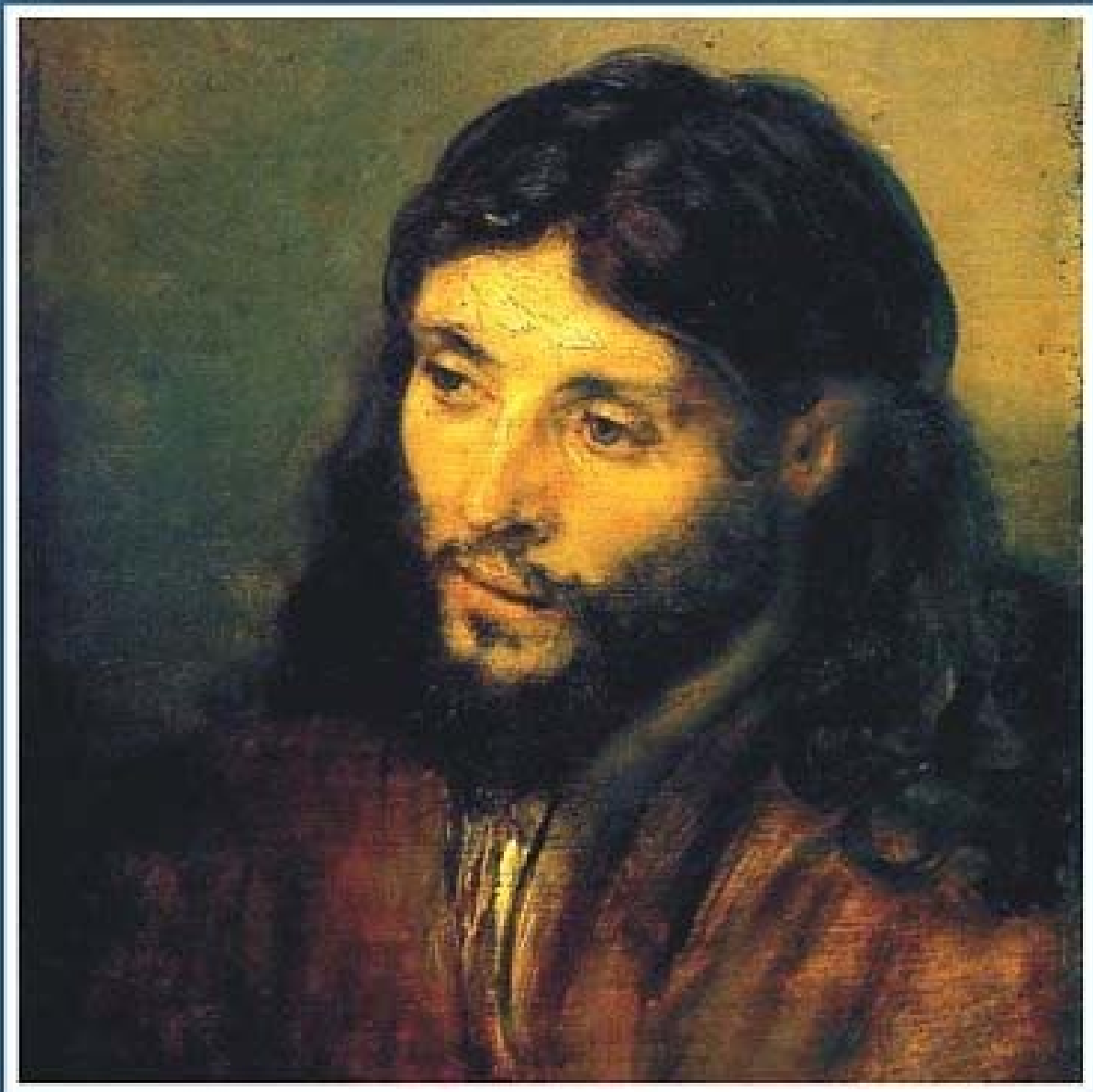


March/April 2006

The Herald

Of Christ's Kingdom



Jesus

Firstborn of Every Creature • Nativity
Miracle Worker • Master Teacher • Redeemer
Advocate • Mediator

The Herald

of Christ's Kingdom

This journal brings you 192 pages of spiritual reading material each year on a variety of biblical subjects. Each issue also lists many Bible conventions and conferences where you will find Christian fellowship. Included in every issue is News & Views, four pages of current events, letters to the editor, and information on the operation of the Pastoral Bible Institute. It is published bi-monthly by:

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Editorial Committee

This journal is supervised by an editorial committee of five, at least three of whom have approved for publication each article appearing in these columns. While responsible for articles published, the committee does not endorse every expression herein. The present editors are: Carl Hagensick, Homer Montague, Michael Nekora, James Parkinson, and David Rice.

The committee and the directors agree that the journal's value to its readers is dependent upon contributors being free to present their thoughts, provided such are generally in harmony with our chartered character and purpose for the dissemination of Bible truths. Annual subscription price is \$5.00. This journal will be supplied free upon written request.

This Journal and Its Mission

Chartered in 1918, the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc. was formed for the promotion of Christian knowledge. Its journal, The Herald of Christ's Kingdom, stands firmly for the defense of the only true foundation of the Christian's hope now being so generally repudiated—redemption through the precious blood (1 Peter 1:19) of “the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom [a corresponding price, a substitute] for all” (1 Timothy 2:6). Building upon this sure foundation the gold, silver, and precious stones of the Word of God (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Peter 1:5-11), its further mission is “to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which ... has been hid in God ... to the intent that now ... might be [made] known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”—“which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed” (Ephesians 3:5-10).

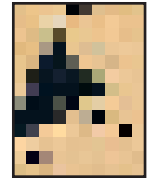
It stands free from all parties, sects, and creeds of men, while it seeks more and more to bring its every utterance into fullest subjection to the will of God in Christ, as expressed in the holy Scriptures. It is thus free to declare boldly whatsoever the Lord hath spoken—according to the Divine wisdom granted unto us to understand. Its attitude is not dogmatic, but confident; for we know whereof we affirm, treading with implicit faith upon the sure promises of God. It is held as a trust to be used in his service; hence our decisions relative to what may or may not appear in its columns must be according to our judgment of his good pleasure, the teaching of his Word, for the upbuilding of his people in grace and knowledge. We not only invite, we urge our readers to prove all its utterances by the infallible Word, to which reference is constantly made to facilitate such testing.

To Us the Scriptures Clearly Teach

- ◆ That the Church is the “temple of the living God”—peculiarly “his workmanship”; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel age—ever since Christ became the world's Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God's blessings shall come “to all people” and they find access to him (1 Corinthians 3:16,17; Ephesians 2:20-22; Genesis 28:14; Galatians 3:29).
- ◆ That meantime the chiseling, shaping, and polishing of consecrated believers in Christ's atonement for sin progresses and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium (1 Peter 2:4-9; Revelation 15:5-8).
- ◆ That the basis of hope for the Church and the world lies in the fact that “Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man,” “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” “in due time” (Hebrews 2:9; John 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:5,6).
- ◆ That the hope of the Church is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be “a partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir (1 John 3:2; John 17:24; Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4).
- ◆ That the present mission of the Church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be kings and priests in the next age (Ephesians 4:12; Matthew 24:14; Revelation 1:6, 20:6).
- ◆ That the hope for the world lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ's millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed (Acts 3:19-23; Isaiah 35).

In the Beginning

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.—1 Corinthians 5:7



Tuesday, April 11, is the date for the Memorial this year. It is appropriate that all the Lord’s brethren commemorate his death as he himself requested when, at his last supper, he took the cup and said, “This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:25).

While it is especially a time for considering his death and the meaning of that sacrifice, it is also appropriate to review Jesus’ entire life. It began at the beginning of time since he was the first created being. It stretches into the future to all eternity. Looking at what we are told about him, we see he has had many roles. This issue of *The Herald* looks at just a few of the parts he has played in God’s great plan of the ages.

The Firstborn of Every Creature examines the different functions of Christ as the Logos in the long period from his creation to his coming to earth as a man. We see him as an assistant in the creation process, a messenger from Jehovah, and as Michael, the great angelic general who defends his chosen people of Israel.

His human life affected many people in different ways. *Perspectives of a Miraculous Birth* looks at how his birth was viewed by King Herod, the shepherds, the Magi, Joseph, and Mary. The next two articles review two of his activities during his three-and-a-half year ministry: *A Man Approved by Miracles* and as a master teacher in *Two Lessons from the Master*.

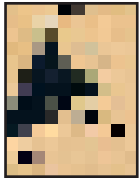
The most important feature of his earthly ministry was to offer his life as an offset for Adam and the penalty of death that sin inflicted upon the entire human race. It is this death that Christians memorialize every year and is considered in the treatise *My Strength and My Redeemer*.

Jesus’ death on the cross did not bring an end to his activities to uplift the human race from sin to an eternal life of perfection in a perfect environment. First he calls out a special people to be his bride, the church. Because they inherited sin as descendants of Adam and Eve, *How Jesus Comforts* describes his role as

advocate before the Father. Then, in his kingdom, he will assume yet another office for the world described in *Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant*.

May this brief review of the life and ministry of God’s only-begotten son, our Lord and our Redeemer, enhance our meditations at this special time of the year.

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The Logos

The Firstborn of Every Creature

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.—Colossians 1:15

Carl Hagensick

Jesus is “the firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18) after whom all who have died will be raised to life. He died once for all, and therefore is to be preeminent among all: the faithful church of the present Gospel age, and the whole rest of the world in the thousand-year kingdom of Christ.

As the original creation of Jehovah, Jesus is “the firstborn of every creature” and at his resurrection he became “the firstborn from the dead.” It is in the first of these senses that he is referred to by the evangelist: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God [Greek: *ho theos*, **the** God], and the Word was God [*theos* without the article *ho*]” (John 1:1).

The usage of the definite article in this verse is significant. William Barclay, an eminent Scottish scholar, makes this observation: “Finally John says that the word was God. This is a difficult saying to understand, and it is difficult because Greek, in which John wrote, had a different way of expressing things from the way it is done in English. When Greek uses a noun it almost always uses the definite article with it. The Greek for God is *theos* (2316) and the definite article is *ho* (3588). When the Greek speaks about God, it does not simply say *theos* (2316), it says *ho theos* (3588, 2316). Now when Greek does not use the definite article with a noun, that noun becomes much more like an adjective. John did not say that the Word was *ho theos* (3588, 2316); that would have been to say that the word was identical with God. He said that the word was *theos* (2316)—without the definite article—which means that the word was, we might say, of the very same character and quality and essence and being as God. When John said the word was God, he was not saying that Jesus was

identical with God; he was saying that Jesus was so perfectly the same as God in mind, in heart, in being that in him we perfectly see what God is like.”

Similarly, the Jewish philosopher Philo (20 B.C. to 50 A.D.), in his *De Somnis*, describes the Word as being “the revelator of God, symbolized in Scriptures as being the angel of Jehovah.” The early Christian, Origen, frequently defines the Logos [Word] as an intermediary between God and the creature. The Greek word *logos* as applied to Christ appears only in the first verse of both the Gospel of John and John’s first epistle, and in Revelation 19:13.¹

It is in this role as representative of Jehovah that we see the Logos in the Old Testament. This is the function of God’s word as described in Isaiah 55:11, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

The Logos in Creation

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Psalm 33:6). The account of the work of the creative days begins in Genesis: “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). The moving force is in the phrase “and God said.” These words appear nine times in the creation narrative. The commentator John Gill observes: “Perhaps the divine Person speaking here is the Logos or Word of God, which was in the beginning with God, and was God, and who himself is the light that lightens every creature.”

1. The “Word” in 1 John 5:7 was not added to the Greek text until the Reformation, and so does not qualify. Just as the original reading of John 1:18 says, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (NASB) there is an implication that John 1:1 is talking about two distinct beings. However, they are in complete harmony.

Throughout the creative account in Genesis, the word translated “God” is the Hebrew *elohim*, a plural word. In the Hebrew there are two uses of the plural: the plural of number and the plural of intensity, also known as the plural of majesty. While there is some debate as to which is meant in the opening chapter of Genesis, the use of the plural pronoun in Genesis 1:26 suggests that the plural of number is intended. This strongly implies what is implicitly stated by Paul: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16,17; cf. John 1:3).

The Wisdom of God

In a related concept, Christ is called “the wisdom of God”: “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. ... But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:24,30). Luke writes, “Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute” (Luke 11:49). It is on the basis of texts such as these that many identify wisdom, as depicted in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, as a personification of Christ as the Logos.

In Proverbs we find a detailed description of the Logos in his creative work: “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up

with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.”—Proverbs 8:22-31

Professor Strong defines the Hebrew word *qanah* (#7069), translated “possessed” in the King James, as meaning “to erect, i.e., create” and is translated either “created” or “made” in a number of places. These verses describe his origin as the first creation of Jehovah; in fact, his **only direct creation** for all else was made by the son of God, the Logos.

The Hebrew word *amown* (Strong’s 525), translated “one brought up [with him]” in Proverbs 8:30 is defined by Brown, Driver and Riggs as being a skilled or master workman. This aptly demonstrates the relationship between the Father and the Son in the creative process: that of a master workman carrying out the plans of the Divine Architect. In the same verse we see that he was “by him,” a position reiterated in John 1:1 where he is said to be “with God.”

The Angel of Jehovah

Another role of the Logos in Old Testament times was as an angelic messenger for Jehovah. In these instances we particularly see him as the Father’s representative. Some expositors link the expression “the word of the LORD” in Genesis 15:1,4 with the Logos (“Word”) of John 1:1. This is suggestive of the thought that the message of the Abrahamic promise may have been delivered by Jesus in his role as the Logos, or representative, of Jehovah.

Other similar occurrences imply this same relationship of the Father with the Son. In Genesis 18:1 when Jehovah appears to Abraham, he is called *adonai* in verse 3 and it is widely assumed to be the Logos. In Exodus 3:1-14 when God says to Moses that his name is “I AM THAT I AM” it is stated expressly in the second verse that the speaker is the “angel of the LORD,” the angel merely being representative of Jehovah.

Of Genesis 3:8 where we read of “the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden” to speak with Adam and Eve, Pastor Russell writes: “We suppose that it refers to our Lord Jesus in his pre-human condition. The Logos was a god. The Logos, Word, Voice of God, communicated with man as the representative of God” (*What Pastor Russell Said*, p. 361). John Gill (1697-1771) wrote that “the voice

Jehovah’s only direct creation was the Logos.

of the Son of God, the eternal Word, is here meant.”

When an angel appeared to Manoah announcing the birth of his son Samson, he is asked his name. He answered: “Wherefore ask-est thou after my name, seeing it is wonderful?” (Judges 13:18, ASV). The name “wonderful” is ascribed prophetically to Christ in Isaiah 9:6.

Michael

Another Old Testament role for the Logos is as the archangel Michael, a name appearing three times at the end of the prophetic book of Daniel when Daniel inquires as to when the Israelites would be restored to the position God desired for them.

In Daniel 10:21 he is referred to as Daniel’s “prince.”¹ In Daniel 12:1 he is called “the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” Daniel’s people were the Israelites. Thus we see the Logos is the guardian angel Michael watching over the interests of Israel.

From Daniel 10:13 we notice that he is called “one of the chief princes,” implying that more than one angel bears this title. Because he was called **the** great prince in Daniel 12:1, it appears that of all who bear that title, he is the greatest of them. Jewish tradition lists seven with that appellation: Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Sariel, and Lucifer. The Bible names only Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer.

This shows a noteworthy contrast. Of Lucifer it is written: “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.”—Ezekiel 28:13,14

Lucifer was charged with protecting the original pair in Eden’s garden, but he usurped power over them through deception. Michael, the Logos, charged with the guardianship of

the nation of Israel, yielded his own life on their behalf and on behalf of the entire human race as well. Comparing the words “great prince” in Daniel 12:1 with “chief ruler” in 1 Chronicles 5:2 suggests that Michael is the same as Jesus, the descendent of Judah: “For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the **chief ruler**; but the birthright was Joseph’s” (1 Chronicles 5:2).

The Messenger of the Covenant

The Logos is last mentioned in the Old Testament in Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Two messengers are mentioned. The first is John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus Christ by boldly preaching a message of repentance and by identifying the Messiah as “there standeth one among you, whom ye know not”; and by pointing to Jesus and saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God” (John 1:26,29,36).

When Jesus was only eight days old he was blessed with Isaiah’s prophecy: “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness ... and will keep thee, and give thee for a **covenant** of the people, for a light of the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6; Luke 2:32).

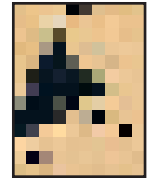
As Jehovah’s messenger at his first advent, Jesus announced the replacement of the Jewish Law Covenant with a covenant of grace through the gospel. At his second advent, he continues this mission by re-establishing a new law covenant instituted under a better mediator, thus providing better results through establishing an educational program, a highway that leads to holiness (Isaiah 35:8), resulting in perfecting all humanity so they can be justly held accountable for their obedience to God’s perfect law.

This text again stresses the subordination of the Son to the Father, because, as the messenger of Jehovah and his covenant, he claimed no greater honor than to be the Father’s agent and representative, roles well defined by the title Logos. How grand it will be when this messenger completes, as mediator, the covenant that he proclaimed!

1. The Hebrew word *sar* implies especially a military prince, whether on the defensive or the offensive.

The Logos is also known as the archangel Michael.

Perspectives of a Miraculous Birth



But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.—Micah 5:2

Tom Ruggirello

When the Magi from the East visited King Herod, he was disturbed to hear that a “king of the Jews” had been born. He called together the chief priests and teachers of the law and asked where the Christ was to be born (Matthew 2:4). When told that the prophet Micah (Micah 5:2) had predicted Bethlehem as the birthplace, he made an unimaginably atrocious decision.

What to others was a cause of rejoicing and celebration was to this man a motivation to murder. Any perceived threat to his power must be neutralized. His cowardly command was that all the male children in the vicinity of Bethlehem, two years of age and younger, should be killed. It is almost inconceivable that such a sweeping decree should be made when the intent was to remove the threat of a single child.

This insanity was to bring such anguish of heart to that small community that Matthew cited the words of Jeremiah as being prophetic of the bereavement that took place: “Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more” (Jeremiah 31:15, *NASB*). How sad to think that the joyous birth of our great savior was accompanied with such poignant grief.

It is clear that many perceived the miraculous birth of our Lord differently. Herod’s evil perception must have reflected the views of Satan himself. But there are other more noble examples.

The Angels

Our examination of the birth of Jesus often focuses on the people who became involved in that marvelous event. But what many human observers believed was the beginning of life for

the baby Jesus, the angels must have perceived quite differently. One of the titles of Jesus is Michael the Archangel. As chief of all angels Jesus was one of their company. In many Old Testament experiences where the angelic army of the Lord fought for Israel, or delivered them in some way, it was Jesus and the angels working together to accomplish God’s will. We see examples even amongst men where there is an inseparable union formed between a good general and his fighting men. David had such loyalty from his troops. Who can doubt that Jesus commanded such devotion from the angelic hosts? There must have been a wonderful melding of purpose and work between Jesus and the angels. The angels knew of his involvement in creation as the “craftsman” of God (Proverbs 8:30, *NIV*). They saw how he was God’s “daily delight,” and how he rejoiced to be in the presence of God. They observed the unique bond that existed between Father and Son.

It was the angel Gabriel whom God called upon to announce the birth of Jesus. Gabriel had been used centuries earlier to relate the prophecy of the seventy weeks to Daniel (Daniel 9:21-27). Among other things, that prophecy predicted the year of Jesus’ first advent. As the Logos, Jesus had been the usual messenger of God. The use of Gabriel, however, may suggest God’s sentiment that it was inappropriate for Jesus to foretell of his own ministry. Heavenly decorum chose Gabriel to present Daniel’s historic prophecy, as well as the later birth announcements.

As Gabriel explained to Mary that her son would be called the “Son of the Highest” he would have known how that statement fit into the full context of his pre-human existence. This was not to be a new position for Jesus. It

*This Savior was
for all people,
even the poor,
disrespected out-
casts of society.*

was merely a statement that mankind would some day come to recognize him as the very son of God.

Gabriel was given great insight into the work that Jesus was to accomplish. He explained to Mary that God would give him the throne of David and that his kingdom would have no end (Luke 1:32,33). Clearly the angelic view of the nativity was deeper than any human mind could initially fathom. The angels understood the great divide that had come between God and mankind and they knew that Jesus was sent to heal that breach. The apostle Paul said that the whole family of God in heaven and earth derives its existence from him (Ephesians 3:15). God did not create a divided family, or multiple families. Heaven and earth were meant to be one, and the nativity was to begin the process of restoring everything to that original purpose.

An angel, likely Gabriel once again, explained to the shepherds that the birth of Jesus would bring “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10). Yes, great joy to all people, but great joy to the angels as well. They wanted the human family morally reunited with the heavenly family of God. Jesus made a brief allusion to these angelic emotions when he said that there is great joy in heaven over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:7).

Seeing Jesus’ life form change from the mighty archangel into the frailty of human seed must have been an awe-inspiring moment for the angels. They were far more than casual observers; they were rejoicing supporters of the great work about to begin.

The Shepherds

Almost everything connected with the birth of Jesus was modest and unassuming. If this were truly the birth of a king, one would never know it by the surroundings, or by those first invited to honor him.

Shepherding was a difficult life. Not only were the shepherds exposed to hunger and the extremes of climate, they also had to defend their flocks against predators and thieves. Because of their profession, they were unable to observe the orthodox ritual of washings. As a result, they were considered unclean. In addition, they were uneducated in the law, giving them the reputation of being ignorant. Since Jewish society had shifted away from shepherding toward agriculture, their profession had lit-

tle respect. This left the shepherds at the lower, poorer end of society.

It is significant therefore that God chose the shepherds to hear the proclamation of the angels. Being selected for this honor suggests that at a minimum these particular men were of noble character. They must have possessed some faith, some inclination to look toward God. Never had a greater proclamation been made than what they heard that night in the fields. This Savior was for all people, even the poor, disrespected outcasts of society. How fitting it was that news of the lamb of God should first come to shepherds.

Once the angels left their presence and the sky was darkened again, the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to see for themselves what they had been told. Were they surprised to see that Joseph and Mary were common Jews, come to register and pay their taxes? Were they dismayed to find the newborn king in a stable lying in a feeding trough? Or did they take comfort in these things? They were most familiar with these surroundings. This was common life to them, and yet under these new circumstances that simple stable became a temple of worship. Has any man-made church ever spoken so eloquently of what is required for worship? A place where humble hearts are gathered in his name to adore the Savior, and honor the Heavenly Father is all that is needed for true worship. These men were assured by what they witnessed that night that the blessings of their Messiah were to reach down to all levels of society. This was their perspective of the nativity.

The Wise Men

Who were these wise men and where did they come from? Why did they care about the birth of the King of the Jews? We have only sketchy details about them. It is not even certain that they were three in number. This is assumed because there were three gifts that were brought to Jesus.

The phrase “Wise Men” (Matthew 2:1) comes from the Greek word *magoi*. “It denotes a Magian, one of the sacred caste, originally Median, who apparently conformed to the Persian religion while retaining their old beliefs” (*Vines Dictionary*).

Pastor Russell discusses why there was a great expectation of Messiah at the time of Jesus’ birth. He writes: “The clearest of all

these prophecies was one by Zoroaster. The Nestorians say that Zoroaster was a disciple of Jeremiah, from whom he learned about the Messiah and talked concerning him to his disciples. In this connection we should remember that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were at this time princes of Persia and intimate with the wise men of that country, which was at that time the principal nation of the world. It is easy to see how traditions would be handed down through that channel, and especially may we suppose that Daniel's prophecy respecting the time of Messiah's birth would be well known to the disciples of Zoroaster, Persia's wise men. Furthermore, there were Jews scattered abroad throughout that country who still more or less kept alive the thought of Israel's hope for the great Messiah so long promised of God." (*Reprints*, p. 3703)

The possibility that these wise men were connected in some way to the prophet Daniel is thrilling. We remember how Daniel agonized over the plight of Israel (Daniel 9:1-19). He yearned for Israel to be released from captivity and longed to know when Israel would be free. He studied the prophecies of Jeremiah to know when the captivity would end. With such passion it is evident that those associated with Daniel would know what was in his heart, and the time prophecy that the Lord sent through Gabriel.

Daniel and his three Hebrew companions were "in all matters of wisdom and understanding ... ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers" of Babylon (Daniel 1:20). Some five hundred years later, as the wise men from the east came to Israel to worship the newborn king, they carried with them a measure of Daniel's faith. Had not Daniel let his light shine so brightly, no one from the east would have come to worship Jesus. No gifts would have been brought to help sustain the holy family during their stay in Egypt.

Through the eyes of the wise men, Daniel's faith finally saw the great deliverer of Israel. Unaware of the far-reaching effect of his faith, Daniel had, for practical purposes, prepared for the coming Messiah.

Seeing the fulfillment of what had been passed on to them, the wise men received a great blessing as they brought their gifts and adoration to the world's Messiah. How well they understood the real benefit that Jesus

would bring is unclear, but undoubtedly they came with open hearts. How appropriate that even Gentiles should recognize the King. As the shepherds knew, his reign is to bless every level of society, even the Gentile world.

Joseph

Little is known about Jesus' earthly father. We can assume he had certain qualities just because he was God's choice to raise Jesus. When he learned that Mary was pregnant, he did not want to expose her to public ridicule and so decided to "put her away secretly" (Matthew 1:19, *NKJV*). The Scriptures say, "He that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Proverbs 11:13). His treatment of Mary shows that Joseph possessed a "faithful spirit." He was loyal to those he cared about and wanted to protect them.

As he struggled to find a place for Mary to deliver her child his protective nature accepted what meager shelter was offered. As he helped Mary recline in a hastily-made bed of straw, he was an unlikely midwife; but, as always, he did what needed to be done. After watching Mary endure her agonizing labor pains, he witnessed the birth of his son. But it was not **his** son! Thoughts of the angel's message must have raced through his mind: "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). His joy of fatherhood was enhanced with the knowledge that this birth was different from any ever experienced before. His deep love for Mary was now strengthened by the miracle they had just shared together. He must have been a special man, possessing strength of character, for God to choose him to carry this responsibility. He and Mary were well suited to care for the miracle child who would deliver the world from sin and death.

Joseph's perspective of the nativity must have been extraordinary. Except for him there was no one to share the pain of Mary, or her joy. He was a loyal friend when Mary needed him, a supportive husband sharing an amazing experience with his young wife.

Mary

Of course Mary was the most profoundly affected by the circumstances of Jesus entry into the world. When Gabriel first told her she was greatly favored of the Lord (Luke 1:28), her reaction was interesting. Unlike Zacharias the priest who needed proof to substantiate

Joseph must have been a special man for God to give him the fatherhood responsibilities.


Gabriel's prophecy about the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:18), Mary needed no such proof. Her only question was, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34). She was not questioning the truth of Gabriel's message; she only wondered how it would be fulfilled. Who would believe her explanation of why she was with child? It sounded so far-fetched that her very life could be at risk, for the law stipulated that a woman caught in adultery should be stoned (Leviticus 20:10). What would Joseph say about her explanation? Would she lose him? Regardless of the questions that Gabriel's words raised, Mary was quick to respond: "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38, *NIV*). Her response to Gabriel is most extraordinary.

What a remarkable woman she was. She needed the strength of character that could withstand the ridicule she would receive. She needed the humility of heart to fend off the pride that might come from being the chosen woman. And she needed maturity to bear the

pain that her role would bring.

Shortly after the birth of Jesus, Simeon described the heaviest burden this poor servant of the Lord would have to bear. He told her, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35). All the hatred and jealousy that was aimed at her eldest son for three-and-a-half years would be intensely concentrated during the agony of his last hours on earth. Simeon's prophecy became a reality as Mary watched the crucifixion of Jesus and felt her soul deeply wounded. Was this the role so coveted by Jewish women? Had they known the pain connected with this honor, few would have been willing to accept it. But Mary, a humble and strong woman, was a true servant of the Lord. Hers was a legacy filled with pain and sorrow, but, more importantly, one overshadowed with the joy of being the mother of our Savior. "Be it unto me according to your word." And so it has been.

May each of us share the wisdom of accepting the Lord's will for us no matter the cost, for his will always ends in unspeakable joy!



Behold!

Behold the Babe! There is for Him
 No room but in the stable dim.
 Among the placid oxen there
 He sleeps, all innocent and fair.
 Heaven's brightest gem in casket rude encased;
 The world's Redeemer in a manger placed.

Behold the Man! A lonely form,
 Erect before the howling storm
 Of angry voices and the rude
 Revilings of the multitude.
 Amid the buffetings of human hands,
 The Son of God, the world's great hero stands.

Behold the King! To Him is given
 Authority in earth and heaven.
 In glory on the great white throne
 He sits, encircled by his own;
 While loud His praise the choir celestial sings;
 The Man of Sorrows, now the King of kings.

—W. H. Pepworth, *Poems of the Way*, p. 97

A Man Approved by Miracles

Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.—Acts 2:22



Richard Suraci

Miracles described in the Bible provide us with super-natural exhibitions of God's power. A miracle has been defined as a work wrought by divine power for a divine purpose, by means beyond the reach of mortal man. The dictionary definition is: "An event or action that apparently contradicts known scientific laws and is hence thought to be due to supernatural laws, especially to an act of God."

In the three-and-a-half years of Jesus' ministry Jesus performed thirty-five known and individually recorded miracles. This would be equivalent to approximately one miracle every thirty-six days. However, the Bible provides only a partial list of Jesus' miracles. The Scriptures state that "He healed them all." This statement appears ten times in Matthew and a few times in the other gospels. This means there were many more miracles than those individually recorded in the gospels (Luke 6:19; Matthew 8:16,17).

"Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and ... a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matthew 3:16,17

While Jesus' baptism was not a miracle, the begetting of the holy spirit without measure and the opening of the heavens followed by God's voice, was.

The holy spirit enlightened Jesus' mind and brought to mind his pre-human relationship with his Father, and the miracles of creation. So while on earth Jesus became "Christ, The [Anointed] Miracle Worker."

Compassion

The word compassion was closely related with many of Jesus' miracles: "[And he] had compassion on them" (Matthew 20:34). He was so much like his heavenly Father!

The word "compassion" appears twenty

times in the Old Testament. In the New Testament it appears twenty-one times, mostly referring to Jesus. The word means love in action. It is translated, to love, pity, be merciful. "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth" (Psalm 86:15). Compassion is literally a feeling with and for others. It is a fundamental quality of the biblical conception of God's character.

Compassion was the foundation of Israel's faith in God. It was out of God's compassion that he delivered them from Egyptian bondage and called them to be his own people. The Israelites gloried in his compassion, especially after they felt God's chastening judgments (Psalm 78:38; 86:15; 111:4). God's own declaration of himself sums up his wonderful compassion: "And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exodus 34:6, 7, *NIV*).

Because compassion was an integral part of God's character, the prophets declared that compassion was an essential requirement for God's people: "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6, *RSV*).

God manifested his love and compassion for his people throughout the Old Testament. Isaiah 35 speaks of the earth's renewal as well as God's therapeutic vengeance and salvation: "The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Isaiah 35:5,6).

The miracles that Jesus performed were vivid illustrations of what God's kingdom on earth will be like. This reminds us that God is faithful and his word never returns to him unfulfilled but accomplishes his grand designs (Isaiah 55:10,11).

The Miracle at Cana

The miracles of Jesus were performed in twenty-one locations; the first miracle occurred at Cana and the last at Jerusalem (healing Malchus' ear, see John 18:10 and Luke 22:51).

Jesus' first miracle was at a wedding to which he, his mother, and disciples, were invited. His group and a few servants knew about this miracle:

When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." His mother [being aware of his miraculous birth and the angels' statement: "He shall be called the Son of God"] said to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons [some authorities claim nine gallons each]. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water," so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.—John 2:3-11, *NIV*

This miracle was an eye opener to his disciples and helped establish their faith in Jesus' gospel. In contrast with the ministry of Moses who turned water into blood as a sign of God's judgment (Exodus 7:14-24), Jesus brings joy through the water of truth leading to the transformation (wine represents joy) of his kingdom.

Jesus' Second Miracle

Jesus' second miracle took place in Capernaum when he healed an official's son (John 4:46-54). The official may have been Chuza, Herod's steward, whose wife, Joanna, ministered to Jesus. He pleaded with Jesus that he

go home with him and heal his son who was dying. Jesus said: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." The man's faith was firm and he said: "Sir, come down ere my child die." This was a pathetic heart-felt request. Jesus said, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." This man believed Jesus' words and went home. He had come a day's journey to see Jesus.

As he came near his home his servant met him and said, "Thy son liveth." He inquired what time of day he started to heal and the servant answered, "Yesterday at the seventh hour," which was the hour Jesus said, "Thy son liveth." And he "himself believed, and his whole house" (verse 53). We too should believe God's word and act upon it. Just think of the less fortunate children who lost their lives in the reign of sin and death. They, too, will hear Jesus' voice and come forth in God's kingdom on earth.

A similar miracle took place in Capernaum, healing a centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10).

Casting Out Demons

Jesus' next miracle took place in Capernaum, delivering a demoniac in the synagogue (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:33-37). There are five other demoniac cleansings:

1. In Galilee, casting out a blind and deaf spirit (Matthew 12:22-30; Luke 11:14-23).
2. Delivering a demoniac at Gadara (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39).
3. In Capernaum, casting out a dumb spirit (Matthew 9:32-34).
4. In Phoenicia, casting out a demon from a Syrophenician's daughter (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30).
5. In Mount Hermon, casting out a demon from a lunatic boy (Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-42).

The word demon is taken from the Greek word *daimoniakes* and means possessed or influenced by demons. The second on the list above was one of the most interesting and difficult of all Jesus' miracles!

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by

We should believe God's word and act upon it.

a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.—Luke 8:26-31, *NIV*

Legion may have been the name he adopted, not his birth name, or, maybe when the demons came into him, **they** took the name Legion in representing him.

In Roman history, a legion was a military division of 3,000 to 6,000 soldiers. Either figure was an astounding number of demon identities. This man was so obsessed with these demons that nothing would persuade him that they were gone except, of course, **seeing** the result of Jesus' miracle:

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.—Luke 8:32-37, *NIV*

What a relief this miracle brought upon this tormented man! There he stood normal again,

in his right mind, fully clothed and sitting at the feet of Jesus. He begged Jesus to let him go with them. Jesus refused and told him to return home and tell how much God had done for him: "So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him" (Luke 8:39, *NIV*).

Peter's Mother-in-Law

Another miracle in Capernaum was the healing of Peter's mother-in-law: "Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them." (Luke 4:38,39, *NIV*; see also Matthew 8:14,15; Mark 1:29-31)

There have been many epidemics of all sorts of fevers during man's existence, including scarlet, yellow, typhoid, and typhus fever; these have taken the lives of many. Typhoid fever came from drinking contaminated water. Typhus fever comes by being bit by fleas, lice, ticks, etc. This will never happen in God's kingdom on earth, where pure water will be available and fleas and lice and other pestilence will be nonexistent (Isaiah 65:25).

The first miraculous catch of fish was at the sea of Galilee and is recorded in Luke 5:1-11. Luke was the only gospel writer to record it. A similar miracle is recorded in John 21:1-13 and it also took place at the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus was standing by the shore of Lake Gennesaret as the crowd pressed toward him, eager to hear his message. Beside him were two boats belonging to Peter, his brother Andrew, and their partners, James and John. Jesus entered one boat and asked Peter to pull out a little. Jesus sat down and began to teach the people. When he finished speaking, he asked Peter to pull out to deeper waters and let down his net for a draught of fish. Peter said they toiled all night and caught nothing, but he did as Jesus requested and the net was filled with fish to the point of breaking. Peter signaled his partners to bring the other boat and the two boats nearly sank because of the weight of the fish.

After this miracle, Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to be his disciples. Jesus told Simon what his future vocation would be: "From now on you will catch men" (Luke 5:10, *NIV*). It was Jesus' gospel that led

Epidemics will never happen in God's kingdom on earth.

Jesus' gospel led to the call of the New Creation, and the apostles were the first to herald it.

to the call of the New Creation, and the apostles were the first to herald it.

Healing Lepers

The sixth miracle of Jesus, the healing of a leper, took place in Galilee and is recorded in Matthew 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-45, and Luke 5:12-15. A similar miracle was the healing of ten lepers in Galilee which is recorded only in Luke 17:11-19.

"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*). They were a pitiable group, with torn clothes, heads shaved and a cloth upon their upper lip. They were required by law to stay away from people (Leviticus 13:45,46).

Leprosy is a symbol of sin and alienation from God; it is a loathsome disease. Out of their misery and hope, the lepers called out in unison: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! He said, Go, show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were cleansed." (Luke 17:13,14, *NIV*) Their faith was rewarded as they went. While walking along, they felt the renewal of their bodies.

Multiply this scene a thousand million times over; as mankind walks up "the [cleansing] highway of holiness" their bodies will become stronger as they near perfection. After the "little season," they will enter into the joy of a perfect earth, possessing perfect human bodies, with "everlasting joy upon their heads ... and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).

A Paralytic Healed

The next recorded miracle is the healing of a paralytic in Capernaum. The King James version calls it "palsy" (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26). The word palsy appears thirteen times in the gospels. This miracle was a tribute to the faith of three men: a paralytic and his two friends.

The home to which Jesus came was one in which he preached the gospel. As usual, the Pharisees and teachers of the law who came from afar were listening to him. Luke adds, "The power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick" (Luke 5:17, *NIV*). Since the home was packed with people, the two friends carried the paralytic to the second floor, re-

moved some tiles, and lowered him down on the mat he was laying on to be in front of Jesus:

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." Jesus knew what they [the Pharisees] were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ..." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God." Everyone [except the Pharisees] ... gave praise to God.—Luke 5:20,22-26, *NIV*

Paralysis has been a scourge upon humanity throughout human history due to vertebrae severing, accidents, strokes, and other causes. Depending on the severity of each case, it may leave the patient paralyzed from the neck down, or affect half the body, or just single limbs. How wonderful it will be when the Scripture is fulfilled: "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart" (Isaiah 35:6).

The Dead Are Raised

Another miracle, in the city of Nain, was the raising of a widow's son (Luke 7:11-17). Similar miracles took place in Capernaum with the raising of Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56), and in Bethany with the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44).

The day after Jesus healed the centurion's servant, Luke records a more wonderful miracle than he had yet wrought, the raising from death of the widow's son: "He went 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. This meeting was not coincidental; it was by divine providence.

Meeting this procession of death gave Jesus an opportunity to illustrate the power God conferred upon him. It also illustrated the joy that will come to mankind when "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28,29).

This meeting "at the gate of the city" was impressive because life triumphed over death and sorrow was turned into joy. One procession was grief stricken; the compassionate Lord

Jesus led the other. The battle at the gate was short and decisive, as life triumphed over death, and sorrow was turned into joy.

Verse 12: “There was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.” She was in deep sorrow: “When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not.” (Luke 7:13) This was a sign of what Jesus intended to do, which would cause her to be happy again: “He ... touched the bier [coffin], and ... said, Young man ... arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother” (Luke 7:14,15).

This was a double witness of the supernatural power at Jesus’ disposal. We pay attention to these miracles because they were samples of what Jesus and his church will do in God’s kingdom on earth (John 14:12).

Healing the Deaf, Mute, and Blind

Five of Jesus’ miracles concerned those who were deaf, mute, and blind:

1. In Capernaum, healing two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31).
2. In the Decapolis, healing a deaf person with a speech impediment (Mark 7:31-37).
3. In Bethsaida, healing a blind man (Mark 8:22-26).
4. In Jerusalem, healing a man born blind (John 9:1-7).
5. In Jericho, healing blind Bartimaeus (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43).

When Jesus was passing through Decapolis, they brought a man to him who was deaf with a speech impediment (see Mark 7:31-37). When a man is completely deaf, usually he is mute, unable to form words, except for shrieks and moans.

The first thing Jesus did was to take the man aside, away from the crowd. At other times he healed people in the presence of all. Why was this healing private? Deaf people are easily embarrassed and become confused in crowds. They get along better with one or two people. Jesus drew him out of the crowd to put him at ease. Jesus spoke to him by his physical actions!

As Jesus healed people, he looked up to heaven. By doing so he demonstrated that his power to heal came from God.

“After he took [the man] aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means, “Be opened!”). At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. ... People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”—Mark 7:33-35,37, NIV.

Imagine the amazement of the people who were deaf and/or mute, who come forth from their graves in God’s kingdom and whose lips will praise God when they “**hear** his voice, and shall come forth” (John 5:28,29).

Another great miracle took place in Jerusalem when Jesus healed a man born blind:

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.—John 9:1-7, NIV

Only John reports this miracle. The apostles knowing this man was blind from birth, questioned Jesus as to whose sins caused his blindness, his or his parents. Jesus said it was neither “that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” Jesus’ significant statement followed: “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

This man didn’t know what light was because he was born to darkness. Jesus used the same method he used with the deaf and mute man. He mixed earth with his saliva and placed it over the eyes; when the blind man washed in the Pool of Siloam, he received his sight. It is important to remember that all sickness comes from Adamic sin, leading to death:

The miracles are samples of what Jesus and his church will do in God’s kingdom on earth.

“Dying thou shalt die” (Genesis 2:17, margin). Through the death of Jesus, man will eventually appreciate the glory of God (John 11:4).

Power Over Troubled Waters

Another mighty miracle took place on the Sea of Galilee:

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. ... A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”—Mark 4:35-41, *NIV*

Notice Mark’s statement, “When they had sent away the multitude, **they took him ... just as he was**, in the boat.” How was Jesus at that hour? It had been a most exhausting day of teaching and Jesus was weary and worn out, both mentally and physically. Mark’s description of his condition suggests extreme tiredness from the fatigue of his constant healing of people.

In chapter 3, evidently the same day, Jesus healed a man with a withered hand. Already

the Pharisees and Herodians took counsel about how to destroy him (vs. 6). A great multitude followed him as he withdrew to the sea. He cured many of the plague and also went up to a mountain where he chose his twelve.

Referring to the time of the end, Jesus said: “The sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:25,26). After his resurrection, he assured his followers: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). As the perfect Lord Jesus, he was able to calm the Sea of Galilee, and as the resurrected, empowered, divine Son of God, how much more power he will have to say to restless mankind, “Peace be still.” And there shall be a great calm.

“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.

When Jesus says to restless mankind, “Peace be still,” there shall be a great calm.

He Bids Thee “Come”

He who says to us “Come!” is the same who said “Come!” to Peter when he walked on the sea. Peter, in obeying, would have sunk, had not the Lord’s outstretched arm upheld him; and the same arm supports them well who now, at his command, come out of Babylon. Look not at the boisterous sea of difficulties between, but, looking directly to the Lord, be of good courage.

—*Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 3, p. 167

Two Lessons from the Master



The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.—John 3:2

Tim Thomassen

Before partaking of his last meal with his disciples, Jesus said to them: “Ye call me The Teacher and The Lord,—and well say, for I am” (John 13:13, *Rotherham*). The King James translation uses the word “Master” instead of “Teacher.” It reads: “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.”

The Greek word translated “Teacher” or “Master” means instructor. It may refer to a doctor, master, or teacher. Therefore, either the title “Master” or “Teacher” is appropriate when applied to Jesus. He may even be thought of as our “Master Teacher.”

On another occasion, Jesus issued this invitation: “Take my yoke upon you, and **learn** of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). Jesus was indeed meek and lowly in heart. This was dramatically exhibited on numerous occasions. He had his heavenly Father’s approval and assistance because this trait is what God desires in all his children: “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).

If we are to be taught, we must also be of this attitude and disposition. The psalmist wrote: “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he **teach** his way” (Psalm 25:9). We must humbly look to Jesus as our teacher and sincerely desire to receive his schooling. It is essential that we be familiar with our Master’s life and teachings and conduct ourselves in accordance with those things.

With this in mind, let us consider two incidents in our Lord’s life to learn what he expects of his followers. What Jesus said to Phillip, he says to us: “Follow me” (John 1:43). This means to follow him in the same way, to accompany him as a disciple.

The Samaritan Woman

The Lord’s encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well is found in the fourth chapter of John and it offers many lessons for the students of Christ. This was a truly remarkable and significant event, certainly one of the great events in Jesus’ earthly life. He related some miraculous things to this inquisitive and thirsty woman.

The fact that Jesus even chose to travel through Samaria is noteworthy, for in so doing, he risked injury. It was well known that the Samaritans and Jews were engaged in a long-standing feud. Hatred and bitterness characterized their feelings toward each other. There was no social interaction between them except for business transactions from time to time. Jesus could have bypassed Samaria but he did not. After all, his heavenly Father was with him. He knew he had his Father’s protection and assistance, just as we have it.

The words of the psalmist should give us strength and confidence for every situation: “The LORD is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1).

We should take courage from Jesus’ words to Pilate shortly before his death: “So Pilate said to him ... Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you? Jesus answered, You would have no authority over me, unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:10,11, *NASB*).

This should be a comfort to us, for we know that our heavenly Father is watching over and caring for us. He will not allow any harm to come to us unless he designs it for our good. Jesus demonstrated his firm faith and belief in that fact as illustrated in his trip through Samaria and on many other occasions.

Jesus quickly turned the conversation with the woman into an opportunity to discuss a fea-

ture of God's plan and character. Beginning with a simple request, "Give me to drink" (verse seven), he proceeded to discuss deep spiritual truths with this lonely woman.

Although perhaps tired from the journey, Jesus did not hold back from discussing spiritual matters. What an example he was of the apostle's later admonition, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). If Jesus ever spoke of earthly things, it was usually to explain profound spiritual lessons. His parables were good examples of this.

But in this experience Jesus shows us what it means to be instant in the preaching of God's word, whether for us it is "in season, [or] out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2). The Greek word translated "season" means "well timed," "opportune," or "convenient." So we should proclaim God's word, not only when it is convenient, but also at times when it is not so convenient.

"This cannot mean that we are to violate the laws of reason and decency by intruding the good tidings upon others at times inconvenient and unseasonable to them; but it does mean that we are to have such a love for the truth, such an earnest desire to serve it, that we will gladly accept the opportunity to do so, however inconvenient it may be for ourselves. It is the chief business of our lives, to which life itself even is subservient, and, hence, no opportunity for service must be laid aside."—*Reprints*, p. 3211.

This incident in Samaria calls to mind our Lord's description of himself: "I am meek and lowly of heart." He was willing to talk with and minister to just one person. He did not need a large audience nor did he feel a need to be "in the spotlight." And he was not bound by the prejudices of people around him.

Politically Incorrect

According to the customs of the time, Jesus committed several "politically incorrect" blunders. First, he spoke to a Samaritan, something Jews generally did not do. But it was not just a Samaritan, it was a Samaritan **woman**.

The decorum of that region regarded it as unbecoming, if not positively wrong, for any man, especially a rabbi, to hold a conversation with a strange woman. Additionally, the rabbis cautioned Jews not to address any woman in

the street, even their own wives, lest they cause a scandal.

Furthermore, there was something about this woman that suggests she was an outcast or one held in low esteem. Many have labeled her a harlot, though the Scriptures do not specifically say it. Nevertheless, it seems significant that she came to the well at noon, during the heat of the day. The customary time for women to draw water was either in the cool of the morning or evening. They would visit and socialize as they completed their tasks.

But she came alone. Whatever her circumstances, Jesus knew what they were, for she later declared, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did" (verse 29).

It was to this lonely Samaritan woman that Jesus uttered words of significance to which all future ages would heed. Jesus first revealed himself as Messiah, not to his family, nor to his disciples, nor even to his fellow Jews, but to this woman of a despised people.

On so many occasions our Lord said remarkable things to unremarkable people in unremarkable situations. This should reassure us as we realize the Lord has been dealing primarily with the unpretentious. He takes the ignoble things of the world and makes of them things that are noble, that will reflect his glory and show forth his praises throughout all eternity.

Washing the Disciples' Feet

In John 13 we read of another incident where water is also featured. But unlike chapter four where it appears for drinking purposes, our Master Teacher put it into a basin and washed the feet of his disciples. Jesus, knowing that the time of his death was near, evidently thought it necessary to teach his disciples a lesson of humility illustrated by himself. He needed to correct the erroneous ideas they had concerning the prerequisites for discipleship. Previous to this experience, at least two of them had shown too much interest in worldly honors and esteem. James and John had requested that in the kingdom they might sit the one on the right hand and the other on the left, in closest proximity to Jesus, and implying very high office (Mark 10:35-37).

Our Lord taught his disciples a lesson in humility: "But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise

We are to have such a love for the truth that we will gladly serve it, however inconvenient it may be for us.

lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”—Mark 10:42-45

Not only Jesus’ words but also his actions were often inexplicable to his disciples. This foot-washing incident was no exception. Jesus had acknowledged himself as the Son of God, the Messiah, their Lord and Master. And yet there he was, kneeling before them in the attitude of a humble servant, washing their feet.

After finishing the service, Jesus explained its significance. He had given them an example of humility, in his willingness to perform the most menial task for those whom he loved. In their fear to be the least, all of the disciples had missed the opportunity of service for the Master and for each other.

Their Lord, their Head and Master, had humbled himself to serve them all. Thus he rebuked their pride and at the same time set them an example that would apply to every affair of life. He powerfully illustrated how that they should be glad to serve one another on every occasion, whether it be in the high things or in the common affairs of daily living. This washing of one another’s feet applies to every operation of life, any and every kindness, though especially along the lines of spiritual assistance and comfort.

Our Foot-Washing Opportunities

We have many opportunities for comforting, refreshing, and consoling one another in some of the humblest affairs or even in respect to some unpleasant tasks or trials. Any deed done or attempted to be done in love, with the desire to do good to one of the Lord’s people, we may be sure has our Lord’s approval and blessing. Let us lose no opportunities of this kind as we remember the Master’s example.

Like him, we should not merely assume humility, but actually perform kindnesses and services to all with whom we come in contact, especially the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). It is a special privilege to assist the members of the Lord’s body, the church.

Christ is our Master Teacher. He instructs us by example as well as by doctrine. For that end he came into this world and dwelt among us, that he might exhibit all those graces and fruits which he desires his followers to develop. And it is a picture without a single false stroke. That is why it is so important to attend to his word, to imitate his examples, and thus be thoroughly conformed to his image.

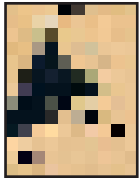
May the words of a beautiful old hymn echo the sincere sentiments of our hearts:

“More like the Master, I would ever be.
More of his meekness, more humility;
More zeal to labor, more courage to be true.
More consecration for work he bids me do.
More like the Master, I would live and grow;
More of his love to others I would show;
More self denial, like his in Galilee,
More like the Master, I long to ever be.”

Teaching with Authority

The words which fell from the lips of Jesus were words of life. They were healthy, gracious words; sweet, wonderful words; words of comfort, hope, healing, kindness, and authority. All who heard him witnessed to their wonder and beauty. He spoke as never man yet spake. He taught as one having authority. His words bubbled like living water from the fount of his own goodness and purity. They were the overflow of a nature uncorrupted by the taint of this world’s sins. They sprang from a heart touched with compassion for the sorrows and struggles of mankind. Mercy mingled with truth, and every utterance was rich with heavenly wisdom, with the revelation of a Father unknown as yet and of a kingdom of love and good will beyond the conception of fallen humanity.

—F. A. Shuttleworth, *The Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*, June 1958.



Jesus as Savior

My Strength and My Redeemer

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.—Psalm 19:14

Tim Alexander

In the days of Moses, when giving the details of the construction of the tabernacle, God set the value of each man's life. Each man twenty years of age or over was to pay half a shekel as "a ransom for his soul" unto the LORD. Rich and poor alike, all men paid half a shekel "to make an atonement" for their souls (Exodus 30:11-16). To our minds it may seem that each man's life would be worth much more than the few cents represented by this price, but God was establishing a principle. God was demonstrating two things: First, that the value of one man's life is equivalent to that of another man's life. Second, that atonement with God can be achieved by paying that price which corresponds to the value of one life.

Centuries later, in Jesus' day, tribute collectors were employed to encourage the payment of this same temple tax. In Matthew 17:24, as Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of this tax approached Peter in the street and asked him, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?" (NASB) Peter, with characteristic haste, answered, "Yes."

Had Peter looked to Jesus before responding, his reply might have been different. Upon entering the house, Jesus, having perceived Peter's interaction with the tax collectors, anticipated the matter in Peter's heart. "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?" When Peter said, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt" (verses 25,26, NASB). Jesus was saying, "If the children of the king are free and if God really were the King of this temple, I would be exempt from this tax because I am God's son."

By this beautifully simple demonstration, Jesus was clearly saying that he himself, the

Son of God, did not need to pay a ransom for his own soul. Jesus was sinless and had no need to make atonement for himself with God. Nevertheless, Jesus continued and said to Peter, "lest we should offend them," take the coin you will find in the mouth of a fish you will catch and pay the temple tax for me and for thee. Jesus was signifying that he, with his sinless life, would voluntarily pay what he did not owe for those who did owe what they could not pay. It was a subtle yet striking foreshadow of the great ransom price spoken of in 1 Timothy 2:5,6: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a **ransom** for all, to be testified in due time."

The Greek word rendered ransom is *antilutron*, which means a redemption price whose value corresponds to that which it is purchasing. Jesus was offering his perfect human life to pay for Adam's no-longer-perfect human life. When Adam sinned, he lost not only his own human life, but also the lives of all of his children; therefore, when Jesus paid this ransom price, he bought not only Adam's human life, but also the lives of all of Adam's children. At Calvary, Jesus therefore bought the lives of the whole human race.

In Hebrews 2:16, Paul tells us it was essential that Jesus be a human man to pay the ransom. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." And in Hebrews 10:4,5, we see that God specifically prepared Jesus a human body for the purpose of coming to earth and paying the ransom price because the typical sacrifices of the Old Testament were merely pictures. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he [Jesus] cometh into the world, he

saith, Sacrifice and offering thou [God] wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.” And that perfect human body, Jesus’ perfect human life, is what constituted the corresponding price for Adam and all of Adam’s race.

Jesus and Barabbas

On the last day of Jesus’ human life, standing before Pilate, Jesus uttered few words; yet still, his message was clear and evident. In front of the governor in a place that implied justice, Jesus stood quietly with the calm dignity and serenity that distinguishes a perfect man. Pilate, according to his custom, offered to release the prisoner Jesus to them coincident with the Passover time, but the people chose the murderer Barabbas instead. As this transaction was carried out, what began as a convenient attempt by Pilate to appease an angry crowd ended up as an enduring portrait of the ransom work of Jesus Christ.

Barabbas’ name means “Son of the Father.” Jesus was a perfect son of his father, God. The only other originally perfect human son of the father, God, was Adam. So by the act of the innocent Jesus going into the prison house (death), the guilty Barabbas (Adam) was released from that same prison house. Throughout his life, Jesus spoke like no other man ever had, with authority, with power and with grace; and here we see a beautiful example of just such “speech,” even though Jesus uttered almost no words at all.

A Sword Piercing Mary’s Soul

A few hours later, at Calvary, as Jesus hung on the cross, Mary, his mother, stood by, witnessing an event that no mother ever should have to see, her own son dying in agony. That cross, as it stood atop the hill of Golgotha, evoked the image of the hilt of a large sword piercing the earth; and Mary’s mind may well have been taken back to the words of the devout prophet Simeon when he said: “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” (Luke 2:35). Those fearful words certainly came to pass, and Mary’s heart was broken, surrounded and enveloped by nearly inhuman grief. As that impossible sorrow descended upon Jesus’ mother’s heart, a parallel sorrowfulness settled in upon Jesus’ Father’s heart also. God keenly felt the pain of watching his only begotten son being sacrificed for the life of the world. God was fulfilling the picture

that he asked faithful Abraham to illustrate thousands of years before in the sacrifice of his son Isaac.

As complete and universal as Jesus’ ransom sacrifice was, it is still only half his work as the Redeemer. The whole purpose of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was to reconcile all mankind to their creator, God. The first part of Jesus’ redemptive work was the ransom, but the final part of this grand work will be the restitution of all things.

A Restorative Work

To accomplish such a great restorative work for the whole world of mankind, Jesus, during his human life, was carefully prepared by God. God allowed Jesus’ discipline and loyalty to be proven by suffering. The apostle Paul wrote: “Though he [Jesus] were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Jesus was being prepared to be a high priest for all the people, a high priest who would recognize and identify with the difficulty the world would encounter trying to learn righteousness. Paul also tells us: “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus, while on earth, was observing firsthand the frailty of sinful human life, our weaknesses, our fragile nature, our failing. This firsthand experience is what qualifies him to fulfill the final part of his role as Redeemer.

Jesus was being trained to be exactly the kind of counselor and guide the world of mankind will need while walking up the highway of holiness after their resurrection. Isaiah promises there will be a highway that will lead toward a condition of human holiness and that, though a man may be “unclean” as he begins his journey on this highway, he will gradually become clean as he passes “over” it (Isaiah 35:8).

This promise of restitution of all things is the main message and the fundamental fulfillment of all the promises God gave from the beginning of recorded history. Acts 3:21 describes the “restitution of all things” as something “which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Every one of the holy prophets suffered greatly to deliver God’s message; and the message they faithfully delivered is that the whole world

Pilate’s attempt to appease an angry crowd ended up as an enduring portrait of the ransom work of Jesus Christ.

The judgment day will be a time when the whole world will be instructed in righteousness.

of mankind, everyone who has ever died because of Adam's sin, will be raised to life again and given the opportunity to learn righteousness. This will occur in an environment where disobedience will not be allowed, and justice and mercy and humility will be appreciated and rewarded by a mediator whose skill and loving interest will encourage each of God's human children on toward a condition of perfect human life on earth.

In Isaiah we read: "When thy [God's] judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9). That is truly a beautiful promise. The judgment day for the world will not be a time of blanket condemnation, but will be a time when the whole world will be instructed in righteousness and will learn to live in harmony with the perfect will of their Creator, God. All of this is possible only through the work of the Great Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Healing a Demoniac

Mark 9:17-27 describes a wonderful miracle related to our subject. From a young age, a man's son, whom he loved, had been possessed by a demon. The brokenhearted father brought his son to Jesus to be cured, because the disciples could not cast out this demon. The father told Jesus that the demon had, time after time, tormented the boy, casting him into water or into fire to destroy him. The father was heartsick. Even when the boy was brought to Jesus, the demon cast the boy down to the ground, wallowing and foaming. Every tender heart was crushed, witnessing this tragedy. Every ounce of human kindness longed for a time when the boy would be freed from this terrible curse, but only Jesus could do it.

With desire in his heart to help the father, and with compassion in his heart to restore the

child, Jesus offered the only solution, which was faith in him. Jesus commanded the demon to leave the child, saying, "Come out of him and enter no more into him." As the demon departed, he cruelly extracted every last shred of suffering he could from the boy. When the demon was finally gone, the boy was left, lying on the ground, "as one dead." When even the spectators were confident that the poor boy was actually dead, Jesus "took him by the hand, and lifted him up," and the boy arose and was reunited with his father.

This miracle is a striking picture of the work of Jesus as the Redeemer. The boy illustrates the world of mankind which, like Adam, was born healthy and only later came under the curse of the demon, Satan. Like the boy, the world of mankind will be nearly destroyed by Satan's attempts, first by water and then by fire, a fitting illustration of the end of the first and second dispensations. Jesus not only commanded Satan to come out of the human race, but also will forever prevent him from re-entering their lives. Like the boy, the human race will be left almost completely lifeless; Jesus, the Redeemer will lift the whole race by their hands, restore them to a standing position, and present them back to their father, God.

What a beautiful picture this is of the redemptive work of Jesus. From the very beginning when the Logos said, "Here am I, send me," to the very end when tears are wiped away from all eyes, Jesus will have remained the faithful servant of God, the Redeemer of the world of mankind. Because of that great work, every one of us can eagerly look forward to the time when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

When considering Bible doctrines, let us not consider prominent human Bible expositors to be the highest court of appeal.

—Carl F. Schrade, *Someone Once Said*

How Jesus Comforts *

I will not leave you comfortless [or orphans]: I will come to you.—John 14:18



In these words of the Savior we have an “**I will not**” and an “**I will**” in close and significant conjunction. One seems to show us the negative, and the other the positive side of Christ’s love. The first suggests his knowledge, feeling, responsibility, etc., with regard to his disciples, and the second the activity of his love. He will **not** leave them orphans, he **will come** unto them. We who have become disciples of Christ know that these words apply to ourselves, as well as to those to whom they were originally spoken; and we who know the needs of the spiritual life will lay hold of such a promise as this and appropriate it in all its fulness.

“I will not leave You Comfortless”

Let us look at the prospect that lay before the disciples. Whichever way they turned, it was a comfortless one. The loss of Christ was the loss of all, the loss of the head, the loss of the great object of life, the bereavement of themselves so that they must be left in a condition of orphanage, with all the evils consequent to that helpless state. Jesus made provision for all this gloomy prospect when he promised that he would not leave them orphaned. What a terrible loss it would have been to his disciples had Christ gone away never to return, never to have sent his holy spirit. He was the head of this little family. To him they had been accustomed to look as Teacher, Lord, and all in all; in all their ignorance he was their adviser. In all their difficulties he was their helper; and although they were no doubt much to each other in holy brotherhood, still their relation to one another was founded upon their common relationship to him. Just as it is today, and has always been. Let Jesus be severed from them, let their bond with him be broken, and there remained nothing to hold them to each other.

How sorely we miss the earthly head of a family when he has filled the headship in the way which God designed. We never know what such a head is to us until he is removed; then when the great void is made, and there is

no one to look to for counsel, no one for action; when we are thrown upon our own resources, then we realize what it is to be left alone. Jesus knew well what would be the condition of the disciples if he left them without the Comforter. Well did he know what he had been to them. He knew this far better than they did, and acting upon his own knowledge he makes the promise, “I will not leave you comfortless.” And is it not of great consolation to us also, that Christ acts toward us, out of his own knowledge, as he did toward those, his immediate disciples! Christ knows all that lies before his people, under all circumstances, and makes provision accordingly. It is as though he said, “I know what would happen if I were to leave you; do not fear, I will not leave you comfortless.” We grow gradually more and more into the knowledge of his headship, his leadership; and into the deep feeling of our need of his comforting presence. Our Lord acts upon his knowledge and is often acting in the power of his headship when we may be coming sadly short of acting in the power of our membership. It is well for us to pause at times and ask ourselves if Christ is indeed **our** head—if we are always conscious of that relationship to us.

Christ Supplants Earthly Affection

There is another very important sense in which the disciples would have been left comfortless had Jesus wholly abandoned them. Such a departure would have involved the subtraction of the great object of their lives. The apostles would have been left aimless, and without purpose. Christ had been the one prominent figure before them for many a long day. With him they journeyed, and with him they rested. With him they lived and moved, and in him every hope and thought was centered. Mistaken though they were about the immediate restoration of the kingdom of Israel and their own consequent exaltation, still everything was connected with their great Master, and so to take him away was to take all. There is always some object which is the

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*Christ will never
desert even the
weakest of those
who have cast in
their lot with him.*

mainspring of life, and when that is removed, the wheels stand still. Now the Master knew what would be the misery of his disciples thus left without their one object in life. He knew that their nets could never be to them what they had been before, and that the receipt of custom had lost the exclusive charm. He knew that it was he himself who had displaced these as life's great object, substituting himself in their place, and now if he went away from them, what remained for them but an aimless life. We cannot imagine Christ calmly contemplating this without making provision for it, and this he did: "I will not leave you comfortless."

All true disciples are very much in the position of those to whom our Lord here speaks. Christ has become to such the great object in life. He has not taken away all life's interests, or diminished the fondness of natural affection, but he has placed himself above them all, he has substituted himself for whatever ruled the heart, and has become the object of that heart's affection, and that mind's thought, so that "they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Though joining Christ in true fellowship, becoming his disciples, involves the loss of earthly interests, Christ has effectually provided for this by substitution. He always gives more than he takes. Some may be afraid to take this step, thinking only of what they shall lose, not realizing what they shall gain. But those who have taken this step of consecration, have personally realized that Christ has substituted himself and all his interest and concern for that which formerly absorbed the heart, and to their great gain. The very fact that Christ has done this is an evidence that he will not depart from his followers and leave them comfortless, for he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He substitutes himself, the imperishable One, for all that passeth away. He gives himself to his people, he is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:5,8).

Friend to the Friendless

We know that none are so helpless as the orphan. All the little needs of daily life are seldom thought of by any, save a parent. All the little sorrows of life are feebly felt, except by a parent's heart, and thus helpless must the disciples have been if their connection with Christ

were now to be broken off by death. Who in all the world could supply their need, even supposing the need were known? The needs of the disciples were such that the world could not meet, and this the Savior knew. The aspect of a helpless family was that which met his view if his disciples were permanently bereft of him. And even now Christ will never allow this picture of a deserted family to become a reality. He will never desert even the weakest of those who have cast in their lot with him. We need never be afraid of becoming forlorn or friendless since we have embraced Christ. We can take his promises to ourselves. We are his disciples. This promise is to us as well as to the apostles. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

Let us look at the prospect of orphaned disciples in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ personally. Their Master was, if we might so speak, bound to take care of them as he had influenced them to give up all for him. We know that the "all" was very little, still it was all to them, and God looks at things relatively, as well as absolutely. He estimates that which is given according to the capacity of the one who gives. Is it not a comforting thought that God looks at things in this light, that he puts his own and not man's value on the two mites, that he knows our feelings, and what it may cost us to do, or give, or give up, any thing for him, to make this sacrifice, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God! Christ puts himself in the place of all that is given up. Christ will never disavow the consequences of this act by which we gave up all for him. Whenever we can clearly trace a connection between our sufferings and the one for whom we suffer, we may always rest assured that that one will never leave us, nor forsake us.

He Knows How to Fill the Void

All true children of the Lord, know how amply he makes up to them for every sacrifice for him. Yes, in truth, the love of Christ is in itself great compensation for all we give up. We remember what Paul said in Philippians 3:8: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." This love of Christ has an expulsive power, so that it and the world cannot affiliate. If our minds are much

occupied with thoughts of holiness, of the meek and lowly Jesus, how he lived and walked on earth, we will feel a shrinking from worldly things. God knows that where the heart is given to him, the life will assuredly be given too, and this motive of obedience is not so much of duty, but of love. So this world is to be given up because of love; and that love supplies the great compensation—Christ substitutes himself. He is with us in our new tasks and new pursuits. He knows what each one gives up for him, and he knows how to fill the void.

Bearing in mind that Jesus knew what would happen to the disciples if they were left to themselves, he recognized that they, like sheep, would be scattered abroad if he, the shepherd, were permanently removed and no comforter sent. He knew all that lay before his disciples in their upward and onward struggle—a struggle and a mission on which he himself had sent them and for which they were wholly unqualified apart from him. From him they had received the mighty impulse for a new life; they like others had to go through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Which of them were in themselves sufficient for these things? They needed their Leader as well as their Teacher.

Meat of Which the World Knows Not

We can contemplate also the difficulty which these disciples would have in retaining their union with Christ. He was taken from them by an ignominious death. All the world scoffed at them as followers of a dead malefactor. How could they cling to him? The trial would have been too much for them. The Christian clings to an individual, to Christ himself, and not to a creed. Christ knows well the difficulties that beset his disciples in retaining their union with him. He also knows that being linked to an abstraction—a system of truth—will never carry them where he would have them be, and so he provides for his personal union with them now. We retain our union in the power of a personal attachment to a living being personally attached to us. Christ is the vine and we are the branches. There must not only be vitality in us to cling to him, but there must be vitality in him to inject sap into us.

So as we survey this side of the subject we realize that separation from the world does not

involve an orphaned or comfortless condition. We who have broken off affinities with it, have become connected with higher infinities in Christ, infinitely higher. We have meat to eat of which the world knows not. By our own faults we may be for a season left comfortless, we may hide ourselves from the Savior. We may not clearly see the one who lives for us, and still is ours, though our eyes are so dim that we know not he is near. Such a condition may come to us, but it is not Christ who has left us. His promise is unbroken, though we are from our own fault “suffering comfortless.” Yet happy is he who is suffering and comfortless without his Lord, for his grief is a witness that he lives. The existence of a life may be manifested by a tear, as well as by a smile, by the voice of weeping, as well as by the voice of joy.

Present Help in Time of Need

And now comes the promise of the Lord: “I will come to you”—or as it is in the Greek, “I am coming to you.” We believe the primary meaning attached to this promise has reference to the sending of the holy spirit. Our Lord gives us to understand that all the ministrations of the spirit are his own ministrations. Our Lord’s promise implied that the holy spirit which the Father would send in Jesus’ name would be to his followers a “present help in every time of need,” that they would be helped, encouraged, and strengthened by that holy power that would guide, direct, and enable his people to walk by faith and not by sight. This power of God is with the whole Church, and yet each receives the influence of the holy spirit personally by individual connection with the channel of the spirit. This comforting and strengthening holy spirit is the spirit of the Father and the Son.

It was necessary too that our Lord should make a personal appearance to the disciples after his resurrection, and before his ascension. The grief of the disciples was connected with the departure of their Lord, and we can easily understand how the reappearance of the Lord would comfort their hearts. The great loneliness would pass away. Death brings with it the most saddening loneliness which falls to the lot of man, and in proportion as we have become bound up in a single object, in that proportion comes the desolation of loneliness when that

If our minds are much occupied with thoughts of holiness, of the meek and lowly Jesus, we will feel a shrinking from worldly things.

object is removed. Jesus had been all to his disciples, and when they lost him, they lost all; when he returned, they got all back again. Their hopes were revived. And it is an eternal source of comfort that Christ dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over him. "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Christ hath ascended into heaven, and the Comforter, which is the holy spirit, has been sent as an eternal source of comfort to his children.

We Are Serving a Living Lord

It was in a body of flesh that the disciples saw our Lord after his resurrection. They knew that henceforth they had no more to do with a dead Christ, but that now he was a living Christ. They had witnessed his ascension. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." He is now far beyond the world's reach, "sitting on the right hand of the Father." He is our Advocate, as well as our Comforter. His disciples are living in him and by him, and thus deriving all benefits from him. We are serving a **living Lord**, and we should be ever rising higher and higher above the world and all the interests of the world. All the interests of the world are perishable: all concerned with our living Christ are eternal.

Going back to the disciples, we remember how they were assembled at Jerusalem, a company of troubled ones. Without were fightings, within were fears. They were weak in faith. Before them lay an unknown future. The one cure for all their sorrows was Christ's manifestation to them. And so he stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be unto you." So Christ's manifestation of himself is the great cure for the troubled heart. No doubt one cause of the disciples' troubles was their imperfect apprehension of the truth. They could not have full knowledge until the spirit came upon them, and so having only part of the truth concerning Christ's resurrection and plan, they were confused and perhaps confounded. And perhaps even we who are responsible by reason of having come into Christ and received the holy spirit may have learned only part of some important truths, and thus when certain experiences come into our lives we are confused and

perhaps confounded. We should strive to have our apprehension of truth more perfect, to be growing in knowledge and in grace.

Discerning Christ in Our Experiences

Another part of the disciples' troubles arose from an unaccustomed manifestation. Jesus appeared to them in a different body and in an unfamiliar form. To these they were wholly unaccustomed. And so we may realize a lesson here: Christ manifests himself to his followers in different aspects at different times and under different circumstances. May we so appreciate Christ's teachings through the holy spirit that when he manifests himself in any way, we may not be troubled, but recognize that it is Christ himself.

There is another aspect in which this trouble of the disciples must be viewed. They were all in trouble **together**; they could not help each other. And so with us, there are times when no one on earth can help us, not even our spiritual brethren. They themselves may be as much perplexed as we are. The lack is in their power, and not in their will. And it may be that God would speak to us and say, Your comfort, your peace lies not in the many any more than in the few. You will not find comfort among your fellowmen, but from one, even Jesus Christ. The revelation of Jesus Christ himself is the solution of trouble, and it was upon the full manifestation of his identity that the disciples obtained peace. We read in Revelation 1:17, 18, how John was comforted: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Thus by declaring his identity, he brought peace and comfort. What could give us more comfort than the knowledge that the Lord we are now in union with, can be identified as the one who came to earth and died that we might live? While here on earth none endured such pain as he, none was so isolated and alone, none was so maligned. But in resurrection life he receives glory for all the sufferings of the past. He is an High Priest forever set on the right hand of God. Thus we receive comfort from the knowledge of the identity of the Christ on earth with the Christ in heaven. It is this Christ that we have taken as our own, hearing him say to us, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

*Your comfort,
your peace lies
in Jesus Christ.*

Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant



*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.—
1 Timothy 2:5*

Russ Marten

When considering the role of mediators in the world today, typically what comes to mind are those who stand between two parties in a dispute, often a labor dispute. Frequently a “federal mediator” is asked to carry proposals between each of the sides and encourages or even demands that each side give a little more in its position until some agreement between the two original positions can be reached.

But the “mediator between God and man” is a role with only limited similarity to a worldly mediator. The dictionary definition of a mediator is one who is interposed between two parties to effect reconciliation; one who acts as an intermediate agent in bringing, effecting or communicating. The mediator between God and man does fit this definition without compromising or reducing God’s position and principles. That mediator is identified for us: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**” (1 Timothy 2:5). In the Greek there is no verb, thus leaving the thought of “himself having been a man.”

Why is a Mediator Necessary?

Is not God able to arrange matters so this function is not needed? While not limiting the hand of the Father in anything, we recognize that he arranged the office of mediator because of his principles.

God is constrained not by weakness or inability, but by his own principles. Justice is the habitation of his throne. God cannot deal with imperfection directly without a covenant to justify the individual or class being dealt with. When there is a conditional covenant in place, he works through a mediator or with an advocate of the sinful party.

Although man’s transition from perfection to imperfection was instantaneous with Adam and Eve’s fall in the garden, the degradation of man’s character has been a process of varying intensity and speed over the past 6,000 years. The merit of Jesus’ ransom is sufficient to instantaneously return man from a state of imperfection to perfection, but the effects of the degrading process of sin cannot be instantaneously overcome. Those logically need time for a process to reverse the effects of sin upon the character of man. Even after coming back from the grave, mankind’s inherent character will not willingly choose what is righteous. The human race will still be more or less at enmity with God. If the reversal of the effects of sin could be accomplished instantaneously, there would be no need for a mediator, only for a redeemer. But God, knowing the effects of years of living under sin and evil, rightly provided a period of a thousand years for the perfecting process.

Thus we see why the role of mediator is necessary. Consider the most basic of conflicts. When two parties are at odds and would do injury to one another, a third party standing between them keeps each from coming in contact with the other and prevents harm. This “third party” is the mediator in the dispute. When the merit of Christ’s sacrifice is presented to the Father on behalf of the world, the resurrection process is initiated and the new covenant goes into operation. The Christ, head and body, must immediately perform the function of mediator, for both sides are inherently in conflict—the justice of God on the one hand and mankind’s fallen nature on the other. For most of the Millennial age mankind will still have either the desire, or at least the tendency, to sin while they are being transformed from sinner to perfect human life. Whatever the moti-

*Christ in his role
as mediator
insulates the
world from the
consequences of
God's justice.*

vation, Christ is there as mankind's mediator to intercede on their behalf. He stands before God's justice and says in effect, "I bought this race with my blood. I will, for the period of this New Covenant, stand between them and absolute justice so I can work with them, nurture them, and develop them to the point where I can stand aside and let them be exposed to justice." A mediator works with both sides in a conflict, and surely the bulk of this mediator's effort will be with mankind's character as long as the world is less than perfect in thought and motive.

A Mediator Is Not an Advocate

In the kingdom Christ moves from being an advocate for his church to being a mediator for the world of mankind. An advocate stands in support of any action committed by the party he represents, much as an attorney defends his client even when he knows the client is guilty of the crime for which he is charged. In his support of his church, Christ bestows upon them a robe of his righteousness. Thus the Father sees in essence Christ's own righteousness for the prospective church members, rather than their fallen human nature. Because it is his robe of righteousness, Christ can and does serve as an advocate for the church before the Father: "The Father himself loveth you" (John 16:27). Paul writes, "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" (Romans 8:33,34). Because God justifies and receives the sacrifice of the church, they need no mediator; they are in heart accordance (rather than at willful variance) with him.

However, the Mediator cannot similarly justify the actions of mankind in the Millennial age, nor can he stand in support of their position. The world of mankind will have been awakened by the application of his merit. They then begin a slow process of learning righteousness, appreciating and developing a Godlike character to replace the tainted one they had under the reign of sin and evil. Because mankind in the Millennial age does not wear Christ's robe of righteousness, Christ cannot be their advocate, even though they need to be insulated from absolute justice. Otherwise, the first sin after being raised from the tomb would justly condemn them immediately to death again. Christ in his role as mediator can and does insulate mankind from the consequences of God's justice. The people must (and will)

appreciate this as a child begrudgingly learns that discipline, and the insistence that things be done correctly and properly, are ultimately for the child's best interests, even if to the child it may seem to be just the opposite.

The Christ is to be the mediator of a bilateral covenant that requires fulfillment by both parties: "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament [covenant], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). The covenant arrangement is simple and it is individually extended. The individual human obeys God's perfect laws and God grants everlasting life. Action on the part of both provides each with gain: man gains life and God gains the ultimate object of his divine plan, which is a perfect everlasting human race, functioning in harmony with one another, praising and serving him.

It is not correct to think of Jesus as an individual mediator for each member of the fallen race, for he will be the mediator for all under the New Covenant. All mankind will be welcome to come under the arrangements and blessings of that covenant and the benefits obtained by its mediator. The blessing of that covenant will start with and flow through the nation of Israel (Acts 3:25). As the world of mankind is transformed in character and become Israelites indeed, they will then realize the full blessings of the kingdom arrangements under that covenant.

The Blessings of a Mediator

The work and blessings of the mediator will be in the form of instruction, enlightenment, knowledge of the truth, and bringing mankind up out of sin and death, out of ignorance and superstition, and out of unbelief and depravity to a truly blessed state of human perfection. The mediator will be able to transform those evil tendencies into devotion to righteousness and will reveal all the eventual blessings man received from the permission of evil. Mankind will appreciate what sin truly wrought on the race, and come into full appreciation of what the kingdom arrangements of love for all and

praise of the Father will yield in eternal blessings. All will become Abraham's seed, having unwavering faith in the outcome of God's arrangements for the race. If any instance arises where Jesus' human experience might not relate to a particular situation at hand, he has a body consisting of 144,000 members with a lifetime of experiences. Those experiences, both of Jesus and his church, will provide a sympathetic response no matter what situation the world experiences in its development. Mankind will see in this process the need to destroy in second death the incorrigible, however few they may be. Although eternally grateful for the work of the mediator, mankind will nonetheless look forward to the day in which they will be so developed in character that the mediator can step aside, and they will be able to stand in full exposure to God's justice and still live forever.

All will be blessed because they will be thoroughly acquainted with the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but no longer willing to consider indulging in sin. Love and righteousness will be their only desire. The work of the mediator will eliminate the activities and industries driven by sin and those that only exist in a feeble attempt to counteract sin's effects. These will be replaced with other forms of activity

that only build-up and serve mankind and glorify the Father. Not only will the work of the mediator reconcile differences between Jew and Christian, but also between Serbs and Croats, Sunnis and Shiites, Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics, and atheists, as they learn the ways of the Lord. Christ Jesus' love, concern, and wisdom obtained through human experience will overcome the misconceptions, bigotry, and prejudice that have caused so much hatred throughout mankind's history.

Jesus has had many roles throughout the ages, all a result of his total devotion to the glorification of the Father. Each role had different experiences and a different focus on the work to be accomplished. As each mission was completed successfully he surely anticipated moving to the next step. Now one more role, that of mediator, remains. Given his ceaseless desire to please his Father, surely Christ is anxious to see his work as advocate completed and his work as mediator begin, for it is only when that work as mediator will also be completed that the object of God's plan will be fully realized. It will be then that all creation will eternally praise the Father and the Mediator for what has been done for them all.

God's plan will be fully realized when Christ completes his work as mediator.

Kings and Priests

If the church is to reign with Christ, there must be subjects over which to reign. These subjects are to be those living on the earth: "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10).

Their work is described as not only that of a king, or lawmaker, but as that of a priest. It is a "royal priesthood," a priesthood "after the order of Melchisedec," who was both a king and a priest (1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 5:10). The priest in ancient Israel was an intermediary between God and man. This "royal priesthood" is to be a sympathetic priesthood. Like their Master, they are to be "touched" with a feeling of the infirmities of others (Hebrews 4:15).

It is the plan of God that all men who have ever lived will come back to life on this earth (John 5:28,29). These will return with the same character and thoughts they took into the grave and they will need to learn righteousness by proceeding up a "highway of holiness" (Isaiah 35:8-10). Guides will be needed along the way to direct their footsteps. This will be the future role of the followers of Christ.

These will need to understand both the demands of a holy God and the needs of man. They will need to have the experience of temptation in order to "succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). They must learn the privations of hardship to comprehend others so deprived. To offer true sympathy to a world plagued by disease, they must feel the pangs of sickness. This is the blessed lot of the church of Christ.

—*The Herald of Christ's Kingdom, January/February 1997.*

In God's Eternal Spring

Words by Alice M. Ripper

Music by Theresa Parkinson

Tenderly

1. The pe-tals of a lov'-ly rose May fall and fade at sum-mer's close, And
2. The pe-tals of a lov'-ly rose May fall and fade at sum-mer's close, E-ven

grief we feel for that brief hour— For it had been a lov'-ly flower. It
though it die our Fa-ther knows— that Spring will re-sur-rect the rose. And
lov'-ly flower.
re-sur-rect the rose.

lies at rest on dew - y grass— So fra-grant still to all who pass. E-ven
so when death makes all seem vain Man-kind like flow'rs shall rise a - gain. "All—

though it die... Our— Fa-ther knows that— Spring will re-sur-rect the rose.
in their graves" shall— hear their King. And— rise in God's e-ter-nal spring.

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News & Views

PBI NEWS

Date of Annual PBI Meeting

The annual meeting of PBI Members and Directors will be held on Friday, July 14, at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The General Convention of Bible Students will begin on Saturday, July 15, at the same location and end the evening of July 20. Those who are interested in the Pastoral Bible Institute, whether members or not, are welcome to attend this meeting. Contact the Institute's secretary for accommodation details.

World News



Religious

The number of Catholic priests in the U.S. has shrunk from 59,000 in 1965 to 43,000 today, even though the number of Catholics has grown. More than 3,000 U.S. parishes—27 percent of the nation's Catholic churches—no longer have a full-time priest in residence. And as older priests retire or die, the shortage is growing worse. Lawrence Young, a co-author of the book *Full Pews and Empty Altars* predicts that the U.S. Catholic Church will lose another 16,000 priests by 2015, a decline of 45 percent. "The priesthood is in free fall," said Rev. Mark Massa of Fordham University.

—*The Week*, 11/25/2005

In vast numbers Americans are turning away from traditional religions. The number of Americans who claim no religion has more than doubled in a decade. More than 27 million adults—nearly one in seven—reject all religious labels. Pollster George Barna, who works for Christian ministries, estimates that 20 million Christians have largely forsaken their local church in favor of discussion groups with friends, Bible study with colleagues or spiritual questing online.

—*Los Angeles Times*, 11/16/2005

Turkey became the first predominately Muslim country to open membership talks with the European Union. The negotiations almost failed because of conflicts over the island of Cyprus which is divided on religious lines.

—*Religious Tolerance.org website*, 10/3/2005

In November 1984, 40 percent of Americans said that they believed the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally word-for-word; 41 percent said that the Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally. In response to the same questions in May, 2005, only 32 percent answered affirmatively to the Bible being taken literally while 47 percent said not everything should be taken literally.

—*Bible Review*, Winter 2005

A Saudi high school chemistry teacher accused of discussing religion with his students has been sentenced to 750 lashes and 40 months in prison for blasphemy. Mohammed Salamah al-Harbi was convicted of questioning and ridiculing Islam, discussing the Bible and defending Jews, judicial officials said.

—*Associated Press*, 11/18/2005



Social

For many people, science has changed what were once immediate death sentences into chronic diseases. Lives that are longer are not necessarily better. Fewer people may be dying from heart attacks, but they're living on in poor health, says Dr. Mark Monane, a biotechnology analyst at investment banking firm Needham & Co. In 1900, Americans, male and female, could expect to live to 47.3 years old, according to data from the National Center for Health Statistics. By 2002, the latest year for which data exist, the average U.S. life span was 77.3 years. But maximum life expectancy is stuck at around 104, Monane says. Our cells will divide only so many times. When they stop doing that, they lose some of their functions, as does the whole body.

—*Investors Business Daily*, 10/31/2005

Among the depleted ranks of police departments throughout the country, it has come to this: desperate want ads offering signing bonuses to new recruits, and cops paying other cops to find new cops. It seems nobody wants to be a police officer anymore, officials say. In a generation's time, the job of an American police officer, previously among the most sought-after by people with little college background, has become one that in many communities now goes begging. The resulting shortage of new officers is the top concern among issues facing law enforcement across the country.

—*The New York Times*, 12/28/2005

Eight million people die every year because they are too poor to stay alive.

—*Time*, 12/26/2005

Improvement in the overall health of Americans has stalled in the last five years as more people became obese and fewer quit smoking. The America's Health Rankings report, issued at the American Public Health Association's annual meeting, showed that 23.1 percent of the U.S. population is now considered obese, more than twice the level in 1990. Tobacco use remains the biggest preventable cause of premature death in the United States, resulting in some 440,000 deaths from a variety of diseases each year, the report said. The report was produced by the APHA, which represents public health professionals, along with the United Health Foundation and the Partnership for Prevention.

—*Reuters*, 12/12/2005

The global fertility rate now stands at 2.9 children for every woman of child-bearing age—a decrease of nearly 50 percent since 1972. According to the latest U.N. projections, the world's fertility rate will fall below "replacement" levels by 2045, meaning that the human population will start shrinking. Some 60 countries are now operating below replacement levels. "Never in the last 650 years, since the time of the Black Plague," said sociologist Ben Wattenberg, "have birth and fertility rates fallen so far, so fast, so low, for so long, in so many places."

—*The Week*, 11/18/2005

Tehran's thickening smog clouds are bringing the Iranian capital to a standstill. The government shut down the city for two days [in December] as pollution reached 13 times the level of London. The smog has cloaked the top floors of buildings such as the 435-meter [1,400 foot] Milad communications tower for more than a week. "They've taken the sky away from us," Majid Mokhtari, a lung specialist, said in an interview. "Tehran was designed for maximum five million people, not twelve." Most of the city's two million cars are dilapidated and damage the environment. Emergency measures including school closures and driving bans on some days aren't working, residents say.

—*Bloomberg News*, 12/29/2005

Forty-nine people have been indicted in a scheme that bilked thousands of dollars from a Red Cross fund designated for Hurricane Katrina victims, federal authorities said Tuesday. At least 14 suspects worked at a Red Cross call center in Bakersfield [California] and are accused of helping family and friends file false claims for aid money. The Bakersfield site is the largest of three Red Cross centers

set up to handle hurricane calls. Officials with the company which operates the call center said the company didn't have time to run background checks on its 1,200 workers.

—*Associated Press*, 12/27/2005

Two days before the end of 2005 there have been 34 fatal accidents, compared with 28 in the whole of 2004, and the number of fatalities is 1,050 compared with only 466 [in 2004]. African airlines had another bad year, suffering 12 fatal accidents, with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Sudan all seeing multiple accidents. There were no fatal accidents involving any of the world's major airlines.

—*FlightInternational.com*, 12/29/2005



Political

Zimbabwe is a country in ruins; its people are destitute. The unemployment rate is more than 70 percent and the annual inflation rate is more than 500 percent. Since 1998, annual foreign investment inflows have dropped from \$436 million to less than \$5 million. The rural population suffers from increasing starvation, which is now being exacerbated by the influx of people displaced from the townships. Nearly 40 percent of Zimbabweans are malnourished, with 70 percent of the population living below the poverty line of \$1 a day. In the span of only 15 years, the average life expectancy has declined from 60 years to 30 years.

—*International Herald Tribune*, 12/27/2005

Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad, Iran's president, said Israelis wanting a Jewish state should establish one in Europe, rather than the Middle East. In the same speech, he attacked Europe for prosecuting doubters of the mass killings of Jews by the Nazis during the second world war. Mr. Ahmadi-Nejad's comments follow widespread international outcry after he called in October for Israel to be "wiped from the map." Iran is calling for a referendum of all present and past citizens of historic Palestine—Israel, the West Bank and Gaza—to determine its future.

—*Financial Times*, 9/9/2005

Eighty-nine of the world's 192 nations are now considered "free," according to Freedom House's annual survey of world governments. That's way up from 76 a decade ago, and a mere 40 countries as recently as 1975. In addition, 122 nations now qualify as electoral democracies, up from 119 in 2004 and 76 in 1990. In fact, the world has more democracies today than at any time in history, despite a steady drumbeat of seemingly horrible news.

—*Investors' Business Daily*, 12/22/2005

More than 2,000 companies paid about \$1.8 billion in illicit kickbacks and surcharges to Saddam Hussein's government through extensive manipulation of the U.N. oil-for-food program in Iraq, according to key findings of a U.N.-backed investigation. The report indicates that about half the 4,500 companies doing business with Iraq paid illegal surcharges on oil purchases or kickbacks on contracts to supply humanitarian goods. The investigators reported that companies and individuals from 66 countries paid illegal kickbacks through a variety of devices while those paying illegal oil surcharges came from, or were registered in, 40 countries. The oil-for-food program was one of the world's largest humanitarian aid operations, running from 1996-2003.

—Associated Press, 10/27/2005

A year after a tsunami ravaged the shores of South and Southeast Asia, killing more than 180,000 people and wiping away entire villages, rebuilding is lagging in many areas, leaving tens of thousands without homes and billions of dollars in donations unspent. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, less than a fifth of the homes that were destroyed have been rebuilt. Only a small slice of the more than \$13 billion pledged by foreign governments, international aid agencies, private donors and others has been spent. Even where projects are going forward, relief workers have faced a bewildering array of logistical problems, including a lack of clear land titles, ruined roads, a shortage of building materials and skilled labor, and the sheer remoteness of many in need.

—Wall Street Journal, 12/19/2005

US planning for Cuba's transition after the demise of Fidel Castro has entered a new stage, with a special office for reconstruction inside the US State Department preparing for the "day after", when Washington will try to back a democratic government in Havana. Every six months, the National Intelligence Council revises a secret watch list of 25 countries in which instability could require US intervention. The reconstruction office was focused on Sudan, Haiti, Congo and Nepal. In a controversial move, Cuba was added to the list.

—Financial Times, 11/1/2005

Financial

There's an unprecedented wave of capital flowing around the world, with all of its owners anxiously searching for a better return. World pension, insurance and mutual funds have \$46 trillion at their disposal, up almost a third from 2000. In the same period global central-bank reserves have doubled to \$4 trillion, and other gauges of available capital

have risen as well. For good measure, many investors use today's low interest rates to borrow money to amplify their bets. This "leverage," in effect, thus enlarges the already overflowing pool of investment capital. As these markets draw more investors, whose buying pushes up their price, prospects rise that a reversal could cause widespread pain.

—Wall Street Journal, 11/3/2005

The number of work stoppages in the U.S., including strikes by unions and management-sponsored lockouts, is on the upswing as tensions rise between workers and companies that are seeking to cut wages and benefits. According to the Bureau of National Affairs Inc., a Washington, D.C. publisher of legal and regulatory information, work stoppages are up 14% in 2005. The recent upswing is "a sign of frustration, almost to the point of desperation," says Prof. Chaison of Clark University. "For many workers there's no alternative. They feel that they were badly beaten up in past negotiations or that companies are making tremendous demands on them."

—Wall Street Journal, 11/16/2005

Israel

More than 60 people in need of heart transplants or major surgery have been treated using a new procedure patented by TheraVita, a privately owned company in Israel. [Although 60 is] a small number, the results are nonetheless stunning: all of them improved. The treatment repairs damaged or inactive heart tissue using adult stem cells harvested from the patient's blood and processed outside the body by mimicking the body's environment. The procedure takes about a week, including the time needed to fly the blood to TheraVita's laboratories in Israel. The resulting product is then injected into the patient's heart where it appears to trigger the body's natural healing mechanisms, helping the heart tissue recover some of its function.

—TIME, 12/12/2005

Israel's high-tech sector is having its best year since the dot-com implosion in 2000. The Intel Corporation, the world's largest chip maker, announced that it would invest \$3.5 billion to build a new plant, adjacent to an existing one that makes Pentium 4 chips, at an industrial park in southern Israel, which has long struggled economically despite the money poured into it. The high-tech sector generates more than \$13 billion of annual exports, or about 40 percent of Israel's total exports, according to government figures.

—The New York Times, 12/19/2005

Two Israeli medical innovations have been cleared by the American FDA and will soon be available on the global market. One improves laser eye surgery and the other simplifies removing tumors. Ophthalmologists can use the new laser to treat several retinal conditions that can lead to vision loss and blindness—including proliferative diabetic retinopathy, retinal tears and detachment, premature retinopathy, and retinal vein occlusion. Another Israeli company has announced approval for a device critical to the treatment of breast fibroadenoma. The procedure involves the application of sub-zero temperatures to freeze the tumors, using needles capable of creating ice-balls of diverse sizes and shapes to match the shape of the tumor exactly.

—*Arutz 7, 12/1/2005*

With the expected exit from politics of Ariel Sharon, just over a year after the death of Yassir Arafat, a generational shift in power across the middle East is almost complete. In the broader Middle East, Mr. Sharon is among the last of the towering and controversial figures whose careers were defined largely by the Arab-Israeli struggles. Over the past six years, the region has lost Hafez al-Assad, Saddam Hussein, and King Fahd in Abdelaziz of Saudi Arabia. With King Hussein of Jordan long gone, Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president is the only leader from the old guard to still be in power. The redrawing of Israel's political map is only now beginning.

—*Financial Times, 1/10/2006*

Archaeology and the Bible

These findings link the Bible and the land of Israel. While not surprising to Bible Students, these reinforce Israel's right to claim the land with secular authorities and anti-Israel proponents who claim they have no history there.

Bethsaida—the home of Andrew and Peter (John 1:44) and the place where Jesus cured a blind man (Mark 8:22-25) and fed the multitude (Luke 9:10-15). Verification of the city existing in the first century was discovered in 1987 with a Hellenistic and Roman-era residential quarter, and the largest and best-preserved city gate yet discovered in Israel.

Dan—the “House of David” inscription contains the only mention of David and his dynasty known outside the Bible; it was discovered at the foot of Mt. Hermon.

Dor—mentioned as the location of one of Solomon's twelve district governors (1 Kings 4:7-8,11). Located 15 miles south of Haifa, the excavation has uncovered gates, walls and monumental buildings and Hellenistic-Roman complexes and temples.

Hazor—the head of the Canaanite kingdoms according to Joshua 11:10. Joshua burned it to the ground (11:13). Hazor lies 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and has been discovered to have an upper mound and a lower city. Excavations have revealed 22 strata of occupation with the earliest dating to the 18th century B.C.

Hippos/Sussita—mentioned in both Matthew and Mark. Excavations indicate an important Roman-era town with temples, baths, a sacred enclosure and a main east-west street.

Megiddo—mentioned in Rev. 16:16. Recently named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, excavations have found more than six millennia of history buried in the remnants of more than 30 different settlements.

Ramat Rachel—Finds have included seal impressions from the reign of King Hezekiah.

Tell Es-Safi/Gath—mentioned in 1 Samuel 5:3-9 as the Philistine city destination of the captured Ark of the Covenant. Last summer excavators uncovered what might be the oldest Philistine inscription.

Tamar—listed as one of the boundaries of Israel in Ezekiel 47:13,19. More than 25,000 objects ranging from the First Temple period to the early Arab period have been uncovered.

Tiberias—John 21:1. Excavations have so far unearthed a basilica, a main street, a covered bazaar, a bathhouse and streets, shops and a theater.

Yotvata—one of the places Israel wandered to during their 40-year journey, mentioned in Deut. 10:7. The modern site is 28 miles north of Eilat. Last year a previously unknown occupation level was discovered.

Zayit—mentioned in 2 Kings 12:17,18 as the site of an invasion by the Aramean King Hazael. It is located approximately 25 miles east of Ashkelon. So far discoveries include a large Egyptian public building and two destruction levels, one dating to the 13th century B.C. and the other to the ninth century B.C., consistent with the period of the Judges.

—*Biblical Archaeology Review, January/February 2006*

News & Views is edited by Len Griehs. Items of interest may be sent to him at 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades CA 90272, or via e-mail (Griehs@comcast.net).



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Convention Announcements

Inquiries should be sent to the individuals listed below.

Mar. 4-6—Florida Convention
 Clarion Hotel, 3835 McCoy Rd.,
 Orlando FL. Bob Goodman
 407.695.6815.
 ☎ goodmanrc@earthlink.net

Mar. 11, 12—New Orleans LA.
 Hilton Garden Inn, 3330 Harding
 Blvd., Baton Rouge LA 70807.
 Michael Costelli, 228.861.2822.
 ☎ michael@simpkins-costelli.com

Mar. 19—Detroit MI.
 Northwest YWCA, Grand River at
 Beech Daly, Redford MI.
 Frank Nemesh 248.649.6588.
 ☎ NemeshF@aol.com

Mar. 19—New York NY.
 Wellesley Inn, Fairfield NJ.
 Deanna Gorecki 845.642.9337.
 ☎ Bobgorecki@aol.com

Mar. 31—Apr. 2—Fresno CA.
 Best Western Garden Court Inn,
 2141 No. Parkway, Fresno CA.
 Bob Wilson 559.255.2241.
 ☎ bobjimmy@sbcglobal.net

Apr. 1, 2—Columbus OH.
 Resurrection Church Banquet Fa-
 cility, 6300 E. Dublin-Granville
 Road, New Albany OH 43054.
 Todd Alexander 614.519.8282.
 ☎ toddnalex@aol.com

Apr. 7-9—Detroit MI.
 Macomb Community College, 14500
 12-Mile Road, Warren MI.
 Frank Nemesh 248.649.6588.
 ☎ NemeshF@aol.com

✠ **Apr. 11 [Tuesday]—Memorial**

Apr. 14-16—Albuquerque NM.
 Wyndham Hotel, 2910 Yale Blvd
 SE, Albuquerque NM.
 Sandi Thomassen 505.268.8170.
 ☎ srbt@juno.com

Apr. 28-30—Boise ID.
 Owyhee Plaza Hotel, 1109 Main
 St., Boise ID. D. Allers
 208.375.6873.
 ☎ Donnallan@aol.com

May 26-29—Los Angeles CA.
 Chapman University, Orange CA.
 Richard Bieniak 949.457.0894.
 ☎ rjbieniak@aol.com

May 27-29—Chicago IL.
 Location TBD.
 Roberta Tabac 630.231.1874.
 ☎ rctabac@flash.net

June 16-18—Portland OR.
 Ramada Inn, 6221 NE 82nd
 Ave., Portland OR. Jerry Black
 503.659.6930.
 ☎ gbblack@pcez.com

June 25—Detroit MI.
 Northwest YWCA, Grand River at
 Beech Daly, Redford MI. Norm
 Zendler 248.399.8843.
 ☎ NGZendler@wowway.com

July 15-20—General Convention
 Univ. of Pittsburgh, Johnstown PA.
 Michael Nekora 310.454.5248.
 ☎ nekora@aol.com

Aug. 6-11—International Conv.
 Nowy Sacz, Poland. Tom Mach-
 acek 219.662.8107 (Int'l. Youth
 seminar follows in Baia Mare,
 Romania, Aug. 14-18.)
 ☎ tommach@aol.com

Aug. 18-20—Portland OR.
 Collins Retreat Center, 32867 SE
 Highway 211, Eagle Creek OR.
 Robyn Hack 503.682.9016
 ☎ Hack@easystreet.com

Sept. 2, 3—Jackson MI.
 FaHoLo Camp & Conf. Center,
 3000 Mt. Hope Rd., Grass Lake
 MI 49240. Mrs. Ray Lumley
 517.782.7252.
 ☎ Lumley@aol.com

Sept. 2, 3—New York NY.
 Wellesley Inn, Two Bridges Road
 at Exit 52 (Route 80), Fairfield
 NJ. Debra Szybinski
 212.998.2095. ☎ ds2@nyu.edu

And finally...



Description of Christ

His hair is the color of a ripe hazelnut, parted on the top in the manner of the Nazirites, and falling straight to the ears but curling below, with blonde highlights and fanning off his shoulders. He has a fair forehead and no wrinkles or marks on his face; his cheeks are tinged with pink. ... his beard is large and full but not long, and parted in the middle. ... his glance shows simplicity adorned with maturity, his eyes are clear and commanding, never apt to laugh but sooner inclined to cry.

This verbal description surfaced in the ninth century, around the time the Catholic Church was struggling with the concept of depicting Christ in artworks, and whether or not it was appropriate to create a visual image of him and, if so, how he should be depicted. In the midst of this debate, these words of a first century A.D. Roman Senator named Publius Lentulus surfaced; he supposedly left behind this verbal description of Jesus. (It was later determined to be a fraud). These excerpts of the description were written down by a student of Rembrandt's, Samuel Van Hoogstraten, in his *Treatise on Painting*.

Source: Getty Museum, Los Angeles



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