



**CHURCH OF GOD**  
GENERAL CONFERENCE

# THE RESTITUTION HERALD

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE **KINGDOM OF GOD** | ACTS 3:21

... heaven must receive [Jesus] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

## Love Must Show Itself In Action

By Edward Bender (SC)

Love is not just a word that you say, such as “I love you!” Love is defined by your actions that involve the person or persons to whom you say, “I love you!” In simple language “love” is an action word! The Bible states it like this: “Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him” (1 John 3:18-19, RSV). Although I do not recommend paraphrase versions of the Bible, I have chosen the following as a commentary of these two verses. “My children, let us not love merely in theory or in words—let us love in sincerity and in practice! If we live like this, we shall know that we are children of the truth and can reassure ourselves in the sight of God” (1 John 3:18-19, Phillips). Love is not a word to be just spoken. It is a word that requires action on the part of the person speaking. Love is never expressed by words alone!

### 1. What does it mean to “not love with theory or words”?

If your mate, parent, child told you that he/she loved you, however, never expressed it in actual actions, how would that make you feel? I believe John expressed it best when he states the following. “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17, RSV). Are we aware of those around us who are in need, especially during this unusual time in which we are living? Have I offered to help someone recently? Am I being a loving mate, parent, neighbor, friend or friend in Christ?

“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another [including your mate] with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor” (Romans 12:9-10, RSV). “...any other commandment, is summed up in this sentence, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor [mate] ...” (Romans 13:9-10, RSV).

Am I able to say as Paul did? “ have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, RSV).

### 2. What does it mean “passed out of death into life”?

Obviously we do not have eternal life today! “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death” (1 John 3:14, RSV). We know we have passed from death unto life when we rose from the waters of baptism and chose to walk with him daily. “And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive to-

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## Love Must Show Itself In Action (cont.)

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gether with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:1-6, RSV).

Our lives changed when we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior and decided to accept this new life through the waters of baptism and to walk with him daily. The Scriptures puts it this way. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27, RSV). "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4, RSV).

"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who remains in Him sins continually; no one who sins continually has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who has been born [begotten, ASV] of God practices sin, because His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin continually, because he has been born [begotten, ASV] of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother and sister" (1 John 3:4-10, NASB).

The real test of our love comes when we love those who do not love us. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:32-36, RSV).

### 3. "By this [example] we know love"

God gave us the extreme example by giving us His only begotten son as a sacrifice for our sins. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved

through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:16-18, RSV).

Jesus was obedient to the command of His Father and set us an example that is very much appreciated, because without it we would be without hope in this age. "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3:16-17, RSV). "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation [appeasing G2435, SCO] for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10, RSV).

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:12-14, RSV).

### Conclusion

We love, because he first loved us. If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (1 John 4:19-20, RSV). "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35, RSV).

Am I able to meet the Scriptural test showing that I have God's love in me? "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you" (John 14:15-17, RSV). I will make an effort to grow in his love!

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# God's Financial Principles vs. Worldly Financial Principles\*

By Nicole Wu (OH)

Often commonly accepted or widespread societal practices do not fall in line with scriptural teachings. The world of finance and the way that believers should handle their money is no different. There are numerous examples of this misalignment, but, in the interest of brevity, we will discuss three commonly held worldly financial beliefs and offer a more biblical attitude toward each one.

The first worldly belief is that debt is unavoidable, and even necessary. In 2019 US student loan debt totaled a staggering \$1.41 trillion with 14.4% of adults having one or more educational loans and each borrower averaging \$35,359 in loans.<sup>1</sup> According to a recent article from the Urban Institute, mortgage debt has peaked, and US total mortgage debt totals \$10.36 trillion with 62.9% of homeowners having a mortgage.<sup>2</sup> The average American household owes around \$6,124 in credit card debt and has a combined average debt of around \$137,729.<sup>3</sup> With the prevalence and extent of those numbers, it's no wonder most Americans accept debt as just a part of life.

Scripture teaches otherwise. Paul wrote to “owe no one anything, except to love each other” (Rom. 13:8, NASB) and Prov. 22:26 (ESV) says, “Be not one of those who give pledges, but who put up security for debts.” Also, Prov. 22:7 (NIV) says “the borrower is slave to the lender.” As servants of Jesus, being enslaved to money is unacceptable. He warns in Matt. 6:24 (NIV) that “no one can serve two masters... you cannot serve both God and money”. Believers should therefore try their hardest to be debt free.

The second worldly belief is that wealth is earned through human effort and not because of divine blessing. In America especially, despite many claiming the USA to be a “Christian nation,” there is a tendency towards idolizing the “self-made man” since the term was coined by Henry Clay in 1832.<sup>4</sup> Each year the “Forbes 400” publishes a list of the top 400 wealthiest Americans. People like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk are extolled for their innovation, dedication, and the hard work they did to achieve their massive wealth.

This is not the correct attitude to have. In 1 Corinthians Paul talks about how, despite his working harder than any of the other apostles, it was not his efforts “but the grace of God” that allowed his apostleship and his message to be accepted. He understood that he could only succeed because of God's blessing and according to God's will. Deut. 8:18 (NIV) plainly states, “remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth”. 1 Tim. 6:17-18 (ESV) warns the rich “not to

be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy”. Scripture makes it clear that is it not by our own power, but by God's, that we are blessed with wealth.

The third worldly belief is that money is the key to success and happiness. In our consumer society we are inundated with advertisements telling us to buy products that will make us younger, thinner, stronger, prettier, better—happier. Purchasing all of those products that we would need to be happy obviously requires a lot of cash. Social media and television floods us with images of the lavish and seemingly perfect lives of the super-rich celebrities. The society message is simple: if you have money, you will have a happy life.

Once again, scripture begs to differ. Eccles. 5:10 (ESV) warns that, “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.” Greed cannot ever be satisfied, and there is no worldly currency that can bring peace and happiness. Hebrews 13:5 (ESV) says, “Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have for, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” Isaiah 58:11 (ESV) talks about how God will guide us continually and satisfy our desires—we “shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.” The satisfaction and joy we have in God are eternal and separate from our worldly circumstances.

In conclusion, believers should be cautious with their attitude and actions towards money. 1 Timothy 6:10 (ESV) says that the “love of money is a root of all kinds of evils” so we need to exercise caution in our pursuit of livelihoods. It is not through our own efforts that we succeed, but through the providence and blessing of God. Philippians 4:19 (ESV) says that “God will supply every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus,” so while we should handle money well, we should not become too focused on the pursuit of wealth and trust in God to provide for us. God is the source of true contentment, and no matter how much wealth we amass, without the love of God we are truly poor.

<sup>1</sup>Investopedia, Student Loan Debt:2019 Statistics and Outlook, Daniel Kurt, 15, 2019.

<sup>2</sup>Urban Institute, Mortgage Debt Has Peaked. Michael Neal, August 20, 2019.

<sup>3</sup>Nerdwallet, 2019 American Household Credit Card Debt Study, Erin El Issa, December 2, 2019.

<sup>4</sup>Wikipedia. Used to “describe individuals whose success lay within the individuals themselves, not with outside conditions.” Henry Clay coined the term on Feb. 2, 1832 when he described Benjamin Franklin as a “self-made man”.

\*This was written for a Personal Finance class at Atlanta Bible College.

# “Jesus Christ is not a Human Person”: the Anhypostasis of Jesus Christ

## By Bill Schlegel (TN)

### Summary:

Trinitarian and “deity of Christ” theologians claim that since “God the Son” took on a human nature, Jesus was not a **human person**. Otherwise Jesus Christ would be two persons - one divine person and one human person. Trinitarian theologians call the non-human personhood of Jesus Christ the *anhypostasis* (“without personhood, impersonality”) and the divine personalizing of the human nature with the divine person the *enhyposstasis*. This article examines the *anhypostasis* and *enhyposstasis* theories from a biblical perspective and finds the theories to be anti-Messiah.

**Trinitarian creed and dogma:  
Jesus Christ is not a *human person*.  
Jesus only has a *human nature*.**

I think if you had told me when I was a Trinitarian that Christianity maintains that Jesus was not a human person, I would have said, “What do you mean I don’t believe that Jesus is a human person? Of course I do.” On this essential question of who Jesus is, there is a disconnect between the theological academy and the average Christian. The average Christian doesn’t think about the ramifications of claiming “Jesus is God”, but the theologians have thought about it. Unfortunately, it seems rarely do theologians venture into trying to explain the ramifications of “deity of Christ” claims to average Christians. I believe that if more people are confronted with this foundational traditional church teaching, the **non-human personhood** of Jesus, they will question the whole “deity of Christ” claim.

### Trinitarian testimony to the non-human personhood of Jesus

The claim that Jesus is not a human person is not a fringe claim for traditional Christianity, nor am I creating a straw man that no one really believes. Rather, the non-human personhood of Jesus Christ is essential to deity of Christ doctrine. Below are five “deity of Christ” theologians that explain that the *anhypostasis*, the non-human personhood of Jesus, is what traditional Christianity believes. The emphases in the quotes below are mine.

First is an article by David Matthis, a pastor and executive editor of [desiringgod.org](http://desiringgod.org) (of John Piper), from his article called, [Anhypostasis: What Kind of Flesh Did Jesus Take?](#)

The famous all-church Council of Chalcedon in 451 confirmed with clarity that Jesus is “one person” with “two natures” (full divinity and full humanity), but after the council, years of further discussion ensued. How is it that one person can have two natures? When the Son of God took on humanity, did that not mean that he was taking to his divine person a second (human) person as part of that humanity? Is he not two persons, if he as two natures?”

Enter the theological term *anhypostasis*. The Greek word *hypostasis* had come to refer in the early church discussions to what we’d call personhood—whether in the Trinity or in the two-natured person of Jesus—and so the negating “an-” prefix was added to signify that, considered on its own (apart from his divinity), **Jesus’ humanity is impersonal.**

In other words, Jesus took a fully human nature, but **he did not take a human person**. Jesus can have a fully human nature without also taking a pre-existing human personhood.<sup>1</sup>

It was at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 that the Byzantine church tried to settle the issue on the dual nature of Jesus, the so-called “hypostatic union” of two natures in one person. Nestorius, who maintained that Jesus had two persons, one divine and one human, was condemned. The church insisted that the personhood of Jesus was only one, the divine one.

It seems odd that the Chalcedon Council “confirmed with clarity,” but then “years of further discussion ensued”. Apparently, the issue of Christ’s two natures in one person wasn’t so clear. It still isn’t.

Note the highlighted phrases in the above quote: “**Jesus’ humanity is impersonal**” and “**he did not take a human person**”.

Next, from a Catholic website, an article by Henry Karlson, [God Became Man Without a Human Self \(Hypostasis\)](#)

When looking at him (Jesus Christ), we see one person, but when we discern who he is in that person, we find he is one person with two natures: God and human. This is where confusion and debate springs up.

This, for many of us, seems rather odd. The perfect human is **not a human person**, the perfect human has **no specific human self**.<sup>2</sup>

The third witness is [Philip Schaff](#) (1819 –1893). Schaff was a Swiss-born, German-educated Protestant theologian and ecclesiastical historian who spent most of his adult life living and teaching in seminaries in the United States. In his monumental work called the [History of the Christian Church](#), Schaff wrote (reference links are to the online version):<sup>3</sup>

“The *anhypostasia*, *impersonality*, or, to speak more accurately, the *enhyposstasia*, of the human nature of Christ - This is a difficult point, but a necessary link in the orthodox doctrine of the one God-Man; for **otherwise we must have two persons** in Christ, and, after the incarnation, **a fourth person**, and that **a human**, in the divine Trinity.” [1653](#)

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## “Jesus Christ is not a Human Person” (cont.)

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“The center of personal life in the God-Man resides unquestionably in the Logos, who was from eternity the second person in the Godhead, and could not lose his personality. He united himself, as has been already observed, **not with a human person**, but with human nature.” [1653](#)

“And the human nature of Christ had **no independent personality of its own**, besides the divine;” [1654](#)

Schaff correctly noted that for Trinitarian, or deity of Christ, doctrine to be correct, Jesus could not have been a human person, otherwise there would in fact be **four** persons in the Trinity: 1) God the Father, 2) God the Son, 3) God the Spirit, and 4) Jesus the human person. Therefore, as church dogma insists, the Logos or second person in the Godhead united only with human nature **“not with a human person”**. In other words, there is no **human person** in the divine Trinity.

Our fourth witness is fairly well-known Christian apologist, Dr. William Lane Craig. Dr. Craig is Professor of Philosophy at Houston Baptist University and Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology. His web page is ReasonableFaith.org.

Dr. Craig explains in a [video interview](#):

What the council of Chalcedon did was set down as it were boundary markers that enabled theologians to know what was the safe channel within which they could move for orthodox Christological speculation. It did not solve the question of the incarnation, but it did set down boundaries to the right and the left that you must not cross. And the watchword of Chalcedon is that you must neither **divide the person** nor confuse the natures. **You must not divide the person of Christ into two persons. There was not a divine person and a human person, the man Jesus.**

... in Christ we have one person with two complete natures... Secondly, the Logos is the rational mind of Jesus, so that Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity. Therefore, there is only one person in Christ. **There is not a human person. There is no man Jesus of Nazareth who is a human person.** You have a divine person who has a human nature.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Craig’s statements speak clearly enough:

“There is **not a human person. There is no man Jesus of Nazareth who is a human person...**”

Our fifth testimony comes from a conservative Christian website called “Got Questions.” The Trinitarian solution to the non-human personhood (the *anhypostasis*) of Jesus is called the *anhypostasis*. The Greek prefix *en*

means “in”, so *anhypostasis* could be translated something like “in-personhood”. The idea is that the pre-existent divine 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity put his personhood *in* human nature. The article called [What are anhypostasis and anhypostasis?](#) from the “Got Questions” website explains:

Christ is ‘*anhypostatic*’ in that Christ’s human nature is not personal in itself, but also ‘*anhypostatic*’ in that it is personalised by being united to the eternal person who is the second person of the Trinity. This makes his hypostasis or personhood fully human and fully divine.

Jesus did not seize another human and appropriate control of that human’s nature. We could say that **the humanity that He put on was impersonal**.

Jesus added to His divine nature and person, and what was added was a real human nature, **not a human person**.

Christ’s genuine human nature is in addition to His genuine divine nature, and He remains one unified person, not two.

Sometimes words seem to make the issue more complicated than it needs to be...If the words *anhypostasis* and *anhypostasis* help us to understand and explain the incarnation to others, then they are useful. If they only complicate the issue, we can communicate the same concept this way: “2 natures; 1 person.”

The five witnesses above make it clear that the non-human personhood of Jesus Christ is an essential doctrine for a deity of Christ believer. Jesus can not be a human person, otherwise he would be two persons, one divine and one human. **“There is not a human person. There is no man Jesus of Nazareth who is a human person”**.

### Biblical response to the non-human personhood of Jesus Christ

1. Like the Trinity itself, the claim that Jesus is **not a human person** is nowhere described in the Bible. There is no explanation, no discussion, no confusion, nor opposition expressed in the Bible to concepts like the non-human personhood (*anhypostasis*), or the personalizing of human nature (*anhypostasis*) by a divine being. The Bible knows no God-man, no “dual nature” of Jesus the Messiah. These are all philosophical concepts created centuries after Jesus, totally foreign to the Bible. In contrast, the Bible says plainly that Jesus is **a man** distinct from God:

“...but now you seek to kill me, **a man** who has told you the truth that I heard from God” (John 8:40).

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## Jesus Christ is not a Human Person (cont.)

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"For as by a man came death, by **a man** has come also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:21).

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, **the man** Christ Jesus..." (1 Tim. 2:5).

2. Denigrating the man Christ Jesus. "Deity of Christ" Christology is a denigration of who **the man** Jesus Christ is, and of what he has done for us. The **man**, the **human person**, Jesus the Messiah from Nazareth "loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2, 25; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14; Rev. 1:5; 5:6; 5:12). If Jesus is not a **human person**, no **human person** gave himself up for us, died and was raised from the dead.

3. Eliminating the man Christ Jesus and even his abstract "human nature". "Deity of Christ" Christology not only denigrates the man Christ Jesus, but attempts to eliminate the human person who has been exalted to the right hand of Almighty God (Psa. 8; 110:1; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 9:24; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 5:7, etc.).

If anything, "deity of Christ" and Trinitarian dogma has only an abstract "human nature" raised from the dead (re-incarnated?) in heaven at God's right hand. However, by Trinitarian dogma definition, even the abstract "human nature" gets eliminated. Otherwise their definition of God would be three persons in two essences – 1) a divine essence and 2) the human nature or essence. Or, as Dr. Schaff mentioned (see above), if Jesus is a real human person – the "Trinitarian" god would be **four persons in two essences**.

All "deity of Christ" interpretations of biblical passages end up being a denial that Jesus is a human person. If someone interprets a passage, for instance, from the gospel of John, Philippians 2, Colossians 1, or Hebrews 1 as evidence for the "deity of Christ", then these passages are not about the human person Jesus of Nazareth. To the Trinitarian, the God-person of Philippians 2 humbled himself - the human person Jesus did nothing since he never existed.

### A spirit not of God

I suggest that the deity of Christ interpretations are a "spirit not of God". "By this you know the spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus the Messiah has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already." (1 John 4:2-3).

1 John 4:2-3 does **NOT** say: "Every spirit is of God that confesses..."

1. that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and yet is fully God

2. that God or one person of God has come in the flesh as Jesus Christ
3. that God or one person of God took on human flesh
4. that Jesus Christ came from some pre-existent state *into* the flesh
5. that God added human flesh to his nature, subsequently being composed of two natures
6. that God or one person of God has taken on a non-personal human *nature*.

Such claims add to, change, and contradict the scripture. Note how the general editor of the Desiring God web page changes Romans 5:8:

"**He** has demonstrated his love for us in that while we were still sinners, **he** took our nature to his one person and died for us" (Romans 5:8, sic).<sup>5</sup>

The real Romans 5:8 (NASB) says: "But **God** shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners **Christ** died for us."

### "deceiver and anti-Messiah"

The deity of Christ interpretations involve deception and are anti-Messiah, against Messiah. "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus the Messiah in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the anti-christ" (2 John 7, NASB).

The prefix *anti* can mean **against**, so anti-christ means that a person or a doctrine is against or opposes the Christ. Also, *anti* can mean "**instead of, in place of**." The Trinitarian "deity of Christ" claim is against the biblical Christ by proposing another Christ **in the place of** the real biblical Jesus Christ. A God-man Christ is not the biblical human Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The non-human person Trinitarian anti-christ is a fake, imposter Christ. The Trinitarian "deity of Christ God-man" is "another Jesus, another gospel" (2 Corinthians 11:3-4; Galatians 1:6-7).

### About the author:

Bill Schlegel taught Bible history, geography and Hebrew in Israel for over three decades. He is the author of the [Satellite Bible Atlas](#). Through Bible study, Bill came to understand that the LORD is one, and that Jesus is the LORD's human Messiah. Bill's podcasts at [One God Report](#) and [blogs](#). He is married to Stephanie. They currently live in Tennessee with the two youngest of their five children.

One God Report Podcast of this presentation can be heard [here](#). Video presentation [here](#). (links work online).

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## Jesus Christ is not a Human Person (cont)

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### End Notes:

<sup>1</sup><https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/anhypostasis-what-kind-of-flesh-did-jesus-take>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.patheos.com/blogs/henrykarlson/2017/10/jesus-christ-god-son-without-human-person>

<sup>3</sup>[History of the Christian Church](#). Thanks to Greg Logan for pointing out the Schaff references.

<sup>4</sup>*Interview, a Defense of Neo-Appollinariansim* [https://youtu.be/3o9b\\_r0ReCk?t=1146](https://youtu.be/3o9b_r0ReCk?t=1146) See especially minutes 19:25-20:10.

<sup>5</sup>*What is the Hypostatic Union*, Mathis, Desiring God Ministries, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-hypostatic-union>

## Genetics By Wally Winner (SC)

*So, God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female (Genesis 1:27, ESV).*

*He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24, ESV).*

It did not take long for the descendants of Adam and Eve to try and acquire through their own efforts what had been sealed away from them in the Garden of Eden. The search for immortality was an immediate desire. While it was still fresh in their minds, humanity began looking for a replacement for the tree of life. Norse mythology had the mighty ash. Egypt had the tamarisk tree. Greece has the olive tree. Asia Minor had the pine tree. There were sacred groves in India, Germany, and with the Celts. The oracle of Jupiter had an orange grove.

When a substitute for the tree of life proved "fruitless," attention was directed to other possibilities. Magic potions, fountain of youths and holy grails were among the surrogates sought.

Failing in the immortality quest, the attention was directed to prolonging life through potions, poultices, and elixirs. The forerunners to the medical disciplines. Of course, it did take (and continues to take, check the lawsuits) a lot of trial and error. For example, here are some "remedies" that once were popular:

**Bloodletting.** A practice for thousands of years. It was thought sickness was a result of "bad blood". Doctors used it for everything from sore throat to a plague. George Washington had about six pints of blood drawn from him on what became his deathbed.

**Trepanation.** This the practice of boring holes in the skull as a means of curing illnesses. It dates back 7000 years. Surprisingly, evidence shows that many of the patients survived the surgery.

**Mercury.** It was used as an ointment by Persians, Greeks, and Chinese. Some healers suggested consuming brews of mercury, sulfur, and arsenic. The patient would gain eternal life and the ability to walk on water. Chinese Emperor Qin Shi Huang died after ingesting mercury pills designed to make him immortal.

**Animal Dung Ointments.** Egyptian physicians used human and animal excrement as a cure-all remedy for diseases and injuries. While this remedy led to tetanus and other infections, research shows the microflora found in some types of animal dung contain antibiotic substances.

**Cannibal Cures.** This so-called "corpse medicine" of human flesh, blood and bone was used for persistent headaches, muscle cramps or stomach ulcers. Romans believed that the blood of fallen gladiators had medicinal powers. Blood drunk from the deceased's skull was particularly potent.

**Dead Mouse Paste.** Mashed mouse with other ingredients was used as a poultice. A remedy for warts was a half mouse applied to the wart. Fried or baked mice could help with whooping cough, measles, smallpox, and bedwetting. A mouse running across a bed might cause bedwetting.

**Hemiglossectomy.** The best way to cure a stutter. Cut off half of the tongue. You couldn't curse the doctor and often bled to death.

**Crocodile Dung.** It was used as a contraceptive. You don't want to how. If crocodile dung was not handy, elephant dung was just as effective.

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# The Kingdom of God: Presenting Real Solutions to Real Problems

## By Talon Paul (IN)

I have absolutely loved the kingdom of God message ever since I first encountered it in class at Atlanta Bible College. I had grown up like most people in America: we know God exists and have a very vague hope of eternal life in heaven when we die. Unfortunately, that "hope" never seemed very exciting to me and never motivated me to change my life. In fact, a high school friend once told me that hell sounded much better to him, because he didn't want to sit on a cloud playing a harp all day long; at the time, I agreed with him! Why on earth would I ever want to go into the sky and play an instrument for all eternity? Is there something more that I was missing?

What's amazing about the true kingdom of God message is how much is involved with it, like a rich tapestry. Not only is there a promise of eternal life, but so many more layers of amazing promises that are just not available in the typical "heaven" presentation that is in most churches. The kingdom of God message, that Jesus will reign on the throne of David over a renewed earth for all eternity with his saints in complete paradise, has absolutely changed my life, and I have seen it change others as well. Thankfully, this message is so complex and beautiful that it can speak to every human being that we come across.

The Bible made much use of the multi-layered nature of this gospel message, and it is presented in various ways to different audiences. In Mark 5, a demon-possessed man encounters Jesus and is finally freed from his demonic, spiritual oppression that plagued him for so many years. To this man, the gospel meant freedom from his suffering. In John 11, as Mary and Martha are mourning the death of their brother Lazarus, Jesus comes to them and announces that he is the resurrection and the life, giving them hope of the restored life to come. To them, the gospel meant resurrection and seeing their brother alive again. In Galatians 3, Paul presents the gospel to a group of believing Jews and Gentiles who had a difficult time getting along. However, he shows that the gospel means the unity between the two groups, as they both have become children of Abraham. To them, the gospel meant a new, unified family where everyone could experience God's blessings and peace.

The good news of the kingdom of God still speaks volumes today, to all the various needs that we find around us. The true beauty of this message is that it never grows old or stale. It is always alive and active (Hebrews 4:12). This means that the individual struggling with COVID-19, cancer, or any other serious illness has great reason to rejoice, since all those illnesses will finally be healed forever (Isaiah 35:5-6). Justice will finally come to those who have been victims of sexual assault, terrorist attacks, and oppression from various institutions (Isaiah 9:6-7). Those dealing with addictions of all kinds can hope in finally being free from their spiritual oppression forever (Isaiah 61:1-2). Everyone, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, or background has reason to believe in the coming kingdom of God.

Unfortunately, our presentation of the message sometimes gets in the way, and it falls on deaf ears when we lack an understanding of their situation. Too often we are preaching the right message to the wrong crowd. We are offering bread to the thirsty and a hammer to remove a screw. The older gentleman who has just suffered the loss of his wife of 50 years does not need to hear about how there will be absolute peace among God's animals (Isaiah 11:6), but that his wife will live again (John 11:25-26). The young woman who is abusing her prescription medication in college to continue making her grades on time does not need a message about how Jesus is going to be seated on David's throne forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Instead, she needs to hear about how Jesus offers her a rest unmatched by anything else, where she can no longer feel anxious about her deadlines (Matthew 11:28-30). The foster child that has moved from house to house does not need to hear about how war will never again be a reality for God's creation (Isaiah 2:4). However, he does need to know that God has adopted him into the eternal family, something this child has been searching for through many years of rejection (Romans 8:14-16). Although everything mentioned above will come true in the kingdom of God, it will not communicate well to different audiences that need to hear something for their situation. The challenge for us as believers is to find the correct way to communicate the kingdom of God to the specific situation in front of us.

Believers also struggle on a personal level, and most of the time it is because we too are focusing on a wrong aspect of the kingdom of God for our own situation. The promises of the kingdom of God can lose their flavor for believers if they are not presented in the most appropriate situations. The former soldier who dedicated his life to Christ overseas, but still struggles with PTSD from the horrors of war, needs to find peace in knowing that war will finally be abolished forever (Isaiah 2:4). The single, Christian mother of three young children needs to hear that she is not alone in her struggles, but that Jesus is available to assist her along the way until he returns (Hebrews 2:17-18). The pastor who is struggling to make hard decisions for his/her congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic needs to know that his/her work is not done in vain, and will be rewarded for the service shown to God's people (Hebrews 6:10).

My prayer is that, as new situations find us in all walks of life, that we would be able to respond appropriately with the same kingdom message that Jesus had. Although the way we communicate it may look different, it will have its fulfillment in the same event when Jesus returns. I hope that you will find comfort in Jesus' message today for yourself and for those around you. May God bless your efforts in bringing the kingdom light to those in darkness.



## Genetics (cont)

*(Continued from page 7)*

**Clysters.** It is an enema usually of warm water, salt, baking soda or soap. Some physicians used coffee, herbs, honey or chamomile or anything else from the kitchen table. Louis XIV of France is said to have more than 2,000 enemas.

**Powder of Sympathy.** It was made of earthworms, pigs' brains, iron oxide, bits from corpses ground into a powder. It was used for rapier wounds.

**Moldy Bread.** It was used to disinfect cuts all the way back to Egypt. Louis Pasteur did get the most from it with the development of penicillin.

**Vin Mariani.** An Italian chemist named Angelo Mariani put together a tonic of red wine and coca leaves. Coca leaves have cocaine. The drink became a hit with Thomas Edison, Queen Victoria, the czar of Russia, Pope Saint Pius X and Pope Leo XIII. It was the inspiration for John S. Pemberton's drink called Coca-Cola.

**Paraffin.** In the 19th century it was injected as way to smooth out wrinkles. It was also injected into women's breasts as an augmentation. It fell out of favor fast.

**Farts in a Jar.** Medical science in the Middle Ages dealing with the Black Death surmised that "like cures like". Doctors thought the Black Death was caused by deadly vapors. What was needed was "therapeutic stink". They captured flatulence in jar. When the pestilence appeared, you opened a jar and took a whiff. Not very effective, since the plague killed 30 to 60 percent of Europe's population.

Then the work of Rosalind Franklin, James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the twisted-ladder structure of DNA in 1953. This gave rise to the modern field of molecular biology. It was by understanding DNA's double-helix form that science was able to begin unravelling the many mysteries of genetic code.

While there is a very positive side for humanity in this discovery, the negative side was developing just as fast.

"The promise of the new biological and genetic technologies for cures and super vaccines for our most ancient and persistent illnesses has a dark side. The discoveries of more efficient bioprocesses that come from DNA research have opened the door to their provision by the military, leading to entirely new possibilities and scales of production of deadly toxins, viruses and bacteria." (Gene Wars, Charles Piller and Keith R. Yamamoto, Copyright 1988, Beech Tree Books, William Morrow, New York)

Piller and Yamamoto saw the possibilities of a type of germ warfare that disguised itself as a virus. The vaccines then would be used to alter the human genome.

The initial result of the new information was to do DNA splicing. DNA splicing is when a section of genes or DNA, are removed from an organism and supplanted into another.

An example is the use in agricultural biotechnology in developing drought and herbicide resistant crops. Through genetic engineering, scientists have been able to introduce traits into existing genes to make crops resistant to drought and herbicides.

While it has been used widely to produce better flowers, grains, fruits and vegetables, scientists saw a larger possibility. What if we can genetically alter the human code to extract imperfections from Down's syndrome to weak eyesight?

The science would permit the DNA splicing of humans. However, it soon became apparent that there was a large drawback. In the slicing and dicing of the DNA to eradicate human weaknesses, it was not exact enough. So, when some of the bad was removed, some of the good was taken, too.

Enter the science of epigenetics— the study of changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code. Epigenetics is way to turn on and off genes – good DNA and faulty DNA itself in more controlled fashion.

The preliminary goal was to cut out and fix glitches in your genes that threaten your health. For example, think of someone who was born with a gene mistake that gave them a rare illness. Or a gene change that happens later in life and puts you at risk for cancer. Let's simply try and get rid of diseases. A noble idea that is ongoing.

A nefarious use has been aggressively advancing. To make a "superhuman" mutation that has been advertised, in all places, the movies. If you watched Captain America and are familiar with Marvel comic books X Men series, you have seen where this is going. Where do you think they get their material for movies?

"Decoding the human genome sequence is the most significant undertaking that we have mounted so far in an organized way in all of science. I believe that reading our blueprints, cataloging our own instruction book, will be judged by history as more significant than even splitting the atom or going to the moon." (Francis S. Collins Director of the National Institute of Health [NIH])

The inquiry goes beyond a pursuit for perfect health but for super wellbeing, super intelligence, and super longevity.

It only takes a 1% change in the DNA make up to transform the human identity. What is produced is no longer human and has no reversal. With the mutations, we are headed for a genetic apocalypse.

Having appealed to human greed in the initiation and proliferation of the blockchain architecture, this same technique has been extended to the acquisition of our DNA/RNA through the offering of a new cryptocurrency.

The system now takes in what makes us all human. Here are some of the implications: \*Loss of privacy and identity \*Denial of access to and rationing of healthcare services \*Increases in healthcare insurance premiums \*Denial of rights of procreation \*Forced abortion \*Euthanasia due to age and mental health \*Incarceration and Institutionalization \*Travel restrictions and denial \*Sequestration to urban living environments \*Education restrictions and structured learning \*Employment restrictions, denial and termination \*Restrictions on acquisition of basic necessities of life \*Overall control of populations

"Science and technology strive to change and build upon God's original design. These attempts come by way of GMO foods, inoculations and various drugs, air-borne nanoparticles, to name but a few methods of administration. They've been successful in that they are able to construct a synthetic third DNA strand, which can attach to God's original design." (Anthony Patch Entangled January 2019)

There are a several ethical questions for the church. Among them are: can altered human genes be redeemed? Can such a mutation make a decision for Christ? Genetics don't need a savior. Do we let science save us?

Maybe with enough experimentation, trial and error and a Frankenstein touch we can piece together and resurrect a being.

## THEY STILL SPEAK

*By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead." Hebrews 11:4*

### Sound Doctrine

By W. T. Roberts

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (KJV)

The word "sound," as it appears in the foregoing text (2 Tim. 4:2-4), is an adjective. It appears about fifteen times in the Authorized Version of our Bible. It is defined thus: "Perfect of its kind, founded in truth, correct in views" (Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary).

With this concise definition before us, we can see that "the word" of verse two, becomes "sound doctrine" of verse three. They are used interchangeably. We can see that "sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13), "sound doctrine" (Titus 1:9), "sound in the faith" (Titus 1:13), "sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1), "sound speech" (Titus 2:8), "words of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), "thy word is truth" (John 17:17), and "the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), all merge or centralize in the "sound doctrine" of the text.

It naturally follows that sound doctrine embraces the entire plan of redemption that God has given us for this age. The plan of salvation, the establishment of the kingdom, the nature of man, the inheritance of the saints, punishment of the wicked, in fact, all Bible subjects are embraced in the "sound doctrine" of the text. This is proof that sound doctrine is the affirmative of these truths. Since each affirmative has its negative, whether expressed or implied, we may naturally assume that the negative would be unsound doctrine. This is basically correct.

However, let us see how comprehensively the Spirit inspired Paul to give us the negative in the text. Let us quote it from another translation. "The time will come when people decline to be taught sound doctrine, they will accumulate teachers to suit themselves and tickle their own fancies, they will give up listening to the truth, and turn to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4, Moff.). The Diaglott reads thus: "There will be a time when they will not endure wholesome instruction, but will accumulate teachers for themselves, according to their own inordinate desires, tickling their ear, and they will indeed turn away from hearing of the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). "Fables" is defined: To narrate fictitiously or falsely; compose or tell fables or myths, fabricate, lie. It is not teachers who have itching ears, but hearers who are demanding fables. Paul said they would. The late Dwight L. Moody said, "Some time you will read in the paper that D. L. Moody is dead. It will be a lie! I will be more alive than I have ever been." Holy writ says, "The

dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5b). There are only two sets of conclusions to be drawn from the entire book of God—those of God and those of man.

We know sound doctrine is positive because Paul urged Timothy to preach sound doctrine. Anything contrary is unsound doctrine and naturally is condemned by God. When we refuse sound doctrine, we automatically embrace unsound doctrine. The lowly Nazarene said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). From the apostle Paul we read: "Which all are to perish with the using; after the commandments and doctrines of men" (Col. 2:22).

What are the doctrines and commandments of men? The things they teach and preach that cannot be sustained or supported by the word of truth. Their preaching is therefore vain, ineffectual, empty, and unreal. We can see the ultimate result of vain worship, which is that of obeying the commandments of men. This is brought about insidiously by those who try to improve God's plan. You will remember that Naaman was sure that the rivers of Damascus were much better than the waters of Israel, but he still had to dip himself seven times in Jordan before he could be clean. Elisha was exacting when he told Naaman to dip seven times in the river Jordan. God was exacting when He refused to cure Naaman's leprosy until he had dipped the seventh time (2 Kings 5:1-14).

God was exacting when He made a plan whereby man might be justified or condemned. He has been very explicit in that we follow to the letter the plan laid down. There are those who often tell us that parts of the gospel plan are not essential. By such preaching we make God's word of none effect that we might keep our traditions. (Mark 7:7-13). Jesus said this is vain worship. We must follow either the sound doctrine of God or the doctrine and commandments of men, for Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). When we embrace one we automatically repudiate the other. There is no middle ground, no substitute for God's Word!

Unsound doctrine is a substitute for the word of God. I listened to a radio program on which, at the close of the service, the speaker said, "If you are out there in radioland and want to be saved, just lay your hand on the radio, and we will pray for you and you can be saved right there in the comfort of your own home. Jesus is able to save you anywhere." This sounds good, but there is not a "thus saith the Lord" for a statement of this kind. Nor is there a promise in God's Word whereby the prayers of the minister will save an alien sinner. This is not sound doctrine. We have heard ministers of our own ask, in assisting a candidate to make confession, "Do you accept Christ as your personal Saviour? And do you want to be

*(Continued on page 11)*

## Sound Doctrine (cont.)

*(Continued from page 10)*

baptized?" This does not conform with Acts 8:37. One young writer said, "I took Christ as my personal Saviour." Another said, "I feel that God, for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins." The eunuch said, "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? and Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Another writer said, "Sister Doe took Christ as her personal Saviour. I had the pleasure of burying her in Christian baptism." Peter said, Baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

One is not a Christian until sins are remitted. One does not become a Christian until after baptism. It is easy for us who have the truth, to be drawn away gradually from the truth and to turn to fables.

We urge all to contend earnestly "for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Paul said, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30). "Perverse" as used in the above text is defined as follows: Willfully wrong or erring; unreasonable.

Let us pray earnestly that we are not among those who spare not the flock by speaking perverse, unsound things. The devil presents something that is so near right that error does not appear immediately. A number of little things like we have presented can, sooner or later, draw us apart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having our conscience seared with a hot iron.

[\*Restitution Herald, Vol. 42 No. 10 \(pp. 9-10\)\*](#)

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### **The Household of Faith by C.E. Randall**

*Two classes of people are mentioned in Galatians 6:10, "all men" and "the household of faith. A trend in religious thinking today seeks to make all men the sons of God and God the Father of all."*

### **The Forward Look by R. H. Judd**

*"In all the important things pertaining to life, where mature and responsible actions are required, God places the responsibility where it belongs—on the people, not upon the children."*

### **The Spirit Giveth Life by Walter Wiggins**

*"The number one need of our church is a spiritual awakening, both in the church and in the ministers. This need is being expressed by our people in requests at prayer meetings and in answer to direct questions."*

## God's Book By Alva G. Huffer

"The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation. Its doctrines are holy; its precepts are binding; its records are true. Read it to be wise; believe it to be safe; and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, the Christian's charter. Christ is its great object, our good its design, and the redemption of man its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet."—Selected.

The Bible is the story of salvation through Jesus, God's son. Take him out of the Bible and little is left. A genuine Christian is a Bible Christian. Someone has said concerning the Bible that one should: know it in his head; stow it in his heart; show it in his life; and sow it in the world.

God's book is the book for the troubled world. The Bible contains a solution for every problem that man has developed. Someday mankind will realize that the only workable plan for the world is God's blueprint for humanity as revealed in His word. In times like these, men need something to cling to; something durable to build their lives upon. **The world needs the Bible!**

[\*Restitution Herald, Vol. 42 No. 2 \(pp. 9-10\)\*](#)

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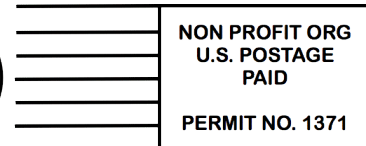
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### THE RESTITUTION HERALD teaches:

1. the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth, with Christ as King of kings, and the immortalized saints as joint-heirs with Him in the government of the nations,
2. the restoration of Israel as a nation,
3. the literal resurrection of the dead,
4. the immortalization of the righteous,
5. the final destruction of the wicked,
6. and life only through Christ.

### Also a thorough belief in:

1. repentance,
2. immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, as prerequisites of the forgiveness of sins,
3. and a holy life as essential to salvation.

We believe and teach the *"restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."* (Acts 3:21)



**CHURCH OF GOD**  
GENERAL CONFERENCE

# THE RESTITUTION HERALD

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE **KINGDOM OF GOD** | ACTS 3:21

... heaven must receive [Jesus] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

## Abraham and the Abrahamic Faith

By Dennis Sharp (SC)

### The Foundation for What We Believe

The people who were responsible for the formation of our movement believed it was critical that we should be called “The Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith.” Why? Understanding the answer to that question allows us to understand God and his plan for all people. Indeed, we cannot have a full understanding of the scriptures if we do not understand who Abraham was, his relationship to God, and our relationship to him. We should desperately want to know about a man whom scripture says was “God’s friend”, “the father of us all”, and the “heir of the world.”

The founders of the Abrahamic Faith understood that Abraham was an excellent starting point in our faith journey. The very first verse of the New Testament speaks of Abraham and tells us that Jesus the Messiah is “the son of Abraham.” The Old Testament promise of the land to Abraham is the beginning of the gospel message of the kingdom of God, which then becomes the central teaching of Jesus in the New Testament (Luke 4:43). Also, following the example of Abraham, we are monotheistic – we worship only one God. There is much we can learn by understanding the life of Abraham.

Our first encounter with Abraham (or, Abram before God changed his name) is in Genesis 11:26. There we learn that he is a descendant of Noah’s son

Shem, from which word Semite is derived. Joshua 24:2 says that Abraham’s father, Terah, “worshipped other gods” making Abraham’s faith in the one true God all the more impressive. Our understanding of the significance of Abraham, and, therefore our Abrahamic Faith, starts in Genesis 12:

*“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. So Abram left, as the Lord had told him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran” (Gen. 12:1-4).*

We learn much about God, Abraham, and God’s plan for his people from this initial encounter. First, the words “The Lord had said to Abram” informs us that God chooses Abraham. He chooses Abraham to initiate the plan of restoration. The first 12 chapters of Genesis cover approximately 2000 years. What has happened during that time? We have seen the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the flood that was a result of the corruption and violence on the earth, and the thwarting of the plans of a proud and egotistical people to build a Tower of Babel. God’s call of Abram is an excellent example of how the one true

*(Continued on page 2)*

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## Abraham and the Abrahamic Faith (cont.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

God works with his people. God reveals himself in the history and events of his people. "The Old Testament is not the story of Israel's discovery of God, but the story of God's revelation of himself to Israel. God initiates revelation and individuals respond."<sup>1</sup> He works intimately with his people through his prophets and angels, who are his representatives. This differentiates the one true God from the pagan gods who were personifications of the forces of nature and idols made by the hands of men. "Israel believed that her God both could and did control the events of history, that in them he might reveal his righteous judgement and saving power. Here is the sharpest break with paganism imaginable."<sup>2</sup> The call and covenant made to Abraham by God is an example of his intervention into history and giving direction to future events. "In the Old Testament, the greatest act by which God made himself known is the Exodus (Exod. 6:6-7). The acts of God reveal both his love and his judgement, his mercy and his wrath. Since God is invisible, he chose to reveal his nature through tangible events."<sup>3</sup> God's action of choosing Abraham sets in motion an eternal plan for his people.

Second, Abraham is told to "leave your country, your people, and your father's household." Abraham is told by God to "break ties," and he does so obediently. He is called to leave the certainty of a life he knows for the uncertainty of a life unknown to him. How many of us could just up and leave our families, homes, and communities and go to a place we didn't know? Abraham's faith is an example for us, and it is the reason we strive to be of the faith of Abraham, or the Abrahamic Faith.

Third, God tells Abraham, "I will make you into a great nation." The word "great" here is more than a mere adjective. From Abraham's descendants will come kings who will possess a kingdom, a throne, and a dynasty that will be established forever (Gen. 13:15; 17:6). This is the promise of a great nation that will ultimately be ruled by Abraham's descendant, Jesus the Messiah (II Sam. 7:16).

Fourth, God tells Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." How will all people on earth be blessed through Abraham? To answer this question, we must examine further dialogue between God and Abraham.

*"The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring*

*could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.'"* (Gen. 13:14-17)

Twice in this passage, God speaks of "the land" and that he is giving it to Abraham and his offspring forever. As referenced earlier, the promise of the land to Abraham is the beginning of the gospel message of the kingdom of God and the central of teaching of Jesus in the New Testament (Luke 4:43). This is where our Abrahamic Faith starts, and it is a message, often ignored, that is revealed throughout the entire Bible. In Genesis, God tells man to fill the earth, subdue it and rule over it. God tells Abraham that he is giving him the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession (Gen. 17:8), to him and also to his descendants after him. From the very beginning it is clear that the future of the faithful is on a glorified earth and not in heaven. Jesus teaches us to pray, "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Here again, the teaching is that the kingdom is on the earth, on the land given to Abraham and his descendants as an everlasting possession that will be the eternal home of the faithful. Our understanding of God's covenant promise of the land is essential to our understanding of the Abrahamic Faith.

So significant are the promises God made to Abraham that the word "covenant" appears 13 times in the 21 verses of Genesis 17. In this chapter, God changes Abraham's name from Abram (meaning high father) to Abraham (meaning father of a multitude). He establishes his covenant with Abraham as an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:19) and gives the land to Abraham and his descendants as an everlasting possession (Gen. 13:15; 15:18; 17:7-8). "The Hebrew Bible describes this promised land as an actual piece of earthly real estate with specific geographical boundaries (Gen. 15:18-21; Num. 34:2-12; Josh. 15:1-12; Ezek. 47:13-20; etc.)."<sup>4</sup> The promised land, the land of Canaan, is not just a spiritual concept. God is the true owner of this land (Deut. 1:20, 25; 2:29), and he has given it to Abraham and the Hebrew people. When Jesus the Messiah returns, he will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem in this promised land. He will be given authority over the whole world, all nations, people, and every language (Dan. 7:13-14) and his saints (believers) will rule with him (I Cor. 6:2; Rev. 2:26-27; II Tim. 2:12). This land promised to Abraham and his descendants is the foundation from which comes the future kingdom of God on the earth.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Jewish confession of faith that God is one (Deut. 6:4), the Shema,

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Abraham and the Abrahamic Faith (cont.)

*(Continued from page 2)*

(which is quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:29) is followed by a reference to the land. "When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you..." (Deut. 6:10). Here these two great truths are spoken together, the understanding that God is one, and the land he swore to Abraham. These teachings are the cornerstone of our Abrahamic Faith.

It would be almost impossible to overemphasize the importance of Abraham in God's plan for mankind. Given that it is often said that Abraham is of central importance to the three great religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, one must ask if his significance gets the proper teaching and attention it deserves. Let's examine the person of Abraham further and why we choose to be identified "of the Abrahamic Faith." Consider the following:

- Proof Abraham's importance to the authors of scripture is the fact that he is mentioned 230 times in our Bible, 160 times in the Old Testament and 70 times in the New Testament.
- Abraham is the ancestor from which the Hebrew people sprang and the first person in the Bible to be called a "Hebrew" (Gen. 14:13).
- Abraham is the first great patriarch of ancient Israel and a primary model of faithfulness for Christianity.
- All Jews trace their ancestry to Abraham as father of the Hebrew nation.

*"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him, he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many (Isa. 51:1-2).*

Notice here that Abraham is called "the rock." God is also called "the rock" in Deuteronomy 32:3-4 and I Samuel 2:2.

- The biblical phrase "our father Abraham" expresses the family relationship every person of faith has with Abraham. He is the father of all of the faithful. The phrase "our father Abraham" is used by Jesus (John 8:53), Stephen (Acts 7:2-3), and Paul (Romans 4:12, 16-17).
- Abraham receives the special recognition of being called "God's friend" (II Chr. 20:7; James 2:23).

- James links all Christians to Abraham by calling him "our ancestor Abraham" (James 2:21).
- Abraham is the first person in the Bible to bear the title "prophet" and is given the title "anointed one" (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:15).
- God's own self-identification includes the name of Abraham. "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6).

The Psalmist tells us that God will remember his covenant with Abraham forever. "He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded for a thousand generations, the covenant he made to Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: "to you I give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit" (Psalms 105:8-11). Just as almighty God has made, repeated, and vowed to remember this covenant forever, it demands that we do also.

We will conclude this article in the next issue of the RESTITUTION HERALD where we will look at how Abraham and the Abrahamic Faith continues to be well documented in the New Testament.

### End Notes

1. Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham – Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), p. 161
2. John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, (Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 25
3. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham – Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, p. 161
4. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham – Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, p. 260

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## We Are Members In Particular

### By Tom Siderius (MI)

In the first quarter RESTITUTION HERALD, Nicole Wu wrote a wonderful article on the financial principles that Christians should follow in our lives, specifically our financial plans. She provoked many thoughts with her article, pointing us to our God as our sufficiency and strength in time of fear and confusion in the world.

As the world wide Covid-19 pandemic continues, we as Christians need to actively consider what our response should be. The current plan is to spend another 1.9 trillion dollars on Covid help, but also a whole list of "needs" that we should address. What are the great priorities of our lives and faith?

Here's some recent headlines with the stark realities of the world in our midst, headlines which have colored our lives and thinking every day for 12 months or more. We think and pray, stay at home or work, but the uncertainty of the situation continues in our minds like the 24/7 feed of world news.

***Unemployment Claims Remain High as Millions Still Struggle to Find Work***

***When Business as Usual Was Turned Upside Down***

***U.S. unemployment claims down 19,000 yet still 4 times higher than pre-pandemic level***

***Coronavirus pandemic 'may cause famine of biblical proportions'; UN food chief warns***

***Covid-19 could push 130 million people into starvation***

***Jobless benefits for 1.2M New Yorkers are about to expire. What's next?***

***Warning of famine, UN releases \$100M to seven countries***

Where do we go in our time of need? What should our Christian responses be?

When I was a much younger Christian and my children were growing up, we memorized and sang a song from the verse from King James Version Philippians 4:13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". We sang the words and marched up and down, putting our trust in the idea that whatever happens, we could overcome it. We would bring out this verse like superman takes off his street clothes, and then with the superman suit on, go out to win every encounter with all forms of evil and violence in the world. We thought of this verse as the bulletproof all-purpose application regardless of what we faced in life. Financial trouble? I can do all things. Health issue? I can do all things. Family issue? I can do all things.

But, is this really the biblical viewpoint? Do we read and study the Word with a "Me-centered" viewpoint? We look for scriptures that seem to apply to our given situations, and we see our Christian experiences from a personal viewpoint. We want the Bible to give us the answers to our immediate situations that we feel apply to "Me".

Christopher Hall in *Christianity Today* magazine in 2012 wrote:

Clearly, our experiences shape our reading of the Bible. We are all wearing tinted glasses, lenses that help us to see some things very clearly but distort our vision elsewhere. Think, for instance, of the parable of the Prodigal Son. When 100 North American students were asked to read the parable and retell it, only six mentioned the famine the prodigal experiences away from home. In a word, American readers tend to be "famine-forgetters," perhaps because most Americans simply have not experienced terrible famine. Compare the response of 50 Russian readers to the very same parable: 42 out of 50 mentioned the famine. Why? The cultural history of famine in World War II has deeply embedded itself in the Russian consciousness, and this cultural lens influences what Russian Christians see in a biblical text.

So, what is the true biblical perspective? God calls us to a "We-centered" viewpoint.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (NKJV) For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Paul gives the metaphor of our physical body being composed of many parts and compares the functions to the body of Christ being built up of many members. Each has a particular function that God has called us to, just as the eye, ear, foot and hand are part of the whole, but not the same. We are baptized (gone from death to life) by gift of grace by the holy spirit that all have received. When you confess the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that he has been raised from the dead, you will be baptized into the body of Christ. Look at Romans 6.

Romans 6:4-5 (NKJV) Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.

Titus 3:5-7 (NKJV) not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NKJV) Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

What does this verse mean? Remember "Me-centric" or "We-centric" thinking.

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## We Are Members In Particular (cont.)

*(Continued from page 4)*

Jan Magiera, in her translation of this verse from the Aramaic Peshitta text, writes as "We are the body of Messiah and members in your place" (APNT). Members that are in our place? What is my place? How does this translation of the verse change your perspective?

Continue in our reading in 1 Cor 12.

1 Corinthians 12:28-30 (NKJV) And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

"God has appointed" is the first thing to look at. The Me-centric viewpoint looks for what I think I should be chosen for and be good at. What if we asked the question, "What has God appointed me for in the church? To be a minister of Christ to it? Is my place to pastor? To teach? To give? To serve physically or spiritually?"

Let's go back to where we started from and look at Phil 4:13 again. What about this translation of the verse? "I find strength for everything in Christ who strengthens me" (Magiera from the Aramaic translation).

Philippians is a letter to the church there from Paul, probably as he is in Rome in prison. Epaphroditus brings a gift of money from the church there to Paul at Rome, and the letter is really a "thank you" letter to them for the way that they worked in the body of Christ to meet needs. The whole section gives the perspective to the process that Paul was emphasizing to the church there, as well as gratitude for their love.

Philippians 4:13-20 (NKJV) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. ("I find strength for everything in Christ who strengthens me") 14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. 15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. 18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. 19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 20 Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

When we expand our reading, we see that the verses 4:13 and 4:19 stand in the midst of a section of the letter which deals with giving and the effects of the giving and the gift. When we give, both financially and physically, we are able to "open the windows of heaven" to be ready for any eventuality that we are faced with. This is a "We-

centric" way of acting and believing. God has not called us to be the "superman" of faith, but we as the body of Christ to be Christ to the world together as this wonderful body which we are all called to be part of.

Ephesians 3:14-20 (NKJV) For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

As we look at our calling in the body we see examples all through the word of the different ministers of Christ. Those that are apostles, that are encouragers, that are teachers, those that do good works. Some minister healing of body and heart to others, some are administrators or do the physical tasks and projects that are needed. But each has a calling to a certain place in this wonderful body of Christ.

The sections of scripture that really stand out in this study bring two main perspectives: Our strength and power is in the body of Christ as members together. And that we energize that strength with the giving that puts God first, opening the door to His help in our time of need.

With this idea in mind North Kent Bible Church made a goal and challenge to go past our own concerns of our health, prosperity and money to look outward as a church body. The question asked was what would help us to gain God's perspective in this situation? Even in the midst of the pandemic, our fellowship has actually been able to give more financially to the church, and has experienced a greater prosperity because of this.

So the challenge was to use this "We-centric" power for good in the body of Christ. The financial problems of the country and world will not be solved by more printing of money or borrowing in order to give ever bigger subsidy payments to us or others. We cannot borrow our way to prosperity and health. This goes against all the principles of God's instruction and scriptural knowledge. Giving to others in their time of need, and to the growth of the ministry will give God's blessing to our lives and hearts. This is not a governmental obligation, but a ministry that God has called the body to do.

The challenge that we have started is to first put together enough money to materially help a specific church, or churches, in Africa. The pandemic and worldwide financial woes are much greater there than here, and real fam-

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## We Are Members In Particular (cont.)

*(Continued from page 5)*

ine there is a great challenge. But the greater challenge is the famine that comes from not having access to God's Word and fellowship. This is the true famine which we need to overcome. We gathered the money over a period of weeks, and put together over \$4000 for African missions. This will be used with the Martins' help to give some building money and ministry money to help the works in Kenya and Malawi.

The other goal that NKBC has is to bring an awareness and fellowship with the churches there by specifically ministering and praying for one or two churches. We want to connect their hearts and lives to our hearts and lives as brothers and sisters in Christ. We believe that God has called us to do this, and we need to prove that His care and blessing of us here has the purpose of sharing to others the help and love that God has given us. By focusing our hearts together we are able to make this fellowship become more alive in the body of believers at North Kent Bible, and to give the African believers a point of fellowship with our church. Perhaps this could become a ministry that other fellowships could follow to connect the work here to the vibrant works of God on the other side of the earth.

The ministry of the Word here in the USA is important as well, and maybe the challenge for your church has a different focus to develop.

The other principle of giving we need to develop is that of the multiplication of seed sown. The principles of seed and sowing for grain were an integral part of the lives of the people in the first-century church. Today it is not so much a part of our thinking.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11 (ASV) 10 And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: 11 ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God.

God supplies the seed to be sown, and as we harvest the grain, we have our seed multiplied in order to sow more the next time. Prosperity is not a zero sum process where in order for me to prosper, then someone else must have less. God's prosperity that he gives to all the earth is based on this growth of seed sown. When we have a greater harvest, do not put it away in our barns for our prosperity. But rather plant it to grow more grain for all the church and the earth to share.

Where in the body of Christ has the holy spirit led you to serve? What is the fellowship that we need to develop to bring God's love and care to all His people?

We can do all things in Christ as we are strengthened by him. Phil 4:13. We have all our needs supplied from His riches as we do His Word and will. Phil 4:19. God has given us all the precious promise of life here and life eternal. Our lives need to become the ministry and blessing in the

body as God has called you to be. Eph 3:20.

What has God equipped you to do for the body of Christ? What fellowship do you bring?

1 Corinthians 12:27 (KJV) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

We are all members in our place, the place that God has put us! Be blessed and bless others in all we are able to do as the body of Christ according to the grace of God.

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## Glory Be to God's Messiah (cont.)

*(Continued from page 7)*

desire to worship and give glory to God motivate us to glorify His Son. Jesus said it best shortly before his crucifixion: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once" (John 13:31,32). In a wonderful, poetic sense, Jesus was glorified through the humiliating crucifixion. The early church father, Origen termed it as a "humble glory". That same "humble glory" also brought glory to God, as the world would soon find out that Jesus truly was the Son of God.

What does all of this evidence suggest? We can see that giving glory to Jesus is something that occurred throughout the New Testament. However, never did anyone try to glorify Jesus as God. It always occurred in the proper context. He is given glory as the Son of God. It's my hope and prayer that all of these examples can help us find the proper balance of how much glory to give to Jesus.

One last passage that we should all consider when giving Jesus glory is Revelation 5:9-14. It consists of a vision that John has of the heavenly host proclaiming praise and glory to both God and His Messiah. What a marvelous vision that must have been to witness! In the midst of this beautiful vision, the heavenly host proclaim, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Revelation 5:13). I long for the day, where we will be shouting of the glory and might of God and His Messiah.

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# Glory Be to God's Messiah

By Kyle McClain (OH)

Imagine a time and place where man has a perfect relationship with God, and they are able to fellowship with God face to face. What a glorious occasion that would be! The truth of the matter is that before sin entered this world, this was a reality, as man had a perfect relationship with God. However, sin eventually entered into the picture, and gone was man's perfect relationship with God. All hope is not lost though. From the beginning of time, God had a special plan to reconcile humanity back to Himself. This plan would be fulfilled through his Messiah – the anointed one. Today, we recognize this man as Jesus of Nazareth – the Son of God and Savior of the world.

It is our responsibility to give Jesus the proper glory that he deserves, as he is the focal point of God's plan to redeem and reconcile mankind. He is the only way that makes it possible for us to be reconciled to God. When considering all of this, we should shy away from giving Jesus too much glory, and at the same time we need to shy away from giving him not enough glory. There is a balance that we all have to find. To help us find that balance, I would like to take a look at three examples found in the Bible that demonstrate Jesus receiving glory.

The first example of Jesus receiving glory that we will take a look at is located in Matthew 14:22-33. On this occasion, Jesus had just finished feeding the five thousand. After this great miracle, the disciples leave the scene on a boat, and Jesus went up on the mountain to pray. After he got done praying, Jesus reconvened with his disciples. However, he had to walk on water to catch up with them. It was quite a miraculous sight that caught the disciples' attention. You don't see people walking on water every day.

How did the disciples respond to such a miracle? We can see their response in verse 33: "And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God,'" (Matt. 14:33 ESV). They responded by worshiping Jesus. It was an "aha moment." The lightbulb went off! They finally realized that Jesus truly was the Son of God! Their initial instinct once they came to this realization was to worship Jesus. I can only imagine the joy and excitement in their hearts at this time.

We must take note that the disciples weren't worshiping or glorifying Jesus as the God of all. Rather, they were giving him glory as the SON of God. They placed their glory and worship into proper perspective.

The second example of Jesus receiving glory that we will look at is found in John 9. There was a man who was born blind, and Jesus healed this man from his blindness. It was quite the interesting procedure, as Jesus spit on the ground to make mud and wiped the blind man's eyes with the mud. This is another miracle that you don't see every day!

Jesus later confronted the once-blind man after the blind man was cast out for witnessing about this miracle. Jesus asked the man point blank, "Do you believe in the Son

of Man?" (John 9:35). The blind man then asked Jesus who the Son of Man was, and Jesus replied, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you," (John 9:37). What a shocking revelation this must have been for the once-blind man! He was talking to the Son of Man himself!

How did the blind man respond to this revelation? We see his response in verse 38: "He said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshipped him" (John 9:38). Once the man found out and believed that Jesus was the Son of Man, he worshiped Jesus! Again, someone comes across this revelation that Jesus is the Messiah, and again, Jesus is worshiped. We are starting to see a trend here.

The third example that we are going to take a look at is found in Matthew 28, as it revolves around the resurrection of Jesus. After Jesus was resurrected from the grave, he appeared to a number of different people, and Mary Magdalene and the "other" Mary were two of the lucky winners who witnessed the resurrected Jesus. After their encounter with the angel, they found Jesus, "And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him" (Matthew 28:9). They were so happy to see Jesus that they literally fell to the ground and worshipped the resurrected Messiah.

The resurrection was the clinching piece of evidence that anybody would need to know for certain that Jesus truly is the Messiah. When both of the Marys witnessed Jesus in his resurrected state, they worshiped him, as they would have known that he was the Messiah – the Chosen One of God!

In all three examples of the disciples, the blind man, and the two Marys, they all responded to the revelation that Jesus was the Messiah by worshiping him. In all three instances when it mentions the worship of Jesus, the Greek word "proskyneo" is used, and it simply means to bow down or worship. In none of the above examples is Jesus worshiped as the God of all, but he is worshiped in the proper context as the resurrected Son of God. These three instances serve as good examples of finding that suitable balance of giving Jesus glory.

Growing up, I shied away from giving Jesus much of any glory because I was afraid of assigning him glory that belonged to God. It's a valid thought process to have, but in general, when fear is our main motivator, that can cause us to make irrational decisions. This was no different. When I stayed away from giving Jesus glory, I was in turn restraining from giving God all the glory that he deserves, as God is the Father of Jesus.

In the past two years, I have recently had the pleasure of becoming a father. Anytime that someone compliments my son, I am an indirect recipient of that compliment. That is because he is MY son, and I helped form him into the adorable little mess he is today. In the same sense, when we give glory to Jesus, God is an indirect recipient of the glory given to His Son. Therefore, I would let our

*(Continued on page 6)*

# Fear of the Lord

## By Jacob Rohrer (NE)

One of the highlights for me in 2020 was completing a Bible reading plan. Surprisingly, I had never completed (or, I think, attempted) one before. My experience was wonderful, and I intend to complete a plan, Lord willing, for the rest of my life, and I encourage you to do so too if you haven't. The benefits I received were rich and bountiful and one of the treasures I discovered is what I would like to share with you in this article. As I read through the Bible in a year, I noticed a particular doctrine woven through nearly every book of the Bible – the fear of the LORD.

### A Definition of the Fear of the LORD

The fear of the Lord is a multi-dimensional doctrine that can't be boiled down to one specific action or belief. Here is my personal working definition of the fear of the Lord from how the Bible presents it:

The fear of the Lord begins as a heart condition, a heart condition that recognizes God is God, and we are not. The fear of God in a heart results in reverence and awe towards God and his mighty existence and produces humility within the person who fears God. From this heart condition the fear of the Lord presents itself tangibly in the life of the believer by pursuing a righteous life, rejecting evil and sin, and confidently living the truth of God. The fear of the Lord is overwhelmingly positive and is presented as something valuable and desirable to obtain. In the Old Testament, the fear of the Lord refers to God the Father and in the New Testament, the fear of the Lord includes the Lord Jesus Christ.

### The Fear of the LORD in the Old Testament

The fear of the Lord is used in the Hebrew scriptures in a variety of ways:

"He said do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now, I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." - Gen. 22.12

"Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." - Ex. 20.20

"You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD." - Lev. 19.14

"You shall rise up before the gray-headed and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD." - Lev. 19.32

"Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life,

that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes." - Deut. 17.18-19

"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing in the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever." - Ps. 19.7-9

"Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." - Ps. 33.8

"Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." - Ps. 34.11

"Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes." - Ps. 36.1

"Who understands the power of your anger and your fury, according to the fear that is due you?" - Ps. 90.11

"My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgements." - Ps. 119.120

"But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared." - Ps. 130.4

"Declare this in the house of Jacob and proclaim it in Judah, saying, "Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see; who have ears but do not hear. Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble in my presence?" - Jer. 5.20-22

Conclusion: According to the Old Testament the fear of the Lord is repeatedly connected with the law of God. It can be taught and learned. To fear God means to treat your neighbor with dignity and respect. The fear of God also means to marvel at his existence and works and his ability to forgive sins in addition to experiencing terror at his judgements.

### The Fear of the Lord in the New Testament

The phrase "the fear of the Lord" is less common in the New Testament, but I want to highlight two important texts:

"I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear; fear the One who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell, yes, I tell you, fear him!" - Lk. 12.4-5

"For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." - II Cor. 5.10-11

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Fear of the Lord (cont.)

*(Continued from page 8)*

Conclusion: Jesus teaches that the fear of God must reside in every believer's life and Paul teaches that one day every believer will give an account of their life to Jesus and because of that future reality, we should conduct our lives in the fear of Jesus in the present, making the most of the opportunities, talents, and life that have been given to us.

### Illustrations of the Fear of the Lord

God presents the fear of the Lord not only in instructional teaching, but he demonstrates it through the lives of people in the Bible. The scriptures contain many accounts of people who do and do not fear the Lord. I'll summarize four accounts, but I encourage you to read them in full for yourselves.

#### **The Hebrew mid-wives - Exodus 1.15-23**

The Hebrew mid-wives were faced with a choice; either kill all the Hebrew boys that were born and transgress against God, or save the boys and face possibly being killed by the king of Egypt. The midwives feared God more than they feared the king and chose to save the baby boys. Because of the mid-wives' obedience, God blessed them.

#### **Nadab and Abihu - Leviticus 10.1-3**

Up to this point in Leviticus 10, God has been painstakingly clear on how he desires sacrifices to be given, including the preceding chapter 9. In chapter 10 Nadab and Abihu, the eldest sons of Aaron the high priest, who are priests themselves, offer sacrifices to God in a manner he did not prescribe—they offered "strange fire". God then strikes them both dead for their irreverent worship and failure to treat him as holy. Nadab and Abihu failed to fear the Lord.

#### **King Saul - I Samuel 15**

At this point in Saul's turbulent reign as king of Israel he has repeatedly disobeyed God. The prophet Samuel gives a message to Saul on behalf of God, telling him to utterly annihilate the Amalekites and everything they own. However, Saul spares the best livestock. When Samuel confronts Saul, Saul says he spared the livestock to sacrifice them as offerings to the Lord. When Samuel announces that God has removed Saul as king for his disobedience, Saul reveals the reason he spared the live stock was because he feared the people. Saul feared man over God and resulted in disobeying God.

#### **King Hezekiah - II Kings 18.13-19.14**

Faithful king Hezekiah receives a letter from the king of Assyria persuading him to surrender his kingdom. Included in this letter the king of Assyria urges Hezekiah to forsake his God because he cannot save Hezekiah or Israel. When Hezekiah receives this letter, he takes it to the temple spreads it out before God and offers a beautiful prayer of petition for deliverance. Hezekiah feared God more than the threat of invasion from a foreign king.

### The Inherit Goodness of the Fear of the Lord

I want to shine light on the overwhelmingly positive nature of the fear of the Lord. We shouldn't shy away from the fear of the Lord or view it as a primitive way to interact with God. If you want the blessing and favor of God on your life, then you must fear him and our Lord Jesus. Here is how the scriptures testify to the benefits of the fear of the Lord.

"Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." - Ex. 20.20

"The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened." - Prov. 10.27

"In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence...the fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death." - Prov. 14.26-27

"The fear of the LORD leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil." - Prov. 19.23

"How blessed is the man who fears always, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity." - Prov. 28.14

"Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments." - Ps. 112.1

"He [God] will bless those who fear the LORD, the small together with the great." - Ps. 115.13

"How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways...behold, for this shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD." - Ps. 128.1,4

"He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him; he will also hear their cry and save them." - Ps. 145.19

### Conclusion

The theme of the fear of the Lord permeates the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures. To fear God means to obey him, honor him, revere him, be in awe of him, and be in terror of his judgements. The fear of God and Jesus is thoroughly positive and invites the favor and blessing of God. In addition, the fear of God quenches sin and disobedience. Are you a man or woman who fears the Lord? How strongly is the heartbeat of the fear of God in your life? God's will for your life and mine is to revere and honor him and his son Jesus. In fearing the Lord, we live and experience the life God desires us to live in Jesus.

## THEY STILL SPEAK

*“By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.” Hebrews 11:4*

### The Children’s Page By Madge Savage (MN)

#### Kinds of Crosses

As the Easter month is here and the trials and sufferings of Christ are brought again to our minds, let us study a bit about crosses. According to the dictionary, a cross is sometimes the emblem of Christianity, or the symbol of the cross on which Christ died.

The word cross has other meanings than its connection with the crucifixion of Christ. It sometimes means the ancient instrument on which criminals were fastened and on which they hung until they died of exhaustion. Sometimes a cross is merely two lines, “X,” used by those who are unable to write. They use the “X” as their signature. Sometimes a cross is a mixture of varieties of breeds of animals or strains of vegetable or fruit. A cross in electricity is when two wires connect, and a current from one flows to the other.

In a spiritual sense many look upon the cross as something to be endured for Jesus’ sake as a suffering or trial. While some think an illness or affliction is their cross. If one studies the illness, he is likely to find it not unusual. God has never promised His own that His people will escape the ills or afflictions of the earth. He has promised us strength. Christ became perfect through suffering. Then how can we think we will become strong if God keeps all the hardships of life from us? Let us do as did Paul and prove by our living that we will let nothing separate us from God’s love.

#### My Cross

Before you can bear your cross, or me bear mine, for Christ, we look to see the first step. Jesus says our “self-denial” comes first. “Less of self and more of Christ” is our aim. You and I must search our lives to find out what we are doing for Christ and for ourselves. Second, let us list the things into two groups. Our activities are either for “me” or for “Christ.” The next thing is to cross off the things that are not right, pure, lawful. Then the questionable things should be gotten rid of as far as we are able to do so. As we follow Him, other things will be easy to do without because of the more joyful activities we undertake for Him.

#### Finding Our Cross

As we talk about the many kinds of crosses in the world, we might compare them to many kinds of work. Your father has different work for his living than does your friend’s father. The cross or the work that really counts is what is done for Christ. We are told to labor not to be rich, but rather that we may give to those in need.

If we are too ambitious for our own selfish interests, we may discover we are so “tied down” to meet the burdens we put upon ourselves that there is not much time or money for Christ. Place Christ first. Then the other things will take their proper places.

Our responsibilities, our work of love, we find we are able to do for Christ, are real. There is a work, a cross, for everyone. Have you found yours? “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24).

Unless we curb our natural desires to be able to carry our crosses for Christ, we cannot follow Him! The size of the cross we carry for Christ is just our size! He knows what we can do. Did you ever look at another’s cross and decide it would be too heavy for you? Or, too light? Some break under a cross another carries with joy.

Think seriously about your cross. At this time of year, we remember Christ “did the will of his father in heaven.” He willingly carried His cross long before He carried the one of wood that was forced upon Him. Perhaps He began to carry His cross when at the age of twelve He realized He must be about his “father’s business” as He talked to the doctors in the temple.

Begin now to find a cross to carry for Christ that you may follow Him! What kind of follower are you if Jesus sees you walking along without a cross—without any denial of self?

I pray you boys and girls will be wise in your life and that you will not, of your own carelessness, burden yourselves with crosses that will hinder you in carrying a cross for Christ.

THE RESTITUTION HERALD. *The Children’s Page* (Vol 37 No 21, pg, 12) and (Vol 37 No 22, pg 12).

## “Why Weepest Thou?”

By Syd Magaw (former editor RH)

Following Jesus’ burial, the chief priests and Pharisees appealed unto Pilate, saying, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, ‘After three days I will rise again’. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first” (Matt. 27:63, 64). Pilate replied, “Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.” Thereupon, the Jews “made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”

Thus, disbelieving Jews feared the disciples would steal Jesus from His tomb, that the disciples might declare Him resurrected. Jesus’ disciples, however, so thoroughly forgot His promise of rising from the tomb, that they not only had no thought of stealing Him for the purpose of making it appear He was resurrected, but some of them, finding the tomb empty, believed somebody *else* had stolen Him. Jesus’ enemies came a little closer to believing in the resurrection than did the disciples, for they remembered Jesus’ promise to rise on the third day.

Mary Magdalene, close friend of the Christ, was one of the disciples whose faith utterly withered. Coming early to the tomb on that third morning, while it was yet dark, and intending only to anoint Jesus’ body, Mary suddenly feared and burst into sorrow. Running to other disciples, she cried, “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him” (John 20:2). Apparently, no thought of resurrection possibility entered Mary’s mind. Somebody, she thought, had stolen Jesus. The empty tomb excited no joy in Mary! Inspired no faith! O! Blind blindness!

When Peter and John heard Mary’s report, they ran to the opened sepulcher, fearing, apparently, that Mary was correct—that Jesus had indeed been stolen. Possibly, they could find the thieves! “Stooping down, and looking in,” John saw the “linen clothes lying.” Why had not the thieves stolen His clothing, also? When Peter arrived a few minutes later, both, entering the sepulcher, saw the napkin that had been about

Jesus’ head: and it was neatly folded and laid to one side by itself. Suddenly, their fears changed to amazement—they *knew!* They *believed!* No disorderly thievery had occurred. Their Saviour was *risen! Alive from the dead!*

Outside the tomb, though, still in the garden, Mary continued weeping. After Peter and John left, probably not noticing Mary as they went, she, still weeping, returned to look into the sepulcher. The Christ was not there, but her fear and sorrow suddenly changed into amazement. Two angels were in the tomb, “one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” They began speaking to her, saying, “Woman, why weepest thou?”

Mary replied, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” Then, as if even a *memory* of her Lord were more precious than beholding angels, where she would like to have seen Jesus, she turned away from the angels and faced out into the garden, not expecting to see anyone, but to weep the more easily with none seeing her tears. Surprised, she *did* see someone there in the garden—and supposed it was the gardener. It was *the* Gardener!

“Woman, why weepest thou?” Almost accusing Jesus of having stolen Himself, Mary replied, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him.”

“Mary”!

“Rabboni”!

“Why weepest *thou?*” Risen from the dead, *the* Gardener calls you and me. He knows our names!

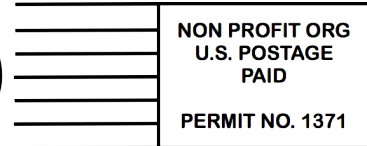
“Rabboni”!

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### THE RESTITUTION HERALD advocates:

- the oneness of God (1 Cor. 8:6);
- the Holy Spirit is God's power (Acts 1:8);
- Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son (Matt. 16:16), and is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5);
- the Bible is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16);
- the mortality of man (Job 4:17; Psa. 146:4);
- the near return of Christ (Acts 1:11), and life only through Him (Col. 3:3);
- the literal resurrection of the dead (John 5:28);
- the immortalization of those in Christ (1 Cor. 15:53-54);
- the destruction of the wicked (Rev. 21:8);
- the final restoration of Israel as the kingdom of God under the kingship of Christ (Luke 1:32);
- the church to be joint heirs with Him (Rom. 8:17), and Israel to be made head over Gentile nations (Isa. 60:1-3);
- the "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

It also firmly advocates repentance and immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and a consecrated life as essential to salvation.





**CHURCH OF GOD**  
GENERAL CONFERENCE

# THE RESTITUTION HERALD

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE **KINGDOM OF GOD** | ACTS 3:21

... heaven must receive [Jesus] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

## Abraham and the Abrahamic Faith (part 2)

By Dennis Sharp (SC)

### The Foundation for What We Believe

The importance of Abraham in God’s plan for the world is well-documented in the Old Testament. It begins when Abraham is called by God, and he faithfully and obediently leaves his country and goes to a place unknown to him at God’s request. God makes a covenant with him and promises him the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession and that his descendants will be too numerous to count. This experience is the foundation of the kingdom of God message and key to understanding the Abrahamic faith. We learn that he is the first person called a Hebrew (Gen. 14:13) and all Jews trace their ancestry to him (Isa. 51:1-2). He is the first person called a prophet (Gen. 20:7), the first great patriarch. He is called God’s friend (II Chr. 20:7), and God’s own self-identification includes his name, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:6).

Abraham’s significance does not diminish as we move to the New Testament where he is mentioned no less than 70 times. In the very first verse of the New Testament, Matthew starts his gospel by referencing Abraham. “A record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Writing to the Jewish people, Matthew starts with Abraham, which connects Jesus to the covenant promise of the land/kingdom and to David, whose throne he will inherit (II Sam. 7:14).

This genealogy or account of Jesus’ lineage supports his Jewish messianic qualifications. It also makes clear that Abraham preceded Jesus in time, which Matthew clearly demonstrates by starting with Abraham.

Jesus and the New Testament writers have much to say regarding the necessity of following Abraham’s example of faith and obedience. A thoughtful examination of their words will demonstrate that these writers saw the ministry of Jesus as an extension and confirmation of the promises made to the patriarchs and specifically to Abraham. Nowhere is this more clearly stated than by Paul in Romans 15:8. “For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises of the patriarchs might be confirmed.” This passage, in addition to linking Christ to Abraham and the covenant promise, illustrates the seamless transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The “Abrahamic Faith” is so named to acknowledge that the salvation we have by accepting and following Jesus actually began with the promise made to Abraham. Let’s look at how Jesus and the writers of the New Testament support and emphasize this truth.

In Luke 19 we have the story of Zacchaeus, and we are told that he was a tax collector, wealthy, and probably for those reasons, a sinner. He tells Jesus

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## Abraham and the Abrahamic Faith (cont.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

that he will give half of his possessions to the poor, and if he has cheated anybody, he will pay back four times the amount. Jesus replies, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9). Here Jesus invokes the name of Abraham and teaches us what it means to be a "son of Abraham." Salvation had come to Zacchaeus, not because of his blood lineage as a Jew, but because of his faith which was like Abraham's.

Jesus again references Abraham in his dialogue with the Pharisees. In John 8:58, he says, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!" Jesus was saying that before Abraham was born, I am he, I am the one I claim to be (see John 8:24), or I am the Messiah. He was not making a statement about his place in time, but rather he is asserting his pre-eminence, not a pre-existence. Jesus' pre-existence is only in the plan and mind of God, and Abraham foresaw this. His willingness to sacrifice Isaac testifies to Abraham's faith and understanding that God's promise would be fulfilled through his "seed." This is made clear in verse 56 where Jesus says, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." The "my day" that Abraham saw was Messiah's day. Paul further clarifies this in Galatians 3:16 where he says, "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The scripture does not say, 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed' meaning one person, who is Christ." "Seed" here refers to Abraham's human descendant or offspring. It is singular because it points to Jesus the Messiah. As verse 14 in the same chapter points out, "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the spirit." We see here that it is important to both Jesus and Paul to reference Abraham in a proper understanding of faith and redemption.

Perhaps no verse better states the relationship between Abraham, Jesus, and all Christians than Galatians 3:29. This is a foundational verse for the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. Here Paul says, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." When Paul says, "If you belong to Christ," he is referring to what he just said in verse 26, that we are "sons of God" if we have faith in, and were baptized into, Christ. This puts us in the right relationship with God. As sons of God and in brotherhood with Christ, we join and become Abraham's seed (which is Christ), and we share in the promised inheritance of God's covenant with Abraham. "Indeed, all Christians find

their origin in Abraham the Hebrew."<sup>1</sup> As an "heir," we look forward with confidence to the resurrection at Christ's second coming and our inheritance in the Promised Land and the kingdom of God on earth. This is consistent with what Paul said in verse 14, "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus." Notice the phrase, "the blessing given to Abraham." That phrase is used only twice in the Bible – here and in Genesis 28:4. "The blessing" is a reference to the promise of the land and ultimate kingdom of God on earth. The importance of correctly understanding Abraham and his faith is reflected by the fact that Paul uses Abraham's name eight times in this one chapter (Gal. 3).

The frequent use of the words "heir" and "inheritance" in the New Testament point back to Abraham and further demonstrate how important the writers of the New Testament felt it was to show the plan of restoration began with Abraham.

"I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." I Cor. 15:50

"For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a person is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Eph. 5:5

"Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." Col. 1:12

"Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has God not chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?" James 2:5

To be an heir, or to inherit, is a reference back to the promise God made to Abraham that he would have "offspring like the dust of the earth" (Gen. 13:16) and "possession of the land" (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8). The phrase "inherit the land" is used six times in Psalm 37 (verses 9, 11, 18, 22, 29, and 34). The statement of Jesus in Matthew 5:5, "Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth" is simply a restatement of Psalm 37:11 which says, "But the meek will inherit the land...". This is why Paul can say in Romans 4:13:

"It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that came by faith."

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Abraham and the Abrahamic Faith (cont.)

*(Continued from page 2)*

The New Testament equivalent to “inherit the land” is “inherit the kingdom.” Notice this phrase in the verses above and in the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:34:

“Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”

That the righteous would inherit the world had been in God’s plan from the beginning. The words of the Psalmist, “Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.” Psalm 2:8 demonstrates that before the time of Jesus and Paul, the promised inheritance of the land had been understood to include not just Israel but the whole world.

The Psalmist tells us that God remembers his covenant forever (Ps. 105:8), and so should we. The writer of Hebrews, in defining what faith is (ch.11), remembers Abraham, his calling, descendants, and the promise made to him. Mary, in her “hymn of praise” (Luke 1:46-56) after the visit of the angel foretelling the birth of the Messiah, remembers Abraham. She says, “He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever.” Zechariah, in his “song of praise” after God has blessed him and his wife Elizabeth with a son in old age, also remembers Abraham and the covenant. “To show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham” (Luke 1:72-73).

The beauty of the Abrahamic faith is that it also remembers Abraham. It recognizes the plan of restoration starts with Abraham in the book of Genesis and continues to the end of Revelation. We are given a view of what the fulfillment of the covenant promise looks like in Revelation 21: “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God’” (Rev. 21:3). Now God has what he has always wanted since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden—an obedient people (Abraham’s descendants both Jew and Gentile) living on a renewed earth (the land promised to Abraham). “As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people’” (II Cor. 6:16).

The writer of Hebrews makes clear the timing of when Abraham, and all who are faithful, will receive

their inheritance in the promised land. He says, “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (Heb. 11:8-9). At the Messiah’s second coming the dead will be resurrected, and those who are “in Christ” and the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29), will put on immortality and at that time inherit eternal life (life in the age to come). The apostle Paul is in complete agreement as he writes, “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (II Tim. 4:8). Jesus also confirms this in the last chapter of Revelation where he says, “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me” (Rev. 22:12). In all of these examples, the focus is not on the time of our death, but rather on Christ’s second coming and the resurrection of the dead.

The Abrahamic faith is simple in logic, easy to understand, and consistent throughout scripture. As one of our little Bible tracts written decades ago says:

“Our faith and hope as Christians, as the seed of Abraham, looks forward to the inheritance with Abraham in the Promised Land of the kingdom of God on earth, when the Lord Jesus returns. This is what ‘Abrahamic faith’ means!”

### End Notes

1. Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham – Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), p. 4

**About the Author:** *Dennis Sharp is a lifelong member of the Church of God. He currently serves on the Church of God General Conference Board of Directors as the Chairperson. He lives in South Carolina and attends the Guthrie Grove Church of God.*

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# Love is a Verb (part 1)

## By Dr. G. Clell France (WA)

Biblical love. For Christians, these are two of the most used and least understood words in the English language. In the King James Bible the word “love” appears 310 times; in the NIV, 551 times. And while the modern meaning of “love” usually relates to a feeling or emotion, in the Bible the word is used in two different ways—one relating to emotion, and one relating to behavior. The modern blending of these two biblical uses obscures an important message of the Bible—that “love” usually means doing the difficult work of changing behavior, of consciously and proactively adding value to others.

As a clinical psychologist and seminarian, I have always considered the Bible to be a relationship book. It describes the relationships between God, Jesus, and humanity. We all encounter challenges in our personal relationships—we would not be human otherwise. And, as Christians, we are admonished to love each other and our God unconditionally. Yet, as the Bible reports, “many fall short.”

As a culture, including Christians, we are usually unwilling to behave in ways that sustain good, positive relationships. Every year countless couples “fall in love” and get married. However, nationwide about 50% of marriages end in divorce. In my 30 years of practice focused on marriage and family counseling, I discovered the published divorce rate did not include the true failure rate of marriages. Many of us simply endure a failed marriage, for a variety of reasons. The actual failure rate is probably closer to 75%. And, yes, many couples today simply move in together and forego marriage, but I suspect the failure rate of those relationships is about the same.

What does the Bible teach about love and relationships? When Jesus was confronted by contentious intellectuals to name God’s single, greatest commandment, he responded with two linked, comparable commandments: love God and love your neighbor. This single statement has sparked countless interpretations, opinions and questions about love. What is love? How should it be expressed or felt? How can it be put into action? How do you “love your enemies?” Yet, in all circumstances, Paul wrote “love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:8, King James).

So, let’s explore the etymology of the word “love” in the Bible. In the New Testament two Greek words usually translate as “love”. One is the Greek word “philos”, which relates to the emotional bond between people, like brotherly love, parental love, or spousal love. This is the modern definition of the word “love”, as in “Philadelphia,” the “city of brotherly love.” The other Greek word for love in the Bible is “agapao,” and it has a different meaning. It describes behavior, not a feeling. This is an important distinction, as we will soon see.

The word “love” appears in the NIV New Testament 232 times. Usually the original Greek is “agapao” (behavioral) not “philos” (emotional). Unfortunately, today both words are interpreted as being the same—emotional, romantic, or brotherly love. I believe this blending of the original

meaning is a significant problem for Christianity in general, and for the Church of God in particular.

For example, in my counseling practice a discouraged spouse would sometimes say “I just don’t love him or her anymore.” We know the Bible admonishes husbands and wives to love each other. And while it’s not possible to require someone to have a particular feeling, you can suggest a specific behavior. It turns out the feelings will follow! Did Paul tell the husbands in Ephesus to attend to their emotional attachments to their wives? Not likely. I believe he told them to add value to their spouses, to acknowledge them, and compliment them, to enhance their spouse’s feelings of self-worth.

Fortunately, the Bible gives us descriptive language about behavioral love. In Corinthians, Paul discusses the Christian’s liberating knowledge about eating meat offered to idols, writing “Knowledge puffs up, love builds up.” (1 Corinthians 8:1, NIV). In the King James Version, the term build is sometimes translated “edify” instead of “build.” In modern usage, the original Greek word “edifice” is still used instead of “building.” To edify is to build, and building something means putting in time and effort to increase its usefulness and value.

So, what happens when you build up or edify another person? What happens to that person? First, their mood improves. They may become more cheerful and more energetic. They may become more alert, more attentive, more confident. In short, they become more valuable, both to themselves and to others. When you “build up” another person, you literally “add value” to that person. I believe this process lies at the heart of behavioral love. It involves every one of us every day. In short, every interaction has a “value impact”—we are either adding value or taking value from one another! There is little or no middle ground.

In writing to the Ephesians, Paul advised them to use only language helpful for building others up (Ephesians 4:29, NIV). Other biblical passages on “best practices” for interacting with others include terms like kindness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and gentleness. When credit is due, Paul advises acknowledgement “in honor preferring one another.” Don’t maneuver to make sure you get the credit, rather give credit to others involved. All positive. All build. All add value.

What happens when we don’t add value? Usually, unconsciously, we employ the exact opposite of edifying, loving behavior—we employ intimidation and guilt. My nephew recently purchased a best-selling book entitled “How to Win Through Intimidation.” These two maladaptive behaviors are not only commonplace, they are often celebrated. Intimidation and guilt have been used throughout history by individuals and leaders, including Christian leaders, to control human thought and behavior.

In Hebrews, Paul seems to chide believers for not having  
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advanced in their Christian growth. He refers to them as “babes in Christ” and says, “Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.” (Heb 5:14; 6:1, NIV) This passage suggests Christians should work to distinguish good from evil, and that it takes constant use to change our cultural conditioning. In Romans, Paul also discusses “good” and “evil.” He mentions being accused of promoting the saying “let us do evil that good may come” (Rom 3:8 NIV). Of course, Paul notes the negative nature of the concept, which translates into modern lingo as “the ends justify the means,” and rejects it.

So, what is “good,” and what is “evil”? In *Strong’s Concordance*, the original Greek word for “good” is translated into “valuable” and “virtuous.” Both passages support the positive concept of value. The word “evil,” in both passages, comes from the same original Greek word which translates to the English word “worthless.” To make something (or someone) valuable, you add value. To make something (or someone) worthless, you devalue or take value. We are culturally conditioned to be quite skillful at both, and we are usually unaware when we shift from adding value to taking value!

For instance, in a friendly discussion where two people express mutual respect, they add value to each other. However, if one participant becomes impatient with the other’s unwillingness to accept his or her point of view, they may intensify the discussion in several ways. One may lean forward slightly, narrow their eyes with a little frown, or add intensity and volume to their voice. These changes are seldom the result of a conscious decision, but are automatic habits triggered by cultural conditioning. The one leaning forward and frowning may not even notice their slight change in behavior, or if they are noticed, the new intensity may be justified by emphasizing the importance of the issue. However, in all circumstances, these subtle changes in behavior will always be noticed by the recipient!

In fact, the ends do not justify the means, in any arena of human affairs, and especially in close personal relationships. Simply adding intensity in a person’s voice can significantly shift the discussion away from the issue being discussed toward intimidation, which devalues the other person. In my estimation, this behavior is “doing evil that good may come.” Half jokingly, I have told clients there should be a mirror on top of the head of the person with whom we are having a disagreement so we can see how we look when we get intense and “serious.”

I believe this concept may be the most important, serious, and difficult issue we deal with in relationship. We must decide whether or not to reject our culture’s nefarious conditioning to prevail through intimidation and guilt, the “taking of value” from others. Assuming a positive decision, this would mean a commitment to become sensitive to the negative behavior we can easily employ—

especially when under pressure—and the cues that trigger that behavior. It is also helpful to plan and even rehearse positive responses to the negative trigger-cues. One positive response to de-escalate is simply withdrawing from the discussion until a later time. Remember, a positive “add value” response does not mean forfeiting your position in the discussion.

This re-conditioning is not easy, but it pays. You will become more effective in your relationships, and it is the best way to live life! I believe that rejecting this negative cultural conditioning is the heart of Jesus’ advice to “be in the world but not of the world.” It is particularly relevant to my paraphrase of 1 John 4:19-21, “You cannot truthfully say you love God if you devalue your neighbor.” To honor and respect God, take Paul’s advice and add value to others!

Importantly, these processes involve each of us every day. Whenever you interact with others, you have an impact. You have no choice. You always have an impact! Your choice is, do you want your impact to be negative or positive? Do you add value, or do you take value? There is little, if any, middle ground! “By constant use” learn to discern the difference between adding value and taking value. Your choice between adding or taking value becomes a way of life.

Most of us are probably quite familiar with, and likely utilize, most of the common statements and behaviors that add value, such as a smile or a compliment. In general, you add value to others by showing pleasant, positive, approving interest in them. Most of us do many of these things routinely, which is good. However, a positive interaction can be contaminated and even thwarted or reversed! A compliment with a qualifier is contaminated by the qualifier which turns the whole statement into a critical remark. This change takes value instead of adding value! “You did a great job, but I’ll bet you can do even better next time!” That means this time it wasn’t good enough! One could say, “I like your hair! It really looks great, but I think it would look better just a bit shorter.” Contamination kills the compliment.

So, how do we love an enemy? The same way. Add value! If a person doesn’t get along well with others, watch, and as the old saying goes, “catch him or her doing something right.” Let them know you like what they did! No qualifiers! They may reject your compliment - “I don’t care much about what you think.” Always be prepared to reaffirm a rejected compliment. As in this case, “Yes, I know, but when I saw you do that, I really wanted to tell you I liked what you did!” People often reject compliments, so always be prepared to override the rejection. If you tell someone their hair looks nice, they might say, “Well, I really didn’t do anything with it.” The reaffirming response might be, “Yes, but you know, it really does look nice.” Don’t let them get away with the rejection!

Why does love not fail? The reason is simple. Humans

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are social beings. Each of us needs to be around and involved with others. We need each other. We need validation and confirmation from others. In other words, our prime motivation is to garner indications of positive acceptance from others. It is typically the automatic, prime consideration when we get up in the morning and dress and groom. It continues to be a consideration in almost all decisions and behavior. This consideration is automatic and may not even be noticed. Adding value feeds our ever-present need for positive attention.

To say love doesn't fail is like saying food doesn't fail. We expend energy, so we need fuel. Food is that fuel. Food doesn't fail. However, food can also be contaminated, and if it is, it can reduce our ability function effectively. In the same way we thrive on uncontaminated food, we also thrive on uncontaminated added value.

Traditionally, we rely on adding value to attract a mate. To court a spouse, we are typically alert to opportunities to offer unqualified compliments. When adding value to each other blossoms into a romantic relationship, we may decide to get married. Why does one partner ask the other to marry, instead of making a demand? Well, it is a huge addition of value, since it gives the other partner complete control over a very significant decision! So why do potential marriage partners court in this traditional way? Why do they add value to each other during this phase of the relationship? There is only one reason. It works!

So, they get married. Then what? Well, probably not the typical childhood storybook ending, "They got married and lived happily ever after!" More typically, cultural conditioning tends to interfere, even before they are married. He may "automatically" let his guard down when he thinks he has her "hooked" and give her some "contaminated compliments" or worse. We often hear, "the honeymoon is over and you gotta get back to reality!" These negative, corrosive cultural misconceptions seem to relegate the whole positive, value-adding courting processes to a departure from reality. The negative, devaluing behavior of these, as well as other cultural negative misconceptions, certainly contribute to our high divorce rate.

After marriage, when some of the "new" mellows and things become more routine, what then? Well, our courting also tends to become more mellow and routine. However, it needs to continue! Perhaps it won't be as often or as consistent as before, but continue adding unqualified compliments. In my psychological practice, I call it "positive feedback". Occasionally, add extra zest to a compliment. Always be polite and considerate. Create an occasional special event, or surprise outing, maybe a "weekend for two." You will be amazed at the results!

## Conclusion

These universal principles of human behavior are expressed eloquently in the Bible, and they are equally valid and true today as they were in Paul's time. They are not true because they are in the Bible. They are in the Bible because they are true. They can be employed to produce a positive or negative outcome in our relationships. It's up to us. If we seek to influence each other using guilt, intimidation and coercion, we may achieve short-term success—however, it will be accomplished at the expense of the relationship we claim to value, as resistance and resentment build, sometimes destroying the relationship entirely. If we seek to influence by building each other up—by adding value and giving credit to others as Paul counsels—we will inevitably experience more willing cooperation, mutual appreciation and improved relationships. Positive or negative—add value, or take value—the choice is ours to make.

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# The Temple in the Olivet Prophecy

## By John Cunningham (U.K.)

Debates over the Olivet prophecy often center around which temple is being spoken of in the following verses:

Matt 24:1-2. Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down.

The importance of this prediction is shown by the disciples' question. "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? (Matt 24:3) Notice they associated the statement with the end of the age and the parousia of Jesus.

A further prediction is found in verse 15. "Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand)." Daniel spoke of this abomination in Dan 9:27, 11:31 12:11, and it is also mentioned in 8:12-13. All of these references point unmistakably to the end of the age and the destruction of Antichrist.

Futurists therefore refer all these passages to the temple at the time of the end.

Nevertheless, some point out that Jesus' original statement has to mean the temple then standing. It was Herod's temple that Jesus spoke of and which the disciples then asked about. Note "the buildings of the temple" (Matt 24:1) and "these things" (Matt 24:2). See also Mark 13:1-2, Luke 21:5-6.

They then proceed to interpret the whole prophecy to center around 70 A.D.

Now this might seem reasonable to Western educated minds, but the Jews had a different mind-set about a lot of things including the temple.

Let's look at Haggai chapter 2. "Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory." The words "this temple" and "its former glory" show clearly that Solomon's temple and the one being spoken of were regarded as the same temple, not two separate ones.

Notice further in verses 6-9 for more striking confirmation of this. "For thus saith the LORD of Hosts 'Yet once, it is a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.'" (KJV)

Note the emphasized words. The temple then under construction is "this house" and is also the house to be filled with glory when the nations are shaken and the desire of all nations shall come. "In this place (the temple currently under construction) will I give peace." This refers to the

millennial temple, yet is spoken of as "this house." "The former" refers back to Solomon's temple.

It is clear from this that the various temples which might arise are all considered to be the same house.

"Zerubbabel's temple was considered a continuation of Solomon's temple." (NIV Study Bible note on Haggai 2:3).

"The temple is regarded as one throughout" (Companion Bible note on Haggai 2:3)

"The second question followed immediately after the first: "and how do ye see it now?"

Although comparison was being made between the temple Solomon built and the one now being built, the expression "this house" in the first question and the pronoun "it" in the second indicates that Jehovah viewed them as only one house of the Lord, i.e. He only had one place where He dwelt in the midst of His people. Jehovah's house had been seen in all its glory, then in ruin, but now was being rebuilt. This temple is identified with Solomon's as fulfilling the same purpose, built upon the same hallowed ground, and being central in the nation's life. (P. Harding, Haggai, What the Bible Teaches series, p.264 Kilmarnock, Scotland, 2007)

"The Jews viewed the temple in Jerusalem as one temple existing in different forms at different times. The rebuilt temple was considered a continuation of Solomon's temple (cf. v3) However, the eschatological glory of the millennial temple, i.e. the latter temple, will far surpass even the grandeur of Solomon's temple (the former temple) Cf. Ezek. 40-48 for the detailed description of the millennial temple" (John MacArthur Study Bible, Haggai 2:9)

There is therefore only one temple, manifested in different forms, and an existing temple can be spoken of as a future one. The temple in the Olivet prophecy is the tribulation temple at the time of the end, in which the abomination of desolation will stand. The disciples thought so, and Jesus confirmed it.

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## What Eschatology Means for Us

### By Nathan Massie (IL)

Since the beginning days of our General Conference, one of the prime focuses has been on God's kingdom on a renewed earth for all of eternity. This is a marvelous truth that gives us a sustaining hope through present difficult circumstances. It gives us the strength to be able to face tomorrow, because no matter what happens to us, God will vindicate us in the age to come. Is there more to be had from these theological truths beyond the future reality of what the return of Jesus holds?

It is clear that from the time of the Old Testament prophets (especially those who experienced the exiles) they all were looking forward to a time where Israel would be a sovereign nation that was ruled by God Himself through the Messiah. The new governmental policies of God are founded in truth, justice and peace for all time. These again are the promises that we look forward to in the coming kingdom, but, beyond hope (which is extremely important), can we gain something deeper from these texts that show us glimpses of what's to come?

When Jesus began his ministry in Mark's gospel, he said, "The time has come! ... The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15, NIV). This passage shows the dual realities of the kingdom of God. God's "kingship is both a present reality (God is exercising his authority now) and a future hope (God will reign in the eschaton - the End - when he finally puts down all opposition to his reign.)"<sup>1</sup> God was blending the powers of the age to come into the present through the ministry of his son Jesus. The kingdom is both where Jesus is and the final hope for all believers: it is a present reality found in the church, and the future salvation for God's people.

With an understanding of the present realities of God's kingdom, it is important for us to reflect on what it means for us. What if the kingdom could be experienced in a deeper way in the present beyond the joys of our fellowship and meeting together? What if we took future realities in the full culmination of God's kingdom and lived out those principles in the present? What would it look like? How would the church be different? Is it even possible to do such a thing? The answer is yes. There are aspects of the coming kingdom that we can live out in the present. It won't be the incorruptibility of our bodies. It won't be escaping suffering or death. But what it can be is experiencing the most significant change that God sets from the foundation of his kingdom, which is peace.

In Isaiah chapter two, a vision is set concerning the last days where Yahweh inhabits the earth again coming from a new and holy temple (Isaiah 2:2). We get a glimpse of the reordering of operations in verse three. When God is reigning in his kingdom on the earth "He

will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths" (Isaiah 2:3 NIV). The first act of this new creation is to "judge between the nations and to settle disputes for all people" (Isaiah 2:4a) and the reaction of the people is a remarkable change in attitude. The people who were originally warring between each other "will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2:4b). The prime directive of Yahweh in His coming kingdom is peace to be had among all people. This is not just an eschatological truth. This is something that we need to begin to cultivate among ourselves now, in the present expression of the kingdom: the church. There are three ways that we can "beat our swords into plowshares" in the present: the speed at which we resolve our conflicts, the words that we choose to share between one another, and acts of forgiveness.

The very language used in Isaiah 2:4 concerning the repurposing of swords and spears assumes a certain speed at which these acts will come to pass. The word that is translated into "beat" in the NIV or "hammered" in the NASB, comes from the root word כָּתַח (kathath) which means to "to beat, crush by beating," and it also shows up as a word for crushing or smiting.<sup>2</sup> Someone with even a novice understanding of blacksmithing knows that you need to heat and slowly bend metal over time for it to be repurposed effectively. The language used suggests that there is no time to waste in the reforming of the tools. These weapons will be dealt with in a forcible manner in which there is no hope for a return to the previous state. God's transforming power of peace happens immediately with no time to spare.

The time frame in which these changes will occur are also reflected in some of the teachings by the apostle Paul. When a conflict arises and feelings are hurt and anger arises, Paul says "do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Ephesians 4:26 NIV). This teaching shows and reflects the change that will come in God's kingdom. Peace will be sudden and non-negotiable. This is how we ought to live in the present. To live our lives in such a way where we are quick to forgive and fast to restore peace among ourselves. Some of the most damaging effects to the body of Christ are to allow wounds between brothers and sisters to fester. This builds opposition, contention and an unloving nature within the church. We must make quick work of making peace with one another, and to be willing to beat our anger into compassion. To hammer our disagreements into effective conversations. To shape our lives in such a way that resolving conflicts is our first and foremost goal to preserve the church as a whole. In the words of E.K. Simpson in his commentary on Ephesians 4:26, he says "practice the

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## What Eschatology Means for Us (cont.)

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noble art of self-restraint. Give no handle to the adversary."<sup>3</sup> We must take our time to sue for peace and do it as quickly as possible.

The most powerful weapons that we carry on a daily basis are our mouths and what proceeds from them: words. It is possible for us to use our words in a way that is constructive or destructive. Every time we have the opportunity to open our mouths we have a choice to make. What will be the next word that comes out of our mouths? Will the words we share be effective or will they come back empty? Will we choose to share the substance from God or the folly of man? Solomon plainly says in Proverbs 18:21a "the tongue has the power of life and death" (NIV). This means that every time we open our mouths we are unsheathing potential disasters. We must take our words that we would use for ill and repurpose to be words that give life. We must do away with our weapons of wrath and make them into cultivation tools of life.

When we choose to share negative words, we are not only hurting others, but we are hurting ourselves. The Midrash Tehellim (the midrash is an ancient Hebrew commentary on the Hebrew Bible) says that "the evil tongue slays three, the slanderer, the slandered, and the listener."<sup>4</sup> When we choose to not speak words of life into other people, we are not speaking life into ourselves. We are setting ourselves for the same fate that we are wishing on other people when we do not share words that build up and bring forth life.

The final thought to be explored from this Isaiah 2 passage is the acts of forgiveness that happen between all of the nations. If one army is to totally disarm themselves by making their means of defense into farming tools, then they must be sure of the forgiveness that has been achieved from their enemies. For us in the present, we must disarm ourselves from the aforementioned words that don't bring life and live a life that brings peace through forgiveness. It is so relatable that we are often called siblings in Christ, because one of the most obvious marks of siblinghood is rivalry and unrest. Eventually most grow out of it, but growing often requires growing pains. To admit our shortcomings, to have the strength to make known our wrongdoings, and to show the fruit of the spirit in our lives, we must show that we are willing to be people that can forgive and move forward.

Jesus addresses this in Matthew 18:21-22 where Peter asks how many times he must forgive the brother or sister who wrongs him. Peter thinks that seven is sufficient, but Jesus corrects his way of thinking and says seven times seventy. This is not to say that our forgiveness only goes to four-hundred and ninety, but to a point where none of us could accurately count

how often we forgive each other. When we choose not to forgive, we are harboring bitterness within ourselves. Joanna Weaver said it best that "bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die."<sup>5</sup> Forgiveness is the antidote to that poison in our lives. Forgiveness is not just something that comes from God when we ask for it. It must also come from us and go to one another. This is not optional. It is an imperative. We must be willing to forgive.

Studying the end times doesn't always have to be a heady occasion where we are looking at calendars, books and newspapers. Sometimes reading these truths that will materialize at the return of Jesus doesn't have to just be for hope. It can be a compass to navigate the often-muddy waters and stormy skies of life. These truths give us a goal to imitate in the present. It gives us the aim of what God has always wanted from us. It gives us focus on what really matters. It shows us how to be more like Christ in the here and now for a broken world. It gives us the cure to the heartache and grief that we all experience through disagreements and points of contention. These truths give us a way to make the church in the here and now a little more like the kingdom that is coming. When we live our lives this way, Isaiah 2:5 suggests that we are walking in the light of the LORD. Come, let us beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks, together.

### End Notes

- 1 *The Expositor's Bible Commentary on Mark, vol. 8*, Frank Gaebelein, page 624.
- 2 *Strong's Concordance*, entry number 3807.
- 3 *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians*, F.F. Bruce, Page 108.
- 4 Midrash Tehillim 52:2 as quoted by Allen P. Ross in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary on Proverbs, vol. 5*, Frank Gaebelein, page 1028.
- 5 Joanna Weaver on Theologyalongtheway.org, *Bitterness is Like Drinking Poison and Waiting for the Other Person to Die* by Nathan Millican.

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## THEY STILL SPEAK

*"By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead." Hebrews 11:4*

### Acquaintance With God

By Lyman Booth (1920)

"And this is eternal life that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent"  
John 17:25

*Since the attaining of eternal life in the coming age is dependent on "knowing" the one true God AND Jesus the Messiah and "being known" by them in a familial relationship, believers should make this a priority in each day that God has given to us.*

*To amplify the importance of this endeavor, Lyman Booth (1849-1934) wrote a series of fifty articles, for the RESTITUTION HERALD Vol. 10-12 (1920-1923), that culminated in a book entitled "Acquaintance with God." The following article sets the tone for how important he felt each of us should strive to know, and be known, by the God who "is intimately acquainted with all our ways" (Psalms 139:3).*

~Bobby Partain, Jr.

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"Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles."  
Job 22:21-23

Acquaintance between two or more persons presumes that each has known the other. We may know a public man by his works, his writings, and his speeches. We may know a man by what he has done for the good or ill of the public, but we cannot claim acquaintance unless he also knows us.

Acquaintance may be pleasant or otherwise, even with little companionship. The reverse may also be true. Two workmen on a machine may be in each other's company many months and know but little of each other. They may associate without any great degree of intimacy or friendship.

Acquaintance admits of many degrees. It may be slight, formal or passing, or intimate. Familiarity may imply an unfavorable or undesirable meaning, as mentioned in Proverbs, where it says "familiarity breeds contempt." Therefore, the word intimacy is preferable in expressing the relation between persons as regards their thoughts, feelings and mutual interests and welfare.

Acquaintance does not necessarily include friendship, but friendship must include acquaintance. An acquaintance may be an enemy, the knowledge of which bars the enemy from our friendship. We can, and may, associate with an enemy, but cannot fellowship him.

Fellowship is a more comprehensive term, including not only acquaintance and fellowship, but sympathy and love as well.

Friendship may be strong, and fellowship may be weak, but wherever fellowship is complete, acquaintance will become more intimate. Therefore, fellowship, friendship, and love all depend upon intimate acquaintance. If this be true in relation to men, how much more does our friendship, fellowship and love for our Heavenly Father depend upon our acquaintance with him? Therefore, if we would know God and be known of him, it becomes necessary for us to acquaint ourselves with him. This necessity gives rise to the question, "How can I become acquainted with him?" "How can I know him whom I have never seen nor can see, while in this mortal state?"

This is a pertinent question and one worthy of a comprehensive answer. A large volume might be written in reply. It is the writer's intention to present some thoughts which he has gleaned from Holy Writ and from observing material objects in the great book of nature. The infinite and all-wise Creator has given to his children two books for study, each containing infinitely more than any one person can master in three score years and ten. His written book is one of infinite and inexhaustible knowledge, far beyond the reach of finite minds to grasp. And yet, it is so plain that they who diligently and prayerfully search its sacred pages may learn to know its author, for therein is his existence, mercy and love clearly revealed and defined. The other volume, in mute and silent language, speaks to the close observer of the works of his creative powers, in which his existence and glory are most wonderfully manifested, and some acquaintance may be had by studying them. His invisible and infinite power and knowledge are clearly revealed therein.

While we may not behold the Creator of all things, and see him face-to-face, yet in his works which he has made, and which are all around us in great profusion, he is visible. They speak in silent tones of his eternal and undervalued existence. Their beauty, perfection, the great variety and immensity of his creatures all testify to his infinite and eternal power; for none other could ever design and bring into existence the numberless objects that are to be found in the storehouse of nature.

The question has been asked, "How may I know and form the acquaintance of one whom I have never seen nor can see?" It has been truly said that we cannot fully know a person until we have lived with that person a term of years. We frequently meet people of whom we form very favorable opinions, only to have those opinions changed after being in close contact with them for a short time. Our respect and admiration changed to indifference, dis-

*(Continued on page 11)*

## Acquaintance With God (cont.)

*(Continued from page 10)*

gust, and in some instances almost to hatred. With others, it is the reverse. The longer we know them and the more we are in their society, the greater our respect and admiration, and the stronger our attachment.

All the knowledge that we can acquire of our Heavenly Father, of his works and his glory, must be through a careful, prayerful and diligent study of the two great volumes he has given us. That knowledge which pertains particularly to our salvation must be through Christ, which is revealed in his written word. Man in his sinful estate is not only a stranger, but an enemy to God, Being an enemy he cannot approach him except through a mediator, for Jesus hath said, "I am the way and the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6.

There was a time when man was in close relationship with his maker, but sin broke their friendship, and it placed man at enmity with his Creator. The fault was not God's, but man's. Isa. 59:2 says, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." Hence no friendship can exist between them, and no reconciliation effected, until man renounces his sins, and pleads, through Christ, the mediator, for reconciliation. In no other way can man gain an audience with the Majesty of Heaven. All other attempts will prove of no avail. Penances, vows or promises, so easily broken and forgotten, will not suffice to gain his friendship.

The terms of reconciliation are honorable and just, and must not be rejected, except at man's peril. While God is merciful and compassionate, he is compelled to be just to all. He did not offend man, but man did offend his Maker, and his honor will not permit him to receive man into his friendship without first receiving complete satisfaction for past offences.

The RESTITUTION HERALD, Vol. 10 No. 7, Nov. 16, 1920, p. 55.

## Christ's Seamless Garment By Sister Wyman (1920)

I have been reading a little tract entitled "Christ's Seamless Garment," and some of the thoughts presented seemed beautiful and scriptural.

What did the seamless coat of Christ represent? Our garments are our outward covering. They make up our outward appearance, and ought to signify one's character as it appears to the world and to those most intimately connected with him in his business and pleasure every day in the week. In scripture the apparel is referred to with the above significance, both to denote the wicked and the righteous. Thus pride and violence are represented as the garments of the wicked (Psa. 73:6).

On the other hand, the righteous are clothed with the garment of praise and robe of righteousness. They keep their garments, and their garments are not defiled (Rev. 3:4). They hate even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23), and they shall walk with God in white. All this shows the symbolical significance of the garments, the character, the real nature as expressed in word and act, and lived from day to day. No one can live a pure, holy life, unless they possess the spirit of holiness and purity within. Hence, the outward character indicates the inward nature or spirit.

If the entire outward life of a person is known, his real spirit and nature is known, as surely as a tree is known by its fruit. Many people will have many character garments with frequent changes and variations. Their apparel in this respect will have many rents and patches, with numberless seams, because of the many shapes and forms that have to be accommodated and fitted for various occasions and different persons.

But Jesus wore one unvarying, beautiful, rich seamless garment. He had no need to make himself up for any particular occasion or to meet any particular person. He did not have to put on or put off. He possessed one perfect, flawless character, for all occasions and all persons. He wore a seamless garment.

The many seams in a garment indicate the extreme effort to make it fit, or they might indicate the scantiness of the original material.

In all these respects the many seamed garment would well represent the character of the natural man. How shall mortal man be just before God? By accepting the righteousness provided—The Lord Jesus Christ—who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. As perfect love is the love of God, so the perfect righteousness is the righteousness of God, which is the righteousness of the perfect man, even that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. 3:9). "For Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Thus, having his righteousness, we have his character, and wear his seamless garment, not to perfection as yet, but we follow on.

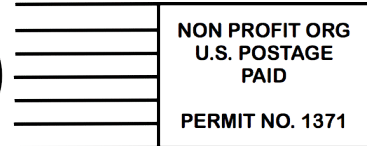
How long, oh Lord, shall thy children wait for deliverance? How long before they awake in thy likeness? Where is the seamless garment, which was so beautiful that even thine enemies would not rend it? Let it fall upon thy Joshua, for verily his soul doth exceeding long to be clothed upon with the house from heaven.

Even so, come Lord Jesus.

The RESTITUTION HERALD, Vol. 10 No. 3, Oct. 19, 1920, pp. 18-19.

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**[thegodofjesus.com](http://thegodofjesus.com)** (Kegan Chandler)  
**[KOGmissions.com](http://KOGmissions.com)** (Tracy Zhykhovich)  
**[focusonthe kingdom.org](http://focusonthe kingdom.org)** (Anthony Buzzard)

### THE RESTITUTION HERALD advocates:

- the oneness of God (1 Cor. 8:6);
- the Holy Spirit is God's power (Acts 1:8);
- Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son (Matt. 16:16), and is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5);
- the Bible is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16);
- the mortality of man (Job 4:17; Psa. 146:4);
- the near return of Christ (Acts 1:11), and life only through Him (Col. 3:3);
- the literal resurrection of the dead (John 5:28);
- the immortalization of those in Christ (1 Cor. 15:53-54);
- the destruction of the wicked (Rev. 21:8);
- the final restoration of Israel as the kingdom of God under the kingship of Christ (Luke 1:32);
- the church to be joint heirs with Him (Rom. 8:17), and Israel to be made head over Gentile nations (Isa. 60:1-3);
- the "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

It also firmly advocates repentance and immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and a consecrated life as essential to salvation.



**CHURCH OF GOD**  
GENERAL CONFERENCE

# THE RESTITUTION HERALD

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE **KINGDOM OF GOD** | ACTS 3:21

... heaven must receive [Jesus] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

## Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the LORD\*

By Jeff Fletcher (VA)

*\*Based on a sermon preached on July 4, 2021*

On July 4, 1976 the United States celebrated the nation's bicentennial. In Philadelphia that day there was a Christian celebration where representatives from all denominations and churches were invited to come and pray for our nation. My father, Joe Fletcher, was asked to represent the Church of God General Conference. I was twelve at the time, and I was able to accompany my father to this event. I do not remember a lot about the day. There were lots of people there, some of the speakers included Jerry Falwell and Jesse Jackson, a very diverse group of speakers. It was a reminder to us all that America had a strong Christian foundation.

In the 45 years that have passed since that day we have seen a lot of changes in our nation. Much of our early history is being rewritten. Much of our national story is being contested. Is America still a Christian nation? Was it ever a Christian nation? What does that even mean?

It is clear that people's attitude toward religion is changing. For the first time in the 80 years that Gallup has been tracking it, now less than 50% of all Americans belong to a church, synagogue or mosque. Just in the last twenty-one years we've seen a drop from 70% of Americans who belong to a religious community to 47%.<sup>1</sup> That's a drop off of nearly 80 million people who are no longer affiliated

with churches and other religious congregations. As the Christian influence is being eroded, are we becoming a more moral nation or a less moral nation?

The relationship between faith and nation has always been an interesting one. Most of our founders had religious faith and heritage. The values that many of them had came from their faith in God, and, from the beginning there was the intention to create a place where people are free to practice their religion as their conscience dictates, but also recognizing that faith and religious values are important to preserve the kind of freedoms that we have sought to maintain.

In 1787 Pennsylvania delegate Benjamin Franklin argued that the delegates to the Constitutional Convention should open their sessions with prayer, contending that otherwise they would do "no better than the builders of Babel." Franklin told the Constitutional Convention: "I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord builds the house they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this, and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the

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## Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the LORD (cont.)

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builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests. Our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and by word down to future ages."

Franklin thought that without God's help, America would fail. Likewise, President John Adams said: "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Thomas Jefferson lobbied for the separation of the church and state, not to keep God out of the government, but to keep the government out of controlling the churches. He wanted people to have the freedom to worship God according to their faith, not dictated by the federal government.

We want America to be a place where we can be free to practice our faith without government interference, but we also do not want our laws to be based on immoral foundations. Adams recognized that our particular system of government depends upon moral people, or it cannot be sustained.

Over the last 50 years a steep decline in morality in the United States, from the sanctioning of abortion on demand as a right to the sanctioning of gay marriage, the decrease in marriage and family and the increase in cohabitation, it is looking less and less like a Christian nation in many ways. In many places support for Israel is declining. The Christian church no longer exerts much influence on our nation.

As Christians we need to recognize to whom our allegiance belongs. It is first to God, then to country. In recent years Christians have concentrated a lot of energy into influencing government policy, getting politicians elected who will make favorable judicial appointments, especially to the Supreme Court. However, we are still losing ground when it comes to faith and morality.

On this Independence Day it is good for us to pause and remind ourselves of what we are called to do and to be as God's people.

How do Christians live as Christians in a hostile society?

How do Christians influence a culture when the culture is moving away from faith in God?

What do you and I need to be doing as Christians living in the United States when the influence of the

church is shrinking and evil and godlessness appear to be winning? We follow Jesus.

Psalm 33:12 says: **"<sup>12</sup>Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD"**.

When King David first composed those words as a Psalm, it was a reminder to a particular nation, Israel, which had a particular relationship with God. From the time that God first called the man Abram from out of Mesopotamia to follow God to the land God would show him, his inheritance, the land God would give to him and his children who were not yet born as an everlasting possession. From that time Israel had a special and unique relationship with God.

God was the one who caused Israel to be born, to become a great nation. God supernaturally opened up Sarah's womb so that at age 90 she gave birth to Isaac, Abraham's heir.

When famine came, it was God who saved his people by having Joseph go down to Egypt ahead of them and rise up to be second to Pharaoh alone in all of Egypt. When Israel was enslaved to Egypt, it was God who brought upon Egypt the plagues and forced Pharaoh to let God's people Israel go.

It was God who parted the Red Sea.

It was God who fed them in the wilderness for 40 years with manna and quail and brought them water from the rock.

It was God who kept them from dying from the diseases that plagued other nations.

It was God who parted the Jordan River so that they could enter the land of promise.

It was God who caused the walls of Jericho to fall down with the blast of a trumpet.

It was God who gave them laws so that they could function as a community.

It was God who sent the rain to grow the crops.

It was God who sent David to beat Goliath the Philistine.

It was God who called David to be his anointed and promised that his heir would reign over God's people forever.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the LORD (cont.)

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God did all of these things. Israel was God's chosen people.

Moses went up to the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments as reported in Exodus 19:3-6: "Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. **Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'**" These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

"Out of all nations you, Israel, will be my treasured possession. You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." How did Israel do? Not so good.

They did not keep the covenant.

They were not faithful to God

They worshipped idols, Baal and Ashtoreth.

They were not lights to the nations, instead they allowed themselves to be corrupted by the ungodly practices of the nations. So, God warned them. Sometimes they repented, but often they did not. God was patient with them, but finally he was forced to keep his promise to punish them. Israel went into exile in Babylon.

God send them into exile, but even then, God was with them. He rescued faithful Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace. He rescued faithful Daniel from the lion's den. He pointed them to a hopeful future, a time of salvation and resurrection and restoration. Eventually they returned from exile, rebuilt their temple and rejected idol worship. But even after the return from exile, they failed to be a very good light to the nations. Israel the nation did not faithfully fulfill their mission.

However, God had an even greater plan all along. Faithful God would do what faithless Israel failed to do. He sent His son. Jesus pointed people to the true ways of God. Jesus prepared the way for the coming kingdom of God to come to earth. Jesus opened the way to salvation for all people from every nation. Jesus made his church to complete the work that Israel was intended to do but failed to complete.

Galatians 3:26-29: "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Speaking to the church, Peter wrote: "**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation**, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." 1 Peter 2:9-10.

We are to become the people God intended Israel to be, but who fell short. We the church are chosen by God to be a chosen people, we are a holy nation, we are set apart by God to serve, we are to act as a priestly kingdom who brings people to God and God to people.

The United States is NOT a Christian nation just as Israel was not a Christian nation.

But from out of Israel God called people to become a holy nation in the church.

And from all of the nations of the world God called people to become a holy nation in the church. We are living in an unholy nation, the USA (or Canada, or Mexico, or Pakistan or Peru, or Malawi), but we are to live as a holy nation, God's people, the followers of Jesus Christ, the church.

We are not living in the fullness of the Kingdom of God. One day King Jesus will return and reign over the earth, and our time of exile will end. In the meantime, the church are the people of God living in exile. **So how are we to live?**

"Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the LORD (cont.)

*(Continued from page 3)*

good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor." (1 Peter 2:11-17)

We, the church, are to live as good and godly people in exile in a godless world. This is true...

Whether we have a president who is favorable to God or opposed to God.

Whether we have a judiciary that is favorable to God or opposed to God.

Whether we have a legislature that is favorable to God or opposed to God.

Whether we have a governor, state legislature, that is favorable to God or opposed to God.

Whether we have schools that are favorable to God or opposed to God.

Whether we have a media that is favorable to God or opposed to God.

Whether the people who create movies, television, art, music, sports are favorable to God or opposed to God.

In the end none of those things matter in terms of how we are to live as God's people.

What does matter is that we are to be faithful to God no matter what others do.

We are to be salt and light for this world, no matter what others do.

We, the church, are to be a holy nation and royal priesthood, no matter what others do.

In some ways on this Independence Day I wish we were living in a Christian nation.

I wish that we were a nation full of genuine disciples of Jesus and our nation made laws that were fully consistent with God's word. But we are not that, if we ever were fully that (remember that for the first 87 years slavery was allowed and for the first 180 years racial segregation was legal).

We have never been a true theocracy, ruled exclusively according to God's word and God's laws, but

there have been times when our morality was more shaped by God's word than it is today. But again, let me remind us that we belong to Jesus Christ. We are disciples of Jesus and our primary allegiance is to him.

If the US were to turn fully communist tomorrow, we are still to live as Christians.

If the US were to collapse tomorrow, and we were taken over by the Russians or Chinese, we are still to live as Christians. Jesus is our Lord and King and our loyalty is to him.

We should still pray for our nation and leaders. We should still attempt to influence the people around us to do good and follow God's word. But our ultimate goal is not to turn the US back to a Christian nation, but rather to live as God's people in exile on earth and do what Christ has commissioned us to do: Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all of God's word (Matthew 28:19-20).

On this Independence Day and every day which follows, let us declare our full dependence on God.

As Psalm 33 concludes:

We wait in hope for the LORD;  
he is our help and our shield.

In him our hearts rejoice,  
for we trust in his holy name.

**May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,  
even as we put our hope in you.**

### Endnotes

1. Gallup Inc. (2021, March 29). *U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time*. Gallup.com. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>

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# Revelation: A Vision of Victory

By Steve Taylor (AZ)

The book of Revelation is hardly an ideal choice for pleasant bedtime reading. With its terrifying scenes of conquest, war, famine, pandemics, earthquakes and other natural disasters, it is unsettling to say the least. But, there is much more to the story of this enigmatic book. If all we see are the horrific judgments of God on wicked humanity, we miss the main point. Revelation is ultimately not about seals, trumpets, and bowls, but rather a great vision of victory. The powerful, overriding theme is that God directly intervenes in the disaster of human rule and government and makes all that is wrong right. Those who persevere and overcome in and through Christ share in the ultimate victory. What could be more positive and reassuring? A little background helps us see why Revelation is precisely what we need to focus on today.

The first-century church was in crisis. Some believers were dying spiritually, while others were being pressured to compromise with their pervasive pagan society. An immoral culture was literally seducing many believers. An epic battle was raging, and the followers of Christ appeared to be losing.

Consigned to a lonely life of exile on a tiny island in the Aegean Sea, the sole surviving apostle of Jesus must surely have been perplexed and deeply troubled concerning the fate of the fledgling church of his Lord Jesus. The explosive birth of the church at Pentecost was a fading memory, its impact appeared to now be marginalized, and its message was in danger of compromise, as he alarmingly warned of in such passages as 1 John 4:1-3.

Current circumstances seem little different than what the apostle John witnessed in the first century. A crisis of faith seems evident today. Church attendance has generally been in decline for several decades in this country and elsewhere. A young generation declares themselves to be “nones” in terms of church and denominational affiliation. Many who left the church during the pandemic lockdowns have apparently chosen not to return. In this post-modern, post-Christian age, biblical values and morals are ridiculed, ignored, and viciously opposed. What is to become of the church that Jesus confidently declared, “the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18)? The great vision of victory we see in the book of Revelation assures and reassures us of the ultimate outcome.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of

Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (Revelation 1:1-3 NASB)

A “revelation” is literally an unveiling; an uncovering. Think of it in terms of going up to the attic of an old home, and finding a large mound of objects covered over with old blankets. You remove the blankets, uncovering and unveiling these objects, and are shocked to find some valuable artwork, books, and treasures. The book of Revelation is the uncovering of the dramatic events that result in Jesus being the ultimate victor, to the glory of God!

It is “the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants.” The book of Revelation is none other than a precious gift from God our Father, to His beloved Son Jesus, to us His people. It is the gift of victory to encourage us to persevere until faith is fully sight.

These are “The things which must soon take place.” Although over two thousand years separate us from the original Revelation vision, the sequence of events began then and stretch down to us today, even as we await the full consummation.

John, we are told in verse two, was to write down all that he saw, which sheds light on some of the difficulty in understanding this perplexing book. If a first century man witnessed the technology and warfare of today, how would he describe it? Words and phrases such as “fire and sulphur,” “brimstone,” and “the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle,” would be the best verbiage to describe such scenes.

According to verse three, we are blessed in reading, hearing, and heeding the words describing the Revelation. Someone has humorously pointed out that the word “understand” isn’t included. The motivation prompting our diligent attention to these words is that “the time is near.” The full consummation is yet future even to us, but the “launch sequence” was initiated in John’s day and continues even now. Insight and understanding come as we are continually attentive.

The apostle John writes these words (verse 4) to seven literal churches in a specific region, which is today the far western area of modern Turkey. These were seven unique churches located in seven cities of varying size, culture, climate, and challenges. The number “7,” a number frequently used in Revelation, is an indivisible and complete number, associated

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## Revelation: A Vision of Victory (cont.)

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with the activity and presence of God. We consider this all-inclusive number to indicate here that these are seven messages that apply in some way or ways to every church in every location in every age. These are messages to us today as much as to those churches then.

John is the human author of Revelation, but ultimately this is a message from Jesus, first of all described as “the faithful witness.” If we only focus on the “eschatological events” of Revelation, we can easily miss the wonderful descriptions of Jesus there. It is, after all, “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (verse 1), and some of the best Christology anywhere is found here. The gospels appear to be among the best places to discover more about Jesus, but we miss the great picture of the resurrected and triumphant Jesus if we neglect what Revelation reveals.

Jesus is called, “The faithful witness,” which He confirmed by His own words in the gospel of John - “the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” (John 5:19 NASB). We might add that the faithful witness calls His people to be faithful witnesses: “you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 NASB)

Jesus is called, “the firstborn of the dead.” Some would be quick to take exception with this statement in that Elijah, Elisha, and even Jesus Himself had previously raised others from the dead. But, no one else is the firstborn of the dead to immortality. “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20 NASB). Because of this great fact, it can be said that Jesus is first, to be followed by us a little later.

Jesus is also called “the ruler of the kings of the earth.” This is a fact either tacitly ignored or vehemently rejected by those in the halls of power of world governments. We are reminded that “The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His anointed” (Psalm 2:2 NASB) The currently rejected ruler is one day destined to rule the rulers - a truth that does not sit well with those bent of keeping their power.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus’ favorite go-to description of Himself was “the Son of Man,” which

readily called to mind an important prophecy in Daniel 7:13-14 NASB - “And behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

This one destined to be the ruler of rulers has also given Himself fully to be the ruler of our hearts and lives: “To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood” (verse 5). The word, “released,” is especially meaningful. We were imprisoned on death row, with no hope of parole or pardon. Jesus “posted bail,” secured our pardon, and unlocked the door of our cell to freely and forever release us. This He did for those willing to accept; to “sign on the line” through deliberate decision. Some would use this phrase, “who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood,” to promote universalism: salvation of all regardless of choice. It is important to be clear: salvation is not automatic. Intentional choice is imperative and essential. Acts 2:38 and John 3:3,5, among many other verses, clearly indicate that personal choice is prerequisite to the promise of forgiveness, and the hope of God’s promises in Christ.

To those who have made the deliberate decision to accept the release from our sins by His blood, “He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (verse 6). Passages such as 1 Peter 2:4-10 remind us that Jesus has made us into His church, but that church serves the larger purpose of His kingdom. The church is not an end in itself; it is the local kingdom project designed to declare and demonstrate this wider priority. It also has a priestly function, according to the pattern of Jesus described in passages such as Hebrews 3.

Jesus has made us to be a kingdom, in training and preparation to rule the world with Him at His return. We are the government in waiting; His “cabinet” in preparation. So, we might say that under Jesus we will develop a good environmental policy, fair tax structure, and equal rights, among other things. We are officials in a good and fair government; the best the world will ever see! And it all starts with Jesus’ return.

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## Revelation: A Vision of Victory (cont.)

*(Continued from page 6)*

"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen." (verse 7)

This is a "line in the sand" truth. Many reject and ridicule the second coming of Jesus, like those described in 2 Peter 3:3-4. It is either truth, or it is not. We adamantly declare that it is truth based on this and many other affirming passages. "He" is coming; Jesus Himself. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven ..." 1 Thessalonians 4:16. "He is coming with the clouds." Daniel 7:13 states, "I saw One like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven." Somehow "every eye will see Him." While the return of Jesus will be breaking news, it won't require CNN, FOX, NBC, CBS, ABC, or any other news network to cover it to fulfill this prophecy. He who is now invisible will suddenly become visible in such a way that every person, in every location, and even from every age ("even those who pierced Him") will see Him. What a day that will be!

"So it is to be. Amen" (verse 7). Let there be no doubt: "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11 NASB) As His ascension was reliably witnessed and verified, the promise of His second coming is thus well-established.

The book of Revelation is "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to his bond-servants" (Revelation 1:1). This is a personal letter of information and encouragement from Jesus to us. To neglect it would be a serious mistake. Sure, there are parts of it that are perplexing and confusing, but if we fail to see the abundantly clear vision of victory, we've missed the important big picture. Revelation is about "the things which must soon take place... for the time is near." (verses 1, 3). There is a sense of urgency here that only increases with the passing of time. As such, a study of Revelation should shake us out of any complacency we might have.

We need to be drawn again to the victorious Jesus, "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth." We need to more clearly see and hear Him whose words are trustworthy and true. This "firstborn of the dead" is our only hope out of the universal problem of death. And it is Jesus who has been put in charge of the governments of the world, awaiting that time in which He will exercise full authority!

We need to be reminded of "him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (verse 5). If nothing is done about our "sin problem," then the rest of the story doesn't matter! At least Jesus, "the firstborn of the dead," wins, but we do not if he has not freed us from our sins. Thankfully He has and He does!

In the eyes of the world, most of us are the least likely people to be destined for greatness. But, "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." (verse 5). Rising from relative obscurity in the world today, we are destined to be elevated with our Lord Jesus to the heights of power and influence in the age to come. Now that's a reason to get out of bed in the morning!

He is coming back in victory, although we don't know the day nor the hour (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44). As such, the watchword is the word "watch." Be prepared. Be diligent. Be persevering.

The daily newsfeed from modern media is rarely good news. When was the last time there were headlines about a city with no murder, rapes, or violence? Instead, as the adage goes, "If it bleeds, it leads." Bad news is big news, and there is plenty of it in a rapidly degenerating world.

The people of God need good news to bolster faith and hope, and the vision of victory in Revelation abundantly provides that. As you try to make some sense of pre-, mid-, or post-tribulation rapture, the specific meaning of each of the judgments of "sevens," be careful not to lose the important perspective of the great vision of victory that Jesus is returning, and that the kingdom of God is to be firmly and forever established. You just might find the book of Revelation more uplifting than you imagined before.

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## Love is a Verb (part 2): What Do You Think?

By Dr. G. Clell France (WA)

In my years of private practice as a clinical psychologist, clients usually came to me for help in relationships—marriage, family, work. And while many relationship challenges can be understood in terms of behavior—what we do and say—those challenges often begin with a thought. We’ve all heard the expression “I think, therefore I am”—an assertion made in the 17th century by René Descartes. However, I suggest a more useful arrangement of the phrase is “I am, therefore I think.” Why? Because thinking is something we all do every day. It’s universal. It’s part of being human. Ultimately our behavior is based on choices, and those choices always begin with thinking.

Here, I’d like to introduce an important concept—commonplace in clinical psychology, but less apparent to the casual observer. Thinking is behavior. Remember the old saying, “Be careful what you wish for, for you shall surely get it.” In a broad sense, over a lifetime, thinking and belief direct your path. Likewise, on a day-to-day basis, what you choose to think also has a profound impact—on how you feel inside. While most of us consider “thinking” to be a passive, mental process, it is actually more akin to physical activity. It is something we do. It is behavior, just “internal” instead of “external.” And, it has an impact on whoever engages with the behavior—in this case, you!

For example, if you are planning a vacation and “thinking” of the entertaining and interesting things you plan to do, you will often experience positive anticipation, excitement, and generally good feelings. This positive thinking literally changes your biology, stimulates the release of endorphins and dopamine in your brain, enhances your energy level and improves your disposition. On the other hand, if you dwell on a traumatic event in your past, you will often experience negative feelings like melancholy, anxiety, and a depressed energy level. These negative feelings are also the result of a shift in your brain chemistry. What you choose to think literally determines how you feel—for good or ill.

In fact, we all “think” in a rambling internal conversation all the time. (Some of us, myself included, occasionally verbalize this internal conversation when alone, and if overheard we’re told we “talk to ourselves”). Sometimes this internal conversation is conscious and self-directed, like “I need to find a hammer to repair this door.” Other times, it’s unconscious and knee-jerk, like “I broke the door, I can’t believe how stupid I am!” Both conversations have an impact. The question is, how do we manage our

internal conversation to move in a more positive direction? Unfortunately, we can’t successfully direct ourselves to “feel” a certain way. We can’t simply “wish” ourselves into a better mood. However, we can change our behavior. And, since thinking is a form of behavior, we can change our thinking to replace an old, negative thought with a new, positive one.

The first step is to make the decision to change—to take responsibility for pulling ourselves out of a negative spiral. This is not as easy as it sounds. We often blame our history and feel at the mercy of it. It can become a fixation. However, the past is past. It’s true that for some people confronting past trauma is therapeutic. However, in most cases, focusing on the present and the future is more powerful. Sadly, no one from our past will magically appear to make us well. We are ultimately in charge of ourselves, and our internal conversation. While this “rescripting” can be challenging, the results are worth it. We each have the capacity to make a positive change! To begin, move away from abstract thinking to specifics. Identify a single negative thought pattern and replace it with a positive one. It’s like going to the gym and lifting weights. Start small and work your way up. The most important step is getting yourself to the gym in the first place!

How does scripture apply? Prov 23:7 (KJV) says “For, as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” This can be either positive or negative. It’s not unusual for us to internally rehearse negative “self-talk”—repeating negative things we may have been told, often in childhood. When a child is called dumb, stupid, clumsy, or ignorant, they internalize the message. Children have limited defenses against such negative input, and as adults they often grapple with the emotional challenges that result. They are less effective, less fulfilled, less happy—often unable to fully recover from such early abuse. Public shaming by parents, demeaning comments, anger and intimidation all leave a scar. This behavior by parents, siblings or caregivers is often a “repeat” of abuse they were subjected to as a child. It’s like the old saying “hurt people, hurt people.” So, how do “hurt people” practice the biblical principle of “love your neighbor” as yourself? It’s not easy! A person with low self-esteem has difficulty commanding the respect of others. Yet, we only respond to positive input from those we respect. It is a catch-22.

As a child, I was admonished, “don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought!” As an adult I ques-

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## Love is a Verb (cont.)

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tioned this statement. Yes, it is intended to instill humility, a Christian virtue, yet I often wondered who determines the meaning of “ought.” Had I, as a child, exceeded an acceptable level of self-assurance, self confidence, and self-reliance? Had I reached the limit of “ought?” Decades later, in my psychological counselling practice, I observed the negative results of “ought” manifested in a variety of debilitating conditions in my patients, including insecurity, self-doubt, and low self-esteem. I think a better rewording of the statement would be, “Be sure to think of yourself every bit as highly as you ought!”

In Matt 5:5 (KJV), we read “Blessed are the meek.” This statement has sometimes been employed to reduce conflict in contentious discussions and disagreements. I prefer the translation of the Aramaic word as “gentle” instead of “meek” (NASB, 1977). In my view, Jesus was not “meek”—defined in the dictionary as mild, compliant, and submissive. Jesus was gentle but strong. He did not shy away from verbal jousting, confrontation, and “speaking truth to power.” For example, in Matt 23:27, Jesus denounces his adversaries in a very un-meek way with the proclamation “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” While it’s true a soft answer turns away wrath, as in Prov 15:1 (KJV), when confronted it is still most effective to respond firmly yet gently. Many people have internalized the limits of “ought” to become obsequious, passive, humble and “meek” at the expense of gently maintaining their position in the course of a challenging discussion.

Over the years in my counselling practice I noticed my therapeutic solutions were similar for many people. Most of us need the positive acceptance of others, as well as positive feedback we can supply to ourselves—supporting the development of self-acceptance and self-love. We all need the “love that does not fail.” And although each client’s need for love is universal, the solution for every person was unique. Every person has a different history and potential, and each treatment plan was completely individualized.

For example, a woman came to my office seeking help for depression. She was a recognized local artist and her husband had recently passed away. Her son was having challenges, and his future was uncertain. She lost interest in her art career and felt her life was in serious disarray. Her thinking—her “internal behavior”—had deteriorated significantly. And yet, she made an internal decision she wanted to change. After several counselling sessions, I sug-

gested a treatment plan combining behavioral changes, positive thinking and self-acknowledgement. This included making a list of things she was grateful for, and articulating hopes and aspirations for the future. I asked her to rank order the list, with the most important at the top, and place it next to her morning cup of coffee. She then began each morning with a review and meditation on her new “hopes and aspirations.” While this list was not her sole therapeutic exercise, I noticed over many weeks that her outlook began to improve. Sometime later, after her treatment had concluded, I encountered her in the post office pleasantly engaged in conversation with friends. When we spoke, she reported she was feeling better, her son had applied to college, and she had re-engaged in her artistic pursuits. She had successfully moved in a more positive direction. The key to her success was her sustained effort, over many months, and her ongoing practice of replacing negative thinking with positive thinking.

The way our thinking impacts both our relationships and our day-to-day communications is suggested in Luke 6:45. (NIV) “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” From infancy, we learn to negotiate, using both positive and negative responses, and how to seamlessly shift to the negative side when necessary. Usually, we aren’t even aware of when we make the shift. If challenged on engaging in negative behavior, we often fall back on the significance of the issue: “I’m angry because this is important!” Unfortunately, most of us go through life relying on both positive and negative responses without really making a distinction between the two.

For example, as a child, I recall learning negative thinking when playing games with my friends. Things generally went well, but not always. There were disagreements, even confrontations. We issued ultimatums like, “If we can’t play my game, I won’t like you anymore.” Or, “I want to play this game, or I’ll go home.” One of us might protest or whine, and only rarely did the conflicts become physical. On one occasion, I recall “learning to be offended.” A playmate made a disparaging remark, but I ignored him. A friend nudged me and said, “If someone said that to me, it would make me mad!” I reconsidered and went nose-to-nose to let the offender know “you better not talk to me that way!” I

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## Love is a Verb (cont.)

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was learning an internal dialogue, a way of thinking that produced a negative intimidating behavior called “righteous indignation.”

So, how did we arrive at such an untenable position? We had a very experienced and persistent tutor. Our culture! And yet, as noted in Hebrews 5:14 (paraphrased) Paul indicated that to become a mature Christian, one would need, by constant use, to learn to distinguish good from evil—that is, to distinguish positive from negative behavior. Most of us do not realize using negative behavior is the result of “just learning how to get along,” as taught by our culture. If challenged on such negative behavior, we often respond, “I know, but that’s just the way I am.” Our negative cultural conditioning is difficult to counter. It requires commitment and vigilance.

In Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV), Paul lists several ways to replace negative thinking with positive thinking. He writes “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Paul expressed similar thoughts in his letter to the Philippians. (Paraphrased from Phil 4:8, NIV) “Finally, brothers, whatsoever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy, think about such things.” If we think “such things,” replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts, we are not only moving in a more positive direction, we are incorporating fundamental biblical teaching into our lives.

### CONCLUSION

The Bible contains many universal human principles. One of these is that behaving in a way that adds value to others enhances positive, loving relationships; and behavior that removes value from others degrades and erodes those relationships. This biblical principle includes our internal behavior, our internal conversation, which is thinking. Is it positive, or is it negative? The Bible says “as a person thinks in their heart” so shall they become, and that out of the abundance of our inner thoughts, we relate to others. What we think ultimately determines our behavior. In 1 Corinthians 13:8 (NIV) Paul notes the positive results for those who follow the principle of adding value by stating “Love never fails.” To add value, to praise, to give credit, and to accept, “is as good as it gets.” The opposite of this principle is also true. To devalue, to criticize, to withhold support, and to reject “is as bad as it gets.” The best advice I know of is in the Bible: Love God and love your neighbor. To follow this advice puts us on

the best side, the positive side, of these universal principles. I believe this is the best possible way to live your life!

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# Christology and the Angel of the LORD (Part 1)

By John Cunningham (U.K.)

*Translation from the NKJV except where indicated in the text.*

The angel of the Lord is a mysterious being found throughout the Old Testament. We first meet him in the patriarchal narratives of the book of Genesis. He appeared to Hagar in the wilderness (Gen 16:7-13), and to Abraham when he was preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:11-13). Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord all night (Gen 32:24-30, Hos 12:2-6). He spoke to Moses in the burning bush and guided the Israelites in their flight from Egypt (Ex 3:1-8; 14:19-20; 23:20-23). Later he confronted Balaam as he prepared to go to Moab to curse Israel (Num 22:22-35). Joshua encountered him just before the conquest of Jericho (Josh 5:13-15), and he appeared to Gideon (Jud 6:11-24) and Samson's parents (Jud 13:3-23) during the period of the judges.

The unusual feature of the narratives concerning the angel of the Lord is that he sometimes speaks of God in the third person, clearly indicating that he is His messenger and at other times speaks in the first person as if he were God Himself. We are left with the distinct impression that there are two personalities involved, both of whom are God.

It is perhaps not surprising that Trinitarians have seized upon these texts to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ was fully and personally active in Old Testament times. A long line of expositors beginning with Justin Martyr in the second century has claimed that the angel is Christ. Justin was followed by Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Novatian, Hilary of Poitiers, and, in more modern times, by the reformers, Hengstenberg and Liddon in the nineteenth century. So important is the angel-Christ identification that denial of it has been regarded as heresy by its advocates.

In the light of such dogmatism, it is rather surprising how little proof is offered. The New Testament as we will see does not make the connection between Christ and the angel of the Lord anywhere. Malachi 3:1 is sometimes cited as proof since Christ is here called "the messenger (i.e., angel) of the covenant." The Hebrew word *malak* means messenger and is used in the Old Testament of any messenger, whether human or supernatural. It is used of the messengers of Jacob (Gen 32:3), David (II Sam 11:4), Jephthah (Jud 11:12-14) and of the spies sent out by Joshua (Josh 6:25). The priest is called the messenger of the Lord of Hosts (Mal 2:7). It is clear therefore that the word *malak* has its ordinary meaning here and cannot be pressed to mean that Christ was the angel of the Lord in the texts we have mentioned.

The gospels record the activity of angels during the ministry of Jesus. Angels ministered to Him after the temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:11, Mark 1:13) and during His agony in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:53; Luke 22:43). The passages which bear the most resemblance to the Old Testament theophanies are those concerning the announcements of the supernatural births of Jesus and John the Baptist in Matthew and Luke. The angel of the Lord appears to Joseph after Jesus has been conceived (Matt 1:20). Previously he had appeared to Zechariah the father of John the Baptist and is explicitly named Gabriel. It is clear that there is no way of making any identification here between the angel of the Lord and Christ, and if we cannot make it here, why should we make it anywhere else?

The letters of the New Testament plainly show that angels are subordinate to Christ. God has "raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Eph 1:20-21). Christ "has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him." (I Pet 3:22). "By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." (Col 1:16) "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power." (Col 2:9-10)

These texts are sufficient to demonstrate that New Testament writers did not believe that Christ was an angel, but the writer to the Hebrews is even more decisive. Jesus has "become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Heb 1:4) God never declared to any angel "You are My Son, today I have begotten you" or "Sit at My right hand till I make your enemies your footstool" (Heb 1:5, 13). At the second coming of Christ angels will worship Him. "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world He says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'" It is true that for a time Jesus was made a little lower than the angels (Heb 2:9) but the administration of the age to come will not be in the hands of angels but of Christ "For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels, but one testified in a certain place, saying, 'What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little

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## Christology and the Angel of the LORD (cont.)

*(Continued from page 11)*

lower than the angels, you crowned him with glory and honour, and set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.' For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. (Heb 2:5-8)

What, then, is the significance of the angel of the Lord? Does the New Testament throw any light on the subject?

It is a commonplace doctrine of the New Testament that God is invisible. Jesus said speaking to the Jews, "You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape." (John 5:37) Paul wrote that "since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." (Rom 1:20). Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) The writer to the Hebrews says that Moses "forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Heb 11:27). Paul describes God as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power." (I Tim 6:15-16).

These texts, and particularly the last one, rule out the possibility that the angel of the Lord can possibly be a member of the Godhead. He has been seen on many occasions, and therefore is not invisible. Since he is not God Himself, nor an appearance of Jesus Christ, we are driven back to the only conclusion possible that the angel of the Lord really was an angel, one of the class of supernatural beings employed to carry out the will of the invisible God.

We will now look at four New Testament passages which support that contention. Hebrews 13:2 says "Do not forget to entertain strangers for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." The writer may have several incidents in mind. Gideon and Manoah, the father of Samson, were both visited by the angel of the Lord whom they apparently did not recognize as such. Both "entertained angels unawares" and were alarmed to discover that they had been speaking to angels. (Jgs 6:11ff; Jude 13)

The remaining three passages concern the role played by angels in the giving of the law. Paul says that the law was "appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator" (Gal 3:19). Hebrews 2:2 refers to the law as the "word spoken by angels". Stephen reminded the judges at his trial that an angel had

spoken to Moses and the fathers in the wilderness and bluntly told them that they had "received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it" (Acts 7:38,53).

We will now look at a number of Old Testament passages about the angel of the Lord to see what we can learn from them. It will be important for our investigation of this and other passages to notice particularly when God is the speaker and when He is spoken about and also to pay attention to the uses of the second person singular and plural. The latter point is totally lost in modern English usage. "You" stands for both singular and plural, and therefore modern translations of the Bible are not at all suitable at this point. Our quotations will therefore be taken from the American Standard Version which renders the second person singular as "thou" and the plural as "you". This version also renders the divine name as Jehovah, and this will help us to see the distinctions which are brought out in the text.

We begin in Genesis 16. Hagar has fled from Sarah and found herself in the wilderness. "And the angel of Jehovah found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, whence camest thou? and whither goest thou? And she said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Behold thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah hath heard thy affliction...And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou art a God that seeth." The angel who speaks to Hagar speaks as Jehovah- "I will multiply thy seed." - and yet maintains a separate identity from Jehovah, and this will be found to be characteristic of many of the angel of the Lord passages in the Old Testament.

Genesis 18 and 19 does not use the term angel of the Lord, but it does illustrate perfectly the principles we wish to emphasize.

The account opens with a visitation to Abraham as he sat in the door of his tent. "And Jehovah appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth and said, My lord, if now I have found favor in

*(Continued on page 13)*



## Christology and the Angel of the LORD (cont.)

*(Continued from page 12)*

thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let now a little water be fetched and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree...". Jehovah then appears to Abraham in the form of three men, and Abraham greets them with the hospitality which was customary, offering them food and rest. Note that he greets them as *adonai*. Abraham begins by using the singular form of address, recognizing the pre-eminence of one of the visitors before reverting to the plural form of address.

The meal completed, the men ask where Sarah is (verse 9). One of the visitors then begins to speak as Jehovah. "I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." "Jehovah said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old. Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the set time I will return unto thee when the season cometh round, and Sarah shall have a son." (verses 13-14).

In verse 16 the visitors are again called men as they turn towards Sodom. At this point Jehovah reveals to Abraham His purpose regarding that city. "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." (verse 20) Two of the men now go to Sodom while Abraham intercedes with Jehovah for the safety of the righteous living there.

Chapter 19 opens with the arrival in Sodom of the two men, and we learn for the first time that they are angels. "And the two angels came to Sodom at even." The two angels now begin to assume the role of Jehovah taken by their companion in chapter 18. Their role as messengers of Jehovah appears in verse 13. "We will destroy this place because the cry of them is waxed great before Jehovah; and Jehovah hath sent us to destroy it". But in verses 18 and 19 Lot addresses the men as if they were God using the singular form. "And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my lord: behold now, thy servant hath found favor in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy loving-kindness which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest evil overtake me, and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; Oh let me escape thither and my soul shall live." Speaking now in the first person as God, one of the angels replies, "See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing."

The angel of the Lord features prominently in the narrative of the book of Exodus. "And the angel of

Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I." (Exod 3:2-4) The angel now speaks to Moses in the first person as God. "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." (verse 6)

The most significant mention of the angel of the Lord in Exodus occurs in Chapter 23:20-23. "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take ye heed before him, and hearken unto his voice; provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgression: for My Name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed hearken unto his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies and an adversary unto thine adversaries." The voice of the angel is the voice of God. God's name is in him, which means that he acts with the full authority of God.

The twentieth chapter of Exodus records the giving of the Ten Commandments to Israel by Jehovah. The people are so frightened at hearing the words of God that they plead with Moses that God should not speak to them anymore. (Exod 20:19) Stephen recalls this incident during his trial recorded in the seventh chapter of Acts. "This is he (i.e. Moses) that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel that spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; who received living oracles to give unto us." The angel spoke to both Moses and the people. The only occasion in which the people heard a divine voice was during the giving of the Ten Commandments. On the authority of scripture, therefore, we can say that the speaker in Exodus 20 was an angel. From the same text in Acts we can say that the being who spoke to Moses in Mount Sinai was also an angel. This is true also of the incident recorded in chapters 33 and 34 of Exodus when Moses was shown the glory of God.

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## THEY STILL SPEAK

*By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead." Hebrews 11:4*

### Jesus Demands Our Attention!

By Harry Sheets (1956)

*The wise men worshiped Him. Herod sought His life. How do you feel about Jesus?*

At this season of the year our minds wander back in time to the birth of Jesus in the little town of Bethlehem. No one can read the simple but beautiful story of Jesus' birth as recorded in Luke 2:1-20 without feeling something tug at his heart. No one can read this record and remain unmoved.

The strange power that Jesus was to exert on the world was evident that first day of His birth. Angels sang of His glory; the shepherds worshiped Him, and Jesus' parents wondered about the strange happenings. Eight days later, when in the temple, Simeon took the babe in his arms and praised God for letting him live to see God's salvation for the world. Simeon said: "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. ... Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of Israel; and a sign which shall be spoken against ... that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:30-32, 34, 35).

Jesus has been revealing the thought of many hearts from that day to this. The wise men worshiped Him. Herod sought His life. A storm has raged about this person for nearly two thousand years. Some contended that He had a devil, while others said He was filled with the Spirit of God. To some, Jesus was an impostor and a blasphemer; to others, He was a prophet, while some boldly declared Him to be the Son of God. Jesus may be loved, or He may be hated, but He is never ignored. We doubt that anyone ever becomes so hardened in sin that he does not, in some sober moment, wonder what Jesus will say when He returns.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David. This was appropriate, for Jesus was the legal heir to the throne of David. Both Joseph and Mary were of the royal line of Israel. In addition to this, God had given the throne to Him. Hear the words of the angel Gabriel as he announced the birth of Jesus: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall rule over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). In spite of this positive statement, there is still disagreement about the future position of Jesus. Jesus is ever the controversial figure.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem for another interesting reason. The name "Bethlehem" means "house of bread." From this city came "The bread of life." Jesus was the true manna sent from God. The first manna, that given in the wilderness, must have been a complete food with all

the necessary elements, for it was all that was needed to maintain life and health. Israel did not need meat, although the people asked for it and received it to prove that God was capable of supplying all needs. Some received the manna joyfully, while others grumbled and were dissatisfied with what God gave them.

The situation did not change when God gave the world the true manna, the bread of life. Some receive Him gladly, others because they feel they must, and still others reject Him. Israel, in a foodless desert could see the necessity of gathering the manna. They had no other choice if they were to live. There is no other bread of life for us today. We may think we can live on the teachings and examples of other men, but Peter, standing before the rulers of Israel, said: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

We are as dependent upon Jesus for life as Israel was dependent upon manna in the wilderness. Without manna, Israel would have starved to death. Without Christ to nourish us, we face as certain a death. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16-18).

As we approach Christmas, let us stop our mad rush, our exchange of gifts, our revelry, for a short time to ponder the reason for Christmas. Let us praise God for His gift to us. More than a baby was born into the world. There was born a new way of living, a way that would lift man above himself, an avenue of approach to God. There came into the world a power that has disturbed the world from that day to this. Man will never know rest again until Jesus is crowned king in every heart. Then the world will have the peace promised by the angels as they sang to the shepherds.

RESTITUTION HERALD Dec. 1956, Vol. 46 No. 8, pp. 3, 15

### The Christ of Christmas

By Emory Macy (1956)

Jesus was born the Saviour. (Luke 2:11.)  
 Jesus was born the "Christ." (Luke 2:11.)  
 Jesus was born "the Son of God." (Luke 1:35.)  
 Jesus was born "the king of the Jews." (Matt. 2:2.)  
 Jesus was born to be God's gift for man. (John 3:16.)

RESTITUTION HERALD Dec. 1956, Vol. 46 No. 8, pg. 5.

## Peace On Earth

By Alva Huffer (1958)

"Joy to the world! The Lord is come," is the triumphant strain that echoes through church aisles and lifts its choral harmony from home altars. Under the spell of the Christmas gladness, under the guidance of the star, we are happy with our neighbors, our friends, and our children. There is a pulse of gladness in the world. Everyone feels it. Even the most desolate and most forlorn acknowledge it and are cheered.

*For unto us is born a Saviour, and His name is Jesus, and He shall save His people from their sins.* Ages may yet pass before His reign of peace shall everywhere be established; but the day of His full ascendancy over every island and continent is speeding on, and the Christmas tide shall finally come, when the star shall shine over an earth swept clean and white, and from shore to shore, under the complete sway of Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and who now sits at the right hand of God.

**Every day is Christmas!** Christmas is not a day or a season, but a condition of heart and mind. If we love neighbors as ourselves; if in our riches we are poor in spirit, and in our poverty we are rich in grace; if our charity vaunteth not itself, but suffereth long, and is kind; if, when our brother asks for a loaf, we give ourselves instead; if each day dawns in opportunity, and sets in achievement, however small; then every day is Christ's day and Christmas is always near.

RESTITUTION HERALD Dec. 1958, Vol. 48 No. 5, pg. 7.

## Path to Peace

By Rega Cramer McCarty (1958)

I wonder in what endless strife  
The world would now be torn,  
What hopelessness would weigh mankind  
If Christ had not been born?

I wonder what chaotic state  
The universe would know,  
If Christ had not brought order  
On that Christmas long ago?

I wonder what the garbled pattern  
Of uncaptured men might be,  
If the Christ had not been sent  
To bring Christianity?

I know what miracle of peace  
God's mercy could convey,  
If, in our hearts, the Christ was  
Again, this Christmas Day!

RESTITUTION HERALD Dec. 1960, Vol. 50 No. 5, pg. 11.

## Mine Eyes Have Seen

By Francis Burnett (1960)

*"Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel"* (Luke 2:30-32).

Simeon, an elderly man, had been promised by the Lord God that *"he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."* As he held the child in his arms, he said, *"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."*

Simeon fully realized the importance of the statement, *"Mine eyes have seen thy salvation."* He was one of several who believed the prophets and was waiting for the Messiah.

This was the Christ child. He, the babe, was the hope, the only hope, of the entire world. He was "a light" to the Gentiles—to us—and the "glory" of Israel. It would seem that all of Palestine would have been overflowing with travelers from all parts of the world coming to seek the Saviour. But this was not so. Only a few miles away in the city of Jerusalem, we find that Herod and others had not heard of Him. When they did find out, they sought to destroy Him.

The Christian world looks on Herod's acts with contempt and scorn. But how much differently are people doing today? There are still those who would destroy the Christian faith; they would kill Christ again if possible. Then there are those who are indifferent and are not concerned about their salvation. *"Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."*

Jesus was born that you and I might have salvation. We have God's Word as witness of that salvation, but what are we doing about it?

RESTITUTION HERALD Dec. 1960, Vol. 50 No. 5, pg. 13.

## After Christmas

By William Wachtel (1960)

After the tree is taken down, the ornaments packed, and the gifts put away, many will think that the time of the Christmas spirit is past, and that Christ may safely be forgotten for another year. It will be time once more to turn one's thoughts to "more important" things.

This is the usual attitude of the world—which "catches" a certain amount of the spirit of Christmas once a year, but which ignores the true Spirit of Christ the rest of the time. As Christians, let us manifest the loving Spirit of Christ all year round!

RESTITUTION HERALD Dec. 1956, Vol. 46 No. 8, pg. 15.

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### THE RESTITUTION HERALD advocates:

- the oneness of God (1 Cor. 8:6);
- the Holy Spirit is God's power (Acts 1:8);
- Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son (Matt. 16:16), and is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5);
- the Bible is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16);
- the mortality of man (Job 4:17; Psa. 146:4);
- the near return of Christ (Acts 1:11), and life only through Him (Col. 3:3);
- the literal resurrection of the dead (John 5:28);
- the immortalization of those in Christ (1 Cor. 15:53-54);
- the destruction of the wicked (Rev. 21:8);
- the final restoration of Israel as the kingdom of God under the kingship of Christ (Luke 1:32);
- the church to be joint heirs with Him (Rom. 8:17), and Israel to be made head over Gentile nations (Isa. 60:1-3);
- the "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

It also firmly advocates repentance and immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and a consecrated life as essential to salvation.