



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.

## What Philippians 2:5-9 Says (or Not)

By J. Dan Gill (TN)

### Philippians 2:5-9

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name (NASB).

This passage is one of the most debated in the New Testament. Famed British theologian F. F. Bruce said of it, *"The diversity of opinion prevailing among interpreters in regard to the meaning of this passage is enough to fill the student with despair, and to afflict him with intellectual paralysis."* (Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, p. 11.)

While the passage has been widely debated by translators and interpreters, there is much that we can understand about these Scriptures if we approach them without prejudice and allow them to speak to us in their context.

### What Philippians 2:5-9 Is Saying

#### The Context

Paul's alpha point in these verses concerns the minds and lives of believers at Philippi. Note verses 3 and 4: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own

personal interests, but also for the interests of others." In the next four verses, Paul draws a mental picture of what "regarding others as more important" than themselves and looking out "for the interests of others" would ideally look like. The illustration he gives them is from the attitude and life of Jesus. Shortly after that, Paul will also write about his co-worker Timothy whose attitude in service was uniquely one of seeking the interests of others (Philippians 2:20-21).

#### Jesus - Paul's Example

**Verse 5** - "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Jesus was the perfect example of a man who regarded others as more important than himself and looked out for the interests of others.

**Verse 6a** - "Who, though he existed in the form of God..."

Jesus was the only begotten son of God (John 3:16). By a miracle in a virgin, this man was literally God's human son (Luke 1:35). Thus, from his birth, Jesus had a station that was far greater than the rest of us.

As God's human son, he was uniquely in the likeness and image of God. Just as Adam was in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), so was Jesus (2 Cor. 4:4). Paul goes on to write that Jesus:

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## Philippians 2:5-9 (cont.)

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**Verse 6b** – “did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.”

Adam failed when – though he was in the image of God - he was being tempted by the thought that he could “be like God” (Genesis 3:5). Adam was not an example of humility and obedience that Paul could point out to the Philippians. Jesus, on the other hand, did not regard “equality with God a thing to be grasped.” Jesus was the perfect example for the Philippians. He succeeded where Adam failed.

### Jesus Was Born Royalty

Because God chose for his son to be born in the lineage of David (Matthew 1:1), God could declare him to be the heir to the throne of David (Luke 1:32). He determined that Jesus would rule over the house of Israel forever (Luke 1:33). And, while he was born the king of the Jews (Matthew 2:2), Paul tells the Philippians that Jesus:

**Verse 7a** – “emptied himself...”

The AV and a number of other translations say: “But made himself of no reputation.” That is the case. For example, when Jesus as the future King of Israel came into the city of Jerusalem in “triumphal entry,” he did not come riding on a great steed suitable for royalty. Rather, he came riding on a beast of burden – a donkey (Matthew 21:7).

**Verse 7b** – he “took on him the form of a bondservant”

Though he was royalty, Jesus chose to take on himself the form of a servant. He did that even in his actions toward his own disciples. For example, at the end of his ministry, he presided over a wonderful meal for them, and, at the conclusion of the meal, he washed their feet (John 13:14). Jesus, the only begotten human son of God, the son of David, heir to the throne of David, performed the acts of a servant toward his people.

**Verse 7c** – “being made in the likeness of men.”

Jesus was “made.” The God who “made” him, made him in the likeness of men. In fact, he was made like us “in every respect” (Hebrews 2:17 - NRSV). God could have had a son that was anything he wanted him to be. Yet, by God's choice, Jesus was truly a man.

**Verse 8a** – “being found in appearance as a man”

Jesus was found, and indeed found himself, in the mode or circumstance of being a man (“appearance” – *schema*). From his youth, he had a wonderful God awareness. By at least the age of 12, he was keenly aware that God was his Father (Luke 2:49). Yet, while he grew up realizing that God was literally his Father, Jesus knew that he himself was truly a human being. God created him as a true man so that he could become the savior of the rest of us (Romans 5:15).

God made Adam “from scratch.” Yet, by the choice of God, what resulted was a human being – Adam – the first human being. Jesus, on the other hand, was made by a miracle of God with the benefit of a human mother. Yet, as was the case with Adam, what God chose to make Jesus was also a true human being. Paul tells us that the man created in Genesis was the “first man Adam,” and that Jesus is the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45). Jesus was the second man to be created by God in such unique fashion.

**Verse 8b** – “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Jesus humbled himself to do the will of God, even to the point of dying (Mark 10:45). And not dying just any death, but a terrible death on a cross. He was willing to die because he understood that by his death, the sins of many would be forgiven (Matthew 26:28). Jesus knew that as God's only begotten human son he was uniquely loved by God (Matthew 17:5). He knew that he was of great value in the eyes of his Father. So much so, that God accepted his death as a sacrifice for the rest of us (Ephesians 5:2). For this reason – God has greatly exalted Jesus:

**Verse 9** – “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.”

Jesus was the only begotten son of God. He was God's “beloved” son (Matthew 12:18). For that reason, he was exalted by God and given great place and station. God made him to be both “Lord” and “Christ” (Acts 2:36). Yet, God also exalted him because of his service: his care and love for his fellow man. The willingness of Jesus to die in order to redeem the rest of us to God was awesome (Revelation 5:9).

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## Philippians 2:5-9 (cont.)

*(Continued from page 2)*

For all of these reasons, God determined that Jesus would be heir of all things and that those who are the people of Jesus will be joint heirs with him (Romans 8:17). This is the wonder of God's favor upon the man Christ Jesus. It is a favor that flows over onto those who are the people of Jesus – those who belong to him (1 Corinthians 3:22-23).

### What Philippians 2:5-9 Is Not Saying

Philippians 2:5-8 does not describe an obedience and sacrifice made by a non-human Jesus before his conception and birth. In that idea a pre-human Jesus makes the "sacrifice" of leaving a supposed splendor in heaven to take on human flesh and save human beings. That unfortunate story developed after the Bible was written and remains popular to this day. That is not what Paul writes in this passage.

The real Jesus had a literal beginning in the womb of a virgin. He was the only son ever begotten by God. Jesus had no prior existence as "God" (Trinitarianism, Oneness) or as an angel / super-being (Arianism – Jehovah's Witnesses). God did "foresee" Jesus, and there is a sense in which he existed from the very beginning in God's mind and his great plans for humanity (Acts 15:18). God had Adam in mind before he made him. Likewise, He had Jesus in mind from the beginning and foresaw that he would succeed where Adam failed (Acts 2:23).

### The Simplest Understanding Is the Right One

Acclaimed Bible scholar N. T. Wright states that this passage in Philippians, *"is one of the most notoriously complex passages in Paul."* (Wright, *A Biblical Portrait of God, in The Changing Faces of God: Lincoln Lectures in Theology*, p. 23.)

The adage that the simplest explanation is usually right is very applicable to these Scriptures. The obedience and sacrifice of a human Jesus is wonderfully simple and direct. There is nothing that Paul seeks to illustrate in Philippians 2:5-9 that isn't clearly established in the life of the real human Jesus.

The notion of a sacrifice made in heaven by a pre-human Jesus is very complicated. It is not talked about in this passage, and is an idea that has left much of

the Christian world with what amounts to a theological headache. Such teaching greatly confuses Paul's lesson and leaves us without a compass for rightly understanding this passage.

Paul's words in Philippians 2 become so painfully confusing only when interpreters and translators begin imposing a pre-human Jesus on them. It is the equivalent of trying to force a theological square peg into a round hole. That agenda itself is what leaves an N. T. Wright using the words "notoriously complex" regarding this passage.

### Five Problems with the Pre-Human Jesus Idea in Philippians 2

**1. "Wrong Person."** It proposes "the wrong person." Paul says nothing about a supposed "pre-human" Jesus in this passage. Rather, from the beginning of his example (v. 5), he points the Philippians towards having the mind of the "anointed" (Christ/Messiah) Jesus. It is men on earth – not God or super-beings in heaven who are anointed. The man Jesus was anointed "by God" for his ministry and work (Acts 10:38). It is that anointed Jesus that Paul is writing about to the Philippians.

God does not "morph" from one kind of being into another. God is immutable and eternally unchangeable (Mal. 3:6). God was not a man (Num. 23:19). He never said that he wanted to be a man or that he needed to be a man. It is the true "man" Jesus who gave up his rightful place of glory as the heir of the throne of Israel to take the role of a servant for the sake of his fellow men.

It was not a "morphed" God who purchased our salvation. It was not a "God-Man" or "Man-God." It was "God and a man" who brought about our salvation. God working for and in Christ, together with the obedience of Christ – even to death – brought about the salvation of humanity. But, God being "in Christ" does not make Christ God. The idea that God or a super-being had to come to earth to purchase our salvation entirely supposes the wrong person. It was a man that sinned and brought death upon mankind. The salvation of men that leads to unending life could only be accomplished by a man (Rom. 5:17), not by a God or super-being coming to earth (1 Corinthians 15:21).

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Philippians 2:5-9 (cont.)

*(Continued from page 3)*

**2. "Place."** It proposes "the wrong place for sacrifice." Paul does not once use the word "heaven" in Philippians 2:5-8. He says nothing of the idea of a pre-human Jesus making a sacrifice "in heaven" by leaving his supposed splendor and coming to earth. That is a story that is never described in the Bible itself. It is a picture that has been painted by post-biblical poets, songwriters and expositors. The obedience and sacrifice that Paul is pointing out to the Philippians took place on earth – not in heaven.

**3. "Sacrifice."** It proposes "the wrong sacrifice." The sacrifice Paul speaks of in this passage is the one that the "man" Christ Jesus made on the cross. To direct people's attention toward a supposed sacrifice in heaven by a non-human Jesus takes away from the singular honor due the man Jesus for giving his life for us. Paul will glory only in the cross of Christ – not in a supposed sacrifice made in heaven by a non-human Jesus (Galatians 6:14).

Again, Philippians 2:5-8 is not a picture of God or a "super-being" making the supposed "supreme" sacrifice by becoming a man. It was not God who sinned. It was humanity. It required a true human being to become a sacrifice to God for the rest of us (Romans 5:19).

The conception and birth of Jesus were not occasions of sacrifice by God or a super-being coming to earth. They were occasions of joy on the part of a Father who now has a new human son – born of a woman. A son who from the day of his birth grew in favor with God (Luke 2:52). A son who would, with God's blessings and help, purchase our salvation and reconcile us to God (Romans 5:12, 15).

God did make a sacrifice in this matter. But it was not by taking on human flesh or dying on a cross. God's sacrifice was that he gave his beloved human son to die. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16).

**4. "Example."** It proposes "the wrong example." Paul says nothing about following the example of a non-human Jesus who comes to earth. How would that be an example to the Philippians? The Philippians are not "super-beings" who could seek to "morph" from one kind of being into another. The true Jesus – born the son of God; the son of David; the heir of all things – who humbles himself and obeys God – even to the giving of his life on a cross – becomes the most incredible

example that we as human beings will ever have.

**5. "Reward."** It proposes "the wrong reward." Jesus receives a reward for his obedience and sacrifice. However, the picture that Paul presents to the Philippians in verses 9-11 is not of a Jesus who is "restored" to his "own" former glory in heaven. Rather, Paul shows us a man who because of his obedience and death on a cross has been glorified and now sits at the right hand of God in heaven. God has "bestowed on him" the name which is above every name. It is not something that he already had. One of "us" now sits at the right hand of God (Acts 3:13).

### Conclusion

It is said that no one should build a doctrine on a passage that seems complicated or unclear. If that is true, then it is certain that we should never build a doctrine about a "pre-human Jesus" making a "sacrifice in heaven" based on Paul's writing to the Philippians. As we saw, in referring to the passage N. T. Wright uses the words "notoriously complex." F. F. Bruce uses the words "fill the student with despair, and... afflict him with intellectual paralysis."

For me, the beauty of the amazing example of the human Jesus shows exactly how I should love and serve my fellows. That example is more than enough to occupy my thoughts and guide my actions for the rest of my life. Peter writes:

1 Peter 2:21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

**Editors Note:** *This article comes from [www.21stcr.org](http://www.21stcr.org) and is printed with permission.*

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# A Slippery Sin

## By Jennifer Haynes (OH)

One of the sins that always frightens me most is the sin of pride. It's slippery and hard to recognize because one of the symptoms of this particular sin is the inability to see a fault in ourselves. I've seen many people who claim humility. They are quick to point out their easily recognized flaws and will readily acknowledge when someone else is better than them at something that they are terrible at. I think of that as easy humility. It's a quick reassurance to ourselves that we are not guilty of the terrible sin of pride. It makes us feel better about ourselves and our attitudes.

But pride doesn't have to show up in every aspect of our lives. You can be humble about your skills playing an instrument, while still being enmeshed in pride in some other area. Sometimes pride disguises itself. For example, not seeking counsel because you believe you already have the answers? Pride. Insisting on things being done a certain way because you think it is the RIGHT way, when really it's just the way you PREFER? Pride.

Philippians 2:3-4 says:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.

It's an easy thing to say. I bet most of us think we already place others before ourselves. We serve others, we give of our time and resources, and we pray over their needs. But Paul calls us to do more than this. He says do NOTHING out of selfish ambition or conceit.

We all have agendas. We all have goals. Do every single one of our agendas and goals look out for the interests of others? I know mine don't always. I struggle with shopping for

gifts for others because I keep seeing things I would like to get myself! We are trained by the world to look out for ourselves! We must do what is best for ourselves!

Let's be clear. God wants you to take care of yourself and do good things for yourself as well. But in this letter, Paul is talking to the church as a whole and to the people working within that church. We, as a body of Christ, are to be working together in complete humility, putting others before ourselves. I've had to say many times, both to myself and to others, "This isn't about you."

Because it's not. None of this is about you. The types of songs we sing in worship. How we conduct meetings. How the furniture is arranged. How we do prayer requests or announcements. What type of public events we hold. I could go on. None of those things is about you.

We have one mission as a church. We are to live and serve like Christ. We are to go and make disciples, baptize, teach, serve, and love. We are to do Christ's work, and not once did Jesus ever put his own agenda before God's agenda. He was the ultimate example of what it looks like to put God's will before our own.

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# Proposed Constitution and By-Laws Amendments

## For Consideration of the Delegates at Summer Conference

### Proposal 1

The Bethel Church of God (Pelzer, SC) proposes adding the following sections 9-11 to Article IV of the Church of God General Conference constitution. (Existing sections 1-8 deal with the election of officers for the board, qualifications of directors, how nominations and voting are handled, the length of term, and how to handle vacancies).

#### ARTICLE IV Officers of the Conference

##### Additional Sections

Section 9. No candidate for director or elected director shall have a close relative (spouse, child, parent, sibling) as a paid employee of the college/conference.

Section 10. No candidate for director shall have a close relative (spouse, child, parent, sibling) already on the Board of Directors.

Section 11. No candidate for director shall have a person from their home congregation already on the Board of Directors.

**Explanation:** The purpose of the proposed new section 9 is to avoid the appearance of impropriety between the Board of Directors and the paid employees of the college/conference. If the Board of Directors found it necessary to review an employee's conduct and needed to consider the dismissal of the employee, a close relative may not be able to make an unbiased decision.

The purpose of the proposed new Section 10 is to avoid the appearance of impropriety among the members of the Board of Directors. Members of the Board of Directors who are close relatives may be perceived as a voting bloc that could pressure the decisions of the other members.

The purpose of the proposed new section 11 is to avoid the appearance of impropriety among the members of the Board of Directors. Members of the Board of Directors from the same congregation may be perceived as a voting bloc that could pressure the decisions of other members.

### Proposal 2

After consideration and recommendation by the Church of God Ministerial Association at its March meeting, the Board of Directors proposes the following changes to the Statement of Faith.

#### BY-LAWS, ARTICLE I Statement of Faith

Proposed revision to point A. GOD

**Current:** We believe that only one person is God, and that He is a literal corporeal being—almighty, eternal, immortal, and the Creator of all things.

**Proposed:** We believe that there is only one God, the Father alone, who is almighty, eternal, immortal, and the creator of all things.

**Explanation:** Remove the phrase, "a literal corporeal being," because of the confusion caused by the word "corporeal." Some believe the word "corporeal" recognizes God's physical appearance in Scriptures and also allows for Him to exist as spirit. Others believe the word inhibits God's ability to appear as spirit and contradicts the Scriptures' assertion that God is also spirit. The inclusion of "corporeal" is unnecessarily divisive and does not add anything to the Statement of Faith that is fundamentally consequential.

### Proposal 3

Proposed revision to point B. JESUS CHRIST

**Current:** "We believe that Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, is the sinless and only begotten Son of God. He existed only from his birth."

**Proposed:** "We believe that Jesus Christ is the sinless and only begotten Son of God, who came into existence at his conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary."

**Explanation:** Including "existed only from his birth" denies his existence as a person within the womb of Mary. Recognizing his existence from conception is consistent with our understanding of human life both scientifically and scripturally, since God knows us in the womb.

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## Proposed Constitution and By-Laws Amendments (cont.)

*(Continued from page 6)*

### Proposal 4

Proposed revision to point **G. THE CHURCH OF GOD**

**Current:** “**G. THE CHURCH OF GOD.** We believe that the Church of God is the Scriptural name for that body of people who have been called out from among all nations through obedience to the gospel plan of salvation. Christ is the Head of the Church, and the nature, work, and government of the Church are set forth in the New Testament.

**Proposed Change:** “**G. THE CHURCH.** We believe that the Church is the body of people who have been called out by God from among all the nations through obedience to the gospel plan of salvation. Christ is the head of the Church, and the nature, work, and government of the Church are set forth in the New Testament.

**Explanation:** This change broadens the reference to the church so that it is not limited to our organization, the Church of God. It acknowledges that God is working through the church established by Jesus, rather than identifying that work exclusively with our denomination.

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These proposed amendments are being published in multiple conference publications prior to the 2026 summer conference and will be voted on by the delegates August 5-7 at Cornerstone Bible Church, 180 Nail Dr., McDonough, GA.



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## Why Are Constitutional Proposals Appearing in the RESTITUTION HERALD?

The Church of God General Conference Constitution and By-Laws includes the following section regarding proposed amendments. In order for an amendment to be voted on by delegates at summer conference, it must meet some requirements for publishing. This is being printed in accordance with those constitutional requirements.

### ARTICLE V Amendment of the Constitution and By-Laws

**Section 1.** The constitution and by-laws of the College/Conference may be amended, altered, or revised by a two-thirds majority vote of delegates present at any General Conference meeting, notice having been given of the proposed amendment or revision in at least three consecutive issues of THE RESTITUTION HERALD and/or the Progress Journal, the first appearance thereof to be at least thirty days prior to the convening of the conference by which it is to be considered. Said notice shall plainly state the nature and purpose of the amendment or revision. Publication in THE RESTITUTION HERALD and/or the Progress Journal shall be deemed sufficient notice.

**Section 2.** Proposed amendments to the Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Board of Directors by a member church, a member conference, or the Board of Directors, in sufficient time to be properly published.

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# Doctrinal Complacency

By Brenda Wessel (IL)

Do you suffer from Doctrinal Complacency? Doctrinal Complacency is a dread disease that affects both the mind and the heart. It is a disabling disease, one that leaves its victims in a lethargic state. Long-range effects include "wimpy" witnessing, routine worship motions, and often just plain confusion.

The prognosis for recovery is excellent for those patients who seek treatment. You won't find this disease listed in your medical dictionary or your favorite family health book. You are no doubt wondering how I know so much about this disease. I have experienced the subtle onset of Doctrinal Complacency and am just now recovering from its clutches.

Some months ago, I became involved with a "nondenominational" Bible study group. I was drawn to the group because the study would encompass the books of Romans through Revelation. Now, you and I both know that when one person writes a group of study lessons, they are slanted toward the particular teachings he or she feels are true. The writer of these lessons very obviously supported the teachings of the trinity, the preexistence of Christ, and the immediate rewarding of heaven or hell at death.

I kept telling myself, "Just keep plugging along. You knew these things would come up." I did keep on, and when asked to serve as a leader for one of the study groups, I accepted, certain that God had opened this door for me. Even though I was able to share what I believe the Bible teaches on these issues: the oneness of God, the virgin birth of Christ, his first existence, and the sleep of the dead, I felt more and more uncomfortable, more and more an outsider. I wanted to jump up before the entire group and shout, "How can all of you believe these lies?" After much agonizing, I decided to leave the study.

I was immediately filled with an indescribable peace. I believe the Lord allowed me to become involved in this group to impress upon me the importance of the truths that His Word teaches, and to give me a burden for those who have been

drawn aside into false teachings. Jesus warned that in the last days, many false teachers would come and attempt to deceive even the elect. That won't happen to you and me if we are firmly grounded in our faith.

We are so safe and sheltered within the Church of God. We do not feel threatened by doctrinal differences, so we relax, often to the point of complacency. Only when we become involved with those of different persuasions and our truths are challenged do we awaken to realize anew just how precious our Bible truths are to us. Only by learning these truths and putting them into action can we effectively serve the Lord in our world.

Maybe you, too, are one of the unfortunates who suffer from Doctrinal Complacency. Maybe you, too, have come to take for granted the doctrines that we, the Church of God, hold so dear. If so, I challenge you today to stand up and boldly witness for the Lord our God in truth, to feel a burden for the lost of this world. Worship with enthusiasm, not routine. Be healed of the malady of Doctrinal Complacency.

**Editor's Note:** *This is reprinted from the March 1987 RESTITUTION HERALD. It seems this is a topic worth revisiting regularly, because it is something each generation struggles with.*

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# I Believe, Help Me In My Unbelief

By Telva Elwell (SC)

Malachi had last spoken 400 years ago and had promised that the Messenger would come. “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.” Surely Zechariah, as a priest, knew this well. But to put it mildly, God caught him off guard one day.

Zechariah was busy in the Holy Place offering incense, a duty Zechariah was permitted to do only once in his lifetime, when suddenly out of nowhere, the angel Gabriel stood by the altar. Of course, Gabriel had to calm Zechariah, because he was focused upon his task and not expecting Gabriel’s visit. “Fear not,” he said. Not only did Gabriel’s presence startle Zechariah, but the news he brought was also startling.

Gabriel told him that Zechariah and Elizabeth, his wife, were going to have a son! One would expect this to be good news for Zechariah because Elizabeth and Zechariah had been praying for a child for many years. Zechariah did not believe such a thing was possible because he was an old man, and his wife was advanced in years as well (Luke 1:18). This story was reminiscent of Abraham and Sarah, for God had also said that He would give them a son in their old age. “Abraham fell on his face and laughed” (Gen 17:17).

Before he could even grasp the idea of having a son in his old age, Gabriel told him to name his son John, and that John would grow up to be God’s prophet to show Israel God’s son. “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:16-17; see Mal 4:5). I understand that this was a lot to take in. But none of it was new to him. He was well-acquainted with the promises of God as told by Malachi and other Old Testament prophets. This was the day, the time, that Zechariah, the priest, was looking forward to. What a blessing and privilege to be the father of the much-anticipated Messenger who would turn the children of Israel to God! But something got in the way of that for Zechariah.

Instead of rejoicing, Zechariah demanded proof that this was even possible. Even though an angel who stands in the presence of God came to deliver this good news, Zechariah believed it was all nonsense. He wanted proof, not just a proclamation of an angel of the Lord. “How can I be SURE of this?” he asked (v. 18). Gabriel gave him proof in the form of punishment. “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words...” (vv. 19-20). Zechariah was struck dumb (v. 20) and quite possibly deaf (v. 62).

When Zechariah finished his priestly duties, he walked home to his faithful wife, and in time, she conceived. For nine months, his words did not come, and his world was silent. Every waking moment of every day, Zechariah was reminded of his unbelief.

I would be remiss not to mention Mary. Gabriel also brought her unexpected news. Although young, a virgin, and unmarried, she was also going to have a son — God’s Son, the Messiah. Her response was unlike Zechariah’s. Instead of demanding proof that this could happen, she humbly submitted to God’s plan as His servant. “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (v. 38). While Zechariah sat silently with his thoughts running rampant in his head, Mary rejoiced in prayer and song (vv. 46-55).

In time, Elizabeth gave birth to a son. Relatives, neighbors, and friends heard the good news and rejoiced with her. Then something truly miraculous happened.

By custom, Jewish boys were circumcised eight days after birth, at which time a name was given to the child. The expectation was that this child would be named Zechariah, after his father, but Elizabeth said his name would be called John, just as Gabriel had told Zechariah. It was unusual not to name the son after his father or another family member, so Zechariah was asked what he wanted the child to be called. Zechariah asked for a tablet and wrote the words, “His name is John” (v. 63). That name, John, means God is gracious. When Zechariah penned the baby’s name, “John,” on his tablet, he was declaring his belief in God’s faithfulness and grace, and affirming Gabriel’s message to him concerning his son, John. A simple thing, yet profound. Because God is gracious, Zechariah’s tongue was immediately loosed (v. 64). Because God is gracious, He did not forget or abandon Zechariah, even when he did not believe. That does not mean that it is okay not to believe. We need to believe God. But when we struggle, God is there.

Belief and unbelief are often at war with one another in our lives. Sometimes we struggle to believe, much like Zechariah, and then other times we simply believe without doubt or question, much like Mary. When we struggle, sometimes it is the small things that awaken our faith and cause us to believe—like a new baby named John.

That same small baby, named John, awakened the faith of the children of Israel years later when, as a man, he “came as a witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through Him” (John 1:7).

**About the Author:** *Telva Elwell grew up in Oregon and Dixon, IL, Churches of God, then graduated from Oregon Bible College. She continued her education and received a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a M Ed in special education. She worked with the US Postal Service, and then as a special education teacher. She lives in SC and is a member of the Guthrie Grove Church. You can connect with her at telva-jo2@charter.net.*

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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*

### The Ten Virgins By A. L. Corbaley (1925)

In your letter, you spoke of the ten virgins of Matthew 25, going out to meet the bridegroom. Five were wise, and five were foolish. The wise ones not only filled their lamps with oil, but also took other vessels which they filled with oil to replenish the supply in the lamps when they should burn low; while the five foolish virgins took no extra oil, only what was in the lamps. While they all slumbered and slept, there came the midnight cry: "Behold the bridegroom cometh!" Then the virgins all arose and trimmed their lamps to go out to meet the bridegroom. The wise refilled their lamps from the supply they had brought with them, but the foolish ones had no extra supply, so their lamps went out, and they desired the wise to share their oil with them. They were informed that there was not enough for all, and for them to go to those who sold and purchase more oil. While they were gone, the bridegroom came, and the wise went in with him to the marriage feast. When the foolish returned, they found the door shut. They said to the bridegroom, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But he answered and said, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Then he added, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

This parable evidently refers to those who will be alive when the Lord comes. They are all spoken of as virgins, with oil in their lamps. Therefore, they have all been obedient to the gospel and are members of the body of Christ. Wherein then is the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins?

Is it not that the wise have an ample supply of oil, while the foolish have not? The lamps of the wise continue to burn, while the lamps of the foolish go out, and they are in the darkness. They still have the lamps, but there is no oil in them, and without the oil, there can be no light. Then what does the oil represent which causes the light to burn?

In Matthew 5:14-16, we read, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Here we have a positive command to let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

In John 14:15, Jesus says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Another positive command, to keep his commandments. Also, in John 13:34, 35, Jesus says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to

another." Then love for one another is the test of our discipleship. Again, in John 14:23, Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Here, then, we find that the motive power which causes a man to keep the words of Jesus is love for him. If we lack this love for Jesus, then we will not keep his word, and our light will not shine out before men, and we will be walking in darkness.

Then love must be the oil which keeps the lamp burning—love for the Father, love for the Son, love for God's word, love for one another, and even love for our enemies. Matt. 5:43-46. So, if we have this love, our lamps will never go out, but we will be faithful till the Master comes.

In Matt. 24, Jesus gives signs of his second coming. In verses 12 and 13, we read, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." It is generally conceded that the tide of crime is rising, not in one country only, but in all countries, so that iniquity is increasing at an alarming rate. Many are "running to and fro over the earth." The great study today of inventors is to increase the speed of travel and of production, and the love of pleasure is luring the unwary to their destruction; so, the one who was once a faithful follower of Jesus is drawn away from his steadfastness, is lured by Satan's devices, and his light goes out.

In Second Thessalonians 2:11-12 we read, "And for this cause (because they received not the love of the truth) God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

These testimonies from the inspired word show clearly that when Jesus comes again to earth, he will find that many who at one time were true and faithful, looking and praying for the coming of the Lord, have grown cold and their light has gone out, and they have become vessels fitted for destruction. But we have the blessed assurance of the Master when He adds, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

**About the Author:** *A. L. Corbaley was born in IN, but moved west where he married and raised children. He often wrote for THE RESTITUTION HERALD. In 1922, he preached at the Northwest Conference, where delegates ratified the new General Conference Constitution and By-Laws and became members of the conference. His book, Coming Events in the Light of Prophecy, was published in 1945.*

# Papers on the Lord's Coming

By F. L. Austin (1933)

It seems clear from scriptures cited in former articles that the coming of Christ "the second time, without sin, unto salvation," is to be in connection with "the day of the Lord." "As that the day of the Lord is now present" (Revised Version) is the way Paul reasons in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, to correct the "brethren" of their erroneous fear that "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" had taken place, as also had "our gathering together unto him." Zechariah, speaking of "the day of the Lord" (14:1-4), prophesies: "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives," thus definitely locating that event in "the day of the Lord."

Keeping in mind this fact that is so important to a thorough study of the coming of Christ, namely, that His return has to do with the unlimited tasks of "the day of the Lord," let us deviate a little at this Christmas time and consider some things concerning

## The Arrival of Christ

True, the coming of Christ will be a great and momentous event. It will not, however, be an event like an evening of fireworks or like an ornate street parade: a show for a brief hour and then gone, no more to return. A larger study of the Scriptures almost entirely dispels such an idea. As an event, Christ's coming in glory will be both beautiful and amazing. But its great meaning to God and man lies in the fact that his coming will be the signal to the whole wide world that a new day with a veritable new deal shall have dawned—a day that will continue until the millennium shall be reached, then on through it for his reign of restitution, and continue still on through the great judgment period extending to the end of the present heavens and earth. His coming will be to thoroughly fit and prepare every nook and cranny of this old sin-cursed world for another and still greater change, namely, the change to the new heavens and the new earth. The coming of Christ means a new day for man. A day when every "racket" of sin will be met and destroyed. It means a new order, with new ideals. It means a vanishing of sin and a fulfilling of righteousness. It means the humiliation of man and the exaltation of God.

## The Born Savior Reenters

The birth of Jesus was an event. The witnesses were the angels and the roomers at the inn. But had his first coming ceased with the event that coming would have meant little. Instead,

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that advent was merely commenced by his birth. Its presence continued till his ascension. Now, very soon, he is about to reenter and to engage to finish "all that (he then) began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1).

At his first advent, the angels announced his arrival; the shepherds listened, and hastened to see; the wise men followed the star, saw, worshiped, and gave gifts. Later, distant points heard of him. These things did not all occur in an instant. They followed along one after another.

So also, at his reentering, there will be development, progress. He "himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." The Greek word here for "shout" means "command"; "summons"; a "signal shout that summons and assembles all at once" (Crit. Lex.). Two things here may well be noticed:

First, he then will have certain authority — for he will "command." He also will have strange, mysterious power — for He will "catch," or "snatch," them away from earth's power to the air. And,

Second, at that time, he must have been authorized by God to take those sleeping ones away from "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14); and he must also at that time have the God-given right to take the living ones away from the authorities of men. Christ must at that time have been given authority to proceed to subdue the evil of man's way, even to subdue the authority which God, for a time, settled upon man. It must be the dawning of "the day of the Lord."

This first witnessing of the coming of the Lord will be by the Church — God's people chosen out through Abraham and Christ. Not merely a portion of those of the churches of Thessalonica and elsewhere, but of the Church as known and approved by God, without the omission of one.

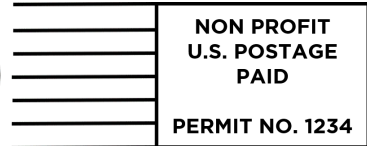
Other groups in due and orderly sequence receive convincing evidences of his arrival, some after enduring heartrending tribulation resulting from man's stubborn resistance against God and His Son. Finally, "shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30). The beast of Revelation 19:11-21 will perish; a resurrection will follow (Rev. 20:4); the reign of "a thousand years" will proceed, witnessing early the gathering before Him of all nations in accordance with Matthew 25:31.

While at Christmas our minds joyously hark back to the Bethlehem Babe, may they also leap forward to the reentered Lord, radiating from His throne of glory worldwide righteousness blooming ever more fragrantly unto the fullness of God's peace.

**About the Author:** *F. L. Austin had a long ministry in the Church of God as a minister and was instrumental in the organization and establishment of the General Conference, serving as the first Executive Secretary.*

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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)
- the "restitution [restoration] of all things" (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.