

# The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

*September/October 2001*

Christ Through the Ages

## In the Beginning

*Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.—Hebrews 13:8*

Unchangeability is but one of the attributes of Jesus Christ. From the time he first appears as the Logos on into the eons of eternity, the purpose of the Son of God remains the same—to completely do the will of his Father, Jehovah God.

It is this quality which makes him so reliable and so completely trustworthy. His promises never fail, his word is steadfast, and his abiding assistance can always be counted on by his footstep followers.

This issue of The Herald takes a closer look at the Son of God—from his origins in the distant “beginning” times of God into the glorious everlasting future guaranteed by his life, death, resurrection, and return.

The [\*Image of the Invisible God\*](#) deals with the creation of the Logos and introduces the meaning of his name, the “wisdom of God.” [\*The Made Maker\*](#) looks at his role in the creation of the universe.

[\*Michael, Your Prince\*](#) shows his role as a guardian over the ancient nation of Israel. He is the unseen defender and guide for the “chosen” descendants of Abraham.

At his first advent we see him most clearly. There he appears as a perfect human being to teach us about his future kingdom and to illustrate it with numerous miracles. It was then that he died as “a ransom for all” and was raised from the dead. His disciples gave [\*Eye-Witness Testimony\*](#) of his Messianic claims.

His work among his followers from the time of his ascension until now is described in the article [\*Our Advocate\*](#). It reviews the oversight the risen Savior gives to his elect bride, his church.

The crowning work of the Son of God is to return and restore both the earth and its inhabitants to the perfection their parents had in the Garden of Eden. [\*Preparations for Eternity\*](#) explains the realities concealed in picture language within the parables and miracles of the First Advent.

[\*Far Above All Principalities\*](#) is our regular verse-by-verse Bible study feature. It examines the Old Testament proofs which the apostle Paul adduces in Hebrews, chapter one.

We hope our readers will accept these articles in the spirit in which they are put forward—as a tribute of appreciation to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## Christ in Creation

# The Made Maker

*In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. The same was in the beginning with God.--John 1:1, 2 [Wilson's Diaglott]*

Richard Kindig \*

One camp of Christians says the first verse of John's Gospel refers to two separate beings. Another camp reads the same words and reads them as stating that the reality is two aspects or manifestations of the same being. Certainly both camps recognize that the term Logos or Word refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he was with God from the beginning, even before creation, and that the Logos made all things. Without the Logos, not even one thing that was made came into being.

	<b>Action of Attribute or Relation of Logos</b>	<b>Verse Reference</b>
1	in the beginning "was"	John 1:1
2	"with the theos"	John 1:1
3	"theos was the logos"	John 1:1
4	All things were made by him	John 1:2
5	Nothing was made without him	John 1:3

Non-Trinitarians might disagree at this point with line 3, but the reality is that the Greek simply says, "God was the Word." Most translators render it, "The Word was God."

Other Scriptures state that the Lord Jesus Created the world:

6	All things were created by him	Colossians 1:16
7	All things were created for him	Colossians 1:16
8	By him all things consist (are held together)	Colossians 1:17

These Colossians verses provide more insight while confirming the basic statement of John 1. Jesus created "all things," which includes both visible and invisible, spirit beings as well as earthly. Life came from Jesus. He created it. These verses also add the dimension of intent. All things were created **for** Jesus. More than that, it says that "by him all things consist" or are held together. Jesus is not only the maker of life and of "the cosmos" as John puts it (the human race) but he is the sustainer or one who holds things together. Hebrews 1:3 confirms this by speaking of the son as "upholding all things."

God's role in creation is defined by these Scriptures:

	<b>Action or Attribute or Relation of God</b>	<b>Verse Reference</b>
9	In the beginning God created	Genesis 1:1
10	God [Yahweh] created everything (listed items include heaven, earth, man, Israel, light, darkness, peace, evil in the sense of judgmental disasters, and salvation)	Isaiah 45:5-14
11	God [Yahweh] created the heavens, gave the Spirit to the people, etc.	Isaiah 42:5
12	God [Yahweh] made the earth by his power, and established the world by his wisdom	Jeremiah 51:15
13	(Lord God Almighty, which art and wast and art to come--verse 8) created all things, and they were created for his pleasure	Revelation 4:11
14	God created specifically foods and marriage to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth	1 Timothy 4:3

	<b>Action or Attribute or Relation to God</b>	<b>Action or Attribute or Relation of Logos</b>	<b>Verse References</b>
15	Inn the beginning God created	In the beginning the Logos was with God, and all things were created by the Logos	Genesis 1:1 John 1:1
16	God [Yahweh] created everything [listed items include heaven, earth, man, Israel, light, darkness, peace, evil, and salvation]	Logos [Jesus before he became a man] made all things, including the world, and spiritual and earthly life	Isaiah 45:4-14, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16
17	God created all things ...	By Jesus	Ephesians 3:9
18	God appointed ...	Son as heir of all things	Hebrews 1:1-3
19	God made the ages [worlds] ...	by [Greek: <i>dia</i> ] his son	Hebrews 1:2
20	There is one God ...	<b>and</b> one mediator between God and man	1 Timothy 2:5
21	There is one God ... the Father ...	<b>and</b> one Lord--Jesus Christ	1 Corinthians 8:6
22	<b>of</b> [Greek: <i>ek</i> ] whom are all things	<b>by</b> [Greek: <i>dia</i> ] who are all things	1 Corinthians 8:6

When point 1 is compared with point 9 or point 6 with point 10, it is easy to see why most Christians simply consider God and Jesus together as two names for the same entity: God. Both were there in the beginning and both are defined as the creator. Certainly these Scriptures show that any non-Trinitarian Christology would be defective if it failed to ascribe to our Lord Jesus all the power and authority which these Scriptures emphatically give to him.

But there is more. The table above contains a few texts which prevent us from equating God with the Logos because of clear distinctions between them.

Points 15 and 16 showed the shared roles of God and the Logos in creation. Points 17 through 22 show distinctions which Scripture presents. Jesus emerges not as God, but as God's choice, God's honored agent, God's son and partner, in the great work of creation. Both share the role of creator, and the titles of Savior, Lord, and King. But they also have distinctive roles they cannot share. The first of these is presented in Point 20. God is not, and indeed cannot be, a mediator between himself and man. That is Jesus' unique role. God and man are estranged. According to God's plan Jesus was positioned to be the brige or mediator, not to bring God down to man's level, but to elevate man to a place where God could again have fellowship with him.

The Greek language is very precise as illustrated in points 19 and 22. In both cases the blessings of God in creation are described as flowing *ek* God and *dia* Jesus. Both prepositions were defined by Euclid, the father of geometry, and his definitions are quite precise. *Ek* defines a line beginning at the center of a circle and proceeding outward. *Dia* defines a line crossing through the circle at its center, and passing to the other side. This is described by the word "diameter."

Notice the simplicity of the Bible's message. Everything is "out from" God and "through" Jesus. They are two separate entities, with two separate names. They were together in creation, but since creation their roles have diverged. The table below shows how this divergence has progressed.

	<b>Action or Attribute of Relation to God</b>	<b>Action or Attribute or Relation of Logos</b>	<b>Verse References</b>
23	God [Yahweh] is alone; there is none beside me	[Jesus said] My Father is greater than I; "I ascend to my God and your God."	Isaiah 40:5, 6; John 14:28; Marek 15:34; John 20:17
24	God will be all in all, He will put all things under Christ's feet. All things, that is, EXCEPT himself, that is, the heavenly Father. The son also shall be subject unto him	God will put all things under Christ. Christ will deliver the kingdom to God. Then the Son [though he will also always himself be a king in his own right) will also be subject (under and obedient to) him [God] who did put all (other) things under him [Jesus].	1 Corinthians 15:24,27, 28
25	Every family [Greek: <i>patria</i> ] gets its name from God, who is himself the father of ...	... our Lord Jesus Christ	Ephesians 3:14, 15
26	God's will and eternal purpose are supreme ...	... and God's will is worked out THROUGH Christ, who himself submitted his will to that of the heavenly Father.	Ephesians 3:11; Luke 22:42; Acts 13:22, 23

According to these Scriptures, the Logos is under the Father, not "coequal" with him as those who wrote the Athanasian Creed put it. God is supreme, the Father, the Blessed, Yahweh. Though he honors Jesus, the son remains obedient and subject to him. Everything flows out from him. It pleased God that in Jesus all fullness should dwell; that all blessings and life should flow THROUGH Jesus (Colossians 1:19).

But does any text say God and Jesus are equal? Here are some which seem to imply that:

	<b>Relation of the Logos to God</b>	<b>Verse References</b>
27	<p>"Let ths mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, though it not robbery to be equal with God." (King James)</p> <p>"Who, though being in God's form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God." (Wilson's Diaglott)</p> <p>"Who, in the form of God subsisting, not a thing to be seized accounted the being equal with God." (Rotherham)</p> <p>"Counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God." (Revised Version margin)</p>	Philippians 2:5-8
28	This attitude in Jesus is commended as the one we should have. We are also elsewhere told what Satan's attitude was: "I will be like the most High." (King James)	Isiah 14:12-15
29	"I and my Father are one." (King James)	John 10:30

In the Phillipians text (see Point 27), Jesus is spoken of as existing "in the form of God" prior to his coming to earth. Unitarians are mistaken when they say Jesus began his life as a baby. Jesus existed previously in the form of God, a spiritual being "far above angels." As John said, Jesus already "was" in the beginning, a term referring to the time when God and his only begotten turned their attention to the plans they had formed, to create a universe populated by living beings in God's image. The Logos began "far above" other spiritual beings. Yet apparently a spiritual being can be far above all other created spirit or earthly things, and still be lower than God in some respects. This seems to be Paul's argument when he shows that it would have been a usurpation, or a snatching or robbery, for Jesus to aspire to be "equal" with God. Trinitarians say Jesus, not thinking about the "grasping" of equality with God means that Jesus was already equal. But the word "grasped" does not mean to "hang on to." It is used elsewhere (see Matthew 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12) to mean to take away, seize by force. Thus it refers not to something one already has. but to something one does not have unless it were "seized" or "taken by force." Strong defines the word as "plunder."

Jesus is already the "only begotten son" (John 1:18), the "first-born of every creature (Colossians 1:15), "the beginning of the creatiaon of God" (Revelation 3:14). He is far above angels and principalities; he enjoys continuous comradeship with the heavenly Father whose house he shares. Everything is his. Yet he doe snot reach our and seize the one thing he does not have: equality with God. He is such a loving and submissive son that he does not aspire to anything that God has not given him. Paul says we should have the same spirit. We should not meditate a usurpation, or aspire to plunder. Like the

Logos, we should be thankful for what God has given us, and willing to give it away or "empty ourselves" if it serves God's purposes.

That is exactly what Jesus did. As a free moral agent or being, separate from God but living alongside him, he humbled himself, left his previous glory, and was made flesh. He even gave that away through his healing ministry and his death; he gave his flesh for the life of the world. That's the spirit we are asked to have in our own minds and attitudes according to Philippians 2:9-11.

How did God respond? The following verses tell us: "Wherefore God has also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord ... to the glory of God the Father."

Notice that all this exaltation of Jesus is spoken of as both a reward for Jesus' spirit of sacrifice and obedience, and also a gracious gift (Greek: *charis*, verse 9) from God "the Father." God has rewarded Jesus' faithfulness. That means Jesus is a person of virtue, a being who was made in God's image much like we are. He is a son whom God loved just as we love the separate beings who come from us: our sons and daughters. Blessings flow **from God to** Jesus. And yet the superabundant amount of God's exaltation of Jesus in his resurrection is still spoken of as a "gracious gift." God was not obligated to elevate Jesus higher than his previous grand majesty as the Logos. In fact when Jesus prayed to God on the even of his death, he simply asked for a return to "the glory which I had **with you** before the world was" (John 17:5). Hallelujah for the humility and love of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

Seeing this more clearly helps us understand the oneness of which Jesus spoke in John 17 (point 29), the oneness of purpose and will which characterizes those who have learned to appreciate the spirit of the heavenly Father and his son.. It is a harmony of purpose and joy of cooperation that is exemplified by the by the unselfish mutual service-relationship between the Father and the son. The same kind of relationship is typified by an earthly father/son and husband/wife relationship, and John 17:17-14 promises it as the heritage of all the true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we begin to catch a glimpse of the love that exists between the Father and the son, we begin to behold Jesus' glory, the glory which, as Jesus stated, God **gave** him because he **loved** Jesus before the foundation of the world.



	<b>God's Role</b>	<b>Jesus' Role</b>	<b>Verse Refs.</b>
30	God made all things through Jesus	All things were made by the Logos	John 1:3
31		The kosmos or human race was made by Jesus	John 1:10
32	God made the ages ...	... by Jesus	Hebrews 1:2
33	Gave Jesus power to do signs	Made water into wine	Hebrews 2:4; John 4:46
34	God is asked by Jesus to make the foillowers of Jesus perfect in oneness with them	... just as Jesus and God are already perfect in oneness	John 17:23
35		God's son Christ Jesus was made of ( <i>ek</i> , out from) the seed of David according to the flesh	Romans 1:3
36	God made Jesus ...	... better than the angels, as Jesus has RECEIVED a higher name	Hebrews 1:4
37	From God ...	... Jesus is made unto us wisdom	1 Cor. 1:30
38	God made Jesus in the likeness of men	Jesus made himself of no reputation	Philippians 3:7
39	God made Jesus ...	... a high priest forever, after the order of Melchizidek	Hebrews 6:20
40	Our "new man" is created by God	Jesus is our brother, not our father	Eph. 4:24; Heb. 2:11; Col. 1:2; Matthew 23:9
41	Goid is the head of Christ, just as ...	Christ is the head of man ... and just as a husband is the head of a wife	1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:22; Colossian 1:18.
42	God is perfect	Jesus, though already holy, harmless, and sinless, was <i>made perfect</i> through sufferings	Deut. 32:4; Hebrews 2:10
43	God knows everything	In AD 33 Jesus did not know the day and hour of his coming kingdom; he <i>learned</i> obedience by the things he suffered	Matthew 24:36; Hebrews 5:8
44	God cannot die	Jesus died, his soul died, he was in <i>hades</i> (the death state), and God resurrected him	Rev. 1:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 1:18; Acts 2:24, 27, 31, 32; Psalm 110:1
45	God made the earth by his power and WISDOM	Jesus identifies himself as the WISDOM of God	Jer. 51:15 (compare Matt. 23:24-36 with Luke 11:49-51)

So what was the role of the Logos in Creatioun? The Lofos was the Made Maker. First, he was made. Just as we do not have anything we did not receive, so Jesus our Lord received all things from God. He was the receiver of the Father's love. He was the only creation of God, the firstborn of all creation, the beginning of the creation of God.

And he became the one who gave love. He became, for all of us, our maker. The great giver who received everything from God gave it all away, He gave it away by creating all the mighty and beautiful angelic hosts. He gave it away by creating the beautiful and perfect galaxies, the suns, planets,.and life on earth.

Sudedenly, the dynamism and depth of the relationship becoime clearer. "Let **us** make man in **our** image." .Truly, a partnership was at work. The result is a great masterpiece of cooperation and commitment which God and the Logos hve accomplished. And they are not done; indeed, they have just started.

"My father worketh hitherto; and now I work," Jesus said in John 5:17, and the lessons of history as well as the statements of Scripture tell us why. Work needed to be done. The human race fell. It needed a savior; indeed, it needed two saviors. It needed God, who planned the salvation and stayed alive while Jesus was in the grave so there would be someone with the mighty poiwer it would take to raise Jesus from the grave. And it took a Savior who could do something that even God could not do, someone who could become a man, someone who could make himself vulnerable to the oppression and abuse of mankind, and who could die.After God puts all enemies under Jesus' feet, Jesus will do something else God could not do; he will serve as the mediator between God and men. And, wonder of wonders, Jesus has invited us Christians to share in that great mediatorial work as kings and priests, judging men and angels, and becoming a bridge between their fallen past and the glorious future which God has promised he will bring to pass for the world of mankind!

## Proverbs 8:22-35

The LORD possessed [Strong's 7069; created] me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

I was set up [Strong's 5258; anointed] from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

When there were no depths, I was brought forth [Strong's 2342; born, as in travail]; when there were no fountains abounding with water.

Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.

While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:

When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep.

When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth.

Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;

Rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth, and my delight was with the sons of men.

Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.

Hear instruction, and be wise, and refused it not.

Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all that hate me love death.

## Christ: His Origins

# The Image of the Invisible God

*For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.—Hebrews 1:5,6*

Jeff Mezera

Jesus is called the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). Paul also says it was the Father “who . . . delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (verses 12, 13). The word “icon” in English means an image or representation of something else. Because Jesus is the representative of the Father, he is the *eikon* (Greek) the “image” or “picture” of what the Father is (verse 15). While most Christians agree that Jesus is not the Father, there is a difference of opinion over who Jesus is. The first chapter of Colossians gives us a part of the answer.

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15). Here Jesus is called the “firstborn [Greek: *prototokos*] of God.” What does “firstborn” mean in this context? The word does not necessarily mean first in birth order; *prototokos* also means priority in importance or rank. In the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) *prototokos* appears 130 times. Half the time it refers to the first born son, the other half it means preeminence. In the New Testament, *prototokos* (firstborn) is used in a wide variety of ways, but usually with either of these two meanings.

### **First-in-time or First-in-importance**

Why did Paul not describe Jesus as the “first created”? This would have directly answered who Jesus is and what his role in the universe has been, is, and will be. The Greek word *protoktistos* does mean “first created.” However, that Greek word is not used in the New Testament. Is Paul saying that Jesus is the preeminent one of creation?

When the word *firstborn* is followed by the genitive “of,” it requires the firstborn to be in the class that it is of. The “firstborn of” the house of Pharaoh belongs to the house of Pharaoh. The firstborn of the beasts is a beast. The firstborn of creation is therefore a part of the creation.

“He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18). Here firstborn refers to a rebirth from death. Jesus was not the first raised from the dead, but he WAS the first who was raised to a new life, to the glory of the divine nature, the first who came back from the dead to never die again.

The word *protoktistos* [first created] did not come into popular use until the second and third centuries. When it first began to be used, there was little distinction between it and the word for firstborn. Clement uses these terms interchangeably in his writings. He clearly calls Christ the “first created” and later the “firstborn” in the same letters.

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Colossians 1:16, KJV). Jesus was the agent of creation; he was not the Creator himself. We see the same Greek word (*di* or *dia*) translated “by” in John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:3. Jesus is before all creation, the first in a series, because through him God MADE the creation. A similar phrase in 1 Corinthians 15:26,27 (NIV) says that “the last enemy to be destroyed is death.” For he “has put everything under his feet.” The next verse goes on to say that the “everything” excludes God himself who put everything under Christ.

The word “all” (Greek: *pas*) can be translated “all other” or “everyone.” It is so translated in Luke 13:2 (NIV) and 21:29, and Philippians 2:21. Paul is not teaching that Jesus is distinct from the creation. 1 Corinthians 8:6 explains that God the father is the source of all creation, while the son is the agency through which creation occurred (see also Proverbs 8:22-30; John 1:1-3). “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17, NIV). Jesus is before all things that were created through him.

“In these last days he has spoken to us in a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world. The son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence [image of God—Colossians 1:15], and he sustains all things by his powerful word [now in these last days, now after he was raised to the glory on high], and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thus he became so far better than the angels.” (Hebrews 1:2-4, NET; comments supplied.) Not only was the son the agent of creation in his pre-human existence, but since being raised to his resurrection glory, he continues to be the instrument by which the universe adheres or remains together.

### **Firstborn from the Dead**

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning [Greek: *arche*], the firstborn [*prototokos*] from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

Jesus is the *arche* (beginning) and *prototokos* (firstborn) from the dead. To what do these words refer? They refer to Jesus as the head of the body of Christ, the first who would be raised from the dead never to die again. Both words can refer to anything that is the “first of a series.”

“He is the beginning of the Christian church, <%0>the root, the fountain and foundation of it, the active beginning, or the first principle and author of it, and of all those influences of grace and spiritual life which animate and enliven it. . . He is called the

first-born from the dead . . . because he was the first that arose to an immortal life, never to die more; all others that were raised to life, besides him, died again, but death had no more dominion over him.”—*Burkett’s Notes on the New Testament*

Jesus had preeminence in all things over the old creation AND the new creation. The word “preeminence” also literally means “to be first.” Jesus was the first creation and he was the first who rose from the dead never to die again. Jesus was first in all things!

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14). The book of Colossians was also shared with those in the Laodicean church (see Colossians 4:16). In the message to Laodicea in the book of Revelation the same thoughts about Jesus Christ are also found. It says that he is the “beginning [*arche*] of creation.” (Compare Revelation 3:14 with Colossians 1:15.) In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 Jesus tells each of the churches, “I am this,” and “I am that.” In this verse Jesus tells us he is the *arche* of the creation of God.

Greek scholars will say that *arche* in this sentence structure could mean that Jesus is the first created being, or that he is the ruler over all creation. It could even mean that Jesus was the source or origin of all creation although it does not have this definition anywhere in the New Testament. When discussing the word *arche*, a Trinitarian in his book says that “it must be admitted that the word might bear this meaning” (in the sense that Jesus was the first created being). He then goes on to quote Alford’s commentary, saying that “*arche* out of this context could possibly mean, ‘the Christ is the first created being.’” (See Robert M. Bowman, *Should You Believe in the Trinity*, p. 65.) Although he says that *arche* could be taken “out of. . . context,” he does not explain his reasoning. The context of Revelation 3 certainly does not prohibit or encourage any specific definition to help us understand what this word means.

Other commentaries state a similar principle that the word *arche* and the grammar of Revelation 3:14 do not prohibit the idea that Jesus is the first created being. Every time the word *arche* is used by John in his writings in the singular form, he uses it to mean first in time. Never once does he use it to mean origin or source. The point of Revelation 3:14 is that Jesus is the first of all creation.

If Jesus is indeed the first created being, how can we say Jesus created all things? - (Colossians 1:15,16) Proverbs chapter 8 helps to answer this question. “The LORD created me first of all, the first of his works, long ago” (Proverbs 8:22, TEV). “Get wisdom, though it cost all you have, get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7, NIV).

Romans proclaims that the world is without the wisdom of God. It says that that the world is “without excuse” (Romans 1:20) because they should recognize the power of God in creation. But even today they do not know God and continue to sin. Nor do they know the son who was sent to redeem man, who is the Word of God, “the true light which lighteth every man [individually, without exception] that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). As a spoken word reveals invisible thought, so Christ the living Word reveals

the invisible God. Jesus, as the mediator between God and man, said “anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9, NIV).

By definition wisdom is the application of knowledge, i.e., “daily practical living.” Wisdom is nothing unless it is manifested. God manifested his wisdom to us through Christ: “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:24,30).

The evangelist alludes to the pre-existence of Jesus in Luke 11:49 when he identifies Jesus as the “wisdom of God.” The *Barnes’ Notes* on this Scripture say: “By the wisdom of God, here, is undoubtedly meant the Saviour himself.”

In Proverbs we find that God made the world through his wisdom: “The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth” (Proverbs 3:19). This is exactly the thought of Colossians 1:15,16 concerning Christ: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth.” Here Jesus is called the firstborn of every creature, which is the same thought of Jesus as God’s wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-30. “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning . . . When there was no depths I was brought forth. . . . Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.”

Jesus loves those who seek him and love him: “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me” (Proverbs 8:17; see also Proverbs 1:28). Jesus leads in the way of righteousness just as wisdom does: “I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment” (Proverbs 8:20). Beginning with the early church fathers even to our own time Christians of all theological persuasions—Arians, Sabellians (Oneness), Unitarians, even Trinitarians—have for centuries applied Wisdom in Proverbs 8 to Jesus Christ.

“Wisdom here has personal properties and actions; and that intelligent divine person can be no other than the son of God himself, to whom the principal things here spoken of wisdom are attributed in other Scriptures.”—*Matthew Henry Commentary*

Jewish commentaries understood wisdom in Proverbs 8 to refer to a creature. “The Targum makes this wisdom a creature, by thus translating the passage: . . . ‘God created me in the beginning of his creatures.’ The Syriac is the same.”—*Clarke’s Commentary*

Wisdom says, “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you” (Proverbs 1:23). Jesus said, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26).

Many Bible commentators for centuries have understood Wisdom in Proverbs 8 to be descriptive of the works of Jesus Christ. contains the instructions of Wisdom or Christ;

showing the excellency of them, and the author of them, in opposition to the harlot and her “This chapter allurements, in the preceding chapter.”—*Gill's Commentary*

“It is a great question what this wisdom is. Some understand it of the Divine wisdom; - others of [Christ] . . . the chapter may be understood of Christ considered partly in his personal capacity, and partly in regard of his office, which was to impart the mind and will of God to mankind.”—*Wesley's Notes*

Some argue that Wisdom can not be a personification of Jesus because Wisdom is feminine and Jesus was male: “Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth HER voice?” (Proverbs 8:1). Although the Hebrew word for “wisdom” is feminine, because wisdom is personified it is only a matter of grammar. Although war is normally associated with men going into battle, the Hebrew word for war is also feminine. Many non-English languages ascribe gender to nouns. The Polish word for “table” is masculine, but it is feminine in French. The gender of the Hebrew word for wisdom has no bearing on the object to which it refers. Jesus is prophetically spoken of as the “sun of righteousness” in Malachi 4:2; the Hebrew word for “sun” is also feminine (Strong's 8121). FSee *Strong's Morphological Dictionary* for word gender.

“They are proclaimed from on high: She stands in the top of high places’ (Proverbs 8:2); it was from the top of Mount Sinai that the law was given, and Christ expounded it in a sermon upon the mount.”—*Matthew Henry*

Some say that this can not be prophetic of Christ because he did not cry out in the streets. Yet we read: “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets” (Matthew 12:17; see also Isaiah 42:1,2). These words are quoted from Isaiah by Matthew to explain why he retreated from his enemies and sought to hide himself. Those familiar with Jesus' ministry know that Jesus did cry out the message of God in the streets. The Hebrew word translated cry is Strong's 7121 which means “to preach.” Jesus preached everywhere he went.

In Proverbs 9 Wisdom is contrasted with Foolishness. If Wisdom is Christ and Wisdom is contrasted with its opposite, then foolishness must be that which is the opposite of Christ, i.e., the Antichrist who is represented as a “woman” in Revelation 17:3,4,6,18.

There are differences about the meaning of the word *qanah* in Proverbs 8:22 as to whether it means “possessed” or “created.” From a footnote on the NET translation of Proverbs 8:22 found at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org): “There are two roots in Hebrew, one meaning ‘to possess,’ and the other meaning ‘to create.’ The older translations did not know of the second root, but suspected in certain places that a meaning like that was necessary (e.g., Genesis 4:1; 14:19; Deuteronomy 32:6). Ugaritic confirmed that it was indeed another root. The older versions have the translation ‘possess’ because otherwise it sounds like God lacked wisdom and therefore created it at the beginning. They wanted to avoid



saying that wisdom was not eternal. Arius liked the idea of Christ as the wisdom of God and so chose the translation 'create.' Athanasius translated it, 'constituted me as the head of creation.' The verb occurs twelve times in Proverbs with the meaning of 'to acquire'; but the Greek and the Syriac versions have the meaning 'create.' Although the idea is that wisdom existed before creation, the parallel ideas in these verses ('appointed,' 'given birth') argue for the translation of 'create' or 'establish' (R. N. Whybray, '*Proverbs 8:22-31 and Its Supposed Prototypes*,' *VT* 15 [1965]: 504-14; and W. A. Irwin, '*Where Will Wisdom Be Found?*' *JBL* 80 [1961]: 133-42)." Many translators render *qanahas* "created."

"Gesenius gives as the primary meaning of *qanah*: 'to get, to gain, to obtain, to acquire.' Davies gives it the meaning of 'to form or make, to get or acquire, to gain or buy.' Strong defines *qanah* as 'to erect, i.e., to create; by extension to procure, especially by purchase.'" —*The Great Debate*, by Robert Wagoner

Regardless of the controversy surrounding the meaning of this word, contextually Wisdom is still spoken of as being "brought forth": "When there were no depths, I was *brought forth*" (Proverbs 8:24). The Hebrew word translated "brought forth" means "to be brought forth, to be born." Wisdom was indeed "brought forth" and this helps us understand the context and meaning of this chapter and especially what "possessed" means in verse 22.

"Then I was by him, *as one brought up* [Strong's #525: "artificer, architect, master workman, skilled workman"] *with him*: and I was daily *his delight*, rejoicing always before him" (Proverbs 8:30). Not only can the word "possess" in this context have the meaning of "create" as translated in the Septuagint and Syriac, but we also see that Wisdom was brought up, was trained, and was the master workman of God's creative works.

Yes, Jesus is the master workman of God's creative works! He was the first of Jehovah's creative acts, and it was with his assistance that all other things came into being. Truly this great being who plays so many important roles in the great plan of the ages is worthy of our adoration and worship!

## Christ in the Jewish Age

# Michael, Your Prince

*But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.—Daniel 10:21*

Little is said directly of the role that the son of God played during the Jewish age. Various biblical titles and pictures identified with the Messiah, however, suggest that the Logos was as active during that period as he has been in every stage of the plan of God.

### Michael

Not only was Michael Daniel's "prince," he was the "the great prince" (Hebrew, *tsar*, from which the words Czar and Kaiser are derived) which stood for "the children of [Daniel's] people" (Daniel 12:1). In Jude 9 he is called "the archangel," or chief angel. Some contend that this is not an office unique to Michael for in Daniel 10:13 he is entitled "one of the chief princes." However the Hebrew *echad*, translated "one" in this passage, can with equal ease be translated "first of the chief princes," (Margin, 'the first.') "That is, the first in rank of the 'princes,' or the angels. In other words, 'Michael, the archangel.'" (*Barnes Commentary*.) *Echad* is translated "first" in such passages as Genesis 1:5 and Genesis 2:11. This being is identified as the "chief ruler" who was to come from the tribe of Judah in 1 Chronicles 5:2 and with Jesus at his second advent in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 designating the pre-eminent one amongst the angelic host.

It is in this role that we see the son of God directing the numerous miraculous victories of the Israelites over their foes and as the mastermind behind their deliverance from frequent captivities. Thus, we read of him in Exodus 33:2, "And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite."

Was he not the angel who parted the waters of the sea that Israel might pass over dry shod? Was he not the "captain of the host of the LORD" who met Joshua by Jericho to give directions for the overthrow of that stronghold? (Joshua 5:13 to 6:2) Was he not the one that caused the phenomenon of the "sun standing still" An alternative explanation is not that the day was prolonged, but that the sun was supernaturally darkened (Hebrew, *damam*, here translated "stand still") which was taken by the sun-worshipping Amorites as an omen, disheartening them for the battle (Reprints, page 3344, supported by the Wycliffe Bible Commentary). so vital in Joshua's destruction of the Amorites? (Joshua 10:12,13) Was he not the leader of "the forces from heaven" which caused the Kishon river to overthrow the forces of Sisera? (Judges 5:20,21) Was he not the "angel of the LORD" who smote the 185,000-man army of Sennacherib? (2 Kings 19:35)

Time and time again, using various means and methods, divine forces were brought to bear in Israelitish history. Although natural explanations have been offered for many of

these miracles, and they may indeed have validity, the timing shows great precision and indicates meticulous planning and direction by just such an unseen leader as Michael, the guardian angel of Israel.

The application of this supernatural power on behalf of Israel (and on none of the surrounding Gentile nations) well demonstrates the accuracy of the scriptural statement, “you only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). How well this should have produced an unflinching trust of Israel in divine leadership and been an incentive to obey the dictates of God! Unfortunately, it did not, and the latter part of Amos’ prophecy became only too true: “Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

This is the same lesson God taught them through his manifest wonders as he brought them through their 40-year journey to the promised land. Rather than serving to make them more dependent upon Jehovah, it only demonstrated their rebellious and complaining human nature (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-12).

### **The Angel of the LORD**

The role of “archangel,” or “director of the angelic hosts,” was not limited to the work of Michael in commanding the hosts of heaven. This work also included the enlistment of spiritual and human agencies (e.g., angels, messengers). The term “angel of the LORD” is used numerous times in the Old Testament. While it would be presumptuous to say that this term always applied to the pre-human Logos, there are various occasions where such an interpretation is so indicated. Perhaps the most commonly applied of these is the appearance of the three angels to Abraham with the message of God’s intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:3). The patriarch’s use of the term *Adonai* (Lord) instead of the usual term of Middle Eastern respect, *doniy*, or sir, often translated “lord” in the lower case, has been taken by many to mean that this was the materialized son of God.

A more direct identification is to be found in the appearance of “the angel of the LORD” to the parents of Samson. When Samson’s father, Manoah, inquires of the name of the angel, he is told that it is “wonderful” (Judges 13:18, NAS). This is the same name as one of those ascribed to Jesus in the famous prophecy of Isaiah 9:6. Further, upon the angel’s departure, Manoah’s awe-struck words to his wife in verse 22 are, “We shall surely die because we have seen God” (Hebrew: *elohim*).

It is in this capacity that “the angel of the LORD” enlisted Gideon (Judges 6:11); comforted and fed Elijah (1 Kings 19:7); and commanded David to set up an altar in the threshingfloor of Ornan (1 Chronicles 21:18). In Zechariah 3:1,2 we find it is the “angel of the LORD” that says to Satan concerning the body of Joshua, “The LORD rebuke thee.”

## **The Wisdom of God**

“Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute” (Luke 11:49). Many students of the Bible believe that the “wisdom of God” is one of the titles of Jesus himself. Albert Barnes is one such commentator who makes this observation:

“By the ‘wisdom of God,’ here, is undoubtedly meant the Saviour himself. . . . He is called ‘the wisdom of God,’ because by him God makes his wisdom known in creation (Col 1:13-18 and in redemption (1 Cor 1:30). Many have also thought that the Messiah was referred to in the 8th chapter of Proverbs, under the name of Wisdom.” For a more thorough examination of the application of “wisdom” as a personal name for Christ in Proverbs 8, please see the first article in this issue of The Herald.

Here Jesus bridges the ages, saying that he was the sender of the prophets of the Old Testament era as well as the apostles (meaning “sent ones”) in the gospel dispensation. As “the wisdom of God” he is acting in the same time frame as Proverbs 8 which is the planning phase of the creative processes. Therefore he uses the future tense “I will send” of both the ancient bards and the still future apostles.

It is in this function that we see the Jewish age activities of the son of God in providing direction and guidance, and not merely as the protector and deliverer of the Hebrew people.

## **Prophets**

As the Mosaic Law “spoken by angels” (Hebrews 2:2) at Sinai provided the rules by which God’s chosen people were to live, so the prophets were the conscience of the nation, drawing attention to their wandering from these laws and calling them back to their covenant responsibilities. “Stand ye in the ways, and see” cried Jeremiah, “and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

The office of prophet appears to have been a progressive one, with the career of Samuel being the turning point. We read of that time in 1 Samuel 9:9, “Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.”

The distinction between a seer and a prophet can be compared to the functions of a newscaster and a commentator. A newscaster gives an objective account of daily events while a commentator interprets the news to make it useful to his audience. In the same way a seer saw events and reported on them as a witness; a prophet brought forth the lessons the people were to gain from these.

It was in the days of Samuel that the office of prophecy was institutionalized and is thenceforth referred to as “the sons of the prophets.” Commenting on this term, Barnes

notes: “The schools or colleges of prophets . . . existed in several of the Israelite . . . towns, where young men were regularly educated for the prophetic office.” We find Elijah, on the last day of his life, making a final visit to these schools in Bethel and Jericho (2 Kings 2:2-7).

Evidently not all the prophets from that time were from these organized schools, for the prophet Amos writes of himself, “Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel” (Amos 7:14,15).

C. Von Orelli has written of the true prophet, “His words are not the production of his own spirit, but come from a higher source.” In contrast, false prophets “prophesy out of their own hearts” (Ezekiel 13:2; Jeremiah 23:16). Isaiah speaks of seeing the words of his prophecy (Isaiah 2:1). Ezekiel attributes his inspiration to the spirit of the Lord falling on him (Ezekiel 11:5). Jeremiah writes, “Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak” (Jeremiah 1:6,7).

Whether individually appointed or drawn from the pool trained in these prophetic schools, it was Jesus, as the Wisdom of God, who sent them on their appointed missions. He was the spiritual channel from whence they derived their messages. Whether these communications were delivered by word of mouth, acted dramatically in the style of Ezekiel, portrayed by a dictated life pattern as in the case of Hosea, or even followed the outline of an entire drama as was the case with Jonah, the Wisdom of God was working behind the scenes directing the issue.

Much of the burden of the prophetic word was giving those clues which would enable the sincere and reverent watcher to identify the Messiah. But when the time came for him to come personally to earth in the form of flesh, few recognized him. They missed the point of the entire picture that he must come first in the form of the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53 before he could come as the reigning “lion of the tribe of Judah.” Looking for a lion, they beheld a lamb—the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

It was not until the Gospel age that the son of God revealed the full import of this prophetic word of old. Truly the “testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

## Christ at His First Advent

# Eye-Witness Testimony

*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.—2 Peter 1:16*

Robert S. Seklemian—Condensed from “The Death and Resurrection of Jesus,”  
*Discourses of Robert S. Seklemian*, pages 264-273.

The three most important events in history are the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Two of these events, the death and resurrection of Jesus, occurred within a period of three days of each other. A wider diversity of emotion can scarcely be imagined. At the death of Jesus was experienced the greatest possible sorrow and within three days, at the resurrection of Jesus, the greatest possible joy.

### **The Viewpoint of the Disciples**

When Jesus began his ministry, he was in direct communication with his heavenly Father. One of the first things the Father did was to indicate to Jesus who were to be his apostles and disciples, the ones he had personally selected to be the companions of Jesus. This fact is clearly shown in Jesus’ prayer just before his betrayal: “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (John 17:6).

When we read that Jesus saw certain men and said “Follow me,” this does not imply a haphazard, spur-of-the-moment selection. No! The heavenly Father had indicated to Jesus the exact individuals. God had previously prepared their minds because when they were invited by Jesus to follow him, they promptly dropped everything and followed him. They were very special people, although in the eyes of the world they were ignorant, rough, and uncultured, what we would today call “of the lower strata of society.” But in the eyes of Jesus, these men were true nobility!

### **The Apostles Loved Their Master**

These whom the Father had drawn loved Jesus and were his constant companions. They ministered to his material needs. They were at his side when he healed the multitudes, preached the gospel of the kingdom to them, and spoke to them in parables. They loved it most of all when later he withdrew to the mountain or wilderness where they could be alone with him, sit at his feet, commune with him on a more personal basis, hear the interpretations of the parables he had given to the multitudes, and absorb the unfailing strength, assurance, and love which flowed from him.

Of course they made many blunders and Jesus had to rebuke them on several occasions. For example, they tried to forbid the little children to come to Jesus. On another occasion they wanted the right to sit one on his right hand and another on his left in his kingdom. Once they wanted to call fire from heaven and destroy an inhospitable village. Whenever Jesus rebuked them, he did it patiently and gently, using each occasion to teach them valuable lessons.

Jesus was particularly pleased when, in answer to his question “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Then we read: “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matthew 16:21).

I don't think we can blame the warm and impulsive Peter too much for saying to Jesus, “Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.” They had learned to depend upon him so much. They were like sheep and Jesus was their shepherd; they could not think of carrying on without him. What can sheep do without a shepherd? They would be lost without him. But Jesus was preparing their minds for future events. He kept telling them that he was going to leave them but they did not understand; they did not understand because they did not want to understand. It was something they did not want to happen so they pushed the thought from their minds. But Jesus kept on telling them; he did not want them to be taken entirely by surprise. When Mary of Bethany poured the very precious ointment upon him, Jesus said, “In that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.”

After the passover supper we read: “When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of olives. Then saith Jesus unto them: All ye shall be offended [or stumbled] because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee” (Matthew 26:30-32).

In a few hours it happened. As his disciples slept Jesus endured the anguish of Gethsemane alone. Then came Judas leading the armed multitude of officers from the chief priests and elders. Although Jesus was betrayed and arrested, they did not really take him. That armed multitude was not big enough to take him by force. No! He gave himself into their hands, saying: “Dost thou think that I cannot entreat my Father, and he will send to my relief more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53, Diaglott).

### **Smitten Shepherd—Scattered Sheep**

Then we read one of the most tragic sentences in the Bible: “Then all the disciples forsook him and fled” (Matthew 26:56). They did not really want to. This was their beloved Master whom they loved with all their hearts. They really meant to be loyal. Peter had said to Jesus just a few hours before, “Though all men shall be offended [or stumbled] because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” Peter really meant it with all his heart but his poor, weak, flesh prevailed. They fled! Jesus understood completely. The

prophecy, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad," was fulfilled. Jesus endured the ordeal that followed ALONE.

The disciples' hopes had been built up for 3½ years, high hopes of a restored kingdom of Israel with Jesus as king and they themselves reigning with him. Now these hopes had been dashed to the ground.

The bravest of the disciples were the women. <%0>They watched from a distance as their Lord was crucified. They watched him die. They saw his side pierced. They waited and watched as his body was taken down from the cross. They followed at a distance to see where it would be laid. Then they went home and prepared spices and ointments for the body of Jesus.

### **The Road to Emmaus**

Two of the disciples decided to walk from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. Emmaus means "hot springs" and is about eight miles from Jerusalem. One of these disciples was Cleopas, the other is thought to have been Peter. They probably wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city to a quiet place where they could talk, think, and perhaps understand. Their hearts were heavy and as they walked the record says: "They talked together of all these things which had happened" and "they communed together and reasoned" (Luke 24:15). In other words, they tried to make sense out of the situation but had difficulty doing so.

Jesus joined them on the road in a form they did not recognize. "And he said unto them, what manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?" They must have sensed a sympathetic understanding in this stranger because they poured out what was in their hearts. They told him how their beloved master whom they described as "a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people," had been delivered up by the chief priests, condemned to death, and crucified; how all their high hopes had been shattered. Then they added wistfully, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel!" Then Jesus said unto them: "O foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And, beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

What a feast it was for their souls, what a balm for their hearts, torn by grief and confusion! What a thrill, what an exaltation of spirit to see everything fall perfectly into place as he talked, to see the reason for it all and to know it was the truth! Confusion and doubt dissolved and the mystery of recent events became an open book. As they said later after Jesus had manifested himself to them and departed, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

These were the things Jesus had not told them before because as Jesus himself said, "Ye can not bear them now." When Jesus was with them, his disciples looked for him to set



up an immediate earthly government to supplant Roman rule. They stubbornly held to this idea and closed their minds to any other. When Jesus told them of his impending suffering and death, they said, “Be it far from thee Lord; this shall not be unto thee.” They simply refused to believe it. Now it was different. Jesus had indeed suffered, he had indeed died. They had to face this grim reality. As a plow rips deep into the hard subsoil to soften it and prepare it to receive and nurture the seed, so their hearts had been bruised, torn, humbled, and made ready for what was now “meat in due season” for them.

What did he tell them as he walked with them to Emmaus? “Beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” These were the “many things” he had to say to them which they could not “bear” before. But they could bear them now! Now it really made an impression, now it was “meat in due season.” It gave them a KEY to the Scriptures.

They learned their lesson well and they remembered. After the holy Spirit was given at Pentecost Peter preached to the multitude. We read in Acts the third chapter that he said: “Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer.” Then he pointed to the future, saying: “When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must retain until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:18-21).

We are now in those “times.” This was what Jesus had revealed to them on the way to Emmaus!

### **The Viewpoint of God**

How can we possibly know something of God’s viewpoint of these events? How can we know the mind of God? Perhaps through reasoning we can have some insight. We humans are created in the image and likeness of God. This means that we have the same basic sensibilities that he has, that we are capable of being moved by the same emotions, except that God’s sensibilities are on a vastly higher scale and more refined than ours. This includes his compassion and mercy. He feels things more keenly than we do. He says: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).

Considering these facts, we begin to appreciate how God viewed these events. If any of you had a beloved son who was treated as Jesus was treated by his enemies, could you be complacent about it? Could you remain unmoved? So how do you suppose God felt when his beloved and only begotten son was spit upon, beaten with fists, slapped, cursed, bound, stripped, scourged, crowned with thorns, mocked, hit on the head with a stick, and then nailed through his hands and feet, alive, to a cross? Then after all this, the necessity of turning his face from his son, for a moment seeming to forsake him, and hearing his tragic cry, “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?” Do you think God was unmoved by these things? I don’t think so! I think God was deeply moved. I think it

HURT God! Perhaps for the three days that Jesus was dead God even felt a certain loneliness. Wouldn't you?

On that Sunday morning when his son rose triumphantly from the grave, I am sure God felt the same joy as the angels felt, as we feel, only more intensely. Let us not forget that God created angels and the human race for his own pleasure. He did not need them. He is all-sufficient and self-sufficient. He created them because of the JOY he had in them, in seeing them happy! We know this because it is written of the Logos that he was God's delight.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is God's joy and delight to have 144,000 joint-heirs with Christ and a race of perfect human creatures to love him throughout eternity.

## Christ In the Gospel Age

# Our Advocate

*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*

Timothy Alexander

In Matthew 26:31, Jesus recalled the words of the prophet Zechariah when he said that when the shepherd is smitten, the sheep will be scattered. Even as our Lord's greatest hour of trial was quickly approaching, he was carefully warning his disciples of the great test of faith that would soon come upon them, and reassured them that, even though they were to stumble, they would still be his sheep. After Jesus had died and was resurrected, his primary goals during the forty days before his ascension were to re-establish their faith in his teachings, to solidify them as a body of brethren, and to give them the courage to live their consecrated lives strong in the confidence that he was still their shepherd. It is this role of comforter, sustainer, and advocate that Jesus promised would characterize his relationship with the New Creation throughout the Gospel age when he uttered some of his final words: "And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20, NIV).

### **The Advocate**

One of the greatest blessings each member of the New Creation enjoys is that we have Jesus as our Advocate with the Father. In the first chapter of 1 John, the apostle exhorts us to "walk in the light," avoiding the unconstrained inclinations of our sinful human nature. John says that God is light and, if we are to have fellowship with him, we must not walk in darkness. John goes on, however, to honestly admit that as sons of Adam, we all have inadequate control over sin in our lives, that if we deny this weakness, we are deceiving ourselves.

In the first verse of 1 John chapter 2, we are told that when we do stumble into sin we have Jesus as our advocate. The word advocate signifies one who pleads another's cause, one who stands alongside. It is a beautiful description of the provision that we have in Jesus. We who have accepted Christ as our redeemer are described by the apostle Paul in Romans 5:1,2 as standing in grace and having peace with God. Isaiah 61:10 describes this same condition as being covered with a robe of righteousness. In this condition of justification, we need no mediator between ourselves and God but, because of our sinful human condition, we do still need an advocate. We still need one to plead our cause when unintentional sin enters our lives, when inherited human tendencies begin to soil our robe. And this is the role of advocate that Jesus plays in our lives.

In 1 John 2:1, the word advocate is translated from the Greek word *parakletos*, which means an intercessor or consoler. As our intercessor, we see Jesus in a role similar to that

of an attorney, standing alongside his client before the bar of justice. In this role, the accused benefits greatly from the good relationship that the attorney has developed with the judge. And so it is with our Advocate. Our Lord's work as Advocate for the church began when he made application of his precious blood on behalf of all those who come to the Father by him throughout the Gospel age. The apostle Paul describes this in Hebrews 9:24 where he says, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands [referring to the Tabernacle in the wilderness] which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Jesus' advocacy for us continues as he proceeds to apply on our behalf the sufficiency of his own merit to cover the unintentional blemishes and fleshly weaknesses that we all have as a result of our inheritance from Father Adam. Paul says that Jesus is now at the right hand of God and "indeed intercedes for us" [Romans 8:34, RSV]. In Hebrews 7:25, a text speaking about Jesus, we read, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Thus the work of Jesus as our Advocate continues throughout the Gospel age.

### **Unintentional Sin**

When John says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," it is evident that he is speaking about unintentional sin, sins that we fall into because of the weakness of our flesh, the inherited imperfection we have as humans. In 1 John 3:8,9, John makes this clear: "He who practices sin is of the enemy; for the enemy has been sinning from the beginning. . . . No one who has been begotten by God practices sin; because his seed abides in him and he cannot sin because he has been begotten by God" (Diaglott). The thought of practicing sin is that of making it an intentional part of our lives. From John's words we can see that those who have been begotten of the holy spirit, those who have the seed of the new nature within their hearts, cannot practice sin without damaging that seed.

John reinforces this thought when he says, "We know that everyone who has been begotten by God does not sin; but the one begotten by God guards himself, and the Evil One does not lay hold of him" (1 John 5:18, Diaglott). Thus all of us must guard ourselves to make sure our intentions are fully in harmony with the will of our heavenly Father and we are following his will to the best of our ability, knowing that for our unintentional sins we have the advocacy of Jesus Christ, the righteous.

When a man is accused of a crime and is called to appear to answer for his actions in court, one of the most foolish things he can do is attempt to hide information from his own attorney. Similarly, we must maintain an open and honest relationship with our advocate and not try to hide or ignore any of our sins and shortcomings. The apostle encourages this heartfelt openness when he says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). A full and honest confession in prayer of our weaknesses and sins is vital to a continued strong and growing relationship with God. These assurances of divine favor and willingness to forgive are designed to have upon our hearts a mellowing influence which

will make us all the more careful to avoid sin and to maintain fellowship with the Lord. What a beautiful provision we have in Jesus as the one who intercedes on our behalf.

## **A Consoler**

In addition to an intercessor, the word *parakletos* also contains the thought of a consoler, and Jesus is indeed our consoler. One of the ways Jesus is our consoler is through his words as recorded in the scriptures. While on this earth, Jesus spoke in a way no other man ever had. His words were full of admonition, instruction, and comfort. We can look to those words for comfort and consolation just as if our Master were speaking directly to us. The apostle Paul calls our attention to this when he says that, while facing trials and severe experiences in our lives, “we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Another way in which Jesus is our consoler is by his own example. In Hebrews 12:1,2, the apostle Paul tells us that, when we become encumbered by the weighty issues of life and are constantly being beset by failures and sins, we can find comfort by looking to our example Jesus who, for the blessed opportunity that was set before him, endured the sacrifice of his own life. This blessed opportunity is also set before us. In 1 Peter 2:19-25, the apostle Peter tells us that, when Jesus was reviled, when he was evil spoken of, when he suffered at the hands of evildoers, he did not retaliate, but “committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” What sublime comfort is found in Jesus’ example when we realize that we too need not respond to unjust persecution but can rest confidently in the understanding that God himself is our great shepherd and the bishop of our souls.

Another way in which Jesus is our consoler is by his own experience. In Hebrews 4:14,15, the apostle Paul tells us that when we come to a point in our lives when we are in danger of losing our grip on the profession of our faith, we should look to Jesus, our great high priest, and realize that he is touched with the feeling of our weakness, having been tested, having become familiar with, and having endured the trials and testings which accompany the sacrifice of a human life. There is a great comfort in knowing that he has gone before, has arrived safely, and is extending his helping hand to us.

Jesus also consoles us through our brethren. “A beloved brother” named Tychicus was sent by Paul to the brethren in Colossae (Colossians 4:7,8). Paul says that he sent Tychicus so that he might become intimately familiar with the struggles the brethren in Colossae were enduring and so that he might comfort their hearts. This is a beautiful example of how brethren are sent or used by our Lord to be a part of our lives, to be partners with us, to become familiar with our struggles, and to encourage our hearts as we struggle together to follow the leading of our Lord.

In addition to the Lord Jesus as our advocate, there is another source of comfort promised to us in the Scriptures. That other comfort is the holy spirit. Each time it is referred to as the “comforter,” it is translated from the same word *parakletos*. We first find this word in John 14:16 where Jesus says, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” Here we find the holy spirit coming to us

from the Father as a result of Jesus' request on our behalf. In John 14:26 the Father sends the comforter in Jesus' name. These are beautiful promises that, during the Gospel age, the Lord God and his son Jesus are strengthening, guiding, and comforting the Christian church through the power of the holy spirit. In this way, Jesus is definitely with each of us even unto the end of the age.

### **The Example of Peter**

Peter's experience with Jesus beautifully foreshadows the role that Jesus would play during the rest of the Gospel age as the advocate for his church. In the upper room during Jesus' last supper with his apostles, Jesus tenderly warns Peter that his faith would soon be tested by the adversary. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31-34). After warning Peter with these words, Jesus immediately offers the reassurance that he would intercede with the Father on Peter's behalf. Jesus said, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." What a beautiful foretelling of Jesus' role as our advocate, the one who is called alongside, our intercessor and consoler.

Jesus' next words informed Peter that his faith would indeed fail, but that it would also return to him and that, after his faith had returned, he would then be in a position, because of his own experience with weakness, to strengthen his brethren. This is a beautiful lesson. The experiences that the Lord sees fit to allow in our lives do not belong entirely to us. They really belong to the entire body of Christ. After we come through them, however scarred we may feel, our responsibility and indeed our privilege is to use those lessons we have learned to "strengthen" the brethren around us.

Peter's legendary boldness is displayed by his response in verse 33: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death." As we know, what followed for Peter was indeed a very trying experience, one where Peter would not only fail to go into prison with Jesus, but would end up actually denying him three separate times. That great torrent of courage in the garden that had driven him to instantly defend Jesus with only one sword against several well-armed soldiers had dissolved to a mere trickle at the fire where he was too fearful to admit even knowing Jesus when challenged by a defenseless young girl.

Peter had failed, and his bold heart was crushed. Verse 62 tells us that Peter "wept bitterly." The entire weight of Peter's failure was bearing down on a heart that had previously been accustomed to bold displays of strength. "If only I had been stronger, maybe the events of that night would have been different." If Peter ever needed a consoler, it was now. But Jesus was dead. Lost without his Master, Peter retreated back to the comfort of what he knew: fishing.+

When it was time for Peter to be consoled, Jesus found him in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. Peter was not the first one to recognize Jesus but he was the first one to do something significant about it. He jumped into the sea and swam to Jesus. Peter's strength was returning, but imagine the guilt and shame Peter carried in his heart as he

walked dripping wet up the shore toward Jesus. But in Jesus' response, there was no reprimand, there was no reproof, only comforting words and the reassurance that Peter could still be of service, a reassurance that was repeated three times. That would have given his heart the confidence that each denial was indeed forgiven.

Jesus' words in this account provided not only the tenderest consolation for Peter, but also an eternal lesson for all those who, down through the Gospel age, would likewise become fishers of men, those who would learn to cast their nets on the opposite side of the boat, and those who would demonstrate their own love for their Master by feeding his sheep.

## Christ in His Kingdom

# Preparations for Eternity

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—John 3:16*

Carl Hagensick

Many and varied have been the roles of Jesus Christ in past ages—as the master workman in the creation of the universe; as the promise-giver to Abraham and his seed; as guardian angel over the affairs of Israel; as Redeemer at his first advent; and as an advocate for his bride, his church, throughout the Gospel age. Many and varied are the roles he is yet to play in the establishment and operation of his kingdom. Let us look into a few of them.

### **Bridegroom**

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John 14:2,3.

During the intervening time between the first and second advents of Jesus, his primary work has been the development of his church. During this time he has not only been preparing a place for them, but also preparing them for that place.

Now, at his second advent, with both place and recipient prepared, he comes to take his bride to her promised heavenly abode. This action is picturesquely described 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.”

In this text the church is divided into two groups: “the dead in Christ” and “we which are alive and remain.” It is a popularly-held belief among many sincere Christians that this verse supports the idea of a “rapture,” the sudden instantaneous translation of remaining Christians by their bodily ascension into heaven. This thought is largely based on giving the word “together” the meaning of “simultaneous.” The Greek word may well have the thought of “together in the same place” as seems indicated in the next chapter, 1 Thessalonians 5:10. Even when used as a designation of time, it is better translated “meanwhile,” indicating a time period, instead of “simultaneous,” signifying “at the same instant.” One example of this prolonged time usage is in Philemon 22 where the New King James version correctly translates it “meanwhile.”



Using a different metaphor, this activity is described as the work of a harvest, separating wheat from tares with a gathering of the wheat into his barn (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43). The barn in this parable refers to the heavenly home of the “wheat” class, the church. Just as the work of a natural harvest is a process requiring considerable time, so is the harvest of the church. This is directly implied in the explanation of the parable given by Jesus in Matthew 13:39, “the harvest is the end of the world.” The Greek word here translated “end” is *suntelia*. Professor W. E. Vine says that the word “does not denote a termination, but the heading up of events to the appointed climax.”

The fact that this picture of the “harvest” is one that refers to the second advent of Christ and is under his immediate direction is strongly implied when the same metaphor is used by the apostle John: “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle” (Revelation 14:14). Thus we see the same activity ascribed to the returned Lord under the symbols of bridegroom and reaper.

### **The General of Jehovah**

In Revelation 19:13-16, Jesus as “the Word of God” is shown as a conquering general, “and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

One of the first works of Christ in setting up his kingdom is the subduing of those nations which dominate the present social order. The transfer of this kingdom authority to him is described in Revelation 11:15, “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” But this transfer is not willing, nor is it immediate. Pastor Charles Russell has captured this point well in the book *The Divine Plan of the Ages*: “Though Christ, with royal title and power, will be present as Jehovah’s representative, taking charge of all the affairs during this day of trouble, it is more as the General of Jehovah, subduing all things, than as the Prince of Peace, blessing all.”

Still another text that deals with this military role of Christ is found in Isaiah: “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the

people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.”—Isaiah 63:1-6.

In this passage, the enemy of Christ is represented by Edom, a picture of Christendom—that church-state system which has made a travesty of their claim to rule in Christ’s stead by a mandate which they have termed “the divine right of kings.” The mysterious words by which ancient Babylon was judged—”Mene, mene, tekel upharsin” (thou art judged in the balances and found wanting—Daniel 5:25-28)—will be used to judge them.

### **Michael—the Protector of Israel**

This battle is described as a “time of trouble” in Daniel: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1).

Here the leader of this battle is named Michael, meaning “one who is like God.” The commentator Matthew Henry (Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database.) rightly identifies this Michael as Christ himself: “Christ is that great prince, for he is the prince of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5).” The “children” of Daniel’s people are none other than the nation of Israel of a later generation.

Numerous prophecies depict the ending of the last pre-kingdom age as involving a great battle of the combined forces of the Gentiles against Israel which, for a time, results in a great defeat of that nation (Ezekiel 38, 39; Joel 3; Zechariah 14). It is in the midst of this confrontation, after Israel has been seemingly crushed, that the Bible predicts, “Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zechariah 14:3).

The purpose of this final warfare, as far as Israel is concerned, is to divide them into two camps—a proud and haughty people who fail to rely on God because of their self-confidence, and a remnant who are afflicted and poor and trust in the name of the Lord. It is of this remnant that we read, “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid” (Zephaniah 3:13). Notice also Micah 5:7, “The people of Israel who survive will be like refreshing dew sent by the LORD for many nations, like showers on growing plants. They will depend on God, not man. Those who are left among the nations will be like a lion hunting for food in a forest or a pasture: he gets in among the sheep, pounces on them, and tears them to pieces—and there is no hope of rescue” (TEV).

This final battle, also called the “battle of that great day of God Almighty” in Revelation 16:16, accomplishes two effects: 1) it removes present earthly society in much the same way as contractors for a new building must first level the old before erecting the new; and

2) it produces a chastened and purified nation of Israel to act, with their resurrected prophets of old, as the center of Christ's earthly kingdom (Isaiah 1:25,26).

### **The Everlasting Father**

One of four titles prophetically ascribed to the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6 is "the everlasting father." As a "father," he is a life-giver; as an "everlasting father," he is the giver of everlasting or eternal life. It is in this role that we see a primary object of Christ's kingdom role—the resurrection of the dead.

This work is described in John 5:28,29, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (ASV).

Similarly, after describing the battle which Michael fights on Israel's behalf, we read: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

In these two texts, the resurrected peoples are separated into two classes—"those who have done good" unto everlasting life and "those who have done evil" unto "judgment" or "everlasting contempt."

The Hebrew word here rendered "everlasting" is *olam*. *Olam* is open to a wide variety of translations. Though it can mean everlasting in the sense of a period of time without an end, it can also mean an indefinite time period, a duration. Prof. W. E. Vine (see *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, article on "God") says it expresses "a period of time that could not be measured other than of lengthy duration." A footnote in Rotherham's Emphasized Bible defends its use as meaning "age lasting," which we suggest is an appropriate translation in the Daniel passage under consideration.

In the John passage the word for "judgment" (incorrectly rendered "damnation" in the King James Version) is the Greek *krisis*, meaning exactly the same as our English word crisis, namely, the point at which a matter can turn for either better or worse.

The thought of these two combined Scriptures is that some of the dead, such as the faithful prophets of old who obeyed God in Old Testament times and the New Testament followers of Jesus, will be raised to perfect life; the rest of men will undergo a crisis of judgment through which they will either be deemed worthy of everlasting life or worthy of everlasting destruction.

## Prophet

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”—Acts 3:22,23

Moses played many roles in the exodus of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In each of these he prefigured Jesus Christ.

1. As a **deliverer**, each led a captive people free—the Israelites under Moses from the land of Egypt, and the entire human race, under Jesus, from the captivity of sin and death.
2. As a **prophet** and **lawgiver**, Moses passed on the unalterable edicts of Jehovah to his people; so also Christ will dictate the laws for mankind in his kingdom.
3. As a **mediator**, Moses established a covenant relationship between Israel and God; so Christ will mediate a “new covenant” through Israel with all who will receive everlasting life.

## Melchizedec: Priest and King

In the seventh chapter of Hebrews the apostle Paul establishes a comparison between Melchizedec, the priest and king of Salem who blessed Abraham (Genesis 14), and Jesus. Under Moses these two offices were separated with the priests being drawn from the tribe of Levi and the kings from the tribe of Judah. Now, Paul says, under Christ they are to be combined and transferred from the figure of that law to a new arrangement typified by Melchizedec.

This combined office is not to be confined to Jesus alone; he is to be the head of **the order** of Melchizedec. This order is to include the faithful followers of Jesus as well: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6). Thus, with these two offices united, the new dominion of earth will be a true theocracy—an earthly government ruled by heavenly powers.

Though the two offices are combined, their functions remain distinct:

1. As **kings**, they will administer the temporal order of the “new earth.”
2. As **priests**, they will administer the spiritual functions, as the “new heavens,” introducing resurrected man to his Creator and teaching him God’s ways. The priestly work also implies a sympathetic understanding

of the needs of humans who will still have many of their former fallen tendencies to overcome. (Note Hebrews 2:17,18; 4:15,16.)

## **A Righteous Judge**

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—Acts 17:31.

Since many are said to be raised to a “resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29, ASV), there must be, of necessity, a judge to execute this judgment. But rather than the stern unforgiving jurist which many imagine, this judge will be first an instructor in righteousness, making his judgment to correct and not to penalize the transgressor. Well has the prophet Isaiah stated, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9).

This judgment work will consist of two parts: a thorough instruction in the eternal laws of Jehovah and then a decision made for each individual as to whether he has obeyed all of these commandments.

The resultant determination for the two classes is given in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:46 where it says of those who do evil: “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Thus the kingdom works of the Messiah will be complete, as Paul phrases it: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”—1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

## The Pre-Eminence of Christ

# Far Above All Principality

*Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.—Ephesians 1:20,21*

A verse by verse study in Hebrews 1

Pre-eminence is the theme of the book of Hebrews. Nelson's Bible Dictionary emphasizes this theme in its outline of the book, an abbreviated portion of which is reproduced here:

<b>Superiority of Christ over the Prophets</b>	<b>1:1-1:3</b>
<b>Superiority of Christ over the Angels</b>	<b>1:4-2:18</b>
<b>Superiority of Christ over Moses</b>	<b>3:1-4:13</b>
<b>Superiority of Christ's Priesthood over Aaron's</b>	<b>4:14-7:28</b>
<b>Superiority of Christ's Covenant over Law Covenant</b>	<b>8:1-8:13</b>
<b>Superiority of Christ's Sacrifice over Law Sacrifices</b>	<b>9:1-10:18</b>
<b>Superiority of Christian's Walk of Faith</b>	<b>10:19-13:25</b>

The contrast between Jesus' life on earth and his station in heaven after his ascension could not be more complete. Paul describes it in nearly poetic language:

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Philippians 2:6-11, NIV.

It is just a portion of this superlative position, then, that we see the apostle contemplating in the first chapter of Hebrews.

## Superiority Over the Prophets —Verses 1-3

***“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”***

All of the epistles of the New Testament, with the exception of the three by John and this epistle to the Hebrews, begin with the author’s name. Here the writer sees fit to attribute the authorship to God. If the writer, as we believe, was the apostle Paul, the reason seems evident. As a “minister to the Gentiles” (Romans 15:16), and the outspoken opponent of the Judaizing elements in the early church, his words might be suspected of bias by some of his readers. The attribution of the epistle to God invokes a higher authority. He is saying, in effect, the doctrine that I am about to inscribe is not mine but that of God himself. Jesus uses a similar attribution in John 14:10.

Periodically, God raised up prophets to correct his wayward people of Israel in “divers manners”—sometimes in direct words, sometimes through dreams and visions, sometimes through enacted dramas. Whatever the manner, they always spoke as they were “moved by the holy spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Frequently the prophetic writers did not themselves comprehend the import of their message (1 Peter 1:10-12).

But now, Paul asserts, there was a new spokesman—one who did not merely narrate what he saw or what he was told, but one who had first-hand knowledge of all things. This spokesman, the son of God, possessed seven pre-eminent characteristics which Paul enumerates:

1. He was God’s appointed “heir of all things.”
2. He was Jehovah’s agency in the creation of the worlds.
3. He is the reflected brightness of the character attributes of God.
4. Raised to the divine nature, he is composed of the same “substance” as his Father, namely, divinity.
5. He is given direction over all things and charged with their “upholding.”
6. He possessed the qualifications for this by purging sin from the human race through the sacrifice of his life, culminating at Calvary.

7. He was now seated on the second highest seat of the universe, “at the right hand of the Majesty,” “waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool” (Hebrews 10:13, NIV).

### **First Contrast with the Angels —Verses 4 and 5**

***“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?”***

The first demonstration of the superiority of Christ is in the unique glory of his name. Two Old Testament quotations are adduced in support of this argument. The first is from Psalm 2:7.

While it is true that Jesus, as the Logos, was created higher than all other angelic beings, it is not to this that our text refers. Rather, it is to his resurrection. Paul, speaking in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, makes this plain: “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Acts 13:33). It was through the faithfulness of his life and his obedience to God even unto death that he obtained his highly exalted position (Philippians 2:6-11).

The second supporting Scripture is cited from 2 Samuel 7:14 and is a promise given to David concerning his son Solomon. David had desired to build a temple for God, and in this passage the prophet Nathan informs him that this desire will not be granted but that the temple would be built by his son. He promised to be a wise father to Solomon, one who would chasten and correct him for any iniquities he would commit. Despite the chastenings, however, he pledged, “But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7:15,16).

Paul’s use of this quotation is an obvious reference to the “greater than Solomon” (Matthew 12:42). The text however refers to more than the glory of Solomon. His honor comes as a result of his father David. A verse with similar import, applicable to David, is found in Psalm 89:26-28, “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.” It is such passages as these that made the Jews of the first advent look for their Messiah as “the son of David.”



## Second Contrast with the Angels —Verses 6-9

***“And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”***

Paul’s second contrast is to demonstrate the inherent subservience of the angels to Christ. Three references are cited by Paul to support this relationship.

Verse 6 supplies many problems in translation. Authorities disagree whether the phrase “and again” means merely the introduction of another citation or whether it properly belongs later in the sentence, making it read “When he again bringeth [or introduces] his first-begotten [first-born] into the world.” The latter may well indicate his second advent, which fits well with the citation being used. The reference is probably to Psalm 97:7. The attribution of this quote to the Septuagint of Deuteronomy 32:43 is unlikely for the following reasons: 1) the words there—“let all the angels of God worship him”—are not in the Hebrew and it is questionable whether Paul would have used a non-Hebrew text in an epistle specifically to the “Hebrews”; and 2) it seems stretched to apply the context in Deuteronomy to the Messiah. “Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.” The context of this psalm, which even two noted Jewish rabbis—Rashi and Kimchi—acknowledge to be a Messianic psalm, is apparently to the second advent and not to the first.

However, we suggest the passage probably refers to the time of his resurrection. In the epistle to the Colossians the same apostle notes that the term “firstborn” refers in two separate ways to Christ, both as the “firstborn of every creature” and also as the “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:15,18).

The last two citations are set in contrast. <-1>Psalm 104:4 places the angelic host in a ministerial or servant possession, while Psalm 45:6, 7 pictures the Messiah as a reigning king, ascribing this regal position to his proven love of righteousness and abhorrence of wickedness. These are the two qualifications to make him eligible for his anointing as king with the “oil of gladness, above his fellows.”

### **Third Contrast with the Angels —Verses 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.”***

Here the apostle quotes Psalm 102:25-27. This is an acknowledged Messianic psalm which many attribute to forming the prophetic words of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane.

While not a direct contrast with the angelic host, the argument for the pre-eminence of Jesus is not only that he was in existence before all things, but he established the very foundation of the earth and the heavens. By “foundation” we are not to understand the literal sub-strata of the earth and heaven, but of the order of things which are set in contrast to “the new heavens and new earth.” We suggest that the reference is to the foundation principles by which society is founded—the earth being those which establish man’s relationship with his fellow, and the heaven being those which establish his relationship with God.

When Adam and Eve sinned and were driven from the garden of Eden, they perished. Perishing does not mean annihilation just as it did not so mean in the case of Noah when “the world, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Peter 3:6). Just as a garment is folded for later use, they remain set aside for future use. So, that same perfect society which could have been in Eden, will be restored in Christ’s kingdom.

But even as the patterns of this world change from age to age and from dispensation to dispensation, so Christ remains unchangeable: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

### **Fourth Contrast with the Angels —Verses 13 and 14**

***“But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”***

In this final passage of Hebrews chapter 1 the writer asserts that God’s promise of rulership over earth was uniquely given to Jesus. Never, he argues, was such a promise made to angels. The citation is from Psalm 110:1 and is applied by Paul to Christ in describing the kingdom: “For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:27,28).

In contrast to this role of royal conqueror, he again refers to Psalm 104:4, a text he had referenced earlier in verse 7. Not only are the angels to be subject to Jesus, but they are to be subject to his faithful followers as well, to “them who shall be heirs of salvation.” This promise is explicitly stated in Psalm 34:7, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”

The discussion concerning the relative roles of Jesus and the angels is continued in the second chapter of Hebrews, where Paul focuses on the role the angels played in the ministering of the law at Sinai, contrasting it with that of Jesus in his role over the entire subject race of mankind.

Thus, step by step we see the writer of this epistle to his natural kin of the Hebrew nation establishing a firm foundation for the supremacy of Christ in all things. Well can we join with the angelic host in singing the rhapsody of praise recorded in Revelation 5:11,12, “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

# NEWS AND VIEWS

## Pastoral Bible Institute News

The PBI is pleased to announce the reprinting of two of our booklets: “What Say the Scriptures About Hell?” and “Why Does God Permit Evil?” The new booklets have four-color covers containing a convenient, tear-off request card for a booklet on another subject. One new booklet has been placed in most copies of this issue of The Herald. The other will be inserted in the November-December issue. Please contact us if you would like to use these or our other publications to hold forth the word of truth.

## World News

### Religious

A leading cardinal hurled a stinging criticism at the Roman Catholic hierarchy Wednesday, saying that the Vatican “does not allow a real culture of debate” among bishops and that many are “scared” to challenge official policies because of careerism or pressure from above. The protest by Cardinal Godfried Danneels, archbishop of Brussels, is believed to be one of the strongest Pope John Paul II has ever heard directly from a member of his clergy. Such a public airing of criticism within Catholicism's senior ranks is unusual. The emergence of a reform agenda [at this four-day consistory] was remarkable, if only because the Vatican press office tried to conceal it.

—Los Angeles Times, 5/24/2001

David Ben-Gurion, Albert Einstein, Menachem Begin and Sigmund Freud have several things in common—they were all Jewish and they have been posthumously baptized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Mormon Church agreed to remove hundreds of names of Jewish luminaries from its genealogical records after a researcher spotted them. The LDS Church believes the dead who did not have a chance to convert while alive can and should be baptized. According to Mormon theology, they retain the ability to choose or reject the baptism in the next life. The quest for forebears to baptize has led the LDS Church to create the largest genealogical database in the world, the Family History Library, housed across the street from the faith's main temple in Salt Lake City. Although Church rules only call for direct ancestors to be baptized, enthusiastic proselytizers have scoured records of names from around the world.

—National Post (Salt Lake City), 6/6/2001

The U.S. *Commission on International Religious Freedom* issued its second annual report on religious persecution worldwide (with the exception of the United States). It featured China, whose situation it described as growing worse. China has cracked down on unregistered religious groups and has severely persecuted followers of the Falun Dafa

spiritual movement. The commission also accused India, Indonesia, Russia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Iran, Sudan, Vietnam and North Korea of directly violating the religious freedom of their citizens, or allowing regional or local governments to restrict religious freedom, or ignoring inter-religious violence in their country.

—ReligiousTolerance.org website, 5/1/2001

## Social

The scourge of AIDS is laying waste small pockets of China's most populous province, Henan, among poor farmers who were first infected through tainted blood. Even as some local authorities in Henan try to prevent word from spreading, information about the province's growing AIDS crisis is leaking out to the domestic and international media. The attention has turned a spotlight on how a disease that has devastated large swaths of Africa and the West is now coursing through the world's most populous nation. In the AIDS-stricken villages of Henan, infection rates are reportedly as high as 65%. Rural victims contract the disease primarily through selling their blood. Unsafe blood collection—especially the practice of pumping pooled blood back into the villagers' bodies after the valuable plasma had been siphoned off—meant that the AIDS virus, once introduced into the pool, almost instantly found its way into new victims. “They look like famine victims in Africa—just bags of bones,” said Gao Yaojie [a retired 74-year-old doctor in Henan's capital, Zhengzhou]. “No one can imagine that people can look like that unless you see them with your own eyes.” In the mid-'90s, the government in Henan banned the blood [collection] stations as reports of AIDS began to emerge. But the damage was already done.

—Los Angeles Times, 5/31/2001

Once the norm, the traditional family now approaches the fringe, according to recent census data. One of every three births now occurs outside of marriage. In 1960, it was one in 20. Social upheaval is not too strong a term for this trend. Robert Rector, a Heritage Foundation scholar who specializes in the sociology of the family, says the latest census numbers are a “recipe for social collapse.” Outside the traditional family, says Rector, children are “seven times more likely to live in poverty” and “three to four times” more likely to end up in crime.

—Investors' Business Daily, 5/17/2001

Legislators in the Russian Duma approved laws that would allow Russia to import an estimated 22,000 tons of spent nuclear fuel from nations eager to get rid of their toxic waste. Atomic Ministry officials say their plan to store and one day reprocess the spent fuel would bring Russia about \$20 billion in revenue. They promise to use some proceeds to clean up existing nuclear waste sites. Environmentalists doubt that. They worry that corrupt officials would siphon off the money. Most troubling, they say Russia is ill equipped to take on more nuclear waste when it cannot deal with what it already has. “The vote today can make history,” Grigory Yavlinsky of the liberal Yabloko faction said

during a 20-minute debate in the Lower House of Parliament. “One hundred million Russian citizens are against it and only 500 people are for—300 members sitting here and 200 bureaucrats who will be getting the money.”

—Chicago Tribune, 6/7/2001

## Financial

The welfare model of Europe is known to be unsustainable in at least one respect. As the continent's population ages, the cost of providing generous state pensions under the current rules will prove insupportable: big increases in tax rates will be needed to balance the books, bigger than most politicians think voters will accept. And another characteristically European problem is also blamed on the welfare state: chronically high unemployment. The persistence of Europe's defective welfare model is not as surprising as some economists think. The welfare state is popular—not just with narrow sections of the electorate, able somehow to hold their countries to ransom, but with solid majorities of voters. It is popular even though voters know, or say they know, that their pension systems are heading for insolvency. These are among the findings of a new opinion-polling exercise carried out by Tito Boeri, Axel Börsch-Supan and Guido Tabellini, and reported in the latest issue of *Economic Policy*.

—The Economist, 5/31/2001

Russia has agreed to sell advanced ship-borne cruise missiles to the Iranian Navy, which will significantly boost Iran's military capability in the Hormuz Strait, leading into the shipping lanes of the Gulf. The sale of Russian Yakhont missiles was hinted at in March when President Khatami of Iran visited Moscow and discussed a deal with President Putin worth a predicted £5 billion. The decision was strongly criticized in Washington, which signed an agreement with Moscow five years ago to ban arms sales to Tehran.

—The Times (London), 5/12/2001

Enthusiasm for a larger Europe is starting to wane. Workers in Eastern Europe are concerned over plans to deny granting their workers the right to work in the rest of the EU for up to seven years after enlargement. Spain is attempting to link enlargement negotiations to a discussion with existing members of the EU on the future distribution of development funding. Public opinion polls in both camps are showing less enthusiasm for expanding the EU. In the candidate countries, less than 55 percent of Poles and 45 percent of Czechs would support membership in a referendum. Among member states, only 26 percent see enlargement as a priority while 35 percent oppose it. Fervent defenders of enlargement fear that solidarity—extending the EU's prosperity to the east as was done to Spain, Portugal and Greece in the mid 1980s—has become replaced by national self interest, underpinned by a reluctance to share financial resources with the poorer regions of an enlarged Europe. Some estimates show an enlargement would create 300,000 new jobs and boost foreign direct investment in new member states.

—Financial Times, 6/6/2001

Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov received the Syrian defense minister in Moscow to discuss a renewed interest in military-technical cooperation. The Syrian army is currently 90 percent equipped with Soviet hardware, of which almost 80 percent requires renewal. Following the collapse of the USSR, military-technical cooperation with Syria declined. Marshal Sustafa Talas brought two lists to Moscow. One of them records the Russian military hardware in use by the Syrian army in need of upgrading. The second was a list of modern arms and military hardware that Syria would like to acquire. Moreover, the defense minister expressed a desire to train its military personnel at Russian military academies and schools. Moscow is expected to earn more than 1 billion dollars as a result of the implementation of these plans for upgrades and deliveries of military hardware. Russian President Putin has set a target for worldwide arm sales of 4 billion dollars.

—Kommersant (Moscow), 5/25/2001

## Civil

About 2.5 million people died in eastern Congo during the country's 2 1/2-year civil war, an international humanitarian aid organization has reported. The overwhelming majority of deaths were related to disease and malnutrition—products of a conflict that has ravaged the vast, mineral-rich country's economy and health-care system—the New York-based International Rescue Committee said in a report published Tuesday. “The loss of life is perhaps the worst in Africa in recent decades,” the group's president said in a statement issued in New York. “The magnitude of suffering is extraordinary. The fighting has driven hundreds of thousands of people into the jungle, where they have had no access to food, medicine or shelter. Aid groups have been unable to reach many war-affected areas. The conflict's most dramatic affects have been on young children.” In two districts, Moba and Kalemie, an estimated 75% of children born during this war have died or will die before their second birthday.”

—Los Angeles Times, 5/10/2001

The US government is concerned that Pakistan's nuclear weapons program is not under adequate control and fears it could be spreading nuclear capabilities to other states. Richard Armitage, US deputy secretary of state, said the US had “concerns of people who were employed by the nuclear agency and have retired.” Officials said there have been contacts between North Korean officials and senior figures in the Pakistani nuclear establishment. US officials say that they continue to watch Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which harbors Osama bin Laden, the man who the US says masterminded the bombing of US embassies in Africa three years ago.

—Financial Times, 6/1/2001

Nepa, Nigeria's state-run electricity company, said on Thursday a third of the country would be without power for two weeks in the latest setback to faltering government

attempts at reviving electricity supplies. Nepa officials said vandals had attacked a vital transmission line last weekend, plunging 13 states in the east of Africa's most populous nation into darkness and cutting power to several main cities, including Port Harcourt where the 2.2m barrels/day oil industry is centered. The blackout comes amid growing disillusionment with President Olusegun Obasanjo's government and doubts about its ability to address the chronic infrastructure and institutional deficits he inherited when the military handed power back to elected civilians two years ago. On a good day Nepa produces scarcely more electricity than nearby Ghana, which has a population seven times smaller. The latest incident underlines the breadth of obstacles to reform in Nigeria. It is not only high level politicians and retired generals who stand to lose control of state patronage in a more functional, liberal economic environment who are a source of opposition. It is also gangs of thieves working for scrap metal merchants feeding off the aging carcasses of poorly protected Nepa installations.

—Financial Times, 6/7/2001

## Israel

Most people assume that the name Palestine derives from “Land of the Philistines” via the Greek Palaistine and the Latin Palaestina. But there is evidence, both philological and geographical, that questions this traditional attribution. The name Palestine may have originated as a Greek pun on the translations of “Israel” and the “Land of the Philistines.” The Greek and Latin words appear frequently in ancient literature, but for the most part, they appear to refer not to the Land of the Philistines, but to the Land of Israel! The Philistines arrived on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean from Greece or Cyprus by way of Egypt at the end of the Late Bronze Age (about the 13th century BCE) . We know this because Philistine material culture has close affinities with contemporaneous Mycenaean culture, especially their pottery. The earliest references to the Philistines in Egyptian inscriptions mention them as one of several Sea peoples. As early as the Histories of Herodotus, written in the second half of the fifth century BCE, the term Palaistine is used to describe not just the geographical area where the Philistines lived, but the entire area between Phoenicia and Egypt—in other words, the Land of Israel.

—Biblical Archaeology Review, May/June 2001

A four-year journey of reconciliation with the Jewish people culminated in Jerusalem with 500 Canadian visitors praying for forgiveness for their sins against the Jews. Participants included members of every major Christian denomination. The initiative came following efforts to heal strife in Canadian society. Although Canada is today relatively free of anti-Semitism, it was rife in the period before the establishment of the state of Israel. The Canadian government refused to allow the ill-fated St. Louis to dock with some 900 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany aboard, as well as refusing to accept 1,000 Jewish children from France. Beaches had signs, “No dogs or Jews allowed.”

—Jerusalem Post, 5/31/2001



The prophet Isaiah, looking into the future, said that when the Jewish people returned from exile to the Land of Israel, even the land would rejoice and provide an abundance of flowers: “The wilderness and the solitary place will be glad for them, and the desert will blossom as a rose” (Isaiah 35:1). This is that day, and now that millions of Jewish people have returned in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, the land is responding. Today, Israel is the leading exporter of flowers to Europe. This year, 1.5 billion flowers were shipped to Europe, some 30% of the entire stock of flower imports to the continent. Kenya is in second place, providing some 20% of Europe's flower needs. Most of these flowers are grown in Israel's southern Negev Desert.

—Bridges for Peace dispatch, May, 2001

Yisrael Rashal, Jewish Agency emissary in Odessa, told Arutz-7 today about the discovery of a hitherto unknown Jewish community in southern Ukraine: “About six weeks ago, in the little town of Konetzpol, which means ‘end of the field,’ a small community of 50 Jews—two or three families worth—was discovered.” When asked what he meant by “discovered,” he said, “It means that until now they did not want to be discovered, but they suddenly decided that they wanted a connection, and began showing interest in Israel and Aliyah [immigration to Israel]. They turned to a neighboring Jewish community, and now they are studying Hebrew. The ‘leader’ of the tribe is an 80-year-old woman, who is now studying Hebrew in the same ‘ulpan’ together with her family of 24 including her great-grandson who is 1.5 years old. . . . Yes, there could be many other little communities like this throughout Russia.”

—Arutz 7, 5/10/2001

## Book Review

***The Prayer of Jabez***, Bruce Wilkinson, Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, Oregon (2000); 92 pages.

*And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “O that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that your hand would be with me, and that you would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain,” So God granted him what he requested.—1 Chronicles 4:9,10, NIV*

A passion for feeding new interest in Christ clearly motivated this extended tract by Dr. Bruce Wilkinson, a founder of Promise Keepers. Recently, he has started WorldTeach—a fifteen-year effort to develop 120,000 new Bible teachers worldwide, for which “a national missions leader,” claims, “the fastest launch of any Christian ministry in history.” What makes the *Prayer of Jabez* noteworthy is both its social and religious impact. Here we find a book focusing on the prayer of an otherwise obscure descendant of Judah, appearing on the New York Times bestseller list in early March, and rising to head the list. In and of itself, this suggests the Prayer of Jabez is addressing a spiritual hunger that needs feeding.

There are moving lessons testifying to lives and hearts touched solely by the faith that God would answer the “Jabez prayer” – that is, to be of service to him. We find a chance meeting at the airport turning first into a marriage counseling session and finally a witness for Christ that brings hope to the desperate. Of note, there is consciousness-raising about consecration in a series of questions; “Do we really understand how far the American dream is from God's dream for us? [that we need] to be a living sacrifice? To be crucified to self?”

In its fervor, the book makes no small claims, and some of these are troubling. The first line of the preface reads, “I want to teach you how to pray a daring prayer that *God always answers*.” Inserting, “In God's due time” would help here. Additionally, it was uncomfortable reading, “with *a handful of core commitments* on your part, you can proceed from this day forward with the confidence and expectation that that your heavenly Father will bring it to pass for you.” Hence, any initial enthusiasm for the phenomenon of a best-selling book on prayer needs to be tempered. It would be helpful if there were more focus on the privilege of praying in Jesus' name; the necessity for our repentance; and the necessity for our conversion. With these cautions, its testimonies, its lessons, and its near infectious energy make the *Prayer of Jabez* a worthwhile book to read thoughtfully.

—Richard Doctor

## AfricanTrip Report

**Purpose of the Trip.** Our plans were initiated by a letter from Bro. O. M. Akpan, whom we met 28 years ago when Sr. Ruth and I joined Bro. Mark Kandel on our first service in Nigeria. Bro. Akpan asked that we attend a convention he organized Thursday through Sunday, at the end of April, 2001. We accepted, and proposed also a seminar for their leaders for three days following. After an overnight in England enroute (and a two-hour research interview with the very gracious Dr. C.B.F. Walker of the British Museum), we flew to Lagos on Wednesday, April 25, greeted by Michael Ajise who entertained me in his bachelor apartment, and assisted me at the domestic airport Thursday morning.

**Uyo:** My flight from Lagos to Calabar was cancelled, so I flew into Port Harcourt instead, then to Uyo overland. An accident with four large overturned trucks delayed traffic. I arrived in Uyo about midnight, and through many providences located the brethren by the end of Friday. I attended the Uyo Convention Saturday and Sunday, joined by 60 others. Bros. Donatus Ariwodor, Moses Ashiegbu, Cajetan Egbu and Sunday Ennang were present, and were all given some place on the program. The services were very instructive, and very edifying. Bro. Akpan of Uyo has organized 11 centers for studies in the Divine Plan of the Ages, ranging from perhaps 15 to 70 at each center. (70 were in attendance at one center we served later.)

The seminar, Monday through Wednesday, was attended by from 10 to 15 persons, including two sisters who were specially sharp and engaged. The convention services were in English, translated into Efik, but the seminar was conducted entirely in English—three hours in the morning, three in the afternoon, daily. We discussed the Chart of the Ages in detail, and (on request) Spirit, Soul, Resurrection—well known doctrines to most, but some of the newer ones needed it. Other subjects were Daniel, the 1260, 1290, 1335 days, Parousia and Harvest, Revelation 21-22, Zechariah 14, and Ezekiel 40-48. We also assisted the brethren in gathering from the post office 21 bags of volumes and literature—all promptly distributed.

As an example of the caliber of leaders in this group, I met a Bro. Peter Inyang who formerly held a well-paid post in the Anglican Church, but left searching for the truth. Subsequently studying at a Baptist seminary for three years, he found in their library the *Studies in the Scriptures*, recognized their value, and (somehow) subsequently got in contact with Bro. Akpan.

During our stay in Uyo we were visited by Bro. Esau Inyang, and later by his associate Bro. N. A. Umoh, who were so instrumental in our visit 28 years ago. Bro. Umoh is a zealous brother who continues to lead study groups in the Divine Plan, and sponsors conventions in his area attended by hundreds of people studying the Divine Plan.

**Warri.** Representatives of two ecclesias in Warri, including Bros. Vincent Aggreh, Pius Monye and Moses Obire, cooperated to sponsor an intensive two-day seminar in Warri. The brethren here are exceptionally well studied. We discussed a number of complex subjects, as well as an overall review of the Chart of the Ages. We were joined by four

visiting brethren, including Bros. Donatus Ariwodor and Lazarus Ukpai. We were warmly received at an evening service with the **Ibadan** ecclesia Monday, and graciously entertained by Bro. Joseph and Dupe Ajise.

Tuesday evening we arrived in **Ghana**, met by five dear brethren near midnight. Two 2-day seminars were held in Ghana—one in **Kumas**, hosted by Bro. Samuel Amoo (attendance 35), another in **Dunkwa** hosted by Bro. Adamu Adams (attendance 70)—and a well attended afternoon Chart of the Ages presentation at a group near **Cape Coast**. These brethren labored hard to prepare the venues, and invite the friends, in order to make these meetings successful.

While in Dunkwa, during a noon break in the seminar, we visited Bro. Paul Nkrumah at his home, a dear brother recently paralyzed in an auto accident. His faith continues deep and rich in the providences of the Lord. We also met the widow of Bro. Hilarion Hayford, the elderly brother who died earlier this year who was largely responsible for the Truth's influence in Dunkwa. We also saw the Bible Student Library he set up, which is still the venue for weekly studies led by Bro. Plange.

In Ghana we travelled with Bros. Joshua Dorh and Gabriel Yrenki of Accra, who donated a week of time to escort me on my various appointments in Ghana. Their many kindnesses, and sweet fellowship, were greatly appreciated. We were deeply impressed by the growth of the Truth in Ghana in recent years. Several groups in three areas of the country are now studying The Divine Plan of the Ages—all new acquaintances for me. We are very thankful for the Lord's overruling providence in each experience of our three weeks in Africa.

—David Rice