

## **Gratitude Is the Memory of the Heart**

**By Kent Heaton**

To be thankful for something is to remember in the heart a kindness or blessing shared by others whether deserved or not. There is so much to be thankful for in our lives. The land we live in was founded by those who sought a better life and established principles of morality to guide a young nation to be a great people. We live today as recipients of thousands who died to keep liberty free. Untold myriads have labored with their hands to forge out a land filled with prosperity and bounty. An unknown author said "Gratitude is the memory of the heart."

Thanksgiving has three eyes that look back at the sacrifice of others who make possible today with promise of tomorrow. As a nation of states united under one flag we enjoy the victory of battles fought to keep a union of freedom as the United States of America. The challenge of any nation is to find the courage to keep alive the passion of freedom which is quickly eroding into an atmosphere of distrust and fear. A heart of gratitude is to remember what others have died for so that we can treasure the present in the freedoms of liberty.

Few nations have enjoyed the level of prosperity as this country. Fields abound with crops and technology has allowed the wealth of our land to be used to fill stores with every imaginable creation known to man. Communities thrive with homes, automobiles, computers, communication devices and gadgets that marvel the science of modern man. The comforts of home have evolved into a world unknown by most countries and civilizations past. A heart of gratitude is to be thankful for the bounty of thanksgiving.

But is the spirit of our holiday Thanksgiving only about the freedoms we enjoy or the material opulence overwhelming our lives? In truth the liberty of our land is being challenged on every side and one day will largely be taken away. History is a cruel teacher to remind us what men do with power. The bounty of our land has made citizens to be selfish, self-centered and uncaring for others. Thanksgiving often becomes the token of kindness given one time a year but lacking any commitment to helping others the other 364 days of the year. What is the real meaning of thanksgiving?

To find the worth of something we must examine the content and character of what we have. Freedom is taken away, wealth is lost and life itself will end. "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Heb. 9:27-28). A thankful heart will fill with the memory of what our Creator has given us as Paul said in Athens so long ago: "For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring'" (Acts 17:28). Of all the things we should be thankful for it is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the bounty of our blessings in Christ and the anticipation of the return of God's Son.

All men will die and all men will stand before God in Judgment. The sacrifice of Christ was given to save us from the penalty of sin and give us hope for His return. Our breath is held in the hand of God (Dan. 5:23). Thank you Lord for your enduring love and for the promise of eternal life beyond the grave. Death is no longer feared and that by itself is the greatest victory we have in thanksgiving (1Cor. 15:54-57). Our praise is echoed by those in Revelation 7:12, "Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 7:11-12). Gratitude is found in the memory of our hearts reflecting upon the hand of God through the ages making possible our hope in the promise of God.

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name ... and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Psalm 100:4; Col. 3:15). Thank you Lord for all you

have done. Thank you Lord for what you give us each day. Thank you Lord for what you have promised. Thank you Lord.

### **More Earnest Heed**

"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...?" (Heb. 2:1-3).

During the night of July 31, 1976, a 19-foot wall of water roared through the mountain-rimmed canyon linking Estes Park and Loveland, Colorado. Earlier in the day, campers had walked along the babbling brook which flowed through the canyon. But mountain thunderstorms turned it into a raging killer which took 129 lives. One couple survived because the husband saw the danger of the rapidly rising waters in the narrow canyon. Before scaling the canyon walls to safety, the man tried to warn others. However, very few people listened to his warning.

How about you? Are you heeding God's warnings? Let us give diligent heed to the things which we have heard lest we drift away.

### **Jesus Returns!**

To many Londoners, 1666 looked like the year when Jesus would return. Prophecy enthusiasts had added 1,000 years since Christ's birth to 666, the number of Antichrist, to arrive at the date 1666.

The world did seem to be on the verge of destruction when in 1665 a plague claimed the lives of 100,000 people in London. Then in September 1666, a London fire destroyed tens of thousands of buildings. Some misguidedly wondered, "Didn't the Bible predict catastrophes at the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:1-8). Yet the year 1666 passed, and life went on seemingly as it had before.

Even in our own day, there are those who have predicted the end of the world. A date is predicted, the media covers the frenzy, and then that day passes uneventfully.

In God's wisdom, the actual time of Christ's return has been kept from us. Jesus said, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24:36). This any-moment aspect of Jesus' return helps keep believers motivated in Christian service and spiritual growth all the time—not just near a certain date (25:1-13; 1John 3:2-3). Be assured, Christ's personal return will take place. And as we await that day, our lives should be marked by "holy conduct and godliness" (2Peter 3:11). No doctrine is more closely linked to practical daily living than that of the Lord's return.