

A Legal Christmas

By Ronald L. Dart

I'm beginning to worry that Americans are losing their sense of humor. A law school in Indiana removed a Christmas tree from its atrium because of complaints. Some folks felt that the Christmas tree sitting there made them feel excluded.

I'm absolutely amazed at how thin-skinned atheists are. They are offended by the very word God. In the words of Shakespeare though, "The lady doth protest too much, methinks." It's beginning to appear that atheists are insecure in their beliefs. Otherwise why are they so offended, why are they so afraid of God, Christmas, the presence of Christmas, anything having to do with God, the Ten Commandments in the courthouse? Why are they afraid of this? They seem to fear not God but the idea of God.

This law school replaced the Christmas tree with two evergreen-looking trees, fake snow, and a sled. One of the trees had lights in it. Now there's an idea: we take down the Christmas tree and we put up an evergreen tree, hang lights, tinsel, colored balls, and put snow around the base of it and call it a "tree for decoration." We just don't call it a Christmas tree.

What's funny about this is the Supreme Court has ruled Christmas trees are legal. They ruled that the Christmas tree, unlike the Menorah, is not itself a religious symbol. Although Christmas trees once carried religious connotations, today they typify the secular celebration of Christmas. I submit this as exhibit one to demonstrate that we are losing our sense of the ridiculous. One, that the Supreme Court of the land should be wasting time on issues like whether or not we can have a Christmas tree on public property. Two, did no one notice that Christmas, the word, is a form of Christ and mass? Christ being the God of the Christian faith and mass is a purely religious ceremony. And yet the Christmas tree is not a religious symbol. It couldn't possibly be because the Supreme Court said it

was not. I agree it really isn't, but it's hard to call it a Christmas tree and utterly ignore the meaning of the word. And, what is the holiday all about anyhow? Isn't it about the birth of one named Jesus, who is called the Christ?

There is something odd going on here. It's the proverbial "elephant in the room" that no one wants to talk about and, yet, here it is. How is it that the Constitution does not permit the display of the Ten Commandments in

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'Tis The Season. . .

Thanksgiving is over, followed by Black Friday. People line up early Black Friday morning to take advantage of the super-low prices on coveted Christmas gifts. People shop 'til they drop to buy gifts the recipient often doesn't even want or use. I thought Christmas is to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ? Isn't it customary to give the one having the birthday the present instead of family and friends? Aren't we a bit confused? How would you, or let's say your kids feel, if people brought gifts for everyone else and didn't give them a birthday gift? Let's rethink this season. Even though it is not Jesus' birthday, shouldn't giving to him, the "giver of every good and perfect gift," be our priority?

By David Havir III

Unless you watch very little television, it is hard to miss a popular crusade that exists in American society today. With the increase in psychoanalysis, there has been an added focus on the importance of self-esteem. To that end, *bullying* has become the buzz word. Many companies are directly involved in anti-bullying campaigns as a philanthropic endeavor. While I don't always agree with all of the conclusions or techniques these campaigns champion, I feel it is a worthy cause, especially when it comes to our youth.

The good news is that we all have a place to go that is free from that sort of behavior. Churches are safe havens from people who would display these tendencies. I mean, after all, Christians don't behave this way. The churches that you and I attend don't have to deal with this issue, right? Or do they?

It is a sad reality that wherever people congregate, whether they be Christian or not, human nature will inevitably get the better of some. People gossip, create chaos, and manipulate—even under the guise of wanting what is best for the church.

But what should your response be? If we read Matthew 5, we are told that it isn't about eye for an eye; it's about letting the bully slap you twice. The church bullies have read this verse too. And they assume this is what the response of a good Christian should be. Perhaps this is why church bullying is so pervasive.

But is it really that simple? I don't claim to be a biblical scholar. I have read there is cultural significance to the “turn the other cheek” metaphor specific to that

time. In my opinion, that is a moot point for this particular discussion. The verse in question is referencing when individuals do something to you personally. We can argue the merits of whether or not you should defend yourself. I could ask ten people and probably get ten different opinions, but maybe there is some common ground on which most, if not all, of us can agree.

Let's go to Proverbs 31:8-9: “Open your mouth for the speechless, In the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, And plead the cause of the poor and needy.” Isaiah 1:17 states: “Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.”

If a church bully is left unchecked, the bully will tear down the church. I do not think it too much of a stretch to say that if a church is destroyed (assuming the church is operating the way a church should), the people who would be most hurt by this would be the widows and the orphans. This isn't about turning the other cheek because someone has done something to you. This is about standing up for those in need.

I implore you to: defend the fatherless, plead for the widow, and don't allow bullies to tear down any institution that is set up to pursue those lofty (and commanded) goals. In the next issue of this newsletter, I will discuss popular techniques utilized by the bully, how to identify them, and potential strategies to combat them. Together we can open our mouths and seek justice for those in need!

Borrowed Prayer

By Ronald L. Dart

Not all of us have the eloquence of a David, and that may be just as well. The eloquence we read in the Psalms arose from the fires of great pain, terrible loss, even of betrayal by his own son. And lacking that eloquence, it is not wrong for us to borrow his.

There was a time when I thought the speaking of a memorized prayer was unworthy. I don't think that way any longer. There are times of pain and despair when we are simply unable to pray, and there are times when we read a prayer that is so eloquent that we are moved by it. We could program our computers to pray for us, but we know that would be pointless. But, when we read a

prayer and make the words our own, I think God hears. I know our own soul can be lifted by it.

And much of the music we sing is nothing more than a prayer set to music. The music is a language, a prayer all its own, and the way we sing can convey a wide range of emotions—emotions that are good for us and pleasing to God. They are a kind of internal body language. And we all know our body language is seen by God when we pray.

From time to time, the Holy Spirit blows through this world, touches a life, and produces a great piece of music that can stir our hearts. Some terrible loss takes a

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The Ronald L. Dart Bible Reading Plan

Ronald L. Dart said, “There was a time when educated men knew the Bible. No one could claim to be well-read who did not have a familiarity with the Bible. The writings of statesmen and even great military minds were salted with references to the Bible. In some cases, men actually learned to read by reading the Bible. As a result, the Bible played a powerful role in the ethical structure of educated men, of statesmen, and generals. That day seems to have passed and it’s a great loss to our country. There was a time when Christian people knew the Bible. In many cases, they had become Christians through reading the Bible. In any case, as believers, Bible reading formed an important part of every day. I recall once at a family dinner, my father-in-law stood at the head of the table and announced that he had reached a goal that year in reading the entire Bible again in the course of the year. He had set a goal for himself, and that required a daily Bible reading

habit. He was a man of rather high character, I might add, as most serious Bible readers tend to be. It is rather natural really. They say we are what we eat, but we certainly are what we read. None of this should be surprising. It is intuitively true.”

Mr. Dart was a gifted student and teacher of the Word of God. In his broadcast, *How to Read the Bible*, he suggests starting to read in the Book of Matthew instead of Genesis. In other messages he spoke of his fondness of reading and praying the Psalms and his appreciation for the Wisdom of Solomon. We are using this information as a guideline for a 2017 reading plan. The plan starts with Matthew and brings us a bit of the Psalms and Proverbs each day. We hope you find this plan helpful and inspiring. We will post the monthly plans in the *Born to Win* newsletters and keep them posted on our website as well.

January 2017 Bible Reading Plan

January 1	Matthew 1-4	Psalm 1:1-6	Proverbs 1:1-6
January 2	Matthew 5-6	Psalm 2:1-12	Proverbs 1:7-9
January 3	Matthew 7-9	Psalm 3:1-8	Proverbs 1:10-19
January 4	Matthew 10-11	Psalm 4:1-8	Proverbs 1:20-23
January 5	Matthew 12-13	Psalm 5:1-12	Proverbs 1:24-28
January 6	Matthew 14-17	Psalm 6:1-10	Proverbs 1:29-33
January 7	Matthew 18-20	Psalm 7:1-17	Proverbs 2:1-5
January 8	Matthew 21-22	Psalm 8:1-9	Proverbs 2:6-15
January 9	Matthew 23-24	Psalm 9:1-12	Proverbs 2:16-22
January 10	Matthew 25-26	Psalm 9:13-20	Proverbs 3:1-6
January 11	Matthew 27-28	Psalm 10:1-15	Proverbs 3:7-8
January 12	Mark 1-3	Psalm 10:16-18	Proverbs 3:9-10
January 13	Mark 4-5	Psalm 11:1-7	Proverbs 3:11-12
January 14	Mark 6-7	Psalm 12:1-8	Proverbs 3:13-15
January 15	Mark 8-9	Psalm 13:1-6	Proverbs 3:16-18
January 16	Mark 10-11	Psalm 14:1-7	Proverbs 3:19-20
January 17	Mark 12-13	Psalm 15:1-5	Proverbs 3:21-26
January 18	Mark 14	Psalm 16:1-11	Proverbs 3:27-32
January 19	Mark 15-16	Psalm 17:1-15	Proverbs 3:33-35
January 20	Luke 1-2	Psalm 18:1-15	Proverbs 4:1-6
January 21	Luke 3-4	Psalm 18:16-36	Proverbs 4:7-10
January 22	Luke 5-6	Psalm 18:37-50	Proverbs 4:11-13
January 23	Luke 7-8	Psalm 19:1-4	Proverbs 4:14-19
January 24	Luke 9-10	Psalm 20:1-9	Proverbs 4:20-27
January 25	Luke 11-12	Psalm 21:1-13	Proverbs 5:1-6
January 26	Luke 13-14	Psalm 22:1-18	Proverbs 5:7-14
January 27	Luke 15-16	Psalm 22:19-31	Proverbs 5:15-21
January 28	Luke 17-18	Psalm 23:1-6	Proverbs 5:22-23
January 29	Luke 19-20	Psalm 24:1-10	Proverbs 6:1-5
January 30	Luke 21-22	Psalm 25:1-15	Proverbs 6:6-11
January 31	Luke 23-24	Psalm 25:16-22	Proverbs 6:12-15

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the atrium of a courthouse but will permit the display of a Christmas tree? We have a national Christmas tree on the grounds of the White House that I presume is paid for by taxpayer dollars—at least the land is that it's sitting on. I know someone said the reason why the Ten Commandments had to go out of the courthouse is because it includes prohibitions against lying and bearing false witness and stealing. These words, they said, create a hostile work environment for lawyers and judges and it had to go.

But what's the real reason we can have one and not have the other? Why are government offices closed on Christmas Day? Why isn't court in session and why are the kids allowed to skip school on Christmas Day? It's not like closing on a president's birthday, Christmas is a religious day—it's all religion from the get-go. I'm just one voice in all this, but it seems to me we have a giant example of hypocrisy in the courts. It also seems to me that I know the reason why.

Christmas will be with us for a long time to come for the simplest of reasons. Any person who tries to outlaw Christmas will be burned at the stake by the merchant class. The abolition of Christmas would probably destroy our economy.

What would be the rationale for giving billions of dollars of gifts that people don't really want if we take the wise men and their gifts out of the picture? Never mind that they gave their gifts to Christ and not each other. How many retail businesses in this country would survive if they lost all their Christmas business? Most of them are in the red until the Christmas holiday season, and only then do they go into the black and start making money. How many people would be out of business in the retail sector alone? And then there's the fallout—all these people would be out of work and not making any money—they wouldn't have money to go out and buy new cars. And, that means people would be out of work in the auto industry because nobody would be making enough money to buy their cars. And, with those people being out of work—well, the domino theory runs up the line to where the people who buy the yachts wouldn't be able buy yachts anymore because they would not be making any money.

Actually this domino theory is real and it would eviscerate our economy. So Christmas is safe. Not even

the all-powerful Supreme Court would dare take it on. It would generate the second American Revolution and the people would burn down the courthouse. And, it wouldn't be so much, I think, from the love of Christmas or of Christ—it would be to save the economy. There's just a whole lot more to this that's important than the smell of evergreens, the tinkle of bells, eggnog, wassail bowls, mistletoe, and Christmas parties. This is a matter of economic survival.

All this opens up another can of worms. Should anyone really try to put Christ back into Christmas when he was never there in the first place? No, I'm sorry, Jesus was not born on December 25th or anywhere near it. No one ever really thought he was. And most of the symbolism we connect with Christmas isn't Christian at all. It's pagan, and nearly everyone knows it. Can you make it though a Christmas season without seeing a newspaper article or something somewhere in the press or on television that reminds you of the pagan origins of all the symbolism surrounding Christmas? Everyone knows it. Is there nothing we can do about this impasse?

What are we going to do about Christmas? What the government could do—Congress could change the name of the holiday on December 25th to “the Saturnalia.” That's what it was originally. That way there would be no Judeo-Christian overtones to the holiday we couldn't have. We wouldn't have people trying to sue to hopefully put a stop to Christmas. There could be no objection based on the name any longer. It would not be a Christmas tree, but a Saturnalia tree. George Will said, “That God works in mysterious ways is not new, but it is particularly puzzling that the birth of Jesus occurred when Romans, who then set the tone of the times, were celebrating Saturnalia.” Think of a Walmart at 6 a.m.—women wearing less than those little Walmart vests singing songs that are not carols. The drunkenness and revelry about Saturnalia need not offend by taking place in connection with a “Christian” event. Does that sound reasonable? Let's just go ahead and make the thing a pagan celebration, as it was to start with.

But there's a problem, a fly in the ointment as it were, as there always is. If we're going to be a secular society then we can't observe the Saturnalia either, because it's part of an ancient religious observance in honor of Saturn. It's a given that the pagan feast called “the birthday of the invincible sun” was held on

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December 25th. December for the Romans was the month of Saturn.

Samuele Bacchiocchi, in his remarkable book, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, notes “that Augustine and Leo the Great strongly reprimanded Christians, who at Christmas worshiped the sun rather than the birth of Christ.” Another author, John Ferguson, concluded “it appears certain that the commemoration of the Nativity was placed on December 25th because on the winter solstice was celebrated the rebirth of the invincible God. By adopting this date the ecclesiastical authorities purified, somehow, some pagan customs which they could not suppress.” That’s really interesting. What he’s saying is simply this: they could not stamp out pagan observances in the church and so they purified them.

So, I guess we’re out of luck on this issue. We can’t celebrate the Saturnalia on December 25th either, because that’s a religious custom—albeit, a religious custom of pagan Rome. Although the courts don’t seem to have the same bias against pagan religions that they display against Christianity, and I’m not entirely sure why that is so. But, not to worry, politics will win in the end and the merchant class will save Christmas. And, the Supreme Court, anyway, is beginning to look overseas for guidance and they will find no real problem with Christmas over there either and that might be easier than looking at the Constitution.

Christmas may be commercial and pagan but the birth of our Savior is absolutely not, and it is the event that introduces us to the Savior of the world.

If, as a Christian, you want to step aside from the fight and the nonsense and all the revelry, let me make a suggestion to you. Let’s accept the fact that Jesus was not born anywhere near December 25th. It’s a given—just write it down somewhere and let’s say, “All right, we’ll accept that.” Why not look at the Bible to determine the holidays that one might observe and how the nativity of Jesus might somehow relate to, or fall within any of those days. The fact is there is evidence right on the pages of the Book that tell you the season of Jesus birth. It takes just a little bit of research to find

it, but it is there. The early church did not have a separate day for celebrating the nativity. If they had, you would have found it plastered through the pages of the New Testament. Think about it.

Think about how important Christmas is in the Christian calendar nowadays. Is it possible that you’d get Acts, all of Paul’s Epistles, all the general Epistles of the Bible, and all the Gospel accounts written, and no one would ever say anything about Christmas in the process? It seems evident to me that the nativity of Jesus, his birth, and all the events surrounding it were extremely important to early Christians, because this is the Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. It is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It’s an important day and yet the church did not have a separate day for celebrating it. This suggests to me that the nativity of Jesus fell within, or in connection with, one of the great holiday seasons of the Bible.

I know it sounds revolutionary to think about dropping out of the Christmas madhouse, but it isn’t necessary to forget the central event. Christmas may be commercial and pagan but the birth of our Savior is absolutely not, and it is the event that introduces us to the Savior of the world.

There was a young, Jewish woman—we could even call her a girl because she was really quite young—and her name was Mary. It’s in the Book of Luke that we encounter this woman. It says, “In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, ‘Hail, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.’ Mary was greatly troubled at the saying and wondered what kind of greeting this might be” (Luke 1:26-29).

I don’t know how this angel appeared to her. I don’t know what he looked like. We aren’t told any of these things, but this remarkable young woman who hears him casts around in her mind, saying *what in the world is he talking about?* “But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. And you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus” (Luke 1:30-31). The name Jesus means “Jehovah saves.” He is a Savior. “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and

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he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32-33).

What a stunning thing to say to this young woman. She was Jewish and the awareness of a Messiah—one who would be a son of David, who would come to the throne of David, who would rule over Israel, who would liberate them from their enemies, who would establish an everlasting Kingdom—was something very much in her belief system. And the idea that she, of all people, could be the mother of the Messiah, well it’s hard to imagine what an effect it would have on her and yet she seems calm enough to have said, “How will this be, Mary asked the angel, seeing I know not a man? The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:34-35).

It would not be Joseph’s son but the Son of God. How in the world this young woman got her mind around this is beyond my understanding. It must have been incredible for her, and yet at the same time, I think she must have been a remarkable young woman.

The angel continued and said, “Behold your cousin Elizabeth has also conceived and she has conceived a son in her old age and this is the sixth month with her who has previously been called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:36-37). This expression “the sixth month of Elizabeth” is the sixth month he was talking about when the angel came to Mary.

Having heard this, Mary said, “Behold, I am the Lord’s servant, Mary answered. May it be to me as you have said. Then the angel left her” (Luke 1:38). It’s hard to imagine this young lady. The poise, the strength, this was not some flighty kid, who having a vision from God, would have gone out screaming out in the streets and telling everybody about it; she was a different kind of woman entirely. “At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth” (Luke 1:39-40).

Elizabeth had already had her visitation from God and was carrying a boy child herself. His name would be John and we would come to know him as John the Baptist. “When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary

the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she spoke with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb and how can this be that the woman of my Lord shall come to me for Lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears the baby leaped in my womb for joy and blessed is she who has believed for there shall be a performance of those things which were told to her from the Lord” (Luke 1:41-45).

What a staggering thing to consider was happening! To realize that this six-month-old fetus that Elizabeth was carrying was a real, identified person to God. And this fetus, if you must call it that instead of where Elizabeth called it the “babe,” recognized the presence of the mother of his Lord, the Messiah, when her voice was heard. Kind of sobering, isn’t it, when you think about abortion and whether or not these are real people we are killing in the womb.

It would not be Joseph’s son but the Son of God. How in the world this young woman got her mind around this is beyond my understanding.

Now, let’s get back to the nativity. The story is told in the second chapter of Luke. “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child” (Luke 2:1-5).

It’s funny the things that catch your attention and make you think, and I think of poor Mary, having ridden on a donkey all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The poor woman getting off, being hugely pregnant, holding her back, as pregnant women are prone to do, and managing to waddle her way into wherever they were to stay—a very uncomfortable woman who is carrying the Savior of all mankind. “And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,

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and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:6-7).

Sounds terrible in a way doesn't it? But, I imagine it was a clean place with a relatively clean stable with clean straw where they laid the baby. You have this image of people going to Jerusalem to keep the festivals of God and you begin to ask, “Why was Bethlehem so crowded that they couldn't even get a room at this time? Why didn't they just come in, pay their taxes, and go home?”

It seems apparent to me having studied it, this was in the autumn season of the year and the Jews who came to keep the holydays couldn't fly in on El Al and fly out after a couple of days. They actually had to come long distances; it took a long time to get there and so, when they came, they came oftentimes for a season and stayed a while. And this autumn season starts with one called the Feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah, otherwise known as the Jewish New Year. Then, two weeks later comes the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles; in between there is the Day of

And when these holy day seasons came, Jerusalem was crowded with people. It's hard to imagine how many of them were there.

Atonement, one of the most solemn days of the entire year, known as Yom Kippur. So, chances are that they were there for this entire season of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

And when these holy day seasons came, Jerusalem was crowded with people. It's hard to imagine how many of them were there. And, you would think, well, this is Bethlehem, isn't it? Yes. If you get out your Bible map and look at it, Bethlehem is about a half-day walk, at a brisk pace, from Jerusalem and I have very

little doubt that people spilled over into Bethlehem, observing these festivals when they came. You can put the whole picture together: the time of Jesus' conception, the time of his birth, the time of the beginning of his ministry—all of these things lead one to the conviction that he was born sometime in the autumn, between the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles, perhaps on one of these very days. To learn more about the dating of Jesus' birth, request a copy of this message and *Too Late for Christmas* by calling 1-888-BIBLE-44, by emailing us at adm@borntowin.net, or by returning the enclosed card with your request marked.

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man to the very bottom, where the Holy Spirit touches him and produces a song like “It Is Well with My Soul.”

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed his own blood for my soul.
It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Once in a great while, the Spirit speaks through great genius as a man with singular talent is lifted to new heights, as Bach with the St. Matthew Passion. We should never despise such a gift. Bach wrote at the end of every manuscript of his music in his own hand, “To God alone the Glory.”

I am beginning to understand in a new way what Paul wrote about prayer and the Holy Spirit: “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not

know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will” (Romans 8:26-27 NIV).

When we lack the words, when all we can do is groan within ourselves, the Spirit can speak on our behalf, sometimes with groans, sometimes with words we borrow from others. We need that kind of help, hence Paul's warning: “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

So don't hesitate to borrow a prayer or a song when you are feeling low. And when you want to praise God but feel inadequate to the need, borrow a psalm of David, who really knew how it was done. And listen to great music. The man or woman who wrote it is not important. But if you listen carefully, you may hear the Holy Spirit as it moves the leaves on the tree.

For Such A Time As This

By Mardy Cobb

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place; but you and your father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knows but that you have come to the royal position for *such* a time as this? Then

Esther sent this reply to Mordecai, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast for me, and do not eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:14-16).

These verses are from the famous story of Esther, the Jewish Queen of Persia. Notice that Esther lived in a time where there were evil people in power. These people were planning to do terrible things, including the slaughter of all the Jews. And at this time what were God’s children doing? The Jews who were faithful were praying in sackcloth and ashes. What does that teach us? It teaches us that there is an obligation when we live in times where evil is being especially promoted. We need to pray and, yes, mourn before God over the evil being done. Why? Because God hates evil. We are taught to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13). And what kind of children would we be if we went along our merry way with no care or concern when evil is being promoted and executed all around us? As Christians this should motivate us to pray for God’s Kingdom with ever greater passion.

Moreover, notice the insight we are given by Mordecai. He suggests to his beloved cousin that “who knows but that you have come to the royal position for *such* a time as this?” When we find ourselves in troubled

times, we are tempted have a selfish viewpoint. Instead Mordecai suggests we look at the bigger picture. What if we were meant to be just where we are? What if there is an expectation from our Father for us to be here and now so we can shine a light on dark spot? If that is true then what should we do?

Esther helps us to see the correct response. The first question is: what does God want us to do? We must find that answer through prayer, study, and reflection. Next, we can only do what we can. Each of us has certain blessings in our lives that allow us a range of possible actions. So if we

follow the example of Esther, we do what we can with what we have from where we are. What about the consequences? Esther knew them. In her case the trouble was incredibly grave, and the consequences were just the same. Esther chose based on what was the right thing to do, and what she could do. She chose to disregard the consequences, “if I die, I die.”

Finally, Esther offers us one more lesson. Preparation. When we are going into difficult circumstances, we must do all to prepare. How do we do that? It might be many things. For Esther it meant fasting and prayer. But, importantly, she knew she was not alone. Neither are we. We can and should call on our brothers and sisters in the faith to pray on our behalf. The prayers of God’s children matter deeply and for many reasons. Let’s call upon them in preparation to do God’s work. Let’s look at our lives realizing our Father has placed us where we are for a reason. Let’s choose to take the righteous path regardless of the consequence, and let’s keep our love for the truth and our hatred for evil burning brightly in our hearts.

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Born to Win

The Media Ministry Arm of
Christian Educational Ministries

PO Box 560 • Whitehouse, Texas 75791
phone: 1-888-BIBLE-44 • **fax:** 903-839-9311
e-mail: adm@borntowin.net
website: www.borntowin.net

*That the man of God may be proficient and
equipped for every good work.*