SAMUEL MORSE

Samuel F. B. Morse was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1791. He was the first child of the pastor Jedidiah Morse, who was also known as the Father of American Geography. Jedidiah wrote a text book called "Geography Made Easy" in 1784. It was the first geography published in the United States and went through over twenty-five editions. His geographies often referred to the Scriptures in describing the earth's formation and geographic history. His son, Samuel, first attended Philips Academy, and then went on to Yale where he studied religious philosophy, and mathematics. He also attended lectures on electricity. He supported himself by painting portraits.

When his wife died, he was out of town. Consequently, she was dead and buried before he even knew what happened. This sad fact must have impressed upon him the importance of being able to communicate quickly. After his parents also died, he was so overcome with grief that he went to Europe to reflect upon God's purpose in his life. On the return trip, he was captivated by a discussion of new experiments in electromagnetism. At that time he reflected: ""If the presence of electricity can be made visible in any part of the circuit, I see no reason why intelligence may not be transmitted by electricity." Perhaps it was God Who placed this idea in his mind for the Bible states: "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." (Proverbs 19:21). It now seems obvious that God was redirecting the life of Samuel Morse to make a more important contribution to the world than merely painting pictures. In 1837 he had perfected the "telegraph" and applied for a patent. As you know, he also was involved in developing the "Morse Code" which was used on his telegraph wires then, and is still being used today.

Because Morse was a poor man, he needed money to string telegraph wires so that his invention could be used. When he sought funding from the government, however, the task seemed impossible. Many in congress considered his invention to be ridiculous. Morse, however, consoled himself by saying: "The only gleam of hope, and I cannot underrate it, is from confidence in God. When I look upward it calms any apprehension for the future, and I seem to hear a voice saying: 'If I clothe the lilies of the field, shall I not also clothe you?' Here is my strong confidence, and I will wait patiently for the direction of Providence."

On the last night of the Congressional session, a few minutes before midnight, Congress awarded him $30,000 to construct a telegraphic line between Baltimore and Washington. Within a year the line was established, and Morse sent the first telegraph message, from **Numbers 23:23** in the Bible, **"What hath God wrought!"** Morse later wrote that no words could have been selected more expressive of the disposition of my own mind at that time, to ascribe all the honor to Him it truly belongs. Morse went on to create several other inventions which paved the way for faxes, modems, e-mail, the Internet and other electronic communication.

By 1874, thirty years after the experimental line was built, the worldwide communications network he envisioned had become a reality. It included 650,000 miles of telegraph wire and 30,000 miles of submarine cable . Now cities could communicate with one another all around the world. Characteristically, Morse had given the first $25 he had earned from the telegraph to a Sunday school. One of the last acts of his life was to endow a lectureship on the relation of the Bible to the sciences.

Four years before his death, Samuel F.B. Morse wrote: "The nearer I approach to the end of my pilgrimage, the clearer is the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible, the grandeur and sublimity of God's remedy for fallen man are more appreciated, and the future is illumined with hope and joy." Now that we know a little of what "God wrought" in the Samuel Morse, perhaps we can also understand more clearly what God can also do through us.