

The Gospel Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION

UNITY & TRUTH

**So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. Eze. 34:12 Jer. 32:39

**But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished. Rev. 10:7 Matt. 24:31

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 52 February 2022 No. 2



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Psalm 122:1

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound,
who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in
Newark, Ohio 43055.
POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

This periodical carries no subscription price;
however, it is partially maintained through the gifts
and offerings of its readers, with the balance of the
expenses being paid by the local congregation.

PRAYER: If you need prayer, please phone or write:

Roger L. Decker, Pastor
83 Decrow Ave.
Newark, OH 43055

Email: pastor@church-of-god-online.com
Phone: 740-344-2543

Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312

This monthly religious journal is published for the benefit of the
Church of God universally. It is our supreme purpose to reach
the world for Christ through the printed page. Our burden is to
reveal the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and
error, war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding
traditions of men that have no biblical foundations.

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

- A personal God (John 4:24)
- A divine Christ (John 1:1, 14)
- An infallibly inspired Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- Salvation from sin (Matt. 1:21)
- The new birth (John 3:3, 5-7)
- A holy life (Luke 1:73-75; Titus 2:12)
- Sanctification (1 Thess. 5:23)
- Unity of God's people (John 17:21, Eph. 4)
- Divine, physical healing (James 5:14-16)
- The ordinances (Matt. 28:19-20; John 13;
1 Cor. 11:23, 34)
- Eternal life (Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:43)
- The Trinity (1 John 5:7, 8)

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

- Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
- God admits members (1 Cor. 12:13-18)
- Sin puts you out of it (Rom. 11:22; Ex. 32:33)
- The saved only are members (John 15:2-6)
- Membership is offered to all (Rev. 22:17)
- Final rewards (Rev. 20:12-15; 21:3-4; 22:14)
- Bible name of the Church (Acts 20:28;
Gal. 1:13; John 17:11)

We reserve the right to edit and/or decline any material
for any reason. Not responsible for unsolicited articles or
items.

CONTENTS

The Birth of the Church.....	3
Accept No Substitutes.....	8
Especially for Young People.....	14
God's Divine Care for His People	17
A Lad, Five Barley Loaves, and Two Small Fish	22

Vol. 52 February 2022 No. 2

Guest Editorial

*"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's
husbandry, ye are God's building."*

1 Corinthians 3:9

*"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you
also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."*

2 Corinthians 6:1

Workers Together

As born again Christians, we are a part of the beautiful Church of God, the body of Christ. Therefore, as saints and believers, we are to work together with Him to build up the beautiful church, or Kingdom of God. The church is a soul saving station where saints unite their efforts together to win others to Christ and the glorious Truth. God has a specific work for each member to perform. Every worker is important and vitally needed to accomplish the mission of spreading the Gospel to this lost world.

This requires earnest prayer, Bible reading, and being faithful in church attendance. Having a real burden and being willing to contribute your time, energy, and talents to the work is necessary. Faithfulness to God and His work conveys an important message to those who watch our lives. Not all are preachers, not everyone is an evangelist, a singer, or a teacher. Yet, all are workers and helpers together, each filling his place in the body. It is not just being workers and doing what we think is good,

but harmoniously working together for the glory of God. Working together demonstrates the unity that God desires.

Laboring together creates a close relationship with Christ and with one another. Unity in heart and spirit are essential, especially in a world where division and strife are so prevalent. When this condition exists, it makes any effort difficult to be spiritually profitable. Satan, through his deceitfulness, endeavors to bring his divisive work into the ranks of the Church of God. As the people of God, we must be awake and reject his attempts to divide and separate us from Christ and one another. There is great power in true unity, and the devil knows this. Therefore, we must stay focused on the instructions the Lord laid down for us to follow. Jesus reminded us of the need of being one with the Father. He prayed for this oneness and unity to be among His people. His words in John 17:11b are, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."

[continued on page 7]

Isaiah 66:5 Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

6 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence

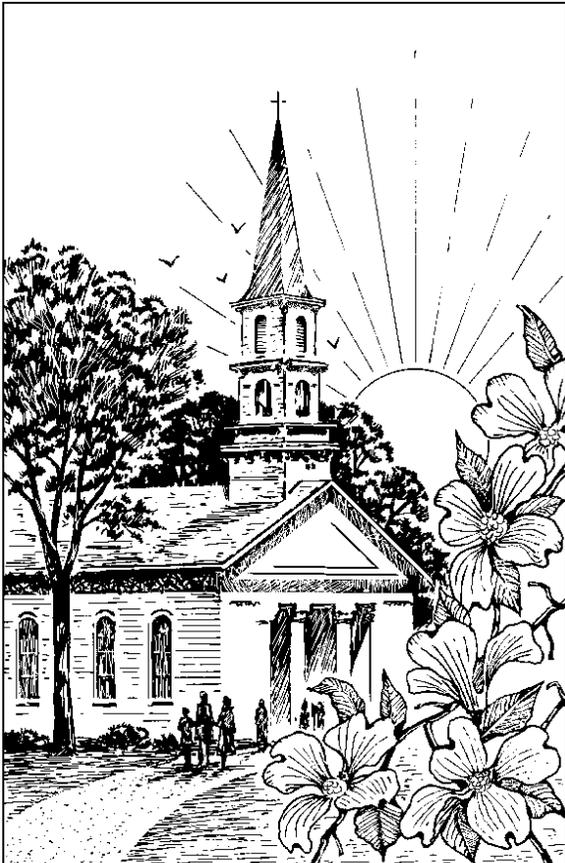
to his enemies.

7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.

10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.



The Birth of the Church

Brother Roger L. Decker

Zion Brought Forth Children

We want to look into the Old Testament prophecy concerning the birth of the church. Verse 7 of our Scripture text says, "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child." There was going to be a great and sudden increase of her numbers. Zion was represented as a woman and a mother. Isaiah 54:1

reads, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD."

Zion, the church, is the mother of spiritual children, and her increase was to be sudden, as if a child was born without the usual delay and pain. The Prophet Isaiah said in verse 8 of our

Scripture text, "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." According to this verse, something was going to take place that had never happened before. In other words, something was going to take place beyond the normal. The earth was going to bring

forth.

The earth does not bring forth in a day. It has been bringing forth since Creation. What was the Prophet Isaiah talking about? He was speaking of Zion, the Church of the Living God. Isaiah 66:5-14 states: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

"Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies."

The Lord will appear to the joy of the humble believer and bring confusion to the hypocrites and persecutors. When the Spirit was poured out and the Gospel went forth, beginning in Jerusalem and Zion, multitudes were converted in a small space of time. The Word of God, especially God's promises and ordinances, are the consolations of the church. Every convert brought to Christ increases the true happiness of Zion. The Prophet Isaiah said, "Who hath heard such a thing?" He was speaking of birth, so sudden. Normally birth takes a while. The earth takes a while to produce. Nations rise by degrees, and it is a slow process.

A Holy Nation

Can the earth be made to bring forth in one day? No, not normally. It takes time. It takes months and years for the growth of the earth to spring forth, but in our Scripture text an event was going to take place in one day. Shall a nation be born at once? Such an event had never occurred. A nation is brought into existence by degrees, but Isaiah talked about a nation being born to present to the world in one day. It had its own law, its own government and its own head. The church did not produce Christ, but rather Christ produced the church.

As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth children. What was the prophet talking about? What natural birth can come forth in a day? He was talking about spiritual birth. Away with the thought that one has to learn theology, catechism, or be preached to for a year or so. One can have a spiritual birth as soon as he believes the Gospel. When he is sick of his sinful condition and puts faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ, then he can be born again.

This is something that takes

place outside the norm. When we think of nations, we think of countries, cities, skyscrapers, buildings, sidewalks, and streets. Those kinds of nations come in degrees. As a nation expands, the city expands by degrees. It does not happen in a day; yet, this nation came forth in a day. This nation is different from all other nations. Why? This nation is none other than the church. This nation came forth a holy nation. This nation came into existence when God sent forth His Holy Spirit.

God's people are a holy people. Exodus 19:4-6 reads: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." This was the message that God gave to Moses to tell the people, and it is the same message yet today. God wants people who will obey His voice, keep His covenant, and be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God's people are kings and priests today. Some say a person has to go away and study catechism and theology and doctrine for months and years before he can become a priest, but that is not so. One might have to do that to become a part of man's priesthood, but that is not so with God's priesthood. Revelation 1:4-6 states: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of

the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

A Peculiar Treasure

You become a king and a priest when you are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. A king reigns and a priest serves. You do both when you are saved. You reign over sin, you reign over the power of temptation, you reign over the flesh and anything that is contrary to the Gospel. You are a priest who serves the Lord and the brethren with a thankful heart. Exodus 19:5 states that when Israel obeyed God's voice and kept His covenant, they became a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people.

What makes God's people peculiar? It is the fact that we belong to God. Titus 2:11-14 states: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The word *peculiar* means "reserved for himself." One must be made clean to be reserved for God.

The Prophet Isaiah said a nation would be born at once. What nation was he talking about? A nation was born at once on the Day of Pentecost. The earth brought forth in one day. When the Holy Spirit came, this earth changed into a holy nation. The Bible says that Peter, stand-

ing up for the eleven, ushered out the old and introduced the new.

We read in Acts 2:14-21: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: [This was something new. There were ones, maybe some patriarchs, some prophets, and so forth, that the Spirit of God used, but the Spirit was never poured out on all flesh, but now it was being poured out on all flesh.] and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh

This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel in Joel 2:28-32: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the hand-

maids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."

When Peter stood up on the Day of Pentecost and spoke the words of the Prophet Joel, he said it would come to pass afterwards. He was talking about after the coming of Jesus Christ, when He was in the midst of Israel, a nation was going to be born at once. People were born again after Peter preached the message about King David being in his sepulcher and that God had raised up Jesus and set Him on His throne. He told them that they were guilty of crucifying the Lord and Christ. What happened? The Scripture says they were pricked to the heart.

Acts 2:37 says, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter gave them instructions to be saved.

How we need the Holy Spirit as a convincer. No doubt, some Jews on the Day of Pentecost had seen some miracles that Jesus did, but they were untouched. They saw His actions in the courtroom when He opened not His mouth, and they were still unmoved. Some of them might have seen Him on the Cross when He cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," yet they were still untouched. When the Holy Spirit comes to the heart, He calls for action. Peter instructed them to

repent and be baptized. Acts 2:41 says, "There were added unto them about three thousand souls." A nation was brought forth at once. Why did Peter say to repent and be baptized? Baptism is not repentance; repentance comes before being baptized.

Peter described this nation in 1 Peter 2:1-10: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

A Chosen Generation

God's people are a holy people. God's church is a holy

church, and all of this (the church, the holiness, the nation, the peculiar people, and the royal priesthood) came forth in a day, or in an instant. On the Day of Pentecost, three thousand souls were born into the church. Soon afterward, another five thousand souls were added to that nation, and that made eight thousand. A holy nation was born at once.

You do not have to struggle with God. When you mean business, you can get instant help. Peter stood up and preached. I do not know how long the message was, but it pricked the hearts of those to whom he was preaching. This was a different conversation that Peter had than when he denied Christ to a little maid. That was Peter talking to the maid, but now the Holy Spirit was using Peter. That made all the difference. When Peter stood up and spoke, conviction fell on many people, possibly some of the same individuals who at one time hollered: "Crucify Him, crucify Him! Give us Barabbas."

If the Holy Spirit moves upon your heart to be saved, you should not keep denying Him and turning Him down. Why? You could wind up blaspheming. You never want to do that because then there would be no hope for you. We do not have another dispensation coming. This is it. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. We are a chosen generation, a holy nation. What did Peter say in 1 Peter 2:9? "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Look at the description given to the church. You are chosen. You are of royal blood now. You are holy and peculiar, and you belong to God. You have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light. When someone

is called out of darkness and into the light, he gives all the praise to God. When a person comes to Jesus Christ, what does he do? He comes to really know God. Do you know God? Somebody may say, "I know all about God." If you do not know Jesus Christ, if He is not your Savior, you do not really know God. Why? It is in Jesus Christ that you learn about God; you learn what God is like.

When a person comes to Jesus Christ, he comes to know God. No longer does he guess who God is. In Jesus Christ is the light of the knowledge of God. When one comes to Jesus Christ, he comes to know goodness. Christ becomes the standard by which all actions and all motives are tested. When a man comes to know Jesus Christ, he finds the way. He no longer gropes in darkness. He no longer walks an unmarked highway without a guide. When a man comes to Jesus Christ, he becomes acquainted with a power that he has never known before. He has power over something that might have held him in bondage for years, but he finds he has power. He finds that he can say no to the devil. He does not have to give in to temptation any longer. All he has to do is call upon God and the situation can become reversed. He finds that he has ample power to serve God. He finds that he can please God and have victory over sin.

Becoming a Member of God's Church

Peter called the church a chosen people. We have entered into a covenant with God, and in the covenant we enter into a special relationship with God. Do you know you have a covenant with God? When you got saved, you made an agreement. A lot of people pray at the altar, "If You do this, Lord, I will serve You."

As long as God's people keep the covenant, they are a special people. Man is chosen for obedience and for service. He becomes part of a royal priesthood.

Every Christian has access to God. He must offer his work and his worship and himself to God. We become a holy nation. We are part of that holy nation. The Christian is different from other people. He lives differently, he acts differently, he worships differently, he talks differently, he dresses differently, and he goes to different places than the world does. He finds his happiness and joy in serving God, and he is dedicated to God's will and His service. What does he do? He becomes peculiar because of Who possesses him. Paintings become famous because of who the artist was. The value of anything is determined by who made it. The Christian is possessed by God. He becomes God's property. He might have been a very ordinary person or he might have been a person from skid row, but he has ac-

quired new value because he belongs to God.

Isaiah's prophecy that we read has reference to the birth of the church. Are you a part of this holy nation? If not, you can be. The church is praying that you will make that choice. If you want a change to take place in your life because you are sick of your condition, it can happen in an instant, just as long as it takes for your prayer to reach the throne of Heaven. When you seek Him with all your heart, that can happen instantly and you can become a member of this holy nation.

What was the Prophet Isaiah talking about? He was talking about the church. Mount Zion is the church. She is a holy nation, a peculiar people. Also, God's church is zealous. We are a zealous people. We have a desire to do right. If you are not a member of God's church, you are not a member of this holy nation, but you can be. All you have to do is humble yourself before God and tell Him that you are sorry for

every sin that you have ever committed. Maybe you cannot remember them all, but God can. What can you do? You can bring them all to God in a bundle and lay them at His feet. He will take you out of that old nation you were in and bring you into a holy nation. He will make you peculiar. He will make you a king and a priest, and you will be a full-fledged member of the one church, the church of the Living God.

If you are in need of repentance and you are sick of living the way that you are living, we have no church for you to join. You could not join the Church of God if you wanted too. You must be born into her by the new birth. On the Day of Pentecost, they did not go around and take names. They just said, "Repent and be baptized." Why? The Lord writes your name in the Book of Life when you are born into His family.

(Compact Disc TR-2407)

[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2]

Love for Christ must be first, and then love one to another. This is the key to real success and unity. In John 13:34-35 Jesus spoke these words: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love is the bond that cements God's people together. It causes us to work in unity and harmony.

Without the love of God ruling in our hearts, laboring together is impossible. Real love is long-suffering, it is kind, and it demonstrates humility. Love does not demand its own way or create problems when things go differently than one desires it to.

Laboring together for the cause of the Gospel often requires us to forsake our own ideas, our wants, and our desires. One may strongly feel that things should be done a certain way in order to attain the best

results. Being laborers together requires submission, first to God and then to one another. Paul admonished the Ephesian brethren with these words, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). Also, in 1 Peter 5:5 we are reminded to "be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Selected

***It is not so much what we know as
how well we use what we know.***

2 Samuel 23:13 And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of

Rephaim.

14 And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

15 And David longed, and said,

Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!

Accept No Substitutes



Brother Roger Nethers

The Real Thing

No doubt, David drank water from the well in Bethlehem many times, and he remembered it as water that satisfied him. Longing for it as he did, he must have thought there was none better. No other water satisfied him the way that sweet water did at the well in Bethlehem.

Do you have a memory from your childhood that sticks in your mind? Perhaps you remember your grandmother's warm chocolate chip cookies fresh from the oven. Something about that may conjure up a memory that brings back that sense of satisfaction. You may think that you would just love to go back one more time and sit in Grandma's kitchen and enjoy those cookies. I believe that is the way David

felt about the water at the well in Bethlehem. Even though you might have had hundreds of chocolate chip cookies since then, nothing really satisfies you like Grandma's cookies. There is no substitute for the real thing.

Have you ever bought generic products at the store? Perhaps you have gone to a grocery store and purchased a store brand product. We would not feel bad about doing that because many times we accept brand substitutes. Those circumstances seem to make sense from a financial standpoint. Sometimes there is little difference between the name brand and the substitute. If you understand marketing and the way things work in the real world, many times the cans labeled with the brand name come off the same

assembly line as the cans with the store brand name. On the other hand, sometimes substitutes are not as good as the original.

I am sure David drank from many different sources of water throughout his lifetime, yet there was something special about the water from the well in Bethlehem. That was the real thing to him. Maybe you are old enough to remember the slogan that Coca-Cola had for many years: "Coke — it's the real thing." When they tried to substitute something else for it, a lot of people got it in their mind that it was not the real thing, and they wanted to go back to the real thing.

When I was a boy, I grew up just outside of town. I remember drinking cold water from a spring. Sometimes it was just a

trickle, but in the springtime its flow was much stronger. There was something refreshing about that water, just to bend down and get a cold drink of that water as it came out of the hillside. Therefore, I can imagine how David must have felt and how he longed for the water from the well in Bethlehem.

Many times when I go back home and walk toward that spring, if it is running, I want to bend down and get a cold drink just for memory's sake, because I have lived in places where I did not have access to cold spring water. Often all we had was city water that was treated with chemicals. There is just something special about spring water flowing out of the hillside. When you have not had the real thing for a while, you get used to a substitute and almost forget what the real thing was like.

We accept the substitutes because it is easier. Another example that came to my mind was instant coffee. Those who drink coffee tell me it is not as good as freshly brewed coffee. Another example is oats. If you like old-fashioned or steel cut oats, instant oats are not the same. We have to be careful that we do not get so used to the substitutes that we forget what the real thing is like.

Cistern Water

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 2:11-13: "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

These verses of Scripture

present a picture of Israel accepting substitutes for God. Jeremiah said they had forsaken the Living Water and had hewed out broken cisterns. Israel had exchanged their God for worthless idols. They had gotten into the habit of accepting substitutes for God.

A cistern is typically a hole in the ground that is dug to hold water. In our day and time, cistern walls are usually made of concrete. In the past people probably used rocks or bricks for the wells to hold the water. A cistern is designed to hold rainwater. Unlike the fresh water from a spring or a well, the water in a cistern just sits there; it does not flow. No life-giving source is feeding it. It is useful for certain things, but it is not ideal drinking water because it sits there and becomes stagnant and lukewarm.

I remember traveling to Haiti. In the original mission house they had electricity and could run water to fill their cisterns, and they also collected rainwater in the cisterns. The water in the cisterns was useful for some things. I remember taking a bath with that water. I would draw out a bucket of water from the cistern and go into the bathroom with a bucket and a pail and lather up with soap and dump water over my head to rinse off. It was good for that, but I did not drink it.

During Jeremiah's time in the Middle East, springs were not abundant and wells were dug with much labor. Therefore, people dug cisterns to hold water. They would carry water from other sources to fill their cisterns, but they used it to water their herds and flocks and to do washings and things like that. Man does not want to drink stagnant cistern water.

As a boy, I walked the roads a lot. Back in those days, many people had spring houses, and most of the spring houses had a

tin cup hanging there, and anybody walking by was welcome to take the tin cup and get a drink from the spring. Often we helped ourselves to a neighbor's spring water. We would much rather have spring water than to drink out of a pool of stagnant water.

Living Water

Jesus gave the woman at the well Living Water. We read in John 4:5-15: "Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

"Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I

thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

The Living Water that Jesus gave her was the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God flows out from Heaven from Christ Himself. In Jeremiah 2:13 we find that God accused Israel of preferring the stagnant waters of their cisterns to the cool, refreshing Living Water that God wanted to supply them. Why would people prefer stagnant water to fresh water? I believe the answer is found in verse 13 when he said they dug their own cisterns.

Those cisterns that they dug were their own. Think about the culture of the time, with the springs and wells being few. When someone dug a cistern, it was his own. He did not have to go to a well and ask permission to get water. When a person caught rainwater or carried water to a cistern, it was his water, but it was just a substitute.

To get God's water, the Living Water, you have to pay a price. The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 55:1-2: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

How can you buy something without money? The answer is found in those two verses. He said: "Come ye to the waters" in verse 1, and in verse 2 he said to "hearken diligently" to God. Then verse 3 states, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." There is a price to pay for this Living Water. First, you must come, and then you must

hearken diligently to God's Word and keep His commandments.

Jesus said much the same thing. We read in John 7:37-38: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come [Again, the first thing you have to do is come, and then drink. It is one thing to come, but it is another thing to come and drink.] unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water [or the Holy Spirit]." In order to get God's water that you can buy without money, first you have to listen to what God has to say. Next, you must believe His Word, accept His standard, and live according to His Word.

Choosing Your Own Way Instead of God's Way

The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 55:6-7: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Some people have a very difficult time accepting God's standards. Sometimes people resist the Bible standards, especially against God's standards. Israel had gotten to a point where they did not want God; they wanted a substitute god. The problem was, they did not want God's standards; they wanted their own standards.

The analogy is, they dug their own cisterns. In other words, they began to live according to their own principles and their own standards. They wanted their own way, not God's way. They did not want His rules. They did not want His regulations. They did not want to live according to His expectations for

their lives.

Israel did not get in this condition overnight. They did not just wake up one morning and say, "We don't want God anymore." The same is true yet today. People do not just wake up one morning and say, "I decided that I am not going to live for God anymore." This is something that happens over a period of time. The people in Jeremiah's day were a very religious people. They had priests (or pastors) and prophets.

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 2:8, "The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit." They still had priests and prophets, and they still had the Law, but they did not want the real God. They wanted a substitute god. The problem was not that they wanted to stop being religious. However, they got into a habit of creating their own god, a god after their own image. They wanted a god who would allow them to dig their own cisterns. They wanted a god whom they could mold into their own image, or into what they wanted him to be.

This is similar to what people do today. They want a god that they can serve on Sunday and then serve other gods the rest of the week. They want to serve sports or other selfish ambitions that they chase all week long; then on Sunday morning they want to come in and pretend to be religious.

Accepting substitutes for God is not a matter of openly rejecting God, but sometimes it is a matter of slowly compromising faith so that the God whom people claim to love does not resemble the Lord who died for us, because they have morphed Him into something that is in their own

image instead of the true God. Friend, you have to be very careful that you do not fall into that same trap, because again, it does not happen overnight. It happens slowly as you begin to serve other gods. You must be careful not to compromise your faith. You must be careful to avoid accepting substitutes for God. After a while, you can forget what the real God is like. If you get too far away from God, you need to be like the prodigal son. You need to come to yourself and realize that it is better with the real God, and come back to Father's house.

Seeking True Satisfaction

As I was studying, I thought of David and how he longed for the water from the well in Bethlehem. To him, that water was the real thing, and he had a longing for it. Only that water could really satisfy him. Spiritually speaking, that water represents the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can bring true satisfaction to your life. You need to have a longing for the Holy Spirit, just as David longed for the water in Bethlehem. You must not allow any substitutes to get in the way.

In Psalm 42:1 David said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The hart is a male adult red deer. A deer can run very fast, but only for a short distance. A deer will tire quickly, and the deer's only defense is to get someplace where it can stop and rest. David said he longed for God as a deer longs for the water brooks. A deer may run so far and so hard that it has to find a place where it can rest. The only place a deer can find to really rest when it is being chased is to get into a place where there is water and submerge itself in the water so the dogs can no longer track its scent.

A dog can chase a deer for a long time, but if the deer can get down in the water, thereby losing its scent, it reaches a place of safety. A deer gets into the water to the point that only its nose is sticking out and it is safe from the dogs. You need to chase after the Lord as the deer chases after the water brooks. You must have that same kind of desire in panting after God. He has promised that if you seek Him with your whole heart, soul, and strength, you will find Him.

Deuteronomy 4:29 says, "But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." You must have that same urgency in seeking after God. You have to desire His Holy Spirit the way David desired that water from the well in Bethlehem, knowing that is the only thing that can bring real satisfaction. The only thing that can bring real satisfaction is God's Holy Spirit.

Friend, have you tasted the Living Water but drifted away and allowed substitutes to replace the real thing? You know what it tastes like, and you know it brings satisfaction. As it says in the Book of Jeremiah, you have forsaken the Living God, and at some point, substituted other gods for Him. If you have forsaken God, I pray that you will consider what the Living Water was like. Again, it is the only thing that can bring satisfaction. I have found this to be true in my own life.

As a young boy, six, seven, or eight years of age, I gave myself to the Lord. I experienced what it was like to be a new creature, but then as I got into my teenage years, I drifted away from God. As a young man in my early twenties, I found the Lord again and gained a good experience. I felt that my experience was really solid with God, and then some things happened and I moved

away from God again. I knew that only the Holy Spirit could satisfy the longing in my soul.

I could not find anything to replace the feeling of satisfaction that the Lord gives. I turned to education and went to college and got a degree. I turned to chasing a career and trying to work my way up in the business that I was in and was successful to some degree, but I never found true satisfaction. I had an opportunity to move away to the state of Georgia. I moved with the underlying thought in my mind that this was an opportunity to start over, maybe to find what I was looking for.

The Holy Spirit Has No Substitutes

Our family moved to Atlanta, Georgia, and we attended different congregations there. We had no idea there was a Church of God congregation there, but when we found there was, we attended the services. We were invited, and Brother Leamon Whitehead was preaching a revival. We walked in and thought we would just blend in with the congregation and see how it was. My wife and I and our five children walked in and sat down, and by service time, there were only nine of them.

Brother Whitehead began to preach, and I could feel the wonderful Holy Spirit again, but I did not move. I was set in my ways, but we began to attend the services there regularly. I sat through seven revivals without making a move. Brother Larry Dishman was there for two or three revivals. The last night that Brother Dishman was there, I yielded my heart to the Lord, and I have not looked back since, thank the Lord!

I found that nothing out in the world can satisfy as the Holy Spirit can satisfy. Nothing can fill that void like the Holy Spirit can.

You need to be careful that you do not compromise and begin to slip away. If you have begun to slip away, I urge you to seek Him with your whole heart. I am not talking about a halfhearted worship, or about merely going through the motions, but I am talking about an honest effort in searching Him with your whole heart and soul.

David said in Psalm 63:1, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." This is the feeling that I had out in the world. My soul was searching for something, but I could not find anything to satisfy the longing of my heart in that dry, thirsty land. David was saying there is no substitute for the Holy Spirit. In essence, David was crying out, "Nothing else can satisfy the soul as God can." Only the real thing was acceptable to David.

I believe that David was literally feeling as though he would die of thirst if he accepted anything less than the real thing. You will die spiritually with anything less than what God can supply. God has promised, not just the well of water, but rivers of Living Water. You do not need to settle for stale, stagnant, cistern water. It would not taste good, and it would be lukewarm. That is not what God wants for you. He wants you to have Living Water. You can have all that life is meant to be if you come and hearken to His Word and refuse to accept any substitute when it comes to the Living Water.

When I think about the Living Water in my mind, I think of my childhood when my grandparents had a little farm, and on the hillside above the house, they had a spring. They ran a pipe from that spring down into their house and into the kitchen sink. It was probably one

of the first houses in the area to have running water. They ran it straight from the spring to the sink, and it never shut off. You could go there anytime and get a drink of that cool, refreshing, running water. Friend, spiritually speaking, that is what God wants you to have. Do not accept any substitutes.

You need to seek the real thing. Revelation 21:6 says, "And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17 states, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Are You Thirsty for God?

You can buy the Living Water without money. He gives it freely. Are you thirsty enough to come and drink or are you guilty of digging your own cistern and drinking stagnant water? Are you putting up with substitutes, living your life for things that do not satisfy? The Bible calls these broken cisterns. In other words, they cannot even hold water. Can you imagine laboring to dig a hole in the ground to build a cistern, and then filling it with water only to go out the next day and find it empty? Are you chasing after something to fill a void in your life, trying to build something that will satisfy, only to find that it is empty? It is like a cistern that will not hold water.

Do you know what Living Water tastes like? Have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit to fill the void in your life? Have you forgotten what that was like? I trust that you remember what it was like if you have experienced it. Again, Jesus said to the Samaritan woman in John 4:14, "But whosoever drinketh of

the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Do you have this well of water springing up within you? Have you dug down deep to where the water is flowing? We read in John 6:35, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." I agree that we will never thirst again, but I also tell people there is a thirst that you can have that will never go away, and that is the thirst for more once you have tasted it. You can have a thirst for more of God in your life.

The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 12:3, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." God offers fountains of Living Water. You can read in Jeremiah 2:13, "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters [not just water but waters—He offers us much in the way of the Living Water], and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." God offers rivers of Living Water.

John 7:38-39 reads: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" Again, what he was speaking about in 2 Samuel was an analogy. David thirsted after the water from the well in Bethlehem, and we liken that to the Holy Spirit and thirsting after what God has to offer.

If you are thirsty, Jesus offers an abundance of flowing Living Waters. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 41:17-18: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is

none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

Substitutes Will Not Fill the Void

I believe that God wants to give us something that, even in our own minds, we probably cannot really fathom. The Scripture says He will open rivers and fountains and pools of water, making the deserts that were once dry places springs of Living Waters. Isaiah 44:3 says, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."

Are you thirsty for more of God? Are you thirsty for what God can offer you? Have you known God and forsaken Him? Come to the Living Waters. Do you know what it tastes like? Do

you know how it feels? Do you long for that? I believe that God puts a longing in a man's heart that he really cannot get over. You can harden your conscience, but that longing for something to fill the soul will always be there. Man is always tempted to substitute something else to fill that void. Again, those cisterns were a substitute for the Living Waters.

What is your substitute? Is there something that you are trying to fill your life with so you will not have to accept the standards or the expectations of the real God? Is there something that you are putting in His place, pushing Him out, forsaking Him, digging your own cistern? The truth is, everyone is thirsty. Everyone is longing for something, but are you thirsty enough to come and drink? Isaiah 55:1-2 invites you to hearken diligently to His voice and obey His commandments.

The Spirit of God can only fill that void in your life if you let Him. Do not be like the many people who reject Him and turn Him away. You will never fill the

void by turning Him away. You will find substitutes. I guarantee you, you can find things in the world to chase after, but they will not fill the void. When you lay your head on the pillow at night, there will still be a longing and a desire.

I did not go deep in sin and get bound with a lot of bad habits of life, but the devil had my mind. At night when I laid my head on my pillow, I could not get away from what God wanted me to do with my life. That longing was always there. Just like David, I could sense that, and I could taste it. I wanted it, but I had to come to a place where I was willing to give up my own desires for what God had for me. I am so thankful that I did.

If you have a desire and a longing in your heart, God stands ready to fill that need and to give you what you stand in need of. He stands ready to give you the Holy Spirit, the Living Water that only He can supply.

(Compact Disc TR-2477)

The Power of the Word

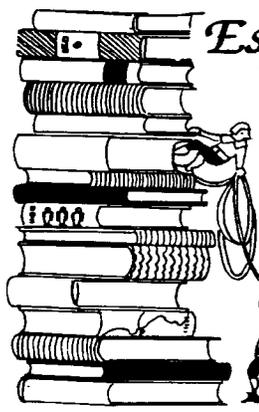
A few years before the war, a humble villager in eastern Poland received a Bible from a colporteur (one who traveled to sell Bibles and religious tracts) who visited his small hamlet. He read it, was converted, and passed the Book on to others. Through that one Bible, two hundred more became believers. When the colporteur, Michael Billester, revisited the town in the summer of 1940, the group gathered to worship and to listen to his preaching. Mr. Billester suggested that instead of giving the customary testimonies, they all recite verses of Scripture.

Thereupon a man arose and asked: "Perhaps we have misunderstood. Did you mean verses or chapters?"

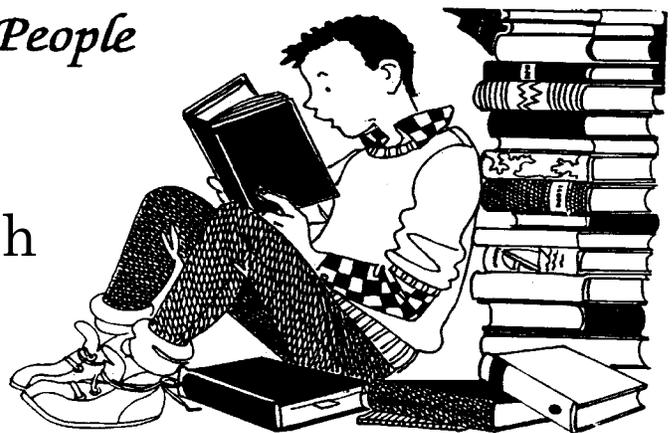
"Do you mean to say there are people here who can recite chapters of the Bible?" asked Mr. Billester in astonishment.

That was precisely the case. Those villagers had memorized not only chapters but entire Books of the Bible. Thirteen knew Matthew and Luke and half of Genesis. One had committed all the Psalms to memory. Together, the two hundred knew virtually the entire Bible. Passed around from family to family and brought to the gathering on Sundays, the old Book had become so worn with use that its pages were hardly legible.

Especially for Young People



Being David Facing Goliath



First Samuel 17:4-11 reads: "And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

"And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid." Verse 16 reads, "And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days."

Goliath's height was estimated to be about nine feet, nine

inches tall, so he was taller than others of that era of time, I estimated his weight. A healthy BMI (body mass index) for a man of that size would be 360 to 486 pounds. His breastplate had brass scales as the base layer, plus he had a brass plate on top of that, which would probably be a total of about 150 pounds. His spearhead alone weighed 15 pounds, so it would have easily killed anyone that it hit.

According to some records, David's height was approximately five feet, five inches. When David went to fight Goliath, he was most likely a little shorter than that because he was probably between fifteen to nineteen years of age. Goliath was almost ten feet tall, which was about double David's height. David's only weapon was five river stones, not a sword, a shield, and a spear like Goliath had. Looking at this from a human standpoint, David was very ill-equipped to go into battle, but God was on his side.

Today things in life can seem overwhelming, just as Goliath seemed to the Israelite army. They were afraid, and they did not want to go out and fight him. Goliath taunted them for forty days. Things in our lives can be troubling to us, such as finding the right companion, choosing the right career, and most important, learning how to stay saved. I am going to tell you about some

of my personal giants. They might look different from those that you face, but they all have the same goal, which is to bring us down. The devil will try to discourage us and try to defeat us in our walk with God.

My first giant I call Fatherless. I did not have a father in the home until the age of seven. My mother got married when she was nineteen years of age and then had me. Sometime after that, they got divorced. She was with my grandmother, my aunt, and my uncle. We all moved to Ohio when I was four years of age. Since my mother was a single parent, my grandmother, my aunt, and my uncle helped a lot because she had to work long shifts to support us. This was something that God helped my mom and our family through. During my formative years, my family helped me to learn good habits. They took me to church and Sunday school to hear Bible stories.

The second giant that I encountered was Underminer. The devil really likes to undermine those who are endeavoring to live for God. He will try to take away your salvation in any way he can, and often he begins in the smallest ways. When I was sixteen years old, I made some mistakes and my whole world felt as though it was falling apart. After that happened, I felt worthless to God.

The third giant I faced was the giant Despair, as in the story "Pilgrim's Progress." After I faced the second giant, I had a big battle with depression. I also experienced anxiety because of the insecurities that I felt.

Next, I faced giant number four, which I call Injury, and that brought life changes. In high school I played football for three years. I suffered multiple concussions. Normally a person can recover quite well from them, but I had what is called "post concussive syndrome." I suffered two smaller concussions and then a major one. That happened in my junior year during the football season. Normally when a person gets checked out for that, doctors say the symptoms may last a couple of weeks or even a lifetime.

When my senior year came around, my learning style changed due to the major concussion that I suffered, and my hormones were completely thrown off balance, so I got flustered easily. I had to completely relearn how to figure things out in school and how to retain information. It was quite embarrassing, and my depression got worse because of this.

I got checked out at a neurological center, and they said that my eyes had shifted a little because of the impact to where I was seeing double close up. Also, my hormones shifted. They said I would have to take a supplement medication if I wanted to feel normal.

The fifth giant that I faced was Doubt, or worldly warrior. After graduation, a lot of things were not going well, especially because of the effects of my injury. One big thing that affected me after graduation was that I lost some of my friends. Again, I felt that my whole world had come crashing down, and I struggled to deal with it.

The sixth giant that I faced I

call Overlord. This one was the worst that I have encountered. I struggled with bitterness. Also, I did not have much self-respect. I had many insecurities. I did not trust anyone, and I cut myself off from others because I did not want emotional connections to people. This condition was not healthy. I struggled spiritually, and I did not feel that I mattered to anyone. Of course, that was the devil speaking to me. It was not a good time in my life, but God has helped me not to get in that situation again. It was like the Lord spoke to me and said, "You need to get hold of yourself." God definitely pulled me out of that condition.

Giant number seven I call Confusion. These giants left me broken and scarred with bad memories and some regrets, but God can change things like that. God has definitely helped me through many problems, and He has taken care of my needs throughout my life. He knows every need out ahead of me. I want to be more like Him. I know that He will help me to overcome the devil in the future.

The next portion of Scripture that I want you to read is about David when he was going to fight Goliath. First Samuel 17:20-24 reads: "And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.

"And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words [bragging

and talking about them coming to face them]; and David heard them. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid."

Verses 32-37 read: "And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

"Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee."

Verses 44-47 state: "And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field [Goliath was offended that David was so young]. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

"This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild

beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands."

When I read that, it was definitely encouraging to me, because David did not have any doubt that God would save him. The rest of Israel was definitely afraid. Men who had been to war many times were afraid of the giant Goliath. Even King Saul, though he was more than six feet tall, was as afraid of Goliath as the Israelite army. Although Saul was a big man, he did not have God with him.

When there is a negative situation in your life, you need to think about some positive things. One positive thing for giant number one, which I called Fatherless, is that now I have a dad. I have had him as my dad since the age of seven. He provides for our family, and I am not an only child anymore. I have a really good family. Having a Church of God family seems almost like a fairy tale. Although we all have things that we need to work on, when you have a Christian family, that is really a plus and a good, positive influence.

When I faced giant number two, Underminer, God gave me strength to face the things that I was feeling insecure about. Also, He gave me the grace to ignore the devil when he said my efforts were fruitless. The devil may say, "It is pointless to go to church because you have been struggling, so it does not really matter." You need to say, "No, I am here because I need to hear from God." God gave me personal growth and helped me to focus on getting help for these condi-

tions instead of focusing on what other people think. It has been a good reflection.

When I faced giant number three, which I called Despair, I learned some positive things. I am not alone in any situation. Many people have faced this giant. I have people in my life who are godly examples to talk to when I am feeling low. First and foremost, I pray and God helps soothe anything like that.

Giant number four was Injury. God helped me with my injury. I have grown stronger mentally as far as adapting to those changes. It has helped me to overcome obstacles and to enjoy life differently with new ways to do things. God works in mysterious ways.

When I faced giant number five, which I called Doubt, I was never alone. God has always been right there for me, and a lot of good things have happened. Sometimes I have thought that some people would not get saved, and then they did. Another positive is that it gives me hope that others will come and get saved if we keep praying.

Giant number six was the one I called Overlord. Since that time, I have made new friendships, and I am in a much better place in life than I was then. I have a greater desire to love everyone, more than I did before, and to be better in whatever I do. I have risen above that condition, and I never have to be that way again.

Giant number seven I called Confusion. Without continual searching I would not have completed my personal training education, and this helped me. The Bible tells us in 1 Samuel 2:10, "The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon

them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed." Second Samuel 22:33 says, "God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect." Psalm 18:17-18 states: "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay."

Second Corinthians 12:9-10 reads: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Philippians 4:13 tells us, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Each giant defeated is a monument along life's pathway. There are some giants that still think they can win, but with God's help I can overcome them. David was a small young man compared to Goliath, and he was unprepared to be a genuine soldier in the eyes of the other soldiers in Israel's army. However, because God was on his side, he had more power than anyone else. This made him the biggest person on the battlefield. It can be the same for each of us. You may feel small and afraid, but that is when God triumphs the most. You need to focus on God and not the giants.

Brother Mason Wilson

A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor.

Revelation 9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the

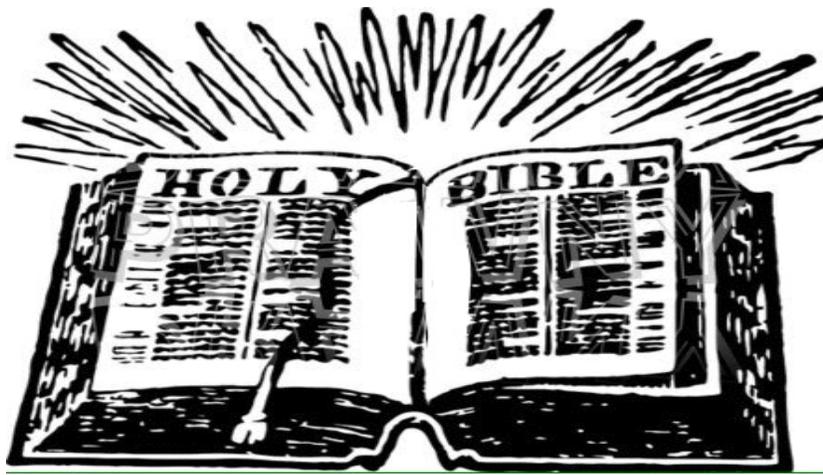
four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of

men.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

God's Divine Care for His People



Brother David Watson

Preaching the Word of God

According to the Book of Exodus, Chapter 30, in the old tabernacle, there was a golden altar. God gave them the pattern for that altar, and there were horns on the altar, which were there to tie the sacrifices on the altar. The golden altar is a type of the Truth and those who worship God at the altar of Truth.

We have had seven trumpets down through the seven ages of time. The seven trumpets symbolize the messages and the warnings that come to us. They are the preaching of the Word of God. They are to sound an alarm to speak to the people concerning God's good will in our daily lives as we live for the Lord. They

bring warnings to us as we travel along in life.

In verse 14 of our text, John said, "Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates." The river that he was talking about flowed through the Babylonian land, and it flows down through spiritual Babylon. It is a type of the spirit of Babylon flowing through every age that we have seen or read of the church coming through. The works of Babylon and the things of Babylon are sent from age to age as the church has traveled along. There is one thing about it, whenever you see it flowing through Babylon, you see it flowing through the heathen land.

You can read in Revelation, Chapter 12, and in Revelation, Chapter 6, about the things that have opposed the church down through the ages of time. It has been a heathen spirit. Those four seasons represent a spiritually heathen kingdom. These spirits are unclean, and they worship idols. Also, they worship the sun, the moon, and other things that they set up to worship down in Babylon.

Down through the ages of time, man has set up his own ideas of how to worship, yet he wants to say that he is worshipping God. The woman tried to tell Jesus in John, Chapter 4, that the people worshiped God at Samaria and Jerusalem, but Jesus said, in John 4:23-24: ". . . the

Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

God wants people to be free, and He showed John in the Revelation what was coming in the future. John got the message in A.D. 96, but he could see what would hinder the message of God down through the ages of time. What put a damper on or hindered those people? Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." On the other hand, if someone is sitting on the Spirit, so to speak, then He is cramped. When a preacher is preaching, he gets his inspiration in two ways: he gets it from God and from the people to whom he is preaching. People can help the man of God preach or they can sit on the preacher, so to speak. For example, you can make it easy on the preacher and pray, "God, turn him loose," or by your attitude, you can sit on the preacher and make it harder on him.

Freedom to Worship God

Those people were bound by this and that. What is God showing us? He is showing us that this spirit is still working against the church today. What God is trying to do through preachers who are preaching about this is to warn the people, to hold the standard of Truth, to hold the church where it is supposed to be, and to stand with the Truth of God so the church will stay free and shout the victory when other people cannot. If you will stand by God, He will stand by you and bless you.

Sometimes a preacher may worry about how many people are going to stay with him and who is going to stay with him. Ecclesiastes 4:6 states, "Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail

and vexation of spirit." We need people whose spirits are free, and God wants you to have a free spirit to enjoy the preaching of His Word. If you have a good spirit, you can say: "Hallelujah! Bring it on, brother" during the preaching of God's Word. I am not afraid of Truth. I enjoy it! Truth will bless you. If there is anything that I dislike, it is to go someplace where people seem to be frozen and their faces look cloudy. Sometimes you wonder what to do to get them thawed out so they can enjoy the Gospel. We want freedom to enjoy the good Spirit of the Lord whenever we go to the house of God. God wants all of us to be free.

Going back to our Scripture text, we read that coming by the river of Euphrates, John said he heard the number of the army of the horsemen were "two hundred thousand thousand." He heard the number of them. John was seeing a great number. Some have counted this as from A.D. 1930 back to A.D. 1792, one hundred thirty-eight years. Some have looked on the time element and counted the hours, the days, the months, and the years. I like to think of it this way: when God was sending the angel to loose those who were bound down here, I like to think of the time that it took to bind all this ministry. There was a long period of time in binding this.

A preacher cannot go into a place and loosen up some things overnight. It takes some anointed preaching to get things free. I think when you put it this way, by the hour, by the day, by the month, and by the year, God was loosing His ministry. God has a way of doing things, so we need to see the way that He does things. I thank God that whenever He sent preachers for missionary work in heathen lands, He was breaking the power of false worship. Those brothers came from the golden

altar, and they were the great number that he was telling us of. Those horsemen rode war horses, for spiritual warfare.

A Spiritual Warfare

Look at Revelation, Chapter 6, and you will see the difference in the horses. The white horse went forth conquering. The red horse in the morning time had a great sword given to him that sat on him, and there was bloodshed. Then there was the black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. This was during the Dark Ages. He is weighing out cheap religion, and he is black, for spiritual darkness.

Next, in the Pergamos age, we find the pale horse. He is mixing truth and light together, so he is warring that way. In this picture that John was seeing, and seeing there are two hundred thousand thousand, he was seeing all that spirit of warfare. He was not seeing literal horses. He was talking about spiritual things. He was speaking of spirits that have been warring against the church and trying to bind the church and hold the Truth down. So God has missionaries who are working and upholding the Truth and preaching the Truth as it comes.

John was telling people: "Look, God has a church, and it is not down in Babylon. It is not in paganism, it is not in papalism, and it is not in Protestantism. It is the Church of God." God said: "Loose yourself from that bondage. Come out of that and take your stand. Come up to Mount Zion. You need to get out of the hills of Babylon so you can sing the song of the redeemed and stand with God's people where you can be free and enjoy the Church of God." He wants you to enjoy the good things of God.

These spirits down through the ages of time have warred

against the church. Down through the ages of time, many people have lost their lives for the Truth. It cost them much. You will never find anyone who steps out with more light than other people have but what they will be persecuted.

Many people get in a comfort zone, and they want to stay there. If a man of God takes the rod of God and begins to chastise and lead people to higher ground, people are going to persecute him. God is leading His church on. You can either go with her or you are going to find yourself standing by yourself. Brother, you need to march with the Truth of God instead of grumbling and growling. You should say, "Lord, lead me and make me better in the Church of God." You need to keep on marching. The devil will send a little letter from somewhere to invite you down to Babylon. He wants you to be quiet and not say anything when God reveals Truth to you. He is trying to shut you up. When you stand for something, stand straight up and live the Truth of God, and God will bless you.

The Spirit of Bondage

In Revelation 9:17 John said, "And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone."

There were those who were really hostile, and they used a hostile spirit against the saints of God. God has fought enough of them and sent them and said, "Go down and loose those who are bound there." They got ready for war. The devil gets hold of anything he does not want to be turned loose. He does not want to turn people loose. He would

rather fill a jailhouse or a prison than to have it empty. He is after every soul that he can get. What a time it was for God to loose those people who were bound!

When Martin Luther proclaimed the Word of God and said, "The just shall live by faith," the people were so glad to hear it, and they accepted it. Germany and England stood up and took their stand in a great way, but after a while, another feeling came over some people, and they wanted to back up and sit down, and God saw that spirit go to work. That old Protestant beast began to speak out of his mouth through the dragon, saying, "You have to join this," and "You have to believe that." What was he doing? He was putting a bridle on them. In other words, he was binding souls and holding them down.

God saw those spirits flowing from the heathen land, and He saw the warfare that it was causing. They were trying to hold the church in bondage. Some had a desire to break loose, and when they found a little freedom, they wanted to sit down and be satisfied. Is that not the way people are yet today?

I read about a man who was in prison in Russia for loving the Truth, and he prayed and was instrumental in getting many souls saved by using a tin cup to beat on the bars and pass along the message. The day that they turned him loose, he said, "God, help me to be as true to You in the free world as I have been in bondage."

You see, in hard times people want Truth and freedom, but sometimes after they get freedom, they sit down and will not be as true. They do not have that desire anymore. Friend, you need to keep the fire burning. You need to get back where the high timber grows, cut down that big tree, pitch in the back log and the forefront log, and build a hot

fire and say, "I am going to take the comfort that God has given me from the heat from Heaven and march with the Truth of God." God will bless you in going, and He will bless you in coming if you will walk with the Truth of God.

"Come Out of Her, My People"

Revelation 9:18 reads, "By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths." I want you to notice that it is out of their mouths, so he was talking about spiritual things and not literal things. When I was growing up, it used to scare me when people talked about the Revelation, because they talked about it as being natural instead of spiritual. On the contrary, this Book is talking about spiritual things. It is talking about the conflict that the church is having and how God is trying to release people who are bound.

A heathen spirit was flowing. In Revelation, Chapter 16, you can read about three unclean spirits like frogs, which represent the spirit of paganism, the spirit of the beast, and the spirit of the false prophet. If you look at those unclean spirits, you will see a lot of heathen ceremony. If that was a heathen spirit then, it is a heathen spirit now, and it is still an unclean spirit. I will tell you what you can do to a frog. You can punch him, and he will hop. Sometimes when people get punched with the Truth, they want to hop somewhere else.

A frog cannot hop fast enough to catch its food, but it has a long tongue with slime on it. It can run out that tongue like lightning and catch its food and carry it into its mouth. That is the way the devil is. He has a long tongue. He cannot hop fast enough to get here and there, but

he uses that old slimy tongue, and that tongue has unclean spirits in it.

God is telling His people to get out of there. Revelation 18:4 says, "Come out of her, my people." In Revelation, Chapter 17, John spent a whole chapter revealing what she is, and in Chapter 18, he said to come out of her. If you are in Babylon, you need to come out of her teachings, her spirit, and her location. You need to come to Zion where we love the mountain, where the fire is, where the Truth is, and stand with God. That is what God wants you to do. There is a battle whenever people make a move to take a stand for the Truth of God. The angels are sounding the trumpet, preaching to people in a far distant land to get ready.

I thought about when they sent missionaries into the mission fields. Did you know that was raised up in heathen land? They were already in the field. They did not have to reach over to the United States to get somebody.

In the sixth seal, when D. S. Warner and others stepped out, they organized to where women volunteered to sew suits and they had a place to stay. The ministers would come through and drop off their dirty clothes, pack up, and go again. It was called "Flying Ministry." They were sending people across the ocean to bring people to Truth to get them to hear the Truth of God. God used people who would preach Truth, and He sent ministers to bring people to Zion so they could hear the precious Word of God, thank the Lord!

Upholding the Truth of God

This power is in their mouths, in what they were saying, and in the tail. Isaiah 9:15 reads, "The ancient and honourable [man], he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." The pagan was a big liar, and He

is still lying and pulling down souls. A lot of preachers have backed up and have given in to these unclean spirits.

Do they not know that God said in Revelation, Chapter 2, that He would cast Jezebel into a bed, and they that commit fornication with her? He will kill the children with death, spiritually speaking. Some say, "There are good people down in Babylon." There may be, but God said to come out of her. He did not say to go down there and join them. He did not say to scratch their backs and to let them scratch your back, so to speak.

If you are going to use your influence down in Babylon in that way, somebody who has confidence in you is going to see you going there and will say, "He can go there, so why can't I go?" The Bible says in Romans 14:7, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." You have an influence on others, so you need to take them to where Truth is being taught and settle down, praise God, and stay with the Truth. That is what God wants you to do.

Some teach that everyone sins a little, more or less, every day, that you cannot backslide, and that you will be saved in the end because you were saved at one time. Friend, this is contrary to what the Bible teaches. If you are going to get to Heaven, you have to be like Jesus right here in this world.

In Revelation 9:20 John wrote, "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk."

Paul told the people at Corinth about the foundation, and he told them what had to be put on that foundation: gold, silver, and precious stones, but

he said that hay, wood, and stubble would burn. When these brethren got there with Truth, they burned up some things. They were trying to show people the real foundation of God and uphold the Truth of God. When they were sounding the trumpet, they were to get everything those brothers were binding God's people with. They wanted God's people and the ministry loose, so the ministry would have freedom to reach souls.

Revelation 9:21 says, "Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." Some people get deep in sin and in bondage. Did you know the Word of God will not do you any good unless you let it do you good?

Paul asked in Romans 3:3, "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" In other words, he asked if their unbelief would make the faith of God ineffective? The answer is, no, the Word of God is still the same whether you believe it or not. If it is going to have an effect on you, you have to let it have an effect. God will draw your heart because He wants to help you; He wants to do something for you. You may tremble and resist it. You have that choice. You are a free, moral agent.

Enjoying the Good Things of God

If you will let the Word of God, it will break the power that has hold of you and set you free from bondage. It will bring you home to God, and it will enable you to stand and enjoy the good things of God. You must let the Word of God have an effect on your life so that you can be free to enjoy the good things of God.

Revelation 11:11 reads, "And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered

into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them." What was he talking about? He was talking about the Word and the Spirit. These two witnesses were laying in the streets of Sodom and Egypt, spiritually, where people walk. The people who were walking did not use the Word of God as a rule, neither were they led by the Spirit of God, so it was not affecting their lives. They were following man-made rules and their own spirit.

Isaiah 2:22 tells us, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." We are not to follow man; we are to follow the Lamb of God. In Exodus 13:21 we read, "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night." God wanted Israel to know that He was with them. He put a cloud up there so that all Israel had to do was look and see. When He wanted them to move, He let the pillar of a cloud move, and at night He led them with a pillar of fire. In Hebrews, Chapter 12, you can read about a cloud of witnesses. Where is it? It is right in the Word of God.

There are a lot of witnesses in the Word of God. Jude spoke of some of them as clouds without water. There are those who do not have anything to give you. They will leave you high and dry, so to speak, or without any help. I do not know why some people sit down in a congregation and go to sleep. There is no water. There is nothing there that will make the desert bloom.

Living Water will cause the desert to blossom as the rose. Isaiah, Chapter 35, tells you about streams in the desert and springs of water. Then in Zechariah, Chapter 13, you can read that a fountain was opened. John wrote about the woman at the well in John, Chapter 4. She

found that Living Water.

When God opens the fountain in you, you will begin to blossom and enjoy the good things of God. I thank God for the Word and the Spirit that He has given. In Revelation 11:12 John said, "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither [God speaks through His Word]. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them."

The Faithfulness of God

The Word of God will get your attention. Where is that heaven that John was speaking of? In Ephesians 2:6 Paul said, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is a heavenly place where the Word is. We must use it as a rule, and we must be led by the Spirit of God. God loosened it so that we can have it. This ministry is free. There is no chain of attachment.

The devil is trying to shut down the Gospel. He is shutting down preachers and congregations. He is working on our nation and our leaders, but thank God for men and women who have the Truth in their souls, who are standing up and letting the Word of God affect them, and who are marching on with the great Church of God. We ought to be bold with the Truth of God. I love everybody, but if someone is doing wrong, I do not love that wrong. As Christians, we ought to love everybody.

John said in Revelation 11:13, "And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven."

Do you see what the Word will do? It puts a shaking in place. Paul told the people in

Hebrews 12:26 that God was going to shake the earth and also heaven. In Haggai, Chapter 2, Haggai said that God would send a shaking, and when He did, He said the latter house would be greater than the former. Why? Isaiah 30:26 tells us, "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

Looking back on the history of where the church has been and what she has come through, we see that God was faithful to the church in every age of time. He has never lied to or forsaken the church. Jesus said the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The church has stood the storms throughout the ages of time. At times, they might have pushed her out of sight and she might have hidden away, but in the evening time she is back on Mount Zion. She has burst like crystal water out of the earth, and the sun is shining on it really bright. She is sparkling again with great Truth and with the Holy Ghost of God. She is still on the march and still moving forward in the great things of God.

If you are without God, you need to say: "Lord, I'm coming home. I have been here and there, and I have been in a dry land. I know that at my Father's house there is plenty." If you have been tossed about by the wind and you have not felt freedom and joy down where you have been, come home to God where you can worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. You need to take your stand and say, "Praise God, this is what I have been looking for, and this is what I want." God will bless you in doing so. May God bless you.

(Compact Disc TR-1327E)

John 6:1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples

4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat

down, in number about five thousand.

11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

A Lad, Five Barley Loaves, and Two Small Fish



Brother Reggie Stegmeier

The Greatness of the Need

In our Scripture text, the disciples were challenged with a great task. How would you like to feed five thousand men? While our need may not be feeding five thousand men, there is certainly a great need of God in our country. The problems we face as a nation and in our world today are beyond the reach of humanity. They are beyond our abilities and our powers. We need God's direction.

Jeremiah 10:23 reads, "It is not

in man that walketh to direct his steps." This is a reminder that this is beyond humanity. We need God. Our Scripture text speaks to the greatness of the need at hand and the greatness of this miracle. There was a large gathering of people. Verses 2-3 of our Scripture text tell us: "And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples."

Verses 5-7 read: "When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." In other words, "What we have is not enough to meet the need."

We are so insufficient in ourselves. The needs at hand are

beyond us. We need God. Verse 9 of our Scripture text reads, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" A pennyworth was a day's wage. Philip was using the currency of his day, something his audience could relate to, to show the greatness of the need at hand. In other words, two hundred days of earnings would not be sufficient to feed this multitude.

Another rendering says, "It would take more than a half year's wages to buy enough bread for each one of them to have one bite." We were talking about one meal, and now we are talking about one bite. It would have taken someone in that day half their annual salary to feed those five thousand men. We are talking about a meal that would cost thousands of dollars in today's currency. This was to feed the five thousand a little bit of food in one setting. The need was great and beyond the scope of His disciples.

We find later in this passage of Scripture, far more than five thousand people were fed with those five barley loaves and two small fish. This miracle was recorded in all four Gospels. Matthew 14:21 states, "And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children." Some theologians believe there were upwards of ten to fifteen thousand people fed by this lad's five barley loaves and two small fish.

Last fall I took one of my orchestras out to eat after one of our competitions. We stopped for pizza, and for just forty students, the bill was close to three hundred dollars. Imagine trying to feed close to fifteen thousand people. We are talking about a great miracle here, but an even greater God.

Man's Part in God's Plan

What made this account a miracle was the impossibility of

the task at hand, and this is one of His many miracles. This is just one little picture into what Jesus did while He was here. He is still able to do this today. The miracle that Jesus performed with this lad's five barley loaves and two small fish was tremendous. If we were to use our currency today to take a group of this size out for pizza, it would cost approximately \$112,500.00 for just one meal. Not only did this lad and his five barley loaves and two small fish feed upwards of fifteen thousand people, the Bible says they ate as much as they wanted. This is a reminder of the great God that we serve.

Now let us consider a part of the title in this message. The word *lad* means, "a servant," but it probably means, "a child." Jesus preferred to work through people. He did not actually feed the multitude in this account. He blessed the food, but the disciples distributed the food among the multitude. This is still God's plan today. Man plays an important part in God's great plan for our lives.

Jeremiah 3:15 reads, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Who does God want to feed His flock? He has ordained that pastors and ministers feed them. In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter, speaking to the elders (the pastors are the spiritual guides), said, "Feed the flock of God which is among you." This feeding, however, is not solely the pastor's responsibility. All disciples of Jesus Christ play a part in feeding the souls of humanity. In the same account, but in Matthew 14:16, Matthew wrote, "But Jesus said unto them [His disciples], They need not depart; give ye them to eat." Again, we read that Jesus blessed the food, but He wanted the disciples to do the distributing of the food.

Our Scripture text says in verse 9, "There is a lad here."

Jesus' disciples had a chance to be involved in God's work, but they did not believe or trust Him. God is going to find someone to get His work done. Jesus' disciples were well acquainted with Him and should have known what His capabilities were, but they thought there was just no way to feed the multitude. How often do we hear people say, while looking at the conditions of our land with the natural eye, "I just do not see any way." The lad had faith in this account because he gave all he had, and that is what we are asked to do. It was just five barley loaves and two small fish, but he gave it to Jesus, and look what He did with it.

I want to encourage you. Your gift may be small, but if it is your all, God can bless and work with that. The investments we make in the Kingdom of God never go without repayment, notice, or interest. God will bless what you invest in His work. Jesus' disciples had a chance to be involved, but they did not believe or fully trust Him. Jesus took what a young child offered and used it to accomplish a great miracle.

Willing Vessels

Verse 11 of our Scripture text reads, "And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." Just as this lad was instrumental in feeding the five thousand, Jesus wants to use each of us. Age is no barrier to Christ. Never think you are too young, too old, too quiet, or too loud to be of service to God. Also, may we never underestimate the value of children and their importance in the work of God.

When Jesus could not get His own followers to believe and trust Him, He turned to someone weak, completely opposite of what the world would seek to

use. He used a lad, or a child, with simple faith who trusted in Him. The disciples who doubted God were contrasted in our Scripture text with the lad who brought what he had. The disciples had more resources than this boy did, but they knew they did not have enough, so they did not give anything. The lad did not have much, but he gave all, and that is the key. Jesus performed this great miracle by using the small lunch of a boy.

What we regard as one of the great miracles in the ministry of Jesus had a very humble and small beginning. Jesus used a peasant boy with only five meager barley loaves and two small fish to do a great work. Did you know that God has always been interested in using people? The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:26-27: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men [the wisest listen to God] after the flesh [worldly wisdom, worldly knowledge, and worldly understanding], not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." We find that God often works in the opposite way that man thinks He will and should work. God can use any willing vessel. If he or she will be willing, and give all, God can work with that.

The Scripture lets us know that the lad had five barley loaves and two small fish in his possession. The barley loaves were the ordinary black bread of the Galilean peasant. The loaves and fish were not the property of the disciples but of a lad who had followed the crowd. We find this poor lad being asked to give away all he had to Jesus. Jesus used someone who was helpless to be helpful. Many times people do not do what God tells them to do

because they do not feel qualified. All God needs is a willing vessel. He can teach you, equip you, and train you, but you have to be willing.

Saint, you can be sure that nothing you invest in God's kingdom will be wasted or go unnoticed. God will reward your efforts. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again [or the amount you give will determine the amount you get back]."

This lad invested five barley loaves and two small fish in the work of God and more than fifteen thousand were fed. That is quite an investment. I do not know of any bank account or stocks that could multiply that quickly, but with Jesus they do. If you will invest what God gives you in the work of God, He will cause it to increase.

Consecrating All to God

Let us consider the two small fish that this lad had. The ordinary relish of fish, when eaten with bread, was the staple food of the people of that day. Could you imagine what a fresh catch of two small fish would have meant to a boy? I have a son who is very interested in fishing. He has been out a few times and finds it so exciting. I remember when I went fishing as a boy. When I finally got a nibble on the hook and reeled in that fish, I was very excited. Here we find the lad with his catch being asked to give it away, but he was willing to give his lunch to Jesus.

This boy was willing to give all that he had to the work of God. As I studied this, I thought of the widow's mite. She did not have

much, but she gave all. Consecration is giving all. This lad was willing to give up those possessions to see God's work go forward. The real blessings in life only come from giving of your want, not of your abundance. Jesus said in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

In our Scripture text, verse 7 says, "Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Philip was quite an active character in this account. We can learn much from Philip's responses. Philip thought the lad's five barley loaves and two small fish were not sufficient for the five thousand. However, when Jesus came in the midst, it was more than enough to feed not only the five thousand, but also three times that many and yet have leftovers.

Saint, we must not limit God. He works beyond what our eyes can see, beyond what our knowledge can come up with, and beyond where man can take us. We try to reason things by saying: "I just do not know." However, we have to remind ourselves that God is in control, and He can make it better than we can even imagine. God can work and turn things around in a hurry. We need to trust God.

We read in 1 Samuel 14:6, "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few." God can work with one or with many. All He needs is willing vessels. God can save by many or by few.

The lad in our Scripture text had only five barley loaves and two small fish to offer those five thousand people. This was all that Jesus had to work with. It was not so much the lad, the five barley

loaves, and two small fish that made the difference. The difference was having Jesus in the midst. Consecrating all we have for the work of God is all that is needed for God to do a tremendous work. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 14:18, "Bring them hither to me." The antecedents of the pronoun "them" are the five loaves and two small fish. In Mark 6:36-37 you can read that the disciples wanted Jesus to send the people away to buy their own food. Jesus said, in essence: "You give them something to eat. You have what they need right in your possession." They found what they had was more than enough.

All Things Are Possible With God

There are no limits with God. Often people limit God with human reasoning or ideas, but there are no limits to what God can do. Job said in Job 42:2, "I know that thou canst do every thing, And that no thought can be withholden from thee." I like the chorus that says: "*Got any rivers you think are uncrossable, Got any mountains you cannot tunnel through? God specializes in things thought impossible; He'll do what no other power can do.*"

In Matthew 9:5 Jesus said, "For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" Both are easy with the Lord. There are no hard cases with Him. Matthew 19:26, addressing the miraculous work of salvation, reads, "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Children sing the song: "*Two little fishes and five loaves of bread; With this little bit of food the multitude was fed. Who but the Son of God could do this, people said, With two little fishes and five loaves of bread.*"

The thought that I want to keep before you is the insufficient resources from a human stand-

point. Returning to our Scripture text, verse 9 reads, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" Andrew said the five barley loaves and two small fish were not enough for the five thousand to have a little. However, when Jesus gave thanks for what the lad had and blessed it, it was more than enough. Mark's account of this same miracle says, "And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all" (Mark 6:41).

Jesus is our example, and the Bible tells us that He gave thanks before the miracle was accomplished. Verse 11 of our Scripture text reads, "And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks [He had not distributed them yet], he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would."

Child of God, your hope is not found in the news outlets or social media. It is found and increased by reading the Word of God. Hebrews 11:1 states, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." He said in Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Never underestimate what God can do with the little that you have if you will use it in His work.

The trouble with many people today is that they are unwilling to use what they have for God, and some are unwilling to remain faithful. Some with God-given talents invest them in the king-

dom for a while, but they do not remain faithful. They are up one day and down the next. God can give you a settled experience and keep you from falling.

God's Unlimited Resources

Verse 5 of our Scripture text reads, "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Why did Jesus test Philip and not the other disciples? Luke gives greater insight into that reason. Luke noted that this miracle took place near Bethsaida. If anyone knew where to get food, it would have been Philip, because he was from Bethsaida, a town about nine miles away.

Jesus was testing Philip to strengthen his faith by asking for a human solution, knowing there was no human solution. Jesus highlighted the powerful and miraculous act that He was about to do. Our Scripture text says in verse 6, "And this he [Jesus] said to prove [*the Amplified Bible* says 'test' and *the Emphatic Diaglott* says 'try'] him [Philip]: for he himself knew what he would do." Jesus was trying Philip, and he began to assess the probable cost of such a tremendous task. Philip did what humanity does today. In essence, he said, "Well, Lord, based on what I have knowledge of, it is an impossible task at hand." However, standing right in front of Philip was the answer to all life's problems.

How often do we overlook the answer that is right with us? The answer is Jesus. Often people are discouraged and downhearted because they look all around when Jesus is standing right there. He is still in control of it all. He sees from a much different vantage point.

Our Scripture text reads in verse 7, "Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of

bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Philip was looking at the situation from the perspective of a weak, frail human being. On the other hand, Jesus saw what God could do through this lad's limited resources. How many people today fail to work and labor or put themselves out for God because they cannot get past their limited resources? There may be times when you work for God and you do not think you have enough resources, but God provides. If God impresses you to do something, you need to do it. God can work through a willing vessel.

Jesus wanted to teach Philip and the rest of the disciples a lesson, and He is teaching us today that financial resources are not the most important resources. We can be guilty of limiting what God does by assuming what is and what is not possible. This can happen with church decisions and when there are business decisions. People may look at situations and say, "There is no way we could ever pay for that." If it is needed, and God is saying to do it, you may need to do it. Are there any limits with God on what He can do? If there is some impossible prayer that you feel like will never be answered, you had better keep praying, because God works the impossible. Luke 18:27 tells us, "And he [Jesus] said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." In Mark 9:23 Jesus said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." If you believe God can do it, He can do it.

In Matthew 13:58, speaking of Jesus' own country, we read, "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." God is not limited to what our eyes can see or what our hands can feel. God is not limited to our resources. He has access to Heaven's unlimited resources. We must not allow our estimate of

what cannot be done to keep us from taking on the task at hand. God can do the miraculous. We need to trust Him to provide the resources. God is just as big as we make Him. He is beyond our comprehension.

Our text says in verse 6, "And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do." This speaks to the foreknowledge of God. Jesus knew what He was going to do, but He was testing Philip. God knows where this world is heading, and He knows what is needed to fight the enemy in our day. God knows the future. Man is limited to what his eyes can see, much like Philip and Andrew. We must always keep in mind that Jesus has resources beyond what our eyes can see. Jesus said in John 4:32, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Many great resources are out there to accomplish God's tasks, but we have to be willing.

The expression "prove" in John 6:6 is still used today when asked for verification. We all face tests to show proof of our own experience and to show whether or not we have the goods. Jesus tests us the same way. We must truly believe in Romans 8:28, which reads, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

We read in Hebrews 11:6, God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Psalm 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD." We must acknowledge the difficulty we are currently in. Maybe it is God's means for proving us. He is in control. Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

God's Power to Work Miracles

The disciples became anxious, worried, and agitated when they

did not see an immediate answer in sight. How about you? How do you respond when a situation becomes a little anxious or agitated and you do not see an immediate answer in sight? Philip responded with what his eyes saw, and even then he scoffed at the thought of trying to feed so many with a little amount of food. Again, verse 7 of our Scripture lesson reads, "Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Philip was doing what so many do today. He was basing his faith purely on what he could see. In Ephesians 3:20 Paul wrote, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Did you know that Jesus owned a buffet restaurant two thousand years ago? The five thousand in our Scripture text were not just given a little food. The disciples waited on them, and the people could have as much as they wanted. The disciples distributed to those that were sitting down. Did you notice that they gathered twelve baskets of food after everyone had eaten? It was almost as if Jesus was saying: "Here you go. You twelve disciples that did not believe Me, there is a basketful of leftovers for each of you." It was almost a gesture on Jesus' part to say, "Here is a token of faith. Believe Me the next time."

Are you guilty of asking or thinking beneath your privileges as a Christian? I am sure we all can relate to the disciples and point to times in life when we doubted God's power to work the miracle at hand. Were you troubled and perplexed? Was your faith challenged when you looked at what was ahead and what needed to be done? You may feel perplexed and a little troubled by what lies ahead, but I want to remind you that God can meet the need. Nothing is too hard for

God.

Did you know that God used a rod in Moses' hand as a sign to Pharaoh? He used the jawbone of a donkey in Samson's hand to destroy one thousand men. He used one smooth stone in David's slingshot to kill Goliath. He used a handful of flour and a little oil to feed a widow, her son, and Elijah, a man of God. God used a cloud about the size of a man's hand as a sign to Elijah of the coming rain. God used the smallest of all seeds to describe the power of even a little faith. In our Scripture text, God used a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish to feed well beyond five thousand. God wants to use each of us.

Zechariah, a minor prophet, asked in Zechariah 4:10, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" If you offer nothing to God, He will have nothing to use, but if you give Him what you think is a little, if it is your all, He can accomplish great things. We must be exercising faith before God can begin to do a great work. The lad in our Scripture lesson gave all he had to Jesus.

What if you gave God all that you had? Could God do the same for you in a similar manner? I believe He could. In considering this miraculous account and comparing it to your own life and what you have to offer God, what have you accomplished for God? This lad had five barley loaves and two small fish, but he gave it all to God, and Jesus fed a multitude.

Jesus accomplished this tremendous miracle, and all four Gospel writers noted it. How about our lives? We have a lot more than five barley loaves and two small fish, but could it be that we are not giving all? Are we keeping back part for ourselves, like Ananias and Saphira? They did not give all that they had promised to set aside for the work of God. They kept back a part of

the price. Could it be a lack of obedience and faith?

Bring Your Need to Jesus

As we consider what is going on around us, the problems of life can seem overwhelming. Our Scripture text in verse 9 says, "What are they among so many?" What do we have to solve the incredible problems around us? The truth is, we have more than what we realize if we are saved. The problems of life can seem overwhelming. David said in Psalm 61:2, "When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock [1 Corinthians 10:4 says the Rock was Christ] that is higher than I." Problems can even cause a person to become depressed. Psalm 42:5 reads, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God."

What do you need done in your life? What miracle do you need performed? What prayers do you need answered? In Matthew 14:18 Jesus said, "Bring them hither to me." This is what Jesus wants every one of us to do. Bring the prayers you need answered and all your resources to Him. Five barley loaves and two small fish were no match for five thousand people. Likewise, your personal resources are no match for the problems that you face today. However, if you will bring your cares to Jesus and trust Him with the keeping of your soul, you, too, can accomplish the impossible.

Just prior to this miraculous account, the Bible tells us in Matthew 14:14, "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick." Perhaps the miracle you need performed in your life is healing. Jesus is saying, "Whatever your need is, bring it to Me."

Just as God is concerned about our spiritual needs, He is also concerned about our physical

needs. In our Scripture text, we find in verse 5: "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" In 3 John, verse 2, we read, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Does God desire that we be healthy? Yes, He does. God desires that we be in good health. Jesus said in Matthew 6:32, "(For after all these things [food, drink, and clothing] do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

If you are saved and you have Jesus in your heart, you have what is needed. In essence, Jesus said, "Give all your troubles, your worries, and your anxiety to Me." Some people have high anxiety levels and panic attacks. We see young people having panic attacks. Jesus is saying, "Bring that to Me."

If Jesus was so concerned that the five thousand men had something to eat for that one meal, do you not think that God is concerned about the much weightier matters that concern you and me? Did you know that Jesus has not changed? Hebrews 13:8 tells us, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." What Jesus did for those five thousand, He will do for us. Just as He met their need, He will meet yours. Are you willing to bring all your troubles, all your burdens, all your concerns, all your cares and all your anxieties to Jesus?

I hope this message will remind you and encourage you that God can do the impossible. God can go far beyond what you and I can see. What you are troubled about is not too much for God. There are no hard cases for God. All He needs is a willing vessel.

(Compact Disc TR-2494)

Postman send form 3579 to:

The Gospel Trumpeter

675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055 U.S.A.

PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID
AT THE POST OFFICE IN
NEWARK, OH 43055
USPS # 871620

REQUEST FOR NEW SUBSCRIPTION, CHANGE OF ADDRESS, OR CANCELLATION

NEW SUBSCRIPTION: To receive *The Gospel Trumpeter*, we need your complete name and mailing address, including country.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: If you have moved or if your name or address is incorrect, please notify us as soon as possible.

NOTICE OF CANCELLATION: If you no longer wish to receive *The Gospel Trumpeter*, please contact us using one of the methods below.

YOU MAY CONTACT US BY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING METHODS:

Mail: *The Gospel Trumpeter* 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055 USA

E-mail: subscribe@gospeltrumpeter.com **Telephone:** 740-345-1312

Please Print or Type

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____

ZIP CODE: _____ COUNTRY: _____

Please check the appropriate box below For changes or cancellations, return this entire page with the old address.

- Subscription Incorrect spelling of name or address
 Change of address Cancellation