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THE FOUNTAIN is published once every six weeks. It publishes articles both expository and evangelistic in nature, testimonies, and news of Christian groups. The magazine is supported by free-will offering from Christian friends who have the burden to see the Word of God reach as many as possible. We depend on the all sufficient grace and providence of the Lord to meet our every need.

OUR AIM is to unite all Christian brothers and sisters who have the same burden to preach the Gospel unto all nations. We preach none other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

WHAT WE BELIEVE: The Bible is the basis of our faith. We believe that the whole Bible, every chapter, every verse as originally given is inspired by God.

- " You (Jesus) are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)
- " Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (I Timothy 1:15)
- " And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
- " For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2: 8,9)

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"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of host."
 (Zecharias 4:6)

" When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest. ' "
 (Matthew 9: 36-38)

THE

WAGE

OF SIN

- Rev. G. Beenken -

".....Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth saying, Give me thy vineyard, And Naboth said to Ahab, the Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased..... And Jezebel his wife said unto him,I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezeelite. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people; And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king: and then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die. And the men of his citydid as Jezebel had sent unto them..... And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

(I Kings 21: 1 - 19)

Romans 6:23 says "the wages of sin is death", In these verses from I Kings we have a tremendous illustration of this fact.

The whole Bible sets forth the fact that God is not ONLY a God of mercy. Yet we hear so much about God's love, God's kindness and God's ten-

derness, and we hear so little about the other side of God --- His majesty, His holiness, His glory, the fact that He is high and lifted up, that He is great and wonderful, and in the old English sense of the word, an awful God, a God before Him we should bow in awe. He is a great God.

He is a judge. All thru the Bible, God is a judge. He judged the earth with a great flood. He judged Sodom and Gomorrah by letting fire and brimstone fall upon those wicked cities. Here, through His prophet Elijah, He predicts the death of Ahab and we shall see how this was fulfilled literally.

Throughout the New Testament, God's judgment is also seen. In the early church, He judged Ananias and Sapphira. In the Epistle to the Corinthians we find that He judged the Christians of Corinth because they took the Lord's supper and the things of God lightly. Paul wrote that some were sick and some were asleep among them. He meant that they had died.

At the end of the world, we read in the Bible that there is going to be a great judgement. There is an amazing phrase in the sixth chapter of the book of Revelation which speaks of "the wrath of the Lamb". The wrath of the Lamb! And of that great white throne of judgement that we read towards the end of the book of Revelation, we read this about it: *"Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."* (Rev. 20:15) This is the teaching of the word of God. If we are going to be true to the message of the Scripture, we have to set forth the fact that God is

a God of judgement as well as a God of love and mercy. The wages of sin is death. To remember the holiness, the majesty, the glory of God may help us to live a pure life in front of Him.

All the prophets and the Apostles, in one way or another, teach what Ezekiel put into words when he said *"the soul that sinneth, it shall die."* This speaks not only of physical death, but also spiritual death. Unless we repent and turn to God in faith, we suffer eternal death -- eternal separation from God. This fact that the wages of sin is death is throughout the Bible. Basic to this truth is the fact that God is holy. Both the Hebrew word "holy" in the Old Testament and the Greek word for "holy" in the New Testament mean "separation from" and "hostility to" all evil and defiled. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts, the whole world is full of His glory. Because God is holy He hates sin. In Habakkuk 1:13 we read *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."* God's holiness is expressed in His "justice" or His "justness", in punishing or rewarding His creature man. The word in Hebrew for "just" means "straight" and in Greek it means "upright". I believe the significance of that is this: God's justness is in perfect agreement, straight with, His holy character. His character is holy and His punishing and His rewarding of man is straight with, is in alignment with that; is in agreement with His holy character, His justice and His justness. So "holy, holy holy" is the Lord God of the hosts" is in perfect agreement with the other truth: "the wages of sin is

death". It seems to me that this message is probably needed more than any other message by not only the world but also the church. Many people and many Christians think that love is the primary attribute of God. But scripturally, holiness is the primary attribute of God. For holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.

God's standard is awfully high. Our passing mark with God is not 50; it is not 75. There is only one passing mark with God and that is 100 - holiness. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect." The passing mark with God is 100.

Elijah was the prophet who prophesied that it would not rain for three years and it did not rain. Then there was the great "contest" between God and the 450 prophets of Baal where Elijah called for fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. Elijah had the 450 prophets slew after the "contest". But his courage failed him when Queen Jezebel threatened revenge. He fled. However God reclaimed him and gave him Elisha to be his companion and successor.

Then after three years, the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, you will find him in the vineyard of Naboth" and Elijah gave Ahab that terrible message, "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." God's prophet Elijah gave a message of judgement. We read the story of how in a terrible way Ahab acquired the vineyard. As I read that and as I studied it, I noticed five terrible sins he had committed. Not only he, but his wife and the people in the city. There was

the sin of *forgery*. Jezebel wrote in Ahab's name. Then I noticed that the whole thing is a sin of *hypocrisy* throughout. There was the sin of *perjury*, putting up false witness, then there was the sin of *murder* and the sin of *robbery*. That story is just a story of sin and the wages of sin, Ahab found out, is death. God is holy. God is just and God just does not allow things like that to happen. Sometimes it seems like heaven is completely unaware of these evil things. But this was not one of those occasions. No sooner had it happened then God says to prophet Elijah that you go and confront Ahab and give him this terrible message. Notice when he came, in I Kings 21:20: Ahab said to Elijah, "*Hast thou found me, o mine enemy?*" Elijah answered "*I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, I will bring evil upon you and will take away thy posterity and will cut off from Ahab every male and his whole house. I am going to cut them off.*" It was a terrible judgement. The Bible says "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness". In Psalms 7:11 we read "*God is angry with the wicked everyday.*" It is said that "the mills of God grind slowly but they grind exceeding small". For years God allowed Ahab in his wickedness to rule over Israel, but finally God in His holiness and in His justice struck down Ahab. The wages of sin is death.

We see God's words fulfilled in chapter 22 of I Kings. Israel and Judah co-operated in a battle against Syria. The king of Israel was Ahab and of Judah was Jehoshaphat. They did battle against Syria. Now notice in I Kings 22:34 "*A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.*"

That was Ahab. By chance the "dis-guised" Ahab was hit. *"Wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day; and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, every man to his city, and every man to his own country. So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the Lord which he spake."* (I Kings 22:34-38) It happened just exactly what God had said would happen through the words of the prophet. The wages of sin is death.

God also said to King Ahab that his son is going to be cut off. In II Kings chapter I we find that Ahab had 70 sons. In verse seven we read, *"And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him them to Jezreel."* and in verse II, *"So Jehu slew all the remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining."* The wages of sin is death.

In I Kings 21:23 we see what God says about Jezebel, the wife of the king. God said, *"The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."* In II Kings chapter 9 we have the story of Jezebel's death. Two of her attendants pushed her out of an upper story window

at the command of King Jehu, and she died and then they just left her there and they celebrated her death by eating and drinking. Then Jehu said, "We better go bury Jezebel." In II Kings 9:35 we read that *"..... they went to bury her but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands."* The wages of sin is death.

Immediately after Ahab was king, for just two years (because all of his sons were slain shortly after) his son Ahaziah reigned in his stead as found in I Kings 22:52-53. He too sinned against God. In II Kings I:2 we read that he had a fall and then he said to his messengers to go enquire of Baalzebub whether he'll recover. But in verses 3 and 4 we read *"But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron: Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die."* So he died. The wages of sin is death.

The verse in Romans 6:23 continues as *"but the gift of God is eternal life"*. In II Kings chapter 2 we have ^{the} wonderful story of the translation of Elijah. *"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."* (v. II) The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life. Elijah was taken up into heaven. Elijah did not deserve that. It says the gift of God is life

Elijah too had sinned. Elijah too, had fled, had forsaken his post of duty, and had not been true to God all along. He had become fretful. He had even prayed for death: "*God I don't want to live any more!*" But God was gracious to his servant. There is one great difference between Elijah and Ahab and Jezebel and Ahaziah. The difference was that in his deepest heart Elijah believed in Jehovah. He believed in God. That was the great difference. The gift of God is eternal life, and God wonderfully took Elijah into heaven.

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In this New Testament age, the way to know that we have eternal life is through believing in Jesus Christ. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the record John writes that *God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

The Revelation tells us that it is this very Son who is one day going to be the wrathful judge -- the wrath of the Lamb. This phrase is the most touching and terrifying truth of the Bible! The fact that He is called the Lamb tells us also of the fact that this One first came to be our sacrifice. He came to be the sacrifice for sin --- the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. The Bible tells us that He became sin for us who knew no sin. "*All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.*" (Isaiah ch. 53 v. 6) "..... He was

wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.: (Is. 53:5) He was the Lamb of God. John the Baptist said of Him as He walked along the Jordan, "*Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.*" Now the book of Revelation speaks of the wrath of the Lamb. That is to say, if we reject the Lamb today we are going to face the wrath of the Lamb. It is the blood of the Lamb today; the mercy of the Lamb today, the forgiveness of the Lamb today, the grace, the love of the Lamb today; or, it is going to be wrath of the Lamb one day. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The only reason we can have life through Jesus Christ is because as the Lamb He suffered for our sin. God's justice was fully satisfied for our sin in the Lamb. God's holiness has expressed itself in His justice when Jesus died for us.

My sin was judged on the cross in the person of Christ. If you are a Christian, then your sin is also judged there in Christ. So as I stand in Christ, my mark is 100, for I stand before God as Christ. Jesus' mark is 100. We have a holy God, and our only refuge is Jesus Christ. There is none others, as the Bible says that "*there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*" (Jn. 14:6)

JESUS, AND HIM ALONE !

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH; BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

Romans 6: 23

HEARING THE SOUND, BUT SEEING NO ONE

- W.L. -

*And the men who were traveling with him stood speechless,
hearing the voice but seeing no one.*

Acts 9:7

*And all were amazed and perplexed,
saying to one another, "What does this mean?".....
"For these men are not drunk, as you suppose"*

Acts 2:12 & 15

One can see it on the front cover of Life magazine (1), a page-long report in Time magazine (2), on CBS News, papers and everywhere. It is described as a Jesus Woodstock, the in-thing, and many other descriptive terms. Photos show youths giving the "One-way" sign, playing in the rain, singing and, of course, the candle-light service, Billy Graham and Johnny Cash in the music festival. It's all in EXPLO '72, but is that all there is?

No. Although the scene and the mood of EXPLO '72 were well captured by Life (1) and Time (2), "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (3)

They heard the "sound", but what did they "see"? No, a natural man cannot see the Spirit of God in EXPLO '72.

EXPLO '72 was an inter-denominational Christian student conference on evangelism held in Dallas from June 12 to 17. The aim was to act as a catalyst for a revival in the world and thus fulfill the great commission that our Lord gave us before His ascension: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." (4) There has never been such a large student convention planned before, and those concerned planned it and carried it out entirely by faith so that God can work miracles.

No words can fully described the beauty of miracles, but I will share two incidents in EXPLO '72 that moved me most. The press gave you another two incidents: the breathe-taking candle-light service participated by 80000 conferencees, and the Jesus music festival with a crowd of 150,000. Though these two are planned to be the topping on the cake and received all the attention from the press, the "climax" of EXPLO '72 was not planned by man but entirely an act of God. It's God's act in two other incidents that moved most of us, but ignored by the press, or more appropriately, simply not "seen" by the press.

The first one was on June 13, the night when 80,000 conferencees gathered in Cotton Bowl for the first time. That night, Billy Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ shared the "Four Spiritual laws" (5) with the crowd. I have heard his talk on this topic quite a few times. Nothing new was added. I knew that I should be praying while he was sharing the four laws. But the hot and humid weather of Dallas, plus the fact that I had only three hours of sleep in the last two days, were a bit too much for me. I couldn't help dozing off a few times.

A verse came to me in my sleep: *"Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."* (6) Yes, the flesh is weak, but "He restores my soul". (7) I had time to make only a short prayer before Bill invited all those who had not yet have Christ as their Savior and Lord to pray with him and invite Christ to come into their hearts. After the prayer, he asked those who had just received Christ to stand up. I was glad that I was awoken to pray for and to behold such a miracle. There were thou-

sands of people standing up and in the high school section, almost a quarter of the people stood up. One could almost hear angels singing Hallelujah. (8)

The second incident came on June 15, the third night when the conferencees gathered in the Cotton Bowl. (The candle-light service was on the 16th, the fourth and last gathering in the Bowl.) It was a cloudy evening. There were already some light drizzles when we were filing into the Bowl. Sitting on the stands, we could see castles of dark clouds racing toward us and -- "WHAM" came rolling thunders. We answered back with shouts and proclamations of "Praise the Lord!" There were more thunders and then the down pour. Many people started to praise and sing and dance. Some just sat in the rain while others went for shelters in the Bowl. Only a few left (and they missed a lot!) I am sure that there were, among each group, people who asked, why the rain, why the discomfort?

The rain lasted for about half an hour and turned to drizzle. The program began as planned. That night, Bill Bright called for Christian soldiers --- those who would seriously dedicate their lives to God for His work. He asked those people to stand as he prayed. After the prayer, as we lifted our heads, we could see the sun breaking thru the clouds and a rainbow stretching across the Bowl. The rainbow lasted for just a minute or two, but it was enough to remind us of His glory (9) and His grace. (10)

Yes, natural men (e.g. reporters) do not see His Spirit, His redemptive power, His divine glory and His everlasting grace which were evident not only in these two occasions but also in our witnessing around Dallas, our quiet times, and all through EXPLO '72. They also ask what this all mean and

whether we are fanatics. We can only pray for the Spirit to move them so that they will catch on. We pray also that EXPLO '72 will be the beginning of more showers of blessings.

The spirit of EXPLO '72 will go on, and the great commission will be fulfilled. Then His kingdom will come. Indeed, in EXPLO '72 we had not even a glimpse of His back (II).

ut just as it is written:

*"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,
And which have not entered the heart of man,
All that God has prepared for those who love HIM." (I2)*

MARANTHA ! (I3)

Reference - all the Bible verses are taken from the RSV Bible.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. June 30, '72 | 7. Ps. 23:3 |
| 2. June 31, '72 | 8. Luke 15:10 |
| 3. I Cor. 2:14 | 9. Ez. 1:28 |
| 4. Matt. 28:19-20 | 10. Gen. 9:8-17 |
| 5. <i>Campus Crusade For Christ,
Inc. 1965</i> | 11. Ex. 33:17-23 |
| 6. Mk. 14:37-38 | 12. I Cor. 2:9 |
| | 13. I Cor. 16:12 (means "Our Lord Comes") |

O Fountain and Grace of Glory

- Virda Lucille Alston -

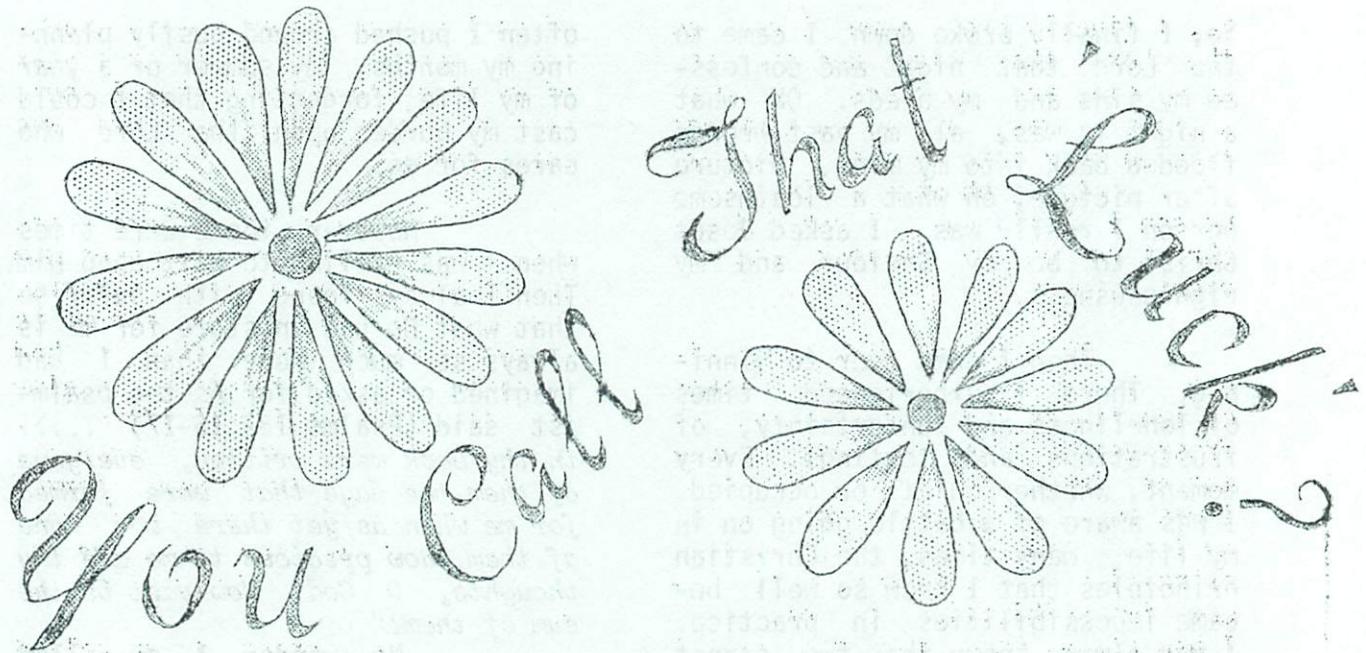
O Fountain of Love and of Life and Salvation,
O God of the earth and of man and the sea;
O Faith of our fathers and hope of our nation,
O Source of all strength and of beauty to be ---

O Pour out Thy blessings of giving and life,
And cleanse us of ugliness, envy, and strife.

O Let the sweet waters of peace overflow
And bring us a surcease from sorrow and woe.

O Source of all goodness and love everywhere,
Forever we praise Thee,

O Answer
Our Prayer.



- Mary Tsai -

Today, lots of people will say to me, "....., how did you ever get this job? You're so lucky!" Others will say, "Oh! You're so lucky - the youngest one in your family. Your parents must love you so." Lucky - lucky - lucky! This word keeps reverberating in my mind as I try to recall the earliest events in my life.There I was standing beside my wailing mom during the funeral service of my eldest brother. I also can recall my dad on his sick bed and following that, a flashback of the scene when my mom fainted onto the floor. I, a pre-kindergarten child was alone with her. Then, there is the picture of me, crying while sitting on top of our window sill, wondering why my mom was not yet home and why dad couldn't come back to stay all the time with us. Yes, these were the vivid pictures of my childhood --- the events that made me dream frightful things. These often make me wonder what would happen if I should die. One thing that I was sure even then was that the world would have cared less. They too became the reasons why I drew near to the Heavenly Father, One who is

always there, listening to my faintest call.

Teenage days came all too soon. Life was much easier then because my family was reunited and my dad's business was going well. I was in grade six, sitting on top of the world, a Sunday-school drop-out eager to join parties, ready to stay up late and to enjoy life. All the while, I thought I was a pretty good kid. Until one day in a chapel service at our school, the speaker gave us a challenge - "Try yourself for one week and see if you can be good. If you find that you can't, then you'll know you need Jesus to save you from your sinful nature and from eternal death, to reconcile you to God." Being full of pride, I accepted the challenge. Although I was able to suppress my evil inclinations, yet deep in my heart I knew I wasn't really that good. These temper-flares with my brother came too often to be dismissed from my conscience. Therefore I decided to be very good to my brother for one whole week. I tried, I honestly tried, but..... I found that I couldn't do it. There was no power

So, I finally broke down. I came to the Lord that night and confessed my sins and my needs. Oh what a night it was, all my past wrongs flooded back into my mind, picture after picture, oh what a loathsome person I really was. I asked Jesus Christ to be my Saviour and my righteousness.

Then I came over to Winnipeg. There I experienced times of loneliness and uncertainty, of frustrations and testings. Every moment, whether quiet or occupied, I was aware of a battle going on in my life. Many times, the Christian principles that I knew so well became impossibilities in practice. I had always known that two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Yet I allowed myself into a relationship which I later dreaded. I know that I should trust in the Lord wholly but oh, how often I was worried about so many things. How

often I pushed around busily planning my months, my summer or a year of my life, forgetting that I could cast my burden upon the Lord who cares for me.

However, there were times when I was willing to wait upon Him. Then I always found with surprise that what He had in store for me is always so much more than I had imagined or asked for. As the psalmist said (Psalms 139:16-17) "..... in thy book were written, everyone of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!"

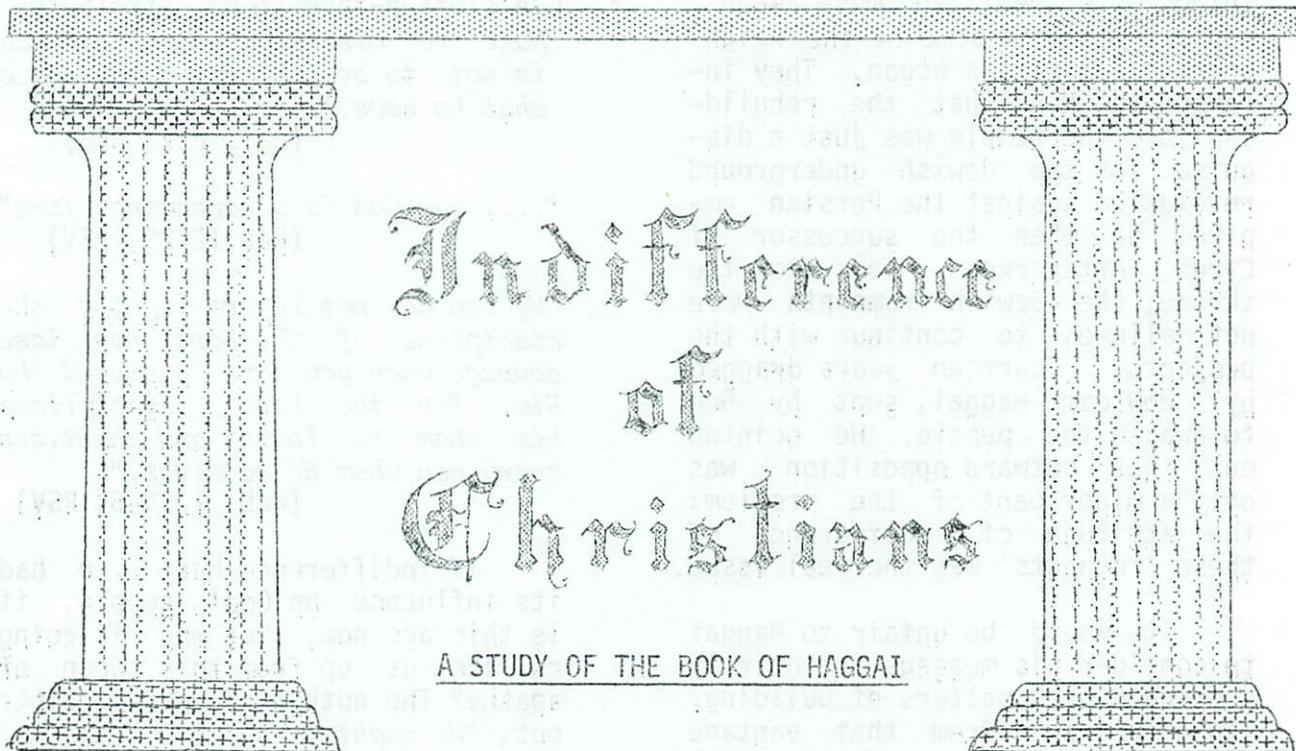
No wonder, I am called lucky; the other word for this is "blessed". Yes, it was because the curse He had already borne for me on the tree, that now His blessings I am receiving, day by day. Echoing Ralph Carmichael, I will sing,

*"All my life, Through the good and bad of life,
Whether I should gain or lose,
Still I chose to live my life
Every moment all for Thee,
Walking, oh so close to Thee.
While I'm learning everyday,
Come what may to trust in Thee.*

*(Uncertain times are still before me, perhaps, pains,
perhaps pleasures whatever they are - oh Lord)
Take away the doubts that hides Thy perfect Will
Give me faith instead and with Thy Spirit fill,
Thru all my days
Be the Guardian of my ways
And I'll know the glory of all Thy love
Thru all my days.*

PRAY

-for the Far East Edition
-for more co-workers
-for more and better articles
-for our financial need
-for Christian revivals
-for more souls to be saved



Indifference of Christians

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

- Lai -

INTRODUCTION

Christians believe that the Bible is God's word to man. They regard both the Old Testament and the New Testament as divinely inspired. Yet many Christians seem ready to donate their Old Testament to the museum. I have been no exception. Recently it suddenly dawned on me that I have been neglecting half of the menu. No wonder, I have been at the most half full. As a matter of fact, at times I have difficulty even in finding certain books in the Old Testament.

To study the Old Testament in details would be a formidable task. The following sharings from the book of Haggai is intended to serve as an illustration of the relevancy

of the messages given through the prophets of the Old Testament.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although the book of Haggai covers only a period of about four months, it actually records a very significant turning point of the Jewish history.

Around the year of 520 B.C., Haggai gave this message from God to the Jewish "remnants" who returned to Jerusalem and Judah after the Babylonian captivity. Sixteen years before this, the Persian emperor, Cyrus, had issued a decree for the rebuilding of Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem. The "remnants", about fifty thousands of them, led by Zerubbabel, had returned to Judah to carry out the royal decree. It took them two years to lay the

foundation of the temple. While things were about to move ahead, oppositions from some of the neighbouring Samaritans began. They informed the king that the rebuilding of the temple was just a disguise for the Jewish underground revolution against the Persian empire. So, when the successor of Cyrus, Artaxerxes, came to the throne, the Jewish remnants were not allowed to continue with the projects. Fourteen years dragged by. Now came Haggai, sent by God to awaken the people. He pointed out that outward opposition was only a minor part of the problem; the attitude of indifference of these 'remnants' was the real issue.

It would be unfair to Haggai to consider his message as entirely concerned with matters of building. Though he began from that vantage point, he went on to speak of the future establishment of God's kingdom and of the glory of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

INDIFFERENCE

The book of Haggai consists of only two chapters. The first chapter deals primarily with the problem of INDIFFERENCE. The charge to "consider your way" which implies an invitation to re-examine one's goal of life and one's priorities, is repeated twice. God showed His displeasure in this case by keeping them from enjoying whatever they earned: "You have sown much but reaped little; you eat but never as much as you wish, you drink but never more than you need, you are clothed but never warm, and the laborer puts his wages into a purse with a hole in it." (Hag. 1:6, NEB) Sometimes I wonder if we might have so over-emphasized God's love that we have neglected His justice and discipline. Actually the Bible is

filled with the verses mentioning God's often-forgotten attribute:

"Make no mistake about this: God is not to be fooled; a man reaps what he sows."

(Gal. 6:7, NEB)

"... our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29, RSV)

"My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by Him. For the Lord disciplines him whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives."

(Heb. 12:5-6, RSV)

If indifference has ever had its influence on God's people, it is this age now. Yet who is going to wake us up from this swoon of apathy? The author of Hebrew points out, "We ought to see how each of us may best arouse others to love and active goodness, not staying away from our meetings, as some do, but rather encouraging one another, all the more because you see the Day drawing near." (Heb. 10:25, NEB) This is not spying on each other. May our exhortations be divinely flavoured and scripture-centered.

CONSECRATION AND SERVICE

"On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask the priests to decide this question, 'If one carries holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and touches with his skirt bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does it become holy?' The priests answered "No." Then said Haggai, "If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered, "It does become unclean. Then Haggai said, "So is

it with this people, and with this nation before me, says the Lord; and so with every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean." (Hag. 2:10-14, RSV)

Here Haggai tries to show us the importance of sanctification in Christian service. Carrying consecrated meat will not make anyone or anything consecrated. But a defiled person can defile whatever he touches. Similarly, serving in a church or in a fellowship per se, will not make anyone holy. On the other hand, much will be spoilt if one serves the Lord only outwardly and rebels against Him inwardly.

"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

(I Sam. 15:22-23a, RSV)

"To be among those which are valued and dedicated, a thing of use to the Master of the house, a man must cleanse himself from all those evil things; then he will be fit for any honourable purpose."

(II Tim. 2:21, NEB)

ENCOURAGEMENT AND ASSURANCE

As mentioned above, the Israelites were strongly opposed by the neighbouring Samaritans ever since they started to rebuild the temple. Often Satan attacks one most fiercely right after one has firmly resolved to follow the leading of the Lord. But when God commissioned the Israelites to rebuild the

temple, He also gave them words of assurance. "Begin the work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts, and my spirit is present among you." (Hag. 2:5, NEB) The promise - "I AM WITH YOU" - is also mentioned in Haggai 1:13. Where can we find greater strength for tasks given to us than from God Himself?

Even at this day and age, we should feel free to enjoy these words of assurance. The wonderful words of Christ still echo in our ears: "Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed to me. Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples; baptize men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time."

(Mt. 28:18-20

NEB)

MESSIANIC IMPLICATION

"The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth of the month," Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders; and the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his fellow. On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you says the Lord of hosts." (Hag 2:20-23, RSV)

This last message is directed to Zerubbabel, the leader of the

returned Jews. Yet, evidently, it looks far beyond him to the ultimate consummation of the Davidic line in the coming reign of Christ. It should be carefully noted that Zerubbabel is addressed here as the "representative" of the Davidic line. The name Zerubbabel is found in both genealogies of the Messiah (Mt.1:12,Lk.3:27).

"I will wear you (Zerubbabel) as a signet-ring." (v.23, NEB) The signet was an object of authority and worth to the Oriental. In olden times, when signet ring was used to sign letters and documents, it represented the owner, who wore it always. In this context, it refers to God's honoring of Zerubbabel. In the days of Zerubbabel, the predicted event did not transpire nor was it meant to. But rather, Zerubbabel

was honoured in such a way that one day the Messiah would come from his posterity along the Davidic line. In other words, the signet ring prefigures Christ. It surely gives us great joy to realize that the coming of Christ was prophesized long before His birth on earth.

SUMMARY

In order to have a more complete and personal knowledge of the Book of Haggai, the reader is sincerely urged to read the whole book through twice at one setting. With the help of the following table, the main points of the book should be obvious. I do pray that this brief presentation will stimulate new interest in the Old Testament.

BOOK OF HAGGAI

FIRST MESSAGE - 1:1-15

DATE - *sixth month, first day*
CRUX - *REBUKE OF INDIFFERENCE*

SECOND MESSAGE - 2:1-9

DATE - *seventh month, 21st day*
CRUX - *" I AM WITH YOU "*

THIRD MESSAGE - 2:10-19

DATE - *ninth month, 24th day*
CRUX - *CALL TO SANCTIFICATION*

FOURTH MESSAGE - 2:20-23

DATE - *ninth month, 24th day*
CRUX - *GOD'S FUTURE BLESSING FOR ZERUBBABEL*

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