

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" MARK 16:15

SEPTEMBER 1994

FROM US TO YOU

Statue of Freedom Washington, <u>D.C.</u>

At this writing we have just returned from a very informative trip to Washington D.C. While the week we spent there was technically a vacation, the Lord and the concerns of this ministry were still with us. So we soon began to see many intriguing aspects of our national government that we had not noticed previously. For example, the District of Columbia is a city filled with statues! Every building has its own monuments. The one building we visited that has more statues and murals than any other is the Capitol. There are statues of past U.S. presidents, governors, authors, and inventors. The dome of the building is filled with huge murals depicting different scenes. In one of the mementos we brought back from Washington, a 192 page color book entitled "The Capitol - A Pictorial History of the Capitol And Of The

Congress" there are pages showing detailed close-up photos of scenes around the dome. The first sentence on the page reads "Gods and mortals mingle in the dome's fresco." Then it goes on to describe the paintings. They include the following Roman idols: Ceres, the so-called goddess of agriculture. She is portrayed as "Young America," wearing a liberty cap and riding a reaper. Vulcan, the "god" of fire is depicted with his foot on a cannon. Another shows Mercury, a "god" that served as messenger to the other gods, offering a bag of gold to Robert Morris (1734-1806), an American Revolutionary politician, financier, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Then there's a scene showing a bearded Neptune (Roman god of the sea) and Aphrodite (the Greek goddess of love and beauty). In this fresco of fantasy they are both portrayed rising from the sea. Aphrodite is holding the Atlantic cable. And finally, there's Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, invention, the arts, and martial prowess. Minerva is seen speaking to Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), S.F.B. Morse (1791-1872), and Robert Fulton (1765-1815).

From the outside, the dome of the Capitol is topped with the "Statue of Freedom." It was authorized by Congress in 1855. The sculptor, Thomas Crawford, an American, had been working in Rome at the time, and had become very influenced by the neoclassical style. Many elements went into the final creation, for it was meant to represent numerous people and their cultural or social histories. The original sketch **wore a liberty cap**, the emblem of freed slaves in ancient Greece. However it

was later changed, and she now wears a helmet **encircled by stars**. The helmet was meant to give her a stronger, more intimidating image. As in the American flag, the **stars** represent the different states. We find this to be especially interesting since so much of the statue is based on symbolism. So why would **stars** represent certain states? It may be helpful to remember the strong **spiritual** connotations on the fresco inside the dome, and also that the "spirits" promoted were not Biblical, but pagan! So let's view it spiritually through the Bible, which often uses the word "star" or "stars" when speaking of angels, either good or bad (Deuteronomy 4:19, Jeremiah 8:2, Obadiah 1:4, Amos 5:26, Matthew 2:2, Acts 7:43, Jude 1:13, Revelation 1:20, 9:1).

Continuing along the same path, it's also interesting to note that certain symbols of Native American culture are also present in the statue, namely an **eagle's head, feathers, and talons**. A talon is defined as "the claw of a **bird** of prey."

While in Washington we also visited a number of the Smithsonian museums, and came back with lots of books and videos filled with information. However, it was one of the videos we saw at the Museum of Natural History that proved to be among the most enlightening. It showed several festivals and religious rites of a little known pagan tribe somewhere in the world. Costumes and **masks** were worn by those who held a prominent part in their services. The video was made totally from the perspective of the idol worshippers, as was everything

else we saw at the museums we visited. Even so, the narrator confirmed the fact that the totem poles and masks were used so that the "gods", who were worshipped, could become more visible to humans! In another video (The Spirit of the Mask), one we purchased and took home, a Northwestern American Indian tribe was visited by a young anthropologist, Wade Davis, who has become so impressed with the religious habits of the Indians, that he is promoting their idolatry to the rest of the country. It was revealed that pagan masks and totem poles were painted by artists who had received special messages from the spirit world through dreams and visions. (Galatians 1:8 & 2 Corinthians 11:14.)

We were also shown a portion of a class given at a major university in Southern California. The instructor was teaching the students how to receive "peace and spiritual relief from tension" through the use of pagan religious masks. Wearing one of the masks, the students were told, would open them up to a totally new way of life. She demonstrated by putting one on, and immediately her bodily movements changed. Her limbs were held at a strange angle, and she began to move around slowly in front of the class, acting more like a bird than a person! Her strange actions were accompanied by weird vocalizations that didn't sound human. After a couple of minutes she took the mask off and began to breath deeply as if recovering from a peculiar, exhausting experience. "Whew" she stated. Then she began to explain how wearing the mask enables her to take

on emotions and thoughts that she is not normally aware of, leaving the impression that, through the mask, great intelligence and spiritual freedom can be possible. This sounds rather reminiscent of the conversation Satan had with Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:3-7). Mankind has always gravitated toward power and influence over other humans. It is the pursuit of material gain and control that has led to idolatry down through the centuries. We hope that this month's article "Nimrod, Cain, and Martha" will reveal one of the most deceptive.

There is much more we'd like to share with you, but space limits us. So, until next time everyone, we remain, *Cric and Anne Kaestner*

Nimrod, Cain, and Martha

In the Bible the earliest ruler was named Nimrod. After the Great Flood that is spoken about in Genesis 7 & 8, the only people left on Earth were from the family of Noah. Nimrod was Noah's grandson. He was known as a "Mighty hunter before the Lord ... " (Genesis 10:9 KJV). He was also the world leader of his day, which wasn't hard, because the earth's population had not yet been disbursed. Therefore, everyone was united in allegiance and purpose to Nimrod and his plan to build a tower so high that it would reach all the way into Heaven. Obviously we now know that such a thing would have been impossible under normal circumstances. However archaeologists have discovered that ancient cultures have been far more ingenious and resourceful than expected. That's because mankind didn't start out as apes or amoebas, but as an intelligent human being named Adam. God created Eve out of Adam, her husband. Adam did not fit, in any way, the crude, club-carrying, woman-beating cliché that scientific historians have portrayed in the caveman! And there is no evidence that Adam ever lived in a cave! Nor was he half-monkey! In fact, Adam was a genius! Therefore, those early generations that came after him, were intelligent too, even when they weren't living for God. They were still Adam's descendants and had inherited much of his brilliance, even though, as sin increased, its darkness stemmed the brightness thereof!

It may seem silly to us, with all the technology we have today, for anyone to think that they can reach into Heaven via a skyscraper. However, the people of Nimrod's day would have eventually discovered, if they had kept at it, that there is such a thing as oxygen, which gets greatly depleted at high altitudes, and that beyond Earth's atmosphere there is no gravity. However, their discoveries would have come a lot sooner if God had not intervened, because they had a great edge over the rest of us. They all worked as one united body fulfilling a common goal, i.e., to get into Heaven via human means, instead of through Christ (see John 10:1-15). Moreover, Nimrod's kingdom didn't have to worry about fighting wars with other countries, because there were no other countries. All of the earth's people lived in one kingdom. Neither did they have a problem with ethnic tension, because they were all of the same race. Racial divisions didn't occur until after different

families (tribes) became disbursed throughout the earth. So the people of Nimrod's kingdom had a real team spirit. But the spirit wasn't coming from God! Satan had already tried once before to get into Heaven and usurp the throne of God, and he had failed (Isaiah 14:13 & Revelation 12:7-9). So this was just another way of attempting it again. "And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:6-9 KJV).

When Christian settlers first visited the shores of America they found a beautiful and abundant nation, a land comparable with the "promised land" of ancient Israel, of which God stated, "... I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Exodus 3:8 KJV). The Canaanites, Hittites, and

By Anne Kaestner

other tribes mentioned, were the pagans who lived in those days. They had their own civilizations, their own rulers, languages, customs, and ways of life. But they did not worship God, their Creator. They worshipped other gods! They tried to please their "gods" through gifts and works. Museums and history books have documented this pattern in cultures and people all over the globe, from ancient times all the way up to present days. For no matter what religion it may be or where the people live, they all have one thing in common. It is a desire to gain acceptance of the spirit realm through good works and sacrifice. That would be the case in every situation except one, that of Christianity! The difference is inescapable. Christianity is the only belief that does not depend on what humans do for their god, but in what God has already done for us! "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NIV). The word "believes" means total dependence and dedication to Christ, as a child "believes" in his parents to provide for him (Matthew 18:3). It doesn't mean just to believe in the existence of God. Even the devil knows that God exists! Neither does it mean simply to think of God as a "genie in a magic lamp" who can be called upon whenever we have problems. God helps and assists those who love and serve Him, but He has made no promises about helping idol worshippers in any

> way, even if your idol is a baseball player, rock singer, politician, doctor, or even your spouse or child! Anyone or anything can become an idol and stumbling block between you and your Savior! The Bible gives us an account of how "Another disciple said to Him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus told him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead'" (Matthew 8:21-22 NIV). The insinuation here is that the disciple's father had died in his sins without repentance or acceptance of his Redeemer, and was therefore, eternally lost (Isaiah 19:20, Isaiah 59:20, Galatians 4:4-5, Titus 2:13-14). Jesus was telling the man to let the others who were also unrepentant, and heading for the same destination, bury the dead man. Christ was saying that when He calls someone, He expects ut Him first and to come guidely.

them to put Him first and to come quickly.

A similar analogy can be found in the story of Mary and Martha. "As Jesus and His disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what He said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, 'Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:38-42 NIV). Frankly, most churches today are filled with far more Marthas than Marys! The Bible doesn't mention anything about Martha or Mary having husbands or children. In fact, Mary may have even been delivered from prostitution through Christ (Luke 7:37-47 & John 11:1-2). However, the majority of Christian women, these days, seem to believe that the most important role they can play in life is that of wife and mother. That also incorporates into it the idea that women are to be good hostesses, keep the house clean, raise the children, prepare the food, do all the things that Martha would have excelled at. On its own there's nothing wrong with a woman fulfilling that role in life, if that is where God wants her to be! However, the two women who were most instrumental in my life, leading me toward Jesus, never got married, never had their own children, and



their lives were so actively involved in seeking out the will of God and obeying His every command, that they would not have allowed anything to distract them from the Word of God (John 1:1-14, Revelation 19:13). The Bible says that we are to be hospitable as Christians (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8, Hebrews 13:2). However, that doesn't mean that we may allow ourselves to become so diverted by the things of this world that we lose sight of our proper priorities (Matthew 6:25, Luke 4:4). There is a time for cooking and entertaining (Ecclesiastes 3:1). But doing such should never become more important than searching for the direction of Christ, and obeying Him. Martha represents the type of person who is so preoccupied with trying to please Jesus, and doing what she feels will make Him happy, that she's not listening to what He is trying to tell her! However, Mary is a good listener. She's the type of Christian who seeks first to find the will of God, and to learn from Him. Even so, to Martha, Mary is lazy and shiftless. Since Martha didn't comprehend the peace and joy of God, she couldn't possibly understand that, unlike her, Mary's hunger is spiritual, not material.

Cain probably felt the same about his brother Abel (Genesis 4:2-5), because Cain also governed his priorities according to his pride, and, like Martha, he expected everyone else to measure up to his criteria, instead of him learning how to live according to the standards of God (Genesis 4:6-7). Cain undoubtedly worked very hard in the fields all day long, under the hot sun. He had no modern farming equipment, and therefore, tilling the soil must have been backbreaking. By contrast, the shepherd's job is to watch over the sheep. He may only have to sit under a shady tree all day to keep an eye over the flock. He doesn't even have to feed them, because sheep eat grass, and drink from lakes and streams. So it's easy to see how Cain grew to resent all the work he was doing while his brother Abel seemingly took it easy. Nevertheless, Cain apparently didn't mind all his hard work because he had convinced himself that

God would surely see how much harder he had worked than had Abel, and would reward him accordingly. Therefore, in view of his preconceived notions of what would make God happy, Cain was furious that God refused his offering and accepted Abel's. Of course Cain didn't stop to realize that while his job was painful

and difficult, it wasn't as dangerous as the job of a shepherd.

No wolves were likely to attack a head of Cain's cabbage, or a patch of his carrots. And even if they did, they wouldn't be shedding innocent blood, or ripping at live flesh! Abel may have seemed to be taking the easy route, but in reality, he was risking his own life watching over a herd of tasty morsels that the nearby wolf pack may have considered a part of tomorrow's menu! Doing the work of a shepherd isn't as easy to the world as it may seem. Remember the conversation that took place between a young shepherd boy named David, and Saul, King of Israel (1 Samuel 17:32-37). God, also has shepherds to tend His flock (John 21:17, Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2). Many of them have been killed over the years because they loved Jesus and had compassion for His sheep even when faced with the enormous might and power of the rulers of their day (Luke 11:48-51). They did not succumb or compromise their faith even when death was the only alternative (Luke 48-51, Acts 7:54-60, Hebrews 11:35-38, Revelation 2:13). Their faith was supernatural, and did not depend on human intervention or strength, because no matter what forces came against them, they knew what Job knew thousands of years ago, when he said, "... I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26 KJV). They knew Christ, even in the days when He had not yet left Heaven and become flesh for our redemption (John 1:1-14).

Martha's sister, Mary, also knew her Redeemer, and when He

was in her midst, the food could wait, the dishes could sit in the kitchen, and the fruit could stay on the vine. For the Vine of Life was right in her own home, and nothing was more important than knowing Him! Martha didn't understand this because her mind was on earthly things, while Mary's was more concerned with the Heavenly! That's why, as in the case of Cain and Abel, the Lord defended Mary and rebuked Martha! What Martha thought was important wasn't necessarily what Jesus considered significant. Martha was trying to show Christ how much she loved Him through her good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9), but remember the words of Jesus, "'Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval.' Then they asked Him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent'" (John 6:27-29 NIV). There is such a contrast between these two women. For while Martha was so busy with "...the worries of this life ... " (Matthew 13:22 NIV) she wasn't receiving proper nourishment from the Vine of Christ (John 15:5), and had become "...unfruitful..." (Matthew 13:22). However, Mary was more interested in humbly sitting at the Lord's feet and hearing what He had to say. Unfortunately, as in the cases of Martha and Cain, most Christians today are more concerned with bringing their fruit and vegetables before God than in humbly learning from Him. Martha was worried about feeding Jesus, but Jesus was more interested in feeding Martha! Martha felt she had something she was anxious to offer Christ, and Christ was dis-

appointed because Martha wasn't there accepting the spiritual food He was offering (John 6:35). We have also discovered, since we started this ministry, that the most immature Christians are far more interested in teaching or "feeding" others than in learning from God themselves. They feel that they already "know it all," but they are so wrong. "They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm"

(1 Timothy 1:7 NIV). For after 32 years of living for Jesus and learning from Him (I was Born Again as a child -- see John 3:3), there's still plenty that Jesus still wants to teach me, and I never stop learning from Him. Still, it took 26 years of spiritual education through Christ, before the Lord actually

gave me this ministry I have today. My husband and I didn't receive it through human means. For events unfolded in such a way that God made it very clear that He was determined to get the glory, and would not share it with anyone else, including us!

Jesus paid a mighty price for our salvation on the cross of Calvary (1 Peter 1:18-19) and He is worthy of our **total** loyalty and attention. He expects to come first in our lives, and won't accept second place (Matthew 10:37), even through the gifts we may wish to offer Him! (See Isaiah 1:13.) We, as Christians, need to become servants for Christ, and that often means learning humility. As Mary did, we sometimes need to forget about what needs doing in the kitchen, or how hungry we might be for food, and remember that "...Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4 NIV, also see Deut. 8:3). That's why it's so important that we heed His spiritual words of life, and learn to wait upon Jesus. Patience is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Now that doesn't mean that you should swing totally in the other direction either, because "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (Hebrews 6:12 NIV). Therefore, while we need to be responsible as Christians, nothing should come between us and our relationship with God. It's not what we can do for Him that's important to Jesus. It's what He can do through us. No job is too (Continued On Page 4) small or unimportant that we cannot

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do it joyfully unto the Lord. Neither should we dictate to God what role we are to play in His kingdom. As clay, we need to remember the admonition of the prophet, "You turn things upside down, as if the Potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to Him who formed it, He did not make me'? Can the pot say of the Potter, 'He knows nothing'?" (Isaiah 29:16 NIV).

Consider the Canaanite woman who went to Jesus seeking help, "Jesus did not answer a word. So His disciples came to Him and urged Him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel'" (Matthew 15:23-24 NIV). If the woman had not completely humbled herself before Him, He probably would not have helped her. For, at that time, the Israelites were the only ones eligible to receive the Lord's blessings as they were the only people who had traditionally loved and served God in a world filled with idolatry. This is despite the fact that they had backslid so terribly under the leadership of Israel's false prophets (see Jeremiah 5:31). Nevertheless, the Canaanite woman wouldn't give up. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me" (Matthew 15:25 KJV). Even then, "He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs?'" (Matthew 15:26 NIV). Can you imagine that? In Biblical times the Jews referred to the pagans, or idol worshippers, as "dogs" (Psalms 22:16, Matthew 7:6). So

Jesus was, in fact, calling this woman and her demon-possessed daughter "dogs." If Jesus had lived in these days and had said something like that, someone less humble than this Canaanite woman would have gotten the ACLU to file civil rights

charges against God! But this woman didn't worry about her bruised ego or her hurt feelings. All she cared about was that the answer to her need was standing right in front of her, and as she sat kneeling before Him (Matthew 15:25 NIV) she not only refused to get angry, but she actually agreed with His statement, and accepted the fact that, through the worship of Canaanite idols, chiefly Baal (also known as Beelzebub) and Astarte, she had **spiritually** become like a dog. Therefore, she knew that she wasn't worthy of the blessings, or "bread" (Luke 22:19) of those who had loved and served Christ. For she and her daughter had so horribly sinned against Him! Furthermore, she had discovered that when she was really desperate, all the Canaanite idols in the world were of no help (see Isaiah 47:13-14 & Romans 1:22-27). But she knew who was! She had found Christ, the one and only solution to her misery. And this Canaanite woman told Jesus, "...Truth, Lord: yet the dogs

eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matthew 15:27 KJV). How many people today would have humbled themselves so greatly at the Master's feet? And it was precisely because of her great faith and total submission before Him, that Jesus finally acquiesced, and granted her request.

This account might also be compared to that of the "prodigal son" who had become bored with the safety and security of his father's home, and had decided to do things his way. Then, finally after falling so far into sin that he became destitute enough to take a job feeding pigs, he actually became hungry enough to eat the swill he was feeding them. That's when he came to his senses, and returned to his father. "And the son said unto him, father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found…" (Luke 15:21-24 KJV). The difference in these two accounts is that the Canaanite woman was coming to Christ for the first time, and had never served

Him before. However, the prodigal son symbolizes the man who once knew God, but has fallen so deeply into sin that he doesn't feel worthy anymore to be called the Lord's child. Even so, he considers it an honor just to become a servant in his Father's household. The father, Jesus was speaking of in His "Prodigal Son" parable, symbolizes God the Father, while Christ is symbolized as the Good Shepherd in Matthew 18:12-14 and John 10:11. He is the bridge that restores us and leads us home to God (1 Timothy 2:5)!

Since this is a prison ministry I'd also like to give one final example of the two different conceptions people have regarding salvation. They are dramatically contrasted in the personalities of two men, both convicts in the process of being slowly and horribly put to death. It was at the time of the Lord's crucifixion. Jesus had been cruelly insulted by the Roman soldiers and many of the Jews who had mocked Him with cutting remarks such as, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One" (Luke 23:35 NIV). You will find that when you are feeling your absolute lowest, and think that nothing worse could ever happen, that's when Satan will kick you the hardest! And there is no one the Devil hates more than Christ Himself! Here was God's own Son, in the most vulnerable predicament known to mankind. His back had been ripped apart with a whip. His eyes undoubtedly stung as the blood dripped into them from the crown of thorns that had been pushed into His scalp. He had been betrayed by one of His own disciples. The rest, even His closest and dearest followers, had fled away in terror. Peter, who had sworn to die for the Lord (and eventually did die the same way), had, at that time, denied Jesus three times. The Lord was now in agony! He was naked, bleeding, and nailed to a cross between two thieves.

It was at this very moment that "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him: 'Aren't you the Christ? Save Yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in Paradise'" (Luke 23:39-43 NIV). The first thief certainly wanted salvation. He didn't want to have to suffer for his sins. Today he would have been happy to call himself "Born Again." He probably would have even gone around claiming to be "Spirit filled." But the sad part is that this man didn't really love Jesus. He only looked upon Him as a means by which he could escape punishment.

The prisons of this land are filled with many who feel the same way. They view Christ as a means of getting out of prison earlier, or persuading naive church goers on the outside to be willing to help them. Then there's the real man of God! He's the one who does not make excuses for his sins anymore. Like the publican in Luke 18:10-14, he feels the full weight and shame of his past, and begs the Lord's forgiveness. Like Mary, who anointed and caressed the feet of Jesus, washing them with her tears, and drying them with her hair (Luke 7:38), the truly "Born Again" believer feels Holy Spirit conviction clear through to his or her bones! As I close, please remember that, like Nimrod, Cain, and Martha, there will always be those who feel they can get all the way into Heaven through man-made achievements and success. But Nimrod's kingdom was destroyed, Cain's life was ruined, and Martha was reprimanded by Jesus in front of her sister! So, remember the words of the Lord, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21 NIV). And "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the Earth" (Psalms 46:10 KJV).