

## Paralysis of Preoccupation

**Leonard Ravenhill:**

Caesar Augustus was having trouble with his tax income. Prices were high and armies of occupation, plus each soldier's need of a special bonus for danger money, kept the treasury low. Caesar needed cash!

This could be part of the trouble that furrowed the brow of Herod, vassal-king in the Roman-occupied Palestine. He must channel more money to his chief.

In the midst of his quandary, some star-gazers had asked audience with Herod because their craft had revealed to them that a person of royal birth had just entered the world, and in that vicinity!

Our story says Herod "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." I imagine that there was a touch of fear about his message to the wise men: "When ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." Half an hour on horseback and Herod could have investigated the spot where the royal child was born. But the demanding affairs of state crowded the time sheet of the ruler. He took a short while out to inquire of scribes and chief priests, but he went no further. Just half an hour's gallop away the greatest event in human history had taken place, and Herod had missed it. Had he gone and had he worshipped, his personal history and destiny might have been different.

Although Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled, there was a minority, too insignificant to mention, who were not troubled. Notice Mary and Joseph on their way to the temple with their holy child. The saintly Simeon is on duty to take the offering the poor couple bring at the dedication of Jesus. Notice the corners of Mary's mouth curve upwards as the priest says, "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

I think that often we overlook the first thing that Jesus ever did. Before He knew where He was, before He knew who He was, before He could walk, before He could talk-Jesus set a pattern for His life and, in measure, for eternity. He divided men!

The first thing that Jesus the Babe did was to divide the nation. Most were against Him, a few for Him. He divided men at His birth; He divided them on His blessed cross in death; He divided them in His life in the synagogue (John 7:43). He will divide them at the judgment seat. Jesus declared quite openly that His mission was to divide men (Luke 12:51). He still divides men, and He will do so until time ends.

Dr. Tozer once reminded us that after Adam sinned, he became occupied with things. Today we are too preoccupied with the complexities of our modern "rat race." Bunyan had an old materialist who was so busy looking down at his muck rake that he had no time to see the crown of dazzling splendor above his head.

Men are now so occupied with getting to the moon that they have forgotten how to get to heaven. They are so bent on inventing new ways to liquidate cities that they have lost sight of living. Some scientists spend their lives inventing death.

This troubled age so relentlessly broadcasts its groans over worldwide radios every hour on the hour that men have forgotten that there is a Prince of Peace.

Honesty is hard to come by even in the church of the living God. We believers are so preoccupied with the lesser things of the church that we have starved our own appetite for the moving of the Spirit.

As we enter this last phase of 1964, I challenge each reader, pastor, or missionary to check his record of soul-saving over the year gone. The strong wine of statistics has blurred the thinking of many. Just who of our group did get saved this year? Just which person was filled with the Spirit? Where are our ranks depleted because our members have moved off into full-time service for Christ at home or abroad?

Perhaps a nibble at Time magazine stirs us for a moment about the perils in Harlem. The flicker of the news on TV startles us as we see the deterioration in Vietnam and the setback in Cyprus. After our reading or seeing, we are back again so-preoccupied with events that the great event of His near return is clouded.

Had Christ come sweeping down the skies in the fiery chariot that Elijah went up in, the world would then have believed on Him. Had He come with ten thousands of His Old Testament saints and the blast of a million angelic trumpets, all men would then have fallen in worship.

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Christ came veiled in flesh. He took the limits of any other infant. Today again He withholds His power and glory. Daily He hears millions blaspheme His holy name. He seems indifferent to the hourly breaking of His commandments and the wrecking of His sabbaths.

But wait! Who shall abide the day of His coming? Of this I am sure: Jesus Christ came to produce a better church than we have here at the moment. He said, "I am the door." He is the door by which we enter to greater power. By Him we enter into all the riches of the Godhead. By Him and through Him and for Him all things exist.

If we were not so preoccupied with lesser things, we would be grief-stricken that we have failed to inherit our possessions in Him. In failing Him, we hurt His dear heart day by day.

**We are too preoccupied!**

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