

The King's Highway

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— Our Pastors Speak —



TRUSTING EGYPT FOR HELP

by Rev. B. M. Hicks

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!

"Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit" (Isaiah 31:1, 3a).

Egypt in Scripture is often used as a type of sin. These verses refer to people relying on Egypt and her strength. The prophet is speaking of trusting in material things, a nation, chariots, horses and horsemen. Egypt had many of these material things and so seemed "very strong."

There is grave danger to-day of the people of God trusting in material things rather than in "the Holy One of Israel."

There is the danger of relying on program. If we can build a program of many things and strong we can attract the attention of those outside of Christ and draw them into the church. If we can get some good Gospel films, that should attract them. If we can just get a choir that can leave the hearers spellbound; if we can work a big program around special days; if we can entertain the people; if we can offer enough gimmicks; if we can just get enough program machinery rolling we can rely on it to further the cause.

We do need a church program. But it seems that more and more we are depending on our church program rather than on the Lord. People generally are more willing to work in the program than to pray. In most cases special prayer for the church program is the most neglected part of the program. Our chariots and horses may have taken a different form than in Isaiah's day but trusting in material things is all too evident.

Then, we rely on the church itself. It must be freshly painted and redecored; the pews the most comfortable; the grounds well kept. And may God help us if we as his people do not have enough interest in His house to willingly spend and be spent to keep it attractive and a fit place for worship. But is this our chariot? Are we trusting in the material and have we failed to pray the glory down that His Shekinah may abide in the midst until those who come to worship are more impressed with having met God than anything else?

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We rely on what the church can offer us. Through the church we can be baptized. The right hand of fellowship is extended to us and we become members. We partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Here we can labor as much or as little as we please. Since we have all these wonderful things to our credit, surely that should be good enough. But as "the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit," "so can all our association with the church be just as void of God and the Spirit. Our trust should be in the Holy One of Israel.

We must rely upon God, His Spirit, His Word. In the Great Commission Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel . . ." He did not command us to provide material facilities that would draw the world but to go to them Jesus seems to have pictured the present church situation by the parable of the great supper. The supper was prepared, the invitations had been given, but no one came. Then the command was given, "go ye" and "compel them." Quite a picture is it not? With all our program, our beautiful churches, and a welcome out to sinners, yet how pitifully few come and truly feast. Are we relying on Egypt for help?

But Jesus' commission still states "Go ye . . . and preach the gospel. "Go ye" not provide material things, comfort, Gospel films, special programs, clubs, hospitals, clinics, schools, etc. so they will come to us. Yet so much of our program is to entice them to come. We seem to be preparing everything so they will come. But as in Jesus' parable most of it fails. Are these our ways of escape from wholly obeying Jesus' command? Are we patting ourselves on the back and saying that by these we are obeying while it is but our way of circumventing Christ's great commission? These are our chariots, horses and horsemen.

In Acts 11:19 it states that the early Christians "were scattered abroad . . . preaching the word." They seemed to have fulfilled the commission. They went and preached and the results were astounding. The Apostle Paul went to them and preached. Are we? Or are we depending on them to come to us?

"Woe to them that . . . look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord."

Prayer

The secret life of prayer alone prepares and qualifies for ministry, and each of these is equally necessary in order to accomplish the glory of God. For while work without prayer is sheer presumption, prayer without work is mere fanaticism . . . To understand rightly the necessity of this preparation puts new emphasis on the giving of our selves to prayer. For it is in prayer that motives are tested, ideals examined and outcome of life thus lived before God, may be of infinite variety, but is always a mediation of His Word to others. For this the world hungers, and without this it perishes.—Sel.