

# KINGDOM SPIRIT

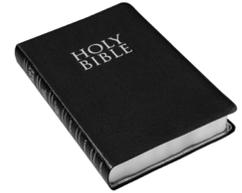
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**“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”**

Matthew 6:33



Issue 1204

## ISAIAH 15-20

The next few chapters in the book of Isaiah list a series of burdens, or judgments on nations in the Middle East and Mesopotamian area. Up to and including the time of Jesus Christ, Bible history has centered on this area of the world. What Isaiah is prophesying tells us of the disintegration of this area as the center of God's attention. Beginning with chapter 40, we'll see that Isaiah deals in his prophecy with the isles of the sea and beyond where this center of attention moves to.

The first of these burdens, or judgments is to descend on Moab. (Read Isa. 15-16) If you recall from Genesis 19, Moab and Ammon were sons of Lot, Abraham's nephew, that he had by his two daughters as they fled from Sodom and Gomorrah. The daughters thought that they would not see civilization again and felt that to preserve their family, they had to have children by their father. So they got him drunk twice and took turns lying with him after which they conceived and each had a son, Moab and Ammon.

We don't have much history of the two sons until Israel left Egypt in the Exodus. Their land was on the east side of the Jordan River and south to the land of the Amorites. As Israel came up on the East side of the Dead Sea, Moses asked for permission to cross the land of the Amorites, but instead of granting them permission, the Amorites attacked Israel. The Amorites were soundly defeated and Israel possessed their land.

When the Barak, king of the Moabites saw

what happened to the Amorites, he hired the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites. You can read the story in Numbers 22-25. Instead of cursing Israel, because of Divine direction, Balaam ended up blessing Israel. However, Moab ended up being cursed for this. Deut. 23:3-5 tells us, **<sup>3</sup>An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:**

**<sup>4</sup>Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.**

**<sup>5</sup>Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.**

Now in Isa. 15-16 we have the ultimate judgment on Moab.

II Kings 16 gives us a brief story of Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, unsuccessfully conspiring together against Judah and Jerusalem. We discussed this a little earlier in this study, but now in Isa. 17 we have God's judgment, or burden, of these two nations for this action. Aroer is mentioned as well. Aroer was a part of Moab, so I think we can assume that they were involved in the conspiracy as well. (Read Isa. 17) Isaiah says that their glory will be made very thin. II Kings 16 tells us that the conspiracy against Ahaz, king of Judah, was unsuccessful. King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria and hired him to come help him against this conspiracy.

King Tiglathpileser of Assyria responded by coming against King Rezin of Syria and took the capital city of Damascus and carried the people of Syria away captive. II Kings 15 tells us that he also took several of the northern cities of Israel and all the land of Naphtali captive as well. A few years later, King Shalmaneser laid siege against Samaria, capital of Israel, and took it and the rest of the people of Israel captive as well.

Isaiah tells us in chapt. 17 that as a man harvests his grain, so would the “harvest” of the children of Israel be by Assyria as they took them captive and placed them in the cities of the Medes south of the Caspian sea. The land would be swept clean of its inhabitants just as a man’s field would be swept clean at harvest.

However, he says that there would be a few individuals left like grapes that might be left during the grape harvest comparing it to the leaving of 2 or 3 grapes on the uppermost branches or 4 or 5 on the outmost branches. This would account for the few people that we find in Christ’s time from some of these tribes of Israel such as the prophetess Anna who was of the tribe of Asher. (Luke 2:36) Isaiah makes it clear that though a few individuals might be left, all of the tribes were removed from the land.

Isaiah goes on to say that when this happens, people will look to God with respect and will not look at their idols that they have made. But it will be too late because they have forgotten the God of their salvation. Their strong cities will be destroyed and there will be great desolation. Again, II Kings 15 gives us the account of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

It is important that we learn the history of both Israel and Judah as recorded in I and II Kings and II Chronicles as we study the prophets. We need to know what is going on with Israel and Judah at the time the prophets are prophesying to understand their prophecies. Also we need to keep in mind that very often, their prophecies have secondary, or more, fulfillments, so it is important that we know who the Israel people are today as it is usually to these people that these secondary prophecies apply.

I believe that Isaiah 17:12-14 is directed

toward the Assyrians who will be the captors of the Israelites. While they will make a noise like the noise of the seas, ultimately they will cease to exist as a nation or kingdom. So it was with Assyria.

(Read Isa. 18) The word “woe” in verse 1 could be translated “Ho” which can mean an interjection of exhortation, warning or sorrow. In this case, I take it as an exhortation. Isa. 18 is at first glance a mystery as there doesn’t appear to be a land in the region that is identified as a land shadowing with wings. Some have thought it refers to Egypt based on the fact that there is two strips of land on each side of the Nile in which crops are grown supposedly giving the appearance of wings. However, none of the rest of the chapter can apply to Egypt. I believe this to be a prophecy of a land not yet known in Isaiah’s time, thus he did not have a name for it. If you look at the seal of the United States, on one side is an eagle with outstretched, or shadowing wings. While other nations have and have had eagles as part of their heraldry, they are always with closed wings.

When we look at a map, the top of the map, or the direction we are facing is north. Jews and other Orientals face east so the “before” is east and “behind” or “beyond” is west. With this in mind Isaiah is saying west of the rivers of Ethiopia or Cush. If you took a line straight west of Jerusalem, that line would take you to the United States.

We’re told that this land or nation would send ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters. Bulrushes comes from the Hebrew word “*gome*” which literally means “absorbent” according to Dr. Strong. By this many have taken this to mean papyrus. Howard B. Rand, in his book Study in Isaiah says that phrase here in verse 2 actually means “water drinking vessel.” Since steamships were unknown at the time of the King James translation, the translators did not know how to translate this phrase, thus they translated it as **“vessels of bulrushes upon the waters.”**

Ambassadors would refer to agents of government, i.e. diplomats, soldiers, sailors, etc.

We could say that these agents of government would travel all over the world in water drinking vessels.

This nation would be a **“nation scattered and peeled.”** The margin of my Bible renders this “tall and smooth skinned.” In WW I the American armed forces was the tallest army in history, being an average height of 5 ft. 11 in. tall and with the exception of some mustaches, they were all clean shaven, the first army to be so in history.

The nation was to be a people terrible from their beginning. In the beginning of the United States, they whipped the strongest military force in the world.

They were to be a **“nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!”** The literal translation would be “the land measured out under the treading.” Quoting from “Study in Isaiah” by Howard B. Rand, “About the time that Florida and Louisiana were taken into the Union, and Ohio taken in as a state, the government passed law that all public lands should be surveyed by the north star, a base line run east and west, and all this land cut up into mile square sections....For the first time in the human race the American government found a new way of meting out land by a general survey by measurements, according to ranges with the north star. All the land in America from the western edge of Pennsylvania to the Pacific Ocean and from Canada to Mexico has been surveyed by lines of measurement staked off in sections and quarter sections.”

Then we're told that the **“land the rivers have spoiled.”** The words “have spoiled” means “divided.” If you look at a map of the United States, the Mississippi River basically divides the nation in half geographically while a combination of rivers also divides the nation east and west, so that it is basically divided into quarters.

In I Kings, we find the story of God causing the division of the kingdom of Israel into two kingdoms, the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. This division was brought on by the sins of Solomon, but God says that this division is from Him. Going back to Gen. 49, Jacob, in bless-

ing his sons, gave the sceptre, or the dominion part of the birthright to Judah and the rest, or the multiplying to Joseph. In effect, Judah was to bring forth the king and Joseph was to bring forth the kingdom. Judah did their part in bringing forth the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. Though both kingdoms were taken into captivity, we need to understand that it is the kingdom of Israel, though no longer known by that name, that escaped from their captivity several hundred years later and began migrating westward. A study of Paul's writings tells us that it is to these people that Paul preached to. It was this people that accepted the gospel and then took it upon themselves to set out to evangelize the world. The United States, as part of these ex-Israelite escapees of the Assyrian captivity, has taken on their very major part of this evangelization by sending out more missionaries than probably all other nations combined and developing the land of America under the banner of taking Christianity to the whole land.

This then fits into this 18th chapter of Isaiah as he says, **“All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he (this nation) lifteth up an ensign on the mountains, and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.”**

Isaiah goes on to say that God says that before the harvest, He will prune and take away branches. Then he finished the chapter with verse 7, **“In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.”** I believe this refers to the time of the first resurrection when Jesus Christ establishes his kingdom here on the earth. The present will be the overcomers who will rule and reign with him.

Isaiah 19 gives the burden of Egypt. (Read) As I read this chapter, it occurs to me that this burden, or judgment may very well have a fulfillment in the time of Isaiah and a second fulfillment in the latter days. The reference in verse

1 to the LORD riding upon a cloud identifies the God who delivered the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage. God manifested Himself in the cloud both to the Israelites and to the Egyptians.

When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was defeated by the death of 185,000 of his soldiers in one night before Jerusalem, this delivered Egypt from the threat of Sennacherib. However, internal troubles then afflicted Egypt. This lasted for several years followed by twelve princes dividing the country and then establishing a rule of tyranny. Following this came the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar followed by the Persians under Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. The oppression of the Persians was so great that when Alexander the Great conquered Persia, the Egyptians considered Alexander to be a great deliverer.

Then, as now, whatever happens in Jerusalem had a great effect on Egypt. We may very well be seeing history repeat itself in Egypt today with the internal strife they are having now and the coming destruction of Jerusalem, we may very well see Egypt turning to Jesus Christ as their great savior in a way never before anticipated.

Several years ago, I heard a man from our area who did quite a lot of world travel say that the people most friendly to Americans in his experience was the Egyptian people. I would not have thought this to be the case at that time and have wondered about it quite often. Now, I think I can see the possibility of this people readily turning to Christ if events develop as I believe they will in that area of the world.

The Nile River is the life blood of Egypt. Whether this prophecy refers to the literal drying up of the river or whether this is symbolic, I don't know. There have been famines in the past when the river failed to provide enough water to the land, most notable the famine in the time of Joseph. We don't hear much about the Aswan Dam, but it was quite controversial as to whether the land behind the dam would hold the water. Whether it does or not, because the Russians built the dam, Egypt has certain economic and political ties to Russia that may surface as a problem in the future.

Verses 19-20 are of special interest. **"In**

**that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them."**

There is little doubt that this is reference to the Great Pyramid of Gezeh. It is located in the middle of Egypt, but on the border between upper and lower Egypt. It wasn't until the latter half of the 18th century that it began to be realized that this "One of the Seven Wonders of the World" was witness unto the LORD. As mathematicians, engineers, intellectuals and others have since examined and measured this ancient structure, they have come away convinced that the structure could be considered the Bible in stone. Though many have examined it and written books about it, this Divine revelation in stone is still very little known by the majority of people, including the people of Egypt. I believe this will change.

(Read Isa. 20) Sargon was the father of Sennacherib. During his time, God commanded Isaiah to walk without his prophet apparel and sandals, probably for 3 days to signify 3 years before the coming invasion of Assyria when many Egyptians would be carried away captive. JRL

## **A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF OUR ECONOMIC SYSTEM**

Because the economy is headline news virtually every day, I feel it is appropriate to look to see what God has to say in His Holy Word as to the cause of our current problem and what the ultimate outcome will be for the economic system that we now have. Though at first it may not sound to promising, having God's perspective, which most economists and politicians don't have, will, I believe, relieve a lot of anxiety about the situation. In fact, what looks like bad news can actually be viewed as good news when we understand what God has in mind for us.

I would like to take you back about 4000 years in history to Noah and “My Three Sons.” After the flood, we’re told in Gen. 11:2 that Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their families traveled from the east, from where the ark settled, until they arrived in the land of Shinar and here they dwelt for a while. The land of Shinar is the Mesopotamian area, or primarily where the country of Iraq is located today. The rest of the Bible from Genesis 10 on deals with the history of some, though not all, of the descendants of these three sons. Genesis 10 gives us the genealogy of these three sons. We’re told that Japheth has 7 sons, Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. If we follow them in history, we will see that for the most part they eventually moved north and became the foundation of the Russian, Mongolian and related peoples.

Ham had 4 sons, Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. Descendants of these men are the foundation of the people of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and other middle eastern countries.

Shem had five sons, Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. It is from these men that the Arabic and the Caucasian European people descended.

Though the Bible deals with most of the descendants of these men at one time or the other, it especially deals with the descendants of Ham and Shem. We hear the term “nation building” today, particularly from those who opposed the Iraq war, who accused the administration of trying to tear down the nation of Iraq and build it back to suit the administration. But what the descendants of these three sons of Noah had to do was genuine nation building. Consider for a moment what would be involved in building a nation besides producing enough people and establishing land boundaries. If the decision were yours to make once there were a sufficient number of people and you were in a land you could consider belonged to these people, what do you think you would need to establish to build a nation? Would you not need an economic system? To regulate and stabilize an economic system, would you not need a political system? The type of economic and polit-

ical systems that you might decide on would most likely be dependent of the type of religious system that you supported, would it not?

I believe that as we look at the various nations, kingdoms, empires, etc., we will see that each of these have these three basic systems upon which that particular government is based. Ideologies upon which each of these systems are based vary from government to government and may vary from time to time. When a variation occurs in the particular ideology of one of these systems, it will almost always have an effect on the ideologies of the other two systems in that particular government as well. For example, in recent history, when Soviet Russia changed from a primarily dictatorial political system to a more democratic system, its economic system also changed to a more capitalistic system as well. The religious system likewise made some fairly major changes.

Going back to the early descendants of Noah’s three sons, the first mention we have in the Bible of a nation forming is in Genesis 10. We’re told in verse 8 that Cush, a son of Ham, had a son named Nimrod and that he began to be a mighty one in the earth. In verse 10, we’re told that the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. This is the first mention of a kingdom, or other form of government in the Bible.

Everyone spoke the same language at this point. Under the leadership of Nimrod, they decided to make brick and use asphalt for mortar and to build a city and a tower whose top would reach unto the heavens.

Very briefly, secular history tells us that Nimrod combined two religions, “monotheism,” which taught there is one God, and “animism,” which taught that every object in nature was inhabited by a different spirit. The animist then prayed to the spirits they thought would be beneficial to them and tried to appease those they thought were against them. The result of this combination was a religion called “pantheism,” which taught that God is nature itself and that each nature spirit then is part of God. This suppressed the idea of a Creator-God. Instead of God creating the universe, the universe became God.

The idea of building a tower to reach into the heavens was really to worship the Zodiac, the astrological signs. In doing this, it was believed they would make a name for themselves, or become renown, thus showing them to be independent from the Creator-God. Thus man, in reality, became his own god. Though he worshipped the universe, it was he, man, who decided what was god and what was not.

If you follow the story in the Bible, it goes on to tell us that the LORD came down to see the city, which the men were building. He found this situation to be adverse to man's ultimate benefit and determined to stop the building. To do this, He confounded their language so that they couldn't understand each other with the result they became scattered upon the face of the earth. For this reason, the city was called Babel, or Babylon, which means confusion.

Gen. 10:11 tells us of the beginning of a second nation, or kingdom in that it was from the land of Shinar, that Asshur, a son of Shem, came and built the city of Nineveh. It was his descendants, the Assyrians, then that, so far as Biblical history is concerned, became the first world conquerors and ultimately founded the first world (the then known world) empire.

Genesis 11 zeroes in on another son of Shem, Arphaxad and his descendants. Several generations later, we come to a man named Abram. In Gen 12:2, God tells Abram, **"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."** The rest of the book of Genesis deals with Abram, whose name God changed to Abraham, and his family. This nation that the LORD told Abram He would make of Abram contrasts with the kingdom that Nimrod started in that God establishes it rather than man establishing it. It is not until over 430 years later that the nation is actually established as Moses leads the descendants of Abraham, Israel, out of the land of Egypt and God establishes their religious system, their economic system, and their political system for them at Mt.

Sinai after their leaving Egypt. Now we have two opposing types of governments, man's government, first established by Nimrod, and God's government established here at Mt. Sinai.

Moving ahead in history, eventually God gave Israel a monarchial form of government and established the throne of David over it. However, a couple of generations later, the kingdom was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Eventually the Assyrians, mentioned above, conquered and took into captivity, the kingdom of Israel. However, it was not too long before the Babylonians, the descendents of Nimrod, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, conquered Assyria as well as most of the countries in the then known world and they became the world empire. We want to concentrate primarily on the economic system of this kingdom, or empire, and succeeding empires, but keep in mind the beginning of the Babylonian religious system as we will from time to time see how it developed and influenced the economic system.

Jerusalem and part of the kingdom of Judah continued to exist after the Assyrian captivity of the kingdom of Israel until Nebuchadnezzar came to power as king of Babylon. II Kings 24 & 25 and II Chronicles 36 give us a brief history of the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, as Babylon began its rise to becoming the world empire of its day. The book of the prophet Jeremiah in particular gives the same history with more detail, but also warns that God is using Nebuchadnezzar as a tool to discipline Judah because of her sins.

Nebuchadnezzar first came against Jerusalem in the days of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and forced Jehoiakim into subjection to him. Three years later Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and God punished Jehoiakim and Judah for this rebellion by sending a number of armies against Judah. Jehoiakim died after ruling 11 years and his son Jehoiachin took the throne, but three months later Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city and broke in and took Jehoiachin, his mother, and his servants and princes, along with treasures from the temple plus the mighty men, craftsmen and smiths back to Babylon and ap-

pointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, to be king over Judah. Though subject to Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah ruled another 11 years and then he rebelled against the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar returned and this time destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple, and took the rest of the people, with the exception of a small remnant, captive back to Babylon.

When Nebuchadnezzar put Jehoiakim into subjection to himself, he took a number of young boys of Judah, among which was a young boy named Daniel, back to Babylon with him. As Daniel grew and matured, God gave Daniel great wisdom and understanding. In Nebuchadnezzar's second year of his reign as king, he had a dream that disturbed him very greatly, but when he awoke he could not remember the dream, only that it disturbed him very much. He called all of his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to him to show him what his dream was and what it meant. Of course, since he couldn't tell them what the dream was, they could not interpret it for him. So he commanded that they and all the wise men of Babylon be killed. When Daniel heard of this, he asked the king to give him some time and then to let him tell Nebuchadnezzar about the dream. The king granted him the time and God revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel who then went before the king and revealed it to him. Daniel 2:31-35 tells us what Daniel told the king about the dream. **"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible (or awesome). This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a**

**great mountain, and filled the whole earth."**

In verses 38-45 Daniel interprets the dream, but he first tells Nebuchadnezzar he is a king of kings and he is in this position because God put him there. Then he tells the king that the head of gold represents him and his kingdom. The silver breast and arms represents a kingdom that will follow Babylon but be inferior to it. The brass belly and thighs represents a third kingdom to follow the silver kingdom and the iron legs represents a fourth kingdom that shall be strong as iron that breaks in pieces and subdues all things. But then because the feet and toes were part of clay and part of iron, this kingdom of iron would become partly strong and partly broken.

The stone that was cut out without hands represents the kingdom of God and also had its beginning on earth during the beginning of these metal kingdoms.

This metal image then represented four successive world empires. We know now from history that the silver represented the Medo-Persian Empire, the brass represented the Grecian Empire, and the iron represented the Roman Empire as each of the empires successively conquered the empire before it and in turn became the dominant world empires from the time of Daniel until the very recent past. But note in the dream that this image remained intact until it was destroyed from the feet up by the stone cut out without hands. Even though the empires themselves disappeared in history, the image remained intact until it was destroyed as a whole.

So, this image is more than just the individual empires that each metal represented. As a whole, it then represents a greater system than any of the empires making it up and the individual systems within each empire that gave each empire its life. It also represents the whole of what each empire added to its development religiously, politically and economically. Keep a mental picture of this image in mind as we continue our study as I believe it will help each of us understand our problem much better. We'll deal with the stone cut out without hands a little later, so for now make a mental note of it and the destruction it wreaked with the image.

When Daniel interpreted the dream for Nebuchadnezzar, the king promoted Daniel to great prominence within the government of Babylon. Though considered a prophet, Daniel's primary job the rest of his life was a governmental administrator, an extremely capable one I might add. Because of his governmental responsibilities, Daniel views things a little differently than other prophets in that he seems to have a better world view than other prophets. God continued to give Daniel visions, dreams, and interpretations that foretold how nations and kingdoms would come and go and activities that these nations and kingdoms would engage in. Though his visions culminate at the same time as the visions of John in the book of Revelation culminates, Daniel primarily provides us with pre-written history of the world from the time of Babylon until the time of Christ, whereas John primarily gives us pre-written history from the time of Christ until the end of the age and into the next age. It is important to have the foundation laid by Daniel in mind in studying Revelation as they both talk of the same entities.

This is the beginning of our current financial problem. We'll continue to see it develop. The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapt. of Daniel tells us that Nebuchadnezzar had an image of gold cast in the plains of Dura. This image was about 90 ft. high and 9 ft. in diameter and was made of solid gold. He then required that all the princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs and all the rulers of the provinces of Babylon come to the dedication of this image. Once they were all gathered together at the site of the image, they were commanded that when they heard music that was to be played on a variety of instruments, they were all to fall down and worship this image.

Then follows the story of Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to worship this image. They were thrown into the fiery furnace that had been used to melt the gold of this image but they were protected by God and came out of the furnace totally unharmed though the men who threw them in were burned up in doing so.

The point we need to understand from the story of the casting of this image is that this was the introduction of the "gold standard," i.e. gold became something to be worshipped. In worshipping it, gold became symbolic of wealth. Notice that this was not a religious ceremony in which religious priests directed and participated in it. Rather, this was the civic rulers and business people that participated. I don't think we need to stretch our imaginations very far to see how worshipping this gold image has led to the worship of gold and/or wealth today and because it is worshipped, money, that represents gold today, has itself, through the charging of interest, become a producer of further wealth. This is contrary to God's laws. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew it was wrong to worship this image and were willing to give their lives before they would do so. Ex. 23:25 tells us, "**If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.**" Deut. 23:19 says, "**Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury.**" Money, or wealth, is not itself to be a creator of additional wealth.

With this information as a foundation, we'll continue our study in the next issue. JRL