

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

March 2001

"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:2, 3) All true peace comes from God the Father and from His dear Son. I pray that each of you are experiencing the spiritual blessings which God the Father is eager to bestow upon each one of us. Be sure to notice the camp meeting announcement and the video project update.

Individuality in Religion

by Alonzo T. Jones

(The following article is the first in a series of articles that will appear in upcoming issues of *Present Truth*. It is taken from the book entitled, "Individuality in Religion," by Alonzo T. Jones. There is no printing date on the book, but it was first printed between 1890 and 1923. The book contains information so valuable that I believe every person in the world should read it, especially in light of current events relating to the freedom of religion. Therefore, I have included the Introduction and the first three chapters in this issue of *Present Truth*.
Editor)

Introduction

Religion is "the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it."

Liberty is "the state of being exempt from the domination of others, or from restricting circumstances. In ethics and philosophy, the power in any rational agent to make his choices and decide his conduct for himself, spontaneously and voluntarily, in accordance with reasons or motives."

Religious liberty, therefore, is man's exemption from the domination of others, or from restricting circumstances; man's freedom to make his choices and decide his conduct for himself, spontaneously and voluntarily: *in his duty to his Creator, and in the manner of discharging that duty.*

Since God has created man, in the nature of things the first of all relationships is that to God; and the first of all duties could be nothing but duty to God.

Suppose a time when there was only one intelligent creature in the universe. He was created: and his relationship to his Creator, his duty to his Creator, is the only one that could possibly be. That is the first of all relationships

that can possibly be. Therefore it is written that "the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." (Mark 12:29, 30)

All there is of any soul is first due to God; because it all came from God. This, therefore, is the first of all commandments, *not* because it is the first one that was ever given by spoken word, or that was ever written out; but because it is the first that could possibly be. And this because it is the expression of the first principle of the existence of any intelligent creature. The principle was there, inherent in the existence of the first intelligent creature, in the first moment of his existence; and there the principle abides eternally, unmodified and unfading.

Now, though that is the first of all possible relationships, and the first of all duties; though that relationship and duty are inherent in the very existence of intelligent creatures; yet even in that inherent obligation, God has

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Indianapolis Baptist Temple Seized by U.S. Federal Marshals	page 8
by Allen Stump	
Living by Faith	page 10
by E. J. Waggoner	
Camp Meeting Announcement	page 12
Letters from our Readers	page 13
Digital Video Project Update	page 16

created every intelligent creature *free*—free to recognize that obligation or not, free to discharge that duty or not, just as he chooses.

Accordingly it is written: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” (Joshua 24:15) “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17) Thus it is absolutely true that in religion—in the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it—God has created man entirely “exempt from the domination of others and from restricting circumstances;” has made him free “to make his choice, and decide his conduct for himself, spontaneously and voluntarily.” Thus religious liberty is the gift of God, inherent in the gift of rational existence itself.

Any service as to God that is not freely chosen by him who renders it is not service *to God*. There can be no virtue in it; there can be none of God in it. Any service rendered as to God that is not freely chosen on the part of him who renders it cannot be of God, because “God is love;” and love and compulsion, love and force, love and oppression, never can go together. Therefore any duty, any obligation, anything, offered or rendered as to God that is not of the individual’s own freely chosen choice, can neither be of God nor to God. Accordingly when the Lord created whatever creature—angel or man—in order that that creature should be happy in the service of God, and in order that there should be virtue in rendering service or worship to God, He created him free to *choose* to do so. And this is individuality, and the divine right of it.

God created man free. When man by sin was separated and lost from that freedom, Christ came to restore him fully to it. The way of God and of Christ, therefore, is the way of liberty. And the work of God through Christ with mankind in the whole history of the world has been to make plain this way and to give to man the absolute assurance of this “soul liberty” which is the only true liberty. Whom the Son makes free is free indeed.

In the Scriptures there are given distinctly and clearly six specific lessons on this subject of religious liberty—the liberty of the individual soul against the domination of man and combinations of men in the powers of the world. Each of these lessons deals with the subject upon a distinct and specific principle. And the six lessons, taken together, cover completely the whole ground upon every principle.

We now purpose to take up for special study these six lessons separately and in succession as given in the Scriptures. The contest for religious liberty is not yet finished. Religious liberty complete is not yet recognized, even in principle, and much less in practice, even by the mass of Christians, as it is made perfectly plain in the Scriptures.

Come, then, let us study and let us have, and let us study that we may have, religious liberty complete, in principle and in experience, as it is in the Scriptures of truth.

Chapter 1 As Related to Autocracy

In the nature of things there is no rightful room for the domination of others in the life and affairs of the soul of the individual person. This is peculiarly and supremely the realm of God alone, who created man in His own image and for His own glory; and who created each person individually and personally responsible and answerable to Him alone.

Yet man, sinful and unruly man, has never been willing to allow God to have His place in and with the soul of the individual man; but has always been ambitious and ready to claim that place for himself, and by every means and contrivance possible to make this claim effective. History itself, as it relates to general principles and not to details, is hardly anything else than a succession of attempts upon the grandest possible scale to make successful this arrogant claim of sinful and unruly man in the place of God to dominate the souls of men. And no grander demonstration that there is a divinity striving hard to shape the destiny of mankind could ever be asked or given than from the day of Abel until now is given in the perpetual heroic assertion and maintenance of this perfect liberty of the individual soul by the individual person against the subtlest pretensions and mightiest combinations of force and power that this world could possibly contrive. From Nimrod to Nebuchadnezzar and from Nebuchadnezzar until now the course and energy of empire have been bent and exerted to this one thing. And through all that time such splendid individuals as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Daniel and his three brethren, Paul, Wyckliff, Huss, Militz, Matthias, Conrad, Jerome, Luther, Roger Williams, and multitudes unnamed, and over all Christ Jesus, by divine faith have sublimely stood *alone with God*, absolutely alone so far as man is concerned, for the individuality, and in that the liberty, of the soul of man; and for the sovereignty of God alone in and over the realm of the soul.

The Empire of Babylon embraced the civilized world, as the world then was. Nebuchadnezzar was monarch and absolute ruler of the empire. “Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, and power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.” (Daniel 2:37, 38)

In His own providential purpose God had made all nations subject to the sway of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. (Jeremiah 27:1-13) In the form and system of government of Babylon the authority of the king was absolute. His word was the law. In this absolutism of sovereignty King Nebuchadnezzar assumed that he was sovereign of the *souls*, as well as the bodies, of the *religious life* as well as the civil conduct, of those who were subject to his power. And since he was ruler of the nations he would be ruler *in the religion*, and of *the religion*, of the nations.

Accordingly he made a great image, all of gold, about ninety feet tall and nine feet broad, and “set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.” (Daniel 3:1) Then he summoned from the provinces all the officials of the empire to the dedication and the worship of the great golden image. All the officials came, and were assembled and stood before the image.

“Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psalter, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” And as the instruments of music sounded forth the grand signal for the worship “all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image.” (Daniel 3:4-6)

But in the assembly there were three young Hebrews who had been carried captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, but who had been appointed by the king, officials “over the affairs of the province of Babylon.” These neither bowed nor worshipped, nor otherwise paid any particular attention to the proceedings.

This was noticed, and excited accusation before the king. “There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” (Verse 12)

Then the king “in his rage and fury” commanded that the three young men should be brought before him. This was done. The king himself now spoke to them personally and direct: “Is it of purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?” The king himself then repeated the command that at the sound of the instruments of all kinds of music they fall down and worship, and if not, they were to be cast “the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

But the young men quietly answered: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” (Verses 14-18)

The issue was now clearly drawn. The sovereign of the world’s power had personally issued his command direct to the three individuals; and from them he had received answer as direct, that they would not conform. This was conduct, and these were words, such as the king in his absolutism of power had never met before. There was therefore a personal as well as an official resentment aroused in him; and he was so “full of fury” that “the form of his visage was changed against” the young men, and he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than usual; and that “the most mighty men in his army” should bind the young men and cast them into the midst of the roaring furnace.

It was done. And the three men, “in their coats, and their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments” fell down bound “into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” But just then the king was more astonished than ever in his life before. He was fairly petrified—“astoried”—and “rose up in haste” and to his counselors cried out, “Did not we cast *three men bound* into the midst of the fire?”

They assured him that this was true. But he exclaimed, “Lo, I see *four men, loose*, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” (Daniel 3:25)

Then the king went near to the mouth of the furnace and called to the men by name and said, “Ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither.” And they “came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counselors, being gathered together, *saw these men* upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed upon them.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and *have changed the king’s word*, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God.” (Daniel 3:26-28)

Here, then, is the situation: The Lord had brought all nations in subjection to the king of Babylon. By messages of His own prophet He had commanded His people, the Jews, and these three young men among them, to “serve the king of Babylon.” Yet these three had

explicitly refused to serve the king of Babylon in this thing which he had personally and directly commanded them; and in this refusal the Lord himself had most signally stood by them and delivered them.

Therefore it would be impossible more plainly to show that the Lord, in commanding the people to be subject to the king of Babylon and to serve him, had never either commanded or intended that they should be subject to him or serve him *in the realm of religion*.

By this unmistakable approval of the course of the three men, and this signal deliverance of them, the Lord made perfectly plain to the king that his command in this matter was wrong: that he had demanded a service that he had no right to require: that in making him king of the nations the Lord had not made him king in *the religion* of the people: that in bringing him to be head of all the nations, peoples, and languages, God had not given him to be head of the religion of even a solitary individual: that while the Lord had brought all nations and peoples under the king's yoke as to their political and bodily service, this same Lord had unmistakably shown to the king that he had given no power nor jurisdiction in any way whatever as to their soul's service: that while in all things between nation and nation, and between man and man, all peoples, nations, and languages had been given to him to serve him, and God had made him ruler over them all; yet with the relations between each man and God the king could have nothing whatever to do: and that in the presence of the rights of the individual person, in conscience and in worship "the king's word" *must change*, the king's decree is naught: that in this the king even of the world is only nobody, for here only God is sovereign and all in all.

And for the instruction of all kings and all people forever, all this was done that day, and it was written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Chapter 2

As Related to the Supremacy of the Law

The world-power and empire of Babylon passed away forever; and another took its place—the power and empire of Medo-Persia. Here was another principle of government, and here there is given to the world another lesson in religious liberty.

In the Medo-Persian empire the principle of government was different from that of Babylon.

Babylon, as we have seen, was not only an absolute monarchy, but an autocracy—a one-man absolutism. The word of the king was the law, and the law was changeable as the will and word of the king might change. The king was the source of the law; his word was the law for all others; but as for himself there was no restriction of law.

The Medo-Persian government was an absolute monarchy also. There, also, the word of the king was the law: but with this all-important difference from Babylon, that when once the word of the king had gone forth as the law, that law could not be changed nor reversed even by the king himself. The king himself was bound, even against himself, by his own word or decree that had once become the law. The government of Medo-Persia, therefore, was a government *of law*; its principle was *the supremacy of THE LAW*.

At the head of the administration of the affairs of this empire there were three presidents, of whom Daniel was first. Because of Daniel's knowledge, integrity, ability, and general worth in the administration, the king had it in mind "to set him over the whole realm." This, becoming known, excited the jealousy of the other two presidents and of the princes; and they conspired to break him down.

They sought, first, "to find occasion against Daniel" concerning his conduct of the affairs of the empire. But after long and diligent search, and the closest possible scrutiny, they were obliged to cease their endeavor and confess that "they could find none occasion nor fault," because "he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."

"Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." But they could not find any occasion against him concerning even the law of his God, until they themselves had first created a situation that would render inevitable the desired occasion.

Their long and exacting endeavor to *find* some occasion or fault against him in the affairs of the empire had convinced them of his absolute devotion in loyalty to God. Through their investigation they knew by experience that he could not by any means be caused to swerve a hair's-breadth from the straight line of absolute devotion to God. But this was wholly an individual matter, in which there was no interference with any man in any way whatever. And in his conduct in relation to others and to the State, their own consciously prejudiced investigation had demonstrated that it was actually beneficial.

Thus there being no possible ground upon which they could find occasion against him even concerning the law of his God, as circumstances and conditions were; and they, therefore, being put to the necessity of actually creating such ground, Daniel's unswerving devotion to God became the way over which they would proceed. They therefore concocted a scheme into which they drew all the officials of the empire, and went to the king and said:—"O king, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors,

and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask any petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into a den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” (Daniel 6:6-8)

The king allowed himself to be caught by this very flattering proposal of so large a number of the highest officials of the empire, and he signed the decree. Daniel knew that the decree had been framed, and that the writing had been signed by the king. He knew that such was now the law of the empire—a law that could neither be waived nor altered. Nevertheless he went to his house, and as his regular times of prayer recurred, three times a day, he “prayed and gave thanks before God, as he did aforetime.” (Daniel 6:10) And his windows happening to be open, the imperial law had not enough place in his mind or weight upon his attention to induce him to take the precaution even to close the windows.

The plotters expecting nothing but just this on the part of Daniel, “assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.” Then at sight of this open disregard of the imperial law, they hastened to the king and very deferentially inquired. “Hast thou not signed a decree?” etc. The king answered, “The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” Then the plotters reported, “that Daniel which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.”

“Then the king, when he had heard these words, was sore displeased *with himself*,” because he had allowed himself to be so flattered as to be caught in such a trap as that. “And he set his heart on Daniel to deliver him.” (Daniel 6:11-14) But the plotters were ready with their plea of the supremacy and integrity of “the law”; and to urge arguments that it was “not a question of religion, but of *the law*,” that to countenance disregard and violation of “the law” was simply to undermine all the government and make an open bid for a reign of anarchy, and for the very dissolution of society itself: that they were exceedingly sorry that such an excellent man as Daniel should be thus involved, yet to allow such open disregard of “the law” by one of such high standing and reputation would be only all the worse; because this very fact of the high standing and wide reputation of the one who so openly

disregarded “the law” would be only the more encouragement to all people to do the same, etc., etc.

Yet the king “labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.” But through all that time and at every turn, the king was met by the plotters with the plea, “The law; the law.” “Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.” The supremacy of the law bound the king himself: there was no escape: and, though with greatest reluctance, “the king commanded and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.” (Daniel 6:16)

The king passed the night in fasting and in sleeplessness. But very early in the morning he hurried to the den of lions and “cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel... O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?”

Daniel answered, “O king, live forever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as *before Him*, innocence was found in me; and also *before thee*, O king, have I done no hurt.” (Daniel 6:20-22) And therein the demonstration is made in perfection forever that the person who disregards any law that touches service to God *is innocent before God*, and also does “no hurt” to the king, nor to the State, nor to society, nor to any principle of law or government.

All of which in divine truth demonstrates again that no earthly government can ever have any right or jurisdiction in matters of *religion*: that is, in “the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it.” And in *this* case there is the additional demonstration that no government can ever of right incorporate *in the law* provisions touching *religion*, and then plead the supremacy and integrity of “the law:” that “it is not primarily a question of *religion* but only of *the law*,” that “we are not asking for religious observance, we ask only *respect for law*.” In the case of Daniel and the “supremacy of the law of the Medes and Persians,” the divine answer to all such pleas is that, nothing pertaining to religion can ever of right have any place in the law.

The right of perfect individuality in religion is a divine, and therefore an absolutely inalienable, right. And to make religious observances or prohibitions a matter of law, does not affect the free exercise of this divine right. The fullness of the right, and the perfect liberty of its exercise, abide ever the same, even though religion be made



Alonzo T. Jones 1850-1923

a matter, and a part, of the law. And when religion or religious observance or prohibition is fixed in the law, even though the law be as supreme and inflexible as that of the Medes and Persians, the divine right and perfect liberty of individuality in religion then extends *to the law that incorporates the religion*, and such law is simply no law. The subterfuge of enforcing religious observances or prohibitions under cover of “the supremacy and integrity of the law,” instead of taking away or in any way limiting the divine right and perfect liberty of individuality in religion, simply reacts to the extent of actually sweeping away all ground of claim for “the supremacy and integrity of the law”—in actually nullifying the specific law in the case.

The civil law is rightly supreme in the realm of things *civil*, but in the realm of things *religious* it simply has no place at all.

In the presence of the divine right of individuality in religion as relates to autocratic government, illustrated in King Nebuchadnezzar, *the king's word must change*.

In the presence of the divine right of individuality in religion as relates to the supremacy and inflexibility of the law, illustrated in the government of the Medes and Persians, any law that touches or contemplates religion is simply no law at all.

The realm of religion is the realm of God. In that realm God alone is Sovereign, and His will is the only law. And in that realm the individual stands alone with God, and responsible to Him alone.

Chapter 3

As Relates to Church and State

By most remarkable facts and unquestionable experiences, in the case of King Nebuchadnezzar and the three Hebrew young men, there was made plain forever the divine truth and principle that with the religion of the people no monarch can of right have anything to do; that in the presence of the right of individuality in religion, the king's word must change.

By corresponding facts and experiences in the case of the Medo-Persian government against Daniel there was made plain forever the divine will and truth and principle that with the religion of the people no law, nor any government by means of law, can of right have anything to do—that in the presence of the free exercise of individuality in religion, any law touching religion is nothing; and every individual in absolutely ignoring and disregarding such law is “innocent” before God, and also does “no hurt” to government, to law, or to society.

These two examples and the principles which they illustrate cover every phase of earthly government as such: and so make plain the great and vital truth that religion,

with its rites, institutions, and observances, is totally excluded, and is to be totally exempt, from the cognizance of earthly government of whatever phase or form: that religion, with all that is incident to it, pertains to the individual alone in his personal relations to God.

But there is another means by which man has sought to dominate man in the realm of religion, that is by means of *the Church through the State*.

People called out from the world and separated from the world unto God, are His church in the world. When God had called His people out of Egypt they were first “the church in the wilderness,” (Acts 7:38) and afterward in the land of Canaan they were the church there.

Through their stiffness of neck, hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, they sadly missed God's great purpose for them as His church. Yet in His goodness and mercy God “suffered their manners in the wilderness,” (Acts 13:18) and in the land from age to age. Thus through many vicissitudes that people had continued as the church till the time when Christ the Lord came to dwell on the earth: and through all that time this church was heir to most glorious promises of a widespread kingdom and dominion.

At the time when Christ came to the earth as man, the dominion and power of Rome held the people of that church in stern and cruel temporal subjection, and they longed for the promised Deliverer to appear. This Deliverer had been abundantly promised, and at last He came. But the high ones of the church had allowed their worldly ambition to hide their eyes from the spirituality of the kingdom and dominion that had been promised; and they looked for, and had taught the people to expect, a political and temporal deliverer who should strike off the yoke of Rome, break her power, and exalt the church of the chosen people to a position of power and dominion over the nations, corresponding to that which for so long had been held by the nations over them.

When Jesus first appeared in His public ministry, these high ones of the church went with the crowds that flocked to hear Him, listened with interest, and hoped that He would fulfil their expectations. But when they saw the interest and enthusiasm of the multitude reach the point where “they would come and take Him by force to make Him a king”; (John 6:15) and when they saw that Jesus, instead of accepting the honor or encouraging the project, “withdrew Himself from them”; in this they also saw that all their ambitious hopes of deliverance from the dominion of Rome, and of exaltation over the nations, were utterly vain so far as Jesus was concerned.

But by this time the influence of Jesus with the people had become so widespread and so strong that the church-leaders saw that their power over the people was

very rapidly vanishing. Instead of seeing fulfilled or sanctioned their ambitious plans and hopes for worldly power and dominion, they saw with dismay that what power and influence they did have with the people was most certainly undermined: and this by a man risen from the greatest obscurity, who came from a town of the meanest reputation, and who was at most only a private member of the church! Something must be done, and that very soon, to preserve their own place and dignity. It was manifestly too late to think of commanding Him not to preach or teach: by this time they knew full well that not only He but the multitudes themselves would pay no attention to any such prohibition. But there was a way out—a means by which to maintain their place and dignity, and to assert their power over Him and the people. In their opinion of themselves and their position it was a very easy thing to make their place and dignity identical not only with the position but with the very existence of the church and even the nation itself. Accordingly they concluded, “If we let Him thus alone all men will believe on Him and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.” And “from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death.” (John 11:47, 53)

But subject as they were to the Roman authority, it was not lawful for them to put any man to death. Therefore, to effect their purpose they must get control of the governmental or civic authority. It mattered not that this authority was Roman; and it mattered not that this Roman authority they hated above all other earthly things, and could not by any possibility willingly recognize: all this must be forgotten in the presence of the awful alternative of seeing vanish their place and dignity and power in the church.

In the church the Pharisees and the Herodians stood at opposite poles. The Herodians were so called because they were the party and partisans of Herod. They were the apologists of Herod in his position of king of Judea. But as Herod was king only by the direct appointment of Rome, and was seated and maintained as king by the power of Rome, for any one to be a partisan and an apologist of Herod was to be even more a partisan and an apologist of Rome.

The Pharisees were the exclusively righteous ones of the church. They were the extreme church party. As such they were the conservators of the purity of the church, the representatives of the truest loyalty to God and the ancient dignity of the chosen people. As such they were the extreme and most uncompromising dissidents from Rome, and from all that was of Rome or that was in any way connected with Rome.

But the Pharisees, as the exclusively righteous ones and the chiefest in dignity, were the most fixedly set

against Christ, and took the lead in the counsels and plans to destroy Him. And to accomplish their purpose to put Him to death, they must have the co-operation of the secular power, which was Roman only. Therefore to accomplish their purpose against Jesus, they would gloze their hatred of Rome, and would use for their purpose against Jesus that very power of Rome of which they were by profession the extreme disputers and opposers.

The means by which at one stride they would both cross this gulf to Rome and make sure of the secular power, was to pool issues with the Herodians. The Herodians, as being only less opposed to Jesus than were the Pharisees, were ready for the alliance. By this alliance the political party would be at one with the Pharisees, and the political influence and power of that party would be at the command of the church leaders. This would make sure to them the use of the *soldiery*, which they must have if they would be really secure in their open movements against Jesus.

The alliance was entered into, and the conspiracy was formed: “And the Pharisees went forth and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, *how they might destroy Him.*” (Mark 3:6) “Then went the Pharisees and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, ” “spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that *so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor.*” (Matthew 22:15, 16; Luke 20:20) And that governor was Pilate *the Roman*.

And when finally the time came, at that awful midnight hour when Judas, “having received” a band of men and a captain and officers, “with swords,” came upon Him in Gethsemane, it was “the band and the captain, and the officers,” (John 18:12) who, at the direction of “the chief priests and Pharisees,” (John 18:3) took Him and bound Him.

And having so taken Him they led Him to Annas first. Annas sent Him to Caiaphas, and Caiaphas sent Him to Pilate, the governor, the Roman. Pilate sent Him to Herod, who “with his men of war” set Him at naught and mocked Him and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him again to Pilate. (Luke 23:11) And when Pilate would have let Him go, they rung their final political note and plea of *loyalty to Caesar and Rome*, even above the loyalty of Pilate the Roman himself, “If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar’s friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.” (John 19:12)

Pilate made his last appeal, “Shall I crucify your King?” only to be answered with the words expressive of

(Continued on page 12)

Indianapolis Baptist Temple Seized by U.S. Federal Marshals

Government Seizes Property from a Church that Refused to be Controlled

by Allen Stump

On February 16 the Indianapolis Baptist Temple was seized by United States Federal Marshals. U.S. District Judge Sarah Evans Barker in Indianapolis ordered the confiscation of the Temple *claiming* the church owed \$6 million in taxes, penalties and interest for its failure to withhold employee income taxes, Social Security taxes and Medicare taxes. The judge had even authorized marshals to seize the property by force if necessary.

Judge Barker ordered that if the church did not comply with the court's demands to pay certain taxes in question, then the church must vacate its property or it could be seized on November 14, 2000. On that date, the marshals seized the church parsonage a few miles from the church, but did not attempt to enter the church. This was due to the public support that the church was receiving not only from hundreds of its members, but also from hundreds of members of different militias from across the United States. The militia members were there to protest what many considered to be a grievous violation of constitutional rights.

As the weeks passed after November 14, the number of people who continued to hold a prayer vigil at the church became smaller. When the seizure took place there were fewer than a dozen people in the church holding a prayer service. Those who were at the building were removed peaceably by the marshals. According to CNN.com, dozens of marshals were employed in the seizure and there was even a helicopter hovering overhead.

According to Richard Hammar, an attorney for the Springfield, Missouri-based Assemblies of God Church and an expert on churches and tax law, this is the first time the federal government has ever seized a church for failing to pay taxes. "To have the IRS come in and seize the church's property, that is an extraordinary event unparalleled in American history."

(cnn.com/2001/LAW/02/13/church.irs.ap/index.html)

The Background Leading up to the Extraordinary Events

Prior to 1986, the Indianapolis Baptist Temple operated as a non-profit 501(c)(3) religious organization under Title 26 of the Internal Revenue Code. Around 1984 the church members and the church leadership came to the understanding that such a partnership with the government was wrong, and, in fact, a betrayal of the gospel. When a church incorporates as a 501(c)(3) religious organization, it is, in effect, asking the government for

permission to exist and function. The Bible teaches that this privilege has been granted to us by Christ, not the government. The churches that apply and are accepted as 501(c)(3) become registered churches.

What is the *supposed advantage* for churches to register and submit to the government requirements that come with it? Most comply because they desire their supporters to be able to receive receipts, for their gifts to the churches, that can be deducted from their federal income taxes. According to the tax code, to be able to give such a receipt, an organization must be 501(c)(3). (However, there is a little-known line in the tax code stating that churches, synagogues, and mosques are exempt from needing such status.) The reason the churches wish to be able to give out such receipts is plain. Money! More people are willing to give, and give more, if they can get a tax break for it.

A further complication develops when a 501(c)(3) church hires employees. The government requires that the employer withhold federal income and social security taxes (as well as paying one-half of the FICA tax) and forward that money to the IRS thus making the church function as an agent of the government.

Coming to this understanding of these and other issues, the Indianapolis Baptist Temple decided to dissolve the corporation that had been formed to become a 501(c)(3) church. After the corporation had dissolved, the members began what they described as a "New Testament Church" without any incorporation or government permission. To our knowledge, the Indianapolis Baptist Temple is one of the largest, if not the largest, non-501(c)(3) church in The United States.

Prior to this, while operating as a 501(c)(3) church, the Indianapolis Baptist Temple had paid taxes and reported to the government as required by the tax codes. After forming a "New Testament Church," they adopted a Biblical approach. On their web site they state:

"A true New Testament Church is not an employer nor does it have employees. Neither is it a taxpayer. Those who serve the church are ministers exercising their gifts by the Holy Spirit. They receive love gifts, not wages." (<http://www.indianapolisbaptisttemple.com/realfacts.html>)

After becoming a "New Testament Church," the "ministers" of the Indianapolis Baptist Temple continued to pay their own personal income taxes as well as the full amount of their social security (FICA) taxes. However, the United States government was not content to allow this to

continue. Even though the taxes were being paid, the government wanted the church to collect these taxes as well as pay one-half of the FICA taxes for the “ministers.” This the Indianapolis Baptist Temple could not conscientiously do. These are facts that most media sources have failed to mention. When the government says that the Indianapolis Baptist Temple owed taxes, what it means is that the taxes were not paid through the “proper channels” and they now not only want the 3.6 million dollars that they claim were to be paid, by and or through the church, but they also want 2.4 million dollars more in penalties and interest, making a total liability of 6 million dollars.

The membership and leadership of the Indianapolis Baptist Temple acknowledge that “Caesar” has a right to receive *due* taxes. However, they believe that that right is only upon the individual and not upon the church as a body. All of Christ’s counsel and Paul’s counsel on this subject are directed toward the individual.

Yet, this is not a tax case, but a First Amendment religious liberty issue! It is an issue of control and compliance. The government case demonstrates the Clinton/Reno Justice Department’s philosophy well: “Rule or Ruin”! Some were hopeful that the new Bush administration would be more favorable to the matter. However, that was a vain and sad expectation.

“‘The purge has started,’ said the Rev. Greg J. Dixon, the church’s pastor emeritus, as the marshals wheeled him out.

“‘We had a promise from the Bush administration. We had every reason to believe there was a moratorium.... They were going to dismiss the case. We had a deal, and they welshed on the deal,’ Dixon said.”

(cnn.com/2001/LAW/02/13/church.irs.ap/index.html)

Some have questioned if the recent air strikes against Iraq ordered by President Bush were smokescreens to help take interest and media attention away from the Indianapolis Baptist Temple seizure.

Judge Barker’s ruling only applies in the Seventh Circuit. However, other United States Circuit Courts will no doubt have the issue brought before them. Once having tasted blood in the Indianapolis Baptist Temple case, the government is unlikely to stop. Before the seizure, the Indianapolis Baptist Temple had appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court. However, they denied the Indianapolis Baptist Temple petition for certiorari, leaving the Seventh Circuit decision in place. Interestingly, while the high court had refused to hear the Indianapolis Baptist Temple’s case, it accepted a case where the issue involved whether professional golfers could be restricted from using a golf cart. To the United States Supreme Court, the issue of religious liberty was less important

than professional golf! Not surprising for a court that does not put value on a life that lives in the womb.

This is perhaps the most important case of religious liberty in the United States in decades. This is the first time that any branch of the government has brought suit against a non-501(c)(3) church. All other lawsuits have been against state recognized and approved religious organizations: 501(c)(3) organizations.

One of the marshals stated that the seizure was one of the most difficult things he had ever done. Like Rome of old, they would claim that there was no persecution, they were merely enforcing the law. This brings to mind the U.S. Senate confirmation hearings of the U.S. Attorney General Ashcroft when he stated that his job would be to enforce the law.

The Bible teaches that the second beast of Revelation 13 would arise in the new world at just the time the United States of America was founded. This power would begin speaking like a lamb. It would be based on the principles of a republican government and protestant churches. However, this image would later speak as a dragon commanding the people to form an image to the first beast of Revelation 13 (the Papacy). Surely we are seeing the beginning of developments that inspiration tells us will happen very rapidly. It is beyond the scope of this article to detail these events. Those who wish to have more information on these prophetic events may request, free of any cost or obligation, a booklet entitled, *A Time to Choose*. This booklet covers the prophecies of Revelation 13 and 14 and clearly demonstrates that the Bible predicts that religious freedom in the United States is soon to end. Just as it was in Communist Russia, and is now in Communist China, churches in the United States will have to be registered and comply with the government to avoid the coming wrath. If you have not read *A Time to Choose* I want to earnestly encourage you to request a free copy today.

Those who wish to keep updated on the current situation with the Indianapolis Baptist Temple case may visit their web site at: (<http://www.indianapolisbaptisttemple.com>). Their postal address is Indianapolis Baptist Temple, P. O. Box 11, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Their contact phone number is (317) 787-0830.

Smyrna's Position

For those not knowledgeable or clear regarding Smyrna’s position on the matter of incorporation, we wish to clearly set forth our position. While not agreeing with all of the theology of the Indianapolis Baptist Temple, we do hold some similar concepts concerning church/state relations. Smyrna Gospel Ministries is an

(Continued on page 12)

Living by Faith

by E. J. Waggoner

"The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17) This statement is the summing up of what the apostle has to say about the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but only "to every one that believeth." (Romans 1:16) In it the righteousness of God is revealed. The righteousness of God is the perfect law of God, which is but the transcript of his own righteous will. All unrighteousness is sin or the transgression of the law. The gospel is God's remedy for sin; its work, therefore, must be to bring men into harmony with the law—to cause the workings of the righteous law to be manifested in their lives. But this is wholly a work of faith—the righteousness of God is revealed from "faith to faith"—faith in the beginning and faith to the end—as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

This is true in all ages since the fall of man and will be true until the saints of God have His name in their foreheads and see Him as He is. It was from the prophet Habbakuk (2:4) that the apostle quoted the statement. If the prophets had not revealed it, the first Christians could not have known of it, for they had only the Old Testament. To say that in the most ancient times men had but an imperfect idea of faith in Christ is to say that there were no just men in those times. But Paul goes right back to the very beginning and cites an instance of saving faith. He says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous." (Hebrews 11:4) He says of Noah also that it was by faith that he built the ark to the saving of his house, "by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Hebrews 11:7) We say that their faith was in Christ, because it was faith unto salvation and besides the name of Jesus "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

There are too many who try to live the Christian life on the strength of the faith which they exercised when they realized their need of pardon for sins of their past life. They know that God alone can pardon sins and that He does this through Christ, but they imagine that having once been started they must run the race in their own strength. We know that many have this idea, first, because we have heard some say so, and second, because there are such multitudes of professed Christians who show the working of no greater power than their own. If they ever have anything to say in social meeting, besides the ever-recurring formula, "I want to be a Christian, so that I may be saved," they tell only of a past experience, the joy

they had when they first believed. Of the joy of living for God and of walking with Him by faith, they know nothing, and he who tells of it speaks of a strange language to them. But the apostle carries this matter of faith clear through to the glorious kingdom in the following most forcible illustration:

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:5, 6)

Note the argument to prove that Enoch was translated by faith: Enoch was translated because he walked with God, and had the testimony that he pleased God; but without faith it is impossible to please God. That is enough to prove the point. Without faith not an act can be performed that will meet the approval of God. Without faith the best deeds that a man can do will come infinitely short of the perfect righteousness of God, which is the only standard. Wherever real faith is found it is a good thing, but the best of faith in God to take away the load of the sins of the past will profit a person nothing unless it is carried right through in ever-increasing measure until the close of his probation.

A Cause of Failure

We have heard many people tell how hard they found it to do right. Their Christian life was most unsatisfactory to them, being marked only by failure, and they were tempted to give up in discouragement. No wonder they get discouraged. Continual failure is enough to discourage anybody. The bravest soldier in the world would become faith-hearted if he had been defeated in every battle. Sometimes these persons will mournfully tell that they have about lost confidence in themselves. Poor souls. If they would only lose confidence in themselves entirely and would put their whole trust in the One who is mighty to save, they would have a different story to tell. They would then "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:11) Says the apostle, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4) The man who doesn't rejoice in God, even though tempted and afflicted, is not fighting the good fight of faith. He is fighting the poor fight of self-confidence and defeat.

All the promises of final happiness are to the overcomer. "To him that overcometh," says Jesus, "will I

give to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Revelation 3:21) “He that overcometh shall inherit all things,” says the Lord. (Revelation 21:7) An overcomer is one who gains victories. The inheriting is not the overcoming; that is only the reward for overcoming. The overcoming is now. The victories to be gained are victories over the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, victories over self and selfish indulgences. The man who fights and sees the foe give way may rejoice; nobody can keep him from rejoicing, for joy comes spontaneously as the result of seeing the enemy give way. Some folks look with dread upon the thought of having to wage a continual warfare with self and worldly lusts. That is because they do not as yet know anything about the joy of victory. They have experienced only defeat. But it isn’t so doleful a thing to battle constantly, when there is continual victory. The old veteran of a hundred battles, who has been victorious in every fight longs to be at the scene of conflict. Alexander’s soldiers, who under his command never knew defeat, were always impatient to be led into the fray. Each victory increased their strength, which was born only of courage, and correspondingly diminished that of the vanquished foe. Now how may we gain continual victories in our spiritual warfare?

Listen to the beloved disciple “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:10)

Here is the secret of strength. It is Christ, the Son of God, the One to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, Who does the work. If He lives in the heart to do the work, is it boasting to say that continual victories may be gained? Yes, it is boast; but it is boasting in the Lord, and that is allowable. Says the psalmist, “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord” (Psalm 34:2) and Paul says, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” (Galatians 6:14)

The soldiers of Alexander were reckoned invincible. Why? Was it because they were naturally stronger and more courageous than all their enemies? No, but because they were led by Alexander. Their strength was in his leadership. Under another leader they would often have been defeated. When the Union army was fleeing panic-stricken before the enemy at Winchester, the presence of Sheridan turned their defeat into victory. Without him the men were a quaking mob. With him at their head they were an invincible army. If you had listened to the remarks after the battle of the soldiers who served under

those and similar leaders, you would have heard the praises of their general mingled with all their rejoicing. They were strong because he was; they were inspired by the same spirit that he had.

Our Mighty Leader

Well, our Captain is the Lord of hosts. He has met the chiefest foe of all and has vanquished him single-handed. Those who follow Him invariably go forth conquering and to conquer. Oh, that those who profess to be His followers would put their trust in Him and then, by the repeated victories that they would gain, they would show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.


John says that he that is born of God overcomes the world, through faith. Faith lays hold of the arm of God and His mighty power does the work. How the power of God can work in a man, accomplishing that which he could not possibly do for himself, no one can tell. It would be as easy to tell how God can give life to the dead. Says Jesus, “The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8) How the Spirit works in a man to subdue his passions and to make him victorious over pride, envy, and selfishness is known only to the Spirit. It is sufficient for us to know that it is done and will be done in everyone who wants that work wrought in him, above all things else, and who trusts God for the performance of it.

We cannot tell how Peter was enabled to walk on the water when the waves were rolling about him, but we know that at the command of the Lord he did it. So long as he kept his eye fixed on the Master, divine power enabled him to walk as easily as though it were solid rock underneath, but when he looked at the waves, possibly with a feeling of pride in what he was doing, as though he himself was doing it, fear very naturally took possession of him, and he began to sink. Faith enabled him to walk on the waves; fear made him sink beneath them.

Says the apostle, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days.” (Hebrews 11:30) Why was that written? For our learning, “that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (Romans 15:4) Why, is there any prospect that we shall ever be called upon to fight armed hosts and to take fortified cities? No, “for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12) But the victories which have been gained by faith in God over visible foes in the flesh are placed on record to show

us what faith will accomplish in our conflict with the rulers of the darkness of this world. The grace of God, in answer to faith, is as powerful in these battles as in those, for says the apostle:


“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

It was not physical foes alone that faith enabled the ancient worthies to conquer. We read of them that they not only “subdued kingdoms,” but “wrought righteousness, obtained promises,” and, most wonderful and most encouraging of all, “*out of weakness were made strong.*” (Hebrews 11:33, 34) Their very weakness became strength to them through faith, because the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness. Who, then, shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? since it is God that justifieth, and we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Romans 8:35, 37) 

(The above article was first printed in the March 25, 1889 issue of the periodical entitled, *The Signs of the Times*.
Editor)

(Baptist Church Seized, continued from page 9)

outreach ministry of Smyrna Sabbath Chapel. Neither the church, nor the ministry is a registered 501(c)(3) religious organization. We have not incorporated, nor do we intend to do so. The church does return tithes and love offerings to those who function in ministry as the church is able. The materials that we distribute have always been available free. For those who are *able and wish to* help with our expenses, we have published some of our costs of production so if those receiving materials would like to help, they know what our expenses have been.

We make a conscientious effort to carefully receipt, and be careful stewards of, the funds that God directs our way. As we noted earlier, the IRS tax code exempts “churches” from needing 501(c)(3) status for its receipts to be used for tax deduction purposes. While we may fall under this exemption, we do not encourage or endorse its use. History teaches us that when government provides favors, the price in the long run is much higher than the value of the favors. 

(Individuality in Religion, continued from page 7)

their final abandonment of God, and of their completest unity with Rome, “We have no king but Caesar.” (John 19:15) “Crucify Him.” (Luke 23:21) “And they were instant with loud voices... And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.” (Luke 23:23)

Thus the mightiest crime and the loudest crying sin in all the history of the universe was committed, and was made possible as it was committed, only by the union of church and State—only by the church in control of the civil power, using that power to make effective her wicked will and purpose.

And that awful fact alone is all-sufficient to blast with perpetual and infinite condemnation, and to consign to eternal infamy, all such connection anywhere forever. And with such a record in the very first instance of the thing, it is not at all strange that this same thing of union of church and State—the church in control of the secular power—should have proved and must ever prove, the chiefest curse to men and nations wherever found in all after times.

So true it is, and so completely demonstrated, that “secular power has proved a Satanic gift to the church.” 

(I pray that you have been blessed by this article. This concludes the first three chapters of the powerful book, “Individuality in Religion,” by Alonzo T. Jones. The remaining five chapters will appear in upcoming issues of *Present Truth*.
Editor)

Camp Meeting Announcement

We are currently planning on having a camp meeting from July 17-21. The first meeting of the convocation will be Tuesday evening the 17th, with the meetings closing out the evening of the 21st.

Interest is already running very high and we expect the attendance to significantly increase over last year’s camp meeting.

We are in the process of contacting potential speakers and the prospects are good that we will have an abundance of excellent speakers who will be sharing God’s Word.

We will be sending you an attendance reply card. Please fill it out and return it, if you are interested, so we will know best how to plan for the accommodations necessary. For further information please contact us.

There will also be a camp meeting in Wilhoit, Arizona on May 9-12. For more information about this camp meeting please call (520) 442-9278.



Letters from our Readers



"I'm writing to you at *Present Truth* because I believe the way the words are spoken in your tablets [Newsletters]. Especially when speaking of the Sabbath day and how to go about doing research and so on. Ever since I've been locked up I've been blessed with the Word. I was introduced to *Present Truth* after I had gotten into a little incident that brought me to detention. However, just when I thought everything was about to go bad, the Lord was in the next cell and He gave me these tablets so I can read. And as I read I was sort of convinced that these tablets were saying and preaching the words or the beliefs that I was trying to follow. If you can please write back and please send me some tablets so I can keep the faith and continue with my beliefs in the Lord. Thank you."

New Jersey

"How fortunate are we, the sheep of God's pasture, in having you to minister to us in your publication, *Present Truth*. The Lord has truly blessed you with the gift of communication. I could comment on every question and answer, but I will just mention one in the January 2001 issue. It concerned using the name Yashua and the Tetragrammaton. What a wonderful explanation you gave. I had not before this heard any reasoning on this subject one way or the other, but your answer was clear, concise, and spiritual. I sensed the influence of the Holy Spirit as I read your answer. I admit I don't know the meaning of the word Tetragrammaton. I don't find it in my *Strong's Concordance*."

Montana

"I do not have time to read the *Present Truth* so take me off the mailing list. Currently I am devoting my time in reading directly from the Bible and using a Christian library for the books so I do not have time to read the *Present Truth*. Thanks for the readings from the past. No longer desire to receive the publication now."

Wisconsin

"I received your large generous envelopes full of your fine booklets and your periodical. I'm grateful. I've been prayerfully reading your material. I'm not finished, but the tracts were impressive. It's NEW! I'm naturally defensively skeptical when something new comes along. You seem to be a thorough scholar and I appreciate that."

Florida

"I want to thank you and everyone else at Smyrna Gospel Ministries and the *Present Truth*. You have a good message for sharing the truth. Thank you for sharing and opening my eyes to see the truth in God's Word.

May God bless you in abundance. Again, thank you so much!"

Philippines

"Your letter dated December 11, 2000, was the first letter that I have received in the year 2001. My wish for the year was that why can't I be like Enoch, why can't I be like Daniel, Joseph and the others in this new year? If they lived righteous then why can't I? My prayer since 2001 started was that I could be like Christ. Then I was blessed with the Bible lessons on Christ our Righteousness. My God answered my prayer through the Bible lessons you have sent. My biggest question, which is on my mind, is "What shall I do to be saved?" The lessons will definitely answer that. Thank you very much. May God bless you richly."

Zambia

"To whom it may concern: I would like for this company to send me the Bible study packages. I would appreciate it. Thank you."

New Jersey

"Your *Present Truth* is a marvelous paper. Thank you for your faithfulness in sending it for the last year. I have been in the British West Indies and it has been going to my sister... I want to change the address that you send it to now. I am home again and will share mine with her."

North Carolina

"Today I received, much to my surprise, my very first issue of *Present Truth*. Thank you so much for including me on your mailing list! At present, I am incarcerated in a state prison. Truth filled reading material is sometimes hard to come by. Your publication is one of many precious gems God has sent my way. Thanks again and may God bless you all!"

Oregon

"Thank you for sending me the video-tape on "The Good News About God." I love the way it was done. Very professional. God bless your work. I would love to order the additional tapes on the list. So when done please send and I will send funds."

Puerto Rico

(I am happy to announce that we now have three videos in this series ready for distribution. If you are interested, please contact us and we will see that you receive them.

Editor)

"Greetings! I am interested in your audio cassettes that are under the title "The Good News About God." [Each tape listed.] I am interested in these on cassette when you have them ready for distribution. From your February 2001 *Present Truth* you stated that the cassette

titled "Who is the God of the Bible?" is ready to distribute. May I receive this one. I am sending you some money to help out with the necessary cost of shipping and handling and production... Also could you please send me 10 pamphlets of the following: 'The Truth About God,' 'The Importance of Knowing the Truth About God,' and 'The Law of God' (Mark of the Beast one). Please only send 10 each so I may receive them in here to hand out."

Ohio

(The videos mentioned earlier are also available in audio cassette form. We have the first three in the series ready for distribution.

Editor)

"Thank you very much for the material you are sending us although it has almost split the church into two with some brethren under censure and some under disfellowship right now. Nonetheless, it arouses great spiritual thirst daily. May you please send me the following if available; original Kings James Version Bible, Bible concordance, material (books) on Bible prophecy, especially on Daniel and Revelation... May you also include video cassettes you may have for distribution. May God bless you abundantly for the wonderful work you are doing. Pray for the gospel ministry in Africa, more so for our elders and leaders to accept these truths."

Zimbabwe

"I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ with 1 Thessalonians 5:23! I greet you also with the new 2000 years. I wish you abundantly God's blessing. May God lead and give you power in the work to spread the truth for the last days to the people of this earth. My name is _____. I am from Bulgaria, but now I am studying in _____ in Hungary... I am studying here to be prepared for Bible worker and to preach the Gospel to the people who don't know the truth. I saw some of your materials that you had sent to the church in Bulgaria... I would like to receive this material from you, if it's possible, and also others that you printed about the last days... I would like to know something more about you. Who are you? What is your activity? Do you have members in Hungary or Bulgaria that I may connect with them? I am expecting for your answer! May God bless."

Hungary

(*Present Truth* is a publication of Smyrna Gospel Ministries. We are a small ministry dedicated to providing truth-filled literature to the world. Our main goal is to more clearly reveal the character of God so that people will have a better understanding of God's character enabling them to have a closer relationship with Him. We do not have a large operation and we are not affiliated with any denomination. We have a print shop where we write and print our own literature. Much of our literature is designed

to present truth that has been hidden for many centuries, and to reveal truth that is "present truth" for our day. Our literature is sent to nearly every state in the United States, and many countries around the world. Many like believers worship together around the world in small home churches or they meet in buildings they rent or they have built their own churches to worship in. There may be one of these home churches in your local area. If you are interested in being able to meet with other like believers in your area, contact us and we will try to get you in contact with someone close to you. I am sorry, but we have no other contacts in Hungary at this time.

Editor)

"Thank you for your email. I am happy to receive *Present Truth* by email and normal format. Many thanks."

Australia

"Thank you for sending me the *Present Truth* books [newsletters] it helps me a lot."

Philippines

"I've received my first copy of *Present Truth* newsletter and I love it. Please keep them coming. I want more. I saw my comment on the back too—I never expected that but it was great to see. I also saw there were a couple of other favorable comments from Australia. I am desperate for others to fellowship with and correspond with either in my area (Cooranbong), or anywhere. If you can help me, please do."

Australia

"We received a very angry phone call today from someone who called us everything from 'fanatics that are doing away with the Holy Spirit to Branch Davidians' and said we surely better not spread this error... It did kind of sober us up to see how much hatred there is against this message!"

Arizona

"Do you know of any verses that stand alone in indicating that Jesus was in a subordinate relationship or in a Father-Son relationship with the Father, prior to Him becoming incarnate, or even prior to the Melchizedek event. I've had some good discussions with people here in Alaska who hold to Trinitarian views. They state that this subordinate relationship was only after He came to earth. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 is an excellent verse for refuting this misconception, clearly stating how the relationship is now and in the future, but are there any verses besides Psalm 2 that give us enlightenment about the pre Genesis relationship?"

Alaska

(I have written a study, tracing the existence and position of the Son in the Old Testament, that is available to whoever requests it. I have sent this article to this dear brother. For those who wish, look up the following verses on this subject: Proverbs 30:4; Psalm 45:6, 7; Psalm 110:1; 2 Samuel 22:2, 3; and Exodus 23:20, 21.

Editor)

"How are you all doing? Prayed that you all are fine and in good health. We are all fine over here. Well how

are you all keeping up in the Lord's work.? May God continue to bless you all abundantly in all areas especially in health. I prayed that we can meet again in either Texas or Malaysia."

Malaysia

"Please discontinue my mailings."

Ohio

"I'm from a central African country of Rwanda... Okay my intention was to exactly know your address in Africa and am very much in need of your message and contacts. Thank you my brethren and my lord bless you."

Rwanda

"Hello Brother. I am joyful to write you from Peru, I read your tracts and found them very interesting. Thank God there are still people that worry about God's business."

Peru

"Regarding your last newsletter, well those videos are a must for Australia. Send them ASAP and preferable if possible in PAL format for Australian players. Any good audio tapes would be appreciated."

Australia

(Unfortunately, at this time, we do not have the videos available in PAL format (to work with many overseas video players). Hopefully we will have them in PAL format soon. We have three tapes in the series "The Good News About God" available in video and audio cassette format.

Editor

"I have had a great desire to reprint some of the tracts so that the web site can go out and also to support the street witnessing team that goes every Sabbath into the main mall in Melbourne. They are desperate for materials too... Regarding the video, send whatever you have and I'll convert them here. This is better than waiting for PAL over there. Whatever you send we get out."

Australia

"How have your videos been coming along? We would love to receive one when you get them ready. We sure do enjoy your newsletters you send us. They are read from cover to cover, and we even reread them. Our friends are thankful to you for sending them their way. All of you have a very Happy Sabbath... Let us know for sure when the camp meeting will be... Take care of yourselves, and we pray to God that we will see all of you this summer at camp meeting. We can only be there for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday."

Illinois

(The camp meeting here in West Virginia will be held July 17-21. Plan on being there.

Editor

"My Brother, while I was reading the last *Present Truth*, in regards to the question from the person in New Hampshire, I broke in tears, when he asked you saying that there is nobody to meet with on Sabbath; that reminds me of myself once when I was searching the king-

dom of our true and heavenly Father, and reading that Jesus never broke this commandment, and He never abolished it, and I looked around, until I found someone who worships on Sabbath, it was the most exciting day in my life, praise God!!! And now so many people are getting revelations in keeping the 4th commandment. It is rewarding, and now I am feeding people with that truth, and planting the seed in their hearts, God bless the Smyrna family, every single brother and truly bond-servant of our heavenly father and Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Messiah. And keep up the good effort and battle the good battle of faith. I really enjoyed reading the answer to his question and we will pray for that person and everybody that may go through the same question."

Peru

"The videos came today. I'm so happy... I watched part of the first one with you and let me tell you it's wonderful. Thank you for showing our great God's love. I am so blessed and pleased with the message. I didn't know God before as I thought how could He make Jesus come and die. It's so beautiful now and how I love Him."

Arkansas

"I'm really enjoying the Bible studies you have sent. There is so much to learn, and that I have learned, and will continue to learn. Thank all of you for all you have done and are doing for me. It really does brighten my dark days here in this institution."

Montana

"I'm a girl aged 18 years and with my name and address mentioned above. I have been reading some of your papers such as 'God's Plan to Save Man' and these papers have drawn me nearer to the cross. So please I do hereby request for some copies of books so that I can grow spiritually. I need all kinds of books... Furthermore I understand the gospel work as dedicated to me, and I promise to do that with God's spirit guiding me as long as I live. But I have a problem because I'm not employed so it is difficult to have money for missionary work and the literature to give especially to the converts. So please help me brethren, I'm ready for missionary work. May the Lord bless you as you send me some literature. Your assistance is greatly appreciated."

Zimbabwe

"I ask you in Jesus' name to add these following relatives' names to the *Present Truth* mailing list and to send the last two numbers, and if it is possible, the one about the millennium. I am sure that this truth, our truth, will help them a lot, and they start searching for the kingdom of God, and they prepare for what is coming. I hope to hear from you soon, until the next one, God bless you and keep you."

Peru

DIGITAL VIDEO PROJECT UPDATE

We currently have two more titles in the series “The Good News About God” ready for distribution. These titles are, “The Love of God,” which is actually the first message in the series, “The Good News About God,” and “The Holy Spirit,” the fifth message in the series. The third message covers the relationship between the Father and the Son. The fourth message covers the complete death of Christ on the cross.

For those who are able *and* wish to help with the expenses, the cost of video tape production and postage is \$7.00 U.S.—\$10.00 outside the U.S. The cost of audio cassette production and postage is \$2.00 U.S.—\$4.00 outside the U.S. For those who need multiple copies of the same video tape, we are requesting a donation of \$3.00 for each additional video tape requested within the United States, and \$4.00 for each additional video of the same message requested outside of the United States. (Currently we only have NTSC format available, but, Lord willing we will have PAL format for overseas available soon.) For example, in the United

States the suggested donation for one video would be \$7.00, the suggested donation for two videos would be \$10.00, the suggested donation for three videos would be \$13.00 etc. For each audio cassette, please add \$1.00 for those sent within the United States and \$1.50 for those to be shipped outside the United States. However, the audio and video tapes, as with all of our materials, are provided free. Anyone who sincerely requests materials and cannot help with expenses will be sent materials as we are able.

As with all of our literature that we print here, duplication of these tapes is not only permitted, but strongly encouraged.

Editor

Present Truth is published monthly by *Smyrna Gospel Ministries*. It is sent free upon request. **Duplication of these papers is not only permitted but strongly encouraged.** *Present Truth* is available online at <http://www.present-truth.net>.

Editor: Lynnford Beachy, HC 64 Box 128-B, Welch, West Virginia 24801, phone: (304) 732-9204, fax: (304) 732-7322, e-mail: berean@present-truth.net.

Present Truth

HC 64 Box 128-B
Welch, West Virginia 24801
U.S.A.

Address Service Requested

**Bulk Rate
U. S. Postage
PAID
Welch WV
Permit No. 35**