

Technological Fakes

Politics is a fertile playground for this sort of manipulation. According to its website, the 1998 movie "*Wag The Dog* examines the blurred lines between politics, the media and show business." It is worth viewing just to see how easily news can be manufactured and events spun to produce a desired effect upon the public. The movie's make-believe, world-class fraud was orchestrated to deflect criticism from a president running for reelection.

Six years ago, scientists invented a procedure that allows them to put words in anyone's mouth. All they need is a relatively small amount of video footage along with its soundtrack. By isolating phonetic segments in both audio and video, splicing them together, and smoothing the transitional facial movements and sounds, they can make a person say, on camera, just about anything. For instance, if they had a reason to do it, they could show former President Jimmy Carter giving a recent George W. Bush pro-war speech in his own voice!

As of now, this procedure still takes time. There are concerns, though, that with increased computing speeds and refined technologies that such manipulation will soon be done in real-time. Already, there is commercial application of a related technology in which one image is seamlessly integrated into another, usually into a live-action event like a baseball game. Most television networks can now integrate in-game advertisements anywhere in the action where none exists in reality. Many advertisers have also combined historic footage with modern actors to make them seem contemporaneous.

However, deception does not need to be technology-heavy to be effective. According to British sources, the Bush administration's "disinformation campaign" leading up to the Iraq invasion succeeded in fooling even Israeli intelligence by breaking a fabricated story of the defection of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to the *DEBKAF* website. Within hours, Aziz appeared on television to deny the story, allowing American intelligence to get a fix on this high-level member of Saddam Hussein's regime and track him to the dictator himself. From this was developed the "target of opportunity" with which the war opened.

Some have postulated that some of the signs and miracles of the False Prophet will be technologically enhanced. Notice Revelation 13:13-15:

He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

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Technology has certainly progressed to the point that such conjectures are not outside the realm of possibility. However, we know from II Thessalonians 2:9 and Revelation 13:2 that Satan the Devil will give supernatural power to both the Beast and the False Prophet to carry out his designs. If these signs are somehow aided by technology, they will only be the more deceptive.

What To Do?

We need to remember that the deceptions of the last days will be difficult to see through. The False Prophet will be allowed to fool almost everyone on earth with his "lying wonders." Jesus cautions, "For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand" (Matthew 24:24-25).

How do we make sure we are not deceived? Obviously, we need to remain close to God. Jesus says, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). A thorough and deep knowledge of God—both intellectual and experiential—will go far in avoiding the deceptive traps of this age. When we truly understand the nature of God—what He is, how He thinks, what He does, what He purposes—we will know whether a statement or action is truly of God or of the Adversary.

Jesus also tells us, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). This covers two areas: 1) being informed and aware of events, and 2) communicating often with God by His Spirit. Discussing with God the day's events helps us understand His perspective on these matters and brings us into conformity with His will.

Finally, Jesus explains, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). One can best spot a counterfeit by knowing the original. The more we study the truth in God's Word, the easier it is to recognize falsehood. Daily Bible study, minutely examining the riches of Scripture, will give us the education and training to know truth from error (I John 4:1; Isaiah 8:19-20).

We need not despair at the inundation of information we receive every day. God has given us a filter, His Holy Spirit, that enables us to see things through God's eyes and "will guide [us] into all truth" (John 16:13). If we have received the love of the truth and make use of God's Spirit, we will be able to recognize the lying wonders in the days ahead.

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Spiritual Gifts
by Betty Schatzle (West Chester, Ohio)

In order to have and use the spiritual gifts that God gives individual persons, we must first have the Holy Spirit within us. To receive the Holy Spirit, you must first believe there is only one God and that he created all things in heaven and on Earth. Acts. 2:38 says "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to His believers only, not to the whole world. (Rom 8:9). "Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Even though we have the Holy Spirit we still have to depend wholly on Jesus for our Salvation. We do this by prayer and being the Christian His spirit makes us. We must also have the fruits of God's Spirit in our inner most being, they will guard us against abusive use of our spiritual gifts. Gal 5:22-23 says, "the fruits of God's Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." The fruit analogy is reminiscent of Jesus teachings on vine, branches, and fruitful harvest. Jesus said in Acts 1:8 "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in many places even to the end of the Earth." All who have the Holy Spirit in them are to witness. Our actions speak louder than words. The purpose of Spiritual Gifts is to enable believers to do the work God has called them for. To help people to find Jesus to let them know He is a loving God, and He wants each and every one of us to make it into His Kingdom.

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We should never boast in what we do or think too little of ourselves. We are all important to God and we all have a specific mission here on Earth. To be a witness is one of the primary responsibilities one has when he receives the Holy Spirit. Our gifts enable us to serve Jesus Christ and to bring more people to believing in him. We must be very careful to guard against making a statement or speaking a message that is not the truth of God. We are only human, and God knows we are going to make some humanly mistakes, but we need to be as Christ-like as we can, and we will be rewarded in the end. Since we all have different gifts, we are to use them accordingly, willingly, and humbly.

Eph 4:11-12 shows us some of the different ways we can use our particular gift. There are many places in the Bible where you can find out about the various spiritual gifts. We need to prayerfully study God's word and ask for His guidance of the Holy Spirit to figure out which one God has given you and use that gift to the best of your ability. It will be nice for God when he comes back to this Earth to find out that his children have perfected the gifts, he gave them.

The Nightmare of Diabetes

by David Antion (Pasadena, California)

A client of mine came in with tears this morning. She just got news that her mother, age 69, had only a short time to live and was in the final stages of kidney failure. Her mother has had type II diabetes for years and just a few weeks ago had to have her toes removed from one foot because of gangrene.

I personally know of 8 people who are struggling with diabetes and its complications. Diabetes is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. And it is on the rise skyrocketing even among children. Predictions based on current research suggests that one in three children born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime. Right now, it's about 1 out of every 16 people who have the disease or about 18 million Americans. That number is expected to double in the next 40 years or so.

Most people know that there are two types of diabetes. Type I was called juvenile diabetes because the pancreas fails during childhood to produce insulin. Type 2 diabetes occurs in adulthood when the insulin produced is not sufficient. Type II can usually be controlled by diet and exercise both of which take self-control!

THE CAUSES: An article written in the 1950's predicted that diabetes would be rampant. It cited the use of corn syrup by mothers as a sweetener in milk or formulae for babies. The writer said that corn syrup would over work the pancreas and create diabetic conditions in these children.

Even worse, today companies use high fructose corn syrup! This sweetener is in soft drinks, in almost every piece of candy, in cereals, etc. In fact, recent research shows that the consumption of high fructose corn syrup has increased 1,000 percent between 1970 and 1990. This far exceeds the percentages of intake of any other food or food group! This sweetener now represents 40 percent of the caloric sweeteners added to our foods and beverages! The Department of Agriculture links the rise in obesity and type II diabetes directly to the increased consumption of high fructose corn syrup!

In addition to the increased consumption of high fructose corn syrup other factors are involved such as too much food and too little exercise. This leads to obesity or what used to be called being “fat.” When a person gains weight, the excess fat decreases the body's ability to use or respond to insulin. This is called insulin resistance. When this happens, a person will find that his/her blood sugar has gone up. Most doctors will warn that person about their situation.

While type II diabetes can be controlled with diet and exercise, many people prefer the quick and easy (but not as effective) solution. They prefer to go on drugs that lower the blood sugar and eventually insulin intake.

If you are overweight, you need a blood test to determine where your blood sugar levels are. But don't be deceived. Many people think that if their blood sugar levels are within the normal ranges, they have nothing to worry about. This is simply self-deception.

What happens is that the pancreas will continue to work hard to supply the needed insulin. But, when it is assaulted continually with high sugar foods - like Mrs. Fields Milk Chocolate & Walnuts cookie (300 calories), or Haagen-Dazs's

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Mint Chip Dazzles made from 3 scoops of ice cream, hot fudge, Oreos, chocolate sprinkles and whipped cream - totally about 1270 calories; and given no help through exercise or self-control - the pancreas will eventually quit. When this happens the blood sugar levels will rise to dangerous and destructive levels.

THE DANGERS OF DIABETES: If you get a diagnosis of diabetes, you have just been told you will not have a very long life. Diabetes is linked to cardiovascular disease. It is the leading cause of blindness in America. It is a major contributor to kidney failure and gangrene leading to amputations.

Here’s why. Elevated sugar levels in the body seem to increase cholesterol fat deposits in the arteries. Furthermore, diabetics have increased thirst and urinate frequently. They lose a great number of nutrients essential to good health. Here are some: Magnesium is washed out by increased and frequent urination. Magnesium is necessary for good heart function and good muscle function. When magnesium decreases the glucose (sugar) control deteriorates because magnesium is needed for proper carbohydrate metabolism. This can also lead to high blood pressure and other cardiovascular problems.

Zinc is also a water-soluble nutrient necessary for immune system functions in fighting infections. It is also necessary to prevent excessive hair loss. Loss of zinc can also lead to diarrhea which leads to more losses of nutrients.

The B vitamins are also water-soluble. Losses of such B vitamins as B12, folic acid and B6 can lead to increased homocysteine levels. As homocysteine levels increase it can lead to increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Losses of B12 and folic acid can have negative effects on mental function such as depression, irritability, and forgetfulness. It can impair nerve function.

Vitamin C and many antioxidants are also lost in the diabetic. You probably have some idea of the many functions in the body of vitamin C.

KEEP BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS NORMAL: High blood sugar in the body is extremely dangerous. Some of the diabetics I’ve known think their only problem is to keep from going into a coma. They don’t realize that high blood sugar levels destroy nerves in the body. That’s why blindness is so common a side effect of diabetes. It burns out the optic nerve.

Neuropathy - the condition where the nerves are being destroyed - is a common result when blood sugar levels remain higher than normal. Eventually people lose feelings in their feet or toes. Slow healing is another problem in the body when the blood sugar levels are higher than normal. Cuts, sores, etc. do not heal quickly or well.

Can you see why the body cannot tolerate high blood sugar? Can you understand why the pancreas must work to keep blood sugar levels normal?

DIET AND EXERCISE: There is no such thing in Nature as white sugar or high fructose corn syrup. When these enter the body, they flush immediately into the blood stream raising blood sugar levels dramatically. This alarms the pancreas (that part that produces the insulin) and it begins to produce a lot of insulin because the levels rise so high so fast. This can happen from one bottle of soda pop or a cookie, candy bar, donut, pie, cake, etc. Exercise has been shown time and again to be very important for the body. We live in a sedentary society. We deceive ourselves that we’re well conditioned when we watch our Olympic athletes compete. “See! Americans are fit and trim and in good shape.” Well, that is true of THEM. But, what about you, your children, and your friends?

Exercise helps the body handle and use blood sugar effectively. It keeps the body trim and helps prevent obesity. This in combination with eating more natural foods and avoiding high sugar foods is the key to preventing type II diabetes.

HOW CAN YOU TELL: How can you tell whether you are subject to developing type II diabetes? First, there is a genetic predisposition toward diabetes. If it runs in your family, you need to be careful. If you are an adult and do not now have diabetes, there is much you can do to keep yourself from ever getting the disease.

WHAT I WOULD DO: If I got sugar diabetes, I would endeavor to avoid all simple sugars and especially anything with high fructose corn syrup. I would cut out all white flour products, white rice, and white sugar.

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I would eat more protein foods and eat only one single piece of fruit two times a day. I would begin a program of regular exercise that would include muscle strengthening and walking for 40 minutes steady. These could alternate on different days.

I would add to my diet a glucose tolerance factor supplement (GTF) which consists of a complex chromium micro-mineral. I would make sure I had enough of the B vitamins and good fatty acids so that I would feel satisfied. I would make sure that my gall bladder was healthy so I could digest fats properly so that I would not have cravings for sugar and starches.

In other words, I would do about more of what I am doing now! And if I continue what I'm doing now it is unlikely that I would end up with diabetes at all.

My wish for you is that you would avoid this dreaded plague and it is preventable just by changing your lifestyle.

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Other Items

Baptism

Sent by Ted & Joanne Saunders (Renton, Washington)



Johnny's Mother looked out the window and noticed him "playing church" with their cat.

He had the cat sitting quietly and he was preaching to it. She smiled and went about her work. A while later she heard loud meowing and hissing and ran back to the open window to see Johnny baptizing the cat in a tub of water.

She called out, "Johnny, stop that! The cat is afraid of water!"

Johnny looked up at her and said, "He should have thought about that before he joined my church."

Marriage!

by James Steinle (Swanville, Minnesota)

What joy! What happiness! What excitement the thought of marriage brings! What a paradox that weddings at first seem so far off yet rush to quickly to the date.

A bride to be, how flushed and beautiful and full of life! Hearts are full of exploding effervescence as though as a bottle of exquisite French Champagne. What joy shines out of sparkling eyes, so full of laughter and hidden mystery.

Bride and groom, looking forward to spending a lifetime together. Looking forward to growing in loving and righteous character as the years roll on. Learning of love, patience, and tenderness. Walking side by side, through the valleys and shaded glens. Through the thorny thickets and the scented gardens. Upon the flowered alpine pastures and across rocky slopes.

The man being a leader and a strength to the woman, and the woman being a helpmeet to the man. Knowing their ultimate destiny and desiring each other to attain it. And each giving help to the other as they cross the thorny, rocky places in the pathways of their lives.

And each being there to share the joy when the stars are shining bright.

A Blast from the Past

Take Heed That No Man Deceive You

by Garry D. Pifer (Bloomington, Illinois)

Jesus' disciples came to Him on the mount of Olives and asked Him what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the world. His response, known as the Olivet prophecy, is found in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. It is interesting to note His first statement, as recorded in verses 4 and 5 of Matthew 24. He instructed them, and us, to "take heed that no man deceive you." He continued by saying "many shall come" and "shall deceive many." They would be able to do that by coming in His name, "saying, I am Christ." Numerous commentaries and Bible helps would suggest that Jesus was saying that "many" would come and say that they themselves were the returned Christ. Though there might possibly be a few who would attempt to lead some astray in this way, it doesn't appear that there are "many" doing such. However, there are "many" that come in Jesus' name, as His disciples, His followers, believers, and proclaim that "I am," which as we know was the name by which Jesus revealed Himself to Moses in the Old Testament, is "Christ," the Messiah. And Jesus tells us, that even though they come in that manner we must "take heed," we must be careful, to not let their teachings deceive us. Just because they claim to be followers of Jesus Christ and come proclaiming Him as Christ, doesn't mean that all they say is true. Ezekiel 22:28 comes to mind. Speaking of "her prophets" he says they are guilty of "divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken."

I believe that today we do see "many" coming in the name and authority of Jesus, proclaiming Him as the Christ, but speaking many things that supposedly are the words and truths of God and the Bible when in fact they are speaking lies. Sadly, many are being deceived. And, perhaps what we haven't been willing to acknowledge, this isn't occurring only within Christianity around us, BUT also within our own midst. We definitely need to hear Jesus' warning and take heed.

One area (of many) that a number of individuals have been speaking out on and are attempting to use Scripture to support is that of entering the military service to participate in the war on terrorism. They are attempting to give their words a "thus saith the Lord God" but the clear Scripture tells us "The Lord hath not spoken."

Let's look at some of the clear Scripture and see what the Lord has spoken. Early in His ministry Jesus made a profound statement that is just as true today as it was then. Notice Matthew 6:24. "No man can serve two masters:" He goes ahead to say that he will hate one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. But He clearly says that there is no way a man can serve both. Who is our master? There are a number of Scriptures that tell us that we have been bought and paid for by Jesus, through His sacrifice. 1 Corinthians 7:23 tells us this. "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." When one enters the military, he is owned by the government. He is the servant of the military system. He can't come and go as he wills; he can't quit because the going gets rough, he is a "G.I.," government

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In Romans the sixth chapter Paul speaks of our being no longer slaves of sin. He says we have become the servants of righteousness (verse 18) and servants of God (verse 22). The Greek word from which "servants" is translated is *douloo*, which means "to make a slave of." Metaphorically it means to give oneself "wholly to one's needs and service." It means to "make myself a bondman to him." We are the slaves, the bond servants, of Jesus and of God. And, as Jesus plainly told us, **WE CAN NOT SERVE TWO MASTERS.**

In John 15, which has been read during traditional Passover services, Jesus states that His disciples "are not of the world" (verse 19). During His prayer just before He was taken (chapter 17 of John) He states several times that His disciples were not of the world. Notice verses 14 and 16. "They are not of the world." In verse 15 He specifically says He wasn't praying that His disciples be taken OUT of the world. They and we must live in the world BUT must not be OF the world. Joining the military makes us OF the world.

Just a few verses over, chapter 18 and verse 36, Jesus makes a very powerful statement. "My kingdom is not of this world." His kingdom was not established yet. And His kingdom will not be a kingdom of the world. It is to be totally different. He continued, "if my kingdom were of this world" (which it wasn't and isn't) "then would my servants" (who cannot serve two masters) "fight." He concludes the statement by stating "but now is my kingdom not from hence." When He returns to establish His kingdom, He will make war and there will be armies following Him (Revelation 19) but we are told that "in righteousness he doth judge and make war (verse 11). No war that man enters into can truly be one of righteousness.

The Apostle Paul makes it very plain in his writings, which are a part of Scripture, that we have been conscripted into the army of Jesus Christ. Writing to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:3, he says, "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The next verse gives us further instruction. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." Paul knew, just as Jesus said, we can't serve two masters. One who has been "chosen to be a soldier" cannot be involved in other affairs of life. His total commitment is to his commanding officer. As soldiers of Jesus Christ, our commanding officer, we cannot be a part of another man's military. We have been chosen to serve Jesus Christ and be a part of His army.

Paul also addresses the fact that we are already in a war, but it isn't the physical warfare of killing other human beings. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)" Also, notice Ephesians 6:12. "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." Our battle isn't fought with guns and tanks and aircraft. We are in a spiritual battle. And, again, the word of the Lord, the Scriptures tell us how we should be fighting this war.

Many are "pumped up" following the September 11 events. They want to "do something." Sadly, many are attempting to deceive them into getting involved with the physical warfare of the world rather than look to the Word for direction. Let's look at the words of God as recorded in Ezekiel 22:30. "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." The word translated "gap" is elsewhere translated "breach." How do we stand in the breach, the gap? We don't have to "figure it out" in our own reasonings. The Scriptures give us examples of many of the men of God who stood in the breach before God.

Moses, a man most meek, stood in the breach when God had decided to destroy the whole nation of Israel and start over with Moses. Look at Psalms 106:23. "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them." How did Moses' "stand" before God in the breach? Read the entire account in Exodus 32. Verse 11 says he "besought the Lord his God." In verse 30 Moses told the people he would "go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." He stood in the breach by talking to God. Notice verse 31, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold." Moses was heartfelt in his prayer. He wanted God's mercy upon His people. Look what he says to God in verse 32. "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." We know "the rest of the story." God "repented" of the evil he thought to do unto His people.

Nehemiah also was a servant of God that stood in the breach between Israel and God. You can read the account in the first chapter of Nehemiah. We will look at a few verses. In verse 4 he says that "it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." Notice how he prayed. Verse 5, "I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments." Continuing in verses 6 and 7, "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgements, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses."

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After rehearsing the words of God that had been given to Moses in verses 8 and 9 Nehemiah tells God that he, and the Israelites, are the people of God. He then cries out to God in verse 11, "O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." He was fighting for Israel, but not with implements of carnal, physical warfare. He was standing in the breach, beseeching God with prayer and fasting.

Another powerful example of a man of God standing in the breach for his people was Daniel. In chapter 9 of the book of Daniel we find Daniel coming to understand from his study that God's word had come to Jeremiah revealing what God "would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (verse 2). Notice how Daniel responded. Verse 3, "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:" You can read on through the next several verses and you will see the attitude that Daniel had. He confessed the sins of himself, Judah, Jerusalem, and all Israel. He repeatedly says that they had not obeyed God, that they had transgressed God's law and they were receiving the curse and "the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him." (Verse 11) Down in verse 16 he begins to beseech God to turn His anger and fury away from Jerusalem. He continues in the next several verses to ask God to hear his prayer and his supplications, to incline His ear and hear. And he concludes his prayer, the last half of verse 18 and verse 19, by saying, "for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

These individuals had a deep concern for the nation. They did what really makes a difference. They came to God in heartfelt prayer, supplication, and fasting. Fasting, unpleasant to most, is a powerful tool when properly used. In Isaiah 58 we see the contrast of the type of fasting that accomplished nothing other than hunger and the fast that God has chosen. (Verses 6-7) God tells us of the blessings and results of that proper fast. Interesting to note is the last half of verse 12, "and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

Once again, let us repeat the words of Jesus. "Take heed that no man deceive you." Some of the arguments and interpretations sound good. They often appeal to our emotional state. But let us always "search the Scriptures" to see what the Lord God truly has spoken. If someone asks if it is proper for a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, to join the military, you don't have to tell them that it is their decision. It is their decision to follow the Word or not, but clearly the Bible shows us that as Christ's disciples, as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ, we cannot entangle ourselves with the carnal warfare of this world. But we don't have to stand by and wring our hands. We can stand in the breach and cry out to God with prayer and fasting for our nation. Plus, we can follow the words of our Lord as recorded in Matthew 5:43-45. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

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Holy Days 2022

Passover – April 16, 2022 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Unleavened Bread – April 16-22, 2022

Pentecost – June 5, 2022

Trumpets - September 26, 2022

Atonement – October 5, 2022

Tabernacles – October 10-16, 2022

Last Great Day – October 17, 2022