

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## What Say the Scriptures?

**Basic Bible Studies No. 4 -The Wages of Sin**

*"In Adam all die." - 1 Corinthians 15:22.*

OUR three studies introductory to the Scriptures found the seasonings of men concerning the Creator, the Bible, and Man's origin, largely negative in value. On the other hand, the Holy Scriptures claim to be the repository of positive truth, divinely inspired. To receive their testimony is to enter a direct road to knowledge independent of rational thought; one requiring, however, the rigid exclusion of human philosophies and speculations, for

"God is His own interpreter  
And He will make it plain."

The necessity for this course becomes obvious from the opening page of the Bible, for its account of man's creation is diametrically opposed to the popularly accepted Evolution theory. There can be no compromise. We who accept the Bible as God's inspired Word must follow the principle expressed by St. Paul: "Let God be true though every man be false" (Rom. 3:4, R.S.V.). We reject, further, the modern well-meaning effort to reconcile the Bible and evolutionary biology, by an allegorizing of the Edenic story. No writer of true history would mix plain matter of fact with allegory in the same continued narrative, without some intimation of a transition from one to the other. If the man Adam be accounted allegorical, so must be the woman Eve; and so the garden, the trees, the rivers, the animals, etc. Continuing up the scale of creation, we must allegorize the earth and the heaven -- thus reaching an obviously absurd conclusion. This attempted interpretation solves no problem, and we are brought back to the inescapable choice-- man is either a fortuitous development from lowly protoplasm, or originally a perfect and direct creation of divine fiat.

God says: "I have made the earth and created man upon it." - Isaiah 45:12.

The Genesis account specifically states -- "In the image of God created he him." And this thought of man's original perfection of being, is borne out by the context, which declares that God looked upon his creature with approval, seeing him to be "very good." It is borne out also by the general

testimony of Scripture respecting God as a Master workman -- "His work *is perfect*" (Deut. 32:4). It is borne out by the statement of the Psalmist, "Thou madest him [man, Adam] a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and with honor [his moral likeness to his Creator]; thou didst set him over the works of thy hands" -- the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea, and the fowl of heaven--"and didst make him ruler over them all" -- giving to man the dominion of the earth, with its lower orders of creation, in the likeness of God's dominion over heavenly things (Ps. 8:6, 7). It is borne out again by the statement of the Wise Man, that God made man *upright*, but he sought out many inventions and *defiled himself*. - Eccl. 7:29.

Furthermore, Adam is termed a "son of God" (Luke 3:38); an expression Scripturally restricted to angelic beings, to Jesus, and to his footstep followers, justified through faith and led of God's spirit.

Additionally, the historicalness of the account of Adam and Eve is attested to by Jesus, who quoted from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 in these words "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh?" - Matthew 19:4, 5.

Finally, there are the multitudinous references from Genesis to Revelation to the pivotal truth of all Scripture -- *the redemptive* sacrifice of Christ -- a doctrine positively confirming Adam's original perfection and subsequent "fall."

We conclude therefore, that the record concerning the first man and woman is neither allegory nor fable, but a literal, historical fact set forth and emphasized through figures of speech to intensify its truthful realities.

## **THE DIVINE COMMAND**

Following the account of Adam's creation, the narrative continues:

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.... And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." - Genesis 2:8, 9, 16, 17.

We note the simple facts: the provisions of a loving Creator for his noble creature's welfare in trees of life -- bearing fruit suitable to the perpetuation of human life; the forbiddance (probably temporary only) of but one tree; and the extremeness of the penalty. Before the perfect man is now set a test of obedience.

We are to think of Adam as perfect in the sense of being mentally and morally fashioned after the likeness of the Creator -- well poised, well balanced -- not prone to sin "as the sparks fly upward," as he subsequently became, and as the children now are. We are not, however, to think of him as perfect in knowledge or in character. Knowledge must be acquired, but he was fully equipped with all the mental and moral apparatus for a rapid acquirement of knowledge. As for character, in an intelligent being it is a fixity of the will; and such a fixity can come only with knowledge. In other words, the perfect Adam was ready to acquire perfect knowledge, and had a perfect Creator, able and willing to give him the requisite instruction; and as this right instruction would be received, and this perfect knowledge be attained, character (good or bad) would be established --

either in favor of the principles of righteousness already established by God, or in opposition to the will of God, in unrighteousness.

We are not to think of Adam's condition and trial as an experiment on God's part, the result of which would be doubtful; but, on the contrary, we are to remember that the results were fully known to the Almighty before the trial began, and that he saw the end of his work from the beginning (Acts 15:18), else he would never have undertaken it. Divine foreknowledge is conceded by a large proportion of professing Christians who, nevertheless, are sadly confused by certain false theories which imply that the Almighty's foreknowledge was to the effect that the vast majority of the posterity of Adam would spend an eternity in most horrible suffering, and that God prepared the arrangement for their suffering in advance of their creation. This view is untenable among those who combine any measure of knowledge of God's character with any measure of reasoning ability. The Scriptures show conclusively that God had a much more just, reasonable, and loving plan than that -- that he foresaw beneficent results before creating our first parents.

There are two methods of giving and receiving instruction. One through precept and example; the other through experience. Man was not the first of the intelligent creatures -previously God had created many higher orders - angels, cherubim, principalities, and powers (Rom. 8:38; Eph. 3:10, etc.). These had all been instructed by good *precepts*; they had not had instruction through *example*, except on the side of good example: they had no illustration of evil and its pernicious consequences. That they antedated man is revealed in the remarkable words addressed to Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . . When the *morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*" (Job 38:4-7). These celestial spectators beheld with wonder and praise the operation of divine wisdom and power in the work of the creative "days." But the angelic host did not know that upon this planet was to unfold a mighty drama which would reveal for all eternity two other wonderful attributes of God -- justice and love. For the divine purpose was to bring into being a new order of creature -- humanity -- whose instruction, it was forearranged, should be along the lines of *experience*, which would add to the instruction of God's angelic creatures by way of giving them an example of sin and its consequences, and of the divine attitude toward sin and toward sinners. The permission of evil -- its eventual removal and the means used thereto -- constitutes the great theme of the Bible.\*

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\* See our free booklet, "Why Does God Permit Evil?"

When God's wonderful Plan of the Ages is understood, everything in nature and in experience bears testimony to the overruling of his providence. The heavens declare his glory and the earth showeth his handiwork -- all speak of an intelligent designer, wisely adapting means to good and benevolent ends, and ministering to the necessities of his intelligent creatures. Every leaf and every sunbeam bears to the thoughtful a loving message of divine care. And every inharmony of nature, when viewed in the light of God's plan, is seen to be but a part of that great process whereby God is preparing for the perfect order of things which shall continue forever, when sin and its entailments shall have been banished under the successful reign of Christ; and even the long permitted wrath of man and Satan will eventually be to God's praise.

Therefore, in considering Adam's trial, we first observe that since God is good, all his providences must be with a view to wise and benevolent ends, either near or remote; and secondly, that since he made man in his own image -- morally free -- and with the alternatives of good and evil before him, it would be contrary to his purpose, thus manifested, to so hedge him

about with his providences as to interfere with his moral free-agency, which is the crowning glory of humanity, and the right exercise of which gives to virtue all its worth.

### **DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS PENALTY**

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, bath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." - Genesis 3:1-6.

The characters in this high tragedy are all worthy the grandeur of the occasion. They are Jehovah; a fallen rebel of the spiritual universe; and man, an earthly image of God. The test -- act of the occasion, too -- however men of low conceptions have sneered at it -- was equal to the character of the parties in grandeur and dignity. It was indeed the simple taste of fruit; but that tasting an act of deliberate disobedience to Him whose law is perfect.

It is with no cloudy vagueness that the personal existence of the spirit of evil is revealed in Holy Scripture. In history, prophecy, and in parable is the Tempter brought before us, and every quality, every action, every attribute which can indicate personality, is referred to him in language which cannot be explained away. The record's of the old dispensation and the writings of the new, alike depict him as preeminent in power among the angels who lost their first estate (Jude 6), and as ever compassing the destruction of men. As God is called "the holy one," so Satan is called "the evil one." He is the oldest sinner (1 John 3:8); the greatest sinner (Eph. 6:12); and the father of sin (John 8:44). In 2 Corinthians 11:3, St. Paul gives us a plain, historic version of the beguiling of Eve; and in Revelation 12:9, we read of the great dragon, "that old serpent, the devil and Satan." We, then, are neither wise nor prudent to talk of allegories, or rhetorical personification, or in bolder unbelief to doubt or deny the existence and the power of the chief of fallen spirits. It were far wiser to recognize our foe, and to seek the strength with which to contend with him.

The fact of original sin presents nothing strange, nothing obscure; it consists essentially in disobedience to the will of God, which will is the moral law for man. This disobedience, the sin of Adam, is an act committed everywhere and every day, arising from the same causes, marked by the same characters, and attended by the same consequences as Holy Scripture assigns to it. It is the way of man -- from God to self and independence. There is first the subtle questioning of God's love; the suggestion that his commandment is merely arbitrary, imposed by power. Love being doubted, truth is next assailed and God is treated as a liar. God's love and truth being denied, the next step is to take his place openly. God has quite lost his character in the heart of man, and self now seeks to be "as God." Thus is spiritual perception destroyed when God is doubted.

St. Paul declares that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). Mother Eve's involvement in transgression was wholly apart from her husband's knowledge or complicity; and he, when he learned of her course, was so full of sympathy and so full of love for her, that his affection quite overcame his proper sense of duty toward God. Concluding that his wife's disobedience had forfeited her life, and that the result to him would mean everlasting loss of her companionship, he deliberately chose to be with his

companion in sin rather than to be separated from her: therefore he ate knowingly, to share her penalty -- he suicided. He chose the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed forevermore.

"Unto Adam the Lord God said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, *till thou return unto the ground; for out of it vast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*" - Genesis 3:17-19.

Here in direct and forceful simplicity the penalty for disobedience to God is stated to be a return to the previous condition of nonexistence. In the words of Paul: "The wages of sin is death." And again: "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by [as a result of] sin: and so death passed upon all men, in that all are sinners [inheritors of their father Adam's blemishes]." - Romans 6:23; Rom. 5:12, 19.

How strange it seems that this simple Genesis narrative, which contains not a word respecting eternal torment, should be made the basis of all the fears which have tormented millions of Christian believers respecting a future of unutterable woe entailed upon Father Adam, and through him upon his race. How simple the statement of the Lord respecting what the penalty would *be -- death*; margin, "dying thou shalt die." How fully this is in agreement with the experiences which have been upon the race for now six thousand years -- dying they have died to the number of something like twenty thousand millions. We would not make light of the original sin; we would have it appear in its full force as a deliberate, willful disobedience of the divine command; and yet we assert with all confidence that no reasonable mind can find anything in this language indicating eternal torment as being the wages of sin. How could any reasonable mind admit that if eternal torment had been threatened it would have been *a just* penalty for the crime mentioned -- disobedience in the eating of forbidden fruit?

If to some it may at first appear that death is not a severe sentence, not a manifestation of divine wrath, not a curse, let them reflect further. Let them note how all of the dying processes are only parts of death, and that as insane asylums mark those who become mentally dead before they are physically dead; and as hospitals mark those who become physically decrepit before they are mentally decrepit; and as prisons mark those who become morally dead or decrepit before they are physically dead; so all of the experiences of our race, "groaning and travailing in pain together," mark "death working in us." All sicknesses, pains, and sorrows are parts of the dying process in the human family. The "curse" or sentence of death has resulted in blighted hopes and loves and ambitions, and is rapidly placing the entire race in the great prison house of death -- the grave. Surely, the true penalty of sin was a heavy one, though we must admit it was a just one. Surely, it involved all of the race of Adam in the most natural manner, because all of his children are partakers of his sentence; because sharers in his weaknesses, his imperfection, resulting from his transgression of the divine law. How unutterably tragic the lot of the human race if this present life were their only and final portion. Thank God for the golden promise of the Holy Scriptures -- a glorious restitution age under the reign of Messiah -- a promise summed up in the Apostle's words in 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22.

"For since by man death,  
By man also the resurrection of the dead.  
For as in Adam all die,  
Even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

- *W. J. Siekman*

(The subject of the fifth article in this series will be: "*Where Are the Dead?*")

## "Lovest Thou Me More Than These?"

*"Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou m I more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." - John 21:15.*

[The following discourse is published verbatim at the request of a number of brethren who have expressed appreciation, and a desire that others might share in the blessings received. - Ed. Com.]

LOVEST thou me more than these?" These are the words of Jesus spoken nearly two thousand years ago, after his resurrection from the dead, to one who had been his follower throughout the three and one half years of his earthly ministry. Ever since that time our risen Lord has been asking that question of every one who has professed to be his disciple, and today he is asking you as he is asking me: "Lovest thou me more than these?" It is a solemn question, and your answer, my answer, must be to the Lord himself.

Now for a short while let us, in our minds, go back over the years to 'the scenes and incidents which marked the last days of our Lord's life on earth, which form the setting of this question, from which we desire to take some lessons for ourselves today. For five or six weeks, commencing with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem a few days prior to his crucifixion, the disciples of our Lord had been passing through experiences of great mental strain. For them their whole world had been turned "upside down"; cherished hopes had been blighted, and the One in whom they had placed all their confidence had been taken from them. During the -last four weeks they had received 'unmistakable evidence that he who was dead now lived, but his appearances to them had been far between, and the former intimacy had gone. Our Lord's first appearance to the assembled disciples occurred on the evening of the Resurrection Day in the upper room at Jerusalem "when the doors were shut ... for fear of the Jews." "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord," is the record of John. (John 20:20.) But Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with them, and it was not till eight days after, that Jesus appeared the second time, to them all. The long interval of indecision and inactivity was very trying to those perplexed and troubled disciples, but for a further two weeks they waited in daily expectancy of another appearance when it might be Jesus would once again take over his former position as Leader of their little band.

During this time the disciples had left Jerusalem and made their way up to Galilee, for there it was tint the angelic messenger at the sepulcher had said that they would see the Lord. That journey would occupy about a week, and as they made their way among the familiar road which they had traveled with their Lord in happier days, one can imagine their feelings of dejection and disappointment; how empty their lives had now become! And poor Peter he surely must have been the most broken man of them all, for had he not set himself above them all in his protestations of love and loyalty to the Master? Yet how grievously he had fallen! True it was that his Lord had forgiven him, for Peter had teen specially remembered by name on that resurrection morning, but how could he forget that in spite of all his boasting, three times he had disowned his Lord! And then, do you remember how, some time previously, when Jesus asked his disciples, "Will ye also ego away?" Bold and loyal Peter had answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" But now the Master had been taken from them, and to whom could they go? The bottom had fallen out of everything, and life was empty and colorless -- especially for Peter!

Well, here they were in Galilee, but still Jesus had not appeared to them, and Peter, unable any longer to endure the idle suspense, decided to resume his old life as a fisherman. "I go a fishing," said he, and six of his fellow-disciples agreed to join him in the business. "After *all*," they

reasoned, "we have to live, and what message can *we* preach seeing that our Leader -- the Messiah -- is no longer with us." But the Lord was very near to them although unseen, and would overrule this experience for the blessing of Peter and his friends, as well as for our instruction. How expressive are those words in John 21:3: "They went forth, and entered into the ship; *and that night they caught nothing.*" Can you imagine how Peter felt? Nothing seemed to be going right; everything was against them! Have you ever felt like that? Oh, if only the Master were with us --how different it would be! That is just the time when he reveals himself.

As dawn breaks over that lovely Galilean scene, the disciples hear a voice across the waters inquiring concerning their night's work, and looking toward the shore, they see a man standing at the sea-edge. Still toiling with their net, they tell him that they have caught *nothing*. -- "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find," comes the request to them. I wonder what made those hardened and experienced fishermen obey such a seemingly vain command from a stranger? Possibly John with his keen perception and vivid memory had something to do with it; anyway it was he who immediately after said to Peter, "It is the Lord." What cared Peter now for "the multitude of fishes"? "*It is the Lord*"; every other thought and care faded into insignificance, and forgetful of the fish, and of his fellow-disciples, he plunges into the sea and makes his way for about one hundred and twenty yards to the shore. We can't help loving Peter, can we? -- and Jesus loved him too!

What a breakfast that was! It was only bread and fish, but Jesus was there acting as their host. "Those disciples were "tongue-tied," but they knew it was the Lord, who now for the third time had showed himself to them. And do we not see something of the tender love and solicitude of Jesus in this incident? It was the same Jesus-"the same yesterday, today, and forever"-and his first thought is for their material needs after a night of toil. We might have chided and reminded them of their harsh dealings with us; probably we would have been "cool and distant," and left them to provide their own meal. But no -- "Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise." These are only details, but what lessons they convey! Oh that we may follow his example!

It was after the meal was over that Jesus turned to Peter and calling him by his old name, said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" What a gentle rebuke there was in our Lord's manner of address: "Simon, son of Jonas"! Some time before this, Jesus had said, "Thou art Peter" ("petros" -- a stone or piece of rock), but recent experiences had revealed a weakness of character of which the Master would remind him at *this* time. So he is addressed, not as "Peter," but "Simon, Bar-Jonas."

I no want to read the record of this incident from which our text is taken, from Darby's translation, which I think, better conveys the meaning of the words which were spoken. Verses 15-17: "When therefore they had dined, Jesus says to 'Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He says to him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I am attached to thee. He says to him, feed my lambs. He says to him again a second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He says to him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I am attached to thee. He says to him, Shepherd my sheep. He says to him a third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Art thou attached to me? Peter was grieved because he said to him a third time, Art thou attached to me? and said to him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I am attached to thee. Jesus says to him, Feed my sheep. It is not our purpose to dwell upon the whole of this incident, but it will be helpful to note that our Authorized Version does not convey the full force of the words which were used on this occasion. In verses 15 and 16 our Lord twice uses a word which was intended to convey to Peter the thought of *love* in its strongest, purest, and most disinterested form. But in verse 17, where Jesus for the third time questions Peter, He uses a word which Peter himself has used in answering him -- for poor



Peter could not now bring himself to claim the highest form of love *for* the Master, so he uses the word "*phileo*," which indicated "the love of a friend." Here is just a little note I would like to read on these three verses: "This passage (ver. 15-17) illustrates the force of two Greek words for 'to love,' -- '*phileo*' and '*agapao*.' The former signifies the love of friendship, and implies attractiveness in the loved. It is translated 'to have affection for,' 'to be attached to.' The noun '*philos*' is 'friend' . . . '*agapao*,' usually employed in the New Testament, signifies love as the settled disposition of the person rather than as an emotion. It is used for God's love to man." - Darby.

Why did Jesus ask such a seemingly strange question of Peter -- that gruff, hardened, impetuous, and boisterous man: "Lovest thou me more than these?" One would scarcely have been surprised if such a question had been addressed to John; the beloved; but no, the question is for Peter to answer. Peter, however, fully understood why he had been singled out in this way. Three times he had denied his Lord, and now, three times he is given the opportunity to declare his love for the Master; but it is not the old, boastful, and self-confident Peter who answers; he has ceased to trust himself any longer, and is even fearful to claim that *agape* love for the Lord, concerning which Jesus had questioned him. Let us not be too hard on Peter, for how often have we denied the Lord in spite of our self-confident declarations of love for him! Just think about it; it should make us humble before him.

"Lovest thou me more than these?" Peter may have thought of his recently expressed determination to resume his old calling as a fisherman. Was his love for the Lord now to take second place to the things of earth, even though they be quite proper and legitimate? Other thoughts also may have flashed through his mind. Was his love for the Master greater than that of his fellow-disciples? "Lovest thou me more than *these*?" At one time he was certain that his own love for Christ was far greater than the love of all the others. Oh, how certain he had been of himself! In the upper room, at the last Supper, Jesus had said to the disciples: 'All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. *But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.*" - Mark 14:27-29.

We can be thankful for these experiences which came to Peter, for without them we would never have had those beautiful Epistles he was able to write some years later. We would never have had that exhortation in 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you *with meekness and fear.*" Yes "*with meekness and fear.*" Neither would we have had those words in chapter 5:5: "All of you be subject one to another, *and be clothed with humility;* for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.*" Surely he must have been thinking of this very incident when he wrote this exhortation to the elders: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, *but being ensamples to the flock.* And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." - 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

And now, brethren, I want us for the short time that remains, to hear no other voice than that of our Lord Jesus. Let us try to forget our surroundings, -to forget for awhile even our fellow-disciples, and those who are about us; let us be oblivious of everything except that "*it is the Lord*" speaking to your heart and mine as he spoke to Peter on the seashore. During those brief moments recorded in verses 15-18 of our chapter in John's Gospel, Peter was barely conscious of his surroundings; all else receded except that it was "My Lord and I." Let us, then, see Jesus only.

*"Lovest thou me more than these?"* That is the question he is asking me today! "Dear Master, you know how much I long for the establishment of the Kingdom, when you will be King over all the earth. God has revealed to me his wonderful Plan for the blessing of all mankind, and I love to meditate upon his Word and seek to understand more clearly all that has been; written for my learning. Yes, and I really do long to be a 'partaker of the divine nature,' and to receive the promised exaltation to joint-heirship with thee so that I might judge the world . . . and angels.' And, dear Lord, you know how much I love to be with thy people, to get away from the world with all its cares, and to meet with those of 'like mind' in conventions and studies and worship. My joy is to be always active in 'thy service, to preach the Gospel and to serve thy people in every way I can. What more can I do than this?" "Yes, child, I know; but that is not what I asked you -- '*Lovest, thou me more than these?*'" "Well, Lord, for many years now I have been walking in the 'narrow way' seeking 'to serve thee. I have given up everything to be thy disciple. There has been much joy and gladness, but Master, there has also been sacrifice and suffering in thy service; comfort and ease have been surrendered, and I have done much work for thee." -"Yes, but '*Lovest thou me more than these?*'"

You see, brethren, it is my love the Master wants before my service; it is your devotion to himself that he requires before all else. That was the Lord's concern for Peter! "*Lovest thou me more than these?*" "Does your love for me come before everything else?" It is so easy to deceive ourselves about this -- to think that our many activities, our love for the fellowship of the brethren, and our love for God's Word, are the proofs of our love for the Lord. But do you remember Lord's message to the Church at Ephesus? It has been well described as the Second Epistle to the Ephesians, and is found in Revelation 2:1-7. Let us read the Lord's words in verses 2-4: "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." *What a wonderful record of service and endurance!* "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, *because thou hast left thy first love.*" There, brethren, was the beginning of the great Apostasy -- works, labor, service, and endurance, but a cooling off of love for the Lord. Doubtless the many activities of the brethren at Ephesus, and their great service for the Lord and the Truth had been generated by their passionate love for Christ, *but how often it has happened that service for the Lord has engrossed his people and overwhelmed their love for Christ himself!* Those Ephesian brethren had drifted away from that condition for which Paul prayed in his Epistle.: "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith:*" that ye, being rooted and grounded *in love*, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." - Eph. 3:17-19.

What do I long for above everything else -- is it *Christ*, or is it the Kingdom? Is it the (high exaltation for which I am striving, or *is it he* that I am wanting more than all beside? Those who are to be of that little company associated with him as *his Bride will* be those who love him for himself alone.

Paul puts it in another way when writing his last words to Timothy: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid *up* for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also *that love his appearing.*" (2 Tim. 4:6-8.) Ah yes, it is "*his appearing*" for which they long-to see him face to face; he who is the Bridegroom of their hearts! *Is that how much I love him?*

*"Lovest thou me more than these?"* Am I in relationship to Christ as his espoused Bride? We get so accustomed to many of the expressions we use that sometimes the full import of them becomes

dulled in our minds. *"The Bride of Christ"*-what does that convey to our minds? You and I have been called to be the Bride of God's dear Son! What should be the object of a -bride's love? Is it wealth? Is it home? Is it comfort and security? She may obtain all these things, but they are not the things on which her heart should be centered. *It is the bridegroom she loves;* he should be the center of *all* her thoughts and affections. *Is that how it is with us and Christ? Would you enjoy heaven without Christ?* Perhaps the hymn-writer has put it better than I can express it:

"The bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear bridegroom's face:  
I will not gaze at glory,  
But on my King of grace  
Not at the crown lie giveth,  
But on His outstretched hand;  
*The Lamb is all the glory*  
Of Immanuel's land."

The Scriptures indicate that there are two classes among the Lord's people, both of which are honorable and righteous before the Lord. They are spoken of in various ways: In Matthew 25 they are referred to as *wise* and *foolish* virgins; in Psalm 45 they are likened to "the King's daughter all glorious within," and "the virgins her companions that follow her." There seems also to be an indication of these two classes in Abraham and Lot. Abraham "walked with God," but Lot, who was "a righteous man," walked with Abraham. This distinction is also brought out in "The' Song of Solomon," which tells beautifully of the mutual love of Christ and his beloved. Here also are two classes brought to *our* attention who love the Lord and are loved by him: the espoused one, and "the daughters of Jerusalem" or "ye daughters of Zion." These "daughters of Jerusalem" are shown as a company who converse with the espoused one concerning the Beloved. They find pleasure *in* him and in the fellowship of his spouse. Just what is the difference between these two classes? They both love the Lord; they both are attracted to him; but would it not be true to say that there is a difference in the quality or intensity of that love?

One has within her heart the love of *the bride* -- "*I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine*" (Cant. 6:3); whereas the other does not have that same intensity of desire toward him and is less intimate *in* her relationship with him. We have an illustration of this *in* the case of Peter and John and their relationship with the Master before Pentecost. Do you remember that incident in the upper room, when Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto *you* that one of you shall betray me"? The record in John 13 goes on to say "Now there as leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" (John 13:21-45.) Peter speaks to John, but John, reclining on Jesus' breast, in sweet intimacy speaks to the Lord.

During our consideration of this subject and while meditating upon "The Song of Solomon," which is so closely linked with our present thoughts, we came across the following quotation, which I trust will help us to face up to the question which our Lord is asking you and me: "Am I a lover of Christ? And if I can answer uprightly that I am, the next question raised would be, 'What kind of a lover am I?' Do I love much or little? Is the quality of my love that which suits the spouse, or is it such as might be found in 'daughters of Jerusalem'? Can I speak to him directly as having bridal affection in my heart? Or am I one of those who only hear, perhaps with some measure of true appreciation, what others *say* to him, *or* about him? These are questions which are definitely suggested by Scripture, *and it is wholesome to face them.*" (C. A. Coates.) What shall my answer be -- what shall your answer be? Peter, *in* his answer to the Lord's question, says, "Lord, *thou knowest*"; yes, he knows, he who can read the thoughts and intents of the heart, and

from whom nothing can be hidden knows what is your first love and what is your chief aim and object in life. There are so many right things which we claim our thoughts and our love, but insistently the question comes: "*Lovest thou me more than these?*" Those who will be of the Bride class are required to have a supreme love for the Lord himself, a ardent longing for his fellowship; to commune with him and to share with him, in every experience,

How beautiful are the words of the spouse in Song of Solomon 1:7 - "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the Rocks of thy companions?" Surely, to be associated with "*the companions of Jesus*" is a thing to be desired; and many there are who are content to follow the leadings of good men and devoted servants of the Lord but not so the Bride. What true bride would *be* content with the companionship of the bridegroom's friends? Our Lord and Bridegroom would have *us* gather together in mutual fellowship with the uppermost *bought in* our minds of *meeting him* and being with him "where he feeds and where he makes his flock to rest." Is that what brings us together in fellowship?

Have you ever thought of the eagerness with which our dear Lord desires to meet with those whose love is toward him only! The love of Christ and the Church is a mutual love which transcends all other loves. Through the Revelator he speaks to us today: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20); but *we must first open the door to him!* Then this is how he looks upon those who are truly his. "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." (Song of Solomon 2:2.) Again, "Thou art all fair my love; there is no spot in thee." Just think of that: he sees "*no spot*" in his beloved! (Song of Solomon 4:7.) Listen again: "Thou hast ravished my heart, 'my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart." (Song of Solomon 4:9.) That is not exaggerated language; it really expresses the love of Christ for his own; but *how* searching are his words which follow: "*How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine!*". (Song of Solomon 4:10.) That is how he appreciates the love of the Church for himself!

In chapter 5 of Solomon's Song we have again drawn to our notice the distinction between the Bride Class and those represented by "the daughters of Jerusalem." The Bridegroom has withdrawn himself, and in her search for him the spouse expresses herself to "the daughters of Jerusalem": "I charge *you*, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love." But they do not see the same beauty in him and reply, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is . thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge *us?*" The spouse then describes his beauty and grace. She says that "he is the chiefest among ten thousand . his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, *he is altogether lovely*. This, is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."-5:8-16.

Brethren, what does Christ mean to you? -- I ask myself, What does he mean to me? The true answer to that question will govern all our walk and conduct. It will decide the use of our time; the use of our money; the kind of company; we keep. "Where your treasure is there will, your heart be also." (Matt. 6:21.) It will. decide the tenor of our conversation, wherever we may be, and, even more important, it will influence all our thinking. *How often: is he in my thoughts?* Does he fill my mind as the bride is filled with thoughts of the bridegroom? Such thought, as these add force and beauty *to* the exhortation of Paul in Colossians 3:16, 17: "Let the inspiration of *Christ* dwell in your midst with all its wealth of wisdom; teach and train one another with the music of psalms, with hymns and songs of the spiritual life: praise God with thankful hearts.

Indeed, *whatever you, say or do, let everything be done in dependence on the Lord Jesus, giving thanks in his name to God the Father.*" - *Moffatt.*

*"Lovest thou me more than these? Let us test ourselves with a few questions; we each will know the answer, even as does the Lord also: Do I do things for his sake alone, many things of which I would otherwise not think of doing? Am I really glad to suffer for his sake? Am I sorely grieved when I displease him? Does it hurt to hear his Name blasphemed or lightly treated?"*

It is only when like Peter, we can humbly and in sincerity confess our love for the Lord in spite of many weaknesses, and short-comings, that we are fitted to serve him at all. The Lord's chief concern is our love for him; all else then falls into its proper place and is seen in its right perspective. "Feed my lambs" -- "Shepherd my sheep" -- "Feed my sheep." Such service can be acceptably rendered only when we are filled with a consuming love for Christ. Only then are we free from thoughts of self and self-gratification; only then can we be "emptied and meet for the Master's use." All can have a share in this service I for the Lord, for it is not the exclusive prerogative of the more prominent ones in our midst. Even "a cup of cold water" can be the manifestation of our love for Christ.

The Lord himself informs us how he decides the measure and strength of our love for him. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* are his words to all who profess to love him. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth, them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." That is the order; we must love him before he will manifest to us the, love of the Bridegroom. This is clearly revealed throughout the "Song" of Solomon," where the King repeatedly manifests himself to the espoused one after her expressions of desire and longing for him. Finally, Jesus said: "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." - John 14:15, 21, 23.

Why did Jesus ask this question of Peter: "Lovest thou me more than these?" It was not to satisfy him elf concerning Peter's love -- "Lord, thou knowest all things." No, it was in order to reveal Peter to himself, and we trust that this may be the result of this meditation together-to reveal us to ourselves! May the thoughts we have expressed lead us to a fuller consecration; a more complete "setting apart," and a strengthening of our love for the heavenly Bridegroom.

We would conclude with the words of Psalm 45: 10, 11: 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget, also thine own people, and thy father's home; *so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*"

- *Edwin Allbon, Eng.*

"How good it is when, weaned from all beside,  
With Christ alone the heart is satisfied!  
How good the heart's still chamber thus to close  
On all but Christ alone!"

## Godly Counsel from an Earlier Period

*This article is contributed by Brother William Hollister and is an excerpt from the biography of George Muller by William Harding. Brother Hollister calls attention to points of interest, as follows:*

GEORGE MULLER (1805-1898) lived and engaged in a world-wide ministry in the last and perhaps one of the greatest "sowing" periods of the Christian Church -- just prior to the "harvest." His counsel was revered and quoted by his associates much as Brother Russell's is by Bible students today.

The value of his life story is not in the elucidation of Bible truths of a doctrinal character, for, while he had much light on the Lord's Word, we have been blessed with a still clearer view of the Divine program. But Brother Muller's contribution is a demonstration of the certainty of God's answers to the prayers of faith which are based upon and authorized by His promises. He desired to be used to inspire faith in his fellow-Christians that God hears and delights to answer the prayers of his children; and at the end of his life he humbly testifies that he had himself been the recipient of thousands of such answers. This inspiring faith was the result of constant and systematic reading of the Bible. He lived in the Word, reading the Bible through twice each year.

In this excerpt we have first, a brief introduction to Brother George Muller, his character and consecration to God and his service, of whom his biographer records that "he took everything to God, and took God into everything." Incidentally, the gifts he mentions were his personal donations out of funds given to him for his personal needs. He was a careful recorder of income and disbursement; and, by the end of his life these gifts reached a total of approximately £90,000, used for home and foreign missions, etc.

For these activities, including the care of about 10,000 orphans during his lifetime, he organized the "Scriptural Knowledge Institution," of which he was the director. During his lifetime, funds amounting to approximately \$7,000,000 were voluntarily contributed and disbursed in the care of the orphans; supporting some and assisting other missionaries; and distributing copies and portions of the Bible, tracts and booklets in various languages.

A second point of interest is Brother Muller's suggestions as to the preparation of edifying discourses.

A third is his views on Christian Unity on the basis of commonly held Fundamental Truths, appropriately emphasized and enjoyed.

And fourth, his counsel as to firmly holding to all other subsidiary truths which the Lord reveals to the individual Christian; but not requiring that these must likewise be discerned by fellow-Christians who are justified and consecrated, in order to have and enjoy full fellowship with them as members of God's family, brethren in Christ.

Bible students of our day who are familiar with his writings, have noted with profound interest the similar advice and views in articles from Brother Russell's pen, for example:

"Doctrines More or Less Important" - Reprints, page R5284 - Z-1913, 231.

"The Epistle of Christ"-Reprints, page R5967 - Z1916, 301..

Following is the quotation from "The Life of George Muller":

In the Conference of 1879, Muller gives, in his own sunny, some very practical hints to Christians, in which he traces much of the joylessness of professors to their refusal to act simply as stewards instead of "proprietors": "They act as if it were all their own, forgetting that they have nothing whatever which is their own, that they are bought by the precious blood of Christ, and that all they possess their bodily strength, their talents, their business, their profession, their eyes, their hands, their feet -- belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ: because he has sought them with his precious blood. They are not their own they belong to the Lord, with all they have and are. Now, beloved saints, I am persuaded many are depriving themselves of great spiritual blessing, because they act as if they were owners instead of stewards."

Not only that the work of God at large may prosper increasingly, but that they themselves may richly partake of his blessing, Muller proceeds to urge: "I affectionately beseech and entreat my beloved Christian friends to take this blessing, and, consider that they have been depriving themselves of vast spiritual blessings, because they have not followed the principle of giving systematically, giving as God prospers them and, according to a plan: not as they are moved by a missionary or charity sermon, but systematically and habitually, on principle, just as God enables them. If he entrusts to them a sovereign, to give a proportion accordingly, if he entrusts them with £10,000, or whatever it may be, still to give accordingly. I believe if we realized the blessing, we should give thus on principle."

But is this a mere matter of "paying out"? Not at all: "We give, just as we are constrained by the love of Christ," and he gives his own experience: "for your comfort and encouragement, to stir up your hearts that you may consider yourselves henceforth as stewards and not as owners. See the blessedness, the privilege, the wondrous honor, that a poor man, as I am, should thus be entrusted by him. By the grace of God I desire to, be nothing but poor. I wish to be nothing but a poor man, having nothing, no house of my own, no money in the Funds, not an acre of land -- a poor man altogether; day by day waiting upon God for all I need, for the very clothes I wear. I wait on God for everything, and *yet*, he has allowed me the great honor and blessed privilege, *of giving* more than £40,000 within the last fifty years. I began in the year 1830 to live thus as steward for the Lord.\* In the little way I could, I gave, but God increased my ability more and more. Why do I say it? To encourage the hearts of my beloved brethren to seek to give systematically." . . .

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\* This passage beautifully harmonizes with Muller's words years before, of the light which came to him at Teignmouth: "The Lord . . . led me, in a measure, to see what is my true glory in this world, even to be despised, and to be poor and mean with Christ. I saw then, in a measure, though I have seen it more fully since, that it ill becomes the servant to seek to be rich, and great, and honored, in that world where his Lord was poor, and mean, and despised."

From this great subject he turns to that of the Christian ministry. Standing upon that high platform at Mildmay he looks upon a throng of Christian workers, many of them young and eager souls, all around him, and to them he turns: "I have been engaged for fifty years in pastoral labors, and there- fore I would say a word of encouragement to younger brethren. The 'first -thing I have to say is: See that the truth is enjoyed in your own soul, and that it is a reality to you, so that, with the Apostle Paul, you can say: 'We speak because we believe.' Another point of great importance is to wait upon God for the right message. We may suppose a certain subject will do, but perhaps another would be more profitable, and our business is to wait 'upon God for the right message, for he alone knows who will come to hear, and he alone knows the state of heart in which they come, and what word is suited to their need. Another deeply important point is the opening up of Scripture and exposition of the Word. When I first began to preach, in my own country, I used to

write out my sermons and then deliver them from memory. I learned the truth more clearly when I came to England; and then from principle I began an expository ministry. One verse; two or three verses, or more—a short Psalm, or half a Psalm, or sometimes a chapter or a whole Epistle, I went through, and obtained great blessing to my own soul; but the greatest blessing came to those to whom I ministered. When I first began my ministry in England, fifty years ago, I came to a congregation where scarcely any had Bibles in their hands; but four weeks after, when the text was announced, hundreds of Bibles were opened; and that was not all—it created a love of the Word in the hearts of the hearers."

Finally: "The grand point is this: Are we preaching Christ? When the crucified and glorified Christ is preached, there is a blessing: it is always the experience of ministers of the Word, wherever Christ is preached. This should be done with the greatest simplicity; as Luther used to say: I preach every Sunday before doctors of divinity and professors, and learned men, but I preach every time so that the maid-servant behind the door, who brings her master's children, may, together with the little children, understand me; and if they can understand, those great and learned men will also be able to understand. I know this is very simple, but there is a vast deal in it, for if you will make inquiry you will always find there are numbers of persons unable to take in that which is not in the most simple way expressed, therefore this cannot be a matter of little account. Christ as the Savior is to be preached, and, whether it is liked or not liked, we are, here to be faithful to our Master." . . .

Since Muller's influence was so unifying, it may well be asked: "What had he to say upon the subject of Christian Unity?" Speaking upon the "Closer Union and Fuller Co-operation of Believers in Christ," he sensibly and pointedly said: "What will help us, who believe in Christ, to be more united together? One might say: 'Oh, we must give up our differences.' Allow me affectionately and humbly to say: 'I do not think so.' According to my judgment, a closer union would not be brought about by our giving up our own views of what we consider to be taught us by God and the Scriptures. Not thus, but the great point is to let the foundation truths of our holy Faith have their proper place. We have, not to say: 'Now I will put away for the time being all that I hold distinctively from my brethren.' No; nor do I expect this from other brethren. With great diligence and prayerfulness, and, if necessary, great sacrifice, ought we to 'buy the truth'; but, having obtained it, for no price whatever is it to be sold.

*"This is one side of the truth; the other side is this: The foundations of our holy Faith are so great, so momentous, and so precious, so altogether super-abounding in comparison with anything else, that, if we lived more under their influence, and more valued and enjoyed them, we should be constrained to love one another, to be knit together in love. We have the one, selfsame Savior; by faith in the Lord Jesus we are all introduced into the same family; through believing the Gospel we become the children of God, and members of the same heavenly family. Now, if this were present to our hearts, that we all have one Father in heaven; one Savior; are all bought by the same precious blood, and baptized by the Holy Spirit, into one Body; are all walking the same road to heaven, and ere long shall all reach the same Home if all this were present to our hearts, I say, this or that difference of opinion would not separate or alienate us. There is a blessedness and sweetness connected with really holding the membership of the Body and loving our fellow-believers, though we differ from them, that brings unspeakable joy to the soul."*

Amid such glorious thoughts of true unity in Christian love, he never loses sight of the blessedness of single-handed conflict for God: "Let no man say: 'I am single-handed; what can I do? If there were a hundred others with me, I might accomplish something!' Never say this. Think what Hezekiah accomplished single-handed, and Josiah, and Martin Luther: see what such men did. 'Oh, if we cry mightily to God, and expect great things from him, what may not be



accomplished through us. Look at our beloved Wesley, and Whitefield, too; they were comparatively single-handed, and yet what great things were accomplished through their instrumentality. But there must be a right beginning, and the right beginning is at home with *ourselves*. Let us, then, 'expect great things,' and ask them of God, who delights in bestowing abundant blessings."

If, however, we are to think of all that Muller teaches, we must take into consideration the man himself and the whole of his work. When he appears upon the platform, every eye is turned: "*That is Mr. Muller;*" When he speaks, it is impossible to think of him only as a Christian brother who expounds Scripture with reverence and insight and holy ardor. He is the apostle of faith, the man of Ashley Down. Moreover, his Annual Reports, apart even from the triumphs of faith of which they consistently tell, contain numerous digressions, in which Divine principles are applied, to the glory of God. All of it, assuredly, is sound teaching, so that we cannot easily take George Muller's various spheres of labor, and treat them in "watertight compartments" under this or that heading. What he is appears in every activity of his life: the unifying golden twin-thread of faith and consecration runs through all.

It is possible for a godly and gifted man to pass a long and useful life, preaching and exhorting among the saints, and yet to be little known outside his own circle; but George Muller's name becomes a household word, and a subject for much marveling. Wherefore we judge that George Muller's teaching derives intensive force from the facts of what George Muller is and of what George Muller does. Clearly, it exercises a powerful formative influence upon Christian life and thought throughout the world, particularly as Muller is truly "a catholic Christian. At Plymouth, in the early days of the Brethren Movement, a certain official, preparing statistical returns, is in doubt as to "what Denomination these people belong," and can obtain no definite information; finally he enters them as: "Catholic, Non-Roman." A particularly shrewd statistician was this, or he wrote better than he realized. This is assuredly George Muller's "Denomination": he is essentially Catholic, and by all means holding to the Book and to the Revelation of the One Mediator between God and men -- Non-Roman.

## The Question Box

*"Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." - Matt. 1:22, 23.*

### Question:

In the March and April issues you considered Isa. 7:14. It has been suggested that, in view of the importance of the subject, the related New Testament passage, above quoted, might well be discussed at this time. Will you please do this for us?

### Answer:

On page 47 of the March "Herald" I said that in this passage St. Matthew, under the guidance of the holy spirit, made application of Isaiah 7:14 to our Lord Jesus as *the fulfillment* of the Prophecy.\* In the April issue, page 60, in referring to St. Matthew's application of the prophecy, I again put this word "fulfillment" -in italics. Let us look at it for a moment.

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\* Some scholars believe that these are not the words of Matthew, but of the angel.

## THE WORD "FULFILLED"

Some translators employ the word "verified" in place of the word "fulfilled" in verse 22. Wilson, in the Emphatic Diaglott, gives "fulfilled" in the "word for word" translation, but uses "verified" in his version (right hand column). Morrison observes that while "verified" is, in some respects, a good translation, it deviates widely from the etymological and distinctive import of the Greek word used by Matthew, which, he says, is a word "that is beautifully significant." Amplifying this remark, Morrison goes on to say: "Words of themselves are *empty*. They need *things* to *fill* them. They are useful only as vessels to convey things from mind to mind. Histories of themselves are words; and therefore, they are empty, unless there be veritable facts to fill the void. Prophecies, too, consist of words; but, from their peculiar predictive character, the words continue, as it were, empty, till the facts come to pass. Then the emptiness is *filled to the full*. The facts, says the Evangelist (Matthew), came to pass *that what was spoken by the Lord might be fulfilled.*"

## DUAL FULFILLMENTS

Some prophecies, however, have more than one fulfillment. Isaiah 7:14 is one such. Failure to recognize this constitutes one of the main difficulties confronting the student of prophecy. One school of thought notes an early application, but is not able to see a later (usually higher) fulfillment. This is particularly true of orthodox Jews-and perhaps especially in their understanding of Isaiah 7:14. Another school of thought, Christian in concept, sees the higher fulfillment, but is not always able to recognize any earlier application.

In the study of any prophecy having, or which appears to possess, a predictive character, it is important to obtain first an understanding of its immediate application; in other words, it is necessary to ascertain what it meant to the writer and those to whom he wrote. What was its

meaning to *them*? Only after *this* question has been satisfactorily answered are we in a position to properly grasp the later application (or applications).

Let us look at a few illustrations of this. Consider, for example, Hosea 11:1. There we read: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." Quite obviously, this has reference to the infant nation of Israel and its deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh. No orthodox Jew could fail to recognize this. Yet Christians, under the guidance of the New Testament, see that it has reference not only to the coming of Israel out of Egypt, but also to the coming of Jesus out of Egypt centuries later. (Matt. 2:15, 19, 20.) Moreover, guided by the holy spirit, the passage is seen by Christians to have yet another significance -the coming of spiritual Israel (the Gospel-Age Church) out of that which Egypt typifies, namely, the world (its aims, ambitions, associations, spirit).

Again, when David, in Psalm 22, wrote: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he was without doubt writing concerning himself. Most people, unacquainted with the New Testament, could come to no other conclusion. Yet *we* know that the Lord was overruling David's choice of words so as to make him speak prophetically of the Messiah who was to come. - Matt. 27:46.

Take the words of Isaiah 61:1:

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings." Here Isaiah, of course, could have reference only to himself and his ministry. But he was a prophet through whom God spoke. (2 Pet. 1:21.) Consequently his words were such that they could be predictive. Jesus himself shows that they were, when in Luke 4:21, he applied them to himself and his ministry: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." While, therefore, we know that there was *a measure* of fulfilment in Isaiah and his ministry, it is not difficult for us to recognize that only in Jesus are the words filled to the full.

### **JESUS BORN OF A VIRGIN**

Returning now to Isaiah 7:14: As already noted, this prophecy appears to have had a dual fulfillment. It foretold an event shortly to occur, namely the birth of a son to a woman who was then a virgin, and the birth of whose son, therefore, could be known only to God; hence an event which could be recognized by King Ahaz as a sign that God would be with him and with the nation. The words employed in the prophecy, however, were such that they described also a future glorious event, even the birth of Jesus of a woman who should appropriately be called *the* virgin, and who should remain so at the time of his birth. If the name Immanuel (God with us) was appropriately given to the boy in Isaiah's day, how much more fittingly might it be given to Jesus! He filled the prediction full. At the time of his birth, Mary, his mother, was a virgin, and he had no earthly father -- Joseph being his foster father. As the angel Gabriel, in answer to Mary's question as to how it could be that she should have a son in view of the fact that she was a virgin, replied (RSV): "The holy spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." - Luke 1:35.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the Prophet:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, (which means, God with us)."

The Rev. Dr. Luther A. Weigle, chairman of the *Revised Standard Version* committee, in an interview reported by Peter Chew in "Look" magazine of Feb. 10, 1953, is careful to stress this

fact. After pointing out that the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 uses the word "almah," which means "a young woman of marriageable age," and after observing that this word "does not assert or deny the virginity of the young woman," he goes on to say: "Moreover, the Scriptural grounds for the virgin birth (of Jesus) are stated clearly and unequivocally by the RSV at those points where the original Greek states them."

### **CORROBORATIVE SCRIPTURE**

When we meditate for a moment on the virgin birth of Jesus, many corroborative Scriptures come rushing to mind. We recall, for example, the Baptist's testimony recorded in John 3:31: "He that cometh, from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all." Here the Baptist is contrasting himself with Jesus. How shall he find appropriate words? "After the flesh" he was his cousin, yet it is evident that he regards Jesus as a being of another order, as standing on quite a different platform from his own. He can find no words strong enough to mark the difference between himself and Jesus. Jesus is "from above" -- "from heaven." I am "of the earth," and "speak of the earth." Jesus said of him that he was a burning and a shining light; John, however, knew himself to be unworthy to loose the Lord's shoe-latchet. While the Baptist is not discussing the "virgin birth," his words certainly do not conflict with that doctrine.

Let us look next at the disciples' words found in John 16:19, 30: "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb [parable] . . . now we are sure that thou camest forth from God."

These words were the response of the disciples to a very clear utterance of our Lord, to which he had given expression in the immediately preceding verse: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." Of what other member of the human race could these words be truthfully spoken?

But "the time would fail me" to list all the Scriptures which come to mind. Peter's reference to "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19) -- surely this would require a virgin birth! Job's inquiry: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14: 4)-a question which had only a negative answer in his day. The description of our Lord given by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"; the Apostle John's reference to Jesus as the "only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14); as the "Word of God" (John 1:1); the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14); St. Paul telling us of one who "though being in God's form yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God" (Phil. 2:6); who "was rich, but for our sakes became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9) these all mark Jesus as one apart, who though he took our human nature, and though he was in all points tempted as we (his brethren) are tempted, was "yet without sin." - Heb. 4:15.

In writing a biography, it is customary to trace a man's career "from the cradle to the grave." In the case of Jesus one must go back further than the cradle and continue on beyond the grave. One must go back "to the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14) to find the origin of the "Only Begotten One," (John 1:14) the "Firstborn of all creation." (Col. 1:15.) Only from *that* beginning may we trace the circumstances whereby a clean thing was brought out of an unclean -- a root out of a dry ground; a perfect man out of the imperfect, contaminate race. This was accomplished by a miracle. The mighty Logos became flesh -- being born of a virgin.

## WHY IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH IMPORTANT?

The doctrine that Jesus was born of a virgin, rightly understood, is of great importance to both the Church and the world. Had Jesus derived his life from an earthly father, the quality of that life would have been no different from ours. Ours was contaminated at the fountainhead, *in* Father Adam. So also would have been the life of Jesus. It would have been a dying one, just as ours. Receiving only such a life, he would have been on his way, willy-nilly, to the grave -- just as we are. His death would not have been a voluntary one, but one from which he could not escape. He would thus have been without power to save us; he would not have had the wherewithal to save even himself.

But when, in the fulness of the time, God sent forth his Son made of a woman (Gal. 4:4), it was not a case of an earthly father passing on to him a spark of a dying life. No, indeed! It was as Jesus himself declared: "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." - John 8:42.

An inspired writer puts the matter succinctly: "Such an high priest *became us*"; that is to say, such an high priest was appropriate to the necessities of our case; namely, one who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). Only such an one as he could have saved us. Praise God that he and his Father had the heart to do so.

## EMMANUEL - GOD WITH US

This is the great message of the New Testament to the Church, and eventually to the world: Emmanuel, God with us. God was with his ancient people, and spoke to them often and unmistakably by the mouth of his Prophets. He was there in the burning bush, in the Shekinah of the tabernacle, and in the pillar of cloud and of fire, as well as in the Angel of Jehovah, whom many believe was the pre-human Logos. But he came into new and closer relationship when he sent his Son, and when he, the mighty Logos, became flesh. Jesus Christ was "God made manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16); he was so true and adequate a manifestation of God; so at one with the Father (in purpose and in spirit-not in person) that he could truthfully say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9.) This was a fulfillment of the prophecy, "God with us," indeed -- nay, it was *the* fulfillment, before which the earlier one fades into relative insignificance.

"God is with us" in the life of the Church, for Jesus laid its foundations in his blood, and became himself its cornerstone and the bishop of our souls. "God is with us" in our personal experiences, for Christ Jesus is our Brother and Savior, our refuge under the consciousness of sin, our strength in temptations, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, with the Psalmist we say "We will not fear," whatever may be our present lot, and whatever may befall us. "God is with us" under our present burden, and in the unknown events of the future. "God is with us" *in* life, in death, in time, and in eternity. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." - Psalms 23, 46, 73.

- P. L. Read.