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Spending Our Years

By Michael R. McDaniel

If you were to go to Egypt today, you might see what Moses himself might have seen centuries ago . . . a crowd of people surrounding a story teller. This is one of the customs of the East. The story tellers are more often found in those places where there are many illiterate and few books. Only a few incidents in the story will stand out in the memories of the listeners. But the stories are often so fascinating that one senses disappointment when the story is done. Moses wrote, "We spend our years as a tale that is told" (Ps. 90:9). Years are spent so very quickly. The story of one's life is filled with amusing events, solemn occasions, beautiful memories. But, like any good book that is read, it seems to go by so fast. Concerning the spending of our years, Moses, in the oldest psalm and one of the oldest poems in the world, wrote of four important facts that we should remember.

I. REMEMBER THE BREVIDITY OF LIFE

Moses wrote, "The days of our years are threescore and ten" (Ps. 90:10). In his day life had come to be very much the same in duration as it is with us. But eighty years is brevity itself compared with those who lived in the beginning of time. Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years. Those who lived before the flood lived an average of seven to eight hundred years. But after the flood, atmospheric conditions changed, the waters of the atmospheric canopy had fallen allowing much more of the sun's ultraviolet rays to reach earth causing men to age much more quickly. Abraham lived only one hundred and seventy five years and by the time of Moses, seventy was average. While seventy or eighty is brevity itself compared with nine hundred and thirty or nine hundred and sixty nine years, it is nothing when contrasted with eternity.

The brevity of life is a truth which everybody believes and yet how many of us act as if we believe it! We are conscious of the precariousness of other people's lives but we persuade ourselves that our time is not quite so limited as theirs. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." David wrote, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am" (Ps. 39:4). How we need to be reminded of that!

II. REMEMBER THAT ONE DAY WE SHALL ALL FLY AWAY

"And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; yet it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). At death man flies away from this earth to realms unknown as yet, those realms of which the Word only gives us a glimpse. Man flies away, his soul takes leave of his body just as in the case of Rachel. "And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin" (Gen. 35:18). It is only the body that is entombed. The spirit goes to Sheol (O.T.) or Hades (N.T.) to await judgment on that final day. The wicked soul will anguish in torment; the righteous soul will be comforted in Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16). How important it is that we live faithfully as Christians so that we will fly away into the Lord's care and keeping when death occurs.

III. REMEMBER THE WRATH OF GOD

"Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath" (Ps. 90:11). Moses saw men dying all around him. He lived among funerals. He saw visible evidence of the wrath of God (1 Cor. 10:5-11).

What the power of God's anger is in hell and what it would be on earth now if it were not in mercy restrained, no man living can conceive. It boggles the mind and staggers the imagination. What man is there who fears God as He ought to be feared? What man is as afraid of sin as he ought to be? Should we not straighten up ourselves, our lives, in view of the wrath of God? Who knoweth the power of His anger? Is it not as unspeakable to us as the love of Christ which passeth knowledge?

IV. REMEMBER TO NUMBER YOUR DAYS

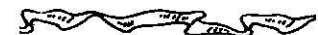
Someone has said that this rule of arithmetic is the hardest. "So teach us to number our days, so that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). Of course, we have no idea when our life will end but the idea here is to recognize that our days here are numbered and to make them count!!!

Thomas Edison said, "Time is the most important thing in the world." Yet, how often do we waste time. How often do we hear expressions such as marking time, passing the time of day, or killing time? Benjamin Franklin said, "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff that life is made of." Oh how we waste precious time!

Our Lord has only a brief time on this earth, just thirty-three years and only three years of that time to finish His work. But look at how He took advantage of his opportunities and numbered his days wisely.

As 1989 draws to a close, let us all remember the brevity of life, that one day we shall fly away, the wrath of God, and to number our days. Let us redeem the time in eighty-nine!

P.O. Box 45
Samburg, TN



Procrastination is not only the thief of time, it is the grave of opportunity

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
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WHEN PAIN COMES!

By David Gibson

PAIN! A word we try to erase from the dictionary of human thought. We will go to almost any lengths to avoid this most dreaded condition. When we cannot stop it's inevitable onslaught through self-gratification or denial, we will try to halt it with pills, physicians or psychoanalysts. Yet, pain keeps on coming. As long as we live in this world of clay men and fragile hearts we will have pain.

Pain and developing the ability to deal with it is an evolutionary process. Knowing the cause of pain and understanding it's effects are attained through years of study and experience. In our early attempts to handle the "little pains" of life we respond by either ignoring them or denying them. We make a "C" rather than an "A". We do not get a raise. We have that first fight with our new spouse. These things hurt but we learn to cover the cause of our pain rather than correct it. We take a drink, buy a new car, or go to a ballgame. Anything but deal honestly with the hurt.

Then it hits. The "great pain" of our life. For some it only happens once; others must pass this way often. But mark it down. It happens to us all. A spouse leaves, a child dies, "six months to live". No more denial, no more diversion through self-gratification. This pain is real and it is ours. We either deal with it or quit the world. Getting mad, blaming God or wishing it had not happened will not change the pain. For the Christian, "the rubber has met the road" and faith hangs in the balance. How do we cope?

We will not blame God! He did not do this. Satan is the author of sin and suffering, not God. We will turn to God as the only real comfort for our pain. "Casting all your care upon Him; for he careth for you", I Peter 5:7.

We will accept our own responsibility for the pain! In most cases we had something to do with the pain of our lives. Our actions may not have deserved the degree of pain they brought. But, to the extent we made mistakes we must accept responsibility. No blaming someone else.

We will correct what we can and leave everything else to God! Real help for pain is relief and only God can cure the pains,

hurts and heartaches of life. When we have done all we can we must "let God" heal. After imploring the Father to spare Him, and blessing those who were crucifying Him, Jesus said, "Father into thy hands I commend my Spirit". He realized the only way to cope with this great pain was to trust God with it. So must we!

We need to build our lives on the Lord Jesus Christ. To do so brings stability in the midst of pain. God says, "I will never leave thee, or forsake thee", Hebrews 13:5. It is time we lay claim to that promise.

HC 63, Box 3
 Salem, AR 72576

I Wonder . . .

*I used to think about visiting those
 Who on beds of affliction lay,
 But by and by I put it off
 Until another day.
 I no longer think about visiting them,
 (I'm not able now, you see);
 Now I only sit and wonder,
 Will anyone visit me?*

*The nursing home seemed always crowded,
 People were everywhere;
 And so I'd usually drive back home
 Without visiting anyone there.
 Now from my bed I look down the hall,
 And stare with furrowed brow;
 Times sure have changed it seems to me,
 Why, it's never crowded now.*

*Hospitals always frightened me;
 (Well, at least they made me feel strange);
 And so I rarely visited them,
 And hoped my feelings would change.
 They didn't change and I didn't visit,
 And now that time has flown,
 It's hard not to think from my hospital bed
 How I've reaped what I have sown.*

*Funerals were such morbid affairs,
 (And I'd never know what to say);
 So instead of going to comfort the family,
 I'd just stay home that day.
 I wonder if any are comforting mine,
 Or if they've a word to say,
 To a broken, mourning family,
 Now that I have passed away?*

Eddy Gilpin

CONTRIBUTIONS

CHURCHES

| | |
|--|---------|
| Agnos Church of Christ . . | \$15.00 |
| Agnos, AR | |
| Garfield Church of Christ . . | 25.00 |
| Garfield, AR | |
| Church of Christ | 15.00 |
| Elizabeth, AR | |
| Pilot Church of Christ | 20.00 |
| Mammoth Spring, AR | |
| Dellhalf Church of Christ . . | 15.00 |
| Myrtle, MO | |
| Gamaliel Church of Christ . | 10.00 |
| Gamaliel, AR | |
| Jeff Church of Christ | 10.00 |
| Thayer, MO | |
| Church of Christ | 10.00 |
| Marionville, MO | |
| Hatfield Church of Christ . . | 25.00 |
| Koshkonong, MO | |
| Arcadia Valley Church of Christ | 10.00 |
| Ironton, MO | |

INDIVIDUALS

| | |
|------------------------------|--------|
| Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Schmerse . | \$5.00 |
| Janesville, WI | |
| W. Ray Duncan | 25.00 |
| Warner Robins, GA | |
| Naomi Price | 5.00 |
| Duncan, OK | |
| Gladys Hill | 5.00 |
| Crossville, TN | |

I Have Finished

(Part 3)

By Eddy Gilpin

The two previous installments of this article have served to address the tenet of premillennialism from the aspects of: 1) A literal return of Jesus to earth to establish his kingdom (which the Bible denies), and 2) The establishment of his kingdom in the first century A.D. following his resurrection (which the Bible affirms). Jesus himself in his prayer recorded in John 17 said, "I HAVE FINISHED the work which thou gavest me to do" (vs. 4). Either: 1) Jesus was correct and has thus "finished" that work; or, 2) He was mistaken about its being "finished"; or, 3) He deliberately misled his followers by stating that he had "finished" his task when, in actuality, he had not. Of course, only the first of these choices is correct and thus substantiated by the remainder of the Bible. Based on Jesus' affirmation in John 17, it shall be the objective of this article to address the topic of the Abrahamic promises.

Beginning in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, the Bible records a series of three distinct promises to Abraham, the father of the Jews. God promised: 1) That through Abraham's seed a great nation would be made; 2) That they (that nation) would receive a land distinctly theirs; and, 3) That through his (Abraham's) seed all earthly nations would be blessed. The remainder of God's word is devoted to the fulfillment of these prophecies and the concerns for the eternal world to come.

The first of these promises concerned the nation of Israel itself. The second involved the land of Canaan, "the land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8). The third was spiritual, involving the coming of Jesus (the seed of Abraham - Mt. 1:1-16), through whom all nations would be blessed. The system of premillennialism affirms that immediately following the second coming of Christ there will be a literal period of 1,000 years in which Jesus will reign on the literal throne of David in the literal city of Jerusalem. Also at his second coming, the Jews are to be returned to Palestine, at which time all the "kingdom prophecies" will be fulfilled. Thus, if it can be shown that all these Abrahamic promises have been fulfilled already, then another of the foundational premises of premillennialism falls, as does the system itself.

Notice, first, the national promise of Israel made by God to Abraham. God said: "And I will make of thee a great nation" (Gen. 12:2); "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Gen 15:5); "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (Gen. 13:16). Although some twenty-five years passed between the promise and the birth of Isaac, the son of promise, and some 430 years between the promise and its actual fulfillment, through the providential care of God the nation of Israel stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai to be pronounced "a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). Therefore, this "holy nation" was the fulfillment of the promise and the prophecy made to Abraham.

The second of these promises, the land promise, has also been fulfilled. In Genesis 13:15 the Lord said, "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Likewise, Genesis 15:18 reveals that "the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." The general contention of premillennialism is that this land promise has never been fulfilled and, therefore, must be in "the millennium." However, after the nation had wandered for some forty years in the wilderness, they were led by Joshua into the promised land. Near the close of his life, Joshua made the following statement concerning Israel:

"And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that NOT ONE THING HATH FAILED of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you: ALL ARE COME TO PASS unto you, and NOT ONE THING HATH FAILED thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as ALL good things are come upon you, WHICH the Lord your God PROMISED YOU; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you FROM OFF THIS GOOD LAND which the Lord your God HATH GIVEN YOU. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the GOOD LAND WHICH HE HATH GIVEN UNTO YOU" (Josh. 23:14-16).

Twice Joshua affirmed that the land was a part of God's promises to them. He also revealed that there was not a single inci-

dent among these promises (including the land promise) that had failed. But, he was quick to iterate that ALL had come to pass. Notice, however, that their continued occupancy of the land was conditioned upon their continued faithfulness to God.

As a further revelation of the land promise having been fulfilled, notice the words of I Kings 4:21: "And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river [Euphrates] unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt." Hence, the territory over which Solomon reigned had the exact dimensions of the territory promised to the seed of Abraham (Gen. 15:18). The land promise made to Abraham does not, therefore, wait for a future fulfillment. It has already occurred. Through their disobedience, however, the Jews broke the covenant and forfeited their rights to the promises (Dt. 30:17-20).

The third promise made to Abraham was spiritual in nature. Through the lineage of Abraham all nations of the earth were to be blessed (Gen. 12:3). In Acts 3:25, 26 the following observation was made by Peter:

"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of THE COVENANT WHICH GOD MADE with our fathers, SAYING UNTO ABRAHAM, AND IN THEE SHALL ALL THE KINDREDS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED. Unto YOU first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities".

There it is, then. The blessing to all nations is the "turning away" of "iniquities", and is found only in Christ, the seed of Abraham. Paul stated it thus: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). There is no denying that Christ is that promised seed (Gal. 3:16) and that the promised blessing to all nations is "all spiritual blessing in heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). Truly, then, did Jesus say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Jn. 17:4).



Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
At all the times you can,
In all the places you can
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

No one is rich enough to do without a neighbor.

IF ONE IS SAVED BEFORE BAPTISM

1. *He is saved before his sins are remitted.* "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

2. *He is saved before his sins are washed away.* "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

3. *He is saved before he is born again.* (John 3:5). "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

4. *He is saved outside of Christ.* (Romans 6:4). "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

5. *He is saved before he is saved!* (I Peter 3:21). "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

6. *He is saved sooner than the Lord said he would be.* "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

As Noah and his house were saved through God's grace, by water (I Pet. 3:20), and as the Israelites were, by the power of God, delivered from the Egyptians by being baptized in the Red Sea (I Cor. 10:1-3) so we are saved by the grace of God when we are baptized. (Titus 3:5).



The best thing to do with the Bible is to
Know it in the head
Stow it in the heart,
Sow it in the world,
And show it in the life.



There is no right way to do a wrong thing.


THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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