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Bobby Liddell, Editor

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YOKEFELLOW

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RIDING A HOBBY Bobby Liddell

A little boy was riding a hobbyhorse (“a stick with a horse’s head, or a rocking horse, ridden by children” [dictionary.reference.com]), when an adult asked, “Are you riding a hobbyhorse?” His reply was, “Yes, sir; but I can get off it.” Some brethren seem unable to get off their hobbyhorses.

What does “riding a hobby” mean?

“Riding a hobby,” is an idiom, defined as: “to concern oneself excessively with a favorite notion or activity” (dictionary.reference.com), “to have some favorite occupation or subject of talk” (thefreedictionary.com), and as “a subject or plan upon which one is constantly setting off; a favorite and ever-recurring theme of discourse, thought, or effort; that which occupies one’s attention unduly, or to the weariness of others; a ruling passion” (dictionary.babylon.com).

Some of us well remember a brother who spoke constantly about one subject (a particular sin), mentioned it everywhere he went, wrote about it continually, and seemed unable to say, “Hello,” without bringing this sin into the conversation. We joked that he could not lead a prayer at the Lord’s Table without saying something about the subject that so consumed his attention. The irony is that he was secretly, habitually committing the sin against which he incessantly spoke and wrote!

What does riding a hobby say about the rider?

What does a brother’s having a particular subject that occupies all his attention, and about which he persistently speaks and writes, to the exclusion of other needed, biblical subjects, say about such a man? It may say something about his **personal life**; that is, that he has a problem, but is unwilling to give up the sin about which he so frequently speaks. It may say something about his **position**, and indicate the brother realizes the weakness of his doctrine. Thus, he thinks endlessly harping upon it strengthens his position. Or, it may say something about his **perception** (whether correct or not), and manifest his feeling that others are not listening to him, or are not as concerned about that subject, as he demands they should be. Therefore, he tries to intimidate them into riding the hobby with him. Or, it may say something about his **personality**, and signal an ego problem that fuels his determination to keep on until he shows everyone he is right—and that everyone who disagrees with him (whether they agree with God, or not) is wrong! So, he continues, on and on, long past the point of tedium, and good sense, hoping to force others to accept his view, or just to give in so he will finally shut up.

Interestingly, while the hobby rider gallops in circles, he does not stop to consider that others may be in agreement with him concerning truth he presents (when and if he presents truth), but they do not share his view that one subject should be the eternal topic of endless articles, sermons, quips, and comments (even to influencing the songs selected for worship).

When is one guilty of riding a hobby?

First, to advocate a position that is not biblical, is always wrong, and cannot be right. Of this, there is no question, and no amount of speaking and writing to uphold such an erroneous position will change that. Some seem to think if they talk longer, shout louder, and act uglier, they can change error into truth.

Second, to reinforce truth, to remind, and to strengthen by repetition, and to do so correctly, is right, for this is a biblical principle (2 Pet. 1:12, 13, 15; 3:1).

Third, to seek to prove a point, or to overwhelm those who do not agree with one’s opinion on that point, by browbeating, accusation, intimidation, or excessive, unceasing harping upon “that which occupies one’s attention unduly, or to the weariness of others,” is not effective, helpful, wise, or right.

Why is it wrong to ride a hobby?

When one focuses on one topic alone, he does so to the neglect of other important topics. His one-track approach does not build up and strengthen, but results in frustrated brethren and a weak congregation. Then,

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(Continued from Page 1)

when spiritually malnourished brethren have had enough, and leave the congregation, or stop their subscriptions, the hobby rider still fails to see the problem, and blames them for not having the same misguided obsession he has—never considering his own responsibility.

Riding a hobby denigrates the position of the hobby rider, whether he is a preacher, elder, editor, Bible class teacher, or other member, and whether he realizes it, or not. Hobby riders often try to bolster their shaky credibility by calling upon others who share their view. It seems that doctrinal differences, even questionable morals and ethics, may be ignored if a hobby rider thinks he may gain advantage by pointing to someone else who holds to the same hobby.

A hobby can become a heresy. Interestingly, the word heresy comes from a word that originally meant a choice, and came to mean a choice based upon one's opinion (as his opinion differed from God's Word). A man can so push an "ever-recurring theme of discourse, thought, or effort," that he creates a division where there was none, and separates brethren. If this is right, God is wrong (Gal. 5:19-21), and the conclusion must be that everyone is "home free."

Some hobby riders belittle the scholarship, education, and intelligence of all who dare to disagree with them. Others latch onto an uncommon interpretation of some trivial matter, making it a point of undue concern, until it becomes a test of faith—at least in their minds. F. W. Mattox, in ***The Eternal Kingdom***, wrote: "As long as the church had been under persecution, the finer points of theology had not been a chief matter of concern. After the persecution ceased, the fine points of distinction came to the front and strong feelings developed over small differences" (128). Some just want to prove themselves right, and will ride their hobbyhorses into the ground in their attempts to do so, even if it means destroying the church in the process. The reality is that some attention-seeking brethren seek the controversial as their theme, and upon finding a subject that creates controversy, they make that their hobby. We wonder why such men still have pulpits and platforms.

Few hobby riders reveal their real motives, or divulge their agendas. Fewer still will admit they are riding a hobby. As a matter of fact, most are deeply chagrined that others think they are hobby riders.

We ought to preach the Word, not hobbies.

When Paul, by inspiration, wrote: "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2), the Holy Spirit did not reveal, through him, "Preach your hobbies." Brethren, God does not ride a hobby. Jesus, the Master Teacher, does not ride a hobby. The New Testament, our rule of faith and practice, does not ride a hobby. For example, baptism, as important a subject as it is, is not mentioned on every page, in every verse, of the New Testament, or to the exclusion of other needed instruction. Neither are such important points as the Lord's Supper, and attendance. God said what He wanted to say, and needed to say, and said all that He wanted us to know. He did not monotonously, tediously, endlessly harp upon one point to the exclusion of all others.

God's Word teaches us not even to "admonish" a heretic endlessly: "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject" (Tit. 3:10). Nor, are we to go on forever reproving a sinner (Mat. 18:15-18).

Sadly, hobby riders think more of themselves than of Christ and His church. They will push their hobbies to the dismay of the faithful, to the division of brethren, and to the harm of the church and her influence. While focusing upon one subject, even if it is a biblical subject, they fail to teach on other subjects that need attention as well. Let us all determine to preach and teach the Truth, but the "whole Truth," not just some "favorite notion," about which we are excessively concerned.

JOHN BESSIRE

July 3, 1918 – August 29, 2010

Garland Elkins

Some years ago, the John Bessire scholarship at MSOP was established to provide help to those students, or family members of students, who have difficulties with their sight. Upon his death, brother Bessire left all his Braille books to the N. B. Hardeman Library (located on the campus of MSOP). We are deeply grateful for brother Bessire's desire, not only to accomplish all the good he could, but also to help others as well. John will be remembered for his strong faith, strength, determination, and humor which touched everyone he met.

John Frederick Bessire was born on July 3, 1918 in Reydon, Oklahoma to Ernest and Prairie Lee (Lusk) Bessire. At the age of 12, he began losing his sight due to Stickler's Syndrome. He attended Oklahoma School for the Blind where he received his high school education. In 1942, with assistance from the Lions Club, he went to Los Angeles for eye surgery. The surgery was not successful and he lost his sight completely. Determined to become employable, he entered Pepperdine University with the goal of becoming a preacher and teacher. In an era when there was no government assistance for people who were blind, he paid his way as a dish washer and library assistant for the college. In 1946 he received his Bachelors Degree.

To further his religious studies, John moved to Tennessee and attended Freed-Hardeman Bible College. There he met Ann Mattox (his angel) whom he married December 12, 1948 in Louisville, Kentucky. John accepted a preaching position at the church of Christ in Fairfield, California where they began their family. John and Ann continued serving in the church of Christ in both Hanford and Yuba City, California. John worked as a minister and taught school in Missouri and Arkansas, receiving his Masters Degree from Harding University in Arkansas.

It was in 1957 that the family returned to California, living in Graton near Santa Rosa. John accepted a dual position as the church minister and principal of the neighboring Pacific Christian Academy. He also taught high school algebra and geometry. He had fond memories of his friends and accomplishments while in Graton.

In the mid 1960's they moved to the San Francisco Bay Area where John taught at the Orientation Center for the Adult Blind for 17 years until retiring in 1983. John and Ann then moved to Oregon, living in the Portland area for a time prior to moving to Sandy. The last few years they have resided in Happy Valley.

John F. Bessire died on Sunday, August 29, 2010 at Kaiser Sunnyside Hospital in Clackamas, Oregon surrounded by his loving family. He died of complications resulting from a broken hip, congestive heart failure and renal disease at the age of 92.

I knew brother John Bessire, though I did not know him well. I visited with him during the Freed-Hardeman Lectureship, and it is possible that I heard him preach once or twice. A friend of mine knew him much better, and he spoke highly of him as a preacher of the gospel. Also, when brother Curtis A. Cates lived in Portland, Oregon, and served as Dean of Columbia Christian College, he became acquainted with brother John Bessire, and visited with him from time to time.

We are saddened at brother Bessire's passing, but rejoice in his victory. We extend our deepest sympathy to his loved ones, and we are thankful that his influence for good will continue through his contributions to the educating of gospel preachers at MSOP.

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS

Bobby Liddell

Daniel 9 records the last revelation of God to Daniel, and is one of the most discussed and most misunderstood chapters in all the Bible. As noted earlier, many premillennial "prophets" and date setters look to Daniel 9, as if it supported their false doctrines, and they purport that it teaches millennialism—but it does not.

Darius I Hystaspes, the son of Ahasuerus, reigned from 521-486 B.C. (Dan. 9:1-2). In the first year of Darius' reign, Daniel understood from Jeremiah that God would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Jer. 25:11; cf. 29:4-10; 2 Chr. 36:19-21). Daniel prayed with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. In his prayer: he praised God for His keeping His covenant and mercy; confessed their sins and disobedience; declared their "confusion of face" because of their transgression; spoke of God's doing what He had promised in His Word in bringing them into captivity, and that God was righteous in so doing; and besought the Lord to let His anger and fury be turned away from the city of Jerusalem, and to cause His face to shine upon the sanctuary (temple) that was desolate, for the Lord's sake (Dan. 9:3-19).

Under Cyrus' decree, Zerubbabel had led 49,897 of the Jews back from captivity to Jerusalem (Ezra 1-2), in the first of three returns. Work was begun on the temple, but was soon stopped by the opposition (Ezra 4). Darius searched for the original decree of Cyrus, and upon finding it, ordered the resumption of the building (Ezra 6). The temple, which was destroyed in 586 B.C. (Jer. 52:12-14), was finished being rebuilt in 516 B.C.

God sent the angel Gabriel to give Daniel understanding. Gabriel told Daniel of seventy "weeks" (seventy sevens); that is, 490 years, as we shall see (Dan. 9:20-23).

During the seventy weeks, or 490 years, the following would be accomplished (Dan. 9:24): (1) To finish the transgression, (2) To make an end of sins, (3) To make reconciliation for iniquity (4) To bring in everlasting righteousness, (4) To seal up the vision and prophecy, and (5) To anoint the most Holy.

1. **To finish the transgression.** There would be a full end of the desolation on the Jewish nation for their sins of idolatry. The Assyrian and Babylonian captivities forever broke them from idol worship.

2. **To make an end of sins.** A way (system) of forgiveness would be provided that sin would be forgiven and remembered by God no more (Heb. 8:12; cf. 10:1-4; 9:22; 10:12).

3. **To make reconciliation for iniquity.** Through Christ, and His shed blood, man could be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rev. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4).

4. **To bring in everlasting righteousness.** The Gospel system of righteousness, that brings salvation by Christ's atonement for sin, would be brought in within these 490 years (cf. Rom. 3).

5. **To seal up the vision and prophecy.** To fulfill the Old Testament prophecies which culminated in the Messiah (Mat. 11:13; 5:17-18; Luke 24:44).

6. **To anoint the most Holy.** Christ would be anointed as King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15; Dan. 7:13-14; Mark 16:19; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9), during this time of seventy weeks.

The seventy weeks would begin with the going forth of the command to build Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25). From then to the Messiah would be seven weeks AND threescore and two weeks, or 69 weeks. 69 (483 years). Seven weeks (49 years) would be involved in the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem ("the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times").

After the threescore and two weeks (which came after the seven weeks); thus, AFTER 69 weeks or 483 years, Messiah would

be cut off (suffer a violent death, Isa. 53:7-8). NOTE: Christ would begin His public ministry AFTER the sixty-ninth week; thus, IN the seventieth week. Many miss this point and misapply this prophecy (Dan. 9:26). "But not for himself" means He would have nothing (ASV). He had no possessions (John 19:23-24). He had no position of worldly honor (John 18:36). He had been forsaken by His friends (Mat. 24:56). He was crucified by His people, the Jews (Mat. 23:34-39; 27:23). He gave up self, and emptied Himself, to save man from sin (2 Cor. 8:9).

Gabriel also told Daniel the people of the prince (the Roman army under Titus) would destroy the city (of Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (temple), with a flood (an overwhelming), which did happen in A.D. 70 (cf. Mat. 24:15), but NOT within the 490 year period of seventy weeks. The Christians in Jerusalem fled to Pella and were spared, but multiplied tens of thousands of Jews were killed, or taken captive, in the destruction of Jerusalem.

According to Daniel 9:27, He would "confirm the covenant with many for one week" which refers to the work of Christ and His disciples to take the Gospel to the Jews. The Jews were given the good news first (Mat. 10:5-6; Acts 1:8). When the seventieth week was up, the Gospel would be taken to the Samaritans (Jew and Gentile mixed race, Acts 8:5), and eventually to the full blooded Gentiles.

"In the midst of the week" means in the middle of the seventieth week. Therefore, AFTER 69 weeks (483 years) and one-half week (3.5 years), for a total of 486.5 years, Christ would be crucified. Half of the week (the seventieth week) would be three and one-half years, the time of the public ministry of Jesus. His public ministry began when He was about thirty (Luke 3:23; John 1:29ff), and He was crucified three and one-half years later.

By His death on the cross, Christ would "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease," nailing the Old Law (with its offerings of animal sacrifices) to His cross (Col. 2:14). Fulfilling the Old Law, He took it out of the way (Mat. 5:17-18), by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 10:9-10). Thus, there is no benefit to offering animal sacrifices any more, for Jesus Christ "offered one sacrifice for sins forever" (Heb. 10:12).

Now, when did the command go forth (Dan. 9:24)? The command to restore and to rebuild the city was given to Nehemiah in the second commission of king Artaxerxes Longimanus (Neh. 1:1-3; 2:1-6). It was in the king's twentieth year, and he began to reign in 477 B.C. Thus, his twentieth year would be c. 457 B.C.

TIMETABLE

To 457 B.C. (the going forth of the command), add:	
7 weeks	49 years for rebuilding Jerusalem.
62 weeks	434 years until the Messiah's ministry.
1/2 week	3.5 years until the crucifixion.
1/2 week	3.5 years of preaching to the Jews.
Total 70 weeks	490 years

Thus, 457 B.C. plus 490 years equals c. A.D. 33. Subtract one-half week (3.5 years), and the date of the crucifixion was c. A.D. 28 or 29 (agreeing with the corrected calendar).

The blessings of the Messiah are now available to us, just as Daniel prophesied. This promise is not something yet to be fulfilled, for God has not postponed the Messiah's coming, Kingship, or blessings. As always, the false prophets, date setters, and premillennialists have missed the point, misapplied the passage, and misled the people—to their own destruction.

*(I owe much to brother Rex A. Turner, Sr., one of the teachers under whom I studied Daniel, and to his book, **Daniel: A Prophet Of God**, from which the basis for much of the preceding information was taken. See especially pages 295-351.)*