

The Herald

Of Christ's Kingdom

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"I Will Make All Things New"

EDITOR'S JOURNAL

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.--Revelation 21:5

January 1, 1999 marks the beginning of yet another year. As with every new year, it brings the reminder of a fresh beginning, a time to re-evaluate our lives and re-dedicate ourselves to the Lord.

Our brief lives of "threescore and ten" bring only a limited number of such remembrances. Perhaps it is because of this very brevity that we value each of these new years so much.

Though our lives are short, yet God's eternal plan is not. Six thousand plus years of sin and death, followed by a millennium of re-education, are but the beginning of eternity. As one has defined it, "Picture an immense mountain at which a persistent bird pecks once a year. When that mountain is completely brought down, that will be the beginning of eternity." More reverently, the hymnist states:

When we've been there
Ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less years
To sing his praise,
Then when we first begun.

In planning for that vast eternity God makes a great many things new. This is the theme of the current issue of **THE HERALD**. Space permits an examination of but a few of these new things in the plan of God.

This issue opens with an "Echo from the Past" written by Paul Thomson, a former editor of this journal. It is entitled *To Live Is Christ*. Truly the secret of happiness is in a life lived "in Christ" and fully committed to him.

Continuing on the theme of the new year, this issue's verse by verse study is Psalm 65 and is entitled *The Crown of the Year*. David wrote a hymn of praise for God's ever-renewing goodness to the children of men.

A "new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20) is the basis for a new creation. The article *What Is So New About a New Creation* looks at the many details that make Christians new and different from what they were before.

The future role of these new creatures is considered in the companion treatise, *God Hears the Heavens*, examining the biblical promise of a new heavens. These "new heavens" form one of the foundation stones for the future of God's plan of the ages.

Another foundation in this plan is a "new earth." This forms the second half of God's promise for mankind for which we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). The author of *God's Promise for a New Earth* looks at the many provisions God has made for the future of life on planet earth.

John the Revelator saw the relationship between the new heavens and the new earth when he beheld Jerusalem descending as "a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2). The article on *The New Jerusalem* gives a beautiful glimpse into this inspiring vision.

The concluding article deals with yet another promise of God in the making of all things new--*A New Covenant*. The author considers both the Old Testament and the New Testament use of this term, analyzing the seeming discrepancies in the accounts.

All of these "new" things are but a part of the plan of God to fulfill the promise made to Abraham so many millennia ago, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:17,18).

"In the beginning God created heaven and earth," preparing it for the human creation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 1). Adam sinned. The first couple was expelled from their Edenic home. But God has promised to make them anew. As he spoke parabolically through the prophet, "the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it" (Jeremiah 18:4).

As God has renewed his promises often to the human race, so let each of us renew our commitments to him in 1999 and each succeeding year. This will truly make a "happy new year."

Settling Our Accounts

Looking to the New Year

Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.--Psalms 40:5

Timo Nordman, Finland

The beginning of a new year is an appropriate time to reflect upon both the past and the coming year. When we look back and think about our lives, how grateful we should be to God for all the grace and love he has given us. What have we done to receive life and the senses to enjoy the life around us? Have we earned it? No, it was our almighty Creator who, in his great love, gave it to us. By his grace "God created man in his own image" and crowned him with earthly honor. He was created as the highest being among the visible creation, the highest form of material life. "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." (Psalms 8:5,6)

Let us praise and honor God with all our hearts for his great gift of life which we enjoy. In these days people's minds are filled with things of the world so strongly that, as the apostle Paul declares, "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Romans 1:21)

In addition to the gift of life, we can be thankful to God for an even greater gift: Jesus Christ. God loved us so much that--while we were sinners--he even gave his only son so that we could have eternal life (1 John 4:9,10). Think about the magnificent love that God, the Creator of the entire universe, showed us tiny creatures by offering the greatest possible sacrifice, his only begotten son. How grateful we are to God for this grace and love. Day by day, year by year, the realization of this gift adds to our reverence for him.

God's goodness toward us did not end there. Through Christ he gave us an even greater gift. The ability of man to receive the love of God is limited. Only those who share the divine nature can receive and grasp the abundance of his love. For this reason God decided before the foundation of the universe to have a New Creation that would share his divine nature so that he would enjoy equal fellowship and divine love from them. To this divine family he has called us as joint heirs of Christ. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (1 John 3:1)

How incomprehensible is the grace we have received, this call to the divine family. We have received the holy spirit of truth whereby we have been able to taste the powers of the coming age and understand God's plan of the ages. This is a mercy indeed, for which we are so grateful.

"What shall I render unto the LORD"

If we really understand that God, our Lord and our Creator, has showered so much love and mercy upon us, is it possible for our hearts to remain cold and indifferent in the face of such love? No, we cannot! It is our joy and privilege to express our gratitude and love toward him. We can ask with the psalmist, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people." (Psalms 116:12-14)

What can we pay to the Lord for all the goodness he has shown us? We have already consecrated our lives to him. Now, in the beginning of a new year, let us renew our vow; let us make our sacrificial covenant with him more alive than ever. Let us tell the Lord that we belong to him, that our earnest intention is to keep all we have on the altar during this coming year, until it is burned to ashes. Let us keep going, day after day, completely fulfilling our vow of consecration to the Lord, as did the psalmist.

When we look back upon the old year, we see many shortcomings, imperfections and weaknesses. How can we faithfully fulfill our vows to the Lord in an imperfect body? These weaknesses may depress our minds if we don't fully trust the Lord. God is the one who has called us; he is able to complete his work in our imperfect bodies if we keep close to him. He is a merciful God; he takes care of us. He is able to direct all things for our good, even when we can not. (Romans 8:28) He is able to help us more than we can even ask, more than we can even think. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." (Ephesians 3:20)

Our heavenly Father has promised to help us if we seek to walk in his ways. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." (Psalms 121)

Our hearts and minds can only bow in respect before God's immense power and love. How can we pay for all this? How can we show our love toward him? How can we fulfill our vow of consecration?

This great expression of love from God required some payment. It required his most precious treasure, his beloved son. What a precious sacrifice this was. Jesus expressed the

same love by giving his life for us. This same kind of sacrificial love must be found in the lives of his followers. Their lives belong to the Lord, and it must be used to serve God, the truth, and the brethren.

When we consecrate to the Lord, we promise to give everything to him and keep nothing back. We vowed to give *everything* to him: our time, energy and abilities. Our vow of consecration includes the promise to give up our earthly desires, ambitions and aims--we don't aspire to earthly goals in any sense. This is what our vow of sacrifice meant. Although we are freed from earthly things, these did not vanish away. On the contrary, they are now to be used in the Lord's service, for the truth and for his children.

Settlement of Accounts

In the parable of talents (Matthew 25:14-30) Jesus gave a clear picture of how we must pay the Lord for all his good works for us and how we must fulfill our vow of consecration. "The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey . . . After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them."

The talents entrusted to the servants were valuable to the lord; he had a right to require faithfulness from his servants when working with those talents. This lord expected all his servants to work enthusiastically according to their several abilities. He did not expect more than they could do. The one who used two talents faithfully was as honored as the one who used five. Upon his return the "lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

All the servants were given talents; none were left empty handed. All were responsible for what they had been given, though some had more, some less. But one servant proved unfaithful. He was not bad in the sense that he used his talent against his lord or his fellow servants. He simply did not use it at all; he hid his talent in the earth. This servant expected to be approved by the lord although he did not use his talent, had no interest and enthusiasm for his lord. He did not have evil thoughts against his master nor did he try to prevent others from using their talents. Yet he did not recognize his responsibility as a servant of the lord, nor did he show any interest in his work.

This was something the lord could not overlook. As an unfaithful and slothful servant he had violated a covenant . It was clearly impossible to give him more responsibility over the things of the master so he was cast into "outer darkness."

The parable should make us look at our activities and appraise our faithfulness in the Lord's service so we improve our behavior and remember our vow to him. The Lord expects activity in his service from those who confess to be his servants, according to their ability and opportunities. If you have one talent, don't hide it--use it. Do all you can

in the great work to which you have consecrated your life. Those who have several talents should use them all faithfully. The Lord's approval goes only to those who are faithful. Each of us should ask ourselves, "Am I using my talents to increase the pleasures of this life, or to serve the Lord?"

What do the talents represent? They are everything we have after providing for the necessities of life--our job, family, and the like. These should be used actively in the service of the Lord.

To be God's child and a joint heir with Christ requires that we love and be active on behalf of the truth and the brethren. Few walk along this narrow way. Let us not worry about what others do; let us walk the way the Lord has shown us. Let those of us who run this race look to our own zeal and activity. If we hide our talents under worldly cares, burdens, and temporal ambitions, or waste our consecrated time in fleshly pleasures, we will surely be thrown into outer darkness like the wicked servant in the parable. It will not matter how great an intellectual understanding we may have had of the truth if we have not loved it so much that we have sacrificed what we have for it.

How faithful have we been in using our talents? How faithful will we be in the coming year? Let us use what we have for the glory of our Heavenly Father. The Lord has promised to reward our smallest efforts, even the use of just one talent, in the service of the truth and the brethren. A cup of water served to the brethren is not left without its reward (Matthew 10:42). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Echoes from the Past*

To Live Is Christ

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.--Philippians 1:21

Paul E. Thomson

It was not just because uncertainty shrouded his future, not because he might be brought any day from his dungeon cell to face sentence of death that the great apostle uttered these words which have exerted a transforming power in the lives of all Christians to this day. It was not merely "now" that Christ was being "magnified" in his body, but "always" (verse 20). That word "always" covers every thought, word, and deed from the day of the vision on the road to Damascus, which, laying hold on Saul of Tarsus, changed his breathing out of threatenings and slaughter into the dispensing of the greatest possible of present blessings. It was not only "all the Pretorian camp" (where he at that moment wore the manacles of Christ) that was his field of endeavor; but "all other places," the whole known world. The fragrance of such a life as his could not be confined to the narrow quarters of a soldiers' camp. In fact, the seeds of his planting had already spread until, scattered throughout that vast expanse, there were other lives sending up the same sweet incense; or, under a similar figure, the fragrance of the same anointing oil. "Now, thanks be to that God, who always leads us forth to triumph with the Anointed One, and who diffuses by us the fragrance of the knowledge of him *in every place*. Because we are a sweet odor of Christ to God." (2 Corinthians 2:14,15, Diaglott)

From the day of his anointing, the purpose that pervaded the life of the apostle was the glorifying of Christ, the principle that ruled his life was the favor of Christ, and the Word that governed the life of Christ in every word and act (John 3:11; 5:19,30; 7:16; 8:28; 14:10,24) was the sole rule of his own life. He desired no more, whether living or dying, than to win Christ and to be found in him. He truthfully could say not only, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (surely a glorious past), but, bringing his consecration down to the present, he could say just as truthfully, and with even more fervor, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but vile refuse, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Philippians 3:7-10) In this passage the apostle has touched on some of the details of the life that is "gain"--"old things passed away"; a mind that looks back upon them not with longing, but, rather, with abhorrence; self-confidence gone; justification by faith depended on; an intimate personal knowledge of Christ his objective. His was a consuming desire that there might be as a reality in his own life the fullness of the power that reached into the depths of the grave and lifted to the very courts of heaven him who became sin for us; his was even an eagerness to "fill up to the brim those things that are

left over of the sufferings of Christ" (literal translation). Pervading all this was a calm and solemn purpose--that this life of gain might culminate as did the life he emulated, a willing sacrifice, holy, acceptable--death, gain. This is to "know Christ"; this "is Christ"--"the hope of glory" so transcending that the apostle could conceive of no adversary so powerful, no conditions so distressing, no pathway so demon-infested but that all would be a mere trifle "if by *any means*" he "might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Humility might seem to be lacking in a claim so lofty as "for me to live is Christ." In this, however, Paul is not counting that he has already "attained, either were already perfect." On the contrary, true modesty is the key-note of this statement, as it is of the yet more clear one, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." His would not have been the life of Christ if it had not been the life of pressing on; "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." "For all those of our number who are mature, this must be the point of view." (Moffatt) "Let us mind the *same* thing."

The world's calendar gives us with the New Year a convenient season to re-examine our spiritual standing, a time to renew our spiritual resolves. No question more searching could be asked of ourselves than "Is it true that for me `to live is Christ'? Have I in every particular, present and future, determined that `to die is gain'?" No higher resolve can be ours than that these phrases shall be as true of us from this moment to the end of our course as of the faithful one who wrote them--a weak one like ourselves. But when he was weak (in self), then was he strong (in the Lord).

In the first phrase the apostle doubtless would include: (1) separation for Christ, (2) dedication to Christ, (3) use by Christ, (4) likeness to Christ, and (5) concealment in Christ. Briefly let us examine ourselves in the light of each of these points.

Separation For Christ

To live Christ can never mean less than the life of complete separation which was his. "In the world, but not of it," every phase of life was contacted by him, but by that contact he was no more contaminated than is the pure ray of sunshine by the foulest corner it enlightens.

Jesus' contacts with the evil elements of the world were neither specially sought nor shunned, though when opportunity offered or need required, he found great joy in serving the meanest sinner, or in a literal leaving behind of all worldly minds and in seeking isolated communion with his Father in nature's most inspiring surroundings. The self-righteous one can neither fully appreciate that fellowship nor avoid the fear of contamination if he were to linger in the presence of the sinner brought directly to him from the discovery of her guilt. Rather than exercise charity, self-righteousness, falling under the temptation to pride and self-laudation, would have brought up all the sins of long ago that a black background might be furnished in which his supposed righteousness might shine.

How often we find that earth's follies have "touched" us, for they intrude into our most sacred moments. Even when we are on our knees before the very throne of God, the trivial things of life and often even the polluting influences of the daily contacts will intrude. Physical separation there may have been, but the "unclean thing" has touched us to our damage because we have touched it in spirit. The natural mind would be content with a physical separation; but as in our separation from Babylon, so in leaving the world, the purpose is that we "be not partakers *of her sins*." To continue in any of the sins of Babylon or the world, either actively or mentally, may result in a smug though condemned contentment. Separation for Christ inevitably results in a life of blessing for self and for all we contact who partake of his spirit.

Dedication To Christ

Vastly the blessings increase when to the separation is added dedication--consecration. In the separation the loss for Paul, as for Jesus, was home, friends, reputation, prospects; even life itself daily was laid down. As one of the results of his life of consecration hundreds of homes, however, became his, true and eternal friendships were made, and he won favor with the One whose standards are perfect. In dedicating himself to God and his service, he entered upon the course that leads to all that life can offer, the way to the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" reserved for those who "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

The New Year could bring us nothing of greater worth than that all things should pass away, be shut out of our minds, so that we may fix our mental gaze unwaveringly upon the "things that are eternal in the heavens." The completeness of the dedication can be clearly discerned by the individual himself by the reality of the separation. Cunningly the flesh argues the necessity of "things" that the life may be "abundant"; with unbelievable persistence the heart supposedly dedicated to him who is love, clings to the ways of the flesh, even relying on evil-speaking, envy, sarcasm, malice, in its boasted "contending earnestly for the faith." Perhaps it is well that practically all Christians can look back with shame to such practices in their own lives, that they may have charity with the brother who, while bearing the sacred vessels of the Lord, brings disgrace upon the vessels and the One whose they are. Dedicated? Yes. A priest? Surely, or at least a Levite; but before he was dedicated to the Lord, he was dedicated to self, the world, and the Adversary. The habits formed in those days must be outgrown. In consecration he has said, "I am not my own. Take me. Use me. Transform me until no more. `For me to live is' I, the selfish I, the self-seeking I, the envious I, the boastful I." "Not I, *but Christ*." What a shout of victory there is in these words! The arches of eternity will ring with them. "For me to live is Christ," now, and for eternity.

"Nought of self to mar His glory,
Nought of sin to make it dim,
Just a glorious, glorious shining
That the friends around see Him.
Resurrection joys abounding;
Every morning mercies new;
Every day His conscious presence;
All our life one interview."

Use By Christ

In the little loom where is being woven daily the intricate pattern of our lives, strange materials are used. In the vaster loom where the eternal purposes of our God for a universe are being worked out, the Master Weaver uses even such as we; and the result will be a tapestry eternally glorifying him. The most insignificant thread in that loom is necessary to the perfection of the pattern. True dedication, therefore, accepts joyfully so trifling a service as the giving of "a cup of cold water, in the name of a disciple"; nor hesitates at any God-given service--no service is too large or too small.

Dedication does not wait for commands; but a mere "this is the will of God concerning *you*" is enough. Before he entered upon the life of sacrifice, our "File-leader" could say, "Thy law is within my heart." No urging was necessary. He needed only to know that "the will of God" for him was sanctification, setting apart as a holy sacrifice. One who could without reservation say, "For me to live is Christ," one who knew all the joys and all the cost of dedication, one who knew and emulated the tender mercies of the heavenly courts so that he, too, could "rejoice," as Jesus did, in sufferings for the Church--this one beseeches, "by the tender compassions of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" in dedication that places no restrictions on him who sends the fire that consumes the sacrifice. Paul was speaking from the darkest depths of experiences that had resulted from a dedication to the God of "tender compassion." Not fleshly comforts, honors, and prospects had been showered upon him; but, rather, the Father assured him: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake"--bearing "reproaches . . . greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"; being "defamed"; made the "filth of the world, the offscouring of all things"; scourged; beaten with many stripes; stoned; thrown into prison--these were the lot of one fully dedicated to the God of all compassion--for him to live was Christ. His Christ was the Christ of the Cross.

Though such experiences are not often today the lot of those who are used by Christ, the half-hearted will, even in our milder sufferings with Christ, find abundant reason for discouragement and idleness. There was probably some one in Philippi saying, "There are no opportunities for service today"; while others were packing that box to be sent the thousand miles to cheer Paul's prison cell. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." It is easy to interpret this to mean: "Do good *only* to the household of faith, or at least only to those

who show some interest in our message"; thus utterly failing of use for Christ in giving to the neighbor next door the cup of cold water he is ready to accept.

Likeness To Christ

Without the dedication that made Paul ready for the most insignificant service, there could have been no likeness to Christ. Also, to attain that likeness, the power working in him must be the "surpassing greatness" of power, even that which raised Jesus from the grave. A lesser power could produce some one or even a few points of likeness to Christ, but for the completing of the likeness, for filling "with all the fullness of God" as Jesus was filled, this miracle that must be worked for every individual of the 144,000, the "exceeding greatness of His power" was required.

The intimate, personal, daily, hourly moment-by-moment walk with Jesus is truly an essential if we would know him so well as ever to become "like Jesus." Living is not a spasmodic thing indulged in a few moments each day--"For me to live is Christ [uninterruptedly: eternity has begun for me]." God had graciously given Saul a vision of himself and a vision of Jesus, neither vision to fade until he should he changed, utterly changed, and "old things had passed away, *all things* had become new." Each one of us, too, may "see Jesus," "a living, bright reality," throughout 1999--if for us also "old things *are* passed away."

Briefly the beloved disciple sums up the beauties of the One we emulate as "full of grace and truth"--every grace was his in fullness, and all truth that was due was *lived* by him. To desire less is to fail of attaining his image. To attain it is to "be satisfied when I awake in his likeness."

Concealment in Christ

"To me to live is Christ" and *not* myself. From the moment one is "in Christ" he is more or less concealed in Christ: the concealing work is begun. Outside of Christ we are nothing, but in front of that cipher place the One who "is able," and we live "according to the power that worketh in us." All power in heaven and in earth is his. In him we rest the blissful, peaceful, joyful rest of the full assurance that faith alone can give. It is a "little flock" only that have enjoyed it, for it is only a little flock who have lost faith in self that they might have concealment in him. To enjoy it, self-interests must be abandoned, even the old body itself presented a "living sacrifice." Concealed in him, the very will of self is trampled under foot that he may "work in us to *will* and to *do*." His will alone must reign in us.

For concealment in him, the willing of his will is *first*, and of paramount importance. Without that, in everything we *do* there is a shameful revealing of self, instead of a blessed concealing. Unless the consuming desire is self-effacement in Christ, shame and confusion await, even though there are truly "great and mighty works" of which to boast--*powerful discourses*, that glorify the preacher; hundreds of converts, *our* converts instead of God's; bounties out-poured, "to be seen of men"; bodies given to be burned,

for personal vindication: all this without Christ, and "I am nothing" again, for I have lost the One that made the cipher something.

To Die Is Gain

Make these, and the many other things that are comprised in the phrase, "For me to live is Christ," ours and we need no one to instruct us that "to die is gain," a gain that words cannot express, but "God hath revealed it unto us by his spirit." (1 Corinthians 2:10) As Jesus alone received the spirit "without measure," he alone could fully know the joys of that gain. If self still lives, it will think of the *losses* rather than the gains, and those things gained it will plan to use for self first and then for others. If Christ live in us, our transcendent joy will be the use to which our new powers may be put now in laying down our lives for the members of his Body, and in the future, as the Seed of Abraham, in blessing "all the families of the earth." Self may dream of the honors it is to enjoy; "dead with him," his honor alone will employ us. If for me to live is Christ, then to the ages of the ages I will with him be able to say, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Before the veil is passed, every thought, word, and deed will have been brought under his control. "Casting down reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity *every* thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5; see Diaglott), what a glorious year 1999 will be; perhaps the very gateway of heaven! Who can compute the gain!

But can we attain a standard so high? "Not I, but Christ." "He is able to do *exceeding* ABUNDANTLY ABOVE *all that we ask or think*, according to the power that worketh in us." Oh that he may freely work in us this year to "will and to do of his good pleasure," so that each one of us can truly say, "Christ liveth in me."

[*Reprinted from the January, 1951, issue of *The Herald*. References to 1951 have been changed to 1999.]

The Crown of the Year

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.--Psalm 65:11

A verse by verse study in Psalm 65

Every year ancient Israel had two "new years." The religious new year was in the month of Nisan (March-April by modern reckoning). The civil new year was in the month Tishri (September-October). Both new years were marked by agricultural harvests--barley in the springtime and fruit in the fall. Both months were celebrated with harvest festivals. In the spring it was the feast of the Passover which, while primarily commemorating the deliverance from Egypt, also included the waving of the first of the barley sheaves. In the fall it was the Feast of Tabernacles, a feast of thanksgiving for both the nation's preservation during the exodus wanderings and for the harvesting of the bountiful fruit crop. The fall festival was also associated closely with the annual Day of Atonement and its sacrifices for sin and the cleansing of the tabernacle (and later the temple) for another year of sacrificing.

Internal evidence suggests that Psalm 65 was written in connection with the fall festivals of harvest thanksgiving, although the psalm includes allusions to the fullness of grain as well as the ripening of grapes.

Both a Psalm and a Song

The titles and subscriptions are a part of the ancient manuscripts in addition to the text of the Psalms. This Psalm is entitled "A Psalm and Song of David" and bears the subscription, "To the chief musician." While "psalm" is used 28 times and "song" 44 times, both are only used together in 14 Psalms. The word "psalm" (Hebrew: *mizmor*) denotes any writing, in either poetry or prose, that was penned for the purposes of meditation. "Song" (Hebrew: *shir*) designates a writing that is in poetry and meant to be sung by either a group of singers or the entire congregation.

It was probably the popularity of the 13 psalms which bear both words in their titles that caused the author to set the words to music. The closing notation, "To the chief musician," usually designates a direction to the leader of the singers to preserve both the words and music for use on regular occasions--in this case, at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Introduction--Verses 1 to 3

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

The Hebrew verb translated "waiteth" is used only four times, all of them in the Psalms. In two instances (Psalms 22:2; 39:2) it is translated more accurately "silent" or "silence"

and is rendered so in this text in the New American Standard. The attitude expressed is of a great hush in the presence of a vastly superior being. In a similar vein (though using a different Hebrew word), the Psalmist declared: "**Be silent**, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation" (Zechariah 2:13).

Israel had been instructed in the Law to bring an offering of their vow unto the Lord to the appointed feasts (Numbers 15:3). The vow they were to make was one of continued fidelity to the keeping of the Law which had been given to them through Moses at Mount Sinai.

Acknowledging the propriety of prayer for all, David in his Psalm called attention to the burden of the prayer. It is to be a prayer for the forgiveness of sin and a proper attitude at all times but especially as the Day of Atonement drew near. The word "iniquity" in this passage is a translation of two Hebrew words. The phrase more properly should be rendered by the phrase "iniquitous words prevail against me." In this context, "iniquitous words" were not those of calumny and condemnation by peers, but the just charges of infidelity by a righteous God. That the charges were just is humbly admitted by the penitent, calling them "transgressions" that need to be purged away. David expressed the same attitude which he had exhibited in his prayer after he had sinned with Bathsheba: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3).

The Blessed Priesthood--Verse 4

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

At this point the psalmist turns his attention to those offering the sacrifice. The vocation of priest was designed by God to be an honorable one. Even when the office was filled by dishonorable men, the office itself was to be honored (Acts 23:5; Exodus 22:28).

The priests of ancient Israel represented a future spiritual group of priests. Like David, the revelator also spoke of priests (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), though those in Revelation are of a different order or line.

The Aaronic line of priests was chosen through heredity, those of the Melchizedec priesthood are individually selected by God. Then they are brought near to God and permitted to dwell in his courts. It is of these courts that the apostle Paul spoke: "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). What a blessing, indeed, it is for those called to a heavenly calling to dwell in these heavenly courts! It is of these the psalmist wrote: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1).

What abundant goodness dwells within these hallowed courts! Israel's priest was surrounded by walls of gold and framed embroidery of cherubim, woven in blue, purple,

and scarlet. These are emblematic of the divine and precious promises by which some might eventually attain the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). It is here that one enjoys the enlightenment of the golden candlestick and views the nourishing "bread of presence." It is here that one has the privilege of offering up prayers with the rich incense provided by Christ himself (Revelation 8:4).

The word translated "satisfied" in verse 4 is much stronger than implied by the English. It more properly could be rendered "sated" or "surfeited" according to Prof. W. E. Vine. God's goodness is so abundantly more than could be described that it is hard to find a word strong enough to appropriately express appreciation. The words of the apostle Paul come to mind: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

The use of the word "temple" has caused some to state that this Psalm could not have been written by David since the temple was not built until the reign of his son Solomon; however the same Hebrew word is used of the tabernacle in the days of Eli in 1 Samuel 1:9. David uses the same word to describe the tent on the threshing-floor of Araunah in 2 Samuel 22:7.

Nature Controlled--Verses 5 to 8

By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea: Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power: Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

As with the word "fear" which is sometimes the translation of this Hebrew word *yare'* (Strong's 3372), "terrible" is open to either a positive or negative definition. Prof. W. E. Vine says about this Hebrew word:

"Used of a person in an exalted position, *yare'* connotes 'standing in awe.' This is not simple fear, but reverence, whereby an individual recognizes the power and position of the individual revered and renders him proper respect. In this sense, the word may imply submission to a proper ethical relationship to God."

David showed his appreciation for the abundant crops of the year by extolling the power of God in controlling the course of nature. From the establishment of the mountains, whose vast reservoirs of water were so important to the nation, to the controlling of the sea waters so they did not flood the coastal plains, David sees a magnificent goodness in the great Creator.

He noted that the same power that holds the seas in their place also stills the stormy hearts of men. Perhaps in this Psalm he is referring to the surrounding nations whose attempts to plunder Israel had been restrained during his reign.

In verse 8 David broadened the lessons learned from the power of God over the elements of nations. God's beneficent goodness in providing the necessary resources for food crops is not limited to Israel. As Jesus said, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

The final phrase of verse 8 can either mean that the worshippers would praise the Lord from dawn to dusk or, as some read it, that God should be worshipped by all from the west to the east. The Hebrew word for "outgoings" can point to direction and is translated "east" in Psalm 75:6.

God's Abundant Goodness--Verses 9 and 10

Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

The song of praise continues with direct references to the blessings leading to the rich harvest. Attention first is called to the rains which, during the winter, dropped as snow in the Anti-Lebanon mountain range to the north and flowed down "the river of God" (probably a reference to the Jordan and its four tributaries) which brought a continuous flow of life-giving water to the fertile valleys in the south. There is a similar understanding of this water course in Psalm 133:3 where the precious anointing oil which installed the kings and priests is likened to this flow of water. "As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Psalm 29 also shows the same comprehension of the rainfall pattern in Israel.

David recognized that God is not only the provider for abundant crops, but also the planner for them. He recognized that corn would come only when God had "so provided for it." Man cannot dictate to God when blessings should be conferred. God is the sovereign and the timing remains with him.

The "ridges" and the "furrows" are both technical agricultural terms. The first refers to the depths of a furrow left by a plow, while the latter to the clods of earth cast up. David notices that the same rain which fills the little man-made valleys of the furrows with water also softens the hard earth of the surrounding clods. Thus the showers prepared the ground for the new grains to spring forth.

The Crown of the Year--Verses 11 to 13

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

The word for "crownest" can be translated "circled" or "compassed" as in 1 Samuel 23:6 and Psalm 5:12. Both "crownest" and "circled" fit this Psalm. Although the fatness of the fields is the crowning achievement of the agricultural year, David more likely was praising the fact that the beneficence of nature has been good to the land all year long.

The word translated "goodness" is the same as in the oft-repeated expression in the first chapter of the Bible: "and God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:10). David, like God at creation, looked over the lushness of the pastures, the fatness of the flocks, and the abundance of grain and said, "It is good." Therefore it was appropriate that those receiving these blessings should gather in the appointed harvest feasts and raise their voices to shout and sing.

How much more so, in the lives of the Christian today! The abundant provisions of the heavenly Father are recognized in providing amply for the harvest of the fruits of the spirit. The Christian shows his appreciation for these spiritual gifts by gathering together and joining their voices in songs of praise.

The New Creation

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.--2 Corinthians 5:17

Carl Hagensick

What is new about a new creation. Everything! That's Paul's simple answer to this question: "All things are become new." A "new creature" suggests a new creation of God. Paul states as much in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (NIV).

A Sabbath Day Creation

This raises a seeming conflict. We read in Genesis 2:3, "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Since the new creature is really a new creation, it suggests that God did not fully rest from creative works on the seventh day. Jesus implies as much in John 5:17, "My Father is working still, and I am working" (RSV). The implication is strong: God has not ceased from working, even from creating a new creation.

In one of his many discussions with the Pharisees concerning Sabbath law, Jesus asked, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" (Luke 14:5) God's possession, the human race, fell into the pit of sin and death early on the sabbath day of creation. The "new creation" is created specifically for the purpose of assisting in the pulling humanity out of this tragic pit.

A New and Living Way

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh"--Hebrews 10:19,20

"Who [God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."--2 Timothy 1:9,10

The calling of the church of Christ was a new concept. Such an invitation had never before existed. Not only was the life which it promised--immortal life--new, but the way to obtain it was new. This calling was to the very nature of God himself. As it is written in 2 Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that

by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

This is the way Jesus mentioned when he invited his apostles to follow him, even beyond the grave. "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:4-6)

New Truths

Not only would this new life be through the following of a new way, but the new way would be based on new truths. Jesus said, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16). The law and the prophets promised prosperity for obedience; the new way promised persecution and death for its adherents. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it," (Luke 9:23,24)

The standards of the Old Testament were three: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). The standards Jesus set forth were also three: to deny self, take up one's cross, and follow Jesus. To deny one's self was to go beyond justice. All the law of justice could demand was to love one's neighbor **as** himself (Leviticus 19:18). The new standards were to so love as to lay down life itself for the brethren (1 John 3:16). The old standard was to "love mercy," the new standard was to **do** mercy by being willing to even carry one's cross to the ultimate end of death. The faithful Israelite of old was to walk humbly with his God--carrying out the precepts of a perfect law. The gospel standard was to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, walking in a way of sacrifice.

It is these truths that are described as the seed which produces the "new creature." "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side." How this "word of the kingdom" is received by the hearer is what determines if it takes root in his heart, or if he is led aside by either persecution or the cares of this life, or whether he produces thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold (Matthew 13:19-23).

A New Mind Set

These truths form a whole new pattern of thought for the new creature. After urging the Romans to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, Paul wrote "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

As natural human beings, the easiest thing for us is to act like a human. Self-preservation is a strong instinct. The thinking patterns of this world have been taught since childhood-- in the home, in the schools, in the work place, and by one's peers. The pressure to conform to these selfish precepts is steady and unrelenting.

The true Christian must break this thought pattern. He must undergo a metamorphosis, a complete "renewing" of his mind. Old priorities must give place to new priorities. Old concepts must be challenged. The question Peter and John asked the leaders of Israel must be honestly faced: "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

These new thought patterns govern more than merely dictating a path of sacrifice. They encourage an active interest in all mankind, even the sinners. The Pharisees were often upset with Jesus' interest in the publicans and sinners. Sinners, to them, were a class to be despised. Their attitude was expressed in the parable of the prayer of the Pharisee and the publican, with the words, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican" (Luke 18:11).

The true Christian not only refrains from being disdainful to sinners, he is not even condescending to them. His concern is their restoration. He sorrows for their conditions. "Blessed are the merciful," Jesus said, "for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Even in the Old Testament, such mourning over sinful conditions was the attitude exhorted. In one prophecy a man with a writer's inkhorn is commanded to place a mark on those "who **sigh and cry** for all the abominations that be done in the midst of [Jerusalem]" (Ezekiel 9:4). The attitude exhorted was one of extreme sorrow, not even righteous indignation, for the corruption which had invaded the priesthood.

The "renewing of the mind" requires that the mind be open to the new thoughts of the gospel. Paul praised the noble Bereans of his day because "they received the word with all readiness of mind" (Acts 17:11). They were not gullible in receiving this word for they "searched the scriptures daily, whether these things be so." Lydia, the first European convert, was praised because "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14). Paul encourages the Thessalonians to "despise not prophesyings," but adds that they were "to prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:20,21).

Such new thought patterns come only from the word of God. Thus we have the admonition, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). While the word translated "study" in this passage is more correctly rendered "be diligent," such diligence requires a continuous study of the Bible. It is there that we replace our thoughts with those of God.

New Relationships

Becoming a new creature in Christ produces a new relationship with both God and his son Jesus Christ.

Sons of God: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12); "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14); "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:1, 2). This relationship is so close that we are encouraged to consider God in the most familial of relationships, calling him by the endearing term "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

Bride of Christ: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:2,9). No more endearing relationship exists on earth than that of a loving bride and groom. The beautiful imagery in the Song of Solomon is an allegorical ode to this close love relationship.

Joint-Heirs: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). As the only-begotten son of God, Jesus was heir to all of his Father's estate--the whole universe. As his bride, the church is a co-inheritor of this same estate.

New Protections

While all of the human race are redeemed from the inherited sin of Adam by the redemption that is in Christ, "new creatures" have a special protection from personal sins for which they show repentance. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

This advocacy brings about complete forgiveness of sins. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:6,7; see also Colossians 1:14).

That such forgiveness is promised for all sins except the "sin unto death" is guaranteed in 1 John 5:16, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."

New Prayer Privileges

It is of these new creatures that Jesus declared, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). It is promised

in Matthew 21:22 that "all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

While prayer is appreciated and used by many sincere individuals and many such testify to answered prayers, such **positive assurances** as those given in Matthew and John are only to such who "abide" in Christ. To abide in him is to take up residence there--to make Christ the home of the soul. Not only must they reside in Christ, but the words of their Lord must abide in them. His dictates must be absorbed and become a part of a new life style.

It is only when not so abiding that prayers go unanswered. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3).

New Objectives

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were placed on the earth with the promise of dominion. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). When God's plan for humanity is complete, they will realize that prospect. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." While this rulership will be for the benefit of all, its realization will bring its primary blessing to each one inheriting such a kingdom.

The church of Christ, the "new creatures," will also be kings (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:4,6). They will be "kings and priests" and "reign on [over, Greek *epi*] the earth." Their position will be honorable and glorious but it will not be primarily for their own benefit that they reign. Their objective is to "bless all the families of the earth" as the promised "seed" of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16,29). The new objective of the church is not egocentric but altruistic, reaching out to bless others.

This outward reach of love is the final result of the new character that forms the heart of these new creatures. Following in the footsteps of their Lord and Master, they copy his life of self-sacrifice in the interest of others. It is for this reason they are called. It is for this reason they are developed. It is for this reason they are made "new creatures." And it is for this reason that for them "all things are made new."

A New Heavens

God Hears the Heavens

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.--2 Peter 3:13

Carl Hagensick

Peter may have been inspired to use this illustration from two allusions in the Old Testament (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). The fact that the heavens and earth are "new" implies they are replacing an old heavens and earth. Also, we find a description of the demise of the old heavens and earth a few verses earlier: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). We read in Hebrews 1:10-12, "And, thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

The apostle Peter dispels any notion that these "heavens and earth" are to be taken literally when he writes of the flood: "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Peter 3:6). Of course Noah's ark came to rest on the same literal earth.

The Literal Heavens

While the "new heavens" and the "new earth" are not literal replacements for the physical environment in which we live, they are symbols based on these elements. In the Bible heaven, when used in a literal sense, is either a name for God's dwelling place outside our environment or for earth's atmosphere.

The word heaven first occurs in Genesis: "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day." (Genesis 1:6-8)

The firmament has many functions in the operation of planet Earth:

- It provides air to breathe.
- It protects the earth from collisions with objects from outer space.
- It provides for the transport of water from the sea to the land for irrigation.
- It redistributes minerals and other solids from one locale to another.
- Through lightning, it produces the nitrogen essential for plant growth.
- It dilutes and spreads out various pollutants discharged by man.

Each of these features is important in the symbolic meaning of heaven. As a symbol, the new heavens are a fitting picture for the spiritual control of Christ's kingdom, a control that will be operated jointly by Christ and his risen Church (Revelation 20:4,6). The creation of the literal atmosphere was accomplished by dividing "waters from waters." One meaning of "waters" in the Bible is a symbol of peoples (Revelation 19:6). The spiritual government of earth will be formed by raising one group of people-- "waters"--to live and reign with Christ. These are "the new heavens."

God's Channel of Communication

The atmosphere or firmament is necessary for life. The physical location of the atmosphere between the land and outer space symbolizes an intermediary role that is played by the church and her Lord in the kingdom. A description of this role is found in Hosea: "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel" (Hosea 2:21,22).

God says specifically that his channel of communication with the earth will not be direct. He will hear the heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth. This illustrates God's method of dealing with the human race during the kingdom.

Individuals will be raised from the dead in the same condition as when they died. Their thoughts will not change instantly from unrighteous ones to righteous ones. A period of time, possibly centuries, will be involved in unlearning selfish ways and learning God's principles of righteousness. During this process, there will be times when individuals will come short of God's righteous standards. They will commit sins that would be punishable by death if they were not given a rehabilitation period during which they will be educated in the perfect laws of righteousness.

Mankind's judgment is described in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46). It is before the Son of Man that all nations will be gathered for judgment; he is the one who pronounces sentence (verse 32). John says "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the son" (John 5:32). Jesus is not alone in this work for we read, "Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 19:28; see also Obadiah 21.)

Notice the steps in the channel of communication as described in Hosea:

- God hears the heavens;
- The heavens hear the earth;
- The earth hears the corn, wine, and oil;
- The corn, wine, and oil hear Jezreel.

If the spiritual heavens which God hears are the Christ and his church, then the earth is the subjects over which they rule--the human race. Because these lack as yet a spiritual ear, they listen to the voice of prosperity--the increase of corn, wine, and oil. While these may have a spiritual meaning, in this context they may refer to literal prosperity. Finally these are said to hear Jezreel, a symbol of the nation of Israel. When Israel turns to the Lord, she will receive prosperity which other nations will recognize. This chain of command seems to be supported by many other scriptures:

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you."-- Zechariah 8:23

"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."-- Zechariah 14:16,17

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."-- Isaiah 2:2-4 (see also Micah 4:1-3)

The same figure of speech used in Hosea is also used by the psalmist: " He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psalms 50:4, 5). This seems to identify the "heavens" which God hears as those who make "a covenant by sacrifice" with him --the Church of Christ.

Spiritual Irrigation

Another function of earth's atmosphere is to pick up waters from the sea through the process of evaporation and drop them as rain upon the land. Seas in the Bible often picture the wild and reckless condition of people (see Psalms 65:7). The human race has been in this restless and troubled condition since sin entered the world over 6000 years ago.

One of the most troubling questions which has faced the race during this long period has been, why does a God of love permit evil? The answer is God's kingdom. Man has learned only too well the results of sin and evil--sorrow, sickness, and death. Only by bringing back all who have died and teaching them the contrasting lessons of righteousness--happiness, health, and life--will a full answer to the question of the permission of evil be found.

The teachers of those lessons will be Christ and the church who have learned them well in the present life. These not only will be instructors, they will possess sympathy and compassion for those who will be learning these lessons. One of the titles for Christ and his church is "priests." A priest, like a high priest, must be endowed with compassion. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Hebrews 5:1, 2).

Like the winds that carry the waters from the sea to the dry land, Christ, Head and body, will pick up the lessons from humanity's turbulent sin-filled present condition and distill them as "showers of blessing" in the kingdom. This is suggested in Deuteronomy 32:1,2, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

Gathered in Clouds

Another text which may carry a similar thought is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

There seems little doubt that this verse connects the beginning of the resurrection of the followers of Christ with the Lord's return. There is, however, an interesting symbol in this passage that is open to various interpretations--those which remain shall be "caught up together with him **in the clouds**."

Most expositors deduce from this that those that remain shall be caught up in large groups. Such an interpretation has little, if any, scriptural support. Clouds are not synonymous with crowds.

Others gather that the last members of the church will be taken in clouds of trouble. This has more support in the Bible. Clouds are used to signify trouble--especially storm clouds. However, the one cloud that is most directly connected with the Lord's return is not a storm cloud but a "white cloud" (Revelation 14:14).

Still others interpolate the words "in the region" of clouds to use it as a description of the place to which the saints shall be gathered.

Another possible interpretation, and the one favored by this author, is based on the fact that the word clouds in this passage lacks the definite article in the Greek. A more accurate translation is that they will be caught up "in clouds." The Greek *en*, translated "in," is open to a wide breadth of interpretation including "into" (Romans 1:23, 25). As air, passing over seas, pick up moisture into clouds, so the church will pick up the lessons from the present turbulent sea-like condition of society to distil them and drop them as blessings in the stable dry-land condition of Christ's kingdom. Certainly it is true, whether taught in this verse or not, that the church will be the clouds of blessing that will take the experiences of the present life and distribute those in the kingdom of Christ.

The Pillar of Cloud.

In a compatible interpretation, the noted Jewish rabbi Nathan says, "What has been done before will be done again. As he led the Israelites from Egypt in the clouds of heaven, so will he do to them in the future time." (*Midras Tillin*, 48:13)

Here the rabbi is referring to the unique pillar of cloud which led Israel through forty years of wilderness wandering. What a unusual cloud that was! No matter which way the wind blew, the cloud either remained stationary or directed them, sometimes contrariwise, in the paths that they should go.

This cloud is described in Isaiah 4:5,6 in these words: "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."

The word translated "defense" in this passage is the Hebrew *chuppah*, the bridal canopy that is so common in Jewish weddings to this day. The same word is used in Psalms 19:1-5 where he writer says of the heavens, " In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.."

In these verses we have a close connection between the canopy under which the bride and groom are united and the cloud that covered Israel. This will certainly be another role of the church in the glorious kingdom ahead, to be a guide to direct all to their promised land. The exodus journey of the ancient Israelites is likened unto this trek of human race in Isaiah 11:15, 16.

As the literal atmosphere protects the earth to a large measure from the many meteorites that fly through space, so the provision of Christ and the church will protect man during this kingdom period from the direct judgments of God. In Isaiah 4:6 this cloud would be as "a tabernacle for a shadow in the day from heat, and a covert from storm and from rain." A rain-proof cloud is an unusual cloud indeed. Even while distilling the moisture needed for growth, it provides protection from the storm clouds and lightning-bolts of God's judgments.

Distribution of Assets

The winds that inhabit the atmosphere also redistribute minerals and other substances. Wind erosion produces a vast amount of material that is carried by rivers and streams, sometimes for many miles, before it settles back in other parts of the world.

This describes another role of the new heavens. Lessons learned by humans in one part of the globe will be transmitted to those living elsewhere. Thus there can be adequate examples for the entire race without every person experiencing personally all the possible consequences of sin.

Pollutants that are absorbed in the air become diluted and so prevent high contamination in a single area. The nuclear disaster in Chernobyl produced radioactive fallout. Although it was heaviest in the local area, it would have been much more devastating if it had not been carried away by the winds. Ashes from the eruption of Mt. St. Helens were carried aloft and distributed throughout the world. Although a wide distribution of pollutants spreads problems to others, it also restrains the negative impact of disasters from being even more deadly in a local area. Likewise in the kingdom: the lessons learned from the permission of evil will be kindly diluted and spread world-wide to produce a beneficial effect.

The atmosphere is an essential part of our life and we could not live without it. The new heavens will also be an essential part of life in the world to come. The human race will not be able to live without these new heavens. How important it is that those who are called to be a part of these "new heavens" learn their lessons so they may properly carry out their important future mission.

God's Promise For A New Earth

We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.--2 Peter 3:13

Michael Brann

These words spoken by the apostle Peter contain one of the most grand and sublime themes of the Bible. That theme is the kingdom of God in both its heavenly and earthly aspects. The "we" referred to by Peter are Christians (2 Peter 1:1). We are reminded of the words of Jesus when he taught his disciples (later known as Christians) to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on **earth** as it is done in heaven." (Matthew 6:10) Christians have been praying for this kingdom for nearly two thousand years.

Some of the early Christians evidently had begun to have doubts concerning the seeming delay of this kingdom for which they were praying. Peter's words were intended to instruct them by reminding them of the flood in Noah's day and how it came to pass just as God had promised. He reminded them of the need to exercise patience and faith. How wonderful an encouragement it must have been to those doubting Christians!

During the passing of nearly twenty centuries since Jesus' first advent, Christians have joyfully anticipated this promised kingdom. How much disappointment many must have felt when their prayers seemed to go unanswered as their lives came to an end with no kingdom in sight or looming on the horizon. How often they must have relied on Peter's words during that time for fresh supplies of encouragement, comfort and hope.

Peter reminded us that this kingdom was **promised by the Lord**. This was not man's promise, but one made by Jehovah himself. The most direct promise with similar language to that of Peter's is found in Isaiah: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." (Isaiah 65:17) "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain." (Isaiah 66:22) The context of these passages speaks in relation to the nation of Israel, of their selection by Jehovah to be his people, their waywardness, God's temporary rejection of them, and the call then going to the Gentiles. Both Isaiah texts conclude with the return of favor to the Jewish nation and their deliverance and exaltation. Furthermore, they show that the world of mankind is likewise to be the recipient of the blessings of this kingdom promised by God.

The promise of a new earth has caused considerable confusion among some of the Lord's people throughout the age. Their theology has caused them to ask, "Why is there a need for a new earth if Christians go to heaven and the unjust go to hell?" Others do not know how to harmonize the words of Peter when compared to certain Old Testament passages. For example, 2 Peter 3:10 says "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the **earth** also and the works that are therein **shall be burned up**." But Psalm 104:5 says, "Who laid the foundations of the **earth**, that it

should not be removed for ever. Psalm 119:90,91 says "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the **earth**, and it **abideth**. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants." Ecclesiastes 1:4 emphatically states, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the **earth abideth for ever**."

As a possible way to harmonize this seeming disharmony of the Scriptures, one theory suggests the idea that the earth will be "burned up" for a thousand years. During this time the saints will be in heaven. After the earth cools and is restored, the saints will return to live on the earth for eternity. Although this would satisfy the conflicting texts, we cannot agree with such an interpretation.

To correctly understand Peter's words and intention of thought, and have it harmonize with the hundreds of related Scripture texts concerning the kingdom of God, much of his language must be considered symbolic. In verse 6 Peter states that "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." It was not the literal earth (Greek: *ghay*), physical land or ground that perished, but the world (Greek: *kosmos*). *Kosmos* is defined as the arrangement, order, government or constitution. This is what perished in Noah's day as we see from the account in Genesis 6:1-8.

Thus words like "fire," "burned up," and "melt with fervent heat," are intended to indicate the complete and final dissolution of the present order or arrangement of the kingdoms of this world. These kingdoms are elsewhere styled "this present evil world" and invisibly ruled over by Satan and his cohorts. (See 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12; John 14:30.)

As we look again at 2 Peter 3:13, we see that this earthly kingdom has one noteworthy characteristic in marked contrast to the order, arrangement or *kosmos* of our day. Peter says, "wherein dwelleth righteousness"! The NIV renders the phrase "the home of righteousness." Peter tells us that this promised kingdom is not a place where righteousness can be found only on certain occasions, or practiced by some at times but not by all. It is the **home** of righteousness. It dwells there. Righteousness, honesty, integrity, faithfulness, love--**all** of these are to be practiced by **all** of its inhabitants **all** of the time. No wonder Jesus taught us to pray for that kingdom. No wonder that Christians have long anticipated its arrival.

Some question the idea that the earth has the capability to house and sustain the billions of mankind which the Scriptures indicate will inhabit it or think it would be too polluted with so many people. Others are concerned with natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and storms wreaking too much havoc to maintain a peaceable and eternal home for man. Ozone layers and atmosphere problems worry some. While these may perplex mankind now, we are convinced that these will be of little consequence to the Author of Life, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

The parallel passage from Isaiah 65:17-25 gives us a foretaste of this "new earth." Included in its many features are concepts like joy, no more crying, long (everlasting) life, destruction of evil and wickedness, safety and security, peace and harmony, a bright

future, and a vital and close relationship with God. What more could anyone ask or think?

How glad we are that the revelator included the following words near the end of the last book of our Bible. What hope they inspire, what praise they elicit toward our Heavenly Father and his beloved son Jesus Christ:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."--
Revelation 21:1-5

New Jerusalem

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.--Revelation 21:10,11

Donald Holliday

"Selfishness works!" Thus did John Major, the former prime-minister of England, reflect on the collapse of the socialistic systems of government in Europe. He was speaking of capitalism, a system of human affairs motivated by the incentive of personal gain at whatever cost to others. Today we see the disappointment of the masses so vainly trying to change their system. Just over a century ago in volume four of his *Studies in the Scriptures* Charles Taze Russell foretold the collapse of every human system, including capitalism. Today we feel the tremors as economies plummet in distant parts of earth.

In 1516 Sir Thomas More published his book describing a perfect society. In it he coined the word "utopia" from the Greek. Idealistic as it was, the vision was but a mirage. It nowhere existed nor could exist without some remarkable changes in human nature. So More used a pun: the word "eutopia" means "Good place"; "utopia" actually means "No place."

From earliest times as fallen men have struggled to find ways to live together in some profitable manner, there have emerged visions of a better state, a perfect society. Blueprints of the perfect city have been devised, a city where every human need is to be satisfied. Sadly, of course, the practicalities have proved impossible to achieve in man's present condition.

But some have had a relationship with their Creator and with it, a vision of the perfect state that will crown his great redemptive program. Dissatisfied with every human attempt, they have sought a system of communal life, a city of which God is the maker and builder. Their vision lay in the misty "by and by," yet its sight brought deep emotions and longings as they welcomed it from afar. God has provided for them such a city.

Glimpses of the Ideal State

At many times and in various manners through the prophets came God-inspired glimpses of this ideal state. But it was in Jesus, God's Lamb, that the full purpose was displayed; in him the prototype of perfect man appeared.

"Behold, when a king shall reign in righteousness, princes shall rule in judgment. And a **man** shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."--Isaiah 32:1,2

The absence of a definite article with "man" suggests that the reference is to humankind, all of whom are to be the subjects in this kingdom. This ideal depiction of a sharing, caring and protecting relationship is epitomized in Jesus. "Wrong will be ended when Jesus is King." The very basis of that perfect society will be love of a heavenly kind welling up from every heart. The knowing of the Lord in that day will be intimate, a close relationship, as this term often implies in Holy writ.

The blessed vision which closes the last sacred book echoes the prophetic glimpses of old. To it have looked the persecuted saints of this age. Today we stand on the threshold of that period of preparation of mankind for the described blessed state here on earth. In a promise to Israel we gain a glimpse of what this process is about: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD" (Hosea 2:19, 20). Christ will achieve this state of permanent bonding between each human heart and that of its Creator. How he does this will be the wonder of the ages.

The very title of this New Jerusalem from above recalls at once that ancient city which today stands at the center both of desire and of strife. Our first glimpse reaches back to the time of Abraham and Melchisedek, King of Salem (Genesis 14). The last vision of Revelation reaches forward to the hour when the enemies of the human soul have been routed and the world has been brought to the Lord through that greater Melchisedek, where they render the homage and true worship due his name. What was once told in vague shadow is now symbolized in the bright splendor of imagery. Such visions are a poetic device for conveying to the heart what is still beyond the full grasp of intellect.

That every detail has meaning we cannot doubt, though it is not to ingenuity that we lean to grasp its deepest message. John was elevated high on a mount to view this wondrous sight. On similar heights above the plane of natural sight have worthy ancient men been granted a vision of those things. We too must wing our flight to highest realm to share that precious glimpse of things prepared for those who love the Lord, for these were things not to be perceived by natural eye. Crude concepts of the human mind leave a trail throughout the age since Patmos. Thank God we live in a time when harvest truth rewards the heart of those who hunger still for truth's great source. Set in array before us are those hopes secured and guaranteed by God's dear Lamb. For Jew and for Gentile lies yet a feast of fat things, bread and wine, while for the saints promotion to that glory of the divine. Each blessed hope relates together, each a part to be of that one joyful family with whom the Father yet will dwell.

The Church Described

It is with awe we see the Church described in terms that pause the heart, as Sheba's queen when viewing the array of Solomon's realm. This kingdom born in heaven reveals to those on earth wonders of wisdom, beauties of holiness, glories of grace, in vision compressed in such few words: "Having the glory of God." It is of us he speaks! The Temple, claimed of God for his eternal "rest," is being filled with glory now. This is that

blessed change for which the hearts of saints were prepared, those who viewed in Jesus' face those sacred gleams of light divine. He was and is their Light. Now, joint-heirs, they enter into that inheritance of Light with him to share. Those precious stones, too bright for human eyes, represent in strange material form beauties of holiness divine outshining all earth's jewels. Yet answering each creature's need these glories of the divine bring light of guidance and of hope to their souls. How speaks the Spirit to men's hearts in that blessed day? We wait to see! Nor do we fully grasp the linking of the Bride with that sweet spirit's voice. Enough to know that he who even now prepares these instruments of grace will polish well the shaft (Isaiah 49:2), the vessel mould in perfect keeping with his high design. How faithfulness in little things relates to usefulness in that glad day we then shall better understand!

It is through the prophet that Salvation's walls are named, and entrance to that safe abode within the gates of Praise. The mystic numbers of this edifice reveal a height and depth unknown in man's attempts that perfect state to find, so great salvation shall it be. The human heart was blessed of God with powers to reason and to probe eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11). All human thought will turn to him who dwells therein. Yet mankind will not even then exhaust the treasure house of knowing him, who is the source of life abundant. The walls so high that seem to reach to heaven link family below with that above. In its foundation glow so many gems of light, attested first by those who set the seal that God is true in faithful spreading of the Word. Each point of entrance makes appeal to a different class of the race depicted by the names of Israel's tribes. The names of Jacob's sons portray a wide range of human character. The first child brought his father joy: "See here a son." But later Jacob realized his faults, "Unstable as water." And so the innocent promise of each birth is often marred by sin. Yet for each need a way is found by the one who stifles not a smoking flax. Within each heart there smolders still some lingering burning of desire for better things, which gently will he kindle into flame. Then will the way that leads to life be precious as the pearl that cost his all to purchase for God's beloved world.

The truth that shines from God's dear Lamb will penetrate each mind. Its warmth will soften hearts. Its light will guide the feet to walk his ways, his love beget desire to know and emulate that King whose reign is righteousness. Before that light all former lights will dim. Within the radiance of his face the "leeks and onions" of a sinful past will be forgotten. For transitory pleasure would one then return to cruel bondage, having tasted the glorious freedom of the sons of God?

True Worship Returns

With sin must ritual too depart. True worship now in spirit, not in lip, delights the heart of God and satisfies the deep desire. Gods that were worshipped in the past claimed his life, yet nothing of its worth did they repay. Now he whose name is Holy can commune directly with each contrite mind and heart. But those who shun the mercies of that day outside salvation's gates will languish on, until their darkness deepens into death.

What blessed scenes will fill this earth with joy, as friend with friend once parted now unite. Death's icy grasp no longer can retain the prisoners of hope. Nor will its shadow ever again bring chill of fear or break tender tie and heart. That wood of life of Eden once lost, again will heal and all its fullness yield. A glimpse of hope in shadowy symbol told by serpent lifted up, met substance in his Son upon the tree. Thus by the tree were Marah's bitter waters healed. Now to mankind life's blessed fullness flows, a wood of healing by life's riverside. Each leaf, each page of Scripture in our hands today, will then have meaning to the fallen race, and what it tells of his redeeming grace will shine from every face. No darkness in the life will any know, no need the vain attempt of platitude to cheer, for broken hearts will never more be found. With one consent all human effort turns to serving their Creator and their God. What blessed prospects now will open up to fill the countless ages with delight as God with his creation cohabits and communes. In every human life his favor shines, while every grace proclaims the Father's name, and seals each child of his.

Before his suffering church the Master left this vision of delight to lift and cheer. What priceless privilege it is to know the truth, to totally engross the mind in our Creator's plan. What joys of hope are ours not for ourselves, nor even all the redeemed race, but for that wondrous day when he, the author of the plan, will know the priceless joy of love returned, a family of love in heaven and earth.

"Selfishness works"? Perhaps this illusion of the human mind, when it has done its work, will leave behind such bitter disappointments, such regrets, that like the bitter herbs of Passover, the Lamb will be more sweet. As a stage of preparation for those joys, that feast to yet be offered to the fallen race, we may assent that selfishness does have a part to play in wisdom's wondrous and mysterious tasks.

A New Covenant

The days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.--Jeremiah 31:31

David Rice

It is this text from which all discussion of a "new covenant" ultimately derives, for this is the only Old Testament text containing the term. The several New Testament references to "new covenant" or "new testament" are all drawn from this one. ("Testament" and "covenant," wherever they appear in the New Testament, are always translations of the Greek word *diatheke* except Hebrews 8:6,7,13 and 9:1,18 where the word is absent in the Greek but implied by the context.)

However there are other references in Jeremiah which mean the same thing. Jeremiah 32:40 repeats the thought but uses the term "everlasting covenant" (so Paul used the same term in Hebrews 13:20). In Jeremiah 33:14 the prophet affirms "the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah"--clearly meaning the same event, but without repeating the word "covenant." Jeremiah 31:1 says, "At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people" (*cf.* Jeremiah 31:33; 32:38); these words and their subject flow from chapter 30. Evidently, therefore, Jeremiah chapters 30 through 33 are a broad context speaking about the same time and event with different expressions. The full content of these four chapters are helpful in discerning all that the holy spirit intends regarding the fulfillment.

That the promises, blessings and guarantees of these chapters pertain directly to Israel is apparent from the entire context, and the fulfillment should therefore be anticipated with respect to the Israelites.

A Blessing for Israel Still Impending

Israel has already received much blessing at the hand of the Lord. By his providence they have been recovered from every land of their wandering and made an independent state again, in their own land and with their own capital "even in Jerusalem" (Zechariah 12:6). But as Ezekiel 37 depicts the matter, Israel today, as a body reconstituted, is yet without the breath of faith which will enliven them through the experience of the four winds (Ezekiel 37:9). In this episode God will appear to Israel as their deliverer. Then "I will bring you into the bond of the covenant" (Ezekiel 20:37)--not their old covenant which produced death, but a new covenant as specified in Jeremiah 31:31.

This covenant bond between God and Israel, under the leadership of the Ancient Worthies, will produce three benefits as mentioned by Jeremiah.

(1) "After those days [*of Israel's infidelity and its consequences*], saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Rather than a set of commandments on tables of stone, rather than details and particulars inscribed on the book treasured in the ark of the covenant, God will implant the principles of godliness in their hearts, just as Adam at his creation had an impress within, an intuitive sense, of what was right and good in order to regulate his conduct. But with Israel this writing on the heart, when complete, will be more thorough than with Adam because the knowledge of sin will, by contrast, deepen their appreciation for what is right.

They will have an advantage in this direction if through the present life they have respected the old Law because those ordinances contain within them the essence of godliness. The law was "holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12), and designed to lead Israel to the perfect one, our Lord Jesus, who fulfilled not only the letter but the wonderful spirit of that Law. The spirit of the old ordinances was so much the spirit of justice, goodness and brotherly conduct, that Jesus summed them up in the words of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:19, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," and "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-40).

(2) There will be full instruction about God, so that "they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." Israel's history under the old covenant was speckled with periods of idolatry, but under this new covenant it will never be so. The entire nation will recognize Jehovah as the one true God, without ambiguity.

(3) There will be full and complete forgiveness of sins. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). As Paul points out, "where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18). Sin actually atoned for requires no further expiation. For this same reason the animal sacrifices of old will not be renewed, having been replaced once for all by the realities.

What of the Gentiles?

These are wonderful blessings. With the Law of God implanted in the heart, the knowledge of God in the minds of all, and sins removed, the curse will be lifted and everlasting life will be available. It is a wonderful prospect for Israel. But what of the Gentiles? Not a word is spoken here of them, but other prophecies do include them.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment [even] to the Gentiles . . . I the Lord . . . give thee for a covenant of the people [one who will arrange, secure, produce this covenant for them], for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."--Isaiah 42:1,6,7

Evidently God's covenant with Israel will benefit Gentiles also, and the mechanism is apparent from the arrangement of the Old Covenant. Those who appreciated the God of Israel then could proselyte to the Jewish arrangement, worship Jehovah, and become obedient to the terms of the covenant. So in the kingdom. All will be able to enter this arrangement by receiving God and his son Jesus with mind and heart, and complying with the terms of obedience. "Ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:23).

A Compatible But Perplexing Text

In his epistle to the Romans Paul addresses the question of the future of Israel in light of the fact that most of Israel failed to receive Messiah at the first advent. He concludes that "the election hath obtained" the chief favor, the spiritual calling, "and the rest were blinded . . . that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in," after which the blinded ones will be recovered (Romans 11:7,25). After all, as concerns God's elect choice, "they are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (verse 28).

As evidence for his conclusion Paul quotes Isaiah 59:20,21 and Isaiah 27:9, but he does not cite either reference except to say "it is written." When he quotes them, he does not distinguish nor separate them in any apparent way. He writes: "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them [*end of the first quote*], when I shall take away their sins [*end of the second quote*]" (Romans 11:26,27). The two texts are run together almost as though they were one or as if the last expression was simply Paul's comment. The matter is further confusing to an English reader because Paul used the (Greek) Septuagint version as his source, which in Isaiah 27:9 differs somewhat from the Hebrew.

With this lack of clarity it may seem to an English reader of Romans 11 that Paul is saying he will make a covenant with Israel when he takes away their sins--especially since Jeremiah 31:31-34 says something similar. But this is not Paul's point. If it were, it would be more exact to say he will take away their sins when he makes his covenant with them, rather than the reverse.

The word "covenant" in this case refers not to the covenant of Jeremiah 31:31, but to God's promise with Israel made in Isaiah 59:21: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord [*now follows that covenant promise*]: My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." This covenant was a promise God made to Israel more than 2500 years ago, whereas the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31 on behalf of Israel is still some years ahead.

Another Subtle Distinction

Yet another subtle distinction is involved with the covenant promised in Ezekiel 16. The context is the kingdom because the resurrection of Sodom, Samaria and Judah is specifically referred to in Ezekiel 16:53-55. God says at that time Judah will be ashamed when they compare their sins with those of Sodom and Samaria, but "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed . . . And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 16:60-62).

Since this is a covenant with Judah in the kingdom--and Jeremiah 31:31 speaks of a covenant with Judah in the kingdom--it is natural to equate the two covenants. But there is a vital distinction. In Jeremiah 31 the covenant is made with Israel and Judah--the combined nation restored--but in Ezekiel the covenant is made with Judah only. The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, referred to by its capital city Samaria, is one of "thy sisters . . . and I will give them unto thee for daughters" to be nurtured by Judah (Ezekiel 16:61,62,46,55).

It is probably a different perspective regarding God's covenant. Jeremiah regards the matter from the perspective that Israel will be reunited as one entity, including fragments from all 12 tribes. But from another perspective Judah will play a particular role in blessing the others. Indeed, since the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity, Judah has been the dominant tribe; the others have been blessed to the extent they attached themselves to the hopes of the Messiah promised through Judah. Even the name generally used for Israelites today--the Jews--reflects this priority.

This is an example of the flexibility of the Scriptures, considering an issue from slightly different perspectives, to give a fuller view of the matter--something like representing the church as one candlestick with seven branches in the tabernacle, but seven separate candlesticks in Revelation 1:20. It is like showing in Revelation 12 that Papacy secured its position after "the great dragon was cast out" of heaven with great warfare, but expressing in the very next chapter that "the dragon gave [Papacy] his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Revelation 12:9; 13:2)--two diametrically different perspectives, but both containing a point of truth from a different viewpoint. (Compare Luke 9:50 with Luke 11:23 for an even more extreme example.)

One lesson we can infer from this difference of perspective (in Jeremiah 31 as compared to Ezekiel 16) is that the covenant God will enact with Israel is not like the old covenant in this respect--it is not to be an arrangement of details, contracted in a literal way--for that would not allow for the flexibility indicated. The new arrangement is to be one of principles, inculcating the spirit of the Law in the heart, the removal of sin, and the worship of Jehovah and his son Jesus "in spirit and in truth."

A Grand Type of Establishing the Covenant

In volume 4 of *Studies in the Scriptures*, chapter 16, "The Establishment of the Kingdom, and How it Will Manifest Itself," pages 630 and 631, there is a discussion of the institution of the Law Covenant on Mount Sinai and how it applies to the institution of its replacement, Jeremiah's New Covenant in the kingdom. As there was a great shaking and a trumpet blast then, so in the period introducing the new age and its arrangements there is a great shaking, the "time of trouble," and also the "trump of God," the "last trump," the trumpet of the "seventh angel." All of these scriptural terms relate to the present. As Moses came down from the mount with two tablets of the law and a face beaming with glory so that for practical necessity he had to veil himself to the people, so Christ head and body will figuratively descend from heaven with the law of God to be ministered to and through Israel, but they will be veiled behind the Ancient Worthies who will be the outward representatives of that kingdom.

This picture appeals to us as one intended by the holy spirit, and the ancillary details are supportive of this application. As respects the "veil" representing the flesh (in this case the Ancient Worthies), Song of Solomon 5:7 provides another example (in this case the flesh of the Great Company being put aside as they pass from the scene).

The descent of Moses on the occasion under review was the second time the tablets had been presented, after a second period of 40 days in the mount. The first time Moses had found the people in riot, and dashed the tablets in pieces at the foot of the mount, seeming to show how the Law Covenant was broken through the disobedience of the Jews at the end of the Jewish Age (the first 40 days). Moses ascended the mount again. The succeeding 40 days pictures the Gospel Age during which God's Law is inscribed on the hearts of the saints so that they become living repositories of the Law to be ministered at the second advent.

If this is a correct application, then we can gain a second insight into the flexibility of Scripture by noting that another application of the same episode, quite distinct, is given in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. There Paul draws a lesson pertaining to his day rather than ours, when the Jews reading the Law of Moses had a figurative "vail . . . upon their heart" preventing them from noticing the diminishing glory of the Law, just as the Israelites seeing the veil over Moses' face could not discern the gradual diminishing of glory occurring behind his veil. (Compare 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 with Exodus 34:29-35 in the NASB version.)

It is well known that prophecies from the Old Testament sometimes have an application at the first advent and another application at the second advent. Psalms 2 and Malachi 4 are two familiar examples. Is it possible that Scriptural pictures such as the one discussed here also have more than one meaning? It seems so. The manna in the wilderness might be another example.

The New Covenant--An Addition to the Abrahamic Covenant

In Galatians 4:21-31 Paul speaks of Sarah and Hagar as allegorical of "two covenants" (verse 24), by which he evidently intends the Abrahamic and the Mosaic, which he discussed earlier (Galatians 3:16,17). These apply to the two ages at issue in Paul's day, the Gospel Age and the Jewish Age. Hagar represents the Law which brought forth Israel (Ishmael), and Sarah represents the Covenant with Abraham which brings forth the promised seed, Christ and the Church (Isaac). (Compare Galatians 3:16,29,28-31).

Hagar was never a full wife; she was an addition as it were, for the purpose of bringing forth a child which was highly blessed but was nevertheless not the seed of promise. So the Law was not a replacement for the original Abrahamic Covenant, represented by Sarah, Abraham's full wife, but was merely an addition which brought forth fleshly Israel, who is highly blessed, but nevertheless not the seed of promise.

The Law had an ennobling influence in proportion to the endeavors of the people to observe it, as far as it was within their ability to do so (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). It also served at least two other practical purposes: it demonstrated by its standard the shortcomings of those under it (thus identifying sin, see Galatians 3:19), and at the same time pointed to Jesus as free from transgression.

But the Law could never cure the blight of sin. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law"--but no law could do this (Galatians 3:21). There needed to be a savior, a redeemer, a rescuer. That was Jesus, our redeemer and priest, and in the latter capacity we will join him to assist the world in the kingdom. But now a new arrangement, not the particulars of the old, but a new program to effect the deliverance of the race, will be of great advantage in securing the promised blessing of "all the families of the earth." Thus the new covenant is "an arrangement whereby the Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled as relates to Israel and to all" (see Reprints, page 5909). It is "a measure for carrying out the blessings purposed in the Abrahamic Covenant" (see Reprints, page 5226).

As such it is also like the Law Covenant it replaces, an addition to the Abrahamic, a "rider" if you will, to effect the benefits Jeremiah stipulates, and thereby effect the blessings promised to Abraham.

Keturah

Since Sarah and Hagar are allegorical of covenants, a reasonable inquiry is raised concerning Abraham's other wife, Keturah. Paul neither affirms nor denies that she was typical, but the details of the Old Testament narrative give some evidence that she was.

For example, Genesis 24:63-67 closes the account of Isaac receiving his bride Rebecca with a notice of the death of Sarah, as though to say the marriage of Christ and his bride

comes in connection with the end of the Sarah covenant. Yet the Abrahamic Covenant does not terminate there. It must also include the blessing of "all the families of the earth" in the kingdom.

Just at this point in the narrative the text says, "Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah." It seems reasonable to suppose that this next full wife represents the remainder of the Abrahamic Covenant.

This means Sarah represented but a portion of the Abrahamic Covenant--the spiritual part--and Keturah represented the remainder--the earthly part. Both are mothers; both show the nurturing function of God's Covenant with Abraham in bringing to life and maturity first the spiritual class, then the earthly.

Technically neither Sarah nor Keturah is the covenant of Jeremiah 31:31. Rather they represent the two parts of the covenant blessings promised to Abraham, the spiritual and the earthly. The Law Covenant was added for its purpose; its replacement, the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31, is added for its purpose--a supplementary arrangement to actually effect the blessings promised.

A Long Discussed Question

There are several other references to the New Covenant in the New Testament. As one reads the references in the book of Hebrews, for example, one gathers the impression that Paul is applying Jeremiah's passage to the age then opening; 2 Corinthians 3:3 compared to Jeremiah 31:33 strengthens this appearance. Yet the Jeremiah passage itself seems to fit in the kingdom; Jeremiah 31:33 compared to Revelation 21:7 strengthens this thought.

Three answers have been proposed. (1) Though the New Testament references seem to fit in the Gospel Age, closer inspection shows otherwise. (2) Though Jeremiah 31 seems to fit in the kingdom, closer inspection shows it to apply to the elect among Israel who received Messiah long ago. (3) Jeremiah 31, like several other Old Testament prophecies, is flexible, so that through the spirit the words of the prophet fit both circumstances. This latter conclusion is reasonable; we note the blessings Jeremiah stipulates are such as are common to the needs in both ages--instilling God's law in the heart, full instruction about God, and release from sin.

Since we receive these benefits now, we have the exceptional privilege of laying down our justified lives in sacrifice with the Lord for the prospect of sharing his glory beyond. If faithful unto death, we shall have the blessed privilege of extending the blessings of God's covenant to and through Israel to all the groaning creation.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Pastoral Bible Institute News

The Bible Student Library CD ROM

We are pleased to announce the availability of a new CD ROM containing a number of books and references of interest to Bible Students. It contains substantially all of the writings of Charles Taze Russell, plus hundreds of books, magazines, tracts, and other publications one might find in Bible Student homes. It can be used on Windows-based and Macintosh computer systems. The cost is just \$25, postpaid. If you are reasonably comfortable with CD ROMs and computers, use the back of the insert sheet found in every issue of this magazine to obtain this product. We regret that our home office cannot give technical support.

Advertising Program

Our first four-color full-page ad offering a subscription to this magazine with a copy of the video "For This Cause" for just \$10 on a send-no-money-basis is scheduled to run in the February issue of *Bible Review*. It will not appear in *Christian History* as we previously announced.

Letters

We would like to suggest a topic for a future issue of *The Herald*: "Evidences of Divine Inspiration of the Bible," covering specific past prophetic fulfilments (the fate of Old Testament cities, Jesus' birth and numerous specific parts of his ministry and manner of death), end of the age, present fulfilments (return of Israel, increase of knowledge, time of trouble, etc.), harmony of its message though penned by so many different writers at different times, its preservation in spite of continued efforts to burn, ban, distort and destroy it, as well as archeological finds that clearly substantiate the existence of cities and peoples mentioned in the Bible that higher criticism had rejected for years. This matter comes up time and again in our discussions with [others]. We pin all our hopes on the testimony of the Bible. We walk by faith, but we have many evidences that provide a strong foundation for our faith!

Elaine Redeker, California

[Note: the editors will seriously consider this suggestion.]

Around the World

Western countries have allowed their deterrent capabilities to erode drastically since the end of the Cold War, David Ivry, an adviser to Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, warned. While attention and resources are focused on economic and social issues, there has been a general decline in budgetary commitments to defense and security issues, he said. Democratic states are attempting to compensate for their reduced deterrence with international treaties, which he called "a form of life assurance." In contrast, he said, "the defense budgets of non-democratic states have been unaffected." There has been no change in the agenda of these countries, despite increasing poverty and unemployment. Such states, he said, joined non-proliferation treaties to abuse them and to acquire technology that would otherwise be prohibited. "It is an illusion that advances are being made through treaties," he warned. He points to the experience of Iraq, Iran and North Korea, noting that "we can expect more surprises in the future."

--*Jerusalem Post*, 10/20/98

The world's population is expected to increase nearly everywhere on the globe next year—even in Africa where AIDS is cutting life expectancies dramatically, according to U.N. figures. Even though fertility continues to decline as the 21st century approaches, the global population, which stood at 5.9 billion in mid-1998, is expected to reach **6 billion** in 1999, the U.N. Population Division said. Last year, AIDS killed 2.3 million people worldwide, while 30 million were living with HIV, the virus that causes the disease.

—*Los Angeles Times*, 10/29/98

Israel

The number of Jews in the world is steadily declining. Three million out of the estimated 10 million to 13 million Jews worldwide have only one Jewish parent. A full 50 percent of the Jews in North America—still the largest Jewish community in the world—are expected to marry a non-Jew. Over the last 50 years, identification with Israel has been a major component of Jewish identity in the Diaspora in general and in North America in particular. It is no coincidence that the weakening of this identification has been accompanied by erosion of Jewish identity. The extent to which ties to Israel have been waning among US Jews over the past generation has been well documented in a recent study conducted by Hebrew University sociologist Steven M. Cohen. While faith in God, ritual observance and religious commitment appear to be stable, only 20% of those surveyed think it is essential to support Israel. While Holocaust remembrance is still high on the agenda of the American Jewish community, the passage of time erodes the centrality that the Holocaust can command in the collective consciousness. The vast rallies for Soviet Jews, once a staple of Jewish activism in America, are no more, because the Soviet Union, before its collapse, opened the gates. But the single biggest factor of all might be the fact that so few American Jews have ever spent any time at all in Israel. A single visit to Israel, more than anything else, is a decisive indicator of lifelong

attachment to Jewish identity, according to the study. "It is not that people are turning against Israel, but they are moving to a more neutral position in their consciousness," Cohen said.

—*Jerusalem Post*, 10/98

According to a World Jewish Congress study the total number of Jews worldwide is about 13.5 million, with the U.S. still home to the largest population—5.6 million. However, Israel, expected to have 4.9 million Jews by the end of the Jewish year, will become the largest Jewish community within a few years, the report said. Of the 13.5 million, about one million are Orthodox. According to the report, anti-Semitism is down worldwide. Jews today are found in more than 100 countries. Large communities include France (600,000), Russia (400,000), Canada (360,000), Ukraine (280,000), Great Britain (280,000) and Argentina (220,000). According to the Statistical Abstract of Israel, the total population is just under 6 million, representing a 740 percent increase since 1948. Just since 1990, Israel's population has grown by almost 30 percent, mostly due to the roughly one million immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Today, Israel's population is still growing at a rate of 2.5 percent per year, considerably higher than most Western countries.

—*Jerusalem Post*, 10/98

The agreement between Israel and the PLO Authority (PA) was supposed to be a two-day meeting, but turned into a nine-day one. The PA has agreed to amend the PNC Charter to eliminate portions calling for the destruction of Israel. In Israel, response from right-wing groups, Religious Parties, and Jewish Settlements was one of condemnation. On the Palestinian side, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the founder of the Islamic group Hamas, dismissed the deal as a "sellout." In his statement condemning the agreement, he said that no deal between Israel and the PA will stop Hamas terrorism aimed at Israel "until the Israeli occupation of Palestine has come to an end." Yassin admitted that a new crackdown (including the CIA working with the PA to crack down on Islamic militants) could perhaps restrict the activities of the Hamas military wing temporarily, but would not prevent attacks against Israelis. "It cannot erase Hamas," said Yassin. "It is an illusion to think the agreement will put an end to our military work."

—*Israel Wire*, 10/23/98

Editor's note: President Clinton's words regarding peace agreements in the Balkans apply here: "Confirmation doesn't necessarily mean commitment."

Islam

What is happening in Afghanistan now is nothing short of a war on women and girls. Most of the country is under the control of the Taliban, an extremist Islamic movement that has thrown a blanket of absolute oppression over the lives of all females. Women are not allowed to work outside the home. Girls are not allowed to go to school. No female is permitted to leave her home unless a close male relative accompanies her. Homes and other buildings in which women or girls might be present must have their windows painted so no female can be seen from outside. Women who leave their homes must be completely covered by a *burqa*, an all-encompassing garment with a small mesh opening through which the wearer can see and breathe. Violations of any of the Taliban's edicts are treated summarily and brutally. It is like a reprise of some dark, medieval period. Women who ventured from their homes unaccompanied or improperly clad have been whipped, beaten and at times killed. Very few medical facilities are available to women and women are so frightened of being flogged or beaten in the streets they often are reluctant to seek help. Women and girls who do not have male relatives to support them have been left destitute.

—*New York Times*, 10/4/98

More than 150 members of the 270-seat Iranian parliament have signed a petition describing the *fatwa* sentencing author Salman Rushdie to death as a "divine order." "The verdict against Rushdie the blasphemer is death, today and tomorrow, and to burn in hell for eternity," the members of the conservative-dominated parliament said. Rushdie published a book condemning the atrocities of the Islamic regime in Iran several years ago.

—*London Daily Telegraph*, 10/5/98

Christendom

With news of recent hate crimes flooding the media, Daniel Plasman's newly released novel, "Lovely are the Messengers—The Ironies of Friendship, Religious Persecution and Fatal Misunderstanding," points the finger directly at religious extremists. Based on real life events, his book details the relationship between widespread hate messages and their result. "I am convinced the rise of incivility and hate crimes in our society is related to the growing trend of using religious conviction as justification for inhuman treatment of those with whom we disagree," said the author. The book explores religious extremism and the growing eruptions of hatred and intolerance. "Some organizations and people in the religious community are blatantly dishonest with the Bible. In voicing moral issues people quote scripture passages that promote their cause while ignoring passages that speak counter to their cause," said Plasman.

—*PR Newswire*, 10/26/98

Moscow is attempting to ban the Jehovah's Witnesses from the city. The case marks one of the first attempts to use a new law to limit the activity of a foreign-based religious sect. The law, which restricts foreign missionary activity in Russia, was passed last year to proscribe the many proselytizing religions that have established a presence since the fall of communist rule. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim to have 100,000 adherents in Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church plans to testify against the Witnesses. It has been losing converts to foreign missionary groups. Galina Krylova, the Witnesses' chief lawyer, said the case would test the willingness of Russian courts to enforce the law. "This is the first time a religious organization faces liquidation under this law," she said. The prosecution's case charges that Witnesses' literature violates the law by claiming their faith to be "the only true religion; all others are declared to be false, and their imminent end is predicted." The law opens the way for court action against religions termed nontraditional for Russia.

—*Washington Post*, 9/30/98}

Economics

The International Monetary Fund said that Europe's single currency has no proper framework for crisis management, and the European Central Bank would not be ready to handle a large-scale financial crisis. This is especially troublesome at the dawn of European unity. The risks of financial system instability are higher now than they have been for some time. The international financial system is in a fragile state, and monetary union will create its own set of risks. As well as the macroeconomic adjustments, the single currency will transform the banking sector, intensifying competitive pressures, and sparking a process of consolidation.

—*Financial Times* 9/23/98

Rampant public corruption continues to plague many developing nations, weakening democratic institutions, stifling economic growth and deepening poverty, according to a study by Transparency International, an international good-government advocacy group based in Berlin. The study is based on the perceptions of business executives and financial risk analysts as well as the general public. The ten most corrupt countries listed in the study were Cameroon, Paraguay, Honduras, Nigeria, Tanzania, Indonesia, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Russia. The least corrupt country in the study was Switzerland.

—*Wall Street Journal*, 9/23/98

Science

The earth's climate abruptly warmed to end an ice age 12,500 years ago, according to researchers whose finding may force a reevaluation of the history of dramatic swings in the planet's climate. Such rapid shifts in the climate on a global basis would make it very difficult for humans to adjust, said James White, a climatologist at the University of Colorado in Boulder. White, co-author of a study to be published in the journal *Science*, said the Antarctic ice cores show a temperature increase of about 20 degrees Fahrenheit within a very short time. Ice cores from Greenland show that at the same time there was a temperature increase of almost 59 degrees in the North Polar Region within a 50-year period. The findings, White said, increase the urgency for researchers to understand climate shifts because it appears they could be abrupt and happen all over the earth at roughly the same time.

—*Associated Press*, 10/2/98

Indonesia's economic crisis is breeding an ecological one. Throughout Indonesia nature is being pillaged, as a nation hit by economic calamity falls back on land and sea to survive. Rare animals are being sold for food. Unique ecosystems are under threat. Indonesia is home to more plant and animal species than any country in the world, except Brazil. But what matters most to conservationists is the extraordinary number of these species that are endemic to Indonesia, meaning that they live nowhere else. Of Indonesia's 515 mammal species, 36% are endemic. Of its 1,519 bird species, 28% are endemic. Hungry Indonesians are overrunning government-protected forests, decimating the wildlife, clear-cutting ancient hardwoods and replanting rain forests with ecologically damaging food and cash crops. Tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, and other animals are all being slaughtered to bring in needed cash. "What's so bad," says Rob Lee, a biologist with the Bronx Zoo, "is the rarest animals fetch little more than the most common wild-pig meat."

—*Wall Street Journal*, 10/26/98

The fate of the world's protective ozone layer depends mainly on the actions of developing countries and Russia. These countries account for 80 per cent of production of chlorofluorocarbons, the most prevalent ozone-eating chemical, and 100 percent of halon production, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) said in a report released in September. Environmental experts expect the ozone layer, which shields the earth from damaging solar radiation, to be at its thinnest in the next few years, and then to recover slowly to more normal levels. However, UNEP cautions that this will happen only if developing countries and Russia play their part, for which they will need financial help.

—*Financial Times*, 9/17/98

10 million: Size, in square miles, of the hole in the ozone above Antarctica.

7.3 million: Its size last year

3.6 million: Size, in square miles, of the United States.

—*Time*, 10/19/98

Book Review

Secrets of Jerusalem's Temple Mount, Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, Biblical Archaeology Society, Washington D.C., 116 pages.

Those world leaders who want to make Jerusalem an international city overlook the importance that Mount Moriah in the city of Jerusalem has played in biblical history. It was probably the site of Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac. It was probably the site of David's altar to the Lord upon his inauguration as King of Judah. Undoubtedly to the orthodox Jew, it is most important as the site of Israel's Temple, first erected by King Solomon, destroyed in 586 BC, rebuilt 70 years later, and refurbished by Herod the Great, only to be destroyed for good in 70 AD. Few archaeological sites hold the fascination of the Temple Mount. Yet little is really known of their presence there because all excavations on that site are forbidden. Under the control of Jerusalem's Arab rulers, the Temple Mount houses one of the most breathtaking buildings from the ancient world—the Dome of the Rock—which at one time was an integral part of Israel's holiest site.

Leen Ritmeyer is a Dutch architect who lived in Jerusalem for 16 years and was greatly responsible for the excavation on the south side of the mount that began in 1967. He left Jerusalem in 1989 to pursue a Ph.D. in Archaeology. His dissertation given in 1992 was, of course, on the Temple Mount. This book is a glimpse of the grandeur he saw. It is an insightful interpretation by the skilled hand of an architect. He translates the evidence into a vision of the past. Using photos, drawings, and words, Ritmeyer and his wife Kathleen conduct the reader on a tour around the wall surrounding the Temple Mount. They employ archeological and literary evidence to reconstruct the ancient appearance and function of all the major features of the wall and its gateways during the Second Temple period—the time when Jesus walked in its shadow.

For those who have visited Israel this will be a fascinating book. It includes a tour through the Jerusalem of Jesus' day and helps the reader understand how the huge reconstruction work on the temple was accomplished by Herod the Great. Ritmeyer's identification of the location of the original Temple is well documented and culminates with a supposition about where the Holy of Holies stood in Solomon's day.

—Len Griehs

