

Zion's Advocate

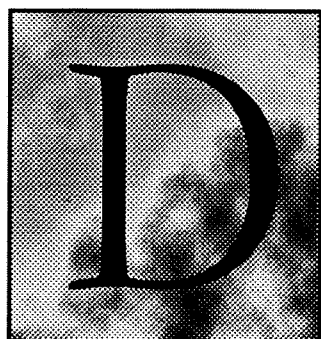
*"And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day,
for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost;"*

1 Nephi 3:187

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oubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him.

Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God.

—Mormon 4:93-94—

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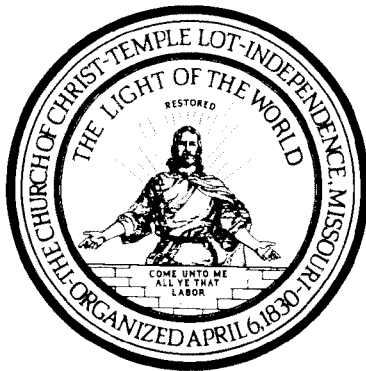
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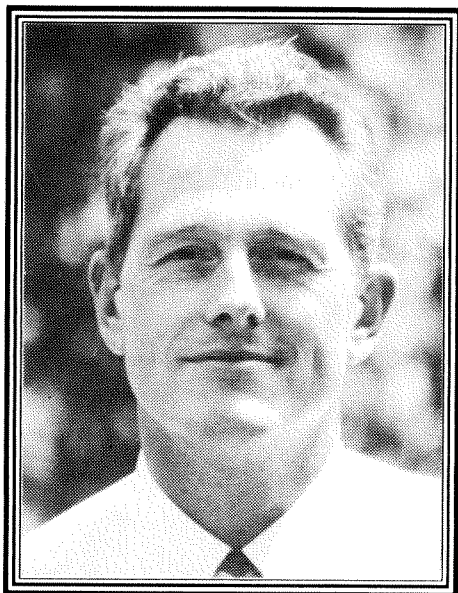
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ZION'S ADVOCATE IS...

To promote Jesus Christ as our only Saviour;
To promote His Teachings & His Church, the Church of Christ
To be a voice of warning to His people; to be Zion's advocate.

Closed Communion



By Apostle Jay Moser

We are sometimes asked to explain our position concerning the practice of closed communion. It is said that if we all believe in Jesus then why can we not share in this most sacred of ordinances? It is said that this would facilitate a greater unity among all Christians! However the real truth is that if we open the communion to all professing Christians we would be approving of disunity.

Our stand comes from a passage in the Book of Mor-

mon found in 3 Nephi 8:58-65. Here the ministry of Christ's church are commanded not to give His flesh and blood to anyone who is not repentant and baptized in His name. When we are baptized in His name we then take that name upon us and become part of His bride. This concept of taking His name brings up a dilemma. I once heard some women lamenting the fact that their live-in boy friends would not marry them. The men were not willing to commit their lives to these women. Why should they? What motivation is there if all of the benefits of marriage are already theirs (i.e. companionship, bed, children, cooking, cleaning, etc.). If, however, these things are denied them there is a reason to consider a different way of life, or, in the case of closed communion, a different belief.

Perhaps you say the communion is different because God loves all people. You say that all those who have covenanted with him should be entitled to the rights and

privileges of the Christian's betrothal to Christ. We have no quarrel with the fact that God smiles on all people, that He loves them and has given provision for them to live on the earth enjoying the same blessings as their neighbors. We believe that He permits the same opportunities to one as to the other. Our nation is a prime example of this fact. He has given the basic necessities of life to the righteous as well as the unrighteous. His rain falls on the just and the unjust. However, we are told that the world can not receive the Spirit of truth because it does not see Him. God does not share everything that he has with every one. There are things that Jesus has that will never be ours and so forth. The scriptures even tell us that there are those with whom we should not eat. The issue then is a spiritual one and not one of some idea of human fairness. Jesus has already freely given himself for all and now we must come to Him to receive more.

There are benefits in

coming to Jesus Christ. The communion is the right of those who have made a covenant with Him. The reality is that all Christians have not made the same covenant with the same Jesus Christ.

We are commanded to take the emblems in memory of Jesus. Who is the Jesus that you remember and have covenanted with? Is He one of the three persons of the one God or is He a manifestation of the one person God? Is he the Jesus who is beloved of His father or beloved by Himself? Is he the one who showed His love for His Father by His obedience to Him or did He obey Himself? Is He a neutral being when it comes to sin or is sin His enemy? Is He the one way or is there another? Is He the Jesus of one body, is that body the church, is it a restored church, and who are the members of His church? Is He the Jesus that showed us the light by His example? Is He the one that we must imitate and follow? What is the true nature of the Jesus we are embracing?

The scriptures say (John 1) that Jesus Christ is the Word. Indeed, Christ is inseparable from His word. This statement carries great weight for this issue. Our practice of closed communion comes from the Book of Mor-

mon. Is Jesus the Christ of the Book of Mormon? Do other Christians consider it a book about Christ? Do they reject the Jesus of the Book of Mormon? If so, then they have covenanted with a different God, or at the least have made a different covenant with Him. Is He a God unchangeable, who works with power to this very day, or is he a God in Word and name only?

When other Christians come among us we must be aware that the covenant they have made differs in some way to the one that we have made. We do not know if they have made a one way covenant (one body, one Spirit, one hope, One Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and father of all). Do they believe in baptism by immersion, pouring, sprinkling, is it even necessary, baptism for the dead, or for little children? Jesus said that he was the vine and that we must abide in the vine. Do other Christians abide in Jesus in the same way? Do they teach repentance and the endurance of faith? Do they expect those who share the communion with them to abide in Christ's teachings? The only means of discerning these things is if they have made the same covenant you have, in the same manner

that you have, and beneath the same teachings that you have. In other words, if they are members of the same church, baptized with the same baptism and by the same authority.

I look at many Christians and see good. The reason is because that they look to the Bible as we do. The good which they do is then credited to the Word of God. It is the same with us. Any good we do is credited to God's Word and Work. We are good only through Him. The gap remains between Christian groups. The unifying of Christians can only be accomplished through repentance and change. To give the communion of the body and blood of Christ to all is to stamp approval to disunity and neutralize a stone of stumbling that helps people to question their way.

Why should we remove this stumbling stone if it will cause some to reconsider the path they have chosen? God is truly wise and knew this fact from the beginning. Therefore, the commandment has reason and merit beyond our human feelings. It is an aid to God to reconcile the world to himself, the Rock, unchanging, unyielding, and everlasting. We are the ones that must conform to Him.

ARTICLE

OUR DAY OF PROBATION



By Apostle Roland Sarratt

On the most part, we of the ministry of the Church of Christ in recent times have felt to preach the more positive side of the gospel, that is, the things that would invite and entice us to do good. However, there is the negative side, the consequence to sin, that often gets left out, that needs to be emphasized from time to time as a warning or a more true guide to the full obedience to the gospel. Without sufficient instructions in this regard, we

as a people may be easily enticed to sin, and, in fact, be unprepared to meet the various powers of influence that would lead us astray. Certainly the opposition to the true Christian way of life is being promoted in our society today, and has become increasingly persuasive to each new generation.

To go on a campaign against the wrongs in the modern world might seem rather extreme, and, indeed, would likely be fruitless considering our small number. But unless we speak out in defense of the true gospel tenets we could become softened toward the evils that would invade the families of the church. Therefore, a greater exposé of such evils are warranted, but the right approach must be made using the never failing word of God as our guide in all such efforts.

Not only do the scriptures have explicit instructions concerning morality, but the histories of the Lord's people down through the ages are replete with examples of

Without sufficient instructions in this regard (to the consequences of sin) we as a people may be easily enticed to sin, and, in fact, be unprepared to meet the various powers of influence that would lead us astray.

the Lord striving with them in keeping them in the way of righteousness. As well, we can see examples in profane history, especially in these latter days. We of this land (the Americas) are greatly blessed with a heritage of right prevailing over wrong, but, unfortunately, time has proven that when a people will reject the truth that they will suffer the consequences of a "falling away." This is happening on this land of promise today.

A scripture that comes to mind that would be appropri-

ate is found in Proverbs 14:12: *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."*

Tragically, many who have good desires and emotional needs are being led to the increasing fountain of humanism. There they are fed many types of sensations that stimulate and enhance their natural feelings for a time. Their minds are impressed with various ideals and ways that would dictate to their consciences that such feelings are good and good for them. They reach no higher than that which is handed them at their present level as nothing is required of them. But more significant facts concerning their relationship with God are hid from them while they try to deal with real life situations that require the strength of God's truth.

The truth of the gospel of Christ is corrective; it must be to redeem mankind from the fall of Adam. This fact is somewhat hidden from the world today. Generally, people believe that their varied lifestyles (within the laws of the land) are good and acceptable to God. They feel no need to "repent" from anything that is part of their customary way of life.

The fullness of the gospel

of Christ, which has come to us through the "plain and precious things" of the Book of Mormon, gives us an understanding that our life here on earth has a purpose. This

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purpose was planned of God and we are not here by accident, but rather, we are here to learn the difference between good and evil and to ultimately make the choice between being good or being evil, which determines our final destiny.

The knowledge of the distinct difference between good and evil is essential in making that choice. Therefore, any effort to confuse or distort the distinction between the two is evil in itself. The purpose of the gospel of Christ is to bring to light the truth about the benefits of good and the sorrows of evil.

Of course the choice between good and evil is not a

simple thing. There are many things that come into play that can complicate matters many times over. The biggest factor is the adversary of our souls, the devil. He is the father of lies and an expert at deception. He is a fallen being who can not be redeemed by the blood of Christ. Therefore he is in a state of never ending misery. His only satisfaction in his present state is to make mankind miserable like himself, which he does by tempting and trying the children of men.

All things that are good for mankind come from God, while that which is evil comes from the devil. The choice between good and evil is an action thing. It is not just the acquiring of the knowledge of good and evil; it is the conscious effort of doing good rather than evil.

Here is where the complications come in. The natural man, in his fallen state, is an enemy to God and would forever be so except that God has provided a means whereby man can be reclaimed from the fallen state. The very nature of the fallen man is to do evil, and he is likely to do evil even in a state of ignorance. Therefore, the teaching of the truth of the plan of salvation in reclaiming mankind from the fallen state is necessary. Jesus Christ himself labored

against the will of the adversary to bring to light the truth concerning the state of the natural man and the need of his salvation. Jesus Christ is indeed the light and the life of mankind.

Through the eternal purposes of the Lord the human is given an opportunity to prepare himself for the reward of eternal life. This life is given to us for that purpose, and it is called a probationary state and a preparatory state in the scriptures. The spiritual force of good, which is of God, is working to help us make the right choice and to resist the spiritual force of evil, which is of the devil.

The principles of the gospel of Christ are given to us as faith toward God, repentance from dead works, baptism, laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement (Hebrews 6:1,2). Through the step-by-step application of the plan of salvation by use of these principles we are assured of receiving eternal life. The acceptance of these truths is an initial conversion to Christ's gospel which requires exercising faith in God and repenting of our sins (dead works). Through baptism we make a covenant with the Lord to be true to the

end. We are then given a "comforter" through the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. Our hope and the strength of our conversion is in the provision

The purpose of the Gospel of Christ is to bring to light the truth about the benefits of good and the sorrows of evil.

of the resurrection of the dead (through Christ's resurrection) and through the promise of eternal life.

A very essential part of being converted is given by Christ as His doctrine: "And again I say unto you, Ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in no wise receive these things" (3 Nephi 5:39). Becoming as a little child as described elsewhere indicates humility, submission, meekness and patience, all of which are usually opposite to the natural man. Putting off the natural man and responding to the enticings of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for man to receive the words of Christ into his heart and be converted.

How is one to know to repent and become as a little child? He must have the gospel of Christ preached to him, the same gospel that Jesus taught to the Jews and to the Nephites and Lamanites on this land. Jesus taught the "fullness of the gospel" with power and authority, and commissioned his disciples to do likewise. This means that when a person exercised faith in the words of Christ through his disciples and repented of his sins, he was then baptized and had hands laid on him for the reception of the Holy Ghost. If he received the knowledge of the truth but then refused to obey the gospel by being baptized, he was worse off than if he had not come to the knowledge of the truth. His refusal would bring condemnation.

We can make this an equation: knowledge of the truth of the fullness of the gospel of Christ plus accepting and obeying his gospel and remaining faithful to the end of one's life equals salvation. The other equation would be knowledge of the truth of the fullness of the gospel of Christ plus rejection of his gospel equals condemnation.

What are we of the ministry of Christ to do? Are we to withhold the truth lest those that hear might reject

it and therefore come under condemnation? No. We are to do as those of old were commanded to do and take the gospel to all peoples, and to shake the dust off our feet from those who reject the truth.

Christ told his followers that they were the light of the world when they taught his gospel, the same as He is the light of the world. He also told them that the truth should make them free. The truth of the gospel brings an enlightening of the mind which brings one to the pinnacle of decision. It inevitably brings one to the stage of accountability where he must answer for his decision of accepting or rejecting the truth.

For the last thirty years or more, this Church of Christ has debated a question over the final destiny of the great masses of humanity that have lived upon the earth and have not come to a knowledge of the fullness of the gospel of Christ, but have known some basic distinctions between good and evil. There are varied beliefs concerning whether or not such people have an opportunity beyond this life to learn the fullness of the gospel of Christ and make a choice to accept it or reject it. It seems quite evident at this point in time that the question will

not be resolved until the Lord comes to set his church in order.

In the meantime, are we to wait to do the work that the Lord has commissioned

Putting off the natural man and responding to the enticings of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for man to receive the words of Christ into his heart and be converted.

us to do? Just how important is this question? Why have there been such strong feelings and wills demonstrated on this issue? Could it be that it is actually a diversion tactic of the devil?

If we of the ministry are doing our job, our primary concern should not be with those who do not know the fullness of the gospel that are beyond our ministerial reach. All souls to whom we are ministering will have an opportunity to accept or reject the truth of the gospel, or at least our initial efforts to declare the truth to them. That is basically what we are commanded to do. The Lord has not given into our hands the right to make a complete and

final judgment upon them. Rather, we are to hold out the great hope of eternal life through their obedience and diligence in keeping the commandments of God. All those who are beyond our reach at this time are in the hands of the Lord, and He will make judgment as to their final destiny without any input from us.

Those of us who have made our covenant with the Lord in the waters of baptism are accountable unto the Lord in retaining a remission of our sins through seeking the Lord's forgiveness daily when we fall short of doing his will. This is our day of probation and it behooves us to do all within our power to run the race to the end in the strength of the promises God has given.

Remaining faithful in keeping our covenant with the Lord requires both the positive and negative sides of the gospel: the hope of reward for doing good and the awareness of the punishment or condemnation for doing evil. There is no middle ground where the absence of evil means that we are good enough as we are. We are commanded to be perfect even as our Heavenly Father is perfect. Although this may seem impossible, we must strive toward that goal in the

hope that we will be like Him and be accepted of Him at the day of judgment. Procrastinating our more dedicated efforts indicates our lack of true commitment to the gospel of Christ.

Those of us who have embraced the gospel of Christ and have responded by obeying it have unlimited benefits through the Spirit of God. We have the promise of having the mysteries of heaven revealed to us. With such promises, however, we cannot excuse ourselves at the day of judgment by saying, I don't know, when, in fact, we all have the word of God in written form before us, and the continual invitation to come to the Lord and ask Him for anything that we need. Neglecting our opportunities in this regard indicates an attitude of rejecting the Lord. Without faith we cannot please Him.

Do we believe that the Lord tolerates our weaknesses and sins? We are told that God does not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. However, He has promised to help us overcome our weaknesses and has given us the opportunity to repent of our sin. What more do we want? What more can we ask for? Can we stand before the Lord right now and say, I can't repent, I can't

quit sinning?

The attitude of modern-day Christians is to expect everything of the Lord and do little or nothing in response. Literal obedience to the com-

Respecting the rights of the people to live the lifestyle of their choice is considered more right than heeding the strict counsels of God in His written word.

mandments and expressed will of God have become such debateable issues or refused by such large numbers of people today that many ministers have restyled their doctrines to suit their congregations' itching ears.

Unfortunately, we as a church have not entirely escaped the influence of such an attitude. Laboring directly with church members whose lifestyles are following the way of the world brings much criticism against those of the ministry who dare to do so. Respecting the rights of the people to live the lifestyle of their choice is considered more right than heeding the strict counsels of God in His written word.

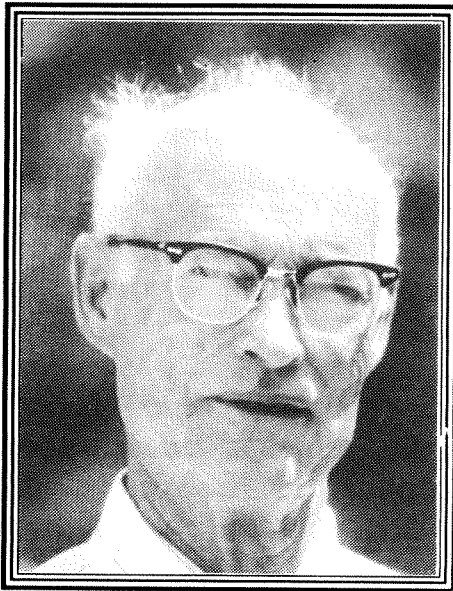
From the prophecies we are aware that the day of the Lord's return is soon at hand. Where will we stand when the Lord returns to set His church in order? Will we be in His favor or disfavor? Much depends upon whether or not we have obeyed the strictness of His word.

Yes, we need those things of the gospel of Christ that invite and entice us to do good. We need to be motivated in the positive truths of the word of God. But the word tells us that there is a God Who truly expects us to give heed to His will and respect His every word of counsel. And, more than that, we should seek His will without being constantly prompted, and respond favorably to His guiding Spirit. Also, we should fear Him; that is, we should fear offending Him. We should be aware that we are subject to Him and dependent upon His mercy.

We can be assured that the love of God is extended towards us, and that the Lord will save us from our sins if we are willing to rid ourselves of our sins through obeying His commandments. Let us all avail ourselves of this opportunity and be saved eternally in the kingdom of God.

ARTICLE

What About the Rapture?



By Apostle Marvin E. Ely

Rapture: A state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion (*Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*). The state of being rapt (carried away) or transported; ecstatic joy: ecstasy. The act of transferring a person from one place to another: Elijah's rapture to heaven (*Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary 1958*).

Those who believe in the rapture believe that they will be carried away or caught

away to heaven and will not have to go through the great tribulation that will take place during the last days. The article that follows will address the time of the great tribulation as well as those who will be there during that time.

In the 24th chapter of Matthew the disciples of Jesus came to Him privately inquiring about the sign of His coming and of the end of the world. Jesus said: *"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, that I am Christ; and shall deceive many"* Matthew 24:4-5.

There would be those proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ and the one to follow but because they did not fully keep the commandments of Jesus, they would deceive many people into believing that what they were teaching was true and the way to attain eternal life.

By reading Matthew 24:6-8 we can read about events that will take place before the time of the end.

The question arises, how can one endure to the end if he or she has already been caught away to heaven?

These will be wars and rumors of wars, but the end is not yet. *"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows"* Matthew 24:7-8.

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" Matthew 24:11-12. Jesus warns people that false prophets would deceive many. The only way this could be done is that the false prophecy would be so close to true prophecy that it would be difficult to tell the difference. There-

fore, it is important that we pray for the spirit of discernment in order that we may know whether it is of God. Also, this shall be a time when iniquity shall abound, causing the love of many to wax cold. We can see this very statement of Jesus being fulfilled before our eyes.

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" Matthew 24:13-14. The question arises, how can one endure to the end if he or she has already been caught away to heaven? Also, who shall preach the gospel in all the world unto all nations if the believers are already caught away?

In Matthew 24 Jesus prophecies of many trying things that will take place before the end of the world and that it shall be a time of great tribulation. *"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"* Matthew 24:21-22. These days of great tribulation shall be shortened for

the elect's sake. Therefore, the elect would have to be upon the earth and not already caught away to heaven.

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false

These days of great tribulation shall be shortened for the elect's sake.

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Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" Matthew 24:23-24. This shows that the very elect shall still be on the earth during the great tribulation, but it won't be possible to deceive them.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they

shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" Matthew 24:29-31. From the above quotation we learn that immediately after the tribulation the sign of the son of man in heaven shall appear. It will not occur before the tribulation so the believers could not be caught away and will still be upon the earth during the tribulation.

His elect will be gathered from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. The four winds are better explained in Mark 13:24-27, where it explains the things that shall take place after the tribulation, including the Son of man coming in the clouds. *"And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven"* Mark 13:27. This very clearly states that the elect of Jesus shall be gathered together after the tribulation from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Therefore, the elect could not be caught away before the tribulation.

In Revelation 6:9-11 John the Revelator saw the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they asked: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood...And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." This is in harmony with Luke 21:16: "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." This refers to events that will take place before the coming of Christ.

By reading Revelation 7:9-10, 13-14, reference is made to a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, kindreds, people and tongues. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes. Those in white robes are those who came out of great tribulation. In order to come out of great tribulation they had to be there during that time.

The Apostle Paul spoke of tribulation in Acts 14:19-22. Barnabas and Paul

preached the gospel to Derbe and then returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation en-

Those in white robes are those who came out of great tribulation. In order to come out of great tribulation they had to be there during that time.

ter into the kingdom of God" Acts 14:22. This does not indicate that the believers will miss the tribulation. In Romans 5:1-5 we can read of Paul's statement in which he said: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope..."

In the parable of the sower the kingdom of heaven was likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept his enemy sowed tares among the wheat. When the wheat had sprung up the tares appeared also. The servants of the householder wanted to know if they should gather up the

tares, but he said, Nay, lest while you gather up the tares, you root up the wheat with them. The servants were told to let them both grow together until the time of the harvest. At that time the reapers would gather first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them: then the wheat would be gathered into his barn (see Matthew 13:24-30).

A tare is "a noxious plant, of the grass family, supposed to mean the darnel. It grows among the wheat everywhere in Palestine, and bears a great resemblance to it while growing—so closely that, before they head out, the two plants can hardly be distinguished." This is why the tares are not separated until the time of the harvest (*Smith's Bible Dictionary*).

The disciples of Jesus desired to know about the meaning of the parable of the sower. Jesus answered them: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of

man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity..." Matthew 13:36-41. Those which do iniquity shall be cast into a furnace of fire, but the righteous shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father (see Matthew 13:42-43). From the above parable we can understand that those who do iniquity will be gathered out from the righteous; therefore, the righteous will still be on the earth and not caught away.

Only the Father knows the day and hour of the return of Jesus. However, Jesus informs us that it will be as the days of Noe (Noah) were when "...they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" Matthew 24:36-39. Also, in the days of Noah the wickedness of man was great and the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence (see Genesis 6:1-11). Today the earth is rapidly becoming like unto the days that preceded the flood. All the people before the flood were upon the earth

at the same time, both the righteous and the wicked. The coming of the Son of man shall be like the days of Noah were; therefore, we should expect both the righteous and the wicked to be here when He returns.

The coming of the Son of man shall be like the days of Noah were; therefore, we should expect both the righteous and the wicked to be here when He returns.

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" Luke 17:28-29. Lot was still upon the earth when Sodom was destroyed. When Jesus returns the righteous shall still be on the earth because it shall be like it was in the days of Lot.

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" Matthew 24:40-42. In the 44th verse we were admonished to be ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. The above references shows the importance of regularly serving God for we do not know when Jesus will return.

Before Jesus returns there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity. Men's hearts will fail them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth (see Luke 21:25-26). The above things are already beginning to take place. Also the powers of heaven shall be shaken. "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" Luke 21:27-28.

In Luke 21:29-35, we can read that we must not be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares. For it shall come as a snare upon those who dwell on the earth; or, we might say, as a total surprise. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always,

that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" Luke 21:36.

"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" Joel 2:30-32.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" Isaiah 2:3-4.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be

changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must

...The righteous were gathered from the four quarters of the earth, showing they would still be upon the earth when Christ returns.

put on immortality" 1 Cor. 15:51-53. This shall all take place at the sounding of the last trump. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" Matthew 24:31.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be

caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" 1 Thes. 4:15-17. In the above passage of scripture we take note that the dead in Christ shall rise first and those who (are righteous and) are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them and shall always be with the Lord. In the following paragraph those who rise first are those of the first resurrection and they shall live and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

In Revelations 20:1-6 we can read where Satan shall be bound for one thousand years, and should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed a little season. In the above paragraph we are informed that the dead in Christ shall rise first. These are the ones who would be the first resurrection, but the rest of the dead lived not until after the thousand years were finished. Also, along with those who died in Christ and were resurrected first, would be those who are righteous and are alive and remain until Christ returns. They also would reign with Christ a thousand years.

"For the time speedily cometh, that the Lord God shall cause a great division

among the people; and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reigns" 2 Nephi 12:90-91. By also reading 2 Nephi 12:92-99 we learn that this is the time of the thousand years when the devil would be bound, for verse 99 says: "And Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more, for a long time." This would be a time when the wolf dwells with the lamb, and the young lion, and the fatling, together; and a little child shall lead them.

By reading 1 Nephi 7:32-42 we can learn that the time speedily cometh, that Satan shall have no power over the hearts of the children of men. God will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. He will preserve the righteous by His power even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear for the righteous shall not perish. "For the time surely must come, that all they which fight against Zion shall be cut off" 1 Nephi 7:42.

"And the righteous need not fear, for it is they which shall not be confounded. But it is the kingdom of the devil

which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh:...yea, in fine, all they which belong to the kingdom of the devil; it is they which need fear, and tremble, and quake; it is they which must

...We should not worry about the time of the tribulation; the important thing is to place our trust in God and look forward to spending a thousand years with Jesus.

be brought low in the dust; it is they which must be consumed as stubble..." 1 Nephi 7:48-53.

"And the time cometh speedily, that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory. And he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him;... And because of the righteousness of his people, Satan has no power; wherefore, he can not be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no

power over the hearts of the people, for they shall dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth" 1 Nephi 7:55-62. This space of many years would be none other than the thousand years spoken of in Revelation 20:1-6. Also, we should note that the righteous were gathered from the four quarters of the earth, showing they would still be upon the earth when Christ returns.

The righteous need not fear, for throughout the scriptures there are some great promises to those who love Him and keep His commandments. Whosoever shall put their trust in God, shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions and shall be lifted up at the last day to be with God and His Son. Therefore, we should not worry about the time of the tribulation; the important thing is to place our trust in God and look forward to spending a thousand years with Jesus.

ARTICLE

Burdens and their Purpose in our Lives

Elder Robert S. Dewaele

Undoubtedly, all of us at one time or another have wondered why we are given burdens to endure, and how to best cope with them.

Burdens can come in a number of forms. They might be physical or emotional health problems, difficulties on our jobs, obstacles placed before the Church, or any number of difficulties too numerous to list here.

One great help in dealing with burdens is to remind ourselves that our lives on earth are periods of probation for us as individuals. It is up to each of us to make the most of this probationary period, and to learn as life progresses. With learning comes greater insight and strength to help us respond successfully to additional burdens as they present themselves.

How we endure these burdens can be an indication of our resolve to live the lives that we have been commanded to. If we show strength and determination

in shouldering a challenge that presents itself, we can surely expect to be rewarded by the Lord for this effort.

Some people might think that burdens are given as a form of punishment in this life for sins that have been committed. While this idea might be partially true, there is ample proof within the scriptures which gives greater support to the idea that even though we are given burdens and afflictions to bear, we can always count on the Lord to deliver us from them if we ask for help from Him in a sincere manner.

Psalms 37:24 gives a good basis of support for this contention, as it states: *"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."*

Further evidence of this heavenly support can be found in Psalms 61:1-2: *"Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I."*

Psalms 34:19 indicates

that *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."*

At this point it should be abundantly clear that while each of us are given burdens and afflictions, it is up to us as individuals to accept these burdens as they present themselves in our lives, for whatever God's purpose may be.

We need to be ever vigilant against the impulse of speculating as to why certain individuals are given specific burdens. This speculation can easily lead to us becoming judgmental of others—a characteristic that must be avoided at all cost.

Hopefully, these thoughts, and the references presented, can give us all a greater degree of confidence to face any burdens placed upon us in the future, and greater empathy for others as they bear their burdens in life.

My Personal Religion On Parent's Responsibility to Children

These verses have guided me throughout my life, from youth through old age. They were taught to me by my mother. "I did not doubt my mother knew."

- ◆ "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally...and it shall be given him."
- ◆ "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."
- ◆ "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."
- ◆ "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."

I owe it to my children and grandchildren to teach these same truths, by exam-



ple.

We who know God's truths are most blessed, and those of us who were taught,

and have taught, have a great heritage. We have a duty, not just a suggestion.

- ◆ "Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord."
- ◆ "And ye shall teach them your children, speaking to them when thou sittest in thy house."
- ◆ "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

As many of us have heard from our ministerial family, our church is just one generation from extinction, unless we teach as we were taught.

Meredyth Malone

"The best inheritance a father can leave his children is a good example."

LOCAL NEWS

RAVANNA, MICHIGAN

Greetings from the Ravenna Local:

What a hot summer we have had!

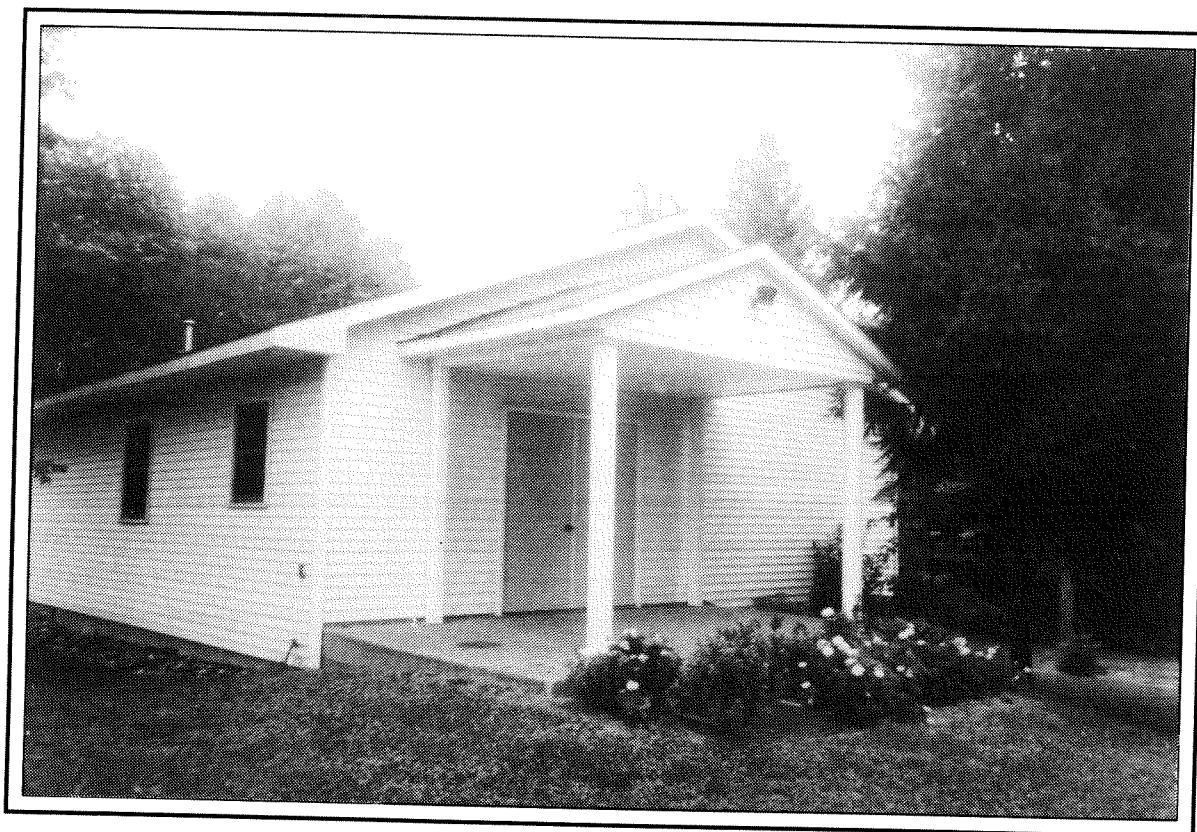
We are happy to finally have our porches built on our entry ways. The upstairs porch has two large columns in front. They add a lot to the church. The man who built them for us did a very nice job. We have needed them for a long time because when it rained it would leak around the doors. Sister Debbie Vogal has offered to scrub the carpet

ing which we appreciate very much. We are so thankful for our little white church in the wildwood. And we thank God who made it all possible. Before Elder Gale Brantner left he planted a lot of Rose of Sharon trees in the church yard. I wish he could see them now as they are just beautiful. Brother Allen Piatt also planted flowers in the front. He has two green thumbs—he's very good with flowers. One day he came out and removed all the plants and weeds and replanted the flowers. We all need to take care of our gardens of life.

Which means we need to do things for each other, a little kindness here and there—and by pulling weeds from our gardens. We do this by not staying mad at someone for things that are said in anger. If we take time each day to say a kind word or do a nice deed, the world will be a better place. There's no limit to the good we can do, if we don't care who gets the credit.

Kind words and kind deeds keep life's garden free of weeds.

*Your reporter
Norma Keith*



LOCAL NEWS

COLLINS, MISSOURI

It's almost time for school to start again in this area. It seems like just the other day they were getting out for summer vacation. Now it's time to begin a new year, a new stage or advancement to their education. The school is all polished and clean and quiet, waiting for the arrival of teaching and learning. Please remember to pray for the children and the teachers who guide them. I know, not all of these kids are "ours," but they are all together and are an influence to one another and so become our concern and our prayerful responsibility.

Our summer has been hot, humid and busy, and I imagine your summer has been similar. Our garden drowned and then the weeds prevailed. So I have accomplished nothing in the way of gardening this season.

Allen and I were privileged to attend the Scripture Theme Camp at Knob Noster and also the Camp For All Ages near Bennett Springs.

Since we were not exactly veteran campers we weren't as prepared as some. However, we had some good friends who looked after us and walked us through the various camping stages so that we got to all the meetings, had a place to sleep (sprayed for bugs!), and enjoyed wonderful meals. All in all we had a wonderful time.

Sister Betty Martin has had cataract surgery and is doing very well. I believe she got her new glasses today. I know that will be a grand relief.

I beg your pardon for having rambled on as I have. Perhaps I should have let another month go by and then sent a report, but I wanted you to know we're still here, we're still holding regular services, and still enjoying many blessings.

I will close with a few sermon quotes I've jotted down:

- ◆ **We all have the same vocation—it's to love one another; have charity.**
- ◆ **Where will YOU spend eternity?**

- ◆ **What is the state of your soul today?**
- ◆ **He is faithful to me, but am I faithful to Him?**
- ◆ **We can't just read over the surface of the scriptures, but need to *feel* what they say.**
- ◆ **Faith cannot be weighed like other matter.**
- ◆ **Believing alone is not quite enough, but doing that which we are told to do—obedience of God's word.**
- ◆ **We forget so soon.**
- ◆ **The door of the Adversary is always open.**
- ◆ **It takes determination to serve God.**

*Your reporter,
Czerna Kauffman*

(We apologize for late dated news. It was not our sister's doing—Editor.)

CHURCH OF CHRIST CONFERENCES

The 1996 Ministers' Conference (general membership) for the Church of Christ will commence Sunday, April 7. The business sessions will start at 9:00 A.M. Monday, April 8. A Solemn Assembly will be held prior to the conference, on April 5 and 6. All services will be held on the Temple Lot.

The 1996 Ministers' Conference (priesthood membership) of the Church of Christ will be held Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, August 21 through 23, at Independence, Missouri.

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 Zion and the Temple of the Lord

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If you or someone you know (member or non-member) would like to be visited by a member of the Priesthood of the Church of Christ, please call or write to the Council of Apostles at Church Headquarters in Independence. The phone numbers and addresses are listed on the inside front cover.