

THE HERALD

of Christ's Kingdom

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In the Beginning

The four evangelists describe 36 miracles performed by Jesus. Only one, the feeding of the five thousand, is mentioned by all four. John relates the events associated with seven miracles¹ before the crucifixion and one after. Six of these eight are only found in his gospel. (Matthew and Mark as well as John report that Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee.)

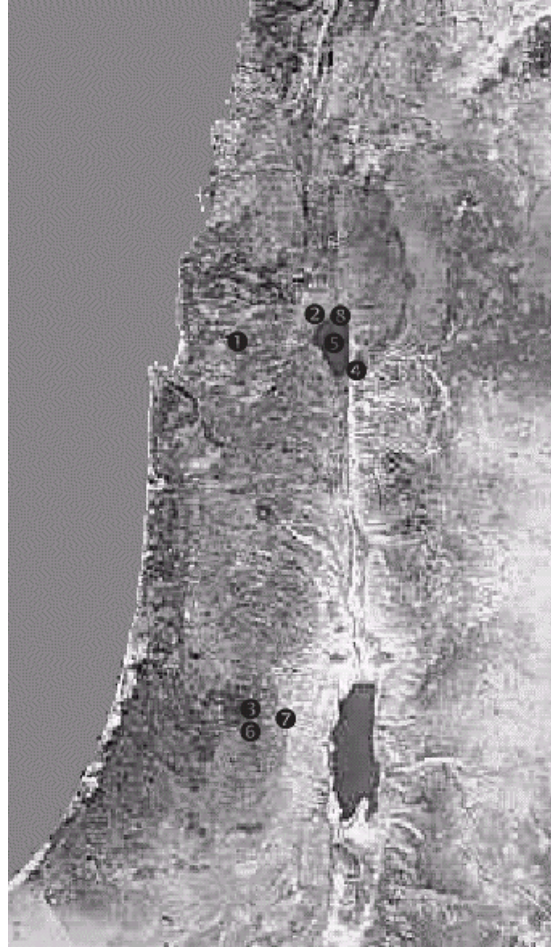
This issue of The Herald takes a close look at the seven miracles preceding the crucifixion. John is the only evangelist who draws attention to the first miracle by saying specifically that it was the first (turning water into wine). He continues that practice by noting that the healing of the nobleman's son of a fever was the second. A unique characteristic of that miracle was that Jesus was in one location while the person healed was in another. Then John stops numbering them, although some useful insights can be seen when comparing all eight with each other

The third miracle was the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. The fourth was the feeding the 5,000 and the fifth was the walking on the sea. The sixth miracle was the healing the man born blind; the seventh and most dramatic was the raising of Lazarus. Each of these seven miracles is examined in depth in this issue. (The eighth miracle, a great catch of fish described in John 21:6, occurred after the crucifixion and is not included.)

We conclude with a verse-by-verse examination of John 3 where Jesus spoke privately with Nicodemus about spirit begetting. Here was a Pharisee who had seen miracles and realized what they implied. His first words were, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Other Pharisees saw what he saw but drew no such conclusion.

As we consider the miracles of Jesus, let us realize that here was "a teacher come from God." Let each of us pattern our life after his, knowing that if we are faithful, the prophecy of Jesus will come true in us: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

1. See Appendix 176 in the Companion Bible for an interesting analysis of the relationship of each of these miracles to the others.



Miracles in John

1. Cana

Turning water into wine.

2. Capernaum

Healing the nobleman's son.

3. Pool of Bethesda [Jerusalem]

Healing the lame man.

4. Mountain overlooking Galilee

Feeding the 5,000.

5. Sea of Galilee

Walking on water.

6 Pool of Siloam [Jerusalem]

Healing a man blind from birth.

7. Bethany

The raising of Lazarus.

8. Shore of Galilee

Multitude of fish.

John 2:1-11

Turning Water Into Wine

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves.—Luke 22:17

Fred Binns

No incident of Scripture should be viewed without its context. Miraculous events are no exception, and may in fact require an even closer regard of the context than the purely historical details of the account. This is even more important since we have four gospels in which each writer has his own personal view. Each chose from the rich fund of events (John 21:25) those that suited his particular perspective, yet each account still intimately relates one to the other. All as moved by the spirit spoke of the coming kingdom and the promise of life to all. And it was not just life but that “more abundantly” (John 10:10). This new life was “as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2).

When Matthew spoke of the coming life-giving king, it was of a new growth out of the dried-up hopes of David: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jeremiah 23:5).

When Mark directed his readers to that servant and his life-giving ministry, it was to the fallen house of servants where he looked for that root: “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant The Branch” (Zechariah 3:8).

Luke, wishing to show us the man from the dead stock of Adam and his failed labor, shows us the man who gave his life for the world and bid Gentiles to his new work: “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD” (Zechariah 6:12).

John saw the glory of the Son of God (John 1:14), the one empowered to create all things (John 1:3), come down to a world in ruins to “make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). He also shows us the Branch of Jehovah: “In that day shall the Branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel” (Isaiah 4:2).

Each writer chose those parables, sayings, and miracles which best suited his need to bring the fullness of the blessed work of Christ before the church. With John seeing the glorious “Branch of Jehovah” we have among all four gospels, the most wonderful intimations of the coming new creative work.

With the benefit of the general context of the other gospels, we should look to the more immediate context of John’s gospel itself, particularly since John carefully enumerates the number of days prior to this miracle. He also wants us to note the order of the miracles and their location, as they appear in his record. The first two he describes were performed in Galilee,

outside of Judea. He rounds out his account of the incident by stating, quite directly, that turning water into wine was the first of all the miracles that Jesus performed.

Revealing the Messiah

Chapter two begins: “And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.” This was the “third day” from which event? Chapter one contains a carefully recorded notation of days which in this highly selective and concise gospel can only mean that John wants us to note carefully the events connected to the days mentioned. This miracle is part of a continuing revelation of the Branch of Jehovah.

John’s gospel opens with a brilliant display of Christ’s nature as the Word, and continues the notation of days in a more subtle way. The narrative continues with John the Baptist: “The record of John” (John 1:19). Priests and Levites have been sent to John by the Pharisees to ask John about his ministry. Even more interesting is that Jesus is present at the commencement of what is a gradual revelation of himself as Messiah to his future followers. This revelation is made first by John the Baptist, then by the Lord himself. But it is a revelation that is withheld from the priests, Levites, and Pharisees in familiar words we also apply at the end of this present age: “There standeth one among you, whom ye know not.” John was saying that they were in the presence of their Messiah. They only needed to ask and John would have pointed them to him. But they did not ask because they did not believe. Thus passed the first day of this revelation.

The narrative continues: “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Because the priests and Levites had returned to Jerusalem, the revelation was given only to the penitents and to John’s disciples: “Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and **they followed Jesus.**” Thereafter they communicated this wonderful news to their brethren (John 1:35-37, 40,41).

The Lord himself—“The day following” (John 1:43)—gives out this same revelation as he actively seeks those who would be his followers. But first these two disciples are shown where he lives: “Come and see” (John 1:39). What a revelation this is! It is like sitting in “heavenly places” (Ephesians 2:6) and it was only the beginning. After the Lord found Philip, we are at once brought to Nathaniel, an “Israelite without guile,” and to the revelation of “the Son of God [and] the King of Israel” (John 1:49).

Next we move from the place where the Lord dwells to Bethel, the house of God, and to the very gate of heaven (John 1:51; see also Genesis 28:17), a revelation that surely lies only within the disposition of the Branch of Jehovah. Then John informs us that on the third day from this last event “there was a marriage.” Since we have taken the trouble to follow John, we see that seven days had elapsed since the first announcement of this new work, of which we read: “And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with **water**, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the **holy spirit**” (John 1:32,33).

In this announcement, not surprisingly, we have the principle underlying the miracle which was to occur. John baptizes with water, Messiah baptizes with spirit. The Old Order is being prepared for the New. The miracle of turning water into wine is indeed the commencement of the Lord’s

ministry to Israel, yet in a very special way. We recall his rather enigmatic statement, “Mine hour is not yet come” (John 2:4). The facts, however, are quite simple: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:11,12).

Strictly speaking, if we may use this term, his work for Israel would start a few days later when he would “suddenly come to his temple” (Malachi 3:1-3). John carefully notes the special order of days as he continues: “**After this** he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there **not many days**. And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem” (John 2:12,13). In Jerusalem Jesus **cleanses** his Father’s temple. The leaders of the nation were “passed over” because of their comprehensive refusal to accept the cleansing of John and their consequent rejection of their Messiah (Matthew 3:7-12). The Lord’s first work was to cast out the money changers and that sets the complete context for the miracle of turning water into wine. Prior to this Jerusalem work, Jesus was revealing himself as the Branch of Jehovah to those who had received him: “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and **manifested forth his glory**; and **his disciples believed on him**” (John 2:11). “And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14; see also 1 John 1:1-3).

Water Into Wine

As we consider this wonderful miracle, let us first consider the various symbolic aspects associated with wine in the Scriptures and determine under its instruction the fullness of “the glory of the only begotten of the Father.”

The most significant use of this special metaphor is the cup that the Lord bequeathed to his followers. It is striking that it was with this symbol of wine that the Lord opened and closed the intimate communion he enjoyed (and still enjoys) with all those who “receive him.” It is present at the beginning of a spiritual work and, as we follow the figure, it is a maturing work as well. The Millennial age is, for instance, marked by the figure of new wine: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim” (Joel 3:18).

Zechariah writes: “For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids” (Zechariah 9:17). This applies to Israel since they will receive the blessings of the new age first. But as the age advances and the nations are brought back, we have the matured (old) wine served: “And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” (Isaiah 25:6).

The most striking reference to this figure is made by the Lord to the closing of the Jewish age as opposed to the opening of the Gospel age: “No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.” The whole incident which prompted this remark is recorded in Luke 5:27-39. In addition to furnishing us with a definitive application from the Lord himself, it also emphasizes the important admonition that accompanies the wonderful instruction of the Cana miracle itself.

The incident in Luke provides some interesting parallels. First we find another disciple called (Levi in this case). Again the Pharisees are present. John the Baptist comes to our attention

because his followers are mentioned. And most importantly, we have the comparison between that which is old and unready for the new, this time with a direct warning of the responsibility involved. The scribes and Pharisees had drunk deep of the old wine and had little appreciation for the vintage of the gospel; worse, they did not appreciate that the old was running out. But far worse than that, they did not realize that the desiccated wineskin of Judaism was worse than useless—they were violently resisting the new work. Not for them the cleansing John knew they needed. As leaders in Israel they should have been foremost in acknowledging their need for cleansing in readiness for their Messiah. But they had already rejected this and so, although as leaders of the nation they are the first to be present at this revelation of Messiah's glory (and in his very presence), they are at once passed over.

The significance of the water pots now becomes clear. John has distinctly described their purpose: "There were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkin¹ apiece" (John 2:6). Note the words, "after the manner of the **purifying** of the Jews." Even if John had not told us that their measure was two or three firkins, they would have still stood as condemning witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). Similarly, if we did not know that these leaders had steadfastly refused to enter the offered rest of the new order by consistently opposing the Lord's healing on the Sabbath, obdurately insisting that their own works were sufficient, we would still have recognized the significance of these six water pots standing ready for this miracle performed on the seventh day, condemning them once more for failing to enter into the rest prepared from the foundation of the world for the people of God (Matthew 25:34; Hebrews 4:3,4).

John does not need to tell us that at the first these vessels had been filled at the word of Moses. We know we are in the presence of the Branch of Jehovah who in the office of the greater Moses is filling them once more: "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim" (John 2:7). Even then to fully appreciate the significance of this precious symbol of water turned into wine we must turn to the night in which the sacred cup was passed to the disciples. On that night Jesus "poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet" (John 13:5). He said only later would they understand, but he assured them that they were "clean every whit" (John 13:10) and that "through the **word** which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

This sacred lesson of service must be well learned, the more so as we now see that this ministry of turning water into wine was placed solely in the hands of the servants. What a wonderful thought it is to realize that this miracle has been wrought by the Lord throughout the Gospel age as faithful servants have ministered the word to the invited guests (Luke 14:21-23). While there are servants to "fill," "draw," and "bear" this miraculous gospel vintage, it will continue to come forth. It will come forth and increase for there must be "new wine" and "well refined"—for all are invited—and the "waterpots" must be "filled to the brim"!

As wonderful as all this will be, this first miracle of the seventh day was preceded by a promise for all the "Israelites indeed" with the words "thou shalt see greater things than these." The Branch of Jehovah after having fulfilled his work on earth is waiting to welcome his faithful servants home. The cup he filled will soon have been all "divided" (Luke 22:17). They have all seen where he abides; they all know the way (John 14:4). And he has promised to wait for them (Mark 14:25) when in his presence he will pour his wine anew for them. He will do this not as the first born of every creature, but as the only begotten of the Father, first born from the dead.

"She [wisdom] hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table" (Proverbs 9:2). "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I

am; that they may behold my glory” (John 17:24). What a prospect as we anticipate the time when he takes the cup again and, giving thanks, says, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves.” Then “we shall see him as he is.” (John 4:43-54).

1. According to the *Companion Bible*, one firkin is about nine gallons.

John 4:43-54

Healing the Nobleman's Son

There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that - Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.—John 4:46-54

Donald Holliday

The sequence of events in John's gospel leading up to this miraculous sign is of particular interest from our vantage point at the end of the age. The ministry of Jesus had been in Judea, but while some interest there is recorded in John 4:1, hostility had also developed to the point that Jesus needed to depart. Curiosity may have brought out crowds greater than had been attracted by John the Baptist, but this had produced a deepening hatred by the powers that be. "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), he left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee" (John 4:1-3). Notwithstanding the interest shown, in John 3:32 we read, "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony."

Jesus then departed from Judea, and this may be seen aptly to parallel the closing of the first advent of Israel's Messiah. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

A depiction of the work of the Gospel age follows. The message and blessing of the gospel now finds ready hearts in Samaria. These were a people of mixed origin drawn mainly from various Gentile nations, though including some of Jewish stock. "For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country" (John 4:44). The account of the response, first of the woman of Samaria, and then of her kinsfolk, forms a moving illustration of the call of the church during the age between the two advents. That this work occupied "two days" adds to the force of the analogy (see John 4:43).

Then Jesus was to appear again, this time in Galilee. While Galilee was essentially a part of Israel, it was in close proximity to ten Gentile nations forming the Decapolis. The blessings of the Master's further ministry were now figuratively to extend beyond Israel. In fact, his future activities include restoration and blessing both for Israel and for all mankind. It is here that we are afforded a beautiful illustration of the central feature of the Second Advent program: the deliverance of mankind from the bondage of sin and death.

Jesus is now at Cana, and John is careful to remind us that here the first sign had taken place, the turning of the water into wine. What happens now is described by John as the "second sign." (See John 2:11; 4:46,54.) We may justly ask, "A sign of what?"

In this gospel John refers to "many miracles" or signs: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30,31).

We notice that John 2:23 and 3:2 speak of impressive miracles he had already performed. Why then is this one called a "second sign"?

The apostle John's reference to this second sign has caused some to enumerate in this gospel special mention of six further signs (elsewhere described in this issue). Each of these signs is thus selected to reveal the Master's ability in wonderful ways to fully rise to the needs of human limitations and failure. However, John does not continue to enumerate in this way by calling the next "sign" the "third" sign (John 5:1-17, the impotent man), nor are the following ones so numbered. This "sign" was notable for being the "second sign" performed here at the same place. He had marked his first presence here by turning water into wine. He would now manifest his great authority over death itself, his second presence sign.

This second sign reveals the power of an invisible Lord to release mankind from the dying process. An "invisible Lord"? Yes. The miracle took place in Capernaum while Jesus was in Cana.

The invisible presence of the Lord at the second advent is one of the gems of truth long hidden and reserved for disclosure at the time of his *parousia*. A literal interpretation of such texts as Revelation 1:7 ("every eye shall see him") led to expectations of a dramatic and breath-taking display of the descent of a divine form fulfilling literally the visionary language of this book of symbols.

Job, speaking of the Most High, confessed, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5). Here the Greek version of the Old Testament uses the same Greek word found in Revelation 1:7, illustrating the wider meaning of perception. We are told in John 1:18, "no man hath seen God at any time." Here the word *horao* is used again but now in its literal sense. This confirms that Job's "seeing" was therefore not by literal sight.¹

The thief-like presence of the returned Lord was taught by Jesus, and echoed by Paul and Peter (see Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:39; Revelation 16:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4; 2 Peter 3:10). Yet in the wisdom of God, this truth became submerged under human misconceptions and awaited the appropriate hour for a full appreciation.²

We are reminded here of God's word to Moses in Exodus: "And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exodus 3:12). The token, or sign, that this faithful servant was indeed sent of God would be in the final achievement of the divine purpose in bringing the bondaged race out of Egypt unto himself at this mountain of God's holiness, representative of the kingdom. Likewise with the second sign of Jesus. If the wine of the first presence sign was the giving of the spirit, the second sign that he was sent of God would be in the achievement of the divine purpose in bringing mankind to the Father, the work of the intervening age.

This seems to be beautifully confirmed in the Master's prayer: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."—John 17:21-23.

The body members of Christ complete in perfect oneness with their head, Jesus, and with their heavenly Father, now achieve that blessed purpose in the divine mind from before the foundation of the earth, releasing death's captives and restoring man into that close communion with his Maker once lost by Adam at the fall.

Did Jesus have all this in mind when he saw that nobleman approach and listened to his - urgent plea to restore his dying son? Does it perhaps explain the words of the Master in response to that appeal? "Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48).

Was Jesus in fact reflecting on the inert faith, not only of Israel, but also of the whole human race he came to save? Until the divine plan is completed, when the almighty power of heaven has devoured death and destroyed the veil that covers the nations (Isaiah 24:5,6), "Except ye see these signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48). On the other hand, they who during this age of preparation have tasted the wine of the spirit and pronounced it more wonderful than anything man has ever experienced in the former days are those described as the ones who "have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8). How precious is such faith to the Master.

The almost universal lack of belief and trust in an Almighty God and in the efficacy of one perfect man's death upon the tree, does not frustrate that merciful purpose. Yet how can any who know and love the Lord bear the thought of so great a love thus spurned!

If we thus weep for man's hopeless rejection of that arm so long out-stretched, we do indeed the more take comfort in the truth that this great veil is due for removal. Countless scales are yet to fall from eyes long blind to heaven's love.

In desperation the nobleman cries out. The very urgency of the case demands action, not philosophy. It has taken him so long to make the journey, and, with material mind, he is frantic to see how both he and this healer can make the return in time to be of use. Still does he demand sight. He expects a visible work of a visible Lord. He is yet to realize the enormity of the power of an invisible presence. With wonder does he hear the words of Jesus: "Go thy way; thy son liveth."

A whole day's journey lay ahead before he could fully realize the certainty of that assurance. With haste he would now make his way. Did he sleep that night, or did he brave the hours of darkness the sooner to reach the sick-bed of his son? Whichever way, a new morn broke before the sight of servants hurrying to meet him with that news so welcome to his ears. Again he heard those words, in echo of the promise from the Master's lips: "Thy son liveth!"

One more day's journey, and mankind will find that every promise of the Word of God is true, as real and valid at the moment of utterance as that day when sight reveals what lack of trust before had missed.

What hour did death's fever begin to lift? For some it was at Golgotha, confirmed by an empty tomb. Others may need to wait until the visible manifestations of the "seventh hour."

Then will all know that when Jesus rose from death, assurance was there given for every man. Do we require that second sign to kindle faith? Or is that first sign more than we could ever ask?

1. (a) Generally *horao* means see with one's own eye, become aware (Genesis 27:1). (b) Figuratively it is used of intellectual or spiritual perception: notice, become conscious (Psalm 34:8); or of what man experiences or suffers (seeing death, Psalm 89:48). It also means to regard (misfortune, Psalm 106:44), attend to, know or have experienced (Deuteronomy 11:2), or be concerned about something (Genesis 37:14; Isaiah 5:12). "Seeing" in the Greek and Hebrew O.T. can refer also to perception by means of other senses, e.g., hearing (Jeremiah 33:24) or understanding (1 Samuel 12:17; 1 Kings 20:7 or LXX 1 Kings 21:7).—New International Dictionary of N.T. Theology.

2. We have an interesting confirmation of the early teaching of an invisible coming of Christ in 2 Thessalonians 2:1,2: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." Here "at hand" is an unfortunate mistranslation, as Vine and others confirm. The true rendering of *enistemi* should be "is present." The word is used elsewhere consistently in this way such as in Romans 8:38, ("nor things present, nor things to come"). See also 1 Corinthians 3:22; 7:26; Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 9:9.

The graphic language used by Paul in his first letter to this church (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, "with a shout," "trumpet," etc.) was evidently understood in the light of his verbal teaching while at Thessalonica, and in that same first letter in chapter 5:1-4, ("as a thief"). He had warned them to be ever alert lest that day should overtake them. It appears subsequently that some had disquieted the friends with the belief that certain events signified that the day of Christ's return was already present. Paul reassures them not by asking, "Well did anyone see him descend, hear the shout?" Instead he describes certain events that must precede the Lord's return. (See *Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 2, p. 269.)

John 5

Miracle at Bethesda

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.—Psalm 103:2,3

Carl Hagensick

As Jehovah is mentioned as the “healer of all diseases” under the Old Testament law arrangements, so Jesus, as the Father’s active agent, performed countless miracles healing the infirmities of those who came to him at his first advent (Luke 5:15).

A remarkable example of one of these healing miracles is recorded in the fifth chapter of the gospel of John. This event occurred during one of Jesus’ visits to observe the feasts in Jerusalem, probably the feast of Passover on this occasion.

The Location

The miracle occurred at the pool of Bethesda, close by the sheep market on the eastern side of the city. Archaeologists concur on the location of this pool and have done extensive excavations at the site. The gospel account mentions five porches, or covered walkways, which surrounded the pool and protected visitors from the heat of the sun. Dr. James Lancaster, writing of how the pool would have appeared in Jesus’ day, states: “At that time the pool was divided by an east-west dam across the center. The five porticoes may have referred to the four sides and the central dam.”

Verse 4 speaks of an angel periodically troubling the waters, giving them healing powers. There is some question about the authenticity of the verse because it is missing in both the Sinaitic and Codex Vaticanus. It was not unusual for the Jews to attribute unexplainable phenomenon to the angels. It is also possible the pool’s owners, possibly priests, operated a sluice gate in a dam to “trouble” the waters and make a profit from the waters’ presumed alleviative powers.

If there were curative, or even palliative powers, to the waters of the pool, it might well explain why it was given the name Bethesda, meaning the house of mercy or house of grace. Alternatively, it may have taken its name from the suburban area Bezetha, where it was located. Some scholars feel that it is the same site mentioned as the “king’s pool” in Nehemiah 2:14.

The Ailment and the Man

Though we are not informed as to the nature of the man's infirmity, we may safely assume that it inhibited his ability to walk since the miracle-producing words of Jesus were, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk" (John 5:8). The Greek word translated infirmity, *asthenia*, literally means "lacking strength." The word is not so much suggestive of paraplegia (the inability to use one's extremities) as it is of paraparesis (the lack of strength greatly inhibiting the functionality of the limbs).

From the fact that he had had his ailment for 38 years, we may deduce that he acquired it when he was a young man. That it was not a birth defect is attested to by Jesus' words to the healed man later in the temple: "Behold thou art made whole, sin no more, lest some worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14).

These words strongly infer that the ailment which Jesus healed was a direct result of some sin or vice which the man had committed some four decades earlier. Such paraparesis can result from syphilis or from prolonged alcoholism with its accompanying malnourishment and lack of vitamin B-12. We simply do not have enough evidence to form a solid conclusion as to the nature of the infirmity. Such details are also unnecessary.

The account does not state that he had sufficient faith in Jesus to request a miracle as so many others had done. In fact he did not even recognize that it was Jesus to whom he was speaking, though he was apparently later apprized of the fact (John 5:13-15). He simply asked for assistance in getting into the pool when the waters became agitated. Although his faith did not reach out to request relief from his illness, it was strong enough to quickly respond to the command to arise and walk. That was the faith that resulted in his immediate cure.

Lessons for Us

The same Greek word *asthenia* is used of a Christian in James 5:14, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Here it does not refer to physical weakness, but to spiritual faint-heartedness. This spiritual weakness can frequently be traced to our former sins of lack of faith and trust in the overruling providences of God.

How often we want to say as did the early disciples, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5)! The Lord responds not by miraculously carrying us to the healing waters, but rather by calling out to our faltering faith: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." It is by responding to that command that we are healed of our spiritual infirmities.

Frail human nature trends downward in the course of sin. The longer we are in that condition, the greater the load of guilt we bear, the weaker we become, and the feeling of estrangement from the throne of heavenly grace grows stronger. But even if it extends over the greater part of one's life, as long, as it were, as thirty- eight years, we may rest

assured that the Lord will respond to our call for help. Christ's response will not be to direct us to some earthly palliative, some temporal pool of Bethesda, but will, in itself, produce full healing if we will but have the faith to believe. When we arise to that call of faith, it will not be to dip our body in some agitated, earthly waters, but to walk straightway to the temple of worship and praise the Lord for his goodness unto us.

But it is one thing to obtain that heavenly grace to walk upright, and it is another thing to maintain that state of favor. To maintain that state, we must further respond to the added call, "Go and sin no more, lest some worse thing happen unto thee." The apostle Paul states the matter in plain terms: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29).

The Sabbath Debate

A group of the Jews who had not witnessed the healing, but saw the impotent man walking away with his bed, accused him of breaking the Sabbath laws by what he was doing. His response was simple: the man who had healed him told him to carry it. When he identified Jesus as the healer, the anger of the Jews turned against him.

The various exchanges between Jesus and the Jews over the Sabbath law resulted in different responses. The response of Jesus on this occasion increased their hatred so much that they sought to kill him.

All he said was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). At first glance, this could appear in their eyes as accusing God of being a Sabbath breaker. After all, the Sabbath law was based on God resting during the Sabbath: "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:10,11).

Apparently, however, the Jews had reconciled themselves on this question, perhaps reasoning that God was exempt from his own laws. In this case their accusation was deeper; the charge was blasphemy. Perhaps God could break his own Sabbath law, but if Jesus violated it, he was making himself equal with God. Undoubtedly Jesus increased their anger even more when he said it was not he that worked on the Sabbath, but God who enabled him to do so (John 5:18,19).

In verses 20 to 22 Jesus shows how these works only prefigure greater works. Claiming to be Jehovah's representative in all matters of judgment, he foretells that making the lame man walk was only a foregleam of the greater work of raising the dead. He refers here, not to the temporary resuscitations of Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of

Nain, and Lazarus, but to the future work of the great antitypical Sabbath of raising all mankind from the tomb.

It is on the basis of these prophesied works that he sums up his relationship with the Father in verse 23: “All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.”

Two Resurrections

Jesus proceeds to illustrate the greater works which he will do. In verses 24 to 27 we read: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”

In this passage he is not referring to the work of bringing all mankind back to life. Rather he limits these benefits to those who hear and believe on his word. He implies that the Father, who had life “in himself,” passed that non-dependent life to his son who, in turn, gives it to the believing hearer.

Although the words “and now is” in verse 25 are not found in the Sinaitic manuscript, they are not far from being correct. Beginning at Pentecost the procedure for producing immortal life began with the bestowal of the holy spirit.

In at least one important aspect, this “new life” or resurrection concept for the church - operates in an opposite way than it does for the balance of mankind. Humanity will receive new bodies and then, walking up the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8-10), develop a righteous character. For the church it is the reverse; they first develop a holy disposition and then are given celestial bodies (1 Corinthians 15:40).

Jesus continues by describing another great event. “Do not marvel at this” work with his church, he says, but know that there is still another resurrection, one that will affect the entire human race.

The updated version of the New American Standard Bible, noting in its subheading covering verses 25 to 32 that they speak of “Two Resurrections,” correctly translates verses 28 and 29: “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”

Seven Witnesses

Having stated his defense against the charges of blasphemy, in John 5:31-47 Jesus calls seven witnesses to the stand to prove the accuracy of his statements:

- 1. He, himself, is the first witness.
- 2. An unnamed second witness is probably the man he had just healed. This unnamed man was an accurate eye-witness of Jesus' claims.
- 3. John the Baptist is the third witness.
- 4. The works he performed were the fourth witness as he later says, "Though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38).
- 5. Jehovah was the fifth witness. The accusers of the Lord had never seen him or heard his voice, not because it was impossible, but because they had not used the inner ear of conscience to perceive his message. God's word did not abide in them.
- 6. The sixth witness is the Old Testament. If they searched its pages, they would discover its Messianic prophecies were being fulfilled in Jesus.
- 7. The final witness was Moses: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

Thus did our Lord turn the healing of an impotent man, made ill through his own excesses, to the glory of God by becoming one of the witnesses of Jesus' Messianic claims. Not only that, but this became yet another illustration of the far-reaching powers of his coming kingdom. That kingdom was something which he not only preached, he gave his life on the cross of Calvary to make it a reality

John 6:1-15

Feeding Five Thousand

Feed me with the food that is needful for me.—Proverbs 30:8, RSV

Aaron Kuehmicel

The feeding of the five thousand is the Lord's only miracle that is recorded in all four gospels. A comparison of all the accounts provides a more complete understanding than reading just one of them.

Prelude to the Miracle

Jesus paired his disciples and sent them out as a witness and testimony of himself. Before sending them out he gave them power to: 1) heal the sick; 2) cleanse the lepers; 3) cast out unclean spirits; 4) raise the dead; 5) preach the kingdom of God (Matthew 10:1,8; Luke 9:2).

Receiving both ability and instruction, they dispersed "everywhere" (Luke 9:6), preaching and healing.

The gospels of Matthew and Mark record that the death of John the Baptist was the catalyst that brought the dispersed disciples together again. Matthew states that during this time of dispersion, they were still in contact with and had significant interaction with Christ Jesus. (This conflict is reconciled when one realizes that the perspective and purpose of the writers differed. Matthew took events out of sequence and combined them to make a point. Luke tries to record the events in the order in which they occurred so he does not record it similarly.)

While the disciples were dispersed, Matthew says they were participants in the Sermon on the Mount and the Kingdom of Heaven parables. The timing of Matthew 13, for our consideration, is not as important as is the affirmation the disciples gave at the conclusion of hearing the kingdom of heaven parables. Matthew records Jesus asking his disciples, after stating the parables in Matthew 13, the question: "Do you understand all these things?" The disciples replied, "Yes." What an interesting reply! Surely they felt that they did understand! Perhaps they were embarrassed to admit the depth of their ignorance.

Upon their reply, Jesus gave the parable about the householder bringing forth good things. In effect, he told them that if they understood, they had a responsibility to teach and share the things that they have (Matthew 13:51,52). What did they have? They had the ability to work miracles and to teach. They also had been exposed to a spiritual

understanding, a spiritual perspective and outlook, and knew they had a responsibility to use that ability and insight.

The Miracle

John's death, his burial by the disciples, and the desire to tell the Master brought the disciples together. Jesus takes them apart and this is where the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand begins. It is the disciples' first opportunity to show the Master what they learned from being sent out.

The gospel accounts differ as to exactly what Jesus and the disciples did on the day preceding the miracle, but collectively they state that Jesus preached to the multitudes about the kingdom of God, and healed as many as approached him. The accounts do not state whether the disciples healed or not though there is evidence they did not: 1) the Scriptures do not say that they did; 2) in humility they deferred to their Master and assumed the role of student (they were being ministered to as well as the multitudes); 3) had they participated in the physical healing and spiritual feeding of the crowd, it would have been a natural extension for them to physically feed the crowd in the evening.

At evening, the disciples implored Jesus to disperse the crowds so that they might find food to eat, but the Lord did not do it. Instead, he told his disciples to feed them (Matthew 14:6). Here was their opportunity. They had been given the miraculous ability to heal, raise the dead, and cast out demons (Matthew 10:8). Jesus also told them they had a responsibility to preach (Matthew 10:7,27). Now, the opportunity presented itself and Jesus even told them what they should do; he did not tell them how.

Although the opportunity was clearly before them, they did not see it. Jesus wanted them to stretch mentally, to not think naturally, to trust him and the ability and power he had given them (Matthew 9:16,17). But the disciples could not grasp what he was doing, so they replied from a practical perspective: "Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little" (John 6:7). Easton's Bible Dictionary defines a penny as a Roman soldier's pay for one day. It would take an estimated 200 day's pay to feed this crowd and the disciples did not have that much. They did have a different resource but they failed to use it because they did not realize the value of what they possessed. Lest we marvel at how quickly they failed, we should put ourselves in their place. How well would we have done?

Jesus did not dwell on the fact that they did not understand what he was implying. He asked what they had available; five barley loaves and two small fishes were graciously - offered by a young boy.

All four gospel accounts say that Jesus gave thanks and then distributed the bread and fish. What a wonderful example of humility. Though Jesus performed the miracle, he acknowledged the source by which he was able to do it, so he thanked his Father before he blessed others.

The multitude was organized into groups and sat down on grassy places. Jesus distributed the food to his disciples and they distributed it to the groups. We are not told how they distributed it, but they probably did not give the food to each member of the multitude. It is more likely they distributed it to one or more representatives of each group and then these representatives further dispensed it. After all had eaten, Jesus told his disciples to gather up the fragments so nothing would be lost. The fragments filled twelve baskets. (See John 6:12,13.)

We are told that five thousand men were fed, which is where we get the name of this miracle. But was it only five thousand? Although we do not know the actual number, we do know the multitude included more than just men. After all, it was a boy who supplied what was used for the miracle. If a boy was among the multitude, it is likely that both women and children participated and were not counted. Some have postulated that as many as fifteen thousand might have been fed.

We also do not know the size of the baskets used to collect the fragments. Strong's Concordance indicates that they were small baskets. Regardless of the size, everyone had sufficient to eat because there were fragments to be collected.

Why would the Master, who controlled wind and sea, converted water into wine, and raised the dead, care about collecting fragments of food? Was it simple frugality? Was he concerned about having provisions for the morrow? No. It is much more likely that he wanted to show that the gathering of the fragments proved the reality and scope of the miracle.

This miracle is a larger picture of how we learn. Jesus distributed to his disciples, they distributed to representatives, and these distributed to the multitude. It is a model of how our heavenly Father and his son spiritually care for his people by using spiritual leaders. This is an arrangement from which we still benefit to this day. It is also a model of the ecclesia arrangement with its spiritual leaders (representatives) feeding the people of God.

Why Miracles?

Jesus said the crowd came to him for food, not for instruction, nor because they believed he was the Messiah, the son of God. Yet he fed them anyway. Why? He fed them in fulfillment of the Law, of which love and compassion are major components. The Law, as summarized in the Ten Commandments, addressed one's relationship to the heavenly Father and mankind. This is illustrated in the burnt and meal offerings. The burnt offering shows service to God; the meal offering shows service to man. Jesus' miracles were fulfilling the meal offering (his service to his fellow man), while his life (the living and giving of it) fulfilled the burnt offering. Both were necessary and both were most pleasing to his Father.

Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). The value of a miracle was the effect it should have on those who witnessed it. The recipient was often relieved of a terrible condition, while everyone had to face the mental challenge of reconciling the miracle to the one who performed it. This was meant to stimulate and grow their faith for the purpose of salvation. Jesus performed the miracles because he was compassionate and touched with their infirmities. He wanted to convince Israel that he was the Messiah; he gave many signs to show it. The effect of these signs was to bring salvation to all who believed in him. Miracles also helped start the gathering of a people for his name.

Did Jesus walk through the crowds healing those he thought should be healed? Perhaps. But the Scriptures seldom record his performing a miracle without first being asked to do so. He healed those who recognized their need and who asked to be healed. Before approaching Jesus, each one had to acknowledge that Jesus could perform the miracle and believe that he would. Because of their belief those desiring to be healed had to act; they approached and asked directly, or they reached out to touch or to be touched by him. In responding to their need, Jesus' touch wasn't always physical.

So it is in our lives. We must first believe that God is and that he is a rewarder of them that love him. Then we must reach out in faith believing that he is both able and willing. When touched by his son, we are no longer the same! How do we react when Jesus touches us? Will we be like the nine lepers who went their way, or will we be like the one who returned glorifying God? That is a question each must answer.

Lessons for the Listeners

Jesus met the need of each one in the crowd that day. It was a mixed multitude. Some were wealthy and some were poor. Some knew when their next meal would be, others did not. Some followed hoping for bread for their stomachs, some for bread for their heads, while some hoped for both. When people are hungry and uncertain of when they will next eat, they will eat as much as they can when the opportunity presents itself. If food is plentiful, they will gather some for later use. So it was that day. They ate as much as they could, and carried away more. No one left without being fed. In fact, they were fed twice: once for the head and once for the stomach. No matter how little or how much each one ate, all were filled.

Jesus tells us, "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). A "heavy laden" person may be burdened with sin, the excessive demands of religious leaders, oppressed and persecuted, weary with the concerns and cares of life, or perhaps, worst of all, be weary in the search for the meaning of life. Jesus frees everyone from all these burdens and he promises peace with God. That peace comes through an understanding of God's love, an acknowledgment of our position before him and of the sacrifice of his son for our sins. This was the food offered that day. When Jesus feeds us, we are completely fed.

When Jesus tells us to do something, he supplies the means to do it. When we are given God's holy spirit, we have a responsibility. Spiritual growth comes at the expense of our natural mindedness, expectations, and rights. Growth in natural things comes at the expense of spiritual growth. We must not let the ordinariness of this life, the daily natural events and concerns of this world, retard our spiritual growth. Which growth do we cultivate most: the natural or the spiritual? Would those who witness our daily life and conduct agree? Like the disciples, we also are challenged to see, and think, and act spiritually.

Jesus fed the multitude everything they wanted; there was food for both soul and body. By doing this he reminded his disciples, and all of his followers, that they have the ability and responsibility to feed others. Because of this miracle, we are confident that he can and will meet all of our needs. The lessons of this miracle performed so long ago still apply to us today.

John 6:16-25

Walking on Water

Be not faithless, but believing.—John 20:27

Robert Goodman

Walking on water was one of our Lord's most dramatic and profound miracles. As we consider the circumstances surrounding it, we see a much deeper significance to the events. We are told in the Scriptures that Jesus and his disciples left Bethsaida in a boat to withdraw from the crowds and go to a solitary place. Jesus had been teaching and performing miracles and he and the disciples were weary. As they sat on a mountain on the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee, they realized their seclusion would be short lived as they saw the multitude approaching. It was just before Passover and the crowds were seeking Jesus. Our Lord had compassion on them and instructed his disciples to obtain food that they might be fed. Jesus blessed the five loaves, broke them, and fed five thousand men plus women and children with those loaves and two fish. This was a miracle for the masses; every person was filled and there were twelve baskets left over.

The multitude wanted to make Jesus their king. Not only could he heal the sick and afflicted, he could feed thousands. Our Lord, realizing it was not yet his time, desired solitude to meditate and pray so he instructed his disciples to get into a boat and row to Capernaum. Then he sent the multitude away and departed. When evening came, Jesus was alone on the mountain praying. Doubtless he was regaining his strength and enjoying communion with the heavenly Father.

The disciples were alone in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. They undoubtedly assumed Jesus would walk to Capernaum along the shore. A great storm arose and the waves tossed their ship about. They rowed with all their strength to get to safety but the wind opposed them.

We are told in John 6:19 that they had only rowed 25 or 30 furlongs (a little more than three miles). Mark 6:47 states that the ship was in the midst of the sea. The Greek word for midst (*mesos*, Strong's 3319) has the idea of being in the middle, as in halfway between two shores. The Sea of Galilee is about 13 miles long and more than seven miles wide. Rowing from a point north of Gergesa on a northwesterly course to Capernaum would be a distance of just over six miles; the halfway point would be three miles. They probably rowed directly across the sea toward Capernaum, otherwise they would have rowed toward the shore when the storm arose.

Jesus sent the disciples on their way in late afternoon. They expected their journey would take a few hours, but they were still rowing as night fell. When a great storm overtook them, they turned the bow of the boat into the wind and fought the storm.

Sleepless and exhausted, they were startled during the fourth watch (between three and six a.m.) when they saw a figure approach them on the storm-tossed sea. They had been rowing for more than nine hours. The Scriptures state they thought they saw a spirit and were afraid. It appeared as though the figure would pass them by. Thinking Jesus was a spirit, they cried out. Over the roar of the storm, Jesus heard their cries and immediately said, "Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid" (Mark 6:50). Still doubtful that it was our Lord, Peter said, "Lord if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come" (Matthew 14:28, 29). For a few steps Peter walked on water, but as he looked to the wind and waves, he was afraid and began to sink. He cried out to Jesus and said, "Save me!" Jesus stretched out his hand, Peter came out of the water, and Jesus replied, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). Even though Jesus told them to not be afraid, when Peter used his natural eyes, he was afraid. His faith was not strong enough, but Jesus extended his hand and gave him strength when he needed it.

We are told that the other disciples received them into the ship and when they entered it, the wind and waves ceased. More than this, we are told "and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went" (John 6:21). This is to say that immediately when Jesus entered the ship, they were at the shore at Capernaum. Doubtless this incident reminded the disciples of an earlier incident when Jesus slept in the boat during a storm. They woke him and he said to the sea, "peace be still" (Mark 4:39). The wind and the waves obeyed his command.

As we think about this experience, we realize there was not one but several distinct miracles: 1) Jesus walked on water; 2) Peter, bidden by Jesus, also walked on water; 3) Jesus silenced the wind and waves; 4) the ship was immediately transported to its destination. These miracles provide a beautiful picture of the necessity of faith in Jesus' footstep followers.

The Significance of This Miracle

By examining the Matthew, Mark, and John accounts we can understand the full import of this miracle. We realize Jesus' miracles pictured his kingdom. Raising the dead, healing the sick, and feeding the masses pictured greater things to come. The miracle of walking on water focuses on the faith of the footstep followers at this end of the age.

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes was a miracle for the masses, those who were more interested in food than the spiritual aspects of life. Jesus ministered to the world at his first advent, but the food he dispensed was short-lived (because of their hard hearts) and it did not endure. Even though they had tasted the pure bread of life, they went on to seek other food.

The people wanted to make Jesus their king at his first advent, but our Lord fed his followers and the world and sent them on their way. He retired to be in communion with the heavenly Father. This corresponds to Jesus' resurrection when he left his earthly estate to be with his Father.

The miracle of walking on water was directed at a spiritual class. Only they were involved in this experience and only they witnessed the outcome. It is reasonable therefore, to conclude that the footstep followers throughout the Gospel age, not the world of mankind, are those to whom this lesson is directed. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear” (Matthew 13:16). The lessons of these miracles are for those who walk by faith.

It is no mistake that Jesus left his disciples to be on his own and pray to (commune with) his Father. At the close of our Lord’s first advent he told his disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). After his resurrection, his followers had to stand in their own faith.

His followers found themselves on a perilous journey on a dark, storm-tossed sea. The darkness that covers the world of mankind is aptly described by Isaiah: “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people” (Isaiah 60:2). Ever since the fall, mankind has been in a nighttime of darkness, separated from God. The stormy sea is a picture of the restless sea of humanity. In Genesis 22:17 the world of mankind is described as “the sand which is upon the sea shore.” We know that the world is tossed about by perverse doctrines and teachings. As we are told in James 1:6, “For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” Thus we see a beautiful picture of followers of Jesus struggling in the sea of humanity in a world of darkness.

The followers of Jesus must wage a mighty struggle to stay afloat despite desperate conditions. They are buffeted by the social, political, economic, and religious winds. Yet they are safe in the ship on the sea as long as the sea is not in the ship. What a beautiful picture of the Christian walk. It is a constant struggle to keep the “restless sea” from engulfing our lives. Christians huddle and toil together to keep out the sea and fight the wind so they can complete their perilous journey to a distant shore. They must work together diligently to complete their journey. Their very lives are at risk. The more they toil, the harder the winds blow until seemingly there is no escape. What a beautiful illustration of the struggle against the flesh. Only when we move from the arm of flesh to a life of faith can we overcome.

Like Peter, when we lean upon our own strength and depend upon our own eyes and not the eyes of faith, we fail. Paul writes, “For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9). By leaning on the arm of the Lord, we receive strength in every time of need.

Our Lord said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). He offers us his hand, symbolic of the power of the holy spirit, that our faith might be strengthened so we can complete our journey. Only when we welcome him into our hearts will he calm our storms. He is able to command the sea and the wind, he can control everything. When the eyes of flesh observe difficult situations, faith subsides and fear abounds.

There is a desire to believe him, to follow him, to walk in his footsteps, and this is indeed possible. The Lord demands a faith that can move mountains, but we need the power of his hand to stand in that faith. Only then can we enter into the safety of the ship. Only then will the wind and the waves subside. Only then will we receive immediate deliverance. “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

Footstep followers are delivered from the storm once they submit to the Lord and walk with him. They are invited to come into his ship where they are under his protection. Only then can they have true peace and be delivered from the storm. At the end of this age, all of the church class are invited to remain in the ship where Jesus joins them. It is then that they are delivered. It is then that collectively they find themselves at the promised city. Then the world will understand the meaning of the words “peace be still.”

These miracles wonderfully illustrate the lessons of faith necessary for the Master’s footstep followers to grow and develop in grace. They beautifully illustrate the role of the church in bringing deliverance from this sin- sick world. What a beautiful picture! What a wonderful assurance of The Faith in which we stand!

John 9

The Man Blind from Birth

One thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see.—John 9:25, NIV

Richard Doctor¹

Poised between awe and horror the hastily assembled council of the temple in Jerusalem was facing a dilemma. Surely only the Messiah could heal blindness. How could it be that blindness was just healed at the hands of Jesus?

The healing of blindness as a demonstration of Messianic power may well have been in our Lord's planning as he led his disciples to the feast of tabernacles. This festival stood as the crowning celebration of the Jewish agricultural year. During the final autumn of Jesus' human life he took the occasion to depart from the relative security in "Galilee of the Gentiles" to go up to Jerusalem. All of God's promises are sure, and in some measure the immutable promise of blindness turned to sight that opens Isaiah's prophecy of kingdom blessings called for a partial demonstration: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Isaiah 35:5,6).

Already the gospel forewarns us that "he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him" (John 7:1). But as Jesus taught in the temple in Jerusalem, he had numerous supporters: "As he spoke these words many believed on him" (John 8:30). At the same time his message further polarized his adversaries—the Sanhedrin, lawyers, Pharisees and their sympathizers. Eagerly they looked for opportunities to tear into his words. They listened with the special attention that is only possible for critics as Jesus spoke of a freedom, greater than the freedom brought by Moses. This freedom would abide with those who accepted his teachings: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). His adversaries resolutely spoke of their adherence to Moses. They needed no such novel freedom.

As the exchange continued it became more intense and personal. Jesus decried the hardened hearts of Israel's elite: "Ye are of your father the Devil" (John 8:44). In response the Jews shot back, "We know that you have a devil."

Finally, after Jesus spoke openly of his pre-human experience—"before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58²) the dialogue ended in an attempt to foment a riot. These words provided the hoped for opportunity and some of the crowd affecting a loss of restraint sought to stone him. Jesus hid himself and, passing through their midst, escaped. Our Lord's hour had not yet come.

What remarkable composure we witness in Jesus. He knew that as quickly as a mob's false passions arose, they could ebb. Both Jesus and his disciples soon regathered as an organized band at the temple gate. In short order the critics, without stones for stoning, appeared. Now the Master's awesome gaze focused on a blind man near the gate seeking alms. Jesus was about to add an epilogue to his discourse in the temple. Perhaps the man himself announced his miserable condition of blindness from birth; or possibly this was written on a placard he displayed. This pitiable circumstance, brought on by the effects of man's fall, created an academic question for the Jews³ Tradition regarded special suffering as the necessary and immediate consequence of special sin. This seemed reasonable to the disciples. Perhaps this even seemed sanctioned by our Lord's warnings to the paralytic he healed at the Pool of Bethesda, as well as his warning to the paralytic he healed at Capernaum. The disciples asked how this man came to be born blind? Was it because of the sins of his parents? If not, was it for his own sins? The supposition in the former case seemed hard; and in the latter, impossible! The disciples were perplexed.

In all likelihood this dialogue was not conducted in discreet whispers. Whenever the mind of an otherwise healthy adult is diminished in one of its senses, such as by the loss of eyesight, it is typical for other senses to compensate by becoming much keener. For those afflicted with blindness, it is not unusual for the sense of hearing to become acute. The unguarded and painful words of the disciples no doubt reached the ears of this man who was blind from birth. Whether these words caused anguish or not, no doubt such conversations among the temple crowds were not spoken for the first time.

What a ray of hope Jesus offered when he announced, "I am the Light of the World" (John 9:5). Neither the man's sins, he told the disciples, nor those of his parents, were the cause of this lifelong affliction; but now, by means of it, "the works of God should be made manifest" (John 9:3).

Speaking no further words, Jesus spat on the ground, made clay with the spittle, and smearing it on the blind man's eyes, bade him, "go wash in the Pool of Siloam." The blind man went, washed, and was healed!

It is of small consequence that this therapeutic approach may seem repugnant to modern sensibilities even though medical research has established that healing hormones are present in saliva and that the "licking of wounds" offers more than psychological comfort. During the time of this incident the saliva of one who was fasting was believed to remedy weak eyes. Moreover, clay was occasionally used to repress tumors on the eyelids. But that both of these instruments were accepted medical practices of that era in no way detracted from the splendor of the miracle. Here more than in the parallel instances, it is not clear why our Lord, who sometimes healed by a word, preferred at other times to adopt slow and more elaborate ways to employ his miraculous power.

Jesus' mode of action led to serious results. This man was well known in Jerusalem as a beggar born blind. Now his appearance as one who could see caused a sensation. Scarcely could those who had known him believe he was the same man. They were amazed and made him repeat again and again the story of his cure. But that story infused

into their astonishment a fresh element of Pharisaic indignation, for this healing had occurred on the Sabbath. Except in cases of mortal danger the rabbis had forbidden any man to smear even **one** of his eyes with spittle on the Sabbath. Jesus not only smeared **both** the man's eyes, but had actually mingled the saliva with clay!

Sadly, this spirit of narrow legalism, slavish minuteness, and feigned obedience to God's law had long degraded the Sabbath from its true institution into a pernicious superstition. The Sabbath of Rabbinism, with all its petty servility, was in no respect the Sabbath of God's loving and holy law. Our Lord's adversaries were so imbued with this utter littleness, that even this miracle of mercy awoke in them a horror kindled by a neglect of their Sabbatical superstition rather than astonishment and gratitude. This healing, as an act of mercy, was in the deepest and in the most inward accordance with the very causes for which God had ordained the Sabbath—rest and refreshment.

Soon the man found himself facing the council. First came the repeated inquiry, "How was this thing done?" This was followed by the repeated assertion of some who held that Jesus could not be from God because he had not observed the Sabbath. However, even in the council there was a division. Others astutely replied that to press the charge of Sabbath-breaking, was to admit the miracle, and to admit the miracle was to establish the fact that he who performed it had great power from God if indeed not Messianic power.

Then, being confounded, they asked the blind man for his opinion of his deliverer. The man, not caught in their vicious circle of reasoning, replied with fearless promptitude, "He is a prophet." By this time the council was anxious for any loophole by which they could deny or set aside the miracle so they sent for the man's parents. Was this their son? And, if they asserted that he had been born blind, how was it that he now saw? Perhaps they hoped to frighten the parents into a denial of their relationship, or an admission of imposture. But the parents also cautiously clung to the irrefutable truth of the healing and answered, "This is certainly our son, and he was certainly born blind; as to the rest, we know nothing. Ask him. He is quite capable of answering for himself."

In sheer perplexity they turned once again to the blind man. He, as well as his parents, knew the Jewish authorities had agreed to a ban of exclusion from the synagogue upon any who should acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. It is likely that the council hoped that the now sighted man would for the sake of peace be content to follow their advice to, "Give glory to God." Joshua first employed this pious phrase as he entreated Achan to publicly confess his sins (Joshua 7:19). It meant to acknowledge and confess one's guilt, deny or ignore the miracle, and to accept the council's dictum that Jesus was a sinner.

If securing a confession was the hope, they were disappointed, for the man proved less easy to coerce than his parents. He was not to be overawed by their authority, or intimidated by their assertions. "Whether he is a sinner," the man replied, "I do not know. One thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see." Then they began again their weary and futile cross-examination. "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" But the man had had enough of this. "I told you once, and ye did not attend. Do ye wish to hear again? Is it possible that ye too wish to be his disciples?" This bold sarcasm ended the

deadlock and now the council broke into abuse: “You are his disciple. We are the disciples of Moses; of this man we know nothing.” “Strange,” replied the man now possessed of both actual and spiritual sight, “that you should know nothing of a man who has wrought a miracle such as not even Moses ever wrought; and we know that neither he nor any one else could have done it, unless he were from God.” Indeed, in both the Old and New Testaments, there stands no other biblical testimony to the healing of blindness except that which took place at our Lord’s hands. Unable to control their indignation any longer, the council dismissed the man and banned him from the synagogue.

Jesus did not neglect this brave confessor. He sought out the man and asked, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” Perhaps the man thought this was a further cross-examination. “Why? Who is he, Lord,” answered the man, “that I should believe on him?” Now Jesus spoke very directly. “You have both seen him, and he is the one talking with you.” “Lord, I believe,” the man answered; and he did our Lord obeisance. It must have been shortly after this that Jesus pointed to the contrast between the different effects of his teaching: those who saw not, were made to see; those who saw, were made blind. The Pharisees, restlessly and discontentedly hovering about, ever self-absorbed and always on the look-out for some reflection on themselves, asked “if they too were blind?” The answer of Jesus was that in natural blindness there would have been no guilt, but abiding judgment remained on the blindness of willful error. If the teachers, the guides were blind, how could the people see?

The record of this incident closes with Jesus reflecting on the nature of true and false shepherds. The true shepherd was one who would lay down his life for his sheep. In this he prophesied of his coming death and sacrifice: “But they did not understand what he was telling them” (John 10:6, NIV).

Few now have the ability to see or hear. Yet, although the majority are both blind and deaf to this message in the present time—some completely blind and completely deaf, others partially blind and partially deaf—the glorious assurance of the Lord’s word is that in God’s due time all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears unstopped.

This was the lesson the Lord taught from this incident when he declared, “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world” (John 9:4,5, NIV). True, the opening of blind natural eyes could not give sight to the eyes of understanding, but it could and did illustrate the real essence of our Lord’s teachings of which this miracle was a part. He came to do the work of him who sent him, and to finish that work, and the special feature of it that was then due was the sacrificing of himself, the laying down of his life in the service of his brethren, in the declaration of the good tidings, in the teaching of the people through parables, dark sayings, and miracles. Subsequently under the holy spirit’s illumination these would guide a certain class to the real seeing, the real understanding and the real fellowship of heart with him and his work and with the Father, that was intended.

Thus with both a clear Messianic sign and bitter fruitage among his enemies the visit of Jesus to the Feast of Tabernacles ended. And since his life was now in danger, he withdrew once more from Jerusalem to Galilee for one brief visit before he bade his old home one last farewell. The blind in the most hopeless and incurable form had been made to see. For a brief moment the light had shown in the darkness, and the darkness had not comprehended it. In God's providence not only has his love provided the redemption and the opportunity for blessing to the world, but the same love and wisdom will allow all to see the great light and hear the voice of him who speaks from heaven, and learn of our loving heavenly father's offer for life everlasting, on terms of full obedience. Though the lengthening shadows of the coming night already shroud much around us, while it is yet day, let us seek to do his works; let us boldly turn our eyes upon Jesus and let us urge those seeking to escape spiritual darkness to turn their eyes to the one true light of the world.

1. Portions of this article are largely adapted from Fredric W. Ferrar, *The Life of Christ*, reprinted by Fountain Publications, Portland, Oregon, 1980, ppg. 419-424.

2. The verb "I am" is translated from the Greek verb "eimi" and is a direct linguistic relative of the English verb "am." "Eimi" is distinctly different from most Greek verbs. First, it falls into a family of the most ancient verbs used in Greek. Such ancient verbs employ the ending "mi." Second, in sharp contrast to the many shades of meaning Greek verbs may convey with their *twelve* distinct voices, "eimi" is recorded only in *two* voices—the present active and future passive voices. Claims have been made that John 8:58 is an assertion that Jesus was Jehovah. In fact, while this statement stands as another confession of a pre-human existence, an existence as the "Logos" (John 1:1-3), the thought that Jehovah might be meant by "I am" does not logically follow. In the context Jesus declares, "I proceeded forth and came from God" (John 8:42) and was continually seeking to establish his position as the son of the Father (John 8:16,18,19,27,28,29,35,38,42,49,54).

3. For an expanded discussion please see *Reprints*, p. 3519.

John 11

The Raising of Lazarus

Lord, the one you love is sick.—John 11:3¹

Andrew Polychronis

The account of the raising of Lazarus is clearly the crowning jewel of the “miracles, wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22) performed by God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The narrative of the miracle not only reveals Jesus’ authority and power over death, that he is indeed “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), but it also presents us with some remarkable challenges for our walk of faith with the Master as revealed in the responses and reactions of Martha and Mary.

Eluding the fury of his Pharisaic adversaries in Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples “went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days” (John 10:40). The place of retreat was probably Perea on the east side of the Jordan, approximately twenty miles from Jerusalem. It was here that Jesus received word from Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus, saying, “Lord, the one you love is sick.” We immediately catch a glimpse of the wonderfully warm and intimate relationship that Jesus had with this family that lived in Bethany, a village two miles outside of Jerusalem. It is apparent that Jesus was a frequent guest in their home when he visited Jerusalem. We read that at the time of our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus “went out to Bethany with the twelve” (Mark 11:11).

Upon receiving the news, the response of Jesus was both optimistic and purposeful. He said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s son may be glorified through it.” What a powerful faith lesson this is for every footstep follower of Jesus. Those Jesus loves are not exempt from illness and other experiences. How we respond to those experiences is all-important. Allowing God to work his will through the experience will not only bring us into a closer and deeper relationship with him, but in the long run will bring honor and glory to his worthy and holy name.

As the narrative continues, we are given the assurance that indeed “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” But for this event to glorify the Father and the son, Jesus stayed where he was for an additional two days, knowing full well that his good friend Lazarus would succumb to his illness.

When Jesus finally suggested to his disciples that they return to Judea, the disciples were astonished that after such a short time, Jesus was ready to return to this hotbed of conflict where the Jews sought to stone him. The proverbial response of Jesus to the disciples’ reluctance to return to Judea—“Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks

by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light"—is similar to his earlier remark when he said, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4). In both instances, Jesus reminds us that the obligation and commitment to do the Father's will must take precedence over what appears to be safe and convenient. To digress from God's purpose is to walk in darkness.

To explain his reason for returning to Judea, Jesus told his disciples "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." The explanation was intended to be part of the education of the disciples. Assuming that "sleep" meant that the fever had passed its crisis, they expressed their hope for Lazarus' recovery. Jesus, however, had used the word in a figurative sense, meaning "death." The Lord's rejoinder made that fact absolutely clear: "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Why was Jesus glad that he was not present to save his beloved friend from death, or to comfort his sisters, and how would Lazarus' death be of any benefit to the disciples? Of all the miracles that Jesus performed, this one would truly authenticate his sonship and in a supremely powerful way demonstrate that he is truly the long-awaited, promised Messiah. Jesus was certain of the outcome. He knew the faith of the sisters and disciples would be confirmed and many of the Jews who were there would also believe (John 11:45).

Thomas' comment at this point seems strange: "Let us also go that we may die with him." The "him" no doubt refers to Jesus, not Lazarus. Thomas, along with the others, expected Jesus would be seized and executed and that they would suffer with him. Nevertheless, Thomas' loyalty to the Master is revealed in his readiness to share in his suffering.

Martha's Testimony

When Martha, the more aggressive of the two sisters, heard that Jesus was coming to Bethany, she went out to meet him. Mary, the quiet, more contemplative one, "stayed at home." (This portrayal of the sisters by John agrees with that found in Luke 10:38-40.) The dialogue between Martha and Jesus presents us with some of the most exquisite theology we have in Scripture. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus replied: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

What an incredible woman! What remarkable spiritual insight and faith! Although distracted by her many chores and responsibilities (Luke 10:40-42), Martha had accurately learned many precious truths from the lips of the Master which had obviously impacted her life. The intensity and depth of her faith blazes brilliantly through her sorrow. She knows that if Jesus had been there, he had the power and authority to heal Lazarus and prevent his death. But even now, yes, even now, she had that brilliant spark of hope that "God will

give you whatever you ask.” Jesus’ reply, “Your brother will rise again,” elicits a response from Martha which once again reveals a profound depth of understanding, confidence, and trust in the promises of God. “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” There was no confusion in her mind, no doubts, no uncertainties about who Jesus is, about what he is capable of doing, about the nature of death and the hope of the resurrection. When we consider the confusion in Christendom over these and other biblical issues, we can only marvel at the perceptiveness and clarity of vision Martha had.

In what is certainly one of his most majestic and comforting utterances, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Jesus had clearly taught his disciples about the hope of the resurrection, and it became one of the core themes in the ministries of the apostles. On one occasion Jesus said, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28,29, RSV).

When Jesus asked Martha if she believed what he said concerning the resurrection, her response again reveals the clarity and certainty of her understanding: “Yes, Lord,” she said. “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” The confusion that existed at that time over the identity of Jesus is clearly indicated in the response of the disciples to the question posed by Jesus: “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven” (Matthew 16:13-17). The same simple revelation had been given to Martha that was also expressed in Peter’s great confession —Jesus is the Anointed One, the Son of God! No confusing enshrouding of Jesus in a trinitarian mystery, or viewing him as God incarnate or a God-man: simply, the Anointed One, the Son of God! What a wonderful and powerful example for us, to walk in the same simple faith demonstrated by Martha, uncluttered by human imaginations and philosophies.

Mary’s Testimony

When Mary was told that Jesus had arrived, she quickly went out to him. Falling at his feet, she repeated the words spoken by Martha: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Again, we are privileged to catch a glimpse of the intensity of our Lord’s love and his deep compassion for Mary and those grieving with her. “He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.” This is followed by the shortest verse in the Bible: “Jesus wept.” Surely, these powerful emotional and physical responses in an otherwise perfectly calm and fully composed Savior reflect not only our Lord’s true humanity, but also reveal the resentment and full displeasure he feels against the ravages of death because of sin. “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:15,16).

Jesus experienced the same deep emotional distress when he came to the tomb. He ordered the stone covering the tomb's entrance to be taken away. It was time for Jesus to fulfill his promise to the disciples that the outcome of Lazarus' death would be to the glory of God. It was also time to keep his promise to Martha that her brother would rise again. As deep and as strong as Martha's faith was, her natural reaction is understandable. Lazarus had been in the tomb four days! The process of decay had begun. But this is not a problem for the one who is "the resurrection and the life." Jesus reminded Martha, " 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. . . . but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' " After his prayer, Jesus cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus, the one who had been dead for four days, walked out of the tomb, hands and feet still wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to those nearby, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

In our Lord's prayer to his Father, we see the complete unity in purpose between Father and son. Jesus did not ask God to raise Lazarus, but rather thanked him for already having answered. In his mind, it was an accomplished fact. It was for the benefit of those assembled that Jesus prayed "that they may believe that you sent me." Having finished his prayer, Jesus addressed the dead man. He spoke with power and authority: "Lazarus, come out!" It has been suggested that if Jesus had not addressed Lazarus directly, all the dead would have come out of their tombs in fulfillment of John 5:28, 29! Truly, one day they will. And so Lazarus came out, had his grave clothes removed, and returned to normal life.

What a supreme demonstration of God's unlimited creative power, reversing the process of corruption and quickening a four-day old corpse to life! What a sublime picture of the ultimate triumph of God's eternal power over sin, death, corruption, and hopelessness! What a glorious prospect this profound miracle holds for the restoration of the whole world of mankind! In light of this miracle, the earlier and often quoted words of John take on a deeper significance: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16,17).

Indeed, Jesus has purchased life for all by paying the ransom price at Calvary. Through the promised seed—Christ and his bride (Galatians 3:16,29)—eternal life will be made available to all.

It is because of the loving obedience of our Master to the will of his Father that "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 2:9-11). Hallelujah, what a Savior!

1. All Scripture citations are from the NIV unless otherwise indicated.

Begotten by the Spirit

A verse-by-verse study of John 3

John is the only Evangelist who mentions Nicodemus, a Pharisee who was impressed by the miracles and came to Jesus by night to learn more. Because this was a private conversation, we would not expect to know what was said. But since Nicodemus anointed Jesus' body with spices after the crucifixion while the disciples had scattered, it is safe to say he accepted the message and became one of Jesus' footstep followers. Undoubtedly he told John and others about his conversation where he learned that one becomes a son of God by being begotten by God's holy spirit. After growth and development takes place, those who have been begotten will be born on the spirit plane as spirit beings, leaving behind their old human nature as did Jesus.

Nicodemus Appears—Verses 1 and 2

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

In John 7:50 Nicodemus is specifically identified as the one who came to Jesus by night and is associated with “the chief priests and Pharisees” (John 7:45,50). Although Nicodemus might have come at night because he was concerned about what others might think were he to be seen with Jesus, it is more likely he wanted some private time alone. There certainly was no opportunity for privacy during the day when the crowds surrounded Jesus, begging to be healed, and hanging on his every word. Nicodemus was a thinking Pharisee. In John 10:38 Jesus urged the Jews to believe his works even if they couldn't believe in him. That was what Nicodemus was doing. He had seen Jesus' miracles and knew they had to be a result of God's power. He wanted to know more.

Spirit Begetting—Verses 3-8

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born [gennao] again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born [gennao] when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born [gennao]? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born [gennao] of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born [gennao] of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born [gennao] of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born [gennao] again. The wind [pneuma] bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born [gennao] of the Spirit [pneuma].”

In Matthew's genealogy in chapter 1 the Greek word *gennaō* is used repeatedly and is correctly translated "begat" because it describes the role of a man in procreation. Matthew 1:16 reads, "Jacob **begat** [*gennaō*] Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was **born** [*gennaō*] Jesus, who is called Christ." Note that in this verse this same Greek word is correctly translated born when the active agent is a woman.

Jesus begins by saying a person must be begotten/born again. But because he does not mention the operative agent, Nicodemus thinks he's talking about an actual birthing process and is understandably confused. When Jesus says the begetting must be "of water and spirit," Nicodemus undoubtedly understood how he should interpret this ambiguous Greek word.

We can understand the necessary role of God's holy spirit in begetting a new life within a believer, but why water? At that time John the Baptist was using water as a symbol of cleansing from past sins after people repented. Water in Scripture symbolizes truth and truth comes from God through his son Jesus. In John 7:37 Jesus calls out for the thirsty to come to him to drink. In verse 38 he refers to "rivers of living water." In verse 39 John parenthetically observes that by these words he was referring to the spirit that they that believe on him should receive after he was glorified:

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). Jesus is that "fountain." We must drink or appropriate the "living water" which comes from him and receive God's holy spirit if we are to have life on a spirit plane. The *Companion Bible* states that these two nouns next to each other should be understood as referring to one thing and are better translated "of water—yea, spiritual water."

Verse 8 is the only place where translators rendered the Greek word *pneuma* as wind even though it is most unlikely Jesus is talking about the wind. If he were, the Greek word would have been *anemos* which occurs many times and is always translated wind. Surely those who are begotten by God's holy spirit but not yet born on the spirit plane cannot go and come like the wind. Jesus is talking about how God's spirit touches one here and one there with no one able to predict in advance just what it will do or who will respond to it. Rotherham conveys the correct thought: "The spirit where it pleaseth doth breathe, and the sound thereof thou hearest; but knowest not, whence it cometh and whither it goeth." Like countless others Nicodemus was touched by the spirit. Because he boldly came forward during the daylight hours with Joseph of Arimathaea and willingly defiled himself by touching Jesus' dead body (John 19:39), we feel sure he responded appropriately to the spirit and became a consecrated follower of the Master.

Jesus' Authority—Verses 9-15

“Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Nicodemus is hearing things he has never heard before from anyone. Surely this was not a doctrine taught by the Pharisees. Weymouth translates verse 9 as “How is all this possible?”

John is the only one who quotes the Lord as using the phrase “verily, verily.” It appears in this doubled form 25 times, never as a single “verily” which is how Matthew, Mark and Luke use it. Why? Perhaps John wants to emphasize the greater authority with which our Lord speaks. John presents Jesus as God’s personal representative. He speaks for God and thus his words should be given special emphasis. The Greek word means trustworthy, surely. It is almost always translated “verily” in the gospels and “amen” in all other books. In fact in Revelation this Greek word appears as a title of our Lord: “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).

Students of the Bible have long looked into the Old Testament and found types and pictures of what would occur in New Testament time periods. Paul said that what happened to Israel happened as examples or types for our edification (1 Corinthians 10:6). In his conversation with Nicodemus Jesus identifies as a type an experience the Israelites had in the wilderness. After a particularly egregious lack of appreciation for what God had done for them, the Israelites were plagued with fiery serpents and many died. Moses was told to make a copper-colored serpent and place it on a pole so any who looked upon it would live and not die (see Numbers 21:4-9). This, Jesus tells Nicodemus, pictured himself. He would be “lifted up” on a “pole” and those who looked to him would live and not die. John quotes Jesus as saying this even more directly to a wider audience a few chapters later: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die” (John 12:32,33).

As is always the case with a type the Old Testament experience is much inferior to the glorious antitype. True, “bitten” Israelites who would quickly die if they did nothing, were able to live if they looked at that which had been lifted up for their salvation. But of course they did die eventually. There was nothing they could do to stop the dying process which sooner or later culminated in their certain death. Only when we see Jesus do we appreciate the far grander antitype. Looking to Jesus, and him crucified, brings life, not just life for a few years but everlastingly. In John’s gospel the King James translators

rendered the Greek word *aionios* “eternal” nine times (including verse 15) and “everlasting” eight times (including verses 16 and 36). Consistently rendering it “everlasting” in all cases would have been better.

God’s Love—Verses 16-21

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

Perhaps no other verse in the Bible is as well known as John 3:16. God is love (1 John 4:16) another word John uses far more than the other Evangelists. God demonstrated love by giving his most precious possession, his son. How sad it has been to hear those who call themselves by his name claim that God tortures forever those who through ignorance or willfulness reject the avenue of salvation his love has provided. In so doing they make him into an ogre who by placing human beings in flames does the very thing he commanded his people to never do (see Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 18:10,12; Jeremiah 32:35).

Why does God love the world when he specifically tells us to not love the world (1 John 2:15)? The answer, of course, is that God loves the world because of what he knows will be its state when his plans and purposes have been fully accomplished, when it will have been brought back to perfection and harmony with him. He does not love the world in its sinful, depraved condition and neither should we.

Light is another word John uses more than the other writers. God is light (1 John 1:5) and Jesus is the human embodiment of God. Water is a symbol of the truth and so is light. Jesus was like a light shining in a dark room making visible all the imperfections. And what do we do when that happens in one of our darkened rooms? We have three choices: 1) ignore what we see and accept the imperfections as they are; 2) correct the imperfections now that we have become aware of them; or 3) turn out the light and pretend everything is fine. Because those with the power within the Jewish polity preferred choice three, they plotted to destroy Jesus and effectively “turn out the light.”

John the Baptist's Testimony—Verses 22-36

“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Baptism (Greek: *baptizo*—to make whelmed [Strong’s definition], immerse) was being practiced not just by John the Baptist. The disciples under Jesus’ authority were also doing it. We know that Jesus himself did not personally baptize anyone because John says, “Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples” (John 4:2). When some of John’s disciples came to him to discuss what was happening, it appears they were disturbed at what they saw as competition. But John did not view it that way. John was preaching words he received from heaven, which is why he could with assurance say, “He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease.” John did not have a competitive spirit which tried to make himself appear best; the same could not be said for some of Jesus’ disciples on another occasion (see Mark 9:33,34).

John correctly points out that Jesus came from heaven. He was sent by God and God gave him the words which he spoke. Jesus made this claim himself when he said to Philip, “I am not the source of the words that I say to you, but the Father who is united with me is doing these things himself” (John 14:10, Goodspeed). Others could not accept this and later John recounts how some Jews wanted to stone him because, in their opinion, he was making himself God (John 10:30-33).

The King James translation of verse 34 makes it seem as though God’s spirit is measured out to some but it was not so measured out to Jesus. God’s holy spirit is his power in action; it makes things happen. And in this case it illuminated without measure, without limitation, the mind of Jesus so that all the wisdom of God could be communicated to - others. John the Baptist knew that his own understanding, marvelous as it was, had its

limitations. Yet he rejoiced in the role he was given to point to God's anointed one, to be a "friend of the bridegroom."

May we all as did John the Baptist, praise God for what he through the spirit has done for each of us. May we rejoice that his spirit has touched us, one here and one there, and opened our eyes to see and our ears to hear. Jesus performed many great miracles during his earthly ministry, but just as types are inferior to antitypes, so his miracles are much less than what will happen in the future. If we are faithful unto death, we will have the privilege of performing even greater miracles in the kingdom: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

1. The Companion Bible suggests that faulty punctuation of John 7:37,38 hides the meaning of the Greek. This is how they believe the text should be understood: "Jesus cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and let him drink him that believeth on me. [End verse 37 here; begin verse 38.] As the scripture hath said, out of his [the giver--Messiah--not the receiver] belly shall flow rivers of living water [which becomes available for believers to drink.]

Poems and Short Features

Miracles of the Master

He taught in Israel long ago;
His words were profound and true.
Great things he did in his ministry;
Still greater he will do.
He fed the multitudes, healed the sick,
Turned water to choicest wine.
He claimed a special relationship:
His Father was Divine.
He walked on water and stilled the waves,
Gave sight to the man born blind
and strength to one who was impotent.
The Master's deeds were kind.
The common people beheld his works
And quickly the news was spread:
The wonder-worker from Galilee
Could even raise the dead!
The haughty Pharisees felt alarmed.
With anger their hearts were filled
Against this Jesus of Nazareth:
They schemed to have him killed.
Though there were many that needed help,
His miracles touched but few;
And for himself at dark Calvary
No wonders did he do.
Why did the Master do mighty works?
So faith could lay hold and grow
As he unveiled his Messiahship
To those who longed to know.
While many came for the loaves and fish
Or hoping they might be healed;
Both then and now, to his followers
The deep things are revealed.
These see him near on life's stormy sea.
In him, they find peace and rest.
He meets their needs so abundantly,
Providing what is best.
Their earthen vessels with precious truth
Are filled to the very brim.
Transformed, they focus on Heavenly things
And strive to be like him.
Soon, in the Kingdom, these faithful ones
His glory and work will share:
The human race to regenerate
And God's great love declare.
So often done on the sabbath day,
Christ's wonders a glimpse provide
Of that grand time of Millennial rest
With greater works worldwide!

“I That Speak Am He”

She came, the thirsty one, to fill her pitcher,
 And found a stranger sitting on the brink;
And while she poured for him the well's refreshment,
 He gave the precious cup of life to drink.
And when she wondered at her life's revealing,
 And if Messiah deeper depths could see,
He graciously her rising faith encouraged,—
 “I that speak to thee am He!”
And so when we, blest Master, come all empty
 To fountains, we but drink, and drink in vain;
Be thou with satisfying waters waiting,
 That we may drink, and never thirst again.
Our wayward hearts' true inwardness disclosing,
 Constrain our timid faith to hope in thee,
And let us hear again the gracious message—
 “I that speak to thee am He!”
They turned him from the synagogue accursed,
 Whose gift of sight the Savior had bestowed;
And, burning under grief and indignation,
 He sought again the well-remembered road.
And while he mused upon his kindly patron,
 And if he could indeed Messiah be,
Lo, One with beaming countenance addressed him,
 “I that speak to thee am He!”
And so, dear Lord, when our dim eyes are opened,
 And one-time friends thy healing power despise,
Be thou anear with words of cheer and comfort,
 To grant our saddest hour a glad surprise.
And when life's subtle mysteries perplex us,
 Unlock to us with faith's unfailing key,
That we may hear from out the open portals,
 “I that speak to thee am He!”
The proud and haughty still a sign requiring,
 In vain the zenith and horizon scan,
While walks among them One with vesture girded,
 To wield the purging and discerning fan.
But he who humbly treads the path of duty,
 With eyes unsealed shall his Deliv'rer see;
His trial hour shall brighten with this token—
 “I that speak to thee am He!”

—R. B. Hennings (Reprints, p. 2646)

“He loved them to the uttermost.” —John 13:1, Wuest

Dear Brother John. He was there from raising of the little maid, to cloud of glory that descended to engulf that vision of the Master's face that shone upon the mount. Dear John was there! How many times had he reflected on those scenes, nor did he ever tire of their retelling.

Now he is old. Other disciples of Jesus have ended their course. Soon he must go too, and he is prompted to write down the things he remembers with special appeal. Three gospel accounts already enriched the church's fellowship. John knew he needed not repeat, save but in part, their precious testimony. His would be an anecdotal recollection affording deeper glimpses of that sacred time of earthly walk when that dear Master shared with those he loved. John laid no special claim to the Master's love beyond the rest. He knew that Jesus loved them all. Yet it was with a sense of awe he found himself included among that privileged company of loved ones. He could not help but describe himself with wonder at the thought, “the disciple Jesus loved.”

Attempting to describe that holy fellowship to that last meal together, and the sacred conversation that ensued among the olive trees, he sums up all with words so deeply felt: “He loved them to the uttermost” — “loved them to the end.”

Much time has passed, but memory only deepened the appreciation of mind so full of that same spirit of his Lord. Now, as he records each moment with vivid recall, a holy smile passes over his face, broken only by moments of sweet and sacred serious thoughtfulness, betokened by the tear, whether of joy, sorrow, or the combination of both, he knew not. Fellowship with the Lord was deeper now even than in those days of physical contact.

There was no question of the Master's joy in the company of that little band of unknowns, but now could John recall with greater awareness those looks that betrayed in the Master's visage a depth of feelings which he could not fully share with even these he tenderly described as his “little flock.”

The Master's words he hears again, the words of life in which great depths of truth were stored compressed, for none at first can fully bear the burden of such glory themes as these. Gleams of eternal blessedness shone forth as through the veil now by the spirit rent sufficient for that glimpse of glory there, where stood the Lamb before the throne of God.

Dear John. How gratefully we praise the Lord who changed this son of thunder to his instrument of grace, and prompted him to pen for us these sacred memories. With deepest thankfulness we ponder still John's words, indulging in the holy light they shine upon our path: “That life made manifest we know, that life belonging to another realm we share with you, that with us down the age each saint may share that joy, that love, that will not let us go.”

—Donald Holliday

The Purpose of Miracles

Not until we shall experience our “change” and know as we are known shall we be able to fathom all the mysteries connected with the miracles of Jesus and the miracles which we see in ourselves and all about us today. . . .

Miracles were necessary for the introduction of the Gospel message to identify our Lord with the prophecies and to prepare the nucleus of the church for the spirit baptism; but in later years, throughout the Gospel age, the Lord has given his people the opportunity of still greater blessing by withholding the miracles and allowing us to believe in him and to accept him without the attestation of wonders.

One of the greatest wonders, one of the greatest miracles, one that is more convincing to us than any other could be, is the change which the divine message has wrought in our own hearts—transforming us through the power of the holy spirit. Not only do we see this transforming power at work in others, changing them from glory to glory and preparing them for the final glorious change of the first resurrection, but additionally we experience it in our own hearts and appreciate the fact that the things that we once hated now we love, and the things we once loved now we hate. The poet gave the right thought when he exclaimed, “I am a miracle of grace.”

—Reprints, p. 3495

NEWS & VIEWS

PBI News

Financial Statement of the Pastoral Bible Institute

Statement of Net Worth — April 30, 2002 [unaudited]

Cash and Investments: \$147,288
Fixed Assets:None
Liabilities:None
NET WORTH, APRIL 30, 2002\$147,288

Analysis of Net Worth

INCOME

Contributions..... \$15,267
Sale of Material 5,216
Herald Subscriptions 4,747
Interest..... 5,676
Memberships 20
Miscellaneous Income..... 687
Total Income \$31,613

EXPENSES

Purchase of Material for Resale 3,194
Printing and Reproduction 12,653
Postage and Delivery..... 7,812
Administrative and General 778
Miscellaneous..... 1,075
Total Operating Expense \$25,512

Net Gain for Fiscal Year \$6,101

Net Worth, May 1, 2001..... \$141,187
Net Worth, April 30, 2002 \$147,288

Respectfully submitted by Len Griehs, Treasurer

PBI Annual Report for 2001-2002

“For we are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Many hands have contributed to the work of the Institute during the 84 years of its existence. This year has been no exception. Authors, proof-readers, workers in the production and printing of the Herald, those who record and produce tape recordings of the journal and those working on the web page are but a few of our co-laborers. Added to these are the members of the PBI and the subscribers, who are the very reason for this publication.

The main work of the Institute during this past year continues to be the publishing of The Herald magazine. We have continued using specific themes for each issue treating The Book of Revelation, Christ Through the Ages, Heroes of Faith, The Seven Churches of the Apostle Paul, Words from the Cross, and Living the Beatitudes during the past fiscal year.

Some of the issues have included booklets and other free enclosures. One which drew considerable response from our readership was a 12-page color catalog of Bible Student literature distributed by the Chicago Bible Students.

The Herald is also distributed each month on tape for the blind, those wishing to listen in their cars, or who merely enjoy playing the tapes in their home. For this service, we wish to express sincere thanks to the one who records the words of each issue. As a reminder, the Institute sends the audio tapes free to those who are blind.

The Herald web page continues to expand. In addition to each issue of The Herald, it has a special section where scores of books and booklets are offered for free download in a format compatible with the popular On Line Bible program, as well as in the Acrobat format for those who use our Bible Student Library CD ROM and in the standard web language of hypertext markup.

We continue to work on a major revision of the Bible Student Library CD ROM. It will contain many new works, including even more writings of C. T. Russell together with some of the historical background for his teachings. Most of these works will be available in the same three formats currently offered for download on our web page. Because all work is being done by volunteers, we cannot estimate when this new edition will be ready.

A spirit of close fellowship, harmony, and enthusiasm continues to exist between the editors and directors of the Institute as we enter another year of service in the Lord’s vineyard. As fellow-laborers with you, we welcome your comments and suggestions to make our efforts even more productive in the years ahead.

*Directors and Editors
of the Pastoral Bible Institute*

World News

Religious

The Roman Catholic Church's top U.S. leaders said that they've outlined a policy to rapidly oust "notorious" priests guilty of "serial, predatory sexual abuse of minors" and send alleged new offenders to civil authorities and lay-led review boards. But they stopped short of calling for a "zero-tolerance" policy for offenders and alluded to "spiritual atonement" for cardinals and bishops accused of covering up the actions of predatory priests. The statements, in a three-page communiqué and a six-paragraph letter to priests, came at a news conference after two days of crisis meetings with Pope John Paul II and Vatican officials. The church leaders reaffirmed priestly celibacy, saying no link has been "scientifically maintained" between the practice and pedophilia. Though troubles in the USA led to the meeting, several cardinals said it was not only a U.S. problem. Recent scandals have hit the church in Austria, Ireland, France, Australia and the pope's native Poland.

—*USA Today*, 4/25/2002

Proponents of the intelligent-design movement, which challenges Darwin's primacy in the science classroom, argued for equal footing in the Ohio's new teaching curriculum today. Dr. Jonathan Wells, senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, a Seattle organization dedicated to alternative scientific theories, contended that there was enough valid challenge to Darwinian evolution to justify intelligent design's being ordered into the classroom curriculum—not as a religious doctrine, he maintained, but as a matter of "a growing scientific controversy."

—*New York Times*, 3/12/2002

Social

North Korea has been experiencing food shortages since at least the early 1990s. Estimates of excess deaths run from the hundreds of thousands to 3 million with the central estimate around 1 million or about 5 percent of the pre-famine population. North Korea's famine . . . is a product of 50 years of economic mismanagement. North Korea has drifted into a policy of chronic dependency on international assistance. Historically, most of the population relied on the public distribution system for food. This system has broken down, and food is increasingly distributed through markets. Today access to food depends on a complex set of factors including: membership in privileged groups such as the military or other "high priority" essential workers through conventional distribution channels; location in net food producing or consuming areas; access to hard currency to obtain food through markets. What has been the response of the outside world? Some, including Medicins Sans Frontieres, have cited intolerable conditions including diversion of aid to privileged groups and have withdrawn; the majority has stayed on, under the belief that they are ameliorating hunger if under less than optimal conditions. This, in a nutshell, encapsulates the ethical dilemma posed by the North Korean famine.

—*Institute For International Economics, 4/17/2002*

Almost 11 million children die each year from preventable and treatable diseases, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) said. The UN agencies called for a commitment to save children's lives at the Global Consultation on Child and Adolescent Health and Development, a two-day gathering in Stockholm of health experts and politicians that began yesterday. "Of the 11 million who die, eight million are babies, half of them in the first month of life," WHO Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland said in a statement. "These deaths were preventable and treatable, not inevitable." Pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, measles, HIV/AIDS and malnutrition are the main causes of death. Unicef and the WHO gave examples of how easily progress may be achieved to combat disease. Diarrhea may be treated with oral rehydration salts costing about 33 cents a treatment and measles may be prevented with a vaccination costing about 26 cents a dose, the organizations said.

—*Bloomberg News, 3/13/2002*

A severe water shortage brought on by yet another dry winter—coupled with the premature onset of summer—threatens to devastate the Rocky Mountain states. Conditions are so bad so early in the year, that officials fear the extended drought will debilitate the region's economic powerhouses: agriculture, livestock and recreation. "It's about as dry as it can get here," said ranger George Whitten [who lives near the] New Mexico line in the south-central part of [Colorado]. "People talk about how bad it is compared to the norm, but it seems to me like drought is the norm," Whitten said.

—*Los Angeles Times 4/25/2002*

A Rhode Island-size piece of the floating ice fringe along a fast-warming region of Antarctica has disintegrated with extraordinary rapidity, scientists said. The loss of floating ice does not contribute to rising sea levels, just as melting ice cubes floating in a glass do not cause it to overflow. But the researchers said this was the first time in thousands of years that this part of Antarctica — the east coast of its arm-shaped peninsula — had seen so much ice erode and temperatures rise so much. While it is too soon to say whether the changes there are related to a buildup of the “greenhouse” gas emissions that scientists believe are warming the planet, many experts said it was getting harder to find any other explanation. “With the disappearance of ice shelves that have existed for thousands of years, you rather rapidly run out of other explanations,” said Dr. Theodore A. Scambos, a glaciologist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, which has been monitoring the loss of ice in the Antarctic along with the British Antarctic Survey. For years, researchers hiking on the ice and using satellites have been watching pieces of the shelf slowly break away, but the disintegration over the last month was on a vastly greater scale, several experts said. “The speed of it is staggering,” said Dr. David Vaughan, a glaciologist at the British Antarctic Survey.

—*New York Times*, 3/20/2002

Civil

Across Europe, unassimilated immigrant populations from former colonial possessions or old allies have become political headaches for governments that never thought their guest workers would stay. The success of nationalist Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of France’s presidential election is the most recent example of how immigration has risen to the top of the agenda for a growing minority of Europeans willing to vote for extremists to make their concerns heard. What makes this tougher for countries like France, Britain, the Netherlands and Germany is the “tribal” nature of European nation states that is threatened by immigration. Globalization, the need for skilled labor, inertia and simple decency make it unlikely that European Union governments will close the door to further immigrants.

—*Wall Street Journal*, 4/24/2002

The Pashtuns are Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, but a minority here in the valleys and plains of the northwest. They lived in clusters, away from the more numerous Uzbeks and Tajiks, and when the Taliban fled the area last November, the Pashtuns suddenly found themselves hunted and alone. The Pashtuns of northern Afghanistan are fleeing their villages by the thousands now, telling tales of murder and rape and robbery, and leaving behind empty towns and grazing grounds just beginning to shimmer with the first grass of spring. The persecution of the northern Pashtuns opens a new chapter in Afghanistan's tangled history of ethnic relations. For decades, northern Afghanistan peacefully cradled its many groups, jostling together the Pashtuns, the Turkmen and the Hazara with the dominant Tajiks and Uzbeks. Then came the Taliban, ethnic Pashtuns drawn mainly from the south and inspired by a vision not only of extreme Islam but also of Pashtun supremacy. When the Taliban swept across northern Afghanistan in the late 1990's, they focused their fury on minorities, massacring thousands. The Taliban often gave favored status to their local brethren, setting aside the choicest lands for their farms and cattle. Now, it appears, the newly dominant are exacting their revenge. A United Nations official, who declined to be identified, said of the anti-Pashtun campaign: "It has been systematic and wide scale. Rapes are far more common than killings, but the serious looting is very pronounced. With the change in power, it is time to settle old scores."

—*New York Times*, 2/7/2002

\$ Financial

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamanei made a threat April 5 when he called upon all Muslim states to "shake the world" by halting oil exports to "pro-Israel" Western states. Such an embargo is unlikely since without accompanying revenue and production cuts, any targeted state can easily procure oil from alternative producers. Furthermore, any serious embargo that includes real production cuts would inflict far more harm upon countries that are sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, particularly in Asia. This, obviously, hasn't stopped Khamanei from threatening a potential embargo. Alternative sources could hardly lessen the impact of a concerted effort to cut supplies to the United States by Muslim producers who collectively control over 20 million barrels per day of production. Still, in the unlikely event of an actual embargo, the Muslim producers would quickly discover the weaknesses of their actions. The West is not nearly as dependent upon oil as it was in 1973. The United States consumes only 60 percent as much oil per dollar of GDP generated as it did in 1973. It is the reverse situation for most of Asia. For an oil embargo now to deliver the same level of economic shock to the West as did the 1973 energy crisis, the per barrel price would need to hit \$90, a target well beyond the Muslim world's ability to deliver. Any oil embargo large enough to actually harm the West would decimate Asia, including Muslim countries, which has yet to recover from the 2001 global recession.

—*www.Stratford.com*, 4/8/2002

Russia is a changed land since August 1998, when it devalued its ruble and defaulted on government bonds. Russia has risen from being economically crippled to being in the midst of a radical turnaround. Led by President Vladimir Putin, a small army of reformers has spearheaded key economic and business reforms. "Russia's economic reform has been fueled by three factors," said Michael Donnelly, manager of the \$145 million American Century Emerging Markets Fund. Those include a new flat tax, better corporate governance and financial transparency by business and government, and a boom in oil prices. Still, not all of Russia's problems are solved. "The country remains poor by Western European standards," said a spokesman for the American Enterprise Institute. "If you're 50 years or older, you are adrift, you're a product of the communist system. You're likely to be unable to adjust to the new realities," said John Conner of Third Millennium Russia Fund. "But people in their 20s and 30s don't drink at lunch. They're eager to learn new skills. These people work hard and they are hard to differentiate from young people in New York." Russia's entry into the World Trade Organization will mean a further opening of Russia's economy to global trade.

—*Investor's Business Daily*, 4/11/2002

Israel

University students from Cairo have been gathering the names of would-be Egyptian martyrs who have volunteered to fight against the Israelis. Organizers now have 3,500 names. Organizers have collected \$11,000 under the slogan "Preparing for martyrdom." Unlike the first intifada against Israel, Egyptians and other Arabs have had the current fighting beamed to them hour by hour in their homes by pan-Arab TV channels. State-controlled television, which might once have kept coverage to a minimum in order not to inflame domestic opinion, has struggled to keep up. "There's one simple answer: execute Bush" one man told the Financial Times during a demonstration of about 3,000 people. "Aren't we in the third world war?" asked another.

—*Financial Times*, 4/8/2002

“I would like to explain the situation from the Cabinet’s perspective. Let us remember how we got to this point. Until September of 2000, we had a good economy and the Palestinian economy was prospering. This all exploded when Arafat refused the Camp David agreement. We offered the Palestinians 98% of the West Bank and a third of Jerusalem, including the Old City. Arafat refused this offer. He returned to the Middle East and began a wave of terror. Do not think that the terror was set off by Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount. In the month of March, 124 people have been killed and 693 wounded. This is the month in which Gen. Zinni was here, when Israelis canceled all anti-terror activity to give the Tenet/Mitchell plan a chance. We have existed for over 50 years without a Palestinian state and we can live another 50 years without one. We were here before Arafat; we will be here after him. Arafat must understand that we will be everywhere, where there are terrorists. In international law, it is legitimate for a nation under siege of terror to defend itself.”

—*IDF Spokesperson, 4/1/2002*

In 2000 there were 6,040,000 Israelis of which nearly a third were born outside Israel. Of those born abroad, nearly half were born in the former U.S.S.R. Israelis following the Jewish religion: 80.1%. Muslim: 14.6%. Christian: 2.1%. Other: 3.2%. Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza: 3,191,000. Average number of children per Israeli woman: 2.6. per Palestinian woman: 6.1.

—*Newsweek, 4/1/2002*

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 5.9 billion people in the world. The world Jewish population is estimated at 13 million, which means that only one of every 453 people in the world is Jewish. In addition, Israelis are outnumbered almost 35 to 1 by hostile neighbors, who possess 270 times as much land as they do.

—*Israel My Glory, March-April 2002*

The Saudi kingdom pledged US\$400 million last year for the support of “martyrs’ families,” according to the Saudi Embassy’s web site www.saudinf.com/main/y2014.htm. At \$5,300 per “martyr” that works out to about 75,000 martyrs, suggesting the Saudi princes anticipate a lot more suicide bombings than Israel has suffered. The Saudis offered a “peace” plan intended to divert attention from their involvement in the horrors of September 11. According to the Web site, the assistance to the families of Palestinian “martyrs” is handled under the directive of Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz, the Interior Minister, who heads the Saudi Committee for the Support of al-Quds (Jerusalem) Intifada.

—*Bridges for Peace, 4/6/2002*