

THE SABBATH SCOOP

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What Will Keep America Great?

Is there a way the United States of America can remain the greatest nation on earth today?

By Gregory Dullum

America is great because of GOD—his PROMISES to Abraham, his LAWS which guided our early settlers and founders, and his BLESSINGS of natural resources and wonderful location!

God CANNOT lie (Heb. 6:18). When He promised Abraham He would make great nations of him, He had to fulfill that promise! The U.S. and British Commonwealth of nations are the RESULT of that promise! We have been blessed *because* of that PROMISE!

That is the conclusion of last month's article. This month, let's examine how to KEEP those blessings.

God did NOT promise that our blessings would last forever! In order to KEEP God's blessings, we must *meet certain conditions*. What must we do?

Moses told ancient Israel: "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above the nations of the earth" (Deut. 28:1).

This is where the U.S. and British Commonwealth have been: not EQUAL to other nations; not just a *little bit above* the other nations—but HIGH above the nations of the earth! God placed us there to fulfill his promise to Abraham. If we want to remain there, we must meet certain conditions. We must "diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God" and "observe carefully all His commandments."

If we obey God, we will continue to be blessed *agriculturally*: "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl" (vv. 3-5).



Photo by NAPS

Fireworks explode behind the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C., celebrating Independence Day. This July 4, the U.S. is 237 years old.

If we obey God, we will continue to be safe from our enemies: "The LORD will cause the enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways" (Deut. 28:7).

Obeying God includes putting God first in our lives (putting anything else first is idolatry), keeping his weekly and annual Sabbaths, and having a proper respect for church (his sanctuary), in addition to keeping the other laws in the Bible:

"You shall not make idols for yourselves... You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary... If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments and perform them... I will give you peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid;

I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land" (Lev. 26:1-3, 6).

If we obey God, we will continue to be a FINANCIAL powerhouse: "You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them, so that you turn not aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them" (Deut. 28:12-14).

God says if we obey Him, He will *confirm* Abraham's covenant *with us*, and we will continue to enjoy his blessings: "For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you... I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Lev. 26:9).

If America will stay close to God and obey Him, He will preserve our greatness: "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son:... 'And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes to fear the LORD our God *for our good* ALWAYS, that He might *preserve us* alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us'" (Deut. 6:13-14, 17-18, 20-21, 24-25, emphasis added).

We have the wonderful opportunity of being blessed above all peoples on the earth! All we need to do, if we want to remain in this blessed state, is to obey God!

Is Christ a Communist?

Does the Bible teach us to renounce wealth and share our property with the poor?

By Gregory Dullum

Is Christ a Communist? Does He want Christians to be Communists? Does Communism represent God's way of life—eliminating *individual* wealth and property—replacing it with *communal* property where everyone, including the poor, share all things in common?

Defining Communism

What is Communism?

“Communism is a theory advocating *elimination of private property*. A System in which goods are owned *in common* and are made available to all as needed, at least in theory. It is a totalitarian system of government in which a single authoritarian party controls state-owned means of production with the professed aim of establishing a stateless society” (*Ascent to Greatness* by Raymond F. McNair, 1976, p. 674, emphasis his).

Communism is a type of socialism. “Socialism refers to any of various economic and political theories advocating *collective governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods*. It is a system of society in which there is *no private property*. The means of production are owned and controlled by the state” (McNair, pp. 674-675, emphasis his).

Karl Marx, author of *Communist Manifesto*, described Communism succinctly when he wrote in *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, “From each according to his abilities to each according to his needs” (*Collins Concise Dictionary of Quotations* compiled by Donald Fraser, 1987, p. 178).

Biblical Examples of Communism?

In his preincarnate state, Jesus Christ was the Word—the *God of the Old Testament* who created all things in Genesis and spoke to Moses in Exodus (John 1:13, 14; 1 Cor. 10:1-4).

He instructed his people back then, “For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore, I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor, and your needy, in your land’” (Deut. 15:11). Is this an example of “*From each according to his abilities to each according to his needs*”?

When Christ walked the earth, He told a young rich man to renounce his personal wealth and give it all to the poor: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have

and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Mat. 19:21). Doesn't this sound like instructions to *eliminate private property by giving it to those who have need*?

When Christ began his church, didn't it experience Communism—sharing all things in common? “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul, neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.... Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:32, 34-35). When Ananias and Sapphira tried to keep some of their possession for themselves, they were killed (Acts 5:1-11).

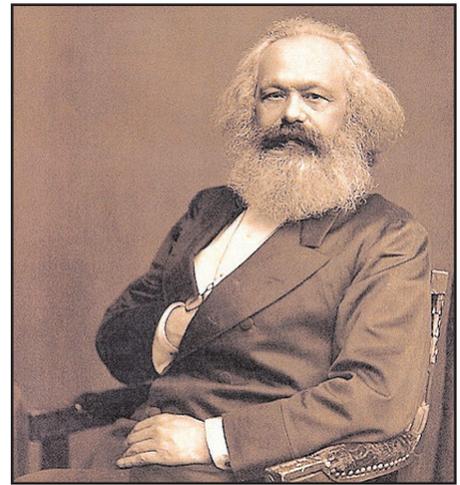
These scriptures give the impression that Christ is a Communist and that Christians should practice Communism. However, they don't give the *WHOLE* story.

Problems With Communism

At first glance Communism may seem to be a way of *LOVE*—a way of *caring for the poor*—but there are *FLAWS* in Communism that are revealed in Ayn Rand's classic 1957 novel, *Atlas Shrugged*. In the novel, a worker from a closed automobile motor factory explains what happened when new owners decided to run the factory using Communist principles. *These same problems occur wherever Communism is tried around the world.*

“The plan was that everybody in the factory would work according to his ability but would be paid according to his need....

“Do you know how it worked, that plan, and what it did to people? Try pouring water into a tank where there's a pipe at the bottom draining it out faster than you pour it, and each bucket you bring breaks the pipe an inch wider, and the harder you work the more is demanded of you, and you stand slinging buckets forty hours a week, then forty-eight, then fifty-six—for your neighbor's supper—for his wife's operation—for his child's measles—for his mother's wheelchair—for his uncle's shirt—for his nephew's schooling—for the baby next door—for the baby to be born—for anyone anywhere around you—it's theirs to receive, from



Public domain photo

German philosopher Karl Marx described Communism as “From each according to his abilities to each according to his needs.” That sounds similar to some Biblical teachings!

diapers to dentures—and yours to work, from sunup to sundown, month after month, year after year, with nothing to show for it but your sweat, with nothing in sight for you but their pleasure, for the whole of your life, without rest, without hope, without end... From each according to his ability, to each according to his need...

“We're all one big family, they told us, we're all in this together. But you don't stand, working an acetylene torch ten hours a day—together, and you don't all get a bellyache—together. What's whose ability and which of those needs comes first? When it's all one pot, you can't let any man decide what his own needs are, can you? If you did, he might claim he needs a yacht.... Well, anyway, it was decided that nobody had the right to

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judge his own need or ability. We *voted* on it....

"It took us just one meeting to discover that we had become beggars—rotten, whining, sniveling beggars all of us, because no man could claim any pay as his rightful earning, he had no rights and no earnings, his work didn't belong to him, it belonged to 'the family,' and they owed him nothing in return, and the only claim he had on them was his 'need'—so he had to beg in public for relief from his needs... hoping that 'the family' would throw him the alms.... so it turned into a contest among six thousand panhandlers, each claiming that his need was worse than his brother's....

"But that wasn't all. There was something we discovered at the same meeting. The factory's production had fallen by forty percent that first half-year, so it was decided that somebody hadn't delivered 'according to his ability.' Who? How could you tell it? 'The family' voted on that too. They voted which men were the best, and these men were sentenced to work overtime each night for the next six months. Overtime without pay—because you weren't paid by time and you weren't paid by work, only by need.

"Do I have to tell you what happened after that—and into what sort of creatures we all started turning, we who had once been human? We began to hide whatever ability we had, to slow down and watch like hawks that we never worked any faster or better than the next fellow. What else could we do, when we knew that if we did our best for 'the family,' it's not thanks or rewards that we'd get, but punishment?... So we did our best to be no good" (*Atlas Shrugged*, 1992, pp. 607-609).

Rewarded According to Need?

Does Christ want people to work hard *without reward*? Does He reward people according to *their need*? Or does He, instead, reward people according to their *works*? He tells us, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work" (Rev. 22:12).

Eternal life will not be given to everyone because of NEED (for *we all* NEED it!) It is a gift from Christ (Rom. 6:23), but will be given ONLY to those who overcome sin (Rev. 2:7) and learn to obey God's laws (Mat. 19:17).

Jesus Christ does not believe in the Communist principle of "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"—He believes in rewarding people according to their works!

The Apostle Paul told Timothy, "For

the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages' " (1 Tim. 5:18). Workers should be PAID for *their* work! Their wages should NOT be given to those who don't work.

Paul further instructed the Thessalonians, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (2 Thes. 3:10-12).

These people are NOT to be rewarded according to *their need*! They are to work to earn *their own* bread!

Private or Communal Property?

The Bible doesn't teach community ownership of property. It supports the principle of PRIVATE PROPERTY! That's why two of the 10 Commandments prohibit *coveting* and *stealing* the property of others (Ex. 20:17, 15).

When God establishes his kingdom on this earth after Christ's return, people will NOT live under Communism, sharing communal property! They will OWN *private property*: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains... and all peoples shall flow to it.... But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:1, 4). Property owners will have their own vine and fig tree—they won't belong to "the family" or "the community."

Revisiting the Scriptures

How are we to understand those verses that seem to support Communism? Let's revisit them and gain a better understanding of what these verses are telling us.

Deut. 15:11 is not a command for all property to be divided up equally among all people, thus eliminating the needy class.

The simple fact that there are "poor" to be helped tells us that everyone is not of the same economic class. Some have more personal wealth than others.

Those who have more are not to be FORCED by the government to give up claim to their possessions. They are to *willingly* share their excess with the needy. The instruction, "You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor, and your needy, in your land" was to be made on an *individual*, VOLUNTARY basis—it was not *forced upon the people by their government*, as it is under Communism.

God's people are expected to work and to earn an income for themselves. They are expected to create an *increase* in THEIR goods. Ten percent of that increase was to be paid to God as a tithe (Deut. 14:22). Tithing can't work under Communism, because under Communism, individuals have no increase in *their own* wealth—all belongs to the community!

God also established a system to help the poor. His system is NOT to take *everyone's* total income *according to their ability* and distribute it to all *according to their need*. God's plan is to take a tithe of the increase on the third and sixth year of a seven-year cycle and give that tithe to the needy (vv. 28-29). In addition to this mandatory tithe, God's people make *personal choices* about helping out the poor in other ways (Deut. 15:7-8, 10-11).

Communism does not allow for an *increase* in one's OWN PERSONAL wealth. It doesn't allow for tithing, because no one has claim to their own wages or increase in wealth, since it all belongs to the community. Therefore, Communism is contrary to God's way!

What about Christ's instructions to the young rich man in Mat. 19:21? Was Christ telling his followers to give all their belongings to the poor? No! Christ wasn't giving instructions to ALL his followers. He was talking to ONE MAN—a man who had great riches (v. 22). Christ offered this man eternal life if he would do three things: 1) Keep the commandments (v. 17); 2) Sell what he had and give to the poor (v. 21); and 3) Follow Him (v. 21). This man was unwilling to sell his possessions. His wealth was more important to him than receiving eternal life. His money was his god. He trusted in his riches instead of trusting in God (Mat. 6:19-21, 24, Mark 10:24, 1 Tim. 6:17, Ps. 49:6-10).

Christ and his Father *are not opposed* to us having riches (John 10:10). They *wanted* the ancient Israelites to prosper and lack nothing! The Israelites were to eat their fill of delicious, nutritious food while living in beautiful homes; they were to own great herds and flocks, and multiply their gold and silver (Deut. 8:7-13). The concern of Christ and the Father was that once the Israelites were wealthy, they would *forget Them* and *trust in their riches instead* (vv. 6, 11, 14-20).

Christ doesn't expect all Christians to sell all they have and give to the poor. Paul gave Christians this instruction: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is

COMMUNISM

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JOHN THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

It may have been John and Peter who loosed a colt and took it for Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Did they steal it?

By Gregory Dullum
Part 10

Visiting Jericho

John and the other disciples accompanied Jesus as he crossed the Jordan River near Jericho, and they continued on their way toward Jerusalem, where Jesus would observe his final Passover in the flesh.

A great multitude accompanied Jesus at Jericho, and they all passed two blind beggars sitting by the wayside (Mat. 20:29-30). One was named Bartimaeus. He was the most conspicuous, and is the *only one* mentioned in the Gospels of Mark and Luke (Mark 10:46, Luke 18:35).

The two beggars cried out to Jesus to have mercy on them. The multitude told them to be quiet, but that made them cry out even louder (Mat. 20:30-31).

Jesus stopped to ask what they wanted Him to do. Surely He knew what they sought! However, He wanted their request to be *specific* before He granted it. We should consider this principle when we make requests to God in our prayers. Do we pray in generalities, or are we very specific in our requests?

What was the specific request of these blind men? "Lord, that our eyes may be opened" (v. 33). Christ had compassion on them. He touched their eyes. Immediately their eyes were opened *AND they followed Him*. Their eyes were opened *BOTH physically and spiritually!* They did not go their own way as did other blind men who were healed (Mat. 9:27-31; Mark 9:22-26). *They followed Him!*

While in Jericho, Jesus visited with a chief tax collector named Zacchaeus. He was a short man who had to climb a tree to see Jesus over the crowd. The Jews condemned Christ for being the guest of a tax collector. They thought collecting taxes for the Roman occupiers was a terrible sin (Luke 19:1-7).

As the group of pilgrims neared Jerusalem, the disciples and many in the multitude thought Christ was about to restore the Kingdom of Israel at that time. So Christ told them the parable of the minas (pounds), in which the ruler went into a far country before he returned to establish his kingdom (vv. 11-28).

Jesus' Triumphal Entry

Six days before Passover (Thursday,

Abib 8), Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany, home of Jesus' friend, Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead (John 12:1).

On the next day, Friday, Jesus told two of his disciples to go get a colt from Jerusalem, and bring it to Him. Which two disciples were sent? One commentary says they were Peter and John: "Mark is so singularly precise here, that it is impossible to doubt that the description is fresh from one of the two disciples sent on this errand; and in that case, who can it be but *Peter*, of whose hand in this Gospel all antiquity testifies and internal evidence is so strong. Probably *John* was the other (compare Mark xiv. 13, with Luke xxii. 8)" (*A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, 1967, vol. V, p. 314).

Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark, was NOT an apostle. It is believed that he was a disciple of Peter. It was from Peter that Mark learned the details of Christ's life that he included in his Gospel (*The New Unger's Bible Handbook* by Merrill F. Unger, 1984, p. 383).

If the JFB *Commentary's* assumption is true, then it was to Peter and John that Jesus gave these instructions: "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here" (Mark 11:2-3).

There is no mention of Jesus' disciples paying for the colt or asking permission to borrow it. A casual reading of the account gives the impression that they were to walk into town and steal this colt.

Jesus was NOT stealing it. He was only borrowing it (or possibly renting it) for a short time and the colt would be returned. Jesus' last sentence indicates that an arrangement had been made ahead of time and the owner of the colt knew a time would come when Jesus would need it. Adds Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's *Commentary*, "It is possible the owner was a disciple; but whether or no, the Lord knew full well what the result would be" (Vol. V, p. 314).

The two chosen disciples—likely John and Peter—"went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it" (Mark 11:4).

Sure enough, some men standing nearby saw them loose the colt and thought they might be stealing it. "And some of those who stood there said to them, 'What are you doing, loosing the colt?' So they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. And they let them go" (vv. 5-6).

It had to be a little unnerving to walk into a strange town, walk up to a colt that wasn't theirs, untie it, and walk away with it while the local townspeople watched. Yet, Peter and John (or whoever these two disciples were) were up to that task, and it was accomplished successfully!

It is likely that the sun set on Friday evening as Christ prepared for his triumphal entry. It was now the Sabbath, Abib 10. It was on Abib 10 that the ancient Israelites set apart a lamb to be killed on Passover (Ex. 12:3). Christ, our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), was similarly set apart by his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the same day—Abib 10!

The disciples put their garments on the colt and Christ sat on it (Mark 11:7). "And many [from the gathered crowd] spread their garments on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying, 'Hosanna! "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (vv. 8-10).

John, the other disciples, and others in the crowd, thought Christ was about to re-establish David's Kingdom of Israel at that time! They were paying homage to their king! "This casting of garments beneath His feet was an ancient Oriental way of expressing homage of a people toward their sovereign, or one whom they wished to welcome as such" (Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, vol. V, p. 315).

Because it was getting late in the evening, Jesus didn't stay long inside the walls of Jerusalem. "And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve" (v. 11).

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

On Saturday morning (Sabbath, Abib

JOHN

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Communism

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worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). Prov. 13:22 expands that principle: “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children.” Christ expects a man to provide for his wife and children, and to leave an inheritance to his children and grandchildren when he dies. He cannot do this without acquiring personal wealth!

Christ’s instructions to “sell all you have, give to the poor and follow Me” were given to ONE *specific* man, not to all Christians. It exposed this one man’s weakness—his trust in his riches instead of his trust in God.

The first-century church had rich brethren! Paul didn’t tell them to sell everything. They were allowed to keep their riches, but were told to not trust in them: “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:19).

Didn’t the church share all in common? Didn’t it practice Communism in Acts 5?

No, not exactly. Under Communism, people are FORCED to give up all personal claim to property and earnings. The ruling party collects all wealth into a pot and then (supposedly) distributes it according to need.

When the early church shared all things in common, it was a *voluntary* action that happened in *one location*—Jerusalem—at *one time*—shortly after the church began.

Notice what Peter told Ananias, who lied about the amount for which he sold his property: “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?” (Acts 5:4). This wasn’t Communism! The church taught private ownership and control of private property!

Ananias and Sapphira’s sin was NOT a *refusal to accept Communism!* Their sin—and the reason for their deaths—was that they LIED—saying they sold their property for one amount when they actually sold it for more! Ananias and Sapphira wanted people to think they had given the whole amount to the church, when in fact, they had secretly withheld some of the money.

How long the Jerusalem Church continued to share things in common is un-

certain. We know it was NOT a practice that *expanded throughout the church*. It was a *financial failure*. Later, Paul took up voluntary offerings from other churches to help out the Jerusalem brethren (1 Cor. 16:1-3). The brethren in Corinth and Galatia voluntarily contributed according to how much they had *prospered* (v. 2). If they had already shared EVERYTHING *in common*, there would have been NOTHING to contribute! There would be NO “prosperity” to share, since all prosperity would already have been distributed to the needy in their own congregations.

However, individual church members were allowed to prosper; therefore they had extra to give to the Jerusalem brethren who were experiencing a dire need at the time.

Conclusion

At first glance, Communism appears to be a way to help the poor, for wealth is distributed “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” In practice, however, Communism destroys ambition and a desire to do better (by removing the reward), and turns everyone into beggars, as explained in *Atlas Shrugged*.

Christ believes in rewarding people, NOT according to their *needs*, but according to their *works*.

Communism does away with personal property. Christ believes in *protecting* personal property; two commandments prevent coveting and stealing property that belongs to another. When He returns to this earth and establishes his kingdom, people will still own private property.

Christ does not instruct *everyone* to sell all their belongings and give to the poor. We are to provide for our families and save an inheritance for our grandchildren. We are to use our riches properly, and generously give *when we choose to do so*. However, we should NOT *trust in our riches* to save us—our trust should be in God.

Early in the history of the church, brethren voluntarily shared all things in common for a limited time in one limited location. The brethren were not forced to do this, as they would have been if this were Communism. It was a voluntary participation that lasted a short time and probably ended in financial disaster, requiring donations to be sent from other churches.

We have seen the fallacies that exist in Communism. As an economic and political system, it is doomed to failure! Christ is not a failure! It is for all these reasons that we can state affirmatively that Christ is NOT a Communist!

Fun Fact



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

The first postage stamps issued by the Post Office went on sale on July 1, 1847. The 5-cent stamp had a picture of Benjamin Franklin and the 10-cent stamp bore the likeness of George Washington.

Witerature

Wit and wisdom to complement the truths of the Holy Bible can be found in secular writings.

Treat Your Customers by Bob Miglani, Hyperion, 2006 pp. 17-18, 22.

Treat Others Right

“Ask anyone who has worked in customer service for a few years and he will tell you how much of a challenge it can be.... Serving customers each and every day is a tough job that requires a positive attitude and thick skin. And after some years in customer service, the physical and mental drain can make a person bitter, angry, or just unhappy.... What’s most dangerous is the thinking that the customer just doesn’t matter—that no matter how poorly you treat the customer, he will continue to come into the store because the product or service is still valued. That the customer is not the king.

“Forgetting the importance of keeping the customer happy can lead to the loss of business....

“Customers may at times be difficult to serve but don’t let anyone tell you that customers are not important. They still are—and always will be—and you’ve got to treat them like they’re royalty if you want to have a successful business.”

Mat. 5:44, 7:12; Phil. 2:5-8

Quotable Quote

“The successful man will profit from his mistakes and try again in a different way.” —Dale Carnegie

Memory Scripture

“Freely you have received, freely give.” —Mat. 10:8

John

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10), John and the other disciples followed Jesus back into Jerusalem. On the way, they passed a fig tree. Christ expected to find some figs to eat, but was disappointed, so He cursed the tree. John and the other disciples heard Christ say to the tree, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, where He drove out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. He taught, saying to them, "It is not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of thieves." This angered the scribes and chief priests, who sought how they could kill Him (Mark 11:15-18).

This was the second time Christ had cleansed the temple. The first time was early in his ministry (John 2:13-22).

Christ Discusses His Death

There were certain "Greeks" (i.e., Gentiles who had converted to Judaism) who had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Feast of Passover (John 12:20).

They probably came from the area of Bethsaida, on the Sea of Galilee. They ran into Philip, who also was from Bethsaida, and asked him to introduce them to Christ. Philip took these Gentiles to Andrew, who also was from Bethsaida, and the two disciples told Jesus these Gentiles wanted to talk to Him.

Jesus knew that He was sent to the Jews and to the 10 tribes of Israel—not to Gentiles (Mat. 15:24). But He also realized He was about to die, opening the door to salvation for all people, including these Gentiles (John 12:23, 32).

Troubled by the thought of dying, Jesus said, "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name'" (v. 27).

John, the other disciples, and the crowd then heard a loud rumbling that sounded like thunder. Some said it was thunder; others said an angel had spoken. Indeed, a voice had spoken from heaven, responding to Christ's comment, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again" (vv. 28-29). Christ told his disciples the voice was not for his sake but for theirs (v. 30).

(To be continued!)



New Egyptian Governor Part of Terrorist Group

"Egypt's Islamist president appointed a new governor of Luxor on Sunday [June 16] who comes from the political arm of an Islamist group that once carried out terrorist attacks that killed dozens of tourists, soldiers and police officers in the same city.

"The group, the Gamaa al-Islamiyya, renounced violence in 2003 and joined the political process after the revolution in 2011.

"But its partisans hold ultraconservative views on matters like sunbathing, women wearing shorts, the consumption of alcohol and other things that many tourists consider necessary components of vacations to see the country's Pharaonic sites....

"Many people were shocked by the appointment" ("New Governor Shock to Some Inside Egypt" by Ben Hubbard and Mayy El Sheikh, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, June 16, 2013, p. 1).

At the time of the end, there will be a "king of the South," which may be a union of Islamist nations (Dan. 11:40). One of the major players in that Union will likely be Egypt. The appointment of conservative Islamists to government positions in Egypt and other countries across North Africa is not surprising if they are to form an Islamist union.

Obama Plans to Cut U.S. Nuclear Arsenal

"President Obama plans to use a speech in Berlin on Wednesday [June 19] to outline plans for further reductions in the American nuclear arsenal if Russia agrees to pare back its weapons at the same time, administration officials said Tuesday.

"Resuming a drive toward disarmament that he had largely shunted aside over the past two years, Mr. Obama will propose trimming the number of strategic warheads that each of the two big nuclear powers still maintains by up to a third, taking them below the 1,550 permitted in the treaty signed with Russia in his first term, a senior administra-

tion official said. That would leave the country with just over 1,000 weapons" ("Obama Has Plans to Cut U.S. Nuclear Arsenal, if Russia Reciprocates" by Peter Baker and David E. Sanger, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, June 18, 2013, p. 1).

God promised that if we refused to obey Him, He would break the pride of our power (Lev. 26:19). Dismantling our nuclear arsenal not only indicates a loss of pride in our military power, but it removes a deterrent that prevents our enemies from attacking us. Unless our nation repents of its sins, national captivity awaits us (vv. 31-35). Nuclear disarmament helps pave the way.

Obama to Use E.P.A. to Force Energy Costs Up

President Obama unveiled a plan June 25 at Georgetown University to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions using the regulatory powers of the Environmental Protection Agency.

"In his speech, Mr. Obama said he would use executive powers to limit the carbon dioxide that power plants could emit. He also called for government spending to promote the development of energy alternatives, and committed to helping cities and states protect themselves from rising seas and other effects of climate change" ("Obama Puts Legacy at Stake With Clean-Air Act" by Justin Gillis, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, June 25, 2013, p. 1).

Obama is attempting to sidestep Congress by "stretching the boundaries" of 1970 Clean Air Act to get a reduction in emissions. Unfortunately for U.S. residents, his new restrictions will cause higher electric bills and may force coal power plants out of business, causing power shortages. His government spending will cause more ruin to an already-stretched federal budget and a weak national economy. All this is based upon the hoax of man-made global warming (a hoax designed to weaken the U.S. economically), and once the U.S. is weakened, it will be easier to take into national captivity.