



activated

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

THE DESTINATION

What dream are you chasing?

THE GREEN DOOR

Is Hell an extension of this life
for some?

ENDTIME INSIGHTS

The 70 weeks of Daniel—Part 1

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Personally speaking

Life is made up of choices, ranging from mundane to mind-boggling. What should I wear today? What do I want for breakfast? Who should I marry? What career should I pursue? Big and small, our choices work together to order our days, define who we are, and largely determine our levels of happiness and fulfillment.

Ironically, it's the little choices that often get more than their share of our time and attention, while the most fundamental choices, the ones that matter most and could make the biggest difference, get overlooked or put off. What do I want out of life? What kind of person do I want to be?

It's possible to go through life without ever tackling those big questions—millions of people do—but that approach to life is far more likely to end in disappointment and regret than in genuine accomplishment and happiness. As someone cleverly put it: If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else. Don't let that happen to you. Find what matters most to you and go for it.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46). How many others, do you suppose, had seen that pearl before this merchant but hadn't realized its worth? How many others wanted it but had already squandered their resources on things of far lesser value?

What's your pearl of great price? What other things are you prepared to sacrifice in order to make it yours? Those are decisions only you can make, with God's help, but we hope that this issue of *Activated* will get you thinking in the right direction. May God bless you with His best!

Keith Phillips

For the *Activated* Family

AH, THE SIMPLE LIFE!

THE AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN was at the pier of a small Mexican coastal village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. In the boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, “Only a little while.”

The American then asked why he didn’t stay out longer and catch more fish.

The fisherman said he had enough to support his family’s immediate needs.

The American then asked, “But what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, and take a siesta with my wife Maria. Then I stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, señor.”

“I am a Harvard MBA,” the American scoffed. “I could help you. You should spend more time fishing. With the proceeds you could buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats. Eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing, and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then



Los Angeles, and eventually New York City, where you would run your expanding enterprise.”

The fisherman asked, “But señor, how long will this all take?”

“Fifteen or twenty years.”

“But what then, señor?”

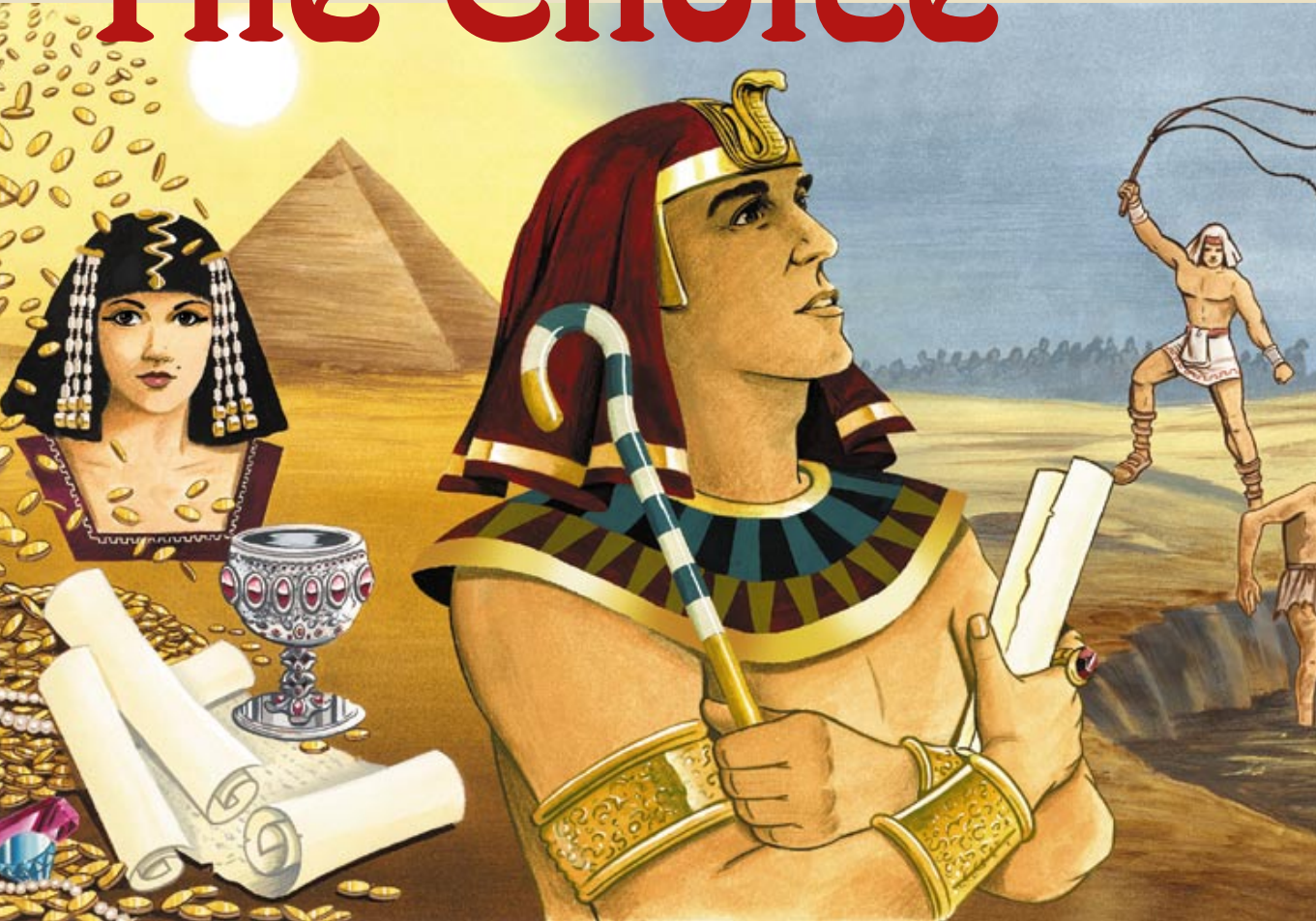
The American laughed and said, “That’s the best part. When the time is right you would sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions.”

“Millions, señor? Then what?”

The American said, “Then you would retire and move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your grandchildren, take siestas with your wife Maria, and stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos.” •

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

The Choice



BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT the choice Moses had to make when he forsook Egypt? That choice is what made Moses great. Solomon is known for his wisdom, Daniel for his vision, David for his psalms, and Peter for his zeal, but Moses was great because of the choice he made.

We read in Hebrews chapter 11 that Moses is included among the heroes of faith in God's hall of fame: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather

to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:24–26 KJV).

Moses, whom as a babe Pharaoh's daughter had found in a basket in tall reeds along the Nile River, was reared in Pharaoh's palace in wealth and privilege. But when he came of age, he had to make a choice. He was a Hebrew, not an Egyptian: Would he be

true to Egypt and wear the crown of the pharaohs, or would he choose his own people?

What a crisis it was for this young man, Moses! Imagine him climbing to some high place and looking at the lights of the palace as they twinkled from the imperial city—the palace with all its riches and beauty, the things that he had been used to all his life. Then he looked south toward the pyramids, where his own people worked as slaves of Pharaoh, making bricks. As they worked to the sound of the slave driver’s whip, Moses’ heart burned within him. They were his people, but if he chose to be one of them, he would have to forget all the comfort and luxury he had always had; he would wear the despised garb of the slaves and renounce forever his foster mother, Pharaoh’s daughter. But he made his choice, as God’s Word says, “to suffer affliction with the people of God [rather] than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”

Now these “pleasures of sin” were more tempting than one might think from this simple statement, because Egypt at that time was the most attractive spot on earth. Her granaries were bursting with grain, and the wealth of the world poured into her treasury—and Moses could have been heir to it all!

Moses had been educated “in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22), so he knew exactly what such a choice would mean: turning from the possessions of the mightiest empire on earth to slavery. But he was not only educated and wise, he was farsighted; he was willing to sacrifice present pleasure for future gain. “He had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” In other words, he knew that the pleasures of sin were only

for a moment, but God’s reward for choosing rightly was for all eternity.

Moses understood that without God’s favor a millionaire is only a pauper. The apostle Paul wrote of Jesus, “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor” (2 Corinthians 8:9). This is the choice that Moses made too.

Moses’ choice entailed poverty and suffering and terrible humiliation, but he decided he would rather be the least of God’s children here and wear a crown forever in Heaven (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). And so he took a stand with God’s children, that he might stand with them before the eternal King.

Standing with Moses on the steps of the palace it may have looked like a foolish choice, but standing on the steps of the throne of God in Heaven, as Moses looks back, what a wise and glorious choice it was! He became one of the world’s greatest leaders, and his influence reaches to this very day.

So many today are short-sighted when they make their choices; they can see only the present. They sell out the future for the present. They’re blind to the reward that could have been theirs.

What about your choices? Do you suffer from short-sightedness of the soul, spiritual myopia, where you’re living mostly for the present? Or do you keep your heart and mind on the great reward God has promised to those who put Him and His kingdom first?

Are pleasures blinding your vision to the great reward God has in store for you? The realities of eternity are pleasures forevermore! God loves you and has great plans for your life, but He leaves the choice to you. Make the right one. •



If he chose to be one of them, he would have to forget all the comfort and luxury he had always had.

THE DESTINATION

BY JOE NICHOLSON

THERE I STOOD, atop a breathtaking snow-covered mountain peak. The world below me glistened in the sunlight of a perfect day. A breeze swept across my face and sent a stream of energy through every fiber of my being. I mentally charted the route of my descent, positioned my goggles over my eyes, dug my ski poles into the snow, and flew forward. Could life get any better than this? The American dream was achievable! There I was, a self-made millionaire, able to do anything, travel anywhere, be anything...

Beep! Beep! Beep! My alarm clock. Reality set in.

By day I was an exhausted, overworked 18-year-old taking six courses in college and working 45 hours a week as a sauce-and-fry cook in the local Mexican restaurant. By night I relived in nightmares my daytime life. Dreams of ski adventures were rare.

One day in the university library someone handed me a fluorescent orange business card that read: "I am looking for people who want to escape the rat race forever." I stared at the words "rat race." Deeply in debt with tuition, monthly car payments, insurance payments, rent, and other bills, I had no trouble picturing myself with fur and a tail, working frantically but getting nowhere for the rest of my life.

I contacted the man who had given

me the card, and at our first meeting Jeremy laid out a multilevel marketing scheme for a telecommunications company. "Do anything. Go anywhere. Have anything your heart desires. This plan can make that dream a reality!" It sounded too good to be true, but I was tired of being me—tired of seeing the same failure stare back at me whenever I looked in a mirror—so I bought into it.

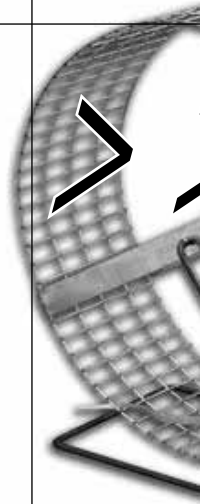
I was attending a seminar given by the company's millionaire director when he picked me out of a crowd of 200 and asked, "What kind of car do you want, son?"

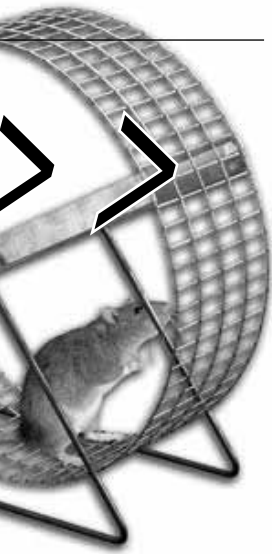
"A Toyota," I answered. The crowd moaned in disappointment at my inexpensive choice, but erupted in a cheer when I added, "Supra—a fully loaded Toyota Supra!"

"Then go down to the Toyota dealership and tell them you want to test drive that car. You need to *feel* your dream!"

Immediately after the seminar, I did. That day greed started to poison my soul.

Over the next couple of months I became increasingly pushy and arrogant. I went to malls, passed out my business card, and got the telephone number of anyone I could. I even pressured my family to buy in to my scheme. Quotes like "If you want it, get it" inspired me to chase that dollar bill





Would riches really bring me happiness? For the first time in a long time I cried out to God and asked Him to show me the way.

a little harder each day, but the harder I tried the more elusive it proved to be. Discouragement gave way to disillusionment.

My lack of success prompted an early morning call from my mentor, whose income depended in part on my own. “Why aren’t you out making money?” Jeremy wanted to know. “You can’t stop until you get enough money to have whatever you want. You need to constantly think and live and breathe your dream!”

“Yeah, whatever!” I said as I hung up.

I spent the next few days wondering if I really wanted to keep going down this road. Would riches really bring me happiness? For the first time in a long time I cried out to God and asked Him to show me the way.

A few days later I spotted a young man in his early 20s pushing his broken-down motorbike along the side of the road. Thinking I might be able to recruit him into my business, I pulled over and offered him a ride. Grateful, he put his motorbike in the back of my pickup truck and jumped in. When we arrived at his house, I gave Peter a sales pitch on the company I worked for. He was polite but not interested.

Once that was out of the way, he showed me pictures of his work with a Christian volunteer group called The Family, and asked me if I wanted to go for a cup of coffee later that evening. I wasn’t any more interested in religion or missionary work than he was in multilevel moneymaking schemes, but for some reason I said yes.

That evening I told him all about my troubles with my family, my work, and school.

“Do you want to go to Heaven?”

Peter asked. It wasn’t a question I heard every day, but somehow it didn’t seem out of place.

“Yes!” I quickly replied.

“Do you know if you’re going there?”

“I don’t think so,” I answered.

“Well, you can know for sure that you are,” Peter said matter-of-factly. “Just ask Jesus into your heart.”

I gave him a look of disbelief.

“It’s not some dead religion,” he said, “and it’s not some Utopian pipe dream either. It’s just Jesus!”

“Just Jesus?—Okay.”

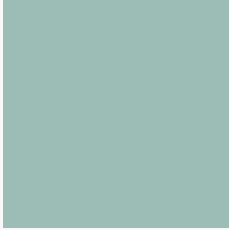
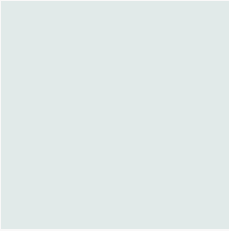


When I look back on my life before I found Jesus, it all seems so empty, so two dimensional. My two lives happened on the same planet, but that’s about all they have in common.

Since I joined The Family as a full-time missionary five years ago, I have traveled from West to East (the U.S. to Vietnam) and South to North (South Africa to the Middle East). The Lord has never failed to supply all my needs or give me joy and fulfillment in whatever corner of the world I found myself.

Along the way I also learned that while most roads lead to the same destination—momentary happiness through self-gratification—it’s a long, lonesome, miserable journey and few, if any, of the folks who actually make it there are truly happy. The second destination is much easier to arrive at and vastly more satisfying: simple truths, eternal values, and genuine accomplishment through Jesus! It’s not some dead religion or Utopian pipe dream, either. It’s just Jesus! •

(JOE NICHOLSON IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.)



The Green Door

A Dream of a Polished Hell

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

I HAD A VERY UNUSUAL DREAM that reminded me a little bit of *Alice in Wonderland*. I still don't know how I got down there in that awful place! I think maybe I was out walking and found a passageway that I wanted to explore. It was almost as if I'd wandered into Hell by accident and wasn't supposed to be there.

It was completely underground with brightly lit hallways, almost like a hospital, as it had very nice polished floors. I wandered along, looking at things and trying to peek in the rooms to see what was in them.

In each room there were people doing a different thing, but it seemed like everything they were doing was totally futile and a waste of time. They were all very, very busy but accomplishing nothing, getting nowhere.

Scientists conducted endless experiments that never bore any useful results. They shot rockets into space that either never got off the ground or never went anywhere.

A soldier was on the battlefield, while bombers zoomed overhead. With shells screaming and landing all around him, he seemed to be going through the endless hell of war, just like he had been on earth.

A fugitive politician was running from a screaming crowd that wanted to lynch him, and he was running and running, trying but unable to hide.

Everything moved at a very slow pace, but there was no stopping. Workers never stopped working, soldiers never stopped fighting on the battlefield, scientists never stopped experimenting. Whatever people were doing, they did it all the time, continuously, and yet they never seemed to accomplish anything or get anywhere.

As I looked in all those rooms, I had this terrible apprehensive feel-

Everything was
an extension
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ing. I thought, *Wow! This must be Hell! What could be worse than that?* Everything was an extension of the same meaningless, purposeless, fruitless, painful, sad existence that these people had on earth. As the Bible says, “There is no peace for the wicked” (Isaiah 57:21).

They keep doing the same things and going through all that agony and suffering and pain—the private hell of their former existence—but now absolutely useless and without relief or surcease or any hope of it ever ending. It was terrible!

It was similar to how many people live today. They get up in the morning, go to work, do the same things every day, come home, go to bed, and get up and do it again. What do they ever accomplish? What do they ever get out of life?

I never thought of Hell being like that. It was a very neat, well-organized place, but there was no end to the misery, no peace, no rest, and no one knew what was the truth. That’s about the worst thing I can imagine—not just burning up with literal flames, but constantly burning with that fruitless fire of endless, useless endeavor, ceaseless struggle, pointless pain, and seemingly endless sorrow and suffering!

It was just the opposite of the ecstasies of life in Heaven for those of us who know Jesus and are saved. Heaven will be an extension of the present happy life we now have. Though we’ll still have work to do there, we’ll be even happier then, with lots of mobility, accomplishment, progress, variety, travel, and freedom. The afterlife will be thrilling and fascinating for us. It will be an extension and amplification of the joy and exciting lives we now lead—our pres-

ent happiness multiplied many times over and with manifold blessings we can only imagine now!

In the dream I exited that polished Hell through a stairwell that led up to a dark green, weed-covered, grave-like hole in the ground. It reminded me of a song that was popular a number of years ago, “The Green Door.” The song was about a fellow who was wondering what was on the other side of a green door, and it turned out that the green door was the grave!

So watch out for that green door! It may lead to a realm where you don’t really belong and certainly would never want to be! Be sure you’ve got your name written in Heaven and your reservation confirmed for one of those mansions in God’s heavenly city instead (Luke 10:20; John 14:2; Revelation 21:27). That’s the place where you’ll be happy forever with Jesus. If you receive Him now, you can enjoy Him and Heaven forever. Then you won’t have to be afraid when it comes your time to die. You’ll know which direction you’re going—not down to a polished Hell, but up to a happy Heaven!



Jesus said, “He who hears My Word and believes on Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24 KJV). Receive Jesus’ forgiveness for your sins and get your free pass to Heaven—Jesus’ gift of eternal life—by simply praying the following:

Dear Jesus, I know I’ve done wrong and don’t deserve Heaven, but I accept Your sacrifice on the cross for my sins and receive Your love, forgiveness, and salvation now. Please come into my heart and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen. •

IN 1870, DURING ONE OF HIS EXPEDITIONS in the heart of Africa, the British explorer and missionary doctor, David Livingstone (1813–1873), was not heard from for some time and his welfare became a matter of international concern. He was eventually found by a search party led by the journalist Henry M. Stanley, who greeted the explorer with the now-famous remark, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” Later, Stanley wrote:

“I went to Africa as prejudiced as the biggest atheist in London. But there came for me a long time for reflection. I saw this solitary old man there and asked myself, ‘How on earth does he stop here—is he cracked, or what? What is it that inspires him?’”

“For months after we met I found myself wondering at the old man carrying out all that was said in the Bible: ‘Leave all things and follow Me.’ But little by little his sympathy for others became contagious; my sympathy was

aroused. Seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went about his business, I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it.”

What *was* it that inspired Livingstone? Thirteen years earlier, at a student gathering at Cambridge University, he had answered a question he was frequently asked: Why had he sacrificed a potentially lucrative medical practice and the comforts of home for the hardships and deprivation of being a medical missionary to the unexplored African interior?

“For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to



Only one life...

our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view, and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a forgoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause,

and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice.”

What are you doing with *your* life? Will it last forever for Jesus and others? “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” •

¹ Jim Elliot (1927–1957), martyred missionary to the Auca people of Ecuador.

TRUE VALUES



Nothing truly valuable arises from ambition or from a mere sense of duty; it stems rather from love and devotion towards men.

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

Mahatma Gandhi identified the seven sins in the world as wealth without work, pleasure before conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, and politics without principle.

We must understand spiritual truths and apply them to our modern life. We must draw strength from the almost forgotten virtues of simplicity, humility, contemplation, and prayer. It requires a dedication beyond science, beyond self, but the rewards are great and it is our only hope.

—CHARLES LINDBERGH

Measure wealth not by the things you have, but by the things you have that you wouldn't sell for money.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Life in time remains without meaning if it does not find its meaning in eternity.

—NICOLAI BERDYAEV

The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.

—WILLIAM JAMES

Happiness is not so much in having as sharing. We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

—NORMAN MACEWAN

If life be short, then moderate your worldly cares and projects; do not cumber yourselves with too much provision for a short voyage.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

The person who tries to live alone will not succeed as a human being. His heart withers if it does not answer another heart. His mind shrinks away if he hears only the echoes of his own thoughts and finds no other inspiration.

—PEARL S. BUCK

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt within the heart.

—HELEN KELLER

Life becomes harder for us when we live for others, but it also becomes richer and happier.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount.

—OMAR N. BRADLEY

Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Living, the real thing, doesn't consist of things at all, because things cannot truly satisfy. They may temporarily satisfy the body but they can never satisfy the soul or the spirit that cries out to God its Father for the joy and happiness and the eternal fulfillment that only God can give.

—D.B.B.

The 70 Weeks of Daniel—Part 1

BY JOSEPH CANDEL

The ninth chapter of the book of Daniel contains one of the most outstanding prophecies in the Bible, as it deals with both the first and second comings of Jesus Christ.

The chapter opens with Daniel praying fervently on behalf of his people, the Israelites, who at that time (about 538 BC) were relocated captives of the Persian Empire. The archangel Gabriel appears and informs Daniel that he has come to give Daniel “skill and understanding.” Then Gabriel tells Daniel to “understand the matter, and consider the vision.”

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up [fulfill] vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy [Jesus] (Daniel 9:24).

The Hebrew word translated “weeks” in the King James Bible and some other versions is *shabuwa*, which literally means “seven.” *Strong’s Greek/Hebrew Dictionary* gives this definition: “literal, sevened, i.e. a week (specifically, of years).” So these 70 weeks are actually 70 times 7 years. Some modern versions of the Bible state this “70 weeks” in simplest terms: 490 years. As we read the rest of the prophecy and understand its fulfillment, it becomes obvious that “7 years” is the correct interpretation of “week” in this passage.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build

Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince [Jesus], there shall be seven weeks [49 years] and sixty-two weeks [434 years]; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself” (Daniel 9:25–26a).

Eighty-five years after Daniel received this prophecy, in 453 BC, Artaxerxes I Longimanus, king of Persia, gave his trusted Jewish servant Nehemiah permission to go to Judah to restore the fortunes of his people. Artaxerxes appointed Nehemiah governor of the province and gave him authority to rebuild the city walls (Nehemiah 2:1–9). This was the “command to restore and build Jerusalem.” Several other proclamations were made by Persian kings to release the Jews from captivity and let them return to Israel to rebuild the temple, but the principal proclamation to rebuild the city of Jerusalem itself was made by Artaxerxes I in 453 BC.

According to the prophecy, from the time of that proclamation until the Messiah would be “cut off” would be 69 times 7 years, or 483 years. Counting from 453 BC, this brings us to 30 AD—the exact year that Jesus Christ was crucified!

It is also significant that the total number of years is given in two figures: 7 “weeks” (49 years) and 62 “weeks” (434 years) because it took 49 years to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and from the time that work was completed until Jesus was “cut off” was 434 years.

The prophet Isaiah, writing in



*Not one stone
shall be left
here upon
another*

about 700 BC, explains how it would be that the Messiah would be cut off [killed], but not for Himself: “For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. . . . When You make His soul an offering for sin. . . . My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:8,10–11). Jesus died for us, to atone for the sins of the whole world, not because He Himself was guilty of any sin or crime.

Returning to Daniel’s revelation, the angel continues:

And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined (Daniel 9:26b).

Forty years after Jesus was crucified, in 70 AD, the Roman legions

under general (and future emperor) Titus—a “flood of ungodly men” (Psalm 18:4)—burned Jerusalem and took the Temple apart stone by stone to get the gold leaf that had melted and run into the cracks, just as Jesus had prophesied of the Temple in 30 AD: “Not one stone shall be left here upon another” (Matthew 24:1–2).

There seems to be a discrepancy, however, between the figures given in Daniel 9:24 (490 years) and the verse that immediately follows (483 years). Where are the missing 7 years?

One pivotal clause in verse 24 was *not* fulfilled when Jesus was crucified: “to bring in everlasting righteousness.” One look at the world today and it is obvious that everlasting righteousness has not arrived. When Jesus died on the cross He made “an end to sin” for those who believe and receive Him as their Savior, but everlasting righteousness will not reign on earth until after Jesus returns, beginning with His initial 1,000-year reign known as the Millennium. The last of the 70 “weeks” of Daniel, the last 7 years (also known as the 70th week), is yet to be fulfilled, and will be soon. Don’t be left in darkness or caught unprepared—find out when and how! •

(TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
ACTIVATED.)



ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: *Jesus said that the way to be happy and successful in life is to “seek first the kingdom of God,” but how is that possible today? How can I lead a God-centered life, do more than survive in this materialistic world, and still be me?*

A: Yes, it is possible to do all three of those things—and it’s not as hard as you probably imagine.

The first step is to assess your values and goals in life. Put pen to paper. Be honest.

To “seek first the kingdom of God” means to bring your priorities in line with God’s, so the next step is to know what God’s priorities are. What would He like to see you do? Many people stop here because they expect God to ask something impossibly difficult or sacrificial of them. They would probably be pleasantly surprised if they knew how simple and clear the Bible is on that, and how attainable it is:

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14 NIV).

Yes, living for those things isn’t always easy and may involve some initial sacrifices, but they are sacrifices that are soon more than repaid. “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

It’s also important to clear up

another common misconception: While it’s true that the Bible doesn’t define success in terms of material comfort and gain, God isn’t against material success; it’s what people *do* with their success that matters to Him. The Bible doesn’t say that *money* is the root of all evil, as 1 Timothy 6:10 is so often misquoted; it is “the *love* of money” that’s to blame. God will be more than happy to bless you materially if you will use those blessings to “do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God,” and

“love your neighbor as yourself.” In fact, the Bible promises, “Delight yourself ... in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of

your heart” (Psalm 37:4), and “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11).

And what about the third part of your question: Can you still be “you”?—Yes, only you’ll be a happier, more focused, and more fulfilled you. God made you to be a unique expression of His love. He’s not going to spoil that, but rather improve on it!

God wants to give you not just the good life, but the *best* life there is! It’s within His power to give it to you, but you’ve got to want it too. When your values are in line with God’s values and you let His priorities become your priorities, it’s a win-win situation! •



MAD DASH

A commentary on
life in the 21st century?
First published in the
Saturday Evening Post
(USA), 1949.

THIS IS THE AGE
OF THE HALF-
READ PAGE
AND THE QUICK
HASH
AND THE MAD
DASH.
THE BRIGHT
NIGHT
WITH THE NERVES
TIGHT.
THE PLANE HOP
WITH THE BRIEF
STOP.
THE LAMP TAN
IN A SHORT SPAN.
THE BIG SHOT
IN A GOOD SPOT.
AND THE BRAIN
STRAIN,
THE HEART PAIN,
AND THE CAT-
NAPS
TILL THE SPRING
SNAPS—
AND THE FUN'S
DONE!

FEEDING READING

Simplicity

The Lord has given us a simple plan for living right.

Deuteronomy 10:12
Ecclesiastes 12:13
Micah 6:8
Galatians 5:14
James 1:27

It is folly to be "wise" when worldly wisdom contradicts God's truth.

Ecclesiastes 1:18
Ecclesiastes 12:12
Romans 1:22
1 Corinthians 3:19–20
Colossians 2:8
1 Timothy 6:20b–21a

Simplicity is a key to faith and the things of the spirit.

Psalms 119:130
Luke 10:21
Luke 18:16–17

It's wise to be simple.

Psalms 131:1
Matthew 6:22
Romans 16:19b
1 Corinthians 3:18
1 Corinthians 8:1b
2 Corinthians 1:12
2 Corinthians 11:3

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, sometimes I feel lost in the forest of my daily life, not knowing which way to go or what my priorities should be. Thank You that this causes me to seek You, and that when I do, You help me make the right choices and follow the right path—the path of loving service to You and others that leads to happiness and fulfillment and Your greatest blessings. •

Stay simple

I spoke great truths, profound words that changed lives and continue to do so. But I also spoke to the children. I was simple, I was clear, and I didn't lose My appreciation of little things. I stopped to enjoy the flowers. I cooked for My disciples.

It's when you can't find joy in the everyday things of life that you become complicated and lose the human touch; you exchange depth of character for a labyrinth of complex thinking, a heart that is sensitive to the things of the spirit for mere head knowledge.

Simplicity is a gift. Everyone starts out with it, but as some people grow up they discount this gift because they associate it with ignorance, naiveté, immaturity, and a lack of sophistication. They prefer to weave a web of complexity to cover it. But did I not say that unless you have childlike simplicity to believe in the "impossible" and the unseen—Me, the One who died for you and rose to life again so you could have the wonderful but simple gift of eternal life—you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven? The gift of simplicity remains for those who have the humility and wisdom to value it and claim it as their own.

There is much to discover throughout life and even more in Heaven, but you will always find that the most profound truths, the greatest beauty, and the most outstanding wisdom are expressed simply.