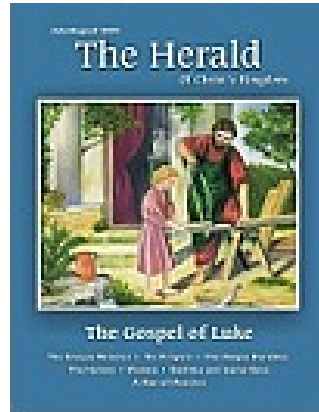


# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## In the Beginning

### The Gospel of Luke

Although his name does not appear in either the gospel of Luke or the book of Acts, scholars generally believe Luke wrote both books. If this is true, Luke was responsible for about one-quarter of the New Testament.

According to Colossians 4:14, Luke was a physician. Indeed his gospel account contains numerous medical terms not found elsewhere. He is first mentioned, indirectly, in Acts 16:10 where “we”—meaning Paul and Luke—endeavored to go into Macedonia.

Luke’s gospel is the most complete of the four accounts. He is the only one to say anything about the prenatal and pre-ministerial events in Jesus’ life. Because he himself was a Gentile and therefore an outcast from orthodox Jewish society, he had a keen appreciation for the lot of those who were considered unimportant: publicans, Gentiles, Samaritans, and women.

This issue of The Herald examines many of the features of this precious gospel including: The six unique miracles: the draught of fish, raising a widow’s son, healing an infirmed woman, a man with dropsy, ten lepers, and a man with a severed ear.

Jesus’ many prayers on various occasions.

Some of the 11 parables found only in this gospel.

The four hymns described nowhere else.

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, so often erroneously cited as proof of torment beyond the grave, is briefly reviewed in a sidebar on page 15. Few realize this is the only parable wherein a person is named, and, in this case, with the same name as one Jesus

actually raised from the dead a few weeks later.

Two articles examine the special relationship Jesus had with a number of women and with others who were scorned by contemporary Jewish society at that time.

We end with a verse-by-verse study of Luke chapter 5 which contains three of the Master's miracles. These not only demonstrated his power, they illustrated the even greater works to be done in Christ's kingdom (John 14:12).

We trust this issue will contribute to a greater appreciation of the son of God and his faithful chronicler Luke.

## The Miracles

# He Healed Them All

*When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.—Luke 23:8*

Richard Suraci

A miracle is a work wrought by divine power for a divine purpose, by means beyond the reach of mortal man. The dictionary defines a miracle as “an event or action that apparently contradicts known scientific laws and is hence thought to be due to supernatural causes, especially to an act of God.” The Greek word *semeion* (Strong's 4592 rendered miracle in Luke 23:8) is translated sign, token, and wonder in the King James.

The parables of Jesus contain divine illustrations of truth and his sermons reveal the continuous development of truth: “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). His miracles are an integral part of God’s word and provide evidence that his word is divinely inspired. Miracles were helpful for the establishment of Christ’s church because they were an aid to faith. They ceased with the death of the apostles when faith was firmly established in the hearts of the early Christians.

Luke was a Gentile, of Greek origin, and most likely a convert of the apostle Paul whom he accompanied on missionary journeys (see Acts 16:10; 20:6; 27:1; 28:16). He also may have been the author of the book of Acts which appears to be part of one continuous report. Both books address their message to Theophilus [Strong’s 2321 meaning “friend of God”] whose background is unknown. The two books, Luke and Acts, comprise more than one quarter of the New Testament. Luke’s name is not found in either his gospel or Acts.

The other three gospel writers wrote what they personally heard Jesus say as they walked with him and witnessed his miracles. Since it is unlikely Luke ever heard or saw Jesus, he may have interviewed the apostles, Mary, her two believing sons, James and Jude, and others to compile his facts. This gave Luke a panoramic view of Jesus’ life and resulted in his own gospel account with its unique report of six of Jesus’ miracles.

Paul called Luke a “beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) and appreciated his service. If anyone needed a personal physician, it was Paul. Because he was a physician, Luke identified with the reports he received of Jesus’ tender loving care when healing people. In Luke’s gospel, the words heal and healing in relation to Jesus’ miracles appear 22 times, the same number as the other three gospels combined.

## Miracle #1—The Draught of Fish

In Luke chapter 5 Jesus was standing by the shore of Lake Gennesaret as the crowd pressed toward him, eager to hear his words. Beside him were two boats belonging to Peter, his brother Andrew, and their fishing partners, James and John. Jesus entered one boat and beckoned Peter to pull out a little from shore as he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he finished speaking, Jesus asked Peter to take his boat to deeper waters and let down his net to catch some fish. Peter said that they toiled all night and caught nothing, but because of his request, he would let down the net. Having done so, the net filled with so many fish it began to tear. Peter signaled his brother Andrew and his partners, James and John, to bring the second boat, and both boats nearly sank from the weight of the fish. Peter was so impressed that he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

The lake where this miracle occurred is the same as that referred to by Isaiah: "There will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan. The people walking in darkness **have seen a great light**; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." (Isaiah 9:1,2, NIV).

Isaiah identified who this light is: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this." —Isaiah 9:6-8, NIV.

After this miracle at the Sea of Galilee, Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John into a special relationship as disciples. This miracle was designed by Jesus to catch them in his "net." He told them what their future vocation would be when he said, "From now on you shall catch men" (Luke 5:10, NIV).

After bringing their boats to shore they left them there and followed Jesus. We are not told what became of the fish. After such an overwhelming display of power, these fishermen knew the one calling them to full-time service was able to meet their every need.

It was the gospel message of Jesus that led to the call of the new creation; the apostles were the first to herald that gospel and prepare the people for discipleship. On the day of Pentecost the apostles and other believers received the holy spirit.

The miracle of the draught of fish teaches us to listen and obey, like Peter, to the words of Jesus. We too must become "fishers of men." At the end of Matthew's gospel Jesus said,

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19,20).

All the apostles became “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Peter started immediately on the day of Pentecost in his newly appointed office. His first “catch” was “about five thousand,” much more than his miraculous draught of fish at the Sea of Galilee.

Down through the age God’s called-out people have followed the example of Jesus and his apostles by becoming “fishers of men.” Today we have the same privilege. Through activities such as the printed page, personal witness, radio, TV, web sites, and distributing tracts, we too may attract those who are suitable for the call of the church, or God’s kingdom on earth (see Ecclesiastes 11:6; 1 Peter 2:12).

## **Miracle #2—Raising the Widow’s Son**

The second miracle recorded only in Luke occurred the day after Jesus healed a centurion’s son, and it was much greater. Jesus left Capernaum and came “into a city called Nain and many of his disciples went with him, and **much people**” (Luke 7:11) As they came to the gate of the city, they met a funeral procession. In meeting this procession of death, Jesus had the opportunity to illustrate to the crowd the power conferred upon him by his father. It also demonstrated the great joy that will come to the world of mankind when “all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth” (John 5:28,29).

The meeting of these two large groups of people at the “gate of the city” was impressive because life triumphed over death, sorrow was turned into joy. One procession was grief-stricken, the other was led by the compassionate Lord Jesus who had the power to raise the dead. The battle at the “gate” was short and decisive as life (through the word of Jesus) triumphed over death.

“There was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow” (Luke 7:12). This was a severe loss for her. Her husband was dead and now her only son had died. In her deep sorrow Luke states, “When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said, Weep not.” This was not a mere request for the woman to refrain from weeping, it was a sign of what Jesus would do to make her happy again: “He touched the bier and said, young man ... arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”

This experience was a double witness of the divine, supernatural power invested in Jesus. The miracles Jesus performed during his ministry on earth were samples of what he and his church will do for the world of mankind in God’s kingdom on earth.

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even **greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12, NIV).

Because of his faithfulness to his father, after his resurrection he applied the merit of his sacrifice on behalf of his church. He comes again to “seek and to save that which was lost” and to make the second application of his ransom for the world of mankind (see Luke 19:10; Hebrews 9:24,27,28).

### Miracle #3—The Infirm Woman

Our compassionate Lord Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath day. Jesus’ adversaries watched his every action to entrap him. As he looked at the audience he saw a woman who had had “a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bowed together and could in no wise lift herself up” (Luke 13:11). Luke displays his training as a “good physician” and a gifted historian. The only direction this woman could see was downward which limited her peripheral vision. One wonders what was in her heart as she heard Jesus speak. The fact that she went to the synagogue in her afflicted condition reveals her desire to be close to God. While she heard Jesus speak, she may not have been able to see him!

The “spirit of infirmity” describes her diseased body. This is the only place where the phrase “bowed together” is found in the New Testament. It describes a severe case of scoliosis, which means crookedness, lateral curvature of the spine. Her condition was very acute. “Bowed together” is an expressive phrase which may illustrate mankind’s general condition as a result of sin: bowed down, unable to look up to their Creator.

“When Jesus saw her, he called her to him and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God” (Luke 13:12,13). In many of his healing miracles Jesus touched people, and in some cases, those who touched him in faith were healed (see Matthew 9:20-22; 14:34-36; Luke 6:17-19).

There were two quite different reactions to this compassionate miracle. The woman “glorified God.” Similar acts of praise will come from the world of mankind when God’s kingdom comes on earth. The beautiful part of this healing was Jesus’ voluntary act of loving compassion. A much different reaction came from the ruler of the synagogue as he poured his anger upon the people and Jesus: “There are six days in which man ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day” (Luke 13:14). Jesus called him a hypocrite saying, “Do not each of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or ass from the stall and lead him away to watering?” The unspoken answer of the ruler was obviously, yes! “Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom **Satan has kept bound** for eighteen long years be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” (Luke 13:16, NIV).

Jesus’ words were so true, and without question Satan is the cause of every ache, pain, and death in human history. Because of Satan’s deception, God condemned Adam to death. “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17). The marginal rendering states, “Dying thou shalt die.” The dying process included sickness, disease, mental anguish, sorrow, pain and finally death. Death passed upon Adam’s family up to

this present day. Jesus' statement humiliated the ruler but the people were delighted with the wonderful things Jesus was doing. Jesus' miracles on the Sabbath day teach us that the Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Sabbath day is typical of the Times of Restitution of all things (see Acts 3:19-21; Romans 8:19-22).

### **Miracle #4—The Man with Dropsy**

Jesus accepted an invitation to eat at a prominent Pharisee's home and the guests watched him carefully. In front of Jesus was a man suffering from dropsy, a symptom of an organic disease, usually of the heart or kidneys. Today it is called edema. This man may have been invited purposely so that the Pharisees and law experts could observe what Jesus would do on the Sabbath. Jesus asked them a question: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (Luke 14:3). They remained silent because the law wasn't specific on this question. Because they said nothing, Jesus took the man, healed him, and sent him away. "Then he asked them, If one of you has a **son** or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day will you not **immediately** pull him out? And they had nothing to say." (Luke 14:5, NIV, Diaglott). Of course they would have saved a life automatically without considering what day it was! Jesus exposed their lack of consistency and his reasoning once again silenced them.

One would think that listening to a man with such compassion and wisdom would touch their hearts and cause them to try to understand his teachings. Such was not the case because of the pride they had as the leaders and teachers of the law. Had Jesus joined their ranks and acknowledged them, they might have accepted him. But Jesus acknowledged God, and God alone, as his teacher (John 14:24). So they hardened their hearts further and looked for other opportunities to trap him.

Jesus frequently witnessed for the truth by asking questions. God's people should remember this and do the same. We should tell the people just enough so that they may desire more.

Jesus warns his disciples with the words, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matthew 10:16). Jesus spoke from experience and told his disciples how to combat wolves in sheep's clothing: "Be ye therefore, wise as serpents and harmless as doves." One cunning facet of the serpent's wisdom is that it exercises patience in seeking prey. It doesn't intimidate it or scare it away. A serpent also displays wisdom by protecting its head because a severe blow to the head may cause its death. The head encompasses the brain which is the control center of the body. The brain and the heart are the home of the new creature. "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23 NIV). A dove is harmless and is a sympathetic bird. A dove was used to illustrate the holy spirit gently alighting upon Jesus (Matthew 3:16).

### **Miracle #5—The Ten Lepers**

During Jesus' last trip to Jerusalem he traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. It was a familiar route to him. The Jews going to Jerusalem usually took a longer

route to avoid any contact with Samaritans with whom they had no dealings.

“As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, Jesus, Master, have pity on us” (Luke 17:12,13 NIV). The lepers had heard of Jesus and his power to heal. They were a pitiable group with rent clothes, shaved heads, and a cloth upon their upper lip. They followed Jewish law which required they keep approximately 150 feet away from people (Leviticus 13:45,46). While this distance was a requirement of the law because of the risk of contagion, it also illustrated the world’s separation from God because of sin.

Leprosy is a symbol of sin and alienation from God; it is a loathsome disease. It corrupts the blood and joints, producing decay. People who study this terrible disease tell us it affects the vocal cords and lessens a victim’s ability to speak. It was probably because of this physical weakness that the ten lepers raised their voices in unison so they could be heard by Jesus.

Out of a deep sense of their misery and the hope that Jesus would hear their cry, they called out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” They came to the right person, in fact the only person, the compassionate Son of God, who could help them. Jesus didn’t touch them as he did with the leper he healed in Matthew 8:2,3. He simply said, “Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that, **as they went**, they were cleansed” (Luke 17:14).

Jesus did not speak a healing word to them as he did for others he healed. He simply said, “go” and they did. Their faith was rewarded **as they went** to the priest. While walking along the road, they felt the renewal of their bodies. “One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a **loud voice** glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving thanks: and he was a Samaritan” (Luke 17:15,16). Being cleansed, he was now able to shout his praises to God!

The lepers were not healed until they demonstrated their faith by obedience. One can only imagine the intense joy they felt as life and strength returned to their bodies. Cries of joy must have echoed from the first to the last of each of these former lepers.

With a touch of pathos, Jesus exclaimed: “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” (Luke 17:17, NIV). Sending the lepers to the priest proved that Jesus had not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). The priest could not cure leprosy; he could only pronounce a leper clean. The lepers showed great faith in the law by going to the priest at Jesus’ command (Leviticus 14:3,4).

Faith and obedience will also be required when God’s kingdom is established on earth as it is in heaven. John the Revelator speaks of that time: “The spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17, NIV).



When people decide to partake of the water of life freely, they will have access to the highway of holiness which Isaiah speaks of in chapter 35: “The wilderness ... shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose ... The eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped ... the lame man shall leap as the hart and the tongue of the dumb sing ... a highway shall be there ... and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those.” This cleansing highway will assist mankind in removing their every weakness and prepare them for perfect life on earth.

### **Miracle #6—Healing a Severed Ear**

“While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, Lord, should we strike with our swords? And [not waiting for an answer] one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, No more of this! And he touched the man’s ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs?”—Luke 22:47-52, NIV

How ridiculous this scene must have been—a heavily armed mob to arrest one innocent defenseless man. By prior arrangement Judas’ kiss led to his apprehension. As always, Jesus was calm, knowing that all things were in his father’s hands, and asked the mob, “Whom seek ye.” They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth,” and he replied, “I am he.” The rowdy crowd, overcome by his confidence and quiet dignity, fell backward to the ground. After they regrouped, he asked them the same question and following their reply, he gave the same answer, adding, “If you are looking for me, then let these men go.” (See John 18:4-8.)

Throughout his dedicated life, Jesus never used his miraculous power for self-preservation. He knew he was born on this earth to die as an atoning sacrifice for the world of mankind, so he meekly submitted himself to his foes (Luke 22:49-53).

John is the only one who identifies Peter as the wielder of the sword, and Malchus as the victim (John 18:10). Luke, the “good physician,” is the only one to record the healing of Malchus’ ear (Luke 22:51). This is the only miracle where a wound inflicted by violence was miraculously healed.

Think of all the vicious wounds which have been inflicted upon humanity during the last 6,000 years! Millions upon millions have needlessly lost their lives. As a result of Jesus’ atonement sacrifice, all that are in their graves shall be awakened from the sleep of death, each receiving a suitable body (John 5:28; 1 Corinthians 15:19-22,35-38).

At the conclusion of the kingdom mankind will stand in God’s presence as perfect as Jesus stood while on earth. Isaiah’s prophecy will then be fulfilled: “The inhabitant shall

not say I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity” (Isaiah 33:24).

“No creature of the redeemed race will be too low for divine grace to reach, through the all-powerful and blessed agency of the kingdom. No degradation of sin will be too deep for the hand of mercy to fathom, to rescue the blood-bought soul; no darkness of ignorance and superstition will be so dense in any heart but that the light of divine truth and love will penetrate its gloom and bring to it a knowledge of the joy and gladness of the new day, and an opportunity to share the same by obedience. No disease that can attack and pollute the physical system will be beyond the prompt control of the Great Physician. And no deformity, or monstrosity, or superfluity, or redundancy, or mental imbecility will be able to resist **his healing touch.**”—*Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 4, pp. 639, 640.

## The Prayers

# Communing With God

*Lord, teach us to pray.—Luke 11:1*

All Scriptural quotations are from the *New King James Version* Bible unless otherwise noted.

*Andrew Polychronis*

One cannot help but be impressed by the prayer life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did he frequently pray in the presence of his disciples, he often separated himself from his followers where in quietness and solitude he communed with his heavenly father.

On one such occasion when Jesus had finished praying “in a certain place,” a disciple, undoubtedly impressed by our Lord’s prayer life, asked, “Lord, teach us to pray.” It was then that Jesus gave his disciples, and us, the well-beloved model prayer recorded in Luke 11:2-4.

More prayers of Jesus are recorded in Luke’s gospel than in any other. Even so the principle enunciated in John’s gospel concerning the miracles of Jesus can be applied equally to his prayers: “There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25).

Certainly not all of our Lord’s prayers have been recorded. For example, after he was baptized by John at Jordan, he was led into the wilderness by the holy spirit. There he remained forty days and nights, being tempted by the adversary. Matthew tells us Jesus fasted during this time. When he finished his testing, “angels came and ministered to him” (see Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). During this time of fasting and temptation Jesus must have been in constant communion with his father although nothing is said in the record. On many occasions we are simply told that Jesus went apart to pray; nothing is said about the subject of his prayers. “He himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed” (Luke 5:16). One thing we know for certain: much of our Lord’s time on earth was spent in intimate communion with his father.

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while he prayed, the heaven was opened. And the holy spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven which said, You are my beloved son; in you I am well pleased.—Luke 3:21,22

This is the first time Luke mentions our Lord praying, and appropriately, it is at his baptism. Although the other three gospels also record our Lord’s baptism, only Luke mentions that Jesus was praying. It immediately precedes a period of fasting and temptation in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. Although we are not told for

what Jesus was praying, we do know that his prayer received an instant answer and affirmation. The heavens opened and Jesus was imbued with the power of the holy spirit. He also received his father's profound benediction as well: "You are my beloved son; in you I am well pleased." Jesus was more than able to endure the forty days and nights of fasting and testing. Not only was he victorious, we are told that he returned from the wilderness "in the power of the spirit" (Luke 4:14).

The report went around concerning him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. So he himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.—Luke 5:15,16

Jesus was engulfed in a wave of great popularity. Recognizing the danger of fame and esteem, and wanting only to honor and glorify his father, Jesus withdrew from the crowds, went into the desert, and communed with his father there. Such withdrawals into the wilderness to pray were habitual. If Jesus, the perfect son of God, found it necessary to retreat frequently to the wilderness to pray, how much more should we! No wonder we are admonished by the apostle Paul to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Now it came to pass in those days that he went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples to himself; and from them he chose twelve whom he also named apostles.—Luke 6:12,13

Because of the formidable task of choosing the twelve apostles, Jesus spent the entire night in prayer. Recognizing the supreme importance of carefully and appropriately selecting twelve men who would fulfill the divine plans and purposes of God, Jesus was unwilling to execute this task by himself. So he earnestly prayed all night, seeking wisdom and guidance from his father. What a marvelous example for all true believers. For any decision in our personal lives, within our families, and indeed within our ecclesias, we must constantly seek divine guidance, wisdom, and the leading that comes from above.

The apostle Paul writes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7).

Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude.—Luke 9:16

Jesus was thankful to God for the physical provision of the five loaves and the two fish. This certainly is in keeping with his instructions to his disciples, and to us, given in his model prayer when he taught us to pray: "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). As children of God we must learn to be grateful and thankful for every "good and perfect gift" that comes from the hands of a loving, kind, and merciful father. Implicit in our Lord's prayer of gratitude is the need for a miracle to multiply the loaves and fish to feed the five thousand.

As he was alone praying, his disciples joined him, and he asked them, saying, Who do the crowds say that I am?—Luke 9:18

The twelve had returned from a successful mission of “preaching the gospel and healing everywhere” (Luke 9:6). Jesus and the twelve had just fed the five thousand who had gathered to hear Jesus and be healed of their infirmities. There was so much to be thankful for. And so Jesus, as he was so often, “was alone praying.” Weighing heavily on his mind was the concern of whether the disciples truly understood who he was, and what his relationship was to God. So when the disciples joined him, he asked a profound question in two parts: “Who do the crowds say that I am?” (verse 18) and “Who do you say that I am?” (verse 20). Peter’s response elicits a most stupendous reaction from Jesus: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17).

Just as there was mass confusion concerning his identity among the “crowds” in Jesus’ day, that confusion continues today among the vast majority of Christendom.

Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that he took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the appearance of his face was altered, and his robe became white and glistening.—Luke 9:28, 29

Although both Matthew and Mark describe the transfiguration scene, neither mentions Jesus praying. According to Luke, it is while Jesus is praying that the transfiguration occurs. What a spectacular sight this incredible vision must have been for the three chosen by Jesus to witness the glory of God’s coming kingdom (verse 27)! Here was the glorified Christ—“King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 19:16), resplendent in power and glory! And in the vision he was seen with Moses and Elijah, perhaps representing the Jewish and Gospel age overcomers.

It came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, that one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.—Luke 11:1

The prayer life of Jesus was a powerful example to his followers. They wanted to experience a similar intimate relationship with God as they witnessed in Jesus, hence their request: “Lord, teach us to pray.” The prayer that Jesus suggested is not only a prayer after which our prayers should be modeled, it is a prayer remarkable in its brevity, powerful in its intended purpose, and sublime in its adoration of and petitions to the heavenly father.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren.—Luke 22:31,32

What a loving and merciful Savior! Knowing full well that Satan would brutally “sift” Peter in the crucible of fire, and that Peter would deny him three times, Jesus said to him,

“But I have prayed for you.” Prayed for what? That Peter would not deny him? Emphatically, not! Jesus, knowing the end from the beginning, was fully aware of precisely what Peter needed to experience to become the steadfast, immovable pillar of the early church that Peter ultimately became. Rather, Jesus prayed that Peter’s faith should not fail. As profoundly devastating as that experience was for Peter (see Luke 22:60-62), it was one he had to go through.

The second part of our Lord’s prayer for Peter is equally powerful and magnificent: “When you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren.” This is precisely what happened. When Peter returned to Jesus in the full power of the holy spirit at Pentecost, not only did his ministry strengthen his brethren in the early church, but through his ministry recorded in the book of Acts, plus his two powerful and spiritually motivating general epistles, he has been strengthening his brethren for nearly two thousand years! What sublime and blessed assurance we can have that in every experience God allows in our lives, our advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ, is praying that our faith fail not, that the experience will not only strengthen our own personal spiritual walk but will encourage and strengthen our brethren as well.

Then he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.—Luke 22:17-19

In establishing the memorial of his death, Jesus draws inner strength from his father as he gives thanks for the cup representing his imminent suffering as well as his precious blood shed on the cross at Calvary. Similarly, he gives thanks for the bread which typifies his body, broken for us, that we through his death might have life by being fully reconciled to God. (The even deeper significance of the bread and wine is explained by Jesus in John 6:26-63.)

Coming out, he went to the Mount of Olives, as he was accustomed, and his disciples also followed him. When he came to the place, he said to them, Pray that you may not enter into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and he knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done. Then an angel appeared to him from heaven strengthening him. And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly. Then his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When he rose up from prayer, and had come to his disciples, he found them sleeping from sorrow. Then he said to them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.—Luke 22:39-46

Having established his memorial supper and having finished the extended conversations and discussions that occurred that night, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and entered the Garden of Gethsemene. His disciples followed. First our Lord entreats the disciples to “pray lest you enter into temptation.” Then he withdrew from them a distance, knelt down, and prayed. While praying in Gethsemene (the name means “oil press”), Jesus

began to feel the pressing weight and agony of what he was about to experience. He would be taking the seemingly unbearable weight of the sins of the world on his shoulders. He would shortly experience not only the excruciating physical pain of hanging on a cross, but the humiliation of being on a cross, for “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). The ultimate pain would be experienced when his father’s communion with him would be momentarily broken as he was about to give up his last breath as the ransom sacrifice for the sins of the world. This would elicit from his lips those haunting words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). Is it any wonder that in Gethsemane Jesus prayed, “Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done.”

Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. Having said this, he breathed his last.—Luke 23:34,46

Both these prayers were uttered from the cross. Although one early manuscript omits the statement “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do,” it is appropriate to consider the sentiments and significance of the prayer, knowing our Lord’s intense teachings on the importance of forgiveness. In his model prayer, Jesus taught us all to pray: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Jesus then further expounds on this important teaching: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:12,14,15). The second brief prayer reveals our Lord’s complete faith, trust, and confidence in his father. Having finished his father’s work on earth completely and perfectly, he commits his life to God knowing that in three days his father would raise him from the dead and crown him with honor, glory, and immortality.

Now it came to pass, as he sat at the table with them, that he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. . . . And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while he blessed them, that he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.—Luke 24:30,50-53

The prayer habits of Jesus continued into his risen life. Accepting the hospitality of the two he met on the road to Emmaus, he gave thanks for the evening meal. Finally, as he left his followers, he lifted up his hands as high priest and blessed them: he was carried into heaven with uplifted hands.

Our Lord’s prayer-life continues on our behalf, as our advocate and high priest. “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

## The Parables

# Lessons for Hearing Ears

*Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old.—Psalm 78:1,2*

All Scriptural quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible* unless otherwise noted.

*Cory Kalgeth*

### Unique Parables in Luke

“Two Debtors” (Luke 7:41-43)

“Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:30-37)

“Importunate Friend” (Luke 11:5-8)

“Rich Fool” (Luke 12:16-21)

“Barren Fig-tree” (Luke 13:6-9)

“Lost Piece of Silver” (Luke 15:8-10)

“Lost Son” (Luke 15:11-32)

“Unrighteous Steward” (Luke 16:1-8)

“Rich Man and Lazarus” (Luke 16:19-31)

“Unjust Judge” (Luke 18:1-8)

“Pharisee and Tax Collector” (Luke 18:9-14)

It was prophesied that the Messiah would teach using parables, or illustrations (Psalm 78:2). This was fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:35). Parables were an identifying characteristic of his teaching. But why parables? Without question they were a powerful teaching aid. People would easily remember and share them with others. They were also rich, spiritual metaphors. Deeper meanings would unfold as a disciple progressed in the Christian walk.

Parables also served another purpose. Jesus explained that, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, in order that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand” (Luke 8:10). The parables acted as a spiritual filter. Those to whom the good news was directed would understand; others would not. How privileged we are then, to be counted worthy by our Lord to understand the divine teaching hidden in his parables.

Luke records eleven parables not found in the other gospels (see list on the right). These were spoken within a common historical context and share a common theme. The end of



the Jewish age was rapidly approaching, to be supplanted by the Gospel age. The self-righteous religious leaders had abused their trust from God, and Jesus was warning them of impending judgment. He contrasted their hypocrisy and hard-heartedness with the merciful love of God. He predicted that repentant, lowly cast-offs from Jewish society would receive God's blessings ahead of them. The Gospel age would be inaugurated with a complete reversal of spiritual conditions: Israel would be abandoned and God would turn to the people of all nations. The first (at least in their own estimation) would be last and the last first (Luke 13:30).

These parables teach a series of important lessons, not just for those who heard them, but for all Christians.

## **Spiritual Needs**

Knowing one's spiritual need, followed by true, heartfelt repentance is the beginning of the Christian walk.

In Luke chapter 7 Jesus was dining with the Pharisee Simon when a woman, a known sinner, entered the house. She washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with perfumed oil. Simon's reaction was disgust. How could Jesus allow such a sinful person to touch him? He reasons to himself that if Jesus were really a prophet, he would discern who this woman was. Jesus tries to correct Simon's thinking, first by exposing his inner reasoning as wrong, and then by an illustration we know as the parable of the "Two Debtors": "A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose the one whom he forgave more. And he said to him, You have judged correctly."— Luke 7:41-43

Jesus then points out that Simon had not displayed the usual courtesies shown to guests in that culture: "You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with perfume." Jesus exposes Simon's self-righteous arrogance, and demonstrates that the woman's self-awareness of her sin and her turning away from it and toward God has saved her. "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

Simon the Pharisee had little awareness of his own spiritual need. Consequently, he showed little love, especially toward those he considered beneath him. The woman had a deep, cutting consciousness of her sins. She was truly repentant from the heart. The evidence of her being forgiven, Jesus asserts, is shown by her deep love. To confirm this he says, "Your sins have been forgiven" and "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Unfortunately this lesson is lost on the dinner guests. They are outraged that Jesus would presume to forgive sins.

The truth is that no one is without sin. Whether we perceive ourselves in debt “fifty denarii” or “five hundred,” we are all sinners and fall short of God’s righteous requirements. It is not possible to pay back any of this debt through our own works. It is only through heartfelt repentance, and the sin-atonement sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that we can have a righteous standing imputed to us by God.

The parable of the “Pharisee and the Tax Collector” teaches a similar lesson.

## **Treasures in Heaven**

In the parable of the “Unrighteous Steward” (Luke 16:1-8), Jesus demonstrates the importance of using our resources wisely to store up treasures in heaven: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this steward was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.”

The steward is not strong enough to work with his hands and ashamed to beg, so he devises a plan. Knowing his employment is about to end soon, he works quickly to reduce the amount owed to the master by two of his debtors. He hopes to call in the favors from them when he is unemployed. His master, a businessman, appreciates his clever strategy, and commends him for it, but does not change his mind about terminating his position. Jesus then explains the meaning: “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings. He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you?”

Jesus teaches that we should use our resources wisely in God’s service. In effect, he is saying that if the sons of this age demonstrate shrewdness in the use of money for their own gain, how much more should those who consider themselves to be sons of light—specifically the scribes and Pharisees in his audience when he gave the parable—use their resources wisely in God’s service? Conversely, if any squander resources and opportunities in this age, how can they be trusted with greater responsibilities in the next?

We prove ourselves true disciples of our master Jesus Christ by giving our time, money, and everything we have to help others in their Christian walk, or to bring relief to those in need (John 21:15-17). Jesus gave up all things, even his very life, to serve others, and so should we if we are following his footsteps. If we do this, we will be “making friends” for ourselves with the “mammon of unrighteousness.” When it fails, that is when this current age ends, the resources of this world will have no value. Only then can the “friends” we have made receive us into the eternal dwellings, the kingdom of heaven, where the Lord will reward us with greater responsibilities (Luke 22:28). Jesus himself said, “You are my friends, if you do what I command you” (John 15:14).

The Jewish age was about to end, and the Gospel age was just beginning. The

unrighteous steward represented the Jewish religious leaders who had squandered God's trust and were about to be dismissed. They had treated the people who were put in their trust harshly: "They tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger" (Matthew 23:4). If they had possessed true wisdom, they would have worked quickly to lighten the loads of the people in anticipation of the new dispensation. This would have met the Lord's approval. Instead, they continued to put their trust in worldly shrewdness and the "mammon of unrighteousness." For this foolishness they were to forfeit all.

The parables of the "Rich Fool" and the "Rich Man and Lazarus" teach similar lessons.

### **The Rich Man and Lazarus**

The parable of the "Rich Man and Lazarus" is often used to support the doctrine of eternal torment. However, parables are not literal statements of doctrine, and cannot be used as such. They are comparisons, illustrations of spiritual truths. To understand the parables, we must first understand the context in which they were spoken. In this particular case, it was a series of encounters with the hypocritical Pharisees. Jesus probably adapted a common folk story to teach a striking and pointed lesson: there will soon be a reversal of spiritual fortunes (see *Interpreter's Bible*, p. 290; *Peake's Commentary*, p. 837). The Pharisees will fall from God's favor, and the outcasts of Jewish society who accept Jesus Christ, pictured by Lazarus, will receive great spiritual blessings.

The parable taught a lesson that applied then and is the only parable where a person is named. The significance of this, often missed by commentators, becomes apparent a short time later when Jesus raises his friend Lazarus from the dead. True to the parable's lesson, the Pharisees still did not believe (John 12:9,10), just as they did not believe when the Lord himself was resurrected. This parable teaches the folly of pursuing worldly prominence, and predicts an imminent change of spiritual fortunes. It does not teach the God-dishonoring doctrine of eternal torment.

### **The Importance of Works**

Seventy disciples had just returned from a preaching assignment and were reporting their experiences to the Lord (Luke 10:17-24). Jesus is overjoyed, he praises his heavenly father, and then, turning to his disciples, he says "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see." In the midst of this joyful revelry, a lawyer, asks how to inherit eternal life and is told to love his neighbor as himself. He then asks who is his neighbor. Jesus responds with the parable of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30-37). A man was attacked by robbers while traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. A priest and a Levite both pass by, offering no help, leaving him to die. However, a Samaritan stops and helps the man at considerable personal time and expense, bandaging his wounds and carrying him to an inn. Jesus asks, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man

who fell into the robbers' hands?" And the lawyer replied, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

The lawyer had asked, "Who is my neighbor [Greek: *plesion*, Strongs 4139]?" According to Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon *plesion* can mean any other person, or it can mean a friend. The lawyer wanted to know to whom he should direct his love. In effect, Jesus tells him that the question should not be "Who is my neighbor?" but rather "How can I be a friend to those who are in need?" The answer is simple: provide help irrespective of race or background.

Jesus teaches that actions speak louder than appearances. The priest and Levite, who appeared righteous and God-fearing, revealed their hypocrisy through their inaction. Only the Samaritan, an outcast from Jewish society, acted as a real neighbor.

Works alone cannot save anyone (Romans 9:30-33). However, good works naturally follow if there is faith in the heart. "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18). Good works prove that we are "sons of [our] Father who is in heaven; for he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45).

The parable of the "Barren Fig Tree" teaches a similar lesson, highlighting the nearness of Israel's judgment for its lack of spiritual fruitage.

### **The Importance of Mercy**

The tax collectors and sinners had drawn close to Jesus to hear him teach. But the Pharisees and scribes "began grumbling, saying, Why do you eat and drink with the tax gatherers and sinners?" (Luke 5:30).

They did not perceive that God, through Jesus, was reaching out to sinners. They failed to realize that in God's eyes, a repentant sinner is of great value; a cause for joy. Jesus tried to teach this lesson with a series of parables, including the "Lost Piece of Silver" (Luke 15:8-10) and the "Lost Son" (Luke 15:11-32). In the "Lost Piece of Silver," a woman with ten silver coins loses one. She searches with a lamp, and sweeps her entire house until she finds it. Then she invites her neighbors to celebrate her good fortune with her. And so it is with God. He searches the earth for lost humans—those who are estranged from him—and shows mercy to those who return (1 Peter 3:10-12).

In the "Lost Son," the younger of two sons requested an inheritance from his father in advance, and proceeded to squander it in loose living in a foreign land. When his situation became desperate, "he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." He had reached the depths of misery and humiliation—swine were an unclean and disgusting animal to Jews. "And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him."

Finally he came to his senses: “I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.” His father saw his lost son walking toward him in the distance and “felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” He forgave his son and was filled with great joy. “Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.” His father accepted him back into the family with all the privileges of a true son.

The older son, however, was not joyful. He was jealous of the attention paid to his younger brother, who he felt was unworthy. He refused to enter the house and join the celebration, so the compassionate father went outside to speak with him. His father tried in vain to show his older son that a great tragedy had been averted: “This brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.”

Jesus explained the point earlier: “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:4-7). The Pharisees should have imitated God’s mercy. Instead, they “[tied] up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves [were] unwilling to move them with so much as a finger” (Matthew 23:4). Like the older son in the parable, they felt they should be the exclusive recipients of God’s blessings. They did not understand that God was merciful and kind toward all, that he reached out to sinners who repented.

Christians should imitate God’s mercy. We should respect and appreciate all those whom God draws to himself, whatever their backgrounds might be. We should forgive, from our hearts, repentant sinners (Matthew 18:21,22). Not only should we forgive, we should forget. If we do, God will show mercy toward us.

## Pray Always

Jesus “was telling them a parable, [the “Unjust Judge”], to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart. ... There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him [the judge], saying, Give me legal protection from my opponent. For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she will wear me out.”—Luke 18:1-5

This widow, by her persistence, was able to extract justice from this unmerciful judge. Jesus concludes: “Shall not God bring about justice for his elect who cry to him day and night, and will he delay long over them? I tell you that he will bring about justice for them speedily.”

How much more loving and just is God than a worldly judge! During times of trial we should never give up and never stop praying. We should have the faith that God both

hears and answers our prayers (Hebrews 11:6).

The parable of the “Importunate Friend” teaches a similar lesson.

### **The Parables Are for Us**

We can see that the negative aspects of these parables apply to the corrupt religious leaders of Israel, but if this is all we see, we may be missing the point. The counsel in these parables is also meant for Christians during the Gospel age. The scribes and Pharisees are no longer with us, but we do have their modern-day counterparts. May we never be found among them or be corrupted by their teachings (Luke 12:1). Instead, let us recognize our spiritual need and take the lessons of these parables to heart, asking God for his holy spirit (Luke 11:13).

Let us store up treasure in heaven, not on earth. Let us prove our faith by our works, and demonstrate Godly mercy. Let us pray incessantly, having faith that our God, the hearer of prayer, will answer (Psalm 65:2). And let us follow our Lord Jesus Christ wherever he leads us while we wait patiently, with endurance, for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

## The Hymns

# Blessing God

*I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church  
will I sing praise unto thee.—Hebrews 2:12*

*Michael Nekora*

A hymn is a song of praise to God. The four recorded in Luke are all unique to that gospel and consist of words from Mary, Zachariah, Simeon, and the angels at the birth of Jesus. All are contained in the first two chapters. The Greek word *hymneo* (Strong's 5214) means to sing a hymn and is used just four times in the New Testament: in Matthew (26:30) and Mark (14:26) referring to the singing of a hymn at the end of the last supper, in Acts (16:25) when Paul and Silas sang praises to God while in prison, and in Hebrews 2:12 (which quotes Psalm 22:22).

The *New International Version* Bible supplies the heading “Mary’s Song” and “Zechariah’s Song” in front of the first two hymns (Luke 1:46,67); the angels sang their praises, one would imagine with a transcendent majesty never heard before nor since. All four hymns are in the style of Hebrew poetry and originally were probably uttered in Aramaic; it was later that they were written in the Greek form we have today.

## The *Magnificat* of Mary

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thought. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our father.”—Luke 1:46-55, NIV

In Latin the first words of this song are *magnificat anima mea Dominum* which is why this is called “The *Magnificat*” (Latin for magnify, the word used in the KJV). The words are similar to the prayer of Hannah when she brought the young boy Samuel to Eli the priest to minister before the Lord (see 1 Samuel 2:1-10).

Albert Barnes says, “There are few pieces of poetry—for this is poetry, and almost the only poetry in the New Testament—more beautiful than this” (*Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*, p. 186). Mary praises God because “he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.” Being no respecter of persons is one of God’s great characteristics (Romans 2:11). Mary sees herself as one of the least within the nation, a woman who has

been selected for the most wonderful honor imaginable. Likewise the shepherd David had a position so low within his family that no one called him when the prophet Samuel arrived to anoint the next king. It was perhaps after being anointed that David writes: “Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly” (Psalm 138:6). Later when the gospel message was preached to the Gentiles, the Jews learned that God’s lack of respect for persons was even more extensive than they had imagined.

Mary not only praises God for what he has done for her, she rejoices in the prospect of what will be done by the one she will bear. She knows salvation is something that comes through Jesus, not through her. As with all four hymns in this gospel the words speak of what will take place as though it had taken place already. Such an outlook can only come from a bedrock of deep faith.

Though one would hardly expect a hymn of praise to also be revolutionary, William Barclay in *The Daily Study Bible Series* notes that this hymn describes three “revolutions” caused by Christianity:

1. A **moral** revolution: “He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thought.” Christianity causes the death of pride when one compares his life to that of Christ.
2. A **social** revolution: “He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.” Christianity puts an end to the world’s labels of prestige. The “common man” is no longer common when one considers that it was for him that Christ died.
3. An **economic** revolution: “He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.” A non-Christian society is one where people are out to get as much as they can. In a truly Christian society one dares not have too much when others have too little.

Thus one can say that Christianity begets a revolution in every human being and this will lead eventually to a revolution in the entire world.

### **The *Benedictus* of Zachariah**

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness



and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”—Luke 1:67-79, NIV

*Benedictus* comes from the Latin verb meaning to bless and is the first word of this hymn in the Vulgate. Zachariah was the husband of Elizabeth and father of John, later to be known as John the Baptist.

“The oath he [God] swore to our father Abraham” is recorded in Genesis 22:16,17: “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord ... that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.” That promise made so long in the past was now about to be fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah. Such a prospect is so sure to Zachariah that he says God has already visited, has already redeemed his people even though the actual redemption would not take place until more than three decades later.

All devout Jews longed for the day when this promised Messiah would come. Most believed that before he came a forerunner would announce his coming and prepare his way. The usual belief was that it would be Elijah (Malachi 4:5). But Zachariah prophesies that it will be his son John.

He says of John, “[you will] prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.” God used John to prepare the hearts of the people to accept Jesus Christ just as he overrules the experiences of those he is drawing in this age. Mankind did not know what God was like until Jesus arrived. The Jews knew only of a demanding God, one who enforced his laws and passed judgment. There was no comfort there. But Jesus’ message was that God is love and the startled world could only say, “We never knew God was like that.”

Forgiveness of sins restores a relationship. We still must bear the penalty of our sins since acts do have consequences. But estrangement from God can be nullified resulting in the restoration of friendship with God. Zachariah praises God because “he has redeemed his people.” The *Companion Bible* says the Greek means “wrought a ransom for.” The concept of a ransom paid to redeem or rescue one taken captive is the heart of God’s great plan of redemption. Jesus Christ, sinless and undefiled, willingly gave his life to ransom father Adam who became a captive of sin and death.

“This song of Zacharias is exceedingly beautiful. It expresses with elegance the great points of the plan of redemption, the doings of John and the mercy of God in providing that plan. That mercy was great. It is worthy of praise—of our highest, loftiest songs of thanksgiving; for we were in the shadow of death—sinful, wretched, wandering—and the light arose, the gospel came, and men may rejoice in hope of eternal life.”—*Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*, p. 188.

## **The Gloria in Excelsis of the Angels**

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”—Luke 2:14, NIV

Although this is just a single sentence hymn, one can imagine the grandeur of the singing. Just as Handel in the *Messiah* took the word “halleluiah” and combined and recombined it in various ways to thrill us, undoubtedly the angels did the same. This was no ten-second performance which left the shepherds wondering just what had happened.

Luke loved the word peace. He used it more often than the other three gospel writers combined. Barclay says, “Peace in Hebrew does not mean merely freedom from trouble; it means all that makes for a man’s highest good; and through Christ a man is enabled to walk in the ways that lead to everything that means life, and no longer to all that means death.”

The work of redemption is universally presented as based in the love of God (John 3:16; Ephesians 5:2). “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Highest praise is to be given to God for his love in redeeming mankind. Would that not only angels but all of humankind join universally in this song of praise.

## **The Nunc Dimittis of Simeon**

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”—Luke 2:29-32, NIV

In Latin the two words “now dismiss” are *nunc dimittis* which is how this fourth and final hymn is identified by the scholars. In some unidentified way Simeon had been promised that his life would not end until he had seen God’s anointed one. In the babe before him he recognized the promised one and was glad.

It is somewhat unexpected to see a Jew praising God for the one who would be “a light to the Gentiles.” Simeon may be thinking of a prophecy in Isaiah: “... to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). There are numerous other direct statements in the Old Testament that Messiah was not just to be the savior of the Jews alone. “From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles” (Malachi 1:11). “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek” (Isaiah 11:10).

We all, like Simeon, should feel grateful that the Savior was given for the Gentiles. But if our departure is to be in peace as was his, our life must also be “just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25). Waiting is expected of all God’s faithful ones. We know the one who is too wise to err is in control and all things are working together for good. Though there is trouble on every hand, “we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).

## Faithful Women

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head,  
and you shall bruise him on the heel.—Genesis 3:15, NAS*

*Richard Doctor*

As the woeful effects of Satan's seductive counsel to mother Eve ushered in a reign of grief, suffering, and death for humanity, even so the promise of God spoke of a day when the woman's seed would bruise Satan's head. As the promise to mother Eve was most wonderfully furthered by Jesus' birth, it was **and is** only natural that the women with faith in this promise should actively cooperate with God's program to destroy Satan. Luke seemed to have a special sensitivity to the critical ministry of women in the outworking of God's plan, and they are prominently featured in his gospel. Many unnamed women are mentioned in connection with the miracles including the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38,39), the raising of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-16), the healing of the woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48), and the raising of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:49-56). Luke's gospel provides a detailed account of how other women, who believed in Jesus as the long-promised Messiah, helped to build, define, and critically contribute to the church.

### Elizabeth

One of the most notable bonds between women in the Bible is that of Elizabeth, a Levite descended from Aaron, and her youthful cousin Mary, a descendent of David through Nathan. Elizabeth and her husband, Zacharias a priest of the course of Abia, were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord (Luke 1:5,6) Despite this exemplary public life, Elizabeth felt reproached for not presenting Zacharias with a much-desired male heir who would carry on the priestly line. The depths of passion attached to childlessness in ancient times can be measured by the similes to which the barren womb is compared: "There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: the grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough" (Proverbs 30:15,16).

To be married and not have children was simply not a "choice" in Judaism. But being barren had been the lot of Elizabeth. Unexpectedly during his service in the temple, the angel Gabriel interrupted Zacharias' ministry with an announcement that a specially chosen son would be born by divine appointment and was to be named "John." His name was a promise that "Yahweh is gracious." Gabriel spoke of John's critical ministry to Israel, and added instructions for his proper rearing. Zacharias met these welcome words with disbelief and argument. Elizabeth was too "advanced" in years to become pregnant (Luke 1:18). Gabriel's swift and decisive response ended the dialogue as Zacharias experienced a complete loss of speech for the next ten months. Through hand gestures he was forced to explain to the waiting crowd that he had seen a vision (Luke 1:22).

As promised, providential intervention permitted Elizabeth to conceive and carry a child. However, this glad news was kept from the scrutiny and gossip of the ever-curious public by Elizabeth's five months of seclusion. It is at this point we are introduced to the most significant woman of Luke's gospel and, with the exception of mother Eve herself, the most significant woman of the entire Bible: Mary the mother of Jesus.

## Mary

Mary was not to have a life of ease. The same angel Gabriel came to Mary, six months after Elizabeth's pregnancy, announcing that she would bring forth a son and commanding that he be named Joshua (Jesus in Greek) that is "Help of Yahweh." Mary is given the promise of Jesus' greatness, of his favor with God, and that he should reign over the house of Jacob forever (Luke 1:31-33). This remarkable young woman was thoroughly submissive to the will of God. In keeping with the custom of the day for betrothal, she was likely about 17 years old.

The mission of motherhood Elizabeth and Mary embrace is one of the highest spirituality. Mary undertook the 100-mile journey from Nazareth to Hebron, in the "hill country" (cf. Luke 1:39, Joshua 21:11) to assist Elizabeth during her last trimester. Upon greeting Elizabeth, Mary delivers a hymn full of spiritual depth and faith in the promises to Abraham (see page 21 in this issue).

Delivering the second Adam to the world safely and securely, and nurturing him to manhood was to be the job of a woman. We have no argument with the tradition that says Mary was widowed after the birth of Jesus' siblings, and hence had responsibility for the care of Jesus, his well-known brother James, as well as Joses, Simon, Judas, and at least two sisters (Matthew 13:55,56). Elizabeth and Mary both carried a child of divine appointment. In Elizabeth's womb was one who would stand in the spirit of Elijah and announce the coming of Messiah, while in the womb of Mary **was** that promised Messiah.

Elizabeth had been given prophetic knowledge of the condition of the youthful Mary. The unborn John the Baptist leapt for joy in Elizabeth's womb when Mary, "the mother of my Lord" who was carrying the promised seed (Luke 1:43-45), entered the room. Elizabeth provided a sympathetic ear that listened and counseled Mary as she unburdened herself about the mission entrusted to her.

Undoubtedly it was Elizabeth who offered seasoned counsel respecting the delicate task of trying to persuade Joseph what divine providence had wrought. Mary was unsuccessful for the clear evidence of her condition left Joseph in doubt of her fidelity and his misgivings were only put to rest by divine intervention (Matthew 1:19,20). Apparently Mary departed shortly before John the Baptist's birth. She was now in the second trimester of her pregnancy and the return trip north to Nazareth in Galilee must have been physically taxing (Luke 1:56). From Nazareth she would make a return to the south six months later in still more physical duress as she was near to giving birth. She would travel past the districts near Jerusalem where Elizabeth and Zacharias lived and

continue ten miles further south to reach Bethlehem where Joseph would register for the census. There, as promised, Messiah was born (Micah 5:2). This clearly was a woman with considerable physical as well as spiritual stamina.

It is regrettable that the many positive aspects of Mary's character were exaggerated until false belief submerged truth. Over the centuries, the worship of Mary has become a cult in its own right with its own hymns, stories, liturgies, miracles, visions, and works of art. To this day it is an unsettling feeling to attend Roman Catholic services where the staccato "Hail Marys" mix mythology and Scripture in an unsatisfying brew of vain repetitions.

Within the confusion of medieval theology, the human Virgin Mary became the intermediary between humanity and Christ the judge and king. In depictions of the last judgment she may be seen leaning against her son Jesus' right side with her gaze averted after one final entreaty, imploring his mercy on sinners doomed to eternal damnation. Since she stood so close to Jesus, a prayer made to her could be whispered into his ear at a convenient time and was certain of a favorable reception. And this is no medieval relic. A Papal encyclical "Redemptoris Mater" was issued under the seal of Pope John-Paul II on the presumed 2,000 year anniversary of Mary's birth (25 March 1987). In 27,000 words and 147 footnotes every exaggeration of the cult of Mary is affirmed.

Both in the mythology and artistic representation of Mary's cult we find echoes of the ancient cult of the Great Mother. The reason this powerful worship persists over the centuries, ebbing and surging in strength, is not that it harkened back to ancient Babylon and Egypt, but because it satisfies an important human need. We all want an all-loving and nurturing mother who understands us, sympathizes with our weaknesses, protects us, sings lullabies to us, and gives us a kiss on the bruised knee that effects healing. For centuries within the church, the Mary of mythology was promoted as meeting all these needs.

When recoiling from these excesses, some may downplay her role during Christ's ministry. She implored her son to show his miraculous power, for it is clear that Christ's answer to his mother's concerns about the wine at the wedding in Cana was antipathetic: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? My hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). Later in his ministry he did not make room through the crowd for her and his brethren (Luke 8:19) using the occasion to teach that a new order not based on family relations was at hand: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:21). In reality, Mary herself was a fallen member of Adam's family and also in need of a redeemer. Yet, she was a remarkable woman who willingly and faithfully submitted to the heavenly father's program for the outworking of the Divine Plan: "The angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art **highly favored**, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28).

If myth has embellished this truth and mixed it with error, there nevertheless is a core of truth about her extraordinary mission. She raised her family in the fear and reverence of the Lord. She was unwavering in support for her son. She stood close by as he suffered

the cruel death on the cross. After being taken into the house of the apostle John she continued her unstinting support of Christ's mission. Although we learn that early in Jesus' ministry his brethren doubted his mission (John 7:5), Mary and Jesus' other siblings are specially noted as being present at Pentecost (Acts 1:14). At the presentation of Jesus in the temple the aged Simeon had prophesied, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35). And so history would prove.

## Anna

As a mark of the covenant relationship God had with Abraham and his seed, he directed that all newly born males be circumcised on the eighth day (Genesis 17:12). Apparently the naming of all new-borns on the seventh or eighth day after birth already had been a custom established in patriarchal times. In conformance with this, Mary and Joseph took their eight-day-old infant to the temple. The baby was given the name Joshua (Jesus in Greek). Luke is the only one to record this presentation. Luke also introduces us to both Simeon and Anna who is called a "prophetess." Anna was of the tribe of Asher and at the age of 84 she "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:36-38). Simeon prophesied of Jesus, and Anna, "coming in that instant," affirmed his prophecy providing a second witness as to the truth. She also praised the Lord and spoke further of Christ's ministry unto all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Thus were Mary and Joseph given yet another witness concerning the remarkable child they were to nurture.

## Mary Magdalene and Others

Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna were wealthy women who were among the "many other" women dedicated to following and supporting Jesus and the apostles financially (Luke 8:3).

We know nothing else from Scripture of Susanna. Joanna is different. John may preserve a more extensive account of the circumstances that brought Joanna into Jesus' circle of close supporters. It is widely believed that early in Jesus' ministry, the "royal officer" seeking Jesus healing of his stricken and dying son was Chuza her husband (John 4:46-54; see also *Reprints* p. 4132). This entreaty for healing had been granted and the parents remained grateful and supportive of Jesus in every way including critical financial support.

Of greatest importance was Mary, called Magdalene after the locality from which she came. At one time she had suffered under the unholy control of "seven demons." Luke is the only one who preserves this critical detail (Luke 8:2). Being freed from this demonic curse, she became the staunchest of Christ's supporters. In addition to financial support she stood with the group of woman near him at his crucifixion. She was among those who came early to his tomb as soon as the city gates were open on the Sunday morning of his resurrection. The other women hastened from the sepulcher to report that they had seen a vision of angels who said Christ was alive (Luke 24:22, 23), but it was Mary Magdalene who separated herself from the distraught company and lingered grieving at

the empty tomb. Her devotion was rewarded, for she was the first of the Master's followers to witness his resurrection.

### **Mary and Martha**

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, he spent time in Bethany at the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). What is particularly interesting about this account is that Jesus strongly departs from the social conventions that kept women in the home and kitchen. He encouraged all women to look to the wider spiritual province outside their domestic duties. Mary was commended because she focused her intellect on the one thing needful, which was the understanding of God's perfect will.

After Lazarus' illness, death, and burial, it was in the company of Mary and Martha that our Master was moved with sympathy, and with them, "Jesus wept" before raising their dead brother. In the last week of his life, Mary chose the opportunity of his last visit to anoint the Master's feet with precious ointment which he approvingly declared was an anointing for his burial (Matthew 26:12). Jerusalem was always a hostile environment for Jesus and it was in the loving hospitality of Mary and Martha that he found repose.

### **The Repentant Sinner**

Although she is unnamed, the repentant sinner of Luke 7:36-50 deserves special consideration. Identifying this woman as Mary Magdalene is problematic since it makes the introduction of Mary Magdalene in the section immediately following confusing.

As Christ's miracles spread his fame far and near, Simon, a prominent Pharisee, invited the Lord to dinner so he could learn more for himself. English common law makes a man's home his castle, but at that time privacy in the home was subject to different mores. Neighbors, friends, and visitors felt at liberty to come and go much as they pleased, sometimes coming in to converse with the guests while dinner was being served. Thus it was that while Jesus and others were at dinner, a woman of the city who was known to be "sinful" came into the room with a vial of very precious ointment. The woman walked to the back of the table couch coming directly to the feet of Jesus (Luke 7:36-50).

Her intention evidently was to anoint Jesus' feet with the ointment, but before she had succeeded in breaking the seals and unstopping the vial her pent-up emotions found expression in profuse tears which wetted the Master's feet—an apparent indignity where she had intended honor. Quickly unfastening her hair she used it as a towel to dry his feet, and then, as expressive of her love, sympathy, and adoration, while wiping his feet she kissed them repeatedly. Finally able to open the alabaster vase, she now poured the sweet ointment.

Simon had not appreciated the loving sympathy of Jesus' heart and he surmised that Jesus was not a prophet, for a prophet would have known that this woman was a sinner and would therefore repulse her approach. Gently Jesus called to Simon's attention the reality

of what was happening. Although Christ recognized the woman as a sinner, he had compassion upon her, especially after her exhibition of shame, contrition, and reformation. Jesus answered Simon's unexpressed thoughts with the parable of the "Two Debtors" (see page 13 in this issue).

Christ lovingly dismissed the tearful woman with the words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace." That we are furnished with an account of Simon's private musings offers a slim hope that he eventually learned the lesson taught by this penitent sinful woman and later became a follower of Christ.

## Summary

In Christ's ministry we find women of deep spirituality, consecration, intelligence, and financial means all working energetically to assist the Lord's mission. Jesus embraced a large spiritual family where even the rejected could find a home and receive a hundredfold of family in this life (Mark 10:30). Although preeminent among women, Christ placed even his own mother on a level equivalent to those who did the father's will. He encouraged women to think, act, and never neglect "the one thing needful." As important as kitchen and home duties were, they were of secondary importance.

These women were a much appreciated, much needed influence within the nascent church. Jesus set a tone of great liberality and provided them with considerably more opportunities for service than was possible within the synagogue arrangement. He placed high demands on their intellectual participation in the church. Their wisdom was manifested in sensing Christ's anguish and pouring out the ointment for his burial even as the apostles bickered over who among them was to be the greatest in the kingdom.

Even so, no women were selected to be apostles. Though male apostles and other missionaries went forth into the world, the women were not passive and uneducated participants. What Jesus wisely did was establish a pattern for successful growth of the church by his policy respecting women. They were and are expected to direct their moral conviction and energies into the church's growth and nurturing. Luke's special sensitivities in recording their story has enriched all the church and set a standard of conduct worthy of emulation by all who have named the name of Christ, both male and female.



## Gentiles and Samaritans

### Second-Class Citizens

*Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.—Luke 15:1*

According to the *Companion Bible*, the Greek word translated “sinners” should be applied especially in a religious sense. It sometimes was used to describe the Gentiles. Paul wrote, “We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles” (Galatians 2:15). Certainly then as now, everyone was a sinner: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

Luke was a Gentile who converted to Christianity. At the end of his letter to the Colossians Paul mentions by name Aristarchus, Marcus, and Justus who are “of the circumcision” (i.e., Jews). Then he lists Epaphras, Luke, and Demas as also sending greetings (Colossians 4:10-14). This implies that these three were not “of the circumcision” (i.e., they were not Jews).

Luke knew how non-Christian Jews treated him, so he had great empathy for those who were considered second- or even third-class citizens in Israel. These included the publicans, Samaritans, and the Gentiles. This group, considered inferior by the majority, received much greater emphasis in Luke’s gospel than in the other three.

### The Publicans

The word publican, from the Greek word *telones* (Strong’s 5057), appears only in the first three gospels, and is used in as many verses in Luke as in Matthew and Mark combined. It describes one who collects taxes for Rome.

“The publicans were hated as the instruments by which the subjection of the Jews to the Roman emperor was perpetuated. They were noted for their extortion and were tempted to oppress the people with illegal exactions so that they might the more speedily enrich themselves. The publicans were regarded as traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent intercourse with the heathen, and willing tools of the oppressor. They were classed with sinners, with harlots, and with the heathen. The scribes and the people alike hated them.”—*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, McClintock and Strong [vol. VIII, p. 769]

Jesus did not hate them. Luke emphasizes that one of the twelve was a publican when Jesus called him: “After these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me” (Luke 5:27). We know this man by the name Matthew (see Matthew 9:9, 10:3, and Mark 2:14). His change of name was similar to Saul becoming Paul.

In one of the parables found only in Luke, we see the contrast in heart attitude between

those who trusted in themselves (the Pharisees) and those who did not (illustrated by a publican). The Pharisee thanked God that he was so much better than others, especially than the publican. But the publican confessed he was a sinner and begged for mercy. The point of the parable was clear: “I tell you, this man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other [the Pharisee]: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:14).

## The Samaritans

Even worse than publicans in the estimation of the Jews were the Samaritans: “The Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans that they could possibly avoid. ‘Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil’ was the mode in which the Jews expressed themselves when at a loss for a bitter reproach. The Samaritan was publicly cursed in their synagogues; could not be adduced as a witness in the Jewish courts; could not be admitted to any sort of proselytism; and was thus, so far as the Jew could affect his position, excluded from hope of eternal life.”—*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, McClintock and Strong [vol. IX, p. 286]

As an example of the contemptuous attitude of the Jews toward Samaritans note the words recorded in John: “Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (John 8:48). Jesus refused to accept the ordinary prejudices of those around him. He did not avoid the Samaritans; he treated them with respect as he did every human being.

Near the end of his life, as Jesus was going to Jerusalem where he knew he would be crucified, he passed through Samaria and Galilee and was met by ten lepers: “And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole” (Luke 17:13-19).

Of course it was divine power that made them all whole, coupled with their faith. They all had faith because they did not lift up their voices begging money as was their wont, and because it was only as they were on their way to the priests that they were actually cleansed. And what did they do when they realized they were healed? Nothing, other than to continue on their way—with one exception: the Samaritan, the one so hated by the Jews, returned to express his gratitude and appreciation.

Often we hear of those suffering from diseases for which there is no medical cure. And through prayer and supplication relief and healing may sometimes occur. It is then that the supplicant is most on trial. Does one return with gratitude and appreciation, asking what can be done for the master? Generally it is business as usual. Where are the nine?

They were gone.

The tenth chapter of Luke contains what many consider the most beloved parable in the Bible, the parable of the Good Samaritan. An expert in the law asked Jesus a question which had as part of the answer the requirement to love one's neighbor as one's self. The lawyer persisted: "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). Rather than answering directly, Jesus begins what may not have been initially perceived as a parable. A certain man, nationality unknown, was traveling alone to Jericho. He was robbed, beaten, and left for dead. By chance a priest came by but he elected to not get involved. Soon after a Levite did the same. "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." (Luke 10:33, 34). Jesus then asks the lawyer to answer his own question as to who is his neighbor by asking who was the neighbor to the poor man who had been left for dead. The lawyer was trapped; the answer is so repugnant to him he cannot even say "the Samaritan." Instead he says, "He that shewed mercy on him" (verse 37).

The priest was not a neighbor, the Levite was not a neighbor. Perhaps they reasoned that they had a higher calling; their service to God might be compromised if they became contaminated by touching someone who either was or might soon be dead. One can't be too careful when one is busy in God's service. But the Samaritan asks no questions. He sees the plight of the unfortunate one and he does everything he can to help. The Samaritan in the parable was like our Lord who came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

## The Gentiles

Luke compiled his gospel as an historian through interviews with those who actually experienced the events. Throughout his account he emphasizes those events that prove God's love is not limited to the Jews. At the very beginning of his gospel he quotes Simeon as saying that Jesus will be "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). Two chapters later Jesus has returned to Nazareth, his home town. In the synagogue he stands and reads from Isaiah. He then sits down and begins to comment on the reading. Although they initially are astonished at the gracious words coming from "Joseph's son," their attitude quickly changes when he says he is not going to do healing miracles there as he had done elsewhere. And to emphasize that God's grace is not always directed to those who think they alone qualify for it, he reaches back to the experiences of Elijah and Elisha when a special blessing went to Gentiles. He says: "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:25-27).

The Sidonian woman was not a Jew; the Syrian Naaman was not a Jew. Were there not

Jewish widows in the time of Elijah? Were there not Jewish lepers in the time of Elisha? Indeed there were, but they, for whatever reason, did not receive God's grace. An indication of the heart condition of those who heard Jesus can be seen in the reaction described in verse 28: "All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath." They tried to kill him, but he passed through their midst and went elsewhere. As he had said in verse 24, "No prophet is accepted in his own country."

In Luke chapter 7 Jesus is at Capernaum. A centurion, a man responsible for 100 military men and thus not a Jew, had a beloved servant who was nigh unto death. He sent for Jesus, but specifies that he is not to trouble himself by actually coming to the house since he knows that just a word would be all that would be required to perform a miracle. Jesus hears this and says, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Luke 7:9). Once again it is a Gentile who surpasses those who thought they were God's special ones.

At the end of his gospel, Luke records the words of the risen Lord who tells the disciples that the wonderful gospel message was something that was for **all** nations, not just the Jews: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name **among all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46,47).

### Lessons for Us

It is always easiest to live like everyone else, sharing their prejudices. But Jesus did not live that way. He considered all human beings to be worth his time and his attention. He indulged none of the common prejudices of his day. He willingly spent time with women, children, tax collectors, prostitutes, and even the hated Samaritans.

Do we live as he did? Or do we share the prejudices of those around us, thinking our time is best spent with others who are just like we are, thinking that since we are in the full-time service of God we have no time for those less fortunate than ourselves? Our Master made time to speak with the poor, with children, and even with those who were openly sinful or might be considered unacceptable by the leaders of his society. Since God has predestinated that we be "made like his Son," we are to follow that pattern and do the same.

Like Luke, we were attracted to the gospel message because someone was faithful to the commission to preach the name of Jesus among all nations. Since we are to be like our Master, let us not draw arbitrary distinctions among ourselves and among others based on age, sex, wealth, or social standing. In our witnessing we must never judge whom the Lord is calling. He decides to whom his grace and favor will be extended and then uses those who are willing to be his instruments of blessing.

The poor in this world's goods may be just what the Lord is looking for because he does not look on the outside, he reads the heart: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath

promised to them that love him” (James 2:5).

True riches are not on earth, they are in heaven: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”—Luke 12:32-34, NIV

Where is your treasure? You will know by looking at where your heart is, what you think and talk about when you have opportunity. It could be your business, your investments, your career, your home, or any of a variety of places where “moth destroys and thieves come near.”

May we continue to keep our heart on our treasure in heaven, knowing that if we are faithful even unto death, we will receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

# A Man of Miracles

*But though he had done so many **miracles** before them,  
yet they believed not on him. —John 12:37*

*A verse-by-verse study in Luke 5 (by Carl Hagensick)*

Jesus was indeed a man of miracles—healing the sick, raising the dead, walking on water, turning water into wine. These were but a few of his mighty works. All were intended not only to demonstrate his power, but especially to illustrate his coming kingdom. Three of these miracles, interspersed with other narratives, are found in the fifth chapter of Luke.

## Lessons by the Seaside—Luke 5:1-3

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

What more tranquil spot could there be for the lessons Jesus taught than by the seashore? While the Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee) can be quickly roiled by stormy winds, it is usually calm, quiet, and peaceful. The sloping banks on its northern shore—and it is there this narrative occurs for that is where the home docks were for the fishing firms of Peter, Andrew, James, and John—rise in a steady curve, forming a natural amphitheater with excellent acoustics.

The choice of Peter's ship is suggestive of the leading role Peter was to play throughout the pre-Pauline New Testament. His quick impetuous disposition naturally suited him for the leadership position he was to fill.

The time was early morning for they had just returned from fishing all night and were busy washing their nets to have them ready for the following night. Jesus had not chosen his apostles from the idlers who were out of work, but men who were not only occupied in a profitable trade but probably were owners of their own fishing business.

Rowing back a short distance from shore gave Jesus better eye contact with his audience. His position of preaching from a sitting position was normal for that time, even when addressing such great crowds as on the mount of beatitudes (Matthew 5:1, ASV).

The popularity he enjoyed in the first year of his ministry is evident from the crowd pressing upon him to hear his message. His message was revolutionary and the multitudes loved it. We read of its appeal in these words: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16).

This narrative does not inform us of the content of his sermon, but we can be sure it was the usual theme of his kingdom and the character qualities necessary to enter into it.

### **The Draught of Fish—Luke 5:4-11**

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Jesus' ministry was bracketed by the capture of a large number of fish on two occasions—the one recorded here near the beginning of his work and that found in John 21:1-11 after his resurrection. Perhaps this is symbolic of the two tasks Jesus would have his disciples accomplish: fish for faithful Jews during the Jewish harvest, and for both Jews and Gentiles during the Gospel age.

The amount of fish in this first instance was so great the nets broke. So it was with the message of the Jewish law; it broke under the strain of the gospel message. In fact, this chapter closes with two parables with a similar lesson.

This does not appear to be the first call to these faithful disciples. The original call to Peter, and probably to John also, is found in John 1:35-42. The time between these two calls was probably used to prepare these men for the work they were to do with Jesus during the first advent. Now they were to be activated—"henceforth thou shalt catch men."

During these months of training the apostles remained in their fishing business. Now they were called away from that to devote their full time to working with the Master in the gathering of the faithful in Jewry into the embryonic Christian faith.

Before they could be sent forth however, they needed to come to a recognition of their own unworthiness. Impetuous Peter expressed the thoughts they all may have had: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Peter's self-confidence melted in the face of the miracle by the far greater fisherman than he.

### **Cleansing the Leper—Luke 5:12-16**

And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who

seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

As in many other cases, the leper's healing was a result of his faith. His was a faith worth emulating. When besought by troubles, how simple the prayer, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." This is not a demand of faith, but a simple request based on the principle of having his will done as to whether to aid or to withhold aid—"Lord, if thou wilt."

The commission to tell no man was not so much to keep the matter quiet as to bring the testimony of the miracle directly to where Jesus wanted it delivered, to the priest. This was not only as a witness to his powers, but to show the priests that he recognized their position and the propriety of the healed leper going to them to be pronounced clean. Notwithstanding, word of the miracle quickly circulated and his fame spread quickly abroad.

Jesus was a man of prayer. He desired constant communication with his father although the burden of many of his prayers is undisclosed. We might assume that this prayer was how to handle his sudden popularity. Perhaps his prayer expressed concerns that he not be overtaken with pride over the acclaim accorded him by the populace. Perhaps he was concerned over the fact that the multitudes followed him more for his miracles than for his message. Likely, it was a measure of both concerns that occupied his mind.

### **Healing the Palsied—Luke 5:17-26**

And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange



things to-day.

Among those pressed into the crowded house in Galilee were many Jewish leaders. They may have been a delegation appointed to check out the rumors of the miracles of Jesus. They were not only local officials, but from the southern reaches of Judea and the capital city of Jerusalem. The miracle of the palsied man was well designed to illustrate the principle of divine healing.

Palsy is a poor description of the disease. Paralysis, rather than some such disease as Parkinson's, is the thought of the Greek word. There is no statement of faith on the part of the victim when Jesus is approached. It is rather the faith of his friends that is rewarded. In treating the miracle as a parable, Pastor Russell comments: "The various difficulties under which humanity labors called diseases, illustrate sin in various respects; for instance, palsy or paralysis represents a condition of sin in which the individual loses his power—sometimes merely becoming impotent, in the sense of helpless; at other times, in combination with this may come an insensibility of conscience, a deadness to all principles of righteousness, such as the apostle describes as 'past feeling.' In this condition are quite a good many at the present time; they are not only helpless as respects all ability to go to the great Physician, but additionally they are devoid of any desire, any appreciation of their need; they have no feeling on the subject."—*Reprints*, p. 2584.

The roofs of houses in the middle East were used for many functions. They were used much as porches in our day, to gain some fresh, cool air in the evenings. They also were handy areas to dry grain and washed or dyed clothes. These roofs were accessed both by steps from the outside of the house and by a ladder from the inside. The hole where this ladder penetrated was covered with tiles to keep out the rain and dirt.

The friends of the palsied man, finding the house overflowing its capacity, ascended the outer stairs and removed the tiles covering the opening for the ladder. It was through this aperture that they let the palsied man down into the crowded room. This was perceived by Jesus to be an act of faith on the part of the invalid's friends. On the basis of this he said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." How much easier it would have been for Jesus to merely heal the man of his infirmities. Jesus, however, had two lessons to convey—one to the paralytic and one to the scribes and Pharisees.

To the leaders of Israel who challenged his right to remit sins, he was equating the removal of sin with the healing he was about to perform. Sickness, after all, is merely a concomitant of the death sentence for sin. All mankind gets ill and eventually dies from one form or another of what has been termed "Adam-itis." Each act of healing was setting aside a portion of the penalty for sin originally pronounced on the human race in the Garden of Eden.

To the invalid there was a further lesson. While there is no record that he exercised personal faith in being brought to Jesus' feet, now he would have to demonstrate his own faith. He not only had to believe that his limbs were strong enough to bear his weight, but he was bidden to carry his cot as well. It must have been tempting for his friends to desire

to help him up or at least carry his bed, but Jesus wanted him to do it himself.

### **The Call of Levi—Luke 5:27-32**

And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Levi, or Matthew as he is later known, was one of the last disciples to be called. Luke's placement of Matthew's selection is suggestive of a connection between the miracle of the palsied man and the call of Levi. Perhaps the association lies in the healing of the man, not for his own faith, but for the faith of his friends. Likewise Levi, as a tax collector, may not have been a religious and faithful Jew and Jesus may well have selected him, not for what he was, but for what he would become.

The change of name from Levi to Matthew, "a gift from God," is supportive of this thought. Sinners brought to repentance are miracles of Jehovah's grace, and thus "a gift from God." Levi's instantaneous response, like that of the palsied man picking up his bed, shows an immediate leap of faith.

Celebrating his conversion he arranges for a feast at his house. It is noteworthy that all the guests appear to be mostly publicans and sinners. These probably represented the class of individuals with whom Levi was acquainted. The use of the name Levi here, instead of his converted name of Matthew, further emphasizes the lesson of this narrative.

The scribes and Pharisees, observing Jesus attending this feast, accuse him of associating with a sinner class. His response illustrates the theme of the chapter. Most of the healings of Jesus were performed upon the disapproved classes. These were the ones he termed "the sick who need a physician." The Pharisees, righteous in their own eyes, did not consider themselves either sick or as sinners who needed to repent. In the words of one, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican" (Luke 18:11).

### **Jesus and John—Luke 5:33-39**

And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and

the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

Knowing that the Israeli populace had great respect for John the Baptist, Jesus was next queried about his life style and the more ascetic customs of John. His answer is in three parts. First, aware that it was common knowledge among the Jews that John had identified him as the Lamb of God, he uses the illustration of a marriage. There is much feasting and celebration in the presence of the prospective groom. But he predicted a time when he would depart—they knew not that it would be to heaven. Then would come the time for the friends of the groom to mourn and fast.

The two parables that close this chapter further illustrate the differences between the Jewish and Gospel dispensations. Their lessons are similar, though not identical. Garments represented that which clothed a man. Both the Jews and the Christians had spiritual garments—these were the justification their respective covenants afforded. To the Jew, the Law Covenant could only offer a justification through works. The justification of the Christian's covenant of grace is one that comes by faith alone. This could not be applied as a patch on the Jewish garment, for their covenant relationship was entirely different. The one covenant was by works, the other by grace. These covenants produce two types of children. The works covenant produces earthly seed while the grace covenant produces spiritual seed.

The wine-skin parable is a similar but different lesson. The wine represents doctrines while the skins picture the organizational structures that contain these doctrines. Old doctrines are naturally preferred because they are familiar and comfortable. They hold no challenge for change. But the new is more invigorating and much superior. As the guests at the Cana wedding discovered, the latter wine was better than the former.

This new wine, or doctrine, seeking to train co-leaders in Christ's kingdom, must be taught by the acquisition of principles. The law doctrines, informing men of rights and wrongs, could be taught by memory and rote. Thus the old system of Levites and instructors in righteousness must be replaced by the more democratic system of church government selected by the individual congregations to assist in their mutual search for absolute truth.

The workings of Christ, the Man of Miracles, are only included in small part in this chapter. The whole of his teachings and his works are meant to prepare the ones heeding them to be kings and priests with him to rule a thousand years. May our individual searches lead us to that all-important end.

# Poems and Short Features

## The Power of Prayer

Have you ever watched a bird sleeping on its perch and never falling off? How does it manage to do this?

The secret is the tendons of the bird's legs. They are so constructed that when the leg is bent at the knee, the claws contract and grip like a steel trap. The claws refuse to let go until the knees are unbent again. The bended knee gives the bird the ability to hold on to his perch so tightly.

From sleeping birds we can learn the secret of holding things which are most precious to us—honesty, purity, thoughtfulness, honor, character. That secret is the knee bent in prayer, seeking to get a firmer grip on those values which make life worth living. When we hold firmly to God in prayer, we can rest assured he will hold tightly to us.

“Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore.”—Psalm 105:4

## Treasures from the Gospel of Luke

Let us explore the Gospel of Luke  
To see what treasures it holds.  
Truths to nourish both mind and heart  
Emerge as its message unfolds.

Jesus, the Son of God, is the theme:  
His words of wisdom and grace,  
Prayers and miracles, sinless life,  
His death to redeem the lost race.

Luke, Paul's companion, Gentile by birth,  
Had broad perspective and scope.  
Details that this physician wrote  
Add substance and strength to our hope.

Tidings of joy the angels proclaimed!  
The shepherds listened in awe.  
Eager witnesses they became  
To share what they heard and they saw.

Jesus' ancestral right to be King  
And heir to David's great throne  
Came through Mary: The faithful line  
Of Nathan through Heli is shown.

Soon would the "rich man" -- Israel -- "die"  
And lose chief favor and place.  
Thus would "Lazarus" beg no more  
As Gentiles received of God's grace.

Cleansed from our sin; our "leprosy" gone!  
Do we give thanks and rejoice?  
One of ten who were healed gave praise:  
It was the Samaritan's voice.

Building great barns to store all his goods,  
One man felt very secure.  
Oh, how foolish! When life is o'er,  
Just heavenly riches endure.

umbly he came, confessing his need;  
God heard the Publican's prayer.  
Pride and boasting cannot be ours  
If we with our Master would share.

Turmoil surrounded Jesus' arrest.  
A sword cut off a man's ear.  
Jesus healed it. His time had come;  
He'd willingly die, it was clear.

Sad and perplexed, two walked down the  
road;  
They thought their trust was in vain.  
Then "a stranger," the risen Lord,  
Made all of the prophecies plain.

Treasures of truth, surpassing rare gems,  
Remain eternally bright.  
They will sanctify, cheer and heal.  
Let's prayerfully use them aright.

*--Elaine L. Redeker*

# News and Views

## Pastoral Bible Institute News

Financial Statement of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc.  
Statement of Net Worth — April 30, 2003 [unaudited]

Cash and Investments:	\$149,841
Fixed Assets:	None
Liabilities:	<u>None</u>
NET WORTH, APRIL 30, 2003	\$149,841

### Analysis of Net Worth

#### INCOME

Contributions	\$12,236
Sale of Material	2,582
Herald Subscriptions	5,138
Interest	2,186
Memberships	0
Miscellaneous Income	<u>601</u>
Total Income	\$22,743

#### EXPENSES

Purchase of Material for Resale	1,581
Printing and Reproduction	8,568
Postage and Delivery	8,665
Administrative and General	512
Miscellaneous	<u>1,049</u>
Total Operating Expense	<u>\$20,375</u>

Net Gain for Fiscal Year	\$2,368
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Net Worth, May 1, 2002	\$147,473
Net Worth, April 30, 2003	\$149,841

*Respectfully submitted by Len Griehs, Treasurer*

## **PBI Annual Report for 2002-2003**

*The people had a mind to work.—Nehemiah 4:6*

We pause at the conclusion of 86 years of the ministry of the Pastoral Bible Institute to thank the many willing ones who have made all this possible. Some have served as proofreaders, others in recording each issue of *The Herald*, still others in the printing and distribution of the journal. One brother provides the beautiful color separations for our covers. Others have assisted in maintaining our web site and in providing an electronic archive of the eight and a half decades over which we have published. During the past decade alone over 50 authors have given countless hours in research and writing the articles which appear in this magazine.

The *Herald* magazine continues to be our main endeavor. Our circulation has risen slightly to 1,300 copies going to subscribers in 46 countries plus the United States. In addition, there are 20 ecclesias in India and Africa who receive 850 copies of each issue for their class use. We also provide 170 copies to various brethren in the United States for their witnessing efforts. The PBI is happy to furnish copies to any of the brethren who feel they can profitably use them in this manner.

Another branch of our work is making audiocassettes for those who wish to listen to the magazine rather than read it. Of the 12 cassettes made of each issue, four are furnished free to the blind.

The PBI also provides a wide array of booklets on a variety of subjects free of charge. While the Institute does not publish all of these booklets, we make them available to promote the spread of the truth.

Demand for the Bible Student Library CD ROM continues. The next version is now available at the same cost: \$25. It contains a greatly expanded fully-searchable database in the popular Adobe Acrobat format, and is on three CDs. The entire archive of *The Herald* from its inception in 1918 is included. Also included are 16 Bible translations, 16 children's books, 44 commentaries, 27 devotionals, 118 booklets, 30 doctrinal treatises, the archived contents of 7 journals, 22 reference works, the complete works of Charles T. Russell, and 223 treatises on Scriptural subjects by 63 brethren.

Our web site—[www.heraldmag.org](http://www.heraldmag.org)—now contains all *The Herald* magazines ever published. The site is fully searchable using the tool found there. The number of visitors to our site is growing. Last March we had 23,525 visitors from 95 countries viewing a total of 90,610 files. We are presently advertising our site on Google.com and have attracted 2,246 new visitors in the first 14 weeks.

The recent election of PBI Directors returned the seven incumbents for another year. We are glad to report a harmonious relationship between them and are looking forward to another year in the service of the Lord.

Directors and Editors of the Pastoral Bible Institute

## World News

### Religious

The sexual abuse scandals that have engulfed the Archdiocese of Boston and the Roman Catholic church have become a powerful threat to religious liberty, said several legal scholars. “These cases will profoundly alter the nature of organized religion,” said professor Patrick Schlitz, of the University of St. Thomas School of law in Minneapolis. “This litigation has the potential to do to churches what many a tyrannical government could not.” Mark E. Chopko, the general counsel of the bishops’ conference, said that the economics of litigation after a \$120 million jury award in Dallas in 1997 compelled dioceses to take aggressive legal positions. “The pursuit of zero incidents is a mistake and an illusion,” said one professor. “You won’t have a priesthood left if you do that.”

—New York Times, 4/6/2003

Swastikas, slogans and physical assaults against Jews in Europe have reached a frequency not seen since the 1930s when Fascism was on the rise. But in the vast majority of the cases today, the assailants are young Muslims of North African heritage whose parents emigrated to Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. The greatest number and most violent attacks have come in France, which, with an estimated six million Muslims and 650,000 Jews in the country, has Europe’s largest Jewish and largest Muslim populations. According to Israeli government figures, 2,556 French Jews emigrated to Israel in 2002, double the number a year earlier and the most since the 1967 Six-Day War.

—New York Times, 3/22/2003

About 10% of Americans say they have no religion, and compared with other Americans, they tend to be younger, more liberal and more likely to live on the West Coast, according to the Gallup Organization. Only about 1% of Americans describe themselves as atheists who have no belief in God, or agnostics who aren't sure about the existence of God, according to the Gallup study.

—Los Angeles Times, 5/3/2003

### Social

The number of unmarried couples in the U.S. surged in the last decade, to 5.5 million from 3.2 million in 1990, newly released Census reports show. “There is a very significant increase in the number of unmarried-couple households,” said Martin O’Connell, chief of the branch on fertility and family statistics at the Census Bureau. The finding distressed advocates of traditional marriage. “It’s continuing a trend that has been growing,” said Allan Carlson, a distinguished fellow at the Family Research Council. “It’s not a healthy thing. The commitments that go with cohabitation are not as firm or strong as marriage.”



—New York Times, 3/13/2003

With fewer than 300 known SARS deaths so far, the worldwide toll is tiny compared with, say, the 3 million people who died of AIDS last year. But if SARS continues to spread, its numbers could skyrocket. Its overall death rate of about 6% is far lower than that of AIDS, Ebola, or malaria, but if enough people catch the illness, even a low rate could cause a catastrophe. The Spanish flu epidemic of 1918-19 had a death rate of less than 3%, but so many people became infected that it killed more than 20 million people in just 18 months.

—TIME, 5/5/2003

Ask American women what disease they're most scared of, and the vast majority will answer without hesitation: breast cancer. They may even cite the ominous statistic that 1 in 8 women will develop breast cancer at some point in her life. But what most women don't realize is that they actually have far more to fear from heart disease, which will strike 1 out of every 3. More than 500,000 women die in the U.S. each year of cardiovascular disease, making it, not breast cancer (40,000 deaths annually), their No. 1 killer.

—TIME, 4/28/2003

A wave of obesity is sweeping through Asia as its population shifts into vast new cities where the food is faster and fattier and the lifestyle more sedentary. Obesity is bringing with it a range of ailments led by cardiovascular disease. Once uncommon in Asia, diseases of the heart and cardiovascular system are now the continent's leading killers. Obesity is spreading among children, bringing a severe form of diabetes and putting them at risk for years to come. Known in Chinese as "xiao pangzi" or "little fatties" these roly-poly children seem to be everywhere, the pampered victims of cultures that prize them as emblems of affluence and well-being. The World Health Organization now reports that 6 out of 10 deaths in China are linked to obesity. It is the direct cause of two-thirds of diabetes cases and one-fifth of all heart disease in the area. The public health challenge is compounded by the fact that most Asian nations are still dealing with the opposite problem—food shortages in much of the population. "More than any other region in the world, Asia faces two quite different diet-related health problems: under-nutrition and over-nutrition," said the Asia Food Information Center, a private group.

—New York Times, 3/13/2003

## Civil

The Democratic Republic of Congo's civil war has taken more lives than any conflict since World War II, and most victims died from malnutrition and treatable diseases, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) said. As many as 3.3 million people died during the more than four years of the conflict, which involved as many as six countries fighting in the mineral-rich central African nation of 50.5 million people. The New York-based

refugee agency said the war was the worst ever documented in Africa's history. About 85 percent of the deaths were caused by nutritional deficiencies and diseases such as malaria, cholera, measles and diarrheal ailments, conditions exacerbated by the collapse of the country's health care system and economy. IRC researchers said in three of the ten zones visited in the war-ravaged east of the country, more than half of the children were killed before two years of age. The war pitted Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi against Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola. The United Nations alleged the plunder of Congo's diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt ... was a prime motivation for national armies fighting in the country and also helped finance and extend the warfare. The former Zaire possesses the world's second-largest reserve of industrial diamonds and 65 percent of the globe's cobalt. Even with its mineral riches, the country's war wracked economy generates less than 50 cents a day in output per person, according to World Bank data. Congo is poorer than at its independence from Belgium four decades ago.

—Bloomberg News, 4/8/2003

At several [Nigerian] polling places, many children were allowed to cast ballots after presenting voter registration cards. At other sites, party agents stuffed ballot boxes with already thumb-printed forms as election monitors looked on helplessly. ... Local and foreign election monitors began to present what they described as serious irregularities and what one called "many observed instances of obvious premeditated electoral manipulation." President Olusegun Obasanjo appeared to be surging to victory with about 65% of the votes tallied. Officials of [his nearest rival's party] called the results "a joke." They said ... in Rivers state, where observers reported that little balloting had taken place, Obasanjo received about 99% of the vote. U.S. officials and other world leaders have hoped that Africa's most populous nation would set a good example for other troubled countries on the continent. [But] if Nigerians feel that the poll lacked legitimacy, opposition parties could unleash the wrath of their supporters. Since 1999 about 10,000 Nigerians have been killed in ethnic and religious violence.

—Los Angeles Times, 4/22/2003

## Financial

The government ran up a deficit of \$252.6 billion in the first six months of the 2003 budget year, nearly twice the total for the same period a year earlier, the Treasury Department reported Friday. Record deficits are forecast this year and next as the government's financial situation continues to deteriorate. Federal spending for the six months totaled \$1.08 trillion, a 6.6% increase from the corresponding period in fiscal 2002. Revenues were down 6.1% for the period.

—Los Angeles Times, 4/19/2003

Consumer debt in the United States hovers near record levels. As a share of disposable income, household debt service rose steadily in the '90s, peaking at just over 14%. A study by the Levy Institute concluded that the upward trend in consumer debt seen over

the last decade is unsustainable and that sooner or later the U.S. will see a retrenchment. Rich Yamarone, chief economist with Argus Research in New York, said, "If labor market conditions continue on their troubled path, then the warnings signs of yellow turn to red. Then the consumer will have to scramble to find the appropriate funds for whatever they have to pay."

—Investors Business Daily, 4/25/2003

Europe's population soon will begin to shrink, according to a recent report in the journal *Science*. A shrinking population, without an offsetting surge in productivity, normally devastates an economy. It pushes down investment, strangles government revenues, leaves companies without profits and kills off innovation and entrepreneurship, all the while building up mountains of debt. Europe's women are having just 1.5 children, 0.56 below the average necessary to sustain population. If the trend continues, Europe's population could shrink by 88 million people over the next century from the current 375 million. That will put serious strains on the European Union's already-overburdened health care, welfare and retirement systems. Right now, there are about four workers per retiree in Europe; that will fall to about two by the middle of the century. No old-age welfare and pension system as lavish and generous as the one the EU has can continue with so few workers supporting it.

—Investors Business Daily, 4/3/2003

Following ... the devastation of campaign Iraqi Freedom, Iraq is in shambles. One of the biggest questions is the size of the Iraqi debt, estimates of which range between \$60 billion and \$120 billion. The U.S. Treasury had to learn the addresses of the Baghdad branches of the Bank for Iraq, the central bank, from the CIA. Treasury officials then lobbied the Pentagon to exclude the banks from its target list because Treasury fretted that without those records, it might be impossible to figure out the actual size of Iraq's gargantuan foreign debt.

—Wall Street Journal, 4/9/2003

The effects of SARS are now so widespread that many analysts believe it will be more damaging to East Asia's economies than the war in Iraq. Standard & Poor's, a credit-rating agency, reckons the disease's impact could cut Hong Kong's GDP by 0.6%-1.5% this year, Singapore's by 0.4%-2%, and China's by 0.5%. Some investment banks are starting to suggest that China's economy could shrink in the current quarter. The United Nations reckons that the combined effect of SARS and the war would cut almost half a percentage point off economic growth throughout Asia this year. More than 4,270 cases of SARS have now been reported worldwide. The decline in travel has been particularly noticeable for economies like Hong Kong and Singapore, where visitor arrivals collapsed by 61% in the first half of April. Retail sales also fell over that period, by between 10% and 50% depending on the type of business, the Singapore government said last week.

—The Economist, 4/23/2003

## Israel

In the five decades since the Jewish state was formed, its economy has never been so sick. Analysts blame the nearly 31-month-old intifada, or Palestinian uprising, for the money troubles that haunt every nook of Israeli society. All over Israel wages are falling, unemployment is wide-spread, and shops are closing. Israel hasn't faced the harsh degree of poverty pervading the Palestinian territories after months of occupation, raids, and curfews. A quarter of the nation's children live below the poverty line and 100,000 more are likely to tumble into neediness if the government proceeds with expected budget cuts.

—Los Angeles Times, 4/8/2003

More than one-quarter of French Jews have considered emigrating because of anti-Semitism, a new poll finds. The survey, by pollster Stan Greenberg for The Israel Project, found that 26 percent of French Jews have strongly considered immigrating to Israel or the United States due to rising anti-Semitism, with 13% of them "very seriously" eyeing emigration. Of those most seriously considering leaving France, 64% say that they have been the targets of anti-Semitic incidents. Overall, 82 percent of French Jews say anti-Semitism is a serious problem.

—JTA, 3/25/2003

There was shock and disbelief in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as Palestinians gathered around TV sets to watch US Marines and Iraqi residents knock down a giant statue of Saddam Hussein in Tahrir Square in central Baghdad. Many Palestinians said Saddam was the only Arab leader who sided with them both morally and financially in their confrontation with Israel. Since the beginning of the Intifada more than two years ago, Saddam has paid about US\$35 million to families of Palestinian victims of the violence, including suicide bombers who blew themselves up in Israel. The money was channeled through the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front, a tiny Palestinian faction operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Older Palestinians said the events in Iraq are reminiscent of the Six-Day War, when Arab radio stations and leaders told their audiences that Israel was on the verge of defeat. Said Abed al-Zamel, a 70-year-old retired schoolteacher from Silwad village near Ramallah, "Once again the Arabs have fallen victim to the lies of their leaders and media. We never learn from our mistakes. When the war erupted, I warned my sons not to watch Arab TV stations so they would not be disappointed and depressed when the truth eventually comes out."

—The Jerusalem Post, 4/9/2003