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Auld Lang Syne

On New Year's Eve, many sing 'Auld Lang Syne.' Why? What does it mean? Is there a lesson in it for us?

By Gregory Dullum

Dec. 31 is celebrated as New Year's Eve. On that Tuesday night, millions of people will stay up past midnight and sing a song whose words *they* don't understand. If we've ever been to a New Year's Eve party, watched TV as the ball dropped at Times Square, or have seen a movie that took place on New Year's Eve, we've heard the song. I've heard this song all my life, but I have never understood the words. That song is "Auld Lang Syne."

Origin of the Song

Scottish Poet Robert Burns, who lived from 1759 to 1796, is usually credited with writing the words to this song, but he said he wrote down the words as he heard them sung by an old Scottish man.

Burns wrote "Auld Lang Syne" in the *last year* of his life, 1796. The tune comes from an old Scottish melody.

"Auld Lang Syne" has five verses and a chorus, but they're in Scottish dialect, and are all hard to understand. I have read the poem, and each verse is harder to understand than the verse before.

My guess is that on New Year's Eve, no one sings past the first verse and chorus. They just sing these over and over until the music stops.

The words to the first verse are:

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?*

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And [the days of] auld lang syne?*

The chorus goes—

For auld lang syne, my dear,

For auld lang syne,

We'll take a cup o' kindness yet

For auld lang syne.

Meaning of the Words

These are the WORDS. What do they

mean?

"Auld lang syne" means, literally, "*old long since*." And what does "*old long since*" mean? It means "*days gone by*." The dictionary further defines this term as "*old times, especially times fondly remembered*."

People sing this song as they celebrate what they think is the end of one year and the start of a new one. As they look back, they ask the question, should old acquaintances and days gone by be forgotten? This is an encouragement to dwell in the past—in the "good old days."

Did Church Have Good Old Days?

Have we, in the church, ever longed for "auld lang syne"—the good old days?

When were they?

Were they 18+ years ago, when the United Church of God was first getting started, and there was a lot of enthusiasm and excitement? There was the promise of getting more people involved in doing the Work of God in each *local* congregation. Were those the good old days?

What about the days before the Worldwide Church of God split? Back when we were all *one big family*? When our congregations had hundreds of people attending? When we had Bible studies on Wednesday nights and Y.E.S. lessons once a month and Y.O.U. activities all year round? When we had 8,000, 10,000 or 15,000 people attending each Feast of Tabernacles site? When our church magazine reached 8 million circulation and we had half-hour daily radio programs and weekly TV programs on regular TV stations? Were those the good old days?

What about back in the 1960s, when the church was really *growing quickly* under Herbert W. and Garner Ted Armstrong? Back when there were *three campuses* to Ambassador College training ministers to attend to the growing flock? Were those



photo by Gregory Dullum

Times Square in New York City is the scene of a large New Year's Eve party in which participants will sing "Auld Lang Syne" without really knowing what they are singing.

the good old days?

What about the 1950s? Were any of us even in the *church* back then? Most of us were NOT yet part of the work in the 1950s, but there was one that was growing.

And back in the '50s, society was *so much better*, wasn't it? There were clean, wholesome TV shows like "Leave It to Beaver," "Father Knows Best" and "Gunsmoke," instead of perverted, sex-and-blood-filled shows that we have today. And the music of the '50s was better, wasn't it? It has endured through the decades and is still played on "oldies" stations today. Were the '50s the good old days?

What about the 1940s? Back before teen rebellion and rock-and-roll came on the scene? When the church was very small and Ambassador College did not yet exist or was just beginning? Were those the good old days?

What the Bible Says

What does the Bible say? When were *auld lang syne*? When were the good

AULD LANG SYNE

Continued on Page 2

Auld Lang Syne

Continued from Page 1

old days?

Notice what the Bible says: “Do not say, ‘Why were the former days better than these? For you do not enquire wisely concerning this’” (Eccles. 7:10). Why did God inspire Solomon to write this? I believe there were TWO REASONS.

Old Days Not So Good

The first reason Solomon wrote this is because *the old days were not so good*. When we look back, we tend to *remember the good times and forget the bad*. But there was evil in those days as well.

Jesus Christ tells us, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself. *Sufficient unto the day is the EVIL thereof*” (Mat. 6:34 *King James Version*, emphasis added). The *New Century Version* translates this verse, “So don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will have its own worries. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” EACH DAY has its *own troubles!* Tomorrow has its evils, but *so did yesterday*.

Society has indeed gotten WORSE. It is *more depraved*. Bible prophecy tells us that *as we get closer to the end, it will continue to get worse* (2 Tim. 3:1-5). It will become as bad as it was in the days of Noah, when every thought of man was evil continually (Mat. 24:37, Gen. 6:5). So yes, *in some ways*, the “old days” of the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s were better.

But some things were WORSE in the past and *have gotten better*, haven’t they? If we have a big, flat-screen plasma or LCD color TV in our living room, would we want to go back to the old black-and-white TVs of the 1950s and ’60s? If we enjoy the sound of music on our iPod or CD player, would we want to go back to those scratchy record players? What about indoor plumbing? Do we want to go back to outhouses and hauling water from a creek? Do we want to give up the vehicle we drive with its comfortable seats, warm heater, cold AC, stereo/CD player and GPS—and go back to a horse and buggy? And SPIRITUALLY, we have grown and matured over the years. Do we want to go back to *less understanding*?

When we long for the “good old days” we forget that *in many ways*, those days were NOT so good. If we go all the way back to the day Eve pulled that forbidden fruit from the tree and ate it, we find that the “good old days”—no matter what days we are looking at—were A MIXTURE of GOOD and EVIL. Satan is the ruler of this world and the good old days, no mat-

ter how good they seem now, were NOT so good *at the time*.

We Only Have Today

The second reason I believe Solomon wrote Eccles. 7:10 is because *today is the only day we have*. If we dwell in the past—if we live in the past—if we spend all our time thinking about how much better it was in the past—we LOSE today. And TODAY is the ONLY day we have.

We can’t do anything TOMORROW. *It’s not here yet*. We may not even be alive tomorrow (Jas. 4:14)!

We can’t do things in the past. *That time is gone*. We must LIVE IN THE PRESENT. We must *make every day count*. We must run our race NOW. We must overcome NOW. We must develop spiritual character NOW.

We *can’t* do it in the past! The past is not really “the good old days” because *we can’t change it*. All we can change is our present. Heb. 3:13 tells us, “But exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today’ lest any of you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” We must act TODAY. We must live in TODAY!

Should we *forget the past*? No! George Santayana wrote, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” LEARN from the past but don’t LIVE in the past.

Did the Apostle Paul live in the past? When his life got tough, did he fondly long for the good old days—for *auld lang syne*?

He wrote, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philip. 3:13-14).

We won’t win a race if we keep looking backward. It is foolish want to go back to the beginning of the race. We can’t run a race backward! We must RUN forward. We must FACE forward. We RUN a race *in the present*—in TODAY—and *look forward to the goal*. If we keep running toward that goal, we will reach it!

Rather than wishing for the good old days of the past, we can confidently say, *every day*, the words of Ps. 118:24: “THIS is the day which the LORD has made; we will REJOICE and be glad in it.” We don’t say that about yesterday. We say it about TODAY. We should rejoice and be glad in TODAY.

We don’t long for “auld lang syne” or “old long since” or “times fondly remembered.” We don’t long for the good old days of the past. They weren’t so good and we can’t change them.

These are two lessons we can take from Solomon’s instruction in Eccles. 7:10:

“Do not say, ‘why were the former days better than these?’ For you do not enquire wisely concerning this.”

The Good Old Days to Come

The REAL “good old days” *have not arrived yet!* We are living—and have been living all our lives—in what the Apostle Paul called “this *present evil world*” (Gal. 1:4 emphasis added). Why is it evil? Because it is a world ruled by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4). This present evil world is a mixture of good and bad. Remembering the good times and forgetting the bad does not make the old days any less evil!

Although we are living in the *present world (society)*—which is EVIL—there is a “world to come” (Mat. 12:32, Mark 10:30, Luke 18:30, Heb. 2:5, 6:5). Sometimes called, “the world tomorrow,” this *world to come* will begin when Jesus Christ returns to this earth, overthrows Satan and establishes God’s government here. We will be changed into spirit beings, and will live forever (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

The true “good old days” will begin when Jesus returns to this earth! ALL CREATION *is looking forward* to that moment:

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of creation eagerly awaits for the revealing of the sons of God.... For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption [sonship], the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:18-19, 22-23).

We should long for the “good old days” in the FUTURE of God’s kingdom as we run our race TODAY.

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JOHN THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

John silently witnesses Jesus' Jewish and Roman trials, and then sees his cousin condemned and crucified!

By Gregory Dullum
Part 15

Illegal Jewish Trial Completed

On Passover—Abib 14—Jesus endured three stages of a Jewish trial. They were: “(1) before Annas, (2) before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin for informal examination, [and] (3) before them in a formal trial” (*A Harmony of the Gospels* by A. T. Robertson, 1950, p. 212).

The first two stages of the Jewish examination had been completed in the early morning hours before the rooster crowed. The crowing of the rooster (immediately after Peter’s third denial of Christ) signaled the end of darkness and the beginning of the daylight portion (Wednesday) of Passover (Abib 14).

It was ILLEGAL for the Jews to have conducted Jesus’ trial *before dawn*. Knowing they had violated their own laws, the Sanhedrin held a third examination *after dawn*. “When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death” (Mat. 27:1).

“This ratification of the condemnation after dawn was an effort to make the action legal. But no ratification of a wrong can make it right. ...the hate of the Sanhedrin for Jesus made them violate their own rules of legal procedure” (Robertson, p. 215).

What was the Sanhedrin? “The high priest at that time was Caiaphas (A.D. 18-37; John 18:13). The chief priests included others who had formerly been high priests, and the elders consisted of the heads of leading families in the community. The scribes were the Jewish experts and teachers of the commandments of God as well as the traditions of men ([Mark] 7:8, 9, 13). Together this group made up the Sanhedrin, always referred to in the Gospels and Acts as the Council ([Mark] 14:55; 15:1; Acts 5:27; 23:1)....

“The Sanhedrin was supposed to administer justice, but this council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death. The Jewish authorities had lost to Rome the right to pronounce a death sentence. Thus they eventually had to appeal to Pilate ([Mark] 15:1). Because no real witnesses could testify to any grounds for Jesus’ death, false witness was heard, but it was contradictory” (*Nelson’s NKJ Study Bible*, 1997, notes on Mark 14:53-56, p. 1676).

The Bible tells us Peter and John were among the crowd of onlookers at the house of Caiaphas (John 18:15-18). Peter left after he denied Christ at the close of the second Jewish stage (Luke 22:61). There is no mention in the Bible of any apostle being with Christ during the third Jewish stage (after sunrise), or during the Roman trial. The FOCUS is entirely upon Christ, *as it should be*. However, it’s *likely* John remained *hidden in the crowd* of onlookers to see what happened next and to *record the events* so we can read about them today.

Luke 22:67-71 contains a summary of the third stage of the Jewish trial. Jesus was asked if He was the Son of God. He replied, “You rightly say that I am.” Considering this to be blasphemy, the Jewish rulers declared, “What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”

Christ Before Pilate

Then began Christ’s Roman trial. “The Roman Trial also comprised three stages. (1) the first appearance before the Roman procurator Pilate, (2) the appearance before Herod Antipas, the native ruler of Galilee appointed by the Romans, and (3) the final appearance before Pilate” (Robertson, p. 216).

Jesus was bound (Mark 15:1, Mat. 27:2) and the “whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate” (Luke 23:1). The “whole multitude” certainly included members of the Sanhedrin, but *also* very likely included temple guards (John 18:3) and other onlookers, *including John*.

“Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning” (John 18:26).

Where was the Praetorium and what hour was this? “The Praetorium was the Roman governor’s official residence, probably the Fortress of Antonia near the temple. Early morning refers to the fourth watch of the night, from 3 to 6 a.m. A Roman court could have been held immediately after sunrise, and this scene could have taken place around 6 a.m.” (*Nelson’s NKJ Study Bible*, notes on John 18:28, p. 1802).

The Jewish leaders themselves did not go into the Praetorium. Why not? “But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover” (John 18:28). This statement has confused some Bible readers, leading them to conclude

that Jesus kept the Passover a day early. How could these Jewish leaders have become defiled and be *prevented* from eating the Passover, when it *had already been eaten* by Jesus and the apostles the previous evening?

The Jews used the term “Passover” for BOTH the Passover itself (Abib 14) and for the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread that immediately follows it (Abib 15-21).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins with a special meal after sunset as the 15th begins. The Jews call this meal a “seder” but the Bible refers to it as the “night to be much observed” or day [i.e., night] to be remembered (Ex. 12:42, 13:3 *King James Version*). The FIRST and SEVENTH days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are HOLY DAYS. The other five are NOT HOLY but *leaven is to be avoided all seven days* (Lev. 23:6-8; Ex. 13:3, 6-7).

“During Passover [i.e., the Feast of Unleavened Bread], if a Jew entered a house that contained leaven, he or she would be ceremonially defiled and unable to celebrate the feast. Thus Jews would not enter the residence of any Gentile for fear of being ceremonially defiled.... The main meal of the Passover [the Passover lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs and wine] had taken place. The synoptic Gospels report that Jesus celebrated that meal the night before (see Matt. 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-22). However, there were other ceremonial meals during the Passover [i.e., the Feast of Unleavened Bread], which lasted the entire week” (*Nelson’s NKJ Study Bible*, notes on John 18:28, p. 1802).

In other words, these Jews were concerned about coming into contact with leaven and becoming ceremonially unclean and unable to properly observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Since they would not enter the Praetorium, Pilate came out to them and asked, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” (John 18:29).

They answered, “If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.”

Pilate, assuming Christ had violated *Jewish tradition*, thereby becoming an “EVILDOER,”—as opposed to being a CRIMINAL who broke *Roman law*—told the Sanhedrin, “You take Him and judge

JOHN

Continued on Page 4

John

Continued from Page 3

Him according to your law.”

“It is not lawful for for us to put anyone to death,” the Jews objected (John 18:29-31).

Pilate wondered what Jesus could have done to deserve death. So the Jews *falsely accused* Jesus of Roman CRIMES.

“And they began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King’ ” (Luke 23:2).

Pilate entered into the Praetorium—leaving the Sanhedrin outside—and asked Jesus, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

Jesus answered, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?”

“Am I a Jew?” the ROMAN governor responded. “Your own nation and chief priests have delivered You to me. What have you done?”

Jesus relieved Pilate’s *fears of sedition* when He replied, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

“Are you a king then?” Pilate asked.

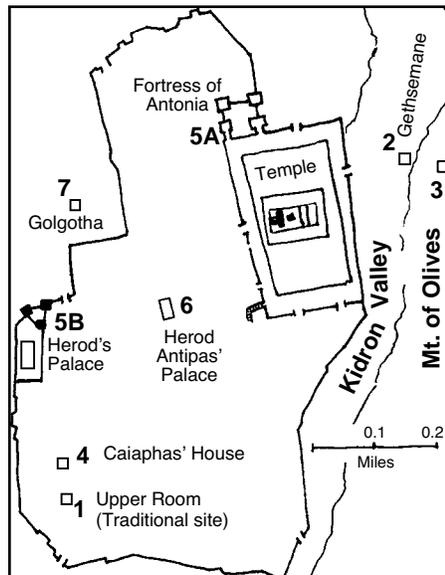
“You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

Pilate asked, “What is truth?” Then he went out to the Jews and announced, “I find no fault in Him at all.” Jesus was found NOT GUILTY (John 18:33-38)!

“But they were the more fierce, saying, ‘He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place’ ” (Luke 23:5).

Jesus didn’t respond to any of the accusations made against Him. “Then Pilate said to Him, ‘Do you not hear how many things they testify against You?’ But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly” (Mat. 27:12-13).

Pilate was unsure of his next step. He found no guilt in Jesus but the Jews were insisting that He was an evil criminal deserving death. Then a thought occurred to Pilate. *He could pass the buck!* Didn’t the Jews say Jesus was a *Galilean*? If that were true, he could send the whole mess to Herod, *King of Galilee*, and let him deal with it! The two Roman rulers didn’t get along, but maybe this would be a way to patch up their rocky relationship. He inquired if Jesus were indeed Galilean, and learning that He had come from Nazareth in Galilee, Pilate sent the matter to Herod (Luke 23:6, 12).



Map by Greg Dullum

The sites Christ visited on his last day, Passover, A.D. 31: Upper Room where He ate Passover (1); Gethsemane where He prayed (2) and was arrested (3); Caiaphas’ House (4), Fortress of Antonia—traditional site of trial before Pilate (5A) [many scholars now believe it was at Herod’s Palace (5B)]. His trial before Herod was at Herod Antipas’ Palace (6). He was returned to Pilate (5A-B). He was crucified and buried near Golgotha, (7).

Jesus before Herod

The Herods were a family of Roman rulers considered by the Jews to be HALF-JEWS. Herod Antipas, the king of Galilee, was a son of Herod the Great. “The father of Herod the Great was a man of Idumaeen blood named Antipater. The Idumaeans were of the Edomite stock, descendants of Esau (Josephus. *Ant.* 14.1.3) By conquest John Hyrcanus brought the Idumaeans into the Jewish state about 130 B.C., and as they conformed to the Jewish rite of circumcision they embraced the Jewish religion.... However, the Jews regarded the Idumaeans with considerable suspicion and prejudice, calling them ‘half Jews’ ” (“Herod,” *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* by Merrill F. Unger, 1988, pp. 555, 558).

Although he was NOT of Jewish *nationality*, King Herod practiced the Jewish *religion*. He was in Jerusalem to keep the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Jesus, his accusers, and the multitude of onlookers (probably including John) were sent to Herod Antipas’ palace in the center of Jerusalem.

“Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard

many things about Him, and hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words but He answered him nothing” (Luke 23:8-9).

Why did Jesus remain silent? “Jesus may have remained silent because He had already been declared innocent and yet was still subjected to trial” (*Nelson’s NKJ Study Bible*, notes on Luke 23:9, p. 1747).

“After deciding that he had nothing to fear from Jesus, Herod and his men entertained themselves at Jesus’ expense. Dressing Him in a gorgeous robe was probably a sarcastic reference to Jesus’ claim to be king” (*Nelson’s NKJ Study Bible*, notes on Luke 23:11, pp. 1747-1748).

After treating Jesus with contempt and mocking Jesus in the robe, Herod sent the matter back to Pilate (Luke 23:11).

2nd Appearance Before Pilate

“Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, ‘You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him, no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him’ (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast)” (Luke 23:13-17).

Pilate’s wife approached him as he sat upon the judgment seat and told him, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him” (Mat. 27:19).

If John indeed were among the multitude of Jews watching events unfold, he may have felt a *glimmer* of HOPE! It did not appear that Jesus would die after all! He would just be punished and RELEASED.

The glimmer became dimmer when John heard the chief priests and the elders persuade the multitude around him to ask for the release of Barabbas, a murderer who was in prison for leading a rebellion against the Romans, and for the crucifixion of Jesus (Mat. 27:20). Pilate asked which of the two the crowd wanted released and they shouted, “Barabbas!” (v. 21).

Pilate conceived a plan to save Jesus, whom he had found innocent. If he dressed up Jesus as a Jewish king, and had Him physically abused by his soldiers, the Jews would have compassion on their suffering king and ask for his release instead of Barabbas.

“So then... the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. And they said, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they struck

Him with their hands.

“Pilate then went out again, and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.’”

“Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and purple robe. And Pilate said to them, ‘Behold the Man!’”

When the chief priests and officers saw the bruised Jesus in the purple robe wearing a crown of thorns, they cried out, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate retorted, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him” (John 19:1-6).

The Jews told Pilate, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God” (John 19:7).

This caused Pilate to FEAR! He was a Roman who believed in many gods. Was Jesus truly a *son of a god*? If so, Pilate worried that he may have incurred the *wrath of the gods* by allowing his soldiers to brutalize their son!

He took Jesus back into the Praetorium and asked Him, “Where are You from?” When Jesus didn’t answer, he asked Him, “Do you not know that I have power to crucify You and power to release You?”

“You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given to you from above,” Jesus said. “Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

Pilate sought to release Jesus again, but the Jews said, “If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.”

When Pilate heard them, he brought Jesus out to them in a place called “the Pavement.” This was about the sixth hour (6 a.m. Roman time) on the “Preparation Day of the Passover” (John 19:14).

The Passover (Abib 14) was a FEAST but was NOT a *holy day*. The passover CEREMONY was observed *after sunset as the 14th began* on Tuesday night. The daylight portion of Passover (Abib 14—Wednesday) was a work day—it was the day *before* a holy day (Abib 15), which began at sunset. It was a *preparation day* for the First Day of Unleavened Bread (called Passover by the Jews), just as Friday was a preparation day for the weekly Sabbath.

When he appeared on “the Pavement,” about 6 a.m. Wednesday morning, Pilate sat on the judgment seat before them all and cried out, “Behold your King!” Christ stood before them, bruised from beatings and mistreating by the soldiers, and wearing a purple robe and crown of thorns.

The Jews responded, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!”

“Shall I crucify your King?” asked Pilate. He still *hoped* they would have *compassion* on their battered KING.

“We have no king but Casear,” the

chief priests answered. Pilate’s plan to change their minds had failed (vv. 8-15).

The Jews then said to Pilate, “Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas.”

Pilate, wishing to free Jesus, again called out to them, but they shouted, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!”

Pilate again declared Christ’s innocence and said he intended to punish Him and let Him go.

But the Jews demanded in loud voices that Christ be crucified. Their loud voices prevailed and Pilate *finally* gave in (Luke 23:18-23).

Pilate washed his hands before the multitude and declared, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.”

And all the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and on our children” (Mat. 27:24-25).

Jesus Scourged

Pilate released Barabbas and had Jesus scourged prior to his crucifixion. Earlier, the Roman soldiers had mocked Jesus, beaten Him, and spat on Him. Now they removed the purple robe and scourged Him severely (Mat. 27:26-30, Mark 15:15-19, Luke 23:24-25, John 18:16).

Jesus’ blood spattered as his flesh was ripped open by pieces of metal tied into the leather thongs of the scourge. Some cuts may have been so deep that his bones were visible (Ps. 22:14, 17). The scourging turned the Son of God into an unrecognizable bloody pulp: “his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness” (Isa. 52:14 *New International Version*).

The soldiers put Jesus’ garment back on Him and led Him through the city streets to Golgotha, outside the western wall (Mark 15:20, Mat. 27:31, John 19:16). They forced Jesus to carry his own wooden stake for crucifixion (John 19:17). But weakened from the scourging, He was unable to carry it very far. So the soldiers found a passerby, a man of Cyrene named Simon, and compelled him to carry Jesus’ stake for Him (Mark 15:21, Mat. 27:32, Luke 23:26).

“And a great multitude of people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him” (Luke 23:27). John very likely was among this multitude. The women probably included Jesus’ mother (Mary), Mary Magdalene and others who had helped support Jesus’ ministry the past 3-1/2 years (Luke 8:1-3). Jesus turned and comforted the weeping women (vv. 28-31).

Two criminals also were led to the crucifixion site with Christ (v. 32).

JOHN

Continued on Page 6

Fun Fact



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

The custom of kissing under the mistletoe may have derived from the Scandinavians. They associated the plant with their goddess of love, Frigga.

Witerature

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

You, Inc. by Harry and Christine Beckwith, Warner Business Books, 2007, pp. 79-80.

Don’t Praise Yourself

“You worked hard for your achievements.

“You have reason to be proud, and to assume others will value them, too.

“They will—but far less than you suspect....

“They place faith in the person who communicates most clearly.

“Why stress something that matters relatively little?

“Perhaps worse, you may sound immodest. Touting sounds like tooting one’s horn, which tends to repel people.

“More important... Your credentials come from your past, and in others’ minds may reveal little about your ability to answer their needs.”

“Be careful in complimenting yourself.”

Prov. 25:6-7, 27, 27:2; Rom. 12:3

Quotable Quotes

“God chooses what we go through; we choose how we go through it.”

—John Maxwell

Memory Scripture

“Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.”

—Prov. 23:23

John

Continued from Page 5

Jesus Crucified

The soldiers stopped at a place outside the city called Golgotha (meaning, “the Place of the Skull”—presumably because caves in the cliff below the crucifixion site gave the appearance of a skull).

Jesus was stripped of all his belongings and placed upon a wooden stake. Thick iron nails were pounded through his hands and feet. Some believe Jesus’ hands were nailed outstretched to a cross bar, forming a “T” while others contend they were nailed over his head on an upright pole. The Greek word translated “cross” is *stauros*, which means “stake.” The word “cross” in the Bible does NOT require that there be a cross bar.

The stake was lifted upright and dropped into a prepared hole with a THUNK! The two criminals were set upright as well, one on each side of Jesus (Luke 22:33, John 19:18). Neither of the criminals had been scourged—they were accused of thievery, not trying to overthrow the Roman government.

Jesus was crucified at 9 a.m.—the third hour of the day by *Jewish* reckoning (Mark 15:25). The Jews divided a day into 12 hours of night followed by 12 hours of day (John 11:29)—the daylight portion beginning about sunrise.

John looked up at Jesus hanging on the stake; his bloody body being warmed by the mid-morning sun. He saw Jesus looking down at his murderers, and he heard Him utter the words, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).

The soldiers seated on the ground around Jesus ignored his words. They were busy dividing up his belongings among themselves. When they got to his coat, they cast lots for it (Luke 23:35, Mark 15:24, Mat. 27:35-36, John 19:23-24).

Pilate wrote a title, “THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS” in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, and had it placed over Jesus’ head on his stake. The chief priests complained, saying, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’” Pilate had heard enough from these men. He answered, “What I have written, I have written” (John 19:19-22, Mark 15:26, Mat. 27:37, Luke 23:38).

John stood among the crowd, near Jesus’ mother, and stared at his cousin on the stake. He could *not believe* what his eyes and ears had witnessed over the past three hours!

(To be continued!)



Spying Causes Rift Between U.S., Europe

“European leaders united in anger Thursday [Oct. 24] as they attended a summit overshadowed by reports of widespread U.S. spying on its allies—allegations German Chancellor Angela Merkel said had shattered trust in the Obama administration and undermined the crucial trans-Atlantic relationship” (“Merkel: U.S. spying shattered allies’ trust” by John-Thor Dahlburg and Geir Moulson, Associated Press, *Southeast Missouriian*, Oct. 25, 2013, p. 9A).

As we near the end of this age, we will see the rise of a European beast power comprised of “10 kings,” led by the Germans, who are descendants of the ancient Assyrians. This European union will be used to punish a wicked U.S. with national captivity. Our people will be offered as slaves to many nations, including Egypt (Dan. 2:40-45, Rev. 17:12-14, Isa. 10:5-7, Deut. 28:45-57, 64-68). The trust and alliance between the U.S. and Europe must be broken before these prophecies can be fulfilled. We are seeing cracks appear, indicating that the end is near.

U.S. Crime Increases

“The violent crime rate went up 15 percent last year, and the property crime rate rose 12 percent, the government said Thursday [Oct. 24]....

“ ‘One year of bad news is something you notice but don’t necessarily draw conclusions about. Two years of bad news suggests it might be time to start worrying,’ said Carnegie Mellon University professor Jonathan Caulkins” (“Survey marks second year of crime increases” by Pete Yost, Associated Press, *Southeast Missouriian*, Oct. 25, 2013, p. 9A). As we approach the end time, we can expect crime to get worse (2 Tim. 3:1-4).

Gay Rights Gains Support

“Gay rights advocates from both parties are newly upbeat about the prospects for Senate passage of legislation that would bar employers from discriminat-

ing against workers on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity....

“ ‘I think society continues to evolve on the issue of gay rights,’ said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, a co-sponsor of the measure. ‘As more and more gay individuals are open about their sexual orientation, people come to realize that they are their neighbors, their family members, their friends, their coworkers. That’s made a big difference.’...

“A Pew research survey in June found that more Americans said homosexuality should be accepted rather than discouraged by society by a margin of 60 percent to 31 percent. Opinions were more evenly divided 10 years ago” (“Gay rights legislation in Senate gains bipartisan support” by Donna Cassata, Associated Press, *Southeast Missouriian*, Nov. 4, 2013, p. 7A).

That public opinion is changing and becoming more accepting of homosexuality is a sign that our nation is moving further away from God. Right and wrong cannot be properly determined by public opinion, because “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:16).

To know right from wrong, we must turn to instructions from our creator God. He tells us that homosexual activity is wrong: “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death” (Lev. 20:13).

As America becomes more accepting of this abominable sin, it becomes more like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which God destroyed with fire and brimstone (Gen. 18:16-19:29). We are fast approaching the time of our national demise—not from fire and brimstone, but from national captivity.

Fierce Storms Strike

A powerful typhoon struck the Philippines Nov. 8, killing more than 10,000 people; and scores of tornadoes ripped across America’s Midwest Nov. 17, causing great destruction but killing only about six people.

The Bible warns of “whirlwinds” occurring in the latter days (Jer. 23:19-20, 30:23-24). Expect more such storms as people turn their backs on God!