

# DECEPTION

## **Lessons From Julian The Apostate**

Julian, the Emperor of Rome, was born in A.D. 331. He was the nephew of Constantine the Great, and cousin of Constantius. He was only six years old when his uncle, Constantine the Great, died.

Constantine, as you will recall, is known as the first Christian Emperor, and his nephew Julian received a nominal Christian upbringing under the direction of an Arian bishop named Eusebius of Nicomedia. He was baptized, he prayed, fasted, celebrated the memory of the martyrs, paid the usual reverence to the bishops, besought the blessing of hermits, and read the Scriptures. He was even educated for the clerical order and ordained a lector.

By his own testimony, at the age of 20 he no longer believed in Christianity. He continued, however, to go through the motions of serving Jesus while secretly sacrificing to Jupiter and

Helios. He kept on the mask for ten years but in 361 revealed his real loyalty to pagan gods, and the same year became the sole head of the Roman Empire.

Philip Schaff in his *History of the Christian Church* (Vol. III, p. 47) states, "He considered it the great mission of his life to restore the worship of the gods, and to reduce the religion of Jesus first to a contemptible sect, and at last, if possible, to utter extinction from the earth." Julian hoped to accomplish his goal by first of all the restoration and reformation of heathenism, and secondly the suppression and final extinction of Christianity.

As to the first part of his plan he reinstated, in its ancient splendor, the worship of gods at public expense. Pagan priests were called out of their concealment and given all of their former privileges and shown every honor. Soldiers and civil officers were encouraged to worship at pagan shrines and so many sacrifices of animals and birds took place that the continuance of some species became a subject of concern.

Julian himself set the example. Every morning and every evening he sacrificed to the rising and setting sun. Several times a day, surrounded by priests and dancing women, he sacrificed bulls, himself furnishing the wood and kindling the flames. He used the knife himself and searched with his own hand the secrets of the future in the reeking entrails of his sacrificial victims. He was so radical and devout in his devotion to these pagan gods that not even the most violent storms could keep him from his worship.

In retrospect, we see him aping many aspects of the Christianity which he claimed so vehemently to despise. He lived chiefly on vegetables, fasted often, wore common clothing, usually slept on the floor, let his beard and nails grow, and practiced a strict chastity. His zeal, however, found no echo and he was considered as ridiculous even among the cultivated heathen themselves.

Will Durant in *The Age of Faith* (p. 17) quotes Julian in a letter to his pagan priests:

Act towards me as you think I should act towards you; if you like, let us make this compact, that I am to point out to you what are my views concerning all your affairs, and you in return are to do the same for me concerning my sayings and doings. Nothing in my opinion could be more valuable for us than this reciprocity. . . . We ought to share our money with all men, but more generally with the good and the helpless and the poor. And I will assert, though it will seem paradoxical, that it would be a pious act to share our clothes and food even with the wicked. For it is to the humanity in a man that we give, and not to his moral character.

It seems that Julian was attempting to model his pagan priests after the example of Christian leaders. He forbade them to study immoral books, or to visit a tavern or theatre. He required strict chastity, temperance, and hospitality, and demanded that they pursue no dishonorable trade. In short, he borrowed almost every feature of then prevalent idea of Christian behavior. He also borrowed from the church concepts of discipline and excommunication, absolution and restoration, teaching and music.

Again Philip Schaff observed:

But of course all these attempts to regenerate heathenism by foreign elements were utterly futile. They were like galvanizing a decaying corpse, or grafting fresh scions on a dead trunk, sowing good seed on a rock or pouring new wine into old bottles, bursting the bottles and wasting the wine.

The failures of paganism under the reform of Julian provide the Christian world with an important and profitable lesson about religion without power. It serves to remind us that it is also possible for church members, even in this enlightened age, to "ape" the actions of the Christian without the power of the Holy Spirit and also without any lasting success.

But Julian was not content merely to advance paganism, he also sought to put down Christianity. Three centuries of bloody persecution against the church had proved that violent measures

were fruitless. Therefore he sought to destroy Christianity through subtility and intrigue. Whatever toleration he may have displayed to the Christians resulted from a hypocritical mask which concealed his fanatical love of heathenism and his bitter hatred for Christianity.

Though not burned at the stake, as in the days of Nero, Christians none the less became the victims of discrimination. They were removed from military and civil office, deprived of former privileges, oppressed with taxes, forbidden to teach in all state schools, and harassed by society in general. The judicial system gave mild punishment to pagans, severe punishment to the Christians. Sometimes Christians were deprived of their property with mocking reference to the teaching of Jesus about turning the other cheek and giving their cloaks to an enemy.

Julian's crowning effort to embarrass the Christians was his determination to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Since Jesus had predicted the destruction of the Temple, Julian reasoned that its restoration would discredit the Christ and cause many to become apostate. Nothing gave Julian greater joy than to cause a believer to deny Christ and he even held out the temptation of special rewards for all who did.

Thus, we have before us on the pages of history a confrontation between Christianity and paganism that reminds us of Elijah's duel with baal worship on Mt. Carmel.

On the one hand we have an apostate emperor with all of the personal and powerful resources of the Roman Empire behind him. On the other hand we have a group of believers who are devoid of political power and most of whom lived in abject poverty.

Julian began the project by exempting the Jews from burdensome taxation and encouraging them to return to Jerusalem. He provided them with money from the public treasury and entrusted his accomplished minister, Alypius, with the responsibility of supervising the construction. Upon his return from the Persian war he promised to honor them with his own presence at the

reconsecration and restoration of Mosaic sacrificial worship.

The Jews poured in from East and West into the holy city of their fathers. Since the days of Hadrian they had been forbidden to even visit Jerusalem. With fanatical zeal they began their work with the hope that a speedy reconstruction would usher in the reign of the Messiah. Women brought their costly ornaments and turned them into silver shovels and spades to aid in the work of construction. Earth and stones were sometimes carried to the building site in silken aprons.

Ammianus Marcellinus, a friend and companion in arms to Julian, tells us more particularly that Julian was desirous of perpetuating the memory of his reign by some great work, and selected the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem as his personal project.

It is a fact, however, that the temple was not rebuilt. A number of unusual events frustrated the workers and the Christians were convinced that God had intervened. All agree that fiery eruptions came from subterranean vaults and others testify to the presence of whirlwinds, lightning, earthquakes, and even miraculous signs.

Historians such as Warburton, Mosheim, Schrockb, Neander, Guericke, Kurtz, Newman, Robertson and others testify to the remarkable nature of events at Jerusalem which caused the construction of the Temple to be abandoned.

Julian intended to personally handle the project himself when he returned from Persia . . . but he never returned from Persia. During an insignificant nocturnal skirmish he was mortally wounded by an enemy arrow. He died on June 27, 363 in the 32nd year of his life.

Later, and somewhat doubtful accounts indicate that he died saying, "Galilean, thou hast conquered."

Whether this be true or not, we learn another lesson from Julian the Apostate. Though empires may rise and fall, and though the heavens and the earth may pass away, the Word of God remains forever true. The combined forces of earthly kingdoms and demonic legions are not sufficient to frustrate one

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syllable of prophetic truth, or one event of God's great calendar.

For you, it is important to remember that ultimately every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11).

These are lessons we learn from Julian the Apostate.

## A Lesson From Ahaz

Ahaz, the King of Judah, came from a godly dynasty. His father Jotham, his grandfather Uzziah, and his great-grandfather Amaziah were among the best of the Davidic line (II Chron. 26:4-5; 27:6). His son Hezekiah was the most noted for godly faith in the entire history of Judah (II Kgs. 18:5-6).

Ahaz, however, was an unfortunate exception. "He walked in the way of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites" (II Kgs. 16:3).

Early in his reign his closest neighbors to the north, Israel under Pekah, and Syria under Rezin, determined to destroy the Davidic line and install a foreigner named Tabeel upon the throne of Judah (Isa. 7:6). Syria carried away a great number of captives to Damascus and Israel killed 120,000 warriors of Judah in one day (II Chron. 28:5-6). All of this, the Bible states, was because Judah had forsaken God (II Chron. 28:5,6,19 ff).

Rezin and Pekah, however, could not prevail against Jerusalem (Isa. 7:1). It was at this point that Isaiah was sent by the Lord to Ahaz. The besieged King was encouraged to ask God for a sign . . . he would not. God gave him a sign anyhow ". . . behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel . . . (Isa. 7:14)."

Ahaz was at the end of his rope. He was utterly desperate. Instead of turning to the Lord, however, he did exactly the reverse. He took the silver and gold from the temple of the Lord and gave it as a gift to the King of Assyria (II Kgs. 16:8). He further prostituted his faith by going to Damascus and sending back detailed instructions on how to build a pagan altar (v. 10). He was in such a rush to profane the House of God that the pagan altar was completed by the time he returned from his journey and replaced the true altar in the Temple of God (vv. 14,15).

Moreover, he removed the laver where the priests of God

purified themselves and the covered entrance which was intended for the Kings of Judah he prepared to accomodate the King of Assyria (vv. 17,18).

At his lowest moment he sought for help . . . but not from God. He bankrupted his nation financially, politically, and spiritually to please the King of Assyria . . . but he did nothing to please the God of Heaven.

In the short term his strategy worked. Assyria came to his defense and gave him temporary protection from Israel and Syria. In the long term he found that Assyria was a good servant but a poor master. In the end “. . . the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz King of Israel; for he made Judah naked and transgressed sore against the Lord. And Tigathpilneser King of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him . . .” (II Chron. 28:19-20).

There will undoubtedly be times in virtually every life when we come like Ahaz to the end of our rope. The enemy has made great progress and we feel on the verge of utter collapse and defeat.

At such a time as this we must never resort to a quick fix or a short term solution that offends the God of Heaven. Never should we bow and scrape and sacrifice to anyone or anything but the Lord.

There are moments when we face some fiery furnace that it may seem expedient to bow down to a golden image. There are times when we are tempted to avoid some den of lions by neglecting our commitment to God. We agonize in Gethsemane and dread the dark Friday afternoons when Godly people are condemned and the imps of hell dance with delight.

When times like this beset you . . . don't make the mistake of Ahaz . . . follow in the footsteps of Christ. Sunday's coming!



## **A Christian Gangster?** **(Micky Cohen)**

Myer Harris Cohen, known by friends and enemies as "Mickey" was at one time the number one gangster in Los Angeles. Born in poverty in New York he became a New Jersey punk and strong-arm man. Later he moved to Los Angeles and became a self-styled gangster in the tradition of Al Capone whom he admired.

Cohen was tough to the core. Contracts had been repeatedly put out on his life; his home had been bombed, and his car machine-gunned.

By 1949 Cohen was the top man in the L.A. underworld handling a million dollars a day from illegal gambling and crime. He had a luxurious home, a glamorous wife, and an iron grip on Los Angeles. Prominent police officers and other powerful individuals were on his payroll.

One night in 1949 Cohen received a phone call from one of his employees named Jim Vaus. Jim was an electronics wizard who was one of the original wire-tappers. He had even worked for the police before establishing contact with the underworld. Since Vaus seemed urgent he was invited to Cohen's home. Here he explained that he had attended a Billy Graham Crusade in L.A. and had become a Christian. Consequently he was canceling all commitments to the crime syndicate.

Mickey was willing to allow Vaus to back out from his employment but other underworld figures were not so understanding. When Jim told some of his contacts in St. Louis about this decision they assured him that they would be coming for him. When the musclemen arrived Vaus assumed he would be crippled or killed, but 45 minutes later, after hearing his testimony, they left and never bothered him again.

Jim Vaus was so repentant for his crimes that he even sold his house and car to pay back some of the money he had stolen.

Cohen, who was a Jew, thought all gentiles were "Christians" and had little or no concept of conversion. Intrigued, however, by what happened to Jim Vaus, he went to a special meeting of select individuals like Stuart and Suzy Hamblen, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, etc. to hear Graham preach. That night Mickey Cohen raised his hand to receive a free copy of the Gospel of John.

When the I.R.S. finally caught up with Cohen he was sentenced to five years in jail. He was released in October of 1955 and returned to L.A. a broken man.

Before going to prison Vaus had introduced Cohen to a leading layman in the Los Angeles area named W.C. Jones. Jones was delivered by Christ from a life of addiction to alcohol and gambling and was well qualified to witness to Mickey Cohen. Ultimately Cohen even repeated the penitent's prayer and flew to New York to see Billy Graham who was then in a crusade in Madison Square Garden.

Later Cohen would say, "Jones, you never told me that I had to give up my career. You never told me that I had to give up my friends. There are Christian movie stars, Christian athletes, Christian businessmen. So what's the matter with being a Christian gangster? . . . If I have to give up all that, if that's Christianity, count me out."

Cohen lived out his final years quietly and died of cancer on July 29, 1976. He was alone when he left this world. His wife had divorced him . . . there were no body guards or dancing girls there . . . not even newspaper reporters clamoring to cover the story.

Charles Colson in reflecting upon Cohen's life used him as an example to underscore the need for repentance. When Cohen inquired about the possibility of becoming a "Christian Gangster" he was echoing the sentiments of millions who lack the audacity to state their case so bluntly. C.S. Lewis referred to such as "hyphenated Christians."

In reality Jesus must be the Lord of all or He will not be Lord

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at all. We cannot scrape him off the crumbs of our life like we would do a mongrel dog on the back porch. He is the Creator of all things who will someday summon us to His coronation day where every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

May we never make the mistake of trying to be a "Christian Gangster."

Condensed from *Loving God* by Charles Colson

# You Bet Your Life . . . Mr. Huxley

## (Julian Huxley)

Julian Sorrell Huxley was born June 22, 1887. He is well known for his overt atheism and his leftist political views. He is both admired and highly esteemed in the world of evolutionary thought. His grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley, was known as "Darwin's bulldog" and is credited with the popularization of Darwin's evolutionary theories. The Huxley name is time honored and trustworthy to thousands of "intellectuals" the world over.

The book *Evolution in Action* (Harper Bros.) is a collection of lectures which Julian delivered at Indiana University and later over the B.B.C. The following quotation is found on pages 41, 42 of this book, ponder it closely.

A proportion of favorable mutations of one in a thousand does not sound much, but is probably generous, since so many mutations are lethal, preventing the organism living at all, and the great majority of the rest throw the machinery slightly out of gear. And a total of a million mutational steps sound a great deal but is probably an understatement . . . after all, that only means one step every two thousand years during biological times as a whole. However, let us take these figures as being reasonable estimates. With this proportion, but without any selection, we should clearly have to breed a million strains (a thousand squared) to get one containing two favorable mutations; and so on, up to a thousand to the millionth power to get one containing a million.

Of course, this could not really happen, but it is a useful way of visualizing . . . the fantastic odds against getting a number of favorable mutations in one strain through pure chance alone. A thousand to the millionth power, when written out, becomes the figure one with three million noughts after it; and that would take three large volumes of about five hundred pages each, just to print! Actually this is a meaningless large figure, but it shows what a degree of improbability natural selection has to surmount, and can circumvent. One with three million noughts after it is the measure of the unlikeliness . . . the odds against it happening at

all. No one would bet on anything so improbable happening; and yet it has happened. It has happened, thanks to the working of natural selection and the properties of living substance which make natural selection inevitable.

The faith of an evolutionist literally staggers the imagination. In one breath he acknowledges that it "could not happen" and a moment later affirms that "it has happened." The chances that it has happened are described as one chance in "a thousand to the millionth power." Mr. Huxley concedes that it would take three 500 page volumes just to print this number . . . and says "NO ONE WOULD BET ON ANYTHING SO IMPROBABLE HAPPENING . . ." Mr. Huxley . . . you are wrong! You bet your life you are wrong! You have taken a position which according to your own figures could only be true once in billions and billions and billions of chances (one with three million noughts to be exact) and yet you gamble your everything upon these fantastic and incredible odds.

This puts me in mind of a story about the late Robert Ingersoll. Someone was reported to have asked him, "Mr. Ingersoll, are you sure there is no God?" "Of course I'm sure," replied the atheist, "why do you ask?" "I'm counting on you Mr. Ingersoll, I'm counting on you."

And so, Mr. Huxley, not only do you bet your life, but you are encouraging thousands of others to bet their lives too. Russian Roulette is kid's stuff in comparison to your game. The idiot who spins the chamber and tries to blow his brains out has five chances out of six. Sure he's a screwball but he is so much smarter than the man who would bet his life on evolution that there is little comparison.

Mr. Huxley, only a fool would say in his heart that there is no God. Only a fool would fall prostrate in worship before such a mathematical absurdity when the Father waits with open arms to help and forgive. You are wrong Mr. Huxley . . . and I fear that soon you will be dead wrong. You bet your life, Mr. Huxley.

## Machiavelli

Most Americans are so saturated with the Judaic-Christian code of ethics that we find it difficult to understand the political thinking in much of our world. The term "machievellian" is used to describe an ethical standard much different from our own. Webster defines the term as "characterized by cunning duplicity, or bad faith."

Most of us have adjusted to the idea that politics (and politicians) are generally crooked. We are therefore not too surprised when we discover that someone has welched on his campaign promises or been caught with his hand in the public till. We figure that such individuals are basically good and were simply overcome by temptation. Idealistically we expect to see them manifest some sort of shame or repentance—like a hound dog caught in the hen house tucks his tail between his legs, or a preschooler looks down at the floor when forced to relinquish a forbidden cookie.

I MUST RESPECTFULLY SUGGEST THAT WORLD POLITICS CANNOT BE EXPLAINED BY SO SIMPLISTIC A STANDARD. Some political systems are basically bad. They exonerate evil and promote duplicity. The gears of their government are designed for depravity and are oiled by human blood.

While political evil is as old as recorded history, the principles of such conduct have been best summarized by Nicolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). In 1512 he lost his post as communal secretary in Florence and retreated to Albergaccio where he assumed a rustic mode of living. During the daytime he hunted and chatted with peasants . . . and at night he read history and wrote down his infamous guidelines to power.

It is significant to note that the *American Peoples Encyclopedia* states, "Machiavelli neither loved nor respected his fellows." The state, therefore, was considered a vehicle of power for the despot with virtually no regard for the moral or material

betterment of the populace. Continuing to quote from the above mentioned Encyclopedia,

*The ruler must gain the support of the strong by cajolery, or if this is ineffective, by force or deceit. Since people are taken in by appearance the ruler must appear devout and loyal. Yet in the last analysis, it is better to be feared than loved. Treaties are useful things both to observe and, when opportune, to break.*

The machiavellian despot is therefore not ashamed of stealing someone's personal property or of failing to keep the agreements made in a treaty or truce. Such evils in his warped mind are considered as virtues. Isaiah denounced this very philosophy when he said: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter . . ." (Isa. 5:20).

All of which serves to emphasize the fact that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. The struggle we face is a conflict of ideas . . . a battle of philosophies . . . a discrepancy of ideals. And it has always been so. As long as satanic influence is felt in the world the followers of God will be faced with the task of dispelling darkness and replacing error with truth.

II Cor. 10:3-5 puts it like this:

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; . . .*

Surely this includes Machiavelli.

# The Voice Of The Devil

G. Campbell Morgan in his excellent book, *The Voice of the Devil* (Baker Book House) observes that there are only three times when the voice of the devil is recorded in Scripture. His deeds are recorded all through the Bible, but his voice, that which gives expression to the deepest truth concerning his personality, is heard only three times.

To summarize, he is first of all heard in the Garden of Eden; secondly, in the presence of God regarding Job; and finally in the wilderness temptations of Jesus. Each time he is heard he is a slanderer. When he was in the presence of man he was slandering God, and when he was in the presence of God he was slandering man. His final slanders came in the presence of Jesus who was both God and man.

## Eden

The devil in Eden did three things. First of all he questioned the goodness of God. Secondly, he denied the severity of God. Finally, he slandered the motive of God. This was not only the nature of the original sin, it is the nature of all sin.

Every time we transgress the law of God we are giving open expression to these fundamental lies. God is good and man's greatest happiness can be realized in harmony with God. The consequences of sin are severe and all human experience proves that the way of the transgressor is hard. God is not motivated by selfishness but by His overwhelming desire to benefit mankind. Truly the devil is a liar and the father of all lies.

## Job

When Satan appeared in the presence of God he was slandering Job. Earlier he had attacked the goodness of God but



in the presence of God he not only admits His goodness but uses it as an attack against Job. "Yea, doth Job serve God for nothing." The implication is, that the only reason that Job is religious is for what he can get out of it.

Satan was able to fool man about the nature of God, but he was not able to fool God about the nature of man. The Lord knoweth them that are His. He discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts. He knew that Job had higher motives for His religious convictions than selfish egotism.

Job confirmed God's confidence in him when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him."

### Jesus

When the arch deceiver was in the presence of the God-man he offered grandiose rewards in return for selfishness. Each temptation boiled down to a denial that God was sufficient and inferred that Jesus had better look out for Himself.

Just as the original sin involved exchanging a relationship for an object, the temptations of Christ offered "things" as an incentive to deny God.

### Submit . . . Resist

The divine prescription to conquer the devil is found in James 4:7, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." You cannot do the one without the other. You cannot resist the devil without submitting unto God and you cannot submit unto God without resisting the devil.

## Speaking Of The Devil

Have you ever noticed how uncomfortable it makes many people when you start talking about Jesus Christ? If Bob Hope or Johnny Carson should suddenly work Jesus into their monologues it would put some real starch into the audience. The same thing can happen almost anywhere. Even those who profess to be Christian may begin to perspire at the mention of His name in the wrong kind of company.

Remarkably, however, we can speak about the Devil with the greatest of ease. Anyone in almost any place can strike up a conversation about the occult or the satanic and feel very comfortable about the whole situation. Hardly anybody gets sweaty palms or a tight throat talking about the Devil. Most of us can approach such a subject in a very relaxed and dispassionate matter.

Perhaps one reason for this strange phenomenon is that Jesus demands everything, and the Devil seems to demand nothing. Jesus insists upon being the Lord of all, or He will not be our Lord at all. No one becomes a follower of Jesus by accident. The Devil, by contrast, dangles before us a deceptive kind of self-indulgence. He leads us to believe that we can do what we want to do . . . when we want to do it. His lethal trap is camouflaged so carefully and baited so skillfully that we can drift and dream our way to eternal destruction. It is easy to go to hell by accident . . . all you have to do is "nothing."

There is, however, a real paradox in these relationships. The Lord Jesus demands slavery and gives freedom, the Devil offers freedom and gives slavery. The Lord demands death and gives life, the Devil offers life and gives death. The Lord offers you a cross and gives you a throne, the Devil offers you a throne and gives you a cross. The Lord requires all but gives everything, the Devil requires nothing but takes everything. The Lord asks you to be last that He might make you first. The Devil asks you to be first that he might make you last. Jesus is the Light of the World and

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the Devil is the Prince of Darkness. Jesus is truth and the Devil is the father of lies. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" and the Devil is called in Scripture the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4). This world will pass away and all its elements will melt with fervent heat. The Kingdom of Christ is eternal, imperishable, and fadeth not away. The way up is down, the way to be exalted is to be humbled, and the recognition that you are lost is a key to being saved.

For some strange reason it is easy to speak about the Devil. Books on witchcraft and the occult are in great demand and conversations about them abound on every hand.

For some strange reason it is difficult to talk about Jesus. To confess Jesus Christ is so profoundly difficult that the Scriptures teach that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3).

There are, however, some wonderful blessings for those courageous souls who confess Him upon the earth. Chief among them is the beautiful promise that whoever confesses Jesus upon the earth, He will confess before the Father which is in heaven.

When He comes again . . . may He find us speaking about Jesus!

## His Place (Saul)

“Saul came to Carmel, and behold he set him up a place . . . ” (I Sam. 15:12).

Saul had seemed so humble before he became King. When Samuel acknowledged that honor which was to befall him he replied, “. . . Am not I a Benjaminite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Israel? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?” (I Sam. 9:21).

A man of such humility can become a vehicle of great power in the hands of God. Thus, when the Ammonites threatened to gouge out the right eyes of the men of Jabesh and make slaves of them, the Scriptures record “. . . and the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings . . . ” (I Sam. 11:6). The children of Israel rallied behind him and when the battle was over the Ammonites were so utterly defeated and scattered that no two of them were left together.

The secret of Saul’s success was God. This was the same Lord that had advanced Moses and Aaron, and brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt (I Sam. 12:9). But if they would obey the voice of the Lord and rebel not against His commandment, they would enjoy God’s blessings and companionship (I Sam. 12:14-15).

It is remarkable that in only a little more than two short years Saul had forgotten the humility that had made him great. Typical of this change of heart is the “place” which Saul erected at Mr. Carmel.

The Hebrew word for “place” is *yad*. Its primary meaning is “hand” but it came to mean authority, dominion, strength and possession. To be in someone’s “hand” meant to be under his authority of dominion.

The monument which Saul erected was not to honor God, but himself. It was “his place” with a small “h.” The NIV translates the passage like this: “Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set

up a monument in his own honor. . . ." The N.A.S. has it "Saul came to Carmel, and behold he set up a monument for himself. . . ."

Earlier in the narrative God had given Israel victory over the Philistines at the very place where they had experienced a humiliating defeat some twenty years before. In honor of that victory Samuel set up a stone between Mispheh and Shem and called the name of the place "Ebenezer" saying "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (I Sam. 7:12).

But when Saul returned from the slaughter of the Amalakites there was no humble prayer to acknowledge that to God was the "kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever." Instead, there was a blasphemous monument to himself. Instead of slaughtering all of the Amalakites as God had commanded, Saul had preserved a few trophies that he might savor the glory of his amazing victory and display them before a nation of admirers.

When Saul was little in his own sight, God had made him King over Israel (I Sam. 15:17) but when he became great in his own eyes God rejected him (I Sam. 15:26).

What a dramatic lesson this ought to be for each of us. Someone has said that one of the fastest growing religious movements in the world is man's worship of himself. Such a philosophy is fatal to our spiritual well being. We need to focus our attention on God who is the ultimate source of all that is perfect and good, and to constantly remind ourselves that without Him we are nothing. Paul put it like this, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God . . ." (II Cor. 3:5).

The man who looks back to admire the furrow which he plows is not fit for the Kingdom of God, and monuments which we erect to our own glory write Ichabod across our lives, our ministries, and our destiny.

# Ahab – The Governor Of Israel?

“Dost THOU not govern the kingdom of Israel . . . ” (I Kgs. 21:7).

Ahab, the king of Israel, wanted a vineyard. It was right next door to his palace in Jezreel. Ahab was willing to give the owner a better vineyard in exchange, or perhaps to pay cash for the vineyard.

Naboth, the owner of the vineyard, refused. He said: “The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee” (I Kgs. 21:3).

Naboth undoubtedly had reference to those provisions in the law which forbade the transference of family property from one tribe to another.

So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers . . . (Num. 36:7).

Thus it didn't matter what Naboth wanted to do, from his perspective the Lord had forbidden it. Ahab's lucrative offer notwithstanding, Naboth was content to let the Lord govern the affairs of his life.

The rejected Ahab went back to his house and began to pout like a little child. He laid down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would not eat.

At this juncture his wife Jezebel poisoned his deluded mind with a fatal idea: “Dost THOU now govern the kingdom of Israel?” The implications of this concept are absolutely devastating. In other words, Ahab was being encouraged to exalt himself above God. God had commanded Naboth not to sell his vineyard . . . that ought to have settled the matter forever! Ahab, however, ruled over a few square miles of territory in the Eastern

part of the Mediterranean Basin. His tiny kingdom had even recently been blessed with a victory over the Kingdom of Syria. Since Ahab could order around a few thousand servants and even intimidate a vassal king, he actually dared to harbor the ridiculous notion that even God could not stop him from his intended course of action.

Jezebel seemed eager to handle the grisly details of this treasonous plot. She had Naboth murdered and then assumed that no one would ever be capable of preventing them from taking what they wanted. She was wrong!

The God of Heaven is still upon His Magnificent Throne! Lucifer and legions of angels have not been capable of usurping His unique position as the absolute Sovereign of the Universe. Certainly such a coup d'etat could never be pulled off by a petty dictator like Ahab.

God stayed on His Throne . . . Ahab and Jezebel were killed!

The kind of death they died was nothing new or revolutionary. It has been very much in vogue since Eden and is as up-to-date as the morning news. As ridiculous as it is, it seems that every generation has been plagued with the blasphemous notion that man can defy God and get by with it. Truly, it is the fool who says in his heart that there is no God.

But now let us remove our gaze from Ahab and focus it upon ourselves. Every day for each of us is a day of decision. Ultimately the perplexities of life boil down to something quite basic and simple. Either we allow God to rule our lives, or we try to rule them ourselves.

This was the very question of Gethsemane. Whose will was going to be done? Fortunately, for us, Christ said: "Not my will, but thine be done."

May God grant to us the courage and wisdom to say the same!

# Delilah's Knees

(Samson)

“ . . . And she made him sleep upon her knees . . . ” (Jdgs. 16:19).

There is no doubt that Samson was a sexual being. The Scriptures made reference to his lust for the women of Timnah and chronicle the sad story of the night he spent with a harlot in Gaza. It would be natural, in light of his nature, to assign some sexual connotation to sleeping on the knees of Delilah. This was not the case.

The word translated “knees” in our text is the Hebrew word *berek*. It is used some twenty-five times in the Old Testament Scriptures and not once was it ever used with sexual connotations.

It is used with relation to submission as in Isaiah 45:23 “ . . . every knee shall bow . . . ” and was therefore associated at times with prayer as in I Kings 8:54.

It is used to describe fear and weakness as in Daniel 5:6 where we are informed that Belshazzar's knees smote one against the other.

It is also used, however, to describe the way that a mother cares for her child. II Kings chapter four: relates the beautiful story of the barren woman of Shunem. Through the blessing of Elisha she conceived a son. When that son was grown he became the victim of some fatal accident or illness. The Scriptures chronicle the event with these words:

And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, “my head, my head.” and he said to a lad, carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died (II Kgs. 4:18-20).

This is precisely the situation described for us by the inspired



## DELILAH'S KNEES

author of the book of Judges. Delilah was not just some sexual plaything to satiate the physical desires of her brute lover. She was also like a mother to him. When he was tired, or sick, or emotionally distraught, he came to her and she would cradle his head upon her knees. Samson gave to her the same blind and loving trust that the Shunemite boy had given to his mother in those last moments of his earthly life. When the pains of life become too great to bear we need a place of refuge where we can lie down and sleep with the utter confidence that we are under the watchful eye of someone who will endeavor to care for and protect us.

Herein we perceive a new dimension in the hellishness of sin and the deceptiveness of Delilah. Satan is described in the Scriptures as the "accuser of the brethren." He dangles before us the physical pleasures of sin, but far worse than that he lures us by his cleverness and subtlety to abandon our own vigilance and judgment and to place our utter trust and confidence in him. Once our head is resting upon his soft and comfortable lap he lulls us into a fatal slumber with soothing assurances that everything is all right.

Can you imagine the utter devastation which Samson must have felt when he at last came to realize that Delilah had betrayed him. I can see her now in my mind's eye pointing her hideous finger in his direction and cackling at his stupidity.

This is what the Devil will do at Judgment for those who have been stupid enough to trust him. He is the accuser of the brethren. He talks us into trouble and then accuses us of the very trouble he talked us into.

The lesson we can learn from Delilah's knees is profound enough to have eternal consequences. It is easy for us to guffaw and snicker at the stupidity of Samson while the Devil tricks us into the same identical mistake by merely using a little different bait. There are millions who could never be tricked by Delilah who will still place their trust in science, or medicine, or government, or riches.

PERSONAL VIGNETTES

Let others make the mistake of sleeping on the wrong lap, but as for me and my house we will trust in the Lord who made the heaven and the earth.

## **A Lesson From Death Valley Scotty**

**(Walter E. Scott)**

Though records are not completely accurate, Walter E. Scott, better known as Death Valley Scotty, is thought to have been born on September 20, 1872 in Cynthiana, Kentucky. Scotty had been around high spirited horses since his birth, and in 1890 his equestrian skills earned him a position with the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show which was at that time the best known troupe of its kind in the world.

The success of "Buffalo Bill" undoubtedly lay in the hands of his press agent, "Major" John Burke. Burke had the amazing ability to advertise someone in such a grandiose manner that his own mother would not recognize him. He took a shy farm girl named Annie Oakley and turned her into the sensational heroine of countless gun battles. He let his own hair grow shoulder length and took the name "Arizona John," claiming to be a desperado who had killed fifteen men. He took a nobody named William Cody and turned him into the millionaire "Prince of the Plains."

For twelve years Scotty stayed with the troupe and absorbed the techniques of the "big-time operators." Then he launched out on his own.

In April, 1902, Scotty walked boldly into a banker's office at 358 Fifth Avenue with two gold nuggets which he claimed were from his gold mine in Death Valley. He located the mine "130 miles S.W. of Fenner" which we now know missed the southern tip of Death Valley by some 100 miles. The \$1500 grub stake which he earned was undoubtedly due to a combination of the banker's greed and Scotty's showmanship. During the next four years Scotty sent 33 letters and 50 telegrams to his backer, most of them containing requests for more money. The banker, Julian Gerard, invested more than \$10,000 in the Death Valley Mine,

but never had anything to show for it but two gold nuggets and a pile of correspondence.

In the meanwhile Scotty was keeping the Press "informed" of what was going on. On February 28, 1904, he reported that he had been robbed of \$12,000 in gold dust, but shrugged it off because he had plenty more. Scotty could spend a few hundred dollars and make it seem like thousands. He always stayed in swank hotels, tipped lavishly and paid for everything with large denomination bills.

In 1905 Scotty is thought to have acquired a new backer and promptly deposited \$4,000 with the Santa Fe Railroad, hiring a special train to take him and a stray dog to Chicago. Scotty claimed to have bought the mongrel a \$1,000 collar and now wanted to take him for a train ride. Scotty and the dog were the only passengers, and the train made it to Chicago in record time. Newspaper reporters were waiting at every stop, and screaming crowds lined the tracks. Scotty became a national sensation.

In retrospect we now know that Scotty was a fraud. The man who seemed to have gold nuggets by the bushel and money running out of every pocket was in reality a morally bankrupt con man. Yet, somehow, he managed to keep his name in the headlines for decades and deceive not only the public but also a wide assortment of investors. His castle in Death Valley is even yet a tourist attraction that draws some 150,000 curious visitors every year.

That is the saga of Death Valley Scotty, but what is the lesson? The lesson is this: never measure a man by means of public opinion. The public lauded Scotty and crucified Jesus. People with press agents may not be all that people think they are.

This is the lesson we learn from Death Valley Scotty!

Information taken from *Death Valley Scotty*

by Hank Johnston

Flying Spur Press, Box 278

Yosemite, CA 95389