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Volume 37
Issue 909

"I See Men as Trees, Walking"

The Abject Prevalence of Spiritual Blindness

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

For much of my life I have known someone who has been extremely visually impaired, even with the use of powerful lenses. He has spent his entire life "legally blind" and receives disability benefits.



they are nonetheless, for all intents and purposes, practically, or "legally" blind.

Furthermore, I would suspect that, even among those who profess to have some *fragment* of light, most of them, rather than actually having any spiritual sight themselves, are merely describing what others "see."

According to the National Federation of the Blind,

The statutory definition of "legally blind" is that central visual acuity must be 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction or that the visual field must be twenty degrees or less.

Yet, among that very rare minority who can truly see something spiritually, most can't see it very well. The majority have spiritual sight that remains significantly blurred.

Obviously, sight, as well as "blindness" comes in various degrees, and there are many factors which can cause sight deficiency and blindness. Visual impairment can be categorized as mild, moderate, severe and blind.

I am reminded of Christ's giving of sight to the blind man at Bethsaida in Mark 8. Upon the first installment of sight, the blind man,

looked up, and said, "I see men as trees, walking" (:24).

The Scriptures also discuss another type of blindness: spiritual blindness. This is the inability to "see" or perceive spiritual/scriptural truth.

It took a further act by our Lord for him to be "*keen-sighted*," seeing "*all distinctly*" (:25, CV).

It is estimated that approximately 0.5% of the world's population are physically blind, with an additional 3% having significant visual impairment – leaving approximately 96.5% of the population with some degree of functioning sight.

Like physical sight, faith and spiritual sight are not "all-or-nothing." They come progressively, in divine installments.¹

1. See, — The Nature of Faith: Is It Really "All or Nothing"? Clyde L. Pilkington

Easily these numbers are exactly the opposite proportion when considering spiritual blindness. The vast majority of humanity are blind. Even among those who can see a *glimmer* of some aspect of truth,

"I See Men as Trees, Walking" – The Abject Prevalence of Spiritual Blindness.....	7689
The Parable of the Kingdom's Growing Grain....	7691
666.....	7693



We should not at all be surprised at the abject prevalence of blindness all around us. Such is the *norm* for the *jurisdiction of darkness* of this present *evil age*. What we should be amazed at is the presence of sightedness! We should be astonished that anyone can see. We are always so very thankful to Father when anyone demonstrates some measure of true understanding on any given spiritual/scriptural subject.

Not only should we *not* be surprised at the utter prevalence of blindness, but of course, we know with complete surety its cause. Blindness is as much sourced by God as is faith, and the blind play their vital part in the divine drama as much as the sighted.

So, what is our response to the blind? Compassion, kindness, tenderheartedness, empathy and graciousness regarding their divine impairment – all the while knowing that it has been thrust upon them as

ington, Jr., [Bible Student's Notebook #507](#);
or for a more complete look at the subject:
– *The Divine Activation of Faith and the Myth of Free Will*, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., on the [order form](#) under "Pilkington," or online at StudyShelf.

equally as has been our sight.²

For believers, on hearing of their initial measure of faith (Ephesians 1:15) Paul's prayer was that they would be granted a "*spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him*," that they would have the "eyes" of their "heart" "*enlightened*" so that they could,

Perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints (:17 ff., CV).

This is our heartfelt prayer as well, for ourselves and for those to whom we have been divinely given to have interaction. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Blindness; Faith
Minor: Believer's Walk; Calling

2. See,
– "Our Response to Blindness" (Editor's Desk) [Bible Student's Notebook #606](#); a [video](#) is also available.

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This *free* electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "*preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past*" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see the [online key](#).

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The Parable of the Kingdom's Growing Grain

by — Andrew Brown

After discovering the Kingdom of God, the period of blessing before the great tribulation, it becomes easily noticeable in passages throughout the Bible. The question then arises as to the prescribed length of this period of blessing. This topic is debated among knowledgeable friends. The goal of this article is to inform everyone about the nuances within this debate.

The Kingdom brings the period of blessing before the millennium, and it progresses and grows before the harvest (Christ's Second Coming).

Understanding the parable of growing grain is of utmost importance to this discussion.

*The Kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil ... The soil produces crops by itself; first the **blade**, then the **head**, then the **mature grain** in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the **harvest** has come (Mark 4:26-29, NASB throughout).*

The Kingdom brings the period of blessing before the millennium, and it progresses and grows before the harvest (Christ's second coming).

Acts 2 inaugurated the Kingdom of God, beginning "the blade" stage. Christ took His seat on Heaven's throne and began ruling by distributing "power

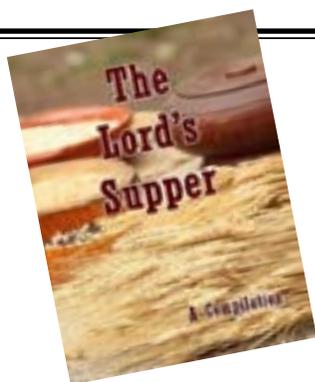
from on High" to His governmental leaders. This was shown by the "tongues of fire" that rested upon them. Acts and the Acts Period epistles display the Kingdom's character as seen "in a mirror dimly" (I Corinthians 13:12). The government of God could be seen in action. It was growing as a seed turns into a "blade," and yet what type of crop it would yield was impossible to decipher positively.

The Acts Period lasted approximately 33 years. As it was drawing to a close, the advancement from the "blade" to the "head" was anticipated.

The night is almost gone, and the day is near (Romans 13:12).

The Kingdom's night stage was growing into the day. This certainly would have occurred; however, God had a secret plan and paused His Kingdom work (at Acts 28:28) to insert the new work of the Dispensation of Grace [*i.e.*, Dispensation of the Mystery]. The stages of the Kingdom will resume in order when the Lord sees fit.

In Daniel 9:24-27, the angel Gabriel showed Daniel a 500-year period of blessing prior to the return of Christ. These "seventy weeks" (of years) must include ten Jubilee years as the standard from Leviticus 25 reveals ($70 \times 7 = 490 + 10 = 500$). The Great Tribulation at the end of the "seventy weeks" ushers in Christ's Sec-



The Lord's Supper:

A Compilation

A dispensational consideration of whether or not the Lord's Supper is necessary for today. Authors include Bert W. Hallman, John H. Kessler, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., R.B. Shiflet, Ike T. Sidebottom, and Charles H. Welch.

70 pp., PB

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and Coming (the harvest). Therefore, Daniel 9:24-27 must be “*the mature grain in the head*” (Mark 4:28).

This 500-year period is branded by the six characteristics listed in Daniel 9:24 which include

... *to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting [eonian] righteousness.*

Consider that, to have this time defined by an “*end of sin*,” there must be a setting-up period before one can say that the sealing up of sin has truly begun. This is what the debate centers around: the “*head*” stage of the parable where the Kingdom work is recognizable but is not yet “*mature*.” Do the 500 years start at God’s next move? Does Acts contain the “*blade*” and “*head*” stages? If so, what are the noticeable differences?

Otis Q. Sellers believed that the Premillennial Kingdom is to be 700 years.¹ He derived this from “*the number of the beast ... is six hundred and sixty-six*” (Revelation 13:18). He thought that the beast’s number marked the Kingdom year of its death and added the Acts Period years (33 years) to total 700 years. Therefore, Mr. Sellers’ conclusion could lead to the idea that the “*head*” stage must be 166 years (666-500 = 166) before Daniel’s 70 weeks.

What could this “*head*” stage include? God’s reign will enlighten the world as He speaks *from Heaven*, resuming His Kingdom work where Acts paused. Israel will be regathered, and their land redistributed. The fulfillment of Christ’s words “*Elijah is coming and will restore all things*” (Matthew 17:11) will occur. God

will resurrect the godly saints of old and those who have displayed faith in Christ. Ezekiel could help with the construction plans of the temple he described in Ezekiel chapters 40-48. God will deal wisely with the wicked and carefully eliminate them from the Kingdom. Sinners will be instructed in the way of God. “*Everlasting [eonian] righteousness*” will be learned. Much will need to be done before the decree to “*restore and rebuild Jerusalem*” (Daniel 9:25) begins the 500-year mature grain stage. The “*head*” must grow first.

There is historical precedent for the premillennial Kingdom having a set-up time. After Israel was gathered together at Mount Sinai they accepted the terms of the covenant, waited for Moses, killed off many rebels, built the tabernacle (set up the priesthood), entered the land, removed the foreigners, and distributed the land. Israel was dwelling in the land long before David was set up as king and Jerusalem was set up as the capital city. This could all be foreshadowing the future. The parallel events will take time.

God did not openly reveal the premillennial Kingdom’s length, as He did the 1000-year millennium. Therefore, any answer is an extrapolation. I do think, from the facts that Scripture provides, that it must be longer than 500 years. Seven hundred years is an interesting estimate (but still an estimate). While the length is debatable, the period of blessing is not. **BSN**

— Kingdom’s Growing Grain

(*edited abridgment*)

TOPICS:

Major: Mark 4:26-29; Pre-Millennial Kingdom

Minor: Daniel 9; Elijah; Mark of the Beast; Prophecy

1. [Editor:] See, “666,” Otis Q. Sellers, next page.

The Blasphemy of the Spirit and Overwhelming Grace, and “Unpardonable” Sin

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) and James Coram

Probably most people under biblical influence have been either perplexed or distressed by the alarming phrase, “the unpardonable sin.” How many have morbidly imagined that they had committed this sin and spoiled their whole career! To the contrary, since Christ died for all that all might live, and all who will be saved will be saved by grace, it follows that eventually all will be saved, that God may be All in all. Two studies in one booklet.



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666

by — Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)

It is my understanding that the years of God's (pre-millennial) government of the Earth will be seven hundred. Since my understanding of this has been based mostly on intimations, clues and glimmers of truth, I have been somewhat hesitant to set it forth in written form.



Any logical student must admit that there is divine truth concealed in the number 666. If there is not, then we may as well borrow King Jehoiakim's penknife (Jeremiah 36:23) and excise these words from our Bibles.

I first heard of "666" in a wild sermon on prophecy. The message was intended to frighten the hearers into taking some action to save themselves from the awful terrors that this number was supposed to represent. I do not think the message accomplished much, but it did prompt me to go to my Bible to see what it actually said concerning this figure. I found there in Revelation 13:16-18,

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark, in their right hand, or their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred, three score and six.

I suppose that all who do biblical research wish at times that they could set forth fragmentary and unfinished ideas in printed form without people thinking that a final and definitive conclusion has now been chiseled into imperishable granite which shall stand forever as the final word on the subject dealt with. Any such conclusion will be far from correct concerning this present dissertation on "666."

It was and is the declaration of Solomon that,

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter (Proverbs 25:2).

The knowledge of God's concealed truths is usually gained by tracing out the intimations to it that are scattered throughout the Bible. These allusions to the truth are regularly ignored by the average Bible reader, but the real lover of God's truth will carefully note these faint glimmers, meditate upon them, and hide them in his heart, maybe for many years, as he waits for more light on the subject.

For several years I tried to analyze this passage in the hope of finding what the writer was telling us, but the results were nil. However, the effort put forth did impress these words on my mind and I could bring them before me as light might be given upon them from other biblical statements. So, lacking understanding I refrained from putting into action the



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Be Likeminded

by — Daniel Andersen

Christ is the basis of Christian unity, and when Paul exhorts believers to be "likeminded" he is not entreating them to comply with the same code or creed, or to conform to the same confession or catechism. Rather he is appealing to them to accept others as Christ, Himself, accepts them.

See [order form](#) under "Other Authors."

biblical admonition,

Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast.

This exercise of mind took place about fifty-five years ago. Since then, I have discovered that many people are quite superstitious about the number six. To them it is an evil number that forebodes no good, and when it is tripled it is to them the symbol of all that is malevolent.

There is nothing in the Bible to support this, and I reject this gullibility as being sheer nonsense. There is nothing evil or satanic about the number six.

In the Revelation passage we have the suggestion that there is truth concealed in this number. This is indicated by the words, "Here is wisdom," and the directive that those who have understanding should "count the number of the beast."

Most interpretations of this passage begin with the assumption that the problem is one of gematria, which is the reckoning of the value of letters in a name, after the manner of the Hebrews and Greeks. They did not have the Arabic numerals and used let-

ters instead. When such interpreters came upon a prominent name, the value of which letters came to 666, they would shout from the housetop that this one was or is the beast of Revelation 13.

The vast number of names that have been put forth is sufficient to show the error of this. Most of those who have followed the historical method of interpreting Revelation have settled on Nero, whose name in its Hebrew form is spelled Neron, which when its letters are added up yields the number 666. This leaves us with nothing in the way of truth. Nero does not fill the bill, even though some of his characteristics were in accord with the description of the beast given here.

I am familiar with all the explanations that any serious expositor has written on this passage. I have recently read again all that twelve commentators have written concerning it. There is no solid teaching in any of them. However, through the years I have come upon certain intimations of truth that should be considered and developed.

At this point it must be said that the conclusions set forth will not be received by those who reject the biblical revelation of a pre-advent period of divine

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government over this Earth. By “pre-advent” I mean before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The [Pre-Millennial] Kingdom of God concludes in a seven-year period that is designated as the revolt against the kingdom, a revolt that is put down by the return of the Lord Jesus to the Earth to be personally present for a thousand years. Thus, we know that the time-period of the revolt is seven years, and the years of His *parousia* will be a thousand. But as to the length of time of God’s manifest government (Psalm 67:4), no time period seems to have been revealed.

However, it could be that we have been surrendering too easily to our ignorance. It may be that the exact time is somewhere revealed, it being the glory of God to conceal a matter.

Most Bible students are familiar with the main outlines of Daniel’s prophecy of Israel’s “seventy weeks” (Daniel 9:24-27). These they know to be weeks of years, that is 490 years. They also know that the last week (seven years) of this period is the most amazing of all. In this period there is one actor who is most prominent. He is called “*the prince that shall come*” (Daniel 9:26); “*the abomination of desolation*” (Matthew 24:15); “*the antichrist*” (I John 2:8).

Inasmuch as before this seven-year period begins, the divine restraints that have characterized God’s manifest government have been removed and no human physical opposition is permissible (*cf.* Matthew 26:52), and he [antichrist] quickly gains dominion over the entire Earth. In his subtle machinations he makes and confirms a seven-year covenant with the redeemed and restored nation of Israel, but in the exact middle of that period he breaks the covenant and begins a final supreme attempt to exterminate Israel,

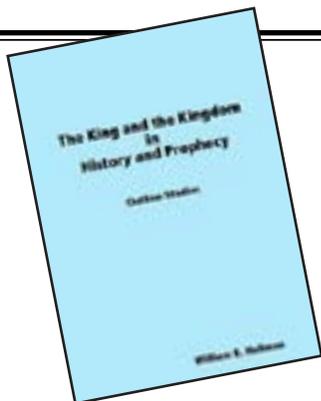
both as a nation and people (Psalm 83:2, 4).

From the day the covenant is confirmed, counting forward 1260 days (42 months, or three and one-half years) – on that day the covenant will be broken. Then in 1260 days more the man of sin will be destroyed by the blazing forth of the Lord’s personal presence (see II Thessalonians 2:8). From these times, given in advance, the actual day of the return of the Lord Jesus will be known.

Of course, many will cite Matthew 24:36 that declares no man knows the day or the hour. That was true then and it is still true today, but this passage does not say no one will *ever* know. A later revelation declares something different (see I Thessalonians 5:4).

It is my understanding that the light, truth and knowledge that will flow from God during His government will allow God’s people to know exactly where they stand time-wise in relationship to the consummation of that eon.

There is wisdom in the number six hundred, sixty, six. The reader of Revelation is told to count (keep track) of the number of the beast. But where does he begin to count? What does he start with? It is evident that 666 is a number that God established and caused it to be recorded in His Word. And while it is “*the number of a man,*” no man made up this number, or gave it its significance. The one who someday will take it as his own symbol was not in existence when John wrote, and he is not in existence today. He appears late in the Kingdom, and when he is manifested it will be seen that he is the supreme one among the tares, the “*sons of the wicked*” (Matthew 13:38) whom Satan plants among “*the sons of the Kingdom.*” He will appropriate to himself this number, using it as a symbol of his claimed divinity. Little will he real-



The King and the Kingdom in History and Prophecy

by — William B. Hallman

42 pp., PB

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ize that he has taken to himself the very number that is indicative of the year of his destruction.

As stated before, the day of His destruction is the day of the Second Coming of Christ. The two greatest events in connection with the manifest Kingdom of God are its inauguration and its consummation. Its beginning is marked by the divine assumption of sovereignty and its consummation is marked by the personal return of Jesus Christ. It is my conviction that there will be 666 years between these two events.

The Acts period was the blade and ear stages of the Kingdom of God. It was thirty-three years-plus long. If we take this and add it to the 666 years we will have 699 years-plus and thus be in the 700th year of the Kingdom of God.

We cannot begin to “count the number” now. The divine clock of the Kingdom stopped running at Acts 28:28. When it will start running again no one knows, but it will start on the day when He assumes manifest sovereignty, taking to Himself His great power, and governs the world. In the meantime, we will do well to remember the words of Dr. E.B. Pusey (1800-1882):

Prophecy was not given to enable us to prophesy, but as a witness to God when the time comes.

There is wisdom in 666. Do not shy away from it. **BSN**

— *Seed and Bread*, #151 (1982)

(*edited*)

TOPICS:

Major: Mark of the Beast; Pre-Millennial Kingdom
Minor: Antichrist; Prophecy



Eros Made Sacred: or

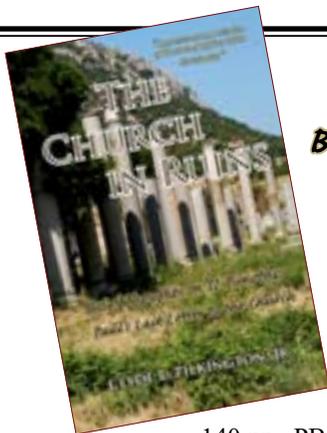
The Biblical Case Made for Polygamy

by — James Wesley Stivers
(originally published in 1991)
74 pages, paperback

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140 pp., PB

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Priceless. – OH
Awesome. – TX
A real eye opener. – MI
Groundbreaking stuff. – OH

THE CHURCH IN RUINS

Brief Thoughts on II Timothy, Paul's Last Letter to the Church

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

This brief survey of Paul's last epistle will reveal that while almost 2000 years have transpired, the condition of the church has remained the same, and indeed has worsened in accordance with Paul's warning to Timothy.

This book is not a call for a re-awakening of “the church,” because it is apparent that this is not Father's plan. Rather, it is a call to individual men – men whose place in the Christian religious system has left them empty, stagnant, and restless – to awaken to Father's call to be His faithful servant and stand outside of that system to look for other faithful men as well.

WHAT READERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS BOOK:

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Impressive. – TX
Another nail driven by the Truth. – WI
A thrill to know that I'm not crazy after all! – PA

Great clarification on the subject. – WI
An outstanding little book, one that needs to be read by every member of His Body, and I do not exaggerate. – KS

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